

## My Cornerstone Retreat Experience

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The men's Cornerstone retreat was something I had no knowledge of until about a year ago. That is the reason I am speaking to you today . Father Owen , Father Matthew and I wish to make this incredible retreat experience known to more Catholics .The retreat is offered at several Parishes nearby and throughout the state. I went to my Cornerstone retreat at Notre Dame of Mt. Carmel in Cedar Knolls January 29 and 30th of this year. I was there with 5 other great and faithful Catholic men from our Parish of St. Rose of Lima. I was hesitant to go , but decided to go to help myself on my journey in my Catholic Faith. I ended up being so blessed and grateful that I attended the retreat. The experience brought me so much closer to Jesus.I'd like to share a little of my cornerstone retreat experience with you now.

The retreat started on a Friday evening with friendly and welcoming Catholic men who had organized the event greeting us .The evening was filled with readings from Scripture, wonderfully uplifting Christian songs, speeches from fellow Brothers that shared heartfelt and personal stories of times in their lives where they found Jesus ,or realized that Jesus was there for them the whole time. The stories these men spoke of took courage to share and made us all realize that Jesus is always with us.

There was also a time for reflection, Adoration and Reconciliation. The Adoration was a personal and enlightening favorite of mine. There was beautiful Scripture and music leading into the Adoration of being in the presence of Jesus. I felt that was the perfect way to end the first night of the retreat. To be brought so close to Jesus just before you turn in for the night. That closeness with Jesus was something I never thought was possible for me. I was so thankful for the opportunity .

We then went to sleep on air mattresses for about 4 to 5 hours. That was an experience in itself. I feel that was necessary to sacrifice a little sleep and comfort to make the experience even more meaningful. The next day was just as rewarding as the first. There was more Scripture, personal stories from more brothers and personal reflection time.

Saturday night , the retreat ended with a wonderful Mass for us . We the new candidates , were about to graduate to be forever brothers. The Mass was celebrated by Fr. O Donovan from Notre Dame and our Fr. Matthew from St Rose of Lima. All of us , the new brothers , were up at the Altar and we gave thanks to Jesus for such an enlightening and enriching retreat. We received the blessed Eucharist and our Jerusalem Cross pins. We all left the retreat with a feeling of peace, brotherhood and of being closer to Jesus than when we first arrived.

I highly recommend experiencing a Cornerstone retreat and leaving your daily lives behind for just a 26 hour period. You don't even feel the need to look at your watch or phone. There was no need to know the time or anything else going on in the outside world . This was a time to reflect on your relationship with Jesus and learn how you can fit Him into your daily life and how much you can benefit from doing so . I will always treasure this retreat experience and be grateful that I went. I encourage you to give yourself the gift of a Cornerstone retreat experience .

I would like to end this with a quote from our Holy Father, Pope Francis. " Do not be a "Part-Time" Christian, at certain moments, in certain circumstances, in certain choices, be Christian all the time! The truth of Christ, that the Holy Spirit teaches us and gives us, always and forever involves our daily lives. Let us invoke Him more often, to guide us on the Path of Christ's disciples."

Thank You and God bless you .