

CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS

A place for solitude, prayer and reflection

Hermitage Retreat Center

Winter January 2014

The Gift

For many years, I have wanted to take a great photo of a male cardinal bird, preferably in the snow. I love the contrast between the vivid red color and the white winter landscape. But, when the universe provides an opportunity, regardless of season, one graciously accepts the gift!

It was late afternoon on a lovely autumn day in Nov. 2012. I had just finished visiting with Sister Julia in the main house and was returning to hermitage "Paul". As I walked along the wooded path toward "Paul," I noticed a vivid red color in the grass several feet from the "Paul" sidewalk. I paused, correctly assuming it was a cardinal and, being a typical bird, expected it to fly away as I drew near. It didn't!

I stood for quite a while before taking another step. When I did, the bird didn't move. I took another step, no movement. As I inched closer, I saw the Cardinal's eyes were open and his head turn slightly. Yet I wondered, "Why isn't he flying away?" It began to feel like this was no ordinary event. It seemed like time was standing still.

Eventually, I very slowly and deliberately made my way inside "Paul" to get my camera, a 34 year old Canon AE1. I haven't gotten around to purchasing a digital camera with a zoom lens yet, so I used the 50 MM lens that was attached at that moment. I knew I wouldn't have time or the opportunity to change lenses once I started snapping. I gently opened the porch door and sat in the chair next to the porch side window. The bird remained unmoved since I first saw it about 10 or 15 minutes ago. I talked to him, asking if he was injured and sent him love. He looked at me as if to say, "I'm fine.



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Take the picture already!" So, again, very slowly, I stood up and walked even closer, then sat down in the grass, not 2 feet from him! I kept thinking "This is amazing. I have NEVER seen this kind of bird behavior before!" Based on some of my past experiences with animals and birds, I knew that the sound of the shutter makes them fly/run away. I had to make sure my one chance for this photo had better be good! I took a long time to focus and frame the shot. Then I snapped it. To my continuing amazement, the bird didn't move! Didn't even flinch! I was able to take 4 more photos. Then I was ready to take one more and when I did, the bird flew away into the thicket behind the bird feeder, apparently perfectly fine.

This entire event felt like an otherworldly experience. It is like I left this reality and walked into an answer to a deep-seated desire....a photo of a cardinal at close range, although not on a snowy landscape as was my preference. This was indeed a gift, one of many that CITW bestows upon retreatants while in solitude. May you all be "GIFTED" with your hearts' desire!

~Peace~ Wolf Eyes

Guided Retreats

Welcome to a unique experience at Christ in the Wilderness! Winter is a special time at Christ in the Wilderness – a season of peace and solitude. Surrounded by rolling hills and thick woods, the beauty of winter evokes a sense of calm and stillness. Because the intent of this retreat is to be able to go out and photograph the winter landscape in the silence and beauty, we decided to cancel the retreat in January because of the frigid wind chills that we had this past weekend.



Focus on God: A Guided Photography Retreat with Dan Pollack has been rescheduled for Feb. 13-16, 2014. We look forward to having a wonderful experience of silence and solitude that celebrates God's beautiful expanse of nature in the rolling landscape at CITW.

Exploring Steps One, Two, & Three of Alcoholic's Anonymous Guided Retreat with Frank Schwirtz is scheduled for March 13-16, 2014. "We admitted that we are powerless over _____ and that our lives have become unmanageable." No experience of AA is necessary for this retreat. Maybe you know of family members or friends that may be struggling with any kind of addiction. This retreat would help to become familiar with the first three steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

This retreat will also be repeated on the following dates; April 3-6, 2014 and Nov. 6-9, 2014.

If you are interested or know someone who would be interested in either retreat experience or for more information, contact me at 815-947-2476 or citw@citwretreat.com.

Christmas Concert Fundraiser

Thanks to all who supported our Fundraiser on December 8, 2013. It was a great success in spite of the snowy weather that day. We appreciate all who attended and who made bids on Auction Items, bought Mystery Gifts and Baked Goods. The concert was wonderful and everyone enjoyed some pleasant visiting, while indulging in great refreshments.



Photo by Maureen Clancy, SSND

We could not have done it without all the hard work of Board and Committee members as well as those who secured donations for the auction or who themselves donated items. Thanks also to those who went around and posted flyers advertising the event. God be with all of you.

Save the date for our Christmas Concert Fundraiser on Dec. 7, 2014. We hope you will mark your calendar and join us in December.

In the Wilderness...

The winter weather has indeed been a challenge this year. We have been persevering by pulling a sled across the snow to get retreatants' belongings to their hermitages. Although we have had a few cancellations, most of our retreatants have enjoyed the beautiful surroundings with the snow on the ground. The full moon nights are reflecting off the snow and light up the nights, creating shadows of tree outlines on the snow. The birds, especially the cardinals and blue jays, stand out against the snow. The deer, rabbits and squirrels are running all over

looking for morsels of food. The silence is very profound because of the snowy cover.

Christ in the Wilderness is a wonderful get-away place this time of the year. We have openings in the next couple of months. Now is the time to start planning your spring time retreat also. Have a safe and enjoyable rest of your winter months.
Sr. Julia



Christ in the Wilderness Website

We have a beautiful new website after many months of working with Liz Kulevich and Dale Hiemstra. You may want to check it out at www.citwretreat.com and forward the information on to others. You are our best advertisers when you share your experience at Christ in the Wilderness with others.



Spaghetti Dinner

For those of you near Stockton, you may want to join us on February 22, 2014 for our Spaghetti and Meatball Fundraiser. We have delicious homemade goodies as well as the wonderful spaghetti, meatballs, and salad. It will be at Holy Cross Parish Center in Stockton, IL from 4-7 pm. Adults \$6 ahead of time and \$6.50 at the door. Children: 5 years & under —Free; 6-12 years—\$4.00 each.

Call 815-947-2476 or email citw@citwretreat.com for tickets or more information.



Have you thought of remembering us?

- When you are making your will and are thinking about charitable bequests, have you ever thought about including Christ in the Wilderness? This would help us immensely in the future as we might continue our retreat ministry.
- Our legal title and address are
Christ in the Wilderness
7500 S. Randecker Road
Stockton, IL 61085-8922
We are a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) .