

# CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS

A place for solitude, prayer and reflection

Hermitage Retreat Center

Sponsored by the Congregation of St. Joseph

Winter January 2016

## ***Gift Received***

My first visit to Christ in the Wilderness was in the spring of 1998. With few exceptions, I have returned every year since then. My annual stay at Christ in the Wilderness is a time to pray, reflect, renew my spirit and deepen my relationship with God. This is the place where I find refuge, solitude, and blessed silence.

Sometimes I have come to CITW when facing a major life change. One year I arrived shortly after experiencing a tragic loss. Other times I arrive simply needing to escape the busyness of everyday life. Over the years my stays at Christ in the Wilderness have helped me deal with change, plan for the future, and come to terms with loss. This wonderful retreat is always the haven, the refuge I need.

I have treasured the quiet, the beautiful surroundings, the presence of wildlife, the occasional glorious sunset. I have enjoyed long walks on the trails and my time alone in the chapel. I usually stay in Sabbath Place, the hermitage high in the trees on the hill to the south. I spend most of the time on the porch, either reading or journaling, or even just sitting quietly, always with one eye on the birds at the bird feeder. From the porch, I have

watched wild turkeys parade up the steps toward the hermitage, deer grazing right in front of the porch, and birds flocking to the feeder. My bird list gets longer every year!

I bring my own music (years ago, I brought tapes . . . now CD's, soon an MP3 player?) I usually bring reading material, though I have also found books I loved in



the library at the main house. The days go so quickly . . . I am always surprised when my stay ends. Every year I leave rested, at peace, and with a renewed sense of God's presence in my life.

I think of the time I spend at Christ in the Wilderness as a special gift I give myself. Thomas Merton wrote the following about his hermitage. He has captured the way I feel about Christ in the Wilderness.

"It is the place God has given me after so much prayer and longing and without my deserving it, and it is a delight. I can imagine no other joy on earth than to have such a place to be at peace in. To live in silence, to think and write, to listen to the wind and to all the voices of the wood . . ."

*Jean Noble, January 2016*

## **Christmas Concert and Benefit—35 Years**

We had a wonderful time at the Concert and Benefit this past December. Sarah and Luke Windham delighted us with their beautiful singing and playing.

Those who attended enjoyed bidding on auction items and ate some delicious morsels from the refreshment table. They perused the baked goods looking for that special treat to take home for family and friends.

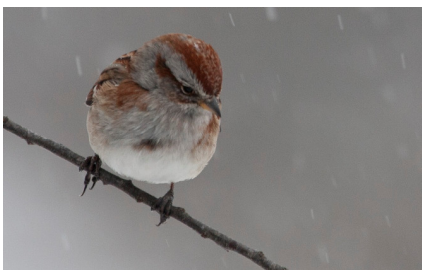
Thank you to all those who helped prepare and carry out the day, as well as those guests who came to enjoy the festivities.

## **Listening for God- The Practice of Advent**

Fr. Albert Haase, OFM give us much to think about as he encouraged us to listen to God always in each and every moment of our day. Thanks to those who came to the reflection day. It was a wonderful experience.

## **In the Wilderness....**

Our winter has been cold, but with less snow. The Yaktrax have been providing extra traction on the snowy and icy hillsides. The cold and snow has not



stopped the retreatants from going out and enjoying the beauty of the winter landscape.

The deer and birds delight the retreatants when they come up to the hermitages. The full moon nights are lit up with the

snow reflecting the moonlight. The stars in the sky are dazzling in the crisp cold air. Sunsets have been stunning.

January has been a pretty busy time at CITW. We have had many new retreatants that are sure to come back in the future. There are still many days in the coming months to schedule some time in the silence as Jean spoke about in her article.



## **Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser**

On Saturday, Feb. 27, 2016, we will have our annual spaghetti and meatball dinner in Stockton at Holy Cross Parish, 223 E. Front Ave., Stockton, IL.

Dinner will be served from 4-7 pm. Dine In or Carry Out. If you are in close proximity to Stockton, join us. Invite family and friends for this delicious meal.

Tickets are \$6 per person or \$6.50 at the door. Children: 5 years & under — Free; 6-12 years—\$4.00 each

Call Christ in the Wilderness for meal tickets at 815-947-2476 or email: [citw@citwretreat.com](mailto:citw@citwretreat.com)

## **BEQUESTS**

Have you considered a bequest to *Christ in the Wilderness*? A few of our donors have remembered our retreat center in their wills. If you are considering this, you can do it very easily by including one of the following legal phrases in your will or trust.

“I give, devise or bequeath to *Christ in the Wilderness*, 7500 South Randecker Road, Stockton, IL 61085 for its general purposes all (or state fraction or percentage) of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate, both real or personal.”



**OR**

“I give and bequeath the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_dollars to be used for the general purposes of *Christ in the Wilderness*, 7500 South Randecker Road, Stockton, IL 61085.”