

CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS

A place for solitude, prayer and reflection

Hermitage Retreat Center

Sponsored by the Congregation of St. Joseph

Fall October 2014

Be With Me....

Having been to CITW before, I had a notion of what to expect. My "prayer plate" was full. I was ready for a week of solitude. As I quieted myself to step into retreat mode, I was surprised by three words that filled my mind: be with me. What did that mean, I asked myself. I had never had an experience quite like that before. Be with ME,..... the Holy One, as in God? Be with me, as in myself, my true inner being? These three words continued to invade my thoughts as I moved into the first hours of this time of solitude. Though over the days



I did ponder my reading materials and I did hold so many others in prayer, those words, be with me, demanded my attention.

As I walked the grounds, as I watched leaves break from their branches and fall to the ground, or clouds form in the sky and then dissipate in the wind, as I listened

to the birds chattering or stood silently gazing at a remarkably elegant deer, they all said "be with me", and I was. I spent time with each expression of creation as it was presented to me over the days. I felt the unifying force of Divine Love binding us together as one creation.

My well established identity as a Sister of St. Joseph, as one always in relationship, always seeking unity with the Divine and with every face of the Divine reflected in each and every fragment of nature...of creation...of the cosmos, was confirmed and strengthened. Every element, every person and animal, and every facet of the universe, in Sister of St Joseph terms, is "the dear neighbor."

I was with Me, the Holy One and me, my own spirit, mind and body. I was in solitude and yet I was with everything, with all of creation.....with every "dear neighbor" that surrounded me.

It was a quiet, deepening and holy time on beautiful, life-giving Holy ground. I left that place more complete than the day that I arrived.

Chris, October 2014



Open House

In mid-October, we had an open house cosponsored by Clean n Green and Hermes Kettle Corn. Jay and Heather Hermes and family own both businesses. Clean n Green has been cleaning our hermitages since June of 2010. Every time you enter your freshly cleaned hermitage, you can thank the Hermes family for keeping up with those duties.

Wednesday, October 15 was an overcast day, threatening rain off and on. However, by evening it cleared a bit and was a rather nice, although slightly cool, fall evening. We set up the refreshments of hot apple cider, baked goodies, salsa, chips, crackers and cheese, kettle corn, fruit and veggies for everyone to enjoy in the chapel area. Our first guests began arriving at 4:30 and we had a steady flow of visitors until after 7 pm.



We built a fire in the fire pit and set up a circle of chairs around it so we could relax, visit, and nibble on goodies. While some were doing that, I took a group of guests in the Kawasaki Mule for a tour of the upper meadow. They were treated with the sight of beautiful leaves, panoramic views, wildlife, and flowers as we circled the meadow. Over 50 visitors had a great time that evening.

Christmas Concert

With just six weeks until our Christmas Concert and Fundraiser, we are getting all the preparations in place. We hope you can join us on December 7, 2014 from 1:15 pm to 4 pm. Barbara Lohrbach will be performing at 2 pm. There will be great refreshments, silent auction, baked goods, jams, mystery gifts, and more for you to enjoy. The festivities will be held at La Grange Center, 1515 W. Ogden Ave., La Grange Park. Bring family and friends to celebrate the season in song and fun. If you would like to help CITW in any of the preparations, give me a call at 815-947-2476.



Guided Retreat

We will be having one Guided Retreat in 2015. Deborah Hansen will be leading **Retreat 101** on April 16-April 19, 2015. If you are wondering what it is like to be on a hermitage retreat, this is a perfect chance to find out. She will have lots of helpful experiences to guide you along. Check out the flyer for more information.

In the Wilderness...

The trees have been displaying stunning shades of red, yellow, orange, purple, etc. over the past several weeks. The retreatants have enjoyed driving in the hills of Jo Daviess County.

We were able to reroof the three hermitages in September, so we will be protected for many years to come. Thank you to all those who contributed to our roofing fund request.

The wild turkeys have been abundant this year. The retreatants tell of daily visits by a flock of turkeys usually a couple of hens with varying sizes of chicks. They enjoy feeding on the bird seed on the ground.

Our fiscal year ends on June 30 each year. We welcomed 200 individuals (60 men and 140 women) who stayed a combined 694 days in our three hermitages

during that time. This translates into an occupancy rate of 63% for the fiscal year, which is very good considering the challenging winter we had this year. Although most of our retreatants come from the Midwest, primarily Illinois, we also welcomed people from as far away as Texas, as well as Kansas and Missouri. While the overwhelming majority of retreatants are affiliated with Christian faith traditions, retreatants of the Jewish, Unitarian, and Buddhist faiths also found their way to Christ in the Wilderness during this past fiscal year, giving testimony to our value of inclusivity.

We still have some hermitage openings in November and December. If you are looking for some reflection time, give me a call. Have a blessed season of Thanksgiving and Christmas in the months ahead. God bless all. Sr. Julia



Here is the Christ in the Wilderness Facebook page link: <https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Christ-in-the-Wilderness/257739718945>. You can also search for Christ in the Wilderness on your Facebook page.

We also have a Business Pinterest page: <http://www.pinterest.com/citwilderstock/>. You can also search for Christ in the Wilderness on your Pinterest page.



Have you ever 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.
- Or you could think of some other form of giving to us, such as a charitable remainder trust or a monthly giving program.
- 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) organization.