

Cherished memories old and new from the Msgr. O'Dwyer Retreat House



“Come Apart and Rest Awhile”

This Monday and Tuesday marked the first overnight retreat of this school year for my John Carroll juniors. For several decades we have taken our kids to the Msgr. O'Dwyer Retreat House, the former CYO retreat house on York Road in Sparks, MD.

Founded in 1963 by Msgr. Clare J. O'Dwyer, a diocesan priest who led the local Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), 'the House' (as we affectionately call it) embodies what was his vision to become a “spiritual powerhouse for young people.” Msgr. O'Dwyer was the one who urged Cardinal Lawrence Shehan (1898-1984), the 12th Archbishop of Baltimore (1961-1974), to have the Archdiocese purchase an old Northern Baltimore County lodge with almost 20 acres to be used as a youth retreat house. When the CYO Retreat House opened its doors in September of 1963, students from Mount St. Joseph High School were the first retreatants with Msgr. O'Dwyer as the first director. For almost twenty years, no matter where he was assigned to work, Msgr. O'Dwyer kept the Young Church and the retreat house as his overriding priority.



After the Monsignor's death in 1982, the CYO Retreat House was renamed for this great visionary who believed that youth are the Church of the present, not just the Church of the future.



1972 Golf Tournament to benefit the CYO Retreat House: Msgr. Clare O'Dwyer (on left) with his foursome including a founding member of the Board of Directors James P. "Jimmy" Lazzati (second from right). Photo: Msgr. O'Dwyer Retreat House Archives

John Carroll Junior Retreats:

For many years John Carroll students have enjoyed the beautiful surroundings of 'the House' for our Junior Retreat program where we indeed come apart and regroup without the distraction of school books, laptops, electronics, and cell phones (yes, can you imagine that?).



Sunrise from the O'Dwyer Chapel

Kellie Reynolds of St. Stephen Youth and Young Ministry helps me direct these overnight retreats. We provide opportunities for our students to have large and small group sharing, prayer time, witness talks, free time indoors and outside, lots of good food from their great kitchen staff, and Reconciliation and Mass in the intimate Chapel. It can be a wonderful time of spiritual renewal and growth in relationships with others, self, and God. Happily, most of our students enter fully into the various retreat activities and make the most of this great opportunity.

I am known to remind my students frequently:

- You only get one junior retreat, so make the most of it. You won't get a second opportunity here with your classmates as a junior.
- There is no doubt that we were meant to be together here at this place and at this time: God wants to touch your lives in powerful ways. You need to let Him in so that He can touch your hearts and minds.
- You never know what challenges other people carry on their shoulders unless you listen to their story. Be ready to listen.

What makes a great retreat?

After serving here at John Carroll for over three decades, I have participated in literally hundreds of retreats. From these experiences I now share with my students the three “Murphy Dohn principles” to ensure a great retreat:

- Enter into the retreat with an open mind and heart: Attitude is everything: Get involved. Participate fully in all sessions. What you put into your retreat has a lot to do with what you get out of it.
- Cooperate so that you do not detract from the retreat experience for the others: Be quiet when it is time to be quiet, on time for meals and sessions, and go to bed when it is lights-out so that you aren’t dozing through the next day’s sessions.
- Allow God to speak to you in our retreat activities and the Sacraments to show you what He is calling you to do with your life now and in your future.



Juniors Molly and Kathy were lectors at our closing liturgy on October 29.



Father Paul Breczinski from St. Stephen Church, Bradshaw was our celebrant.

What are your special memories from O’Dwyer?

This year is a special one for both the retreat house and for John Carroll: We are both celebrating our 50th anniversaries. A double golden jubilee for two great institutions whose missions are to serve youth in our Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Did you go on retreat at the CYO House or the Msgr. O’Dwyer Retreat House?

What are your memories?

Share your memories and any photos with me and I will feature them throughout

this anniversary year. Send to: pattimurphydohn@gmail.com



Autumn beauty from the Msgr. O'Dwyer Chapel

50th Anniversary Articles and Camp Glow:

Read about the 50th anniversary at the retreat house [here](#).

And read about the start of our 50th anniversary year at John Carroll [here](#).

Camp Glow for adults with special needs was held last June at the Msgr. O'Dwyer Retreat House: Read about Camp Glow [here](#).

VIDEO:

Archbishop Lori and volunteers reflect on the beauty of the Camp Glow experience in this 2-minute video from CR/Tom McCarthy.