“Incline your ear, and come to me: listen, so that you may live.” [Isaiah 55:3]

As Mark 16:20 says, “And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.” As and when the word of God is preached here, God showers abundant miracles and signs realizing His promises and revealing the very presence of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

When the streams of God’s grace are opened, our hearts are drenched with the Holy Spirit and it becomes a grace anointing experience! This calls us to be reconnected with God, to experience love and peace, healing and deliverance, in order to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit to know God’s plan, his direction for our life to restore our spirit, to risk for mission.

Sr. Sabina Pathrose, Province Leader was inspired to invite two retreat preachers from the United States of America and Sr. Inigo, a Sister of St. Anne’s of Madhavaram, Spirit filled persons to help the sisters retreat with God.

The more in harmony you are with the flow of your own existence, the more magical life becomes – Adyashanti. here are some of the reflections and experiences shared by a few of the sisters
I am blessed; to be a blessing!

This retreat was different from the other retreats that I made so far. It challenged me and gave me a taste to read the Word of God with full understanding and apply it to my life’s situation daily. I experienced God’s manifold blessings upon me, my sisters and brothers and the whole creation. I realized that I am called to bless myself everyday with positive words like ‘I am divine, I am love, I am peace, I am compassion, I am gentle’ and send the same blessing vibration to all my brothers and sisters, in the Congregation, Province, families, women and children with whom I work so that what I think I will become. This retreat strengthened me to be still, and silence and bring my mind to oneness through prayer and meditation. It was difficult in the beginning of my retreat and slowly I was able to be in stillness with the help of God and able to pray well during my retreat. This retreat enabled me to leave behind what I am so attached to and go beyond and do the maximum for the poor and deprived people in the society. I should not forget that I am here to continue Jesus’ mission and radiate God’s love, joy and peace to all the people I encounter daily - Sr. Shanthi

God’s appointment with me for a week

To talk about my retreat, I can start by thanking God for making an appointment with me. I also thank Sr. Inigo who with her guidance made this retreat a fruitful one. With her sessions and with my understanding I can say that the very word retreat can be defined as: to go away from a place or person in order to escape from fighting or danger, secondly to go to a quiet safe place in order to avoid a difficulty. Silence is a privileged time to face oneself as the author Henry Miller, says “I need to be alone. I need to ponder my shame and my despair in seclusion; I need to be face to face with myself, with only the music of my heart for company”. This was true during the one week of my retreat I feel it is a great privilege to attend the retreat of Sr. Inigo who really made me to look within, who made me to ponder my shame and victory, and made me face myself. This retreat was something special for me. I was really taken up by her sharing and her knowledge of the Bible. I have taken this as an inspiration for my life, though most of the time I try to learn by heart the verses in the Bible, but I fail; but I have understood that I should not give up. Making a retreat or learning some values in the retreat is very easy but to put into practice is difficult. With the conviction that whatever may be the situation I will try to practice, this very thought itself will motivate me. Nothing is done by us as the psalmist says in Ps: 32:8: The Lord will instruct you and teach you the way you should go, He will counsel you with His eye upon you. If I am happy or sad, I am loving or hating, I am caring or hard, the Lord watches me. Yes, this I have clearly understood during my retreat. Retreat is a journey with the Lord not only for one week but lifelong - Sr. Ruby
Be still and know that I am God; Be still and know that I am;
Be still and know; Be still; Be.

The above hymn by Steven Curtis Chapman summarizes my experience of the retreat. We live in an advanced technological and busy world where most of us are anxious about completing our tasks than giving time for silence and solitude. By choosing to turn our attention away from the everyday chatter of the mind and on what our body is doing, give the mind just enough time to focus, so that it can slow down and become quiet. It is essential to take time to calm oneself from within through practicing mindfulness for a qualitative living. It helps a person to listen to God’s voice, make the right decisions and choices, manage stress in a better manner, and become an optimistic person.

The retreat by Ms Nicky and Ms Jolie enabled the participants to become more serene by slowing down and getting in touch with our inner being. Their life experiences were very touching, and it increased my faith in God. The spiritual practices such as Slowing down, sharing our story, Stillness and Solitude, Spiritual discipline of Surrender and Letting go and practice of Solidarity further enlightened me to seek peace within and with others, be human and humane.

Though it was not a new theme, yet it challenged us to deepen our spirituality and live a meaningful life. Spiritual growth is not only about growing and deepening our faith and beliefs, but also about growing in our inner spirit -- about believing and loving ourselves and the people and the world around us. It is about helping ourselves -- improving our lives, as well as the lives of the people we encounter.

May all of us make conscious efforts to grow in intimacy with God experienced through persons, places, events and things in everyday life - Sr. Mariam Kulangara

Spiritually renewed and Rejuvenated for life & mission

I had a unique and deep spiritual experience during our retreat from 12th to 19th June 2019 conducted by Monica Mary Verploegen & Jolie Jacqueline Hagan Monasterio from USA. They led the retreatarians by daily centring prayer, meditation and quite reflection. The six spiritual paths; Slowing down, sharing our stories, Stillness and Solitude, Surrender (Letting go) and Solidarity (harmony and oneness) these enabled me to be more loving and compassionate with self, others and with the whole universe. I was amused and inspired by the personal sharing of the preachers and their simple and deep faith in the creator God and Jesus our loving Brother. I experienced them as deeply spiritual people. I gained much from their individual spiritual direction and to grow in deeper intimacy with Him. All that I can say this retreat enabled me to be spiritually renewed and rejuvenated for life and mission - Sr. Pushpa Louis
The retreat preached by Monica and Jolie was unique in a way because it was the first retreat I was attending preached by Lay persons. It was more a preaching from life experiences lived and shared. It was visible that they themselves had tried to live the 5 S’s they were sharing with us i.e. Slowing down, Sharing our story, Stillness and Solitude and Surrender.

The first thought to help us slowdown was an answer given by a small boy to a question what happens to us when we slow down? “When we slow down we can speak to God, when we run fast we forget to give it to God”. This struck me very much and I try to practice this when I tend to rush too much.

I learned to slow down in order to listen to God and speak to Him. This also helped when we had to share our stories and listen to the stories of others as “A person is a person because of other people”, this saying was another revelation and enlightenment to me.

Stillness and solitude was difficult because of being a workaholic but it taught me many things about myself and I also discovered if I wanted to help myself then I have to practice discipline of stillness and solitude.

Surrender gave me new insights e.g. feel ready to let go; feel safe inside, safe within God, safe and trusted; balance of gentleness and firmness within us changing wilfulness to willingness, listen to God and be able to discern.

Solidarity with oneself, God, others and creation. This is taken for granted and the words are used loosely. But if I look at it as ‘I am because you are – we are related’; ‘Every person you will ever meet has infinite worth. Every person matters and matters absolutely’.

Laila Watson has this to say “If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. If you have come because your sorrow is tied to mine, joy is tied to mine, liberation is tied to mine, then you have something – let us work together to achieve our dreams, hopes and overcome fears”.

These word are very meaningful to us Social Work/Social Action people as only when we take the above words seriously then our work for our women and girls will be truly successful.

Added to all this we had the good fortune of having a preacher Fr. Cyril OP who gave us meaningful homilies – to share some – God wants FAT Christians…… F = Faithful; A = available T = teachable. He does not want Skull bone – head level; Jawbone – only talking; but Backbone – real pillar Christians in His Kingdom.

A great challenge to live and I am trying a little every day. God bless all of us – Sr. Deanna