

# CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS

A place for solitude, prayer and reflection

Hermitage Retreat Center    Sponsored by the Congregation of St. Joseph    Summer August 2015

## ***Coming Home***

I am at home. Pandora is playing a nocturne gently around me. A cup of tea is steaming at my elbow. My children are playing quietly. My wife is in the kitchen whipping up something that smells delicious.

I am at home. I am a creature of domestic happiness. All other things being equal, I would rather be at home than anywhere else. I am comfortable here. The people I love the most in the world are around me. Why would I want to be anywhere else?

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Home is the place, when you go there, they have to take you in." He could have worded that more eloquently perhaps but it states an essential truth: home is where you are accepted completely for who you are and loved unreservedly.

Not coincidentally, God uses similar terminology to describe Himself and our relationship to Him. He wants to be our Father. He calls those who trust wholly in His Son His children. The Early Church in the New Testament spoke of each other in terms of brother and sister and called itself the family of God.

...all of which explains why as I stepped out of my van when I arrived recently at Christ in the Wilderness I told Sis. Julia, "I feel like I'm coming home."

I suspect many of you reading this are like me. As your car gets further away from the grind of your daily schedule and closer to Stockton the pressure just seems to lift off your shoulders. As the miles roll past your

breath comes a little easier, your mind grows less cluttered, your spirit calmer. A curious combination of peace and anticipation reigns as you turn down the shaded lane covered in the fallen leaves of Autumn. You pull in, put your car in park, turn it off, and just breathe into the silence, "I'm home."

Home is the place where you are accepted without reservation for who you are. Home is the place you are loved unconditionally. Home is the place where you are with your family. I find all of these at Christ in the Wilderness for I come there to meet with God. I walk with Him through the trails. I sit with Him on the benches. I sing to Him on the hill top. I smile with Him at the antics of the wildlife. I praise Him for the uncounted stars spread in a glorious pattern above me on my deck. I weep with Him as I pray for those I love so very much who are struggling with one thing or another. I sit in companionable quiet with Him in my hermitage.

The cares of my life and the pressure of my schedule drift away like the fog of a summer sunrise. No one calls. No one texts. No one messages. No one emails. No one stops by. It's just me and my Father enjoying together His creation.

At Christ in the Wilderness I am at home in the very best sense of the word. I bathe in His love. I breathe in His Spirit. I walk and talk with my Father.

I am at home. There is nowhere else I would rather be. *Tom Brennan, October 2015*



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

**Sunday, December 6, 2015**

**Doors open at 1:15 PM**

**Free Will Offering**

(proceeds support Christ in the Wilderness)

**Fun and refreshments  
after the concert**

**At: Congregation of St. Joseph**

**La Grange Center**

**1515 W. Ogden Ave**

**La Grange Park, IL 60526**

**708-354-9200**



**Please join us Sunday, December 6, 2015 at Congregation of St. Joseph Center for a concert by Luke and Sarah Windham. Enjoy an afternoon of Christmas inspired**

**music benefitting Christ in the Wilderness. Located on 80 acres of rolling hills in Stockton, Illinois, this hermitage retreat center offers you the opportunity to take a break from all of the busyness and stress of life, and to unwind in silence and solitude.**

**We will have a Silent Auction, Bake Sale and Mystery Gifts as part of the festivities. This fundraiser will help support operations and enable CITW to keep costs affordable so that anyone can enjoy time away to replenish soul and spirit.**

**Bring your friends and meet new ones as you take a break from all of your busy Christmas preparations!**

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

*Saturday – December 5, 2015*

*9:00 am - Noon*

Albert Haase, OFM

Advent is a unique and sacred season. It

challenges us to live in the present moment and be attentive to the myriad ways God speaks in the ordinary, hum-drum routines of our daily lives. During this morning presentation, we will discuss the nuts and bolts of living in the present moment and how to listen to the voice of God based upon a prayer practice with a 500-year history.



Cost: \$30 – To register visit  
[csjthewell.org](http://csjthewell.org) Or call 708.482.5048

The Well Spirituality Center –

1515 West Ogden Avenue

LaGrange Park, IL

Co-sponsored with Christ in the Wilderness –

Stockton, IL [www.citwretreat.com](http://www.citwretreat.com)

815.947.2476

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

If you would like to have assist us with our Christmas Concert Fundraiser, let me know at the phone number above. You can donate items for the Silent Auction, or contribute funds to help offset the cost of the event. We appreciate help the day of the event with clean-up, also. If you have other thoughts contact me to talk about them.

Although it is Fall, we have had relatively nice weather. The cold winds blow occasionally, but the sun shines and warms one up while on a walk or sitting on the porch. As Tom stated in his reflection, CITW is like coming home to a special time of solitude, prayer and reflection. We still have days open in December and the Winter months hold their own beauty here. Call to reserve some retreat time in early 2016. God bless you and have a beautiful Thanksgiving and Christmas.

