

The 7th Annual Rideau Canal Men's Retreat

"It is my favourite event of the year." "An amazing combination of spirituality, growth, hope, and exercise for body, mind and spirit." "The sound of silence ... with our Lord."

The above comments are from those participating in the 7th Annual Rideau Canal Men's Retreat by canoe and kayak in August, 2025. A record number of fifty-six men, ages 13 to 82 and including six diocesan priests, enjoyed an inspiring pilgrimage over the waters of the Rideau Canal. This outdoor adventure was a God-given occasion to share and strengthen our faith as Catholic men, while enjoying camaraderie in a beautiful setting.

Over the course of three days we unpacked the Jubilee 2025 theme, "Pilgrims of Hope", in a practical way.

After making our way to Father Brian McNally's family farmhouse along the Upper Rideau Lake shortly after dawn on Tuesday, August 5, we travelled by bus to Seeley's Bay. Each man was assigned to his position in the stern or bow of the canoes, after which tents, sleeping bags and personal items were loaded into the watercrafts.

The pilgrimage officially began with the celebration of Holy Mass by Archbishop Mulhall in a nearby pavilion. After the Mass, instructions on water safety and how best to proceed through the Canal and its locks was followed by a stand-up breakfast. We then launched canoes, kayaks and accompanying motor craft to begin a 16 km journey northward over the waters of the lakes and channels of this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The handiwork of the Creator and Divine Artist was on display throughout the pilgrimage, beginning with our passage over the clear, sparkling waters of Whitefish Lake and along scenic tree-lined shores, granite hills and canal cuts. Arriving at Jones Falls we were transported sixty feet upwards through four locks, and then docked briefly along the historic Stone Arch Dam. When completed in 1832, it was the largest dam (107 m X 18 m X 8 m) in both the British Empire and North America.



After a brief retreat talk we made our way across Sand Lake to Davis Lock. Tents were set up and dinner was enjoyed, followed by talks and a welcomed night's sleep next to the lock basin. Wednesday began with Holy Mass at 8 am, followed by Adoration and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. After breakfast we began a 17 km journey across Opinicon Lake, through Chaffey's Lock, and over the waters of Indian, Mosquito, Pollywog and Newboro Lakes. After passing through the lock into the scenic Newboro Canal, we reached Upper Rideau Lake, the summit of the system. We camped overnight on the McNally 1831 pioneer farm along McNally's Bay, enjoying retreat activities until departure Thursday afternoon.

Blessed by the Lord with perfect weather and protection from accidents and injuries, in addition to daily Mass we prayed the Holy Rosary together, received the sacrament of Reconciliation, swam, broke into the occasional lively song, and engaged in good-humoured banter. Quiet contemplation, conversation and interaction - plus a good deal of paddling and even a game of competitive frisbee - made this Catholic men's retreat a joyful, grace-filled and invigorating event again this year.



The enthusiasm of the participants should help ensure that the August 4-6, 2026 retreat is similarly well attended and enjoyed, providing a special occasion for Catholic men and their sons of the archdiocese and beyond to "know Christ and the power of His resurrection" (Philippians 3:10), the theme of this edition of *Journey*.

Contact information for the 2026 retreat:

Dan Hart - hart.daniel64@gmail.com or 613-899-9514;

Richard Miron - rrmiron2019@gmail.com or 613-218-6497.