

THE SHEPHERDS WALKING STICK

I thank you for your prayers for me while I made my spiritual retreat last week in the little quiet town of Deloraine. It was a good one; I have received much spiritual consolations. How does one do a personal spiritual retreat? Well, it all depends on each person. Some people prefer to follow a strict structure, others prefer a looser schedule. It could last for a day or for several days. For me, the essentials are periods of prayer especially the Liturgy of the Hours and the Rosary, personal prayers or conversing with the Lord, the sacraments – i.e. celebrating the Eucharist and going to Confession to a priest, spiritual reading and journaling. Of course, a retreat should also be a period for physical relaxation. So, I take walks and enjoy a good conversation with my friend-priest over a few bottles of beer on a couple of evenings, and even a karaoke session! You must have heard about a newly-released documentary where Pope Francis seems to have endorsed civil union of same-sex couples. Because of this, some people are accusing the pope of heresy. Others are trying to defend the pope by saying that he was taken out of context, or that what is shown in the documentary is actually at least a couple of interviews digitally spliced together so as to make the pope appear to approve of civil unions between homosexuals. However, we have not heard from Vatican trying to sort out the confusion caused by the documentary. Nonetheless, as your pastor, I would like you to remember the following: (a) The issue is about civil union between homosexuals. The teaching of the Church about marriage in general and the sacrament of Matrimony in particular remains intact; (b) The teaching of the Church about sex and human sexuality also remains intact; (c) The documentary is not magisterial teaching, meaning the Pope in the informal interview was only proposing a personal opinion with regards to a pastoral approach. He was not formally declaring a dogma. In this respect, we are free to agree with him or not. Anyway, do not be troubled by what is going on around us. Focus on the goal – heaven!