

CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS

A place for solitude, prayer and reflection

Hermitage Retreat Center

Summer July 2013

The “Magic” of Solitude....

“Here at the Magic Hour
Time and eternity
Mingle a moment in chorus.

Here at the Magic Hour
Bright is the mystery
Plain is the beauty before us.
Could this beauty be for us?

What is this Voice that sings
Holy and hovering
Over the hill
In the still of the evening?

Son of God speak

Into the peace of these wild things
Into the wild of this grace
Into the grace of this blessing
Speak in the peace of this place

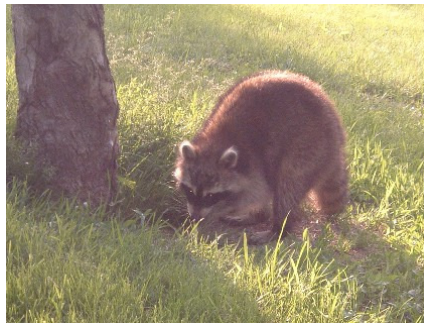
Speak in the peace of this place.”
Lyrics from “*The Magic Hour*”
by Andrew Peterson

Dear fellow retreatant,

May this song be a blessing over your time here. May God speak to you in the peace of this place as He’s spoken to me. May you feel His love and warm embrace. May you receive everything you need while here. Enjoy God and His creation. Allow the Lord to delight in you, for He truly does.

My name is Becky. I’m 23 years old and came here seeking solitude after spending

my energy on nursing school, serving my church, and serving others in need. My heart was desperate for solitude with the Lord. I heard his call to come away with Him in the wilderness, and He blessed my obedience, as I’m sure He will bless yours.



May you be blessed, my friend. Enjoy your only visitors while you’re here—rabbits, mischievous

raccoons, graceful deer, beautiful cardinals, woodpeckers, blue jays, blue birds, and other beautiful birds and creatures.

May the Lord minister to you. Be refreshed. Be blessed.

Sincerely, Becky June 2013

This book--on its last page--reflects 8 years of thoughts; prayers, insights and sharing by many others who have had the opportunity to spend time in this wonderful hermitage. I was met by Fox News yesterday when I arrived (and Sr. Julia). They are going to have a spot on the news that is about Silence and Solitude. They followed me around for 3 ½ hours filming many of the things I do here—meditating, journaling, hiking, using the Chapel and painting. (The spot will last about 1 ½ minutes!)

I had a chance to talk about the magic of CITW and why I have been returning since 1996. This spiritual space brings me home--it fills my soul with joy and replenishes my body

with sleep and quiet. I am so much more in touch with the Earth, with God and myself after being here only a short while. And this trip was short--I leave today and will try to retain this centering and mindfulness that is such a blessing in my life.

Pat June 2013

In The Wilderness...

As Pat mentioned we were chosen by Fox News to be part of their special segment on Solitude and Silence. The film crew from Fox News of Chicago spent the day here filming the various areas of CITW and interviewed Pat and myself. The four hours of filming would be edited down to a very dynamic clip one and one-half minutes long. You may have seen it around July 4th on their news program. If you know of anyone who regularly tapes Fox News you may want to check with them, if they have it recorded. I myself have not seen the clip and would love to see it as well. Since the segment aired, we have received five calls inquiring about a retreat here and three of the ladies have booked some time here. What a blessing it was for CITW to get the word out.

Thanks to everyone who gave us a donation for the spring appeal. The monies were designated for the retaining wall project. We have replaced the crumbling wooden retaining wall with a new natural stone wall. It looks great and will serve us far into the future. We are also in the process of creating a drainage basin between the parking lot and the hill leading to the main house that will help control water flow when we have heavy rainfall. Along with other erosion control measures, it should improve the natural environment for many years to come.

The black raspberries were abundant this year and the blackberries are taking their turn now. Retreatants have enjoyed picking some to

eat during their stay.

