

Christ in the Wilderness

Hermitage Retreat Center

Fall 2009

Our mission is to provide an environment that is conducive to silence, solitude, prayer and reflection.

The Web of Life

When I tell people I'm going away on a solitary retreat, invariably I get one of two reactions: either a startling look of intense envy, or a blank look of incomprehension. The first I can understand. I've given that look, myself – one that flirts with both covetousness and jealousy – a look qualifying as “confession-worthy.” (Hopefully, by admitting my failing I'm lessening the impact the “deadly” has on this particular “sin,” which didn't even make my top 10 list of reasons why I should pack lightly when I die, rather than taking the time to learn to play the harp.)

The envious I don't mind. If I like the person, I hand them a brochure for CITW. If I don't, I pretend I'm going someplace exclusive, by invitation only. And I take one more item out of my suitcase, replacing it with burn cream, instead.



It's the second group that gets under my skin, those who can't understand why anyone would want to spend time alone, unreachable by mobile device, detached from modem and wi-fi. To them, if you're not online there are only two valid reasons: either there's been a catastrophic event bringing down the

entire web, or you've died. It would be really sad if you died, and they'll make sure to Tweet about what a great person you were - after they check their Facebook page for a new virtual friend to stick in your place.

It makes you realize how far society has drifted from the “real” to the virtual when you find it necessary to justify taking time off for a retreat. Are we really so important we can't be spared for a few short days, or have we just deluded ourselves into thinking so?

I'll admit it. I spend a lot of time online. I've connected with most of my former classmates from high school on Facebook, I write and post photos on my blog, and I Tweet about auspicious events such as my dog throwing up all over the living room floor, lest anyone miss one moment of my life. I love the Internet; it's been good to me. But I love things that were around before the web, too, like: writing, strolling around in nature, taking pictures,



reading, and just sitting and meditating. Things you don't need a keyboard to do.

My big objection to the invasiveness of technology into all aspects of our lives is it implies a diminished sense of the importance of humanity – of contact with real people. It makes me wonder how much more self-centered humankind can get, and what sort of world I'll be handing my children. At the same time, I know children learn by example. Taking time out for solitary retreats may help instill my values, despite the pressures of the world. They may not understand my need for solitude now, but maybe they'll get it when they're older, “blessed” with hectic lives and children of their own. Especially that last part.

It takes conscious effort to tune out modern life, listening to the parts of ourselves we've grown used to neglecting. Weary of being pushed aside, these tiny voices have all but given up trying to get our attention, despairing that we've forgotten they bind us one to another. This is all the more reason each retreat we take is a blessing. Through solitude we re-affirm our own importance, and how crucial it is to check in with our personal spirituality, pushing back the stresses of life for a while, allowing the time and space to breathe. Absorbing the solitude, taking time to rest, reflect and offer our undivided attention to whatever higher power we may believe in regenerates us, allowing the divine inside us to send the message it's still there - that it never left. It just got lost in the shuffle.

At the end of our stay, hopefully we'll feel strong enough to rejoin the world, promising ourselves we won't forget we're human first and only secondarily a presence in the virtual world. And it's okay to feel a stab of sadness when the period of solitude is over. It's a good thing, actually. It means you've left a tiny piece of yourself - of your soul - behind, to continue growing in this place of absolute serenity, waiting to rejoin you when you return. In the meantime, your bit of soul will join hands with pieces left by others, linking human to human, little voice to little voice. Together they'll bind us to each other, creating the only unbreakable web - the one true, unselfish reality left in an increasingly virtual world.



Lisa Guidarini

October 2009

30 Years of Ministry

Thirtieth Anniversary of Christ in the Wilderness

As a reminder.... Christ in the Wilderness will be celebrating 30 years of ministry at an Anniversary dinner and Fundraiser on Thursday, November 19th from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the Congregation of St. Joseph Center Welcome Hall at 1515 Ogden Avenue in La Grange Park, Il.

Wine will be served as you peruse the many wonderful auction items available including; Paintings, jewelry, pottery, iPod Basket & iTunes gift card, a restaurant and cooking package, a birding basket, and many more items. Start your Christmas shopping.

Mary Southard, CSJ and noted artist, will speak about Christ in the Wilderness, illustrating her reflections with a slide show, highlighting this sanctuary for solitude, prayer and reflection whose 30 years we are celebrating.

Please join us for this wonderful evening of friends, great food, and fellowship. (\$50 of which \$34 is tax deductible) Contact Sr. Julia Bathon, OSF, at 815-947-2476 if you need more information or did not receive an invitation. RSVP by Nov. 9.

Photos taken by Lisa Guidarini except for hermitage photo.

Most of our retreatants hear about us from someone who has made a retreat here, that is why you are our greatest advertising agent. Please encourage your friends to come to *Christ in the Wilderness* for their private retreats. Your friends can receive a brochure, or additional information, by calling us at **815-947-2476**, e-mail citw@dishmail.net or checking our website at www.citwretreat.com.

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.

In the Wilderness. . .

Fall barely got here and it brought some pretty cold temperatures. The early part of October saw several heavy frosts that killed off most of the tender vegetation. The cold blustery winds made it feel like we had skipped fall and went straight to winter. On Oct. 10 we even saw our first snow flurries, but nothing significant.



But alas, summer snuck back in the past couple of days. We had sunny skies and it made it to 72 today, so fall is not completely out of the picture. Like a lot of northern Illinois, the trees did not show their array of colors as much this year. The early frosts just turned a lot of the leaves brown before they dropped. A few trees here and there delighted us with the palate of red, orange and yellow, but they were few and far between.

We have had the pleasure of meeting many new retreatants over the past couple of months and they are spreading the word about CITW also. On August 11, 2009, the Chicago Tribune ran an article by Joel Hood about the role of retreat centers and people who are jobless. We were very excited to be one of three centers featured. Two of our past retreatants were interviewed and quoted for the article. If you didn't get to read it, check the link out on www.citwretreat.com at the bottom of the first page.

We hope that you can join us to celebrate our 30th anniversary in Nov., it is quite an accomplishment, considering our meager beginnings. Have a blessed Thanksgiving.

Interesting Facts-CITW

We had 165 retreatants from July '08 through June '09: 129 women & 36 men. About half of those were first time retreatants, whom we hope will continue to return. A lot of them found out about CITW from a friend (90), while 41 people found us on the web. We had 10 retreatants under 30; 33 retreatants were 31-45; 74 retreatants were 45-60 and 49 were over 60.

The retreatants came from Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Maryland, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Illinois. Obviously, the largest number (142) came from Illinois.