

NAU Canterbury Episcopal Campus Ministry News
December 2015

This past month, Canterbury Flagstaff joined with the other campus ministries in the Diocese of Arizona for a retreat at Chapel Rock. Rather than me tell you more about this, and how fantastic it was, for the next three months, we will be hearing from the students that went, and what they experienced.

Enjoy!

Brad

I do not like heights. I never have. I like excitement and I enjoy being pushed out of my comfort zone, but I'm not one to seek out knees-knocking, palms-sweating, heart-palpitating experiences. So how did I find myself at the top of a several-stories-high rock wall, waiting my turn to jump into the void, strapped to a zipline, for my passage back to terra firma?

Being at the young adult retreat at Chapel Rock was a practice in paradox. From the quiet and orderly nature of following monastic orders to the rowdy and adrenaline inducing high-ropes course, very little stayed the same from hour to hour. Our hearts and souls, so quiet and peaceful from the shared breathing of our chanting, leapt during activities meant to test our understanding of trust and teamwork. The innocent joy we felt when playing childhood games shifted to adult solemnity when we tried to comprehend the religious extremism and fundamentalism running rampant in our world. Our chaplains said that the goal of the retreat was to be relaxed and exhilarated by the end of the weekend. And they were right. We did experience both those states of being and many more.

At the retreat, my comfort zone was stretched and my meditative practices broadened. My mind was quieted and my body exerted. And throughout what could have been a chaotic roller-coaster of changing experiences, my heart was full of joy. It was not always full of laughter, though that was a near constant reality for us! My heart was filled with quiet joy as we sang the psalms and hymns in quiet, candlelit, holy spaces. It was filled with the bright laughter we shared as we made new friendships and strengthened old bonds. And it was filled with the solemn joy that comes with knowing that even during our darkest hours, our most hate-filled days, our most difficult years, God is with us. It is that joy, above the photos, memories, inside jokes, and shared experiences that I will strive to keep with me until we meet again. It is that joy, the joy of happiness and sadness, innocence and maturity, peace and excitement, strength and vulnerability that I will strive to seek in my daily life.

So while this weekend was considered a young adult retreat, I see it as a retreat in Christ, a space and a time to push aside the extra worries and tasks crowding your mind to be one with each other and one with the Holy Spirit. I'm thankful for this experience as it reminded me to create that retreat again and again, with others or in solitude, during good days and bad, to draw on the healing spirit all around me. It's there, if only I seek it.

Margaret, Graduate Student in Anthropology