

Etty Hillesum's "Prayer from Auschwitz."

You have made me so rich, oh God, please let me share Your beauty with open hands. My life has become an uninterrupted dialogue with You, oh God, one great dialogue. Sometimes when I stand in some corner of the camp, my feet planted on Your earth, my eyes raised toward Your heaven, tears sometimes run down my face, tears of deep emotion and gratitude. At night too, when I lie in bed and rest in You, oh God, tears of gratitude run down my face, and that is my prayer.

An Interesting Journey Godward

By Alex Torres



A Saint Kolbe retreat is an effective channel of God's unconditional love. It is a glimpse of what will be experienced in paradise. The River Rule, which blocks the misuse of personal stories, also prevents me from divulging much of what takes place at the retreat. However, I am fairly certain the Almighty would not mind a summarized account of His love.

Upon walking into the gym, the weekend participants were greeted with loving embraces, which immediately set the tone for the retreat. Imagine two lines of volunteers, which we call "free world," each wearing a red shirt, waiting to receive us with open arms and big smiles. Needless to say, by the time we completed the gauntlet of loving embraces, the entire group was laughing, some crying, overwhelmed with joy. In a matter of a few minutes, our walls were brought down. Thanks be to God.

One participant, a cradle Catholic hailing from Brooklyn, New York, Raymond Bingham commented: "The love felt is overwhelming and sincere. It is heartfelt and visceral to the point of tears. The participants are 'smack-dab' in the presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I loved being part of the retreat."

Another participant, Toby Guillory said: "At the Kolbe retreat, I had a chance to ask all the questions I wanted. The unity, the structure of the Church and the worship was all one. We were one. All of my questions were answered. The Holy Spirit was present. I walked into the Kolbe retreat with my heart and mind open and was filled with the love of my brothers and the presence of God. I walked into the Kolbe retreat expecting and received. I walked in a Baptist and at the end, walked out a Catholic. Today is a new beginning, a day of renewal of heart, body, spirit and mind."

The retreat includes food, music, an abundance of prayerful discussions and activities concerning the Catholic faith, but most importantly, active listening. Throughout the retreat, the volunteers heard stories of traumatic childhood experiences, which gradually shaped distortions of reality, which in turn led us down criminal paths. We did misuse the gift of free will. Criminality, of course, is much more complex; thankfully, the volunteers focused on mercy and prayer, which does cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:20) Saint Kolbe, pray for us.

A single act of love makes the soul return to life.

St. Maximilian Kolbe