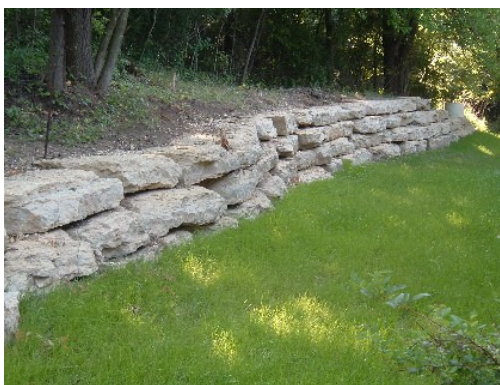
A local beekeeper, Layne Bonvillian, has put eight bee hives on our property to take advantage of the abundant wildflowers in the meadows. He checks on them weekly and is pleased with the growth of the hives. However, he will not get very much honey from them this year. The honey bees are plentiful here and I see them buzzing around all the time.

We have been super busy with retreatants keeping the hermitages filled non-stop. We have not been able to accommodate all the requests because of being full. You can still call at the last minute, but if we do not have a cancellation, then I would not have a hermitage available. Look ahead at your schedule and get your retreat on our calendar.

We still have two openings for the Resting with the Holy Guided Retreat on Prayer scheduled Nov. 21-24, 2013. If you want more information about the retreat or want to attend, give me a call.

Don't forget to mark your calendar for our Strings of Faith Christmas Concert Fundraiser on December 8, 2013 from 1:15 pm to 4 pm. Have a grace-filled and safe remainder of the sum-

mer. God bless you. Sr. Julie



Memorial Day Give Away Winners

We had four happy winners for this year's Give Away. Sr. Rita Stalzer, CSJ, Sr. Kathy Smith, OP, Edward Reilly and Cindy Genandt were the lucky winners. Three of them have already been out here to use their gift certificate. Maybe next year you will be on the list of winners too.

CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS

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Hermitage Retreat Center

Spring April 2013

Just "Be" in Divine Presence....

This is my first time at Christ in the Wilderness, a place I have been seeking my whole life. It feels like I have come home! Here I am invited to enter "deep silence" that only solitude can provide.

Thank you Sr. Julie for your gracious hospitality, and for the gift of cookies, which I enjoyed with tea soon after my arrival. While sitting on my deck eating them and sipping tea, I heard the Eastern Towhee singing its distinctive trilling song...."drink your teeeaa!"

Upon arriving I was invited to let go of "chronos" time and enter "kairos" time. I came with questions and was invited to put them aside and just "be" in Divine Presence who is everywhere, present, now! I followed along the creek and heard her in the gulping banjo-like calls of the Green frogs. I followed her along woodland trails to the upper meadow and into the prairie. Here I experienced a "thin space" as we Irish like to call it; the liminal "in between" space where there is no separation between heaven and earth! In this space, time ceases to exist as the Divine presence is intoxicating and sublime.

Maura N.
7-26-2012



Photo by Dan Pollack

Upper Meadow

I am the gentle breeze.
I am the great spangled fritillary
nectaring on the bee balm.
I am the clouds, always moving,
I am the field sparrow singing its
slowly descending melodic song.
I am the harmony in the song
of a swarm of gnats!
I am the sap in the trees, pulsating
my lifeblood to branches and leaves.
I am the intoxicating taste of
wild plums and blackberries.
I am the presence of all who
have been here and those
who have to come...

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Dear hermit seekers,
may the scripture of nature speak to you in
surprising and unexpected ways!

Maura N.



In The Wilderness...

We look forward to warmer days as the tree buds swell before opening into new leaves. The pussy willow by the main house is sporting grayish white blooms. The birds are singing away early in the day and flitting around building nests and hunting for food. A few crocuses have bloomed, but most of the spring flowers are still hidden from view.

We have had a steady stream of retreatants in the early months of 2013 and are entering the time of the year that is very popular among those seeking solitude. Many people have scheduled their retreat time, but there are still many days available for retreat, if you are thinking of one. Maura wrote her piece in the summer months when she was here. CITW may not presently display all the natural wonders that Maura wrote of in her reflection, but those, or similar wonders, will be here before you know it.

