



Redemptorist Renewal Center

Editor Elizabeth Herzing interviews Peter Tran, assistant director of the Redemptorist Renewal Center in Tucson about its ministry.

“Therefore, behold I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart.”

HOSEA 2:14
DOUAY-RHEIMS BIBLE

Q What is the history of the Renewal Center?

A The Redemptorist Renewal Center had a humble beginning. Located in the Sonoran Desert, the center sits at the foothills of the Tucson Mountains and covers more than 100 acres, thirteen miles northwest of downtown Tucson, looking across the valley and beyond, toward Catalina Mountains. The Center began following an invitation from Bishop Francis J. Green of Tucson, who asked the Redemptorists (known for their preaching), to start a retreat ministry in his diocese. The Redemptorists purchased the property and began construction of the church and residence on July 5, 1963. Fast-forward fifty years and the center is now dotted with various structures that are used as residences, meeting rooms, dining, standard rooms, suites, and hermitages. The Church of Our Lady of the Desert sits in the heart of the property.

Q Explain the mission of the Renewal Center.

A Citing the prophet Hosea, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin of Indianapolis says God, the “eternal lover of humankind,” lures people into the wilderness so he may speak to their hearts. The Redemptorist archbishop sees the mission of the center as a “partnership with God in a process of divine seduction.” This is what the Redemptorist Renewal Center is about. It is simply a venue “where lovers can meet and speak.”



Attendees at the 50th anniversary celebration

Q What are some programs associated with the center?

A The center is available for retreats, meetings, and workshops for groups whose main emphasis is directly related to spiritual growth and development. Although this is a Catholic retreat center, Redemptorists welcome all religious denominations that seek to nourish and sustain the growth of their members. A mutual respect for all religious traditions is an essential element of our statement of mission and belief. Groups that have used the center include Catholic bishops, priests, religious congregations of men and women who are dedicated to healing and the spiritual dimension of the healing arts, numerous forms of meditation, and meditative practice.

In addition, lay associates gather for specific retreats, training, and development.

Rose Kress, program manager for the LifeForce Yoga Healing Institute and Rama Jyoti Vernon Yoga Retreats, said it is wonderful to be able to provide a program room for larger yoga groups and sleeping accommodations that are affordable and meet the needs of her groups. “I have been a yoga retreat organizer for many years. One of the things that I look for is an atmosphere that is calm, quiet, and spiritual. Upon my first visit to the Redemptorist Renewal Center, I fell in love. The meeting room provides a sweeping view of the desert and the city of Tucson. Every morning as we practice yoga we watch the sunrise over the mountains, and in the late

afternoon we watch the colors of the sunset....The center staffers are so caring and accommodating to all of our needs. From the kitchen and office workers to the groundskeepers, everyone helps me support the groups that I help to facilitate. I find myself coming back again and again.”

The center is also known to provide space for those who come for private, directed retreats. Sr. Elizabeth Anne DiPippio, an Ursuline nun from New York, provides a directed retreat during Holy Week each year. What is a directed retreat? She said a directed retreat is a time (usually three, five, or eight days) to be especially attentive to the movement of the Holy Spirit within an atmosphere of silence and solitude. Each day of the retreat, one usually has three or four extended times of prayer lasting forty-five to sixty minutes. And each day, one has a meeting with a spiritual director. These meetings provide the opportunity for talking about one’s prayer and one’s experience of God. Through these conversations, one is guided by the director to discern how to listen more carefully to what God is saying in one’s real life. The Scripture and life experiences provide the primary material for prayer. Sometimes a person chooses to make a directed retreat in order to make a serious life decision. But if there is no serious decision, the retreat offers the time and atmosphere, the silence and solitude for growing in one’s relationship with God.

In addition to published thematic group retreat experiences and the numerous hosted programs that use our facilities, the Redemptorist Renewal Center also offers other unique opportunities for spiritual growth. A sample of the services and programs offered include:

- **Spiritual Direction:** Staffers are available by appointment for spiritual direction during the time of your visit and as a regular part of your spiritual journey.
- **Directed Retreats:** These retreats use the principles of St. Ignatius (Ignatian) or St. Alphonsus



Designed to commemorate the 50th anniversary celebration

Liguori (Alphonsian). They’re offered by advance appointment. A minimum of five full days is suggested in order to benefit from this type of retreat experience.

- **Twelve-Step Directed Retreats:** Directed retreats using the twelve-step recovery method are offered by advance appointment.
- **Private Retreats:** Retreats in which an individual directs his own retreat experience, are available.
- **Hermitage:** A hermitage is available for private retreats upon request. We are also able to direct you to the Desert House of Prayer (across the street from Redemptorist Renewal Center and

staffed by the Redemptorists) if you prefer a contemplative model for your retreat experience.

- **Preached Retreats:** These retreats and days of recollection are offered.
- **Sisters’ Eight-Day Preached Retreat:** Each June, a Redemptorist priest leads this retreat on themes such as: “Living the Life of Jesus: Loving God, Walking with Jesus, Loving Self”; “Seeking the Contemplative Path”; and “God Invites You into the Desert and into His Life.” This year, Fr. David Louch, a Redemptorist priest from Canada, will conduct this annual retreat on the theme “Immersed in the Saving Mysteries.”



Chapel of Our Lady of Desert



Lay staff of the Red Renewal Center

Q What can a visitor expect to experience at the center?

A The Sonoran Desert atmosphere is an essential element in the sabbatical experience. If participants allow the desert to serve as a metaphor for their spiritual journey, it can provide unique access to God. According to Sr. Jeanne Marchese, the introduction to the desert life, plants, animals, and people was very helpful in getting to know and appreciate the beautiful surroundings of the Sonoran Desert. She also appreciates the quiet prayer and reflection she experienced during her ten-week sabbatical. “I am very glad I was part of such a spiritual experience,” she said. Participants are mostly priests and men and women religious. Jim Quinn, an Australian Christian brother who is a missionary to the Philippines, referred to a center sabbatical program on “Growing in Faith and Prayer through Contemplation of Creation” by Jesuit Br. Guy Consolmagno as “excellent.” He said it presented “a challenging view of the universe, its development, and its continued development.”

The center also hosts a number of programs that draw people from

around the world. They include the Hesychia School of Spiritual Direction, directed retreats, intensive contemplative pathless path retreats, serenity retreats, sisters’ eight-day preached retreats and sabbatical program. Each year the Redemptorists run three contemplative study and retreat sabbaticals. The spring and fall sessions last ten weeks and the summer sabbatical is a five-week program.

The emphasis is on spirituality, especially spirituality anchored in a contemplative attitude and approach toward life.

The Redemptorist Renewal Center is a place where the Redemptorist community is privileged to serve their brothers and sisters in the Lord. In the inevitable exchange in each experience of sharing, listening, and silence, the healing and nourishing power of the Spirit of God is at work.

Fr. Paul Coury, director of the Redemptorist Renewal Center, said the task of the Redemptorist retreat ministry is to preach the liberating Good News of Christ to all who come to the center. The Redemptorists adhere to their founder, St. Alphonsus, and his charisma of popular preaching. The retreat house brings a unique contemplative approach to this style of proclaiming God’s word. The emphasis is to help each person discover God speaking to his or her heart here in the desert.

For more information, visit: desertrenewal.org or write or call:

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Dedication ceremony of new buildings to expand the center