

Passionist Young Adults Retreat 2011 held 15-17 July.

Penelope shares her thoughts:

I really enjoyed Retreat held at The Magnificat Retreat Centre, (approximately 8km from Featherston), this year.

It is funny how when you are physically away from 'busy reality' even your mind seems to leave the noise behind. This was very true of retreat this year. As the setting was beautiful, every morning I would wake up to gorgeous rolling hilly country on one side and lush green farmland on the other, I would find myself in awe and wonder as I noticed the simple things in life I had forgotten, such as the sound of my breath, the feel of grass underfoot and the joys of patting the neighboring cows.

As well as the majestic location of retreat, the actual buildings were well laid out and so warm. While on first impression I was slightly disappointed that we weren't sharing rooms with up to eight people like in previous years, it turned out much better having the option to share with one other or having a room to myself. I think this appealed to others as well as the right to privacy is an important factor for everyone to feel comfortable and relaxed. While sharing with Clare I was able to have that precious one on one time with her, while getting a good nights sleep on comfy 'real beds' and feeling refreshed in the morning. The set up of the two wings and all the buildings being attached to each other meant no trips outside in the cold to go to rooms or bathrooms, while having the two fires raging all weekend we were more than comfortably warm.

Brian's content for the weekend was relevant, interesting and down to earth. I especially enjoyed the talk about "time". As a busy student I often feel like time 'gets away from me' or that I don't have enough time in my day to do all that is required of me. Brian talked about time being a symbol created by man and about all the ways we use time e.g. 'killing time' 'spending time' or 'making time'. His presentation with time really spoke to me about what and who is important in my life. Brian made me realize how subtly we can send messages to the people we love that they are not important to us by answering phone calls, not staying just another five minutes for a friend in need, and even positioning our bodies in ways that speak to the other person. Since retreat I am certainly more aware of the time I have and am trying to spend it in a wise and Christian manner.

Although there were only around 20 people at camp we were still able to have group discussions and play games without scrapping for numbers. I think around 20 people is a small enough number to have a tight nit group where all names and stories can be heard, although I think there was room for up to another ten people, ten more contribution, without sacrificing the advantages of small groups.

I would recommend a Passionist retreat to anyone who wants a fresh take on life and time to be spiritually refueled. Retreat is my 'spiritual top up' for the year as the concepts discussed and the people you meet has real affects you for the rest of your life. Since attending Passionist retreats I have found life long friends, a passion for people, and a comfortable environment to ask the big questions in life while finding answers explained in terms that I understand and can relate to. Since I have attended retreat each year since 2006 it is testament to how important I feel retreating in life is to get back to the basics of life and its everyday miracles. While stripping away the noise of everyday life to enjoy everyday miracles makes you appreciate life in its simplest form and you find a new fullness to your own life as you recognize the gifts we receive. Retreat really can change your life, my flat mates are getting married this September and they met at a Passionist retreat, myself and two others from the 06 retreat went on a mission to Vietnam together these last Christmas holidays and retreat was also the first time I gave myself to Jesus. So again, retreats can and is life changing! Thank you so much to everyone involved in organizing, subsidizing, cooking meals, car-pooling and those who come, See you there next year!