

Christ in the Wilderness

Hermitage Retreat Center

Winter 2007

Our mission is to provide an environment that is conducive to silence, solitude, prayer and reflection.

Lost and Found

By Claudia Maria Dado

Because I am someone who finds adventure everywhere, Christ in the Wilderness was the perfect place for me to explore. My first retreat in August was so exciting. It was the first time I'd done anything like this and all those paths seemed like a maze. I wanted to go to the Far Meadow. I looked at the map; it didn't seem too hard to find. I made the mistake of not taking the map with me.

It was nice and warm out, a beautiful summer day. I brought my camera and walking stick and was going to meander. Everything would be fine. It was much farther than I expected, and with all those slopes up and down, real exercise. On the way, I encountered six wild turkeys. They got away before I could get a picture. So I continued on, down the stairs and through the darker part of the path. Finally I rose up and knew I had found the Meadow. I was getting kind of tired, but made it to the table and chair. Wow, this was great! I took pictures and sat there for at least an hour and a half.

I decided it was time to go back. I found the slope down and then started thinking of where those turkeys had been, so I didn't concentrate at all on where I was going. I just wanted to find those turkeys. Suddenly I realized I didn't know exactly where I was. Before me were five possible ways that I could go. I got confused. Nothing looked familiar. I saw no landmarks because I hadn't focused on them. I took a few paths, and then realized I was going back and not forward. I was hungry, thirsty, hot, lost and scared. I couldn't find my way back myself.



In desperation, I called Sr. Julia, something I was embarrassed to do. She told me how to find the 'I Believe' chair and that was the landmark to the way out. She assured me not to be embarrassed; other people get lost, too.

By the time I got back to Paul of Tarsus, I had been gone hours. I looked at the map I shouldn't have left there, and thought 'how could you get lost?' It looked so simple. Well, I

think there was a message there... I didn't let 'getting lost' scare me off. The chair in the Far Meadow is still my favorite spot.

I returned to Christ in the Wilderness at the turn of the New Year. What a contrast! There was a foot of snow, with more coming. I really wanted to go to my favorite spot, but I was afraid to go so far in all that snow. It was really deep. I called a friend of mine and asked, "Should I try to go there?" He "pushed" me. "What do you mean 'try'? Do it!"

My first day there was the best bet. It was 32 degrees and there was no wind. I really bundled up--down coat, heavy boots hat, scarf and gloves, and went out. I set small goals for myself, first, the Chapel, then the beginning of the Upper Meadow, then, the first chair in the Upper Meadow. But my friend's words spurred me on. I was determined. I got to the 'I Believe' chair and knew. This was it; I'm going for it and I can't get lost. I'll never forget this spot after last summer! I got all the way there! It had been a real struggle up and downhill in all that snow. It was foggy, too, and was beginning to snow. The only other footprints were those of the deer. But I got there! I set up the table, chair and walking stick just like in the summer and took a picture. I was so proud of myself!



Getting back was much easier, because I remembered the way, and all I had to do was follow my own footprints. I was elated! It was beginning to get dark, especially with the fog and snowfall. My hair and eyes were full of snow, but I didn't let any of that scare me, because I got there! I stopped in the Upper Meadow to take in the shrouded, snowy beauty of winter. It was like a whole different place than in the summer, but just as glorious. How happy I was to have this winter vacation, something I'd never done before.

When I finally got back to Paul, the first thing I did was leave a laughing, jubilant voice mail for my friend, so he would know I wasn't lost any more! Then, I settled down for a nice mug of hot chocolate.

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