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March 24, 2022

Seeing The Holy Spirit

I woke up so happy and excited today and I have the AMS program to thank!

Yesterday, we held two Lenten Retreats at our parish, and they were fantastic...off-the-charts amazing and beyond my expectations. I'm in awe of seeing the Holy Spirit at work, moving throughout the room! His presence was felt in so many moving stories and connections made between the participants. He may be invisible, but there is no doubt I saw him working through every person in the room. He was there in full, loving force.

While I have been incorporating all that I'm learning from AMS into my RCIA meetings, I had the opportunity to create a Lenten Retreat for our parish because my wonderful pastor, Fr Cesar Magallon, said yes! Without his support, I wouldn't be able to participate in the AMS program and share it with our parish. His support is critical.

After our AMS lesson on Shared Christian Praxis with Douglas Leal, I was inspired to create an experience for Lent since we can now gather in person again. Applying what Douglas shared made it easy to develop a three-hour retreat based on the five movements to lead people to conversion of heart and connect with Our Lord.

My biggest take-away is WOW! Everything I'm learning works...it all comes together! The first retreat of the day made me wonder if it was a fluke. But the same beauty unfolded in the evening too. People who I would have never expected to speak shared such deep personal stories. There were tears and prayers and people reaching out to one another. It was like nothing I've ever seen to watch the Holy Spirit's presence in action moving throughout the room. I got to sit back and watch in awe and wonder of how good our God is.

I thank Flor de Maria Luna and Kay Harter, our faithful AMS leaders, for this glorious experience that has made my Lent the best ever and allowed me to participate in giving back a gift to our parish that has been so good to me.

From the beginning of my planning, I was inspired by all the AMS professors and teachers. I would have never naturally known how to create such an event. It was all of their teaching, advice and answers to many questions. Every one of them has been so inspiring. Any good outcome is their input with the Holy Spirit to carry it out.

The hospitality and accompaniment to build trust and fellowship came from Dr. Colleen Campbell. I hear her saying "Accompaniment is not side work." This critical effort from the moment people step inside establishes the comfort they need to experience trust that they will act on later to speak. It cannot be skipped.

The prayer table was inspired by Dr. Paul Ford's 'sacred space' he used at our most recent AMS meeting. I recall him saying "Make your space beautiful!" This inspired all the décor and visuals.

The activities we did within the movements were inspired by Kay Harter's recent presentation about learning styles. I hear her saying, "It's not how intelligent we are, it's *how* we are intelligent." I had one activity planned but changed it to create options to allow people to choose, per Kay's teaching. This proved to be insightful advice as we had a special needs attendee who needed a specific option so having many to choose from naturally included him without singling him out. She's brilliant!

I have learned to say less and listen more from every teacher; and learned different ways to pray (thank you Sergio Lopez for teaching Centering Prayer). Seeing how this leads people to volunteer to participate and share reinforces all their advice and best teaching.

Thank you, AMS! You have blessed my Lenten season and my life with all you are teaching us. You are truly doing the work of the Holy Spirit to spread his love so we can take that love back to our parishes to bless them too.