The right side of the upper meadow will be burned with the help of the local Conservation Guardians burn team members. We are doing this with the hope that it will allow the native plant seeds, that may now be lying dormant, to begin to grow and fill the meadow with their blooms. A lot of the invasive plants were

removed last summer and fall, so we hope the native plants will be able to grow without a lot of competition from other plants.

The Memorial Day give away tickets will be sent out soon, so you may want to see if you are one of our lucky winners this year. I know that those who have won in the past were pleasantly surprised and have enjoyed their stay at CITW.

Have a wonderful spring and we hope you will visit CITW in the future for a retreat. God bless you. Sr. Julie



Thanks to all up came and supported us for our Spaghetti Dinner at Holy Cross. It was a wonderful success. See you next year.

Have you 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.
- Our legal title and address are
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We are a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) .



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Hermitage Retreat Center

Winter February 2013

Seeking Solitude and Stillness

This was my first time at CITW. It was also my first time being alone, away from the city, quiet with God.

My soul has been panting to be alone for months, maybe longer. It wasn't until this week that I cried out to the Lord in desperation to be alone with Him. The words I described my spiritual state were "depleted," "overwhelmed." My body was tired, my mind had racing thoughts of not understanding God's purpose in my work, ministry, direction, singleness, and His will in that--where to go, what to do, how to obey. I was trying to have it all figured out, with a schedule that permits very little stillness.

So when I wept for solitude and stillness with the Lord, the worldwide web, this time, was helpful and I found CITW. I called. Sr. Julie told me there was a hermitage available this weekend. I barely made it through a few more days. I avoided as many conversations as I could, plowed through a sweet Thanksgiving with family, and was on the road Friday--full of fear. Horror overtook me about being here alone, no reception, no internet, no connection. What if something happens? Who would I call? Then I heard the Lord's voice, "Call me, I'm always with you." Upon arrival, I was still anxious after waiting so long to be alone. I didn't know how to rest my soul, my mind or my body. Sister Julie told me to listen to my body, and that most people sleep when they get here....Well.....I crashed and slept with the sun beaming onto my face through the window. I stayed in on my first day and heard from the Lord. I literally didn't do anything without the Holy Spirit prompting. It felt incredible to just respond to reading books in the



Bible that I was prompted to read, sit and pray when I could, eat when I felt the prompting. It was as if my body and mind were not my own.

The next day fear was over me again. I was afraid to go outside in the forest by myself. It was as if something was holding me back, but the Spirit was prompting, "Get dressed and go." Pretty scared (silly now that I think about, especially since I live in the middle of Chicago and walk around alone all the time). I proceeded to walk. As Lord guided me through the property my flesh wanted to run back into the hermitage and stay. I felt, "take the road" (which to me was certainly a road less traveled), and I walked. I felt that when he told me

to stop the "downtown pace," I did. And I saw deer come out to stare at me. I stared back and realized my fear has been of being alone with my Maker. I kept walking until I realized I was lost (how often do we walk through the forests of our own lives and feel lost?). My mind screamed out in a panic, "no GPS, no phone, no one in sight." Then the Gentle Voice, "I wouldn't bring you here to harm you. I love you. Follow me." (Of

course it wasn't a loud voice from the cloud, but it was what I heard in my heart.) All I needed to hear was that no matter what the mess, darkness or clutter, the Lord is my guide, my compass, the author. On my little walk I learned more about "walking by faith not by sight." Small examples on this walk displayed big trends in my life. The Lord taught me to follow Him, to respond to Him, and to allow myself to be loved more by Him. Questions were answered, others were laid to rest. The Lord allowed me to look into some horrors in childhood and teenage years and taught me to stop trying to forget....there is no bondage of the past...the past can no longer lord it over me. My Christ now lords over it. What a relief. What an incredible God we serve and love. His mercy, redeeming love endures forever.

