

CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS

A place for solitude, prayer and reflection

Hermitage Retreat Center

Sponsored by the Congregation of St. Joseph

Spring April 2016

Retreatant Jottings...

What a blessing it is to be able to spend time in a place like this. The silence--when the wind is still--seems almost to be alive. When the wind blows and seems the most alive thing, the silence is still there--underneath the sounds of the wind. It will anchor my soul to be able to recall what it has been like to be here. To that end, I've taken some photos to use as reminders.



praying as I walk, in quiet questions and unexpectedly write as I journal, or in symbols and nature's gifts. My hope for you is that you open your heart and mind to God and discern all His messages.

TS August 2015

Silence

Within each of us there is a silence. A silence as vast as the universe. We are afraid of it...and we yearn for it. When we experience this silence, we remember who we are: creatures of the stars, created from the birth of galaxies, created from time and space...created from silence. Silence is the source of all that exists, the unfathomable stillness where vibration began. Silence reveals. Silence heals. Silence is where God dwells. We yearn to be there.

From: *Inviting Silence*

by Gunilla Norris

JM, October 2015

My wife gave me a new journal for Christmas. In it, she wrote a dedication with the quotation: "The primary task of the pray-er is learning to waste time gracefully." (Thomas Green in *Opening to God*) What a wonderful thought and no better place to live it out than here at CITW.

I have indeed "wasted time" here - and I hope I have done so gracefully--but the funny thing about it is how much more impactful this "wasting time" is than most of my supposed productive and focused time-spending is.

When "watch the birds" or "go for a walk" tops your "things to do" list, it is pretty amazing when you reflect afterwards how restorative or regenerative or insightful these simple activities become!

My third time @ CITW, second here in Paul: of this I am convinced--this place, every foot of it, has a Divine Presence. God has never been more evident to me than my visits to CITW. In startlingly clear messages while

As many previous pilgrims have noted in these journals, the beauty of nature, the exhilaration of walking the trails, the quiet of the solitude, the simple pleasures of a good book or a good

meal ending up teaching us the most important lessons we could learn: the world is beautifully and wonderfully created, we live through times of warmth and times of cold, we are too busy, we worry too much, we are beloved, all will be well.

We may want to serve God, but until we slow way down, we cannot sense God. God is present in the everyday, but in most of our everyday, we don't take time to notice. Here we do and how blessed that is.

My prayer for all of you that come after--and may read these words--is a very simple one: Dear God, help us all to waste time gracefully. Amen.

JW January 2016

In the Wilderness....

This past week, we commemorated Earth Day. The weather was lovely and spring-like. At Christ in the Wilderness, we can celebrate earth day all year round.

Each season has its own beauty. With spring all kinds of new life can be seen in every square inch of property. The wild plum trees and red bud trees are blooming, lots of violets in the grass, May Apples are abundant. The birds are singing constantly and the turkeys are roaming the property. Soon we will have many wild life babies scampering around also. Most of the retreatants have written about the effect of nature on their experience of Christ in the Wilderness. It is a blessing to waste time in nature.



We sent out our spring appeal letter earlier this

month and have received wonderful support. Our goal of \$5,000 is half way met. We have almost completed one of the projects: the chapel entrance repair. We still need to stain the trim around the door, but it looks great.

Thank you for your support. If you still want to respond to our appeal, it would be most welcomed.



There are many openings from May 30 through the end of the year. If you would like to schedule a retreat, give me a call at 815-947-2476 or email: citw@citwretreat.com.

Looking ahead to 2017, we have three Guided Retreats scheduled. *Winter's Pause--The moment of stillness when we become aware* will be in January of 2017. *Sacred Weavings of Our Lives* will be in February. *Hermitage Retreating 101* will be in November 2017.

Check the enclosed flyers for more information. Since each retreat is limited to three participants, make sure you register soon, if you would like to attend the retreat.

Have a wonderful spring time and enjoy family and friends always. God bless you. Peace, Sr. Julie

Save the Date:

December 4, 2016

On the first Sunday in December, we will have our annual Christmas Concert and Benefit to support Christ in the Wilderness. It will be held at the CSJ La Grange Center at 2 pm. We will have Luke and Sarah Windham performing again this year, as well as the silent auction and wonderful refreshments. Mark your calendars and invite family and friends to join you. For more information call 815-947-2476 or email: citw@citwretreat.com