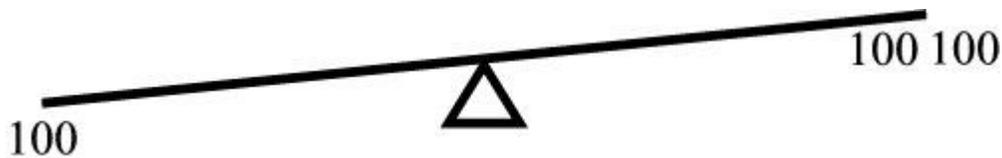


Palanca: Letters of encouragement



Leverage: the fulcrum makes the lever, allowing 100 pounds to lift 200 or more.

The little bit of effort in writing a Palanca letter turns into a lift in spirit 100 fold or more.

Palanca is Spanish; it means to give lift, to rise.

The word is used here to describe the effect of a letter of encouragement on a retreatant. On a retreat, a new retreatant can be overwhelmed, brought to tears by Palanca from family and friends, but in some ways, even more by those from complete strangers. Retreatants who are familiar with the process, look forward to these letters from their loved ones, especially – when they don't come, it is quite depressing; this sends the emotions into a freefall.

Receiving a Palanca while on retreat is a wonderful, moving experience. Writing letters of encouragement and praying for the person is a blessed thing to do.

Please take some time to reach out to someone who is on a leg of their personal journey with God that is scary at times; like any relationship with a loving personality, insecurity is always an issue. Right at this moment, you are being called to help someone. Please say YES; you will be prayed for and blessed.

And you can do it from the comfort of your kitchen table. You can do a prison ministry without leaving your home.

To a man or a woman on retreat, someone in prison or on a spiritual retreat answering this call from God, they are unsure, even afraid, facing their true-self, their spiritual-self for maybe the first time in decades in a prolonged period, your letter, a small sacrifice will mean the world to them.

Your letter will show the recipient that God loves him so much that God moved a stranger, YOU, to support him personally.

OUTLINE OF A PALANCA:

Palanca means lever. A lever is used to lift and move heavy things, in this case the Palanca helps to lift one's spirit.

Your note is a note of encouragement. You know they are moving closer to God and you are happy for them. Example: Attending a three day retreat is a major commitment and shows that you are answering a call from God, that's wonderful. I know that God will bless you and bring you closer to Him.

You will tell them that you will do something a prayer or a sacrifice for their personal success and the success of the retreat. Maybe you'll give up sweets all that weekend, or say a Rosary, or read the Bible. Example: As a gesture of my love and support I will read the letter of James in the Bible this weekend, and I will dedicate it to

you and the success of the retreat.

The letter should be personal, in the vein of talking one on one, but **DO NOT GIVE YOUR FULL NAME. DO NOT GIVE YOUR ADDRESS OR PHONE NUMBER.** Other than spiritual, **YOU DO NOT WANT CONTACT.**

WRITING A PALANCA: Write one letter, or two, or a dozen, whatever you write will be welcomed and cherished. An average retreat has 30 people, but could have 40. Keep the letter personal and short. Each letter should be sealed in an envelope addressed so: Dear Christian Brother (or Sister) of Dear Child of God, depending on the retreat. Get your family together around the kitchen table and, after the Sign of the Cross (dedication your efforts to God) and a short prayer for the retreatants, start writing.

What to write: Remember, each letter is to one person, from one person. Tell him/her that you are happy that he is at retreat, or tell him/her how wonderful it is that he/she is seeking God's love. Tell him/her that you will pray for him/her, or dedicate your attendance at next Sunday's Mass to him/her, or that you will give up something over that weekend, or that you will say a Rosary for them in particular and the success of the retreat. By praying first and God will give you the words to write. Keep it short.

Sign the letter with your first name only to keep it personal. Do not use your last or include your address **DO NOT.**

And put the letter in an envelope addressed to REC W-4 Retreatant.

Place all the letters you write into a larger envelop, or rubber-band them together with a cover sheet, and address that to: Retreat Name (see RETREAT WEEKEND above right Corner). Then bring that to the Parish Office or the person collecting them (also above). We assume here that you have been given instructions when you were asked to participate.

Congratulations, you're doing ministry. Feels good, doesn't it?

note: A PALANCA blesses both the writer and the recipient!

Prison Retreats: This retreat is presented by neighbors of yours working a Ministry for local people or the imprisoned who are actively walking their personal Journey with God. You can give great support and encouragement with just a letter.

On the afternoon the second day, after much prayer, lessons and fellowship, the retreatants will be given letters of encouragement, called Palanca. They will go to their rooms, find a private corner and read these letters. Almost everyone is moved so much that they say this is one of the most powerful times of the retreat. You see, your Palanca - lever - shows a retreatant that God loves them so much that He has moved strangers to not only pray for him, but sit down and write a letter.

You might want to write a letter like this to an old friend or a cousin, or your spouse or child, or a parent. Sharing your love in an unexpected way and including prayer, that is, God, is explosive.

God bless you.