I praise and thank Him for CITW, for making a place like this available for people to be alone. Whoever searches for God with all their heart finds Him. I am leaving in a few hours and I wish I had a few more days. I pray for these grounds, and Sister Julie, and everyone else who makes this place available for us to retreat. I am thankful it is open to all who seek. I pray for all of you who get to stay in this sweet place. I pray you enjoy your stay with the Lord, I pray you fall into His arms, open your eyes, heart, ears, mind, every pore, to soak Him in like a sponge. He is incredible, absolute, uncontested, omniscient, omnipresent. The Lord God omnipotent reigns. He is God and there is no other. Psalm 23

I leave full of peace, filled with love and His grace. I pray all of this for you. I wanted to come here to know how to hear the voice of my God. He answered abundantly.

With all my love, warmly, Anastasia Nov. '12

In The Wilderness...

Much like a large portion of our country, we have had the ups and downs of changing weather. On December 20 we had a blizzard in Northwest IL and Iowa that closed down the highways for a 24 hour period. It took a while to get plowed out of that snow. Then we had the fluctuating temps that melted and froze our snow several times. Most recently at the beginning of this week, we reached 59 and almost all our snow was gone. However, that was very short-lived because we got 5 inches of new snow on Jan. 30 and CITW is beautiful. There are some pictures on Christ in the Wilderness' Facebook page.



We are excited to have experienced the highest occupancy rate for January ever at CITW. We had 60 occupied nights out of 93 for the three hermitages. What a gift to have all those retreatants come and enjoy the time of solitude away from their ordinary life experience. Thanks. And I hope we can make February equally filled with CITW retreatants.

The first Guided Retreat in January was a great success and was enjoyed by the women who came. We still have openings for future retreats. Give me a call if

you need information.

Four people gave their loved ones the thoughtful Christmas present of a gift certificate. Consider remembering CITW when looking for that extra special, one-of-a-kind gift for any occasion. Look ahead and get your retreat time on our 2013 calendar. God's blessing to each and everyone. Sr. Julie

Save the Date

We are so grateful to all those who participated in our Christmas Concert and Fundraiser on December 9, 2012. We especially thank Strings of Faith for sharing their wonderful music with us. People are still commenting about the wonderful time they had.

On December 8, 2013, from 1:15 to 4 pm, Christ in the Wilderness will be having a Christmas Silent Auction Fundraiser at CSJ La Grange Center in La Grange Park. Enjoy refreshments and visit with others as you browse the auction items to make a bid. We will also have a bake sale and mystery gifts that can be purchased. More information will be sent out later as we make plans. Mark your calendars, so you can join us for this enjoyable event

Spaghetti and Meatball Dinner Fundraiser

For those of you who live near enough to CITW, you may want to join us on February 23, 2013, from 4-7 pm for Spaghetti and Meatballs at Holy Cross Parish Center in Stockton. The cost is \$6 in advance or \$6.50 at the door. Children 5 and under eat free and 6-12 years are \$4 per person. Contact Sr. Julia for tickets or for more information. Call 815-947-2476 or email citw@dishmail.net.

Have you thought of remembering us?

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Christ in the Wilderness

Hermitage Retreat Center

Winter January 2012

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

Retreatant Jottings...

First time visit to CITW, and second retreat center visit over all. I give thanks to the Sister of St. Joseph for making this wonderful place available and to Sr. Julia, Frank and others who tend it so beautifully.

Unseasonably warm temps (mid 40s) allowed me to spend approx 5 hrs today enjoying the outdoors: hiking, reading, and more hiking.

Each retreat has its own character and flavor. I've learned not to "schedule" too much, for usually an inner-voice guides me what I need to do next, whether it's going for a hike, reading, writing, praying, etc.



The theme of this retreat turned out to be "compassion," beginning with myself for "just as water reflects the face, so too, does one heart reflect another." Therefore compassion, like charity, must begin at home

and that means with oneself, before one can truly give to others.

Blessings to all who read this.

Written by Glenn

I am leaving tomorrow and I realize I am just beginning to allow myself to "Be" with God. I want to share some of my "experience" here in hopes that you will open yourself to what Our Lord has in store for you.

As I watch the deer at the bird feeder in the early a.m. and early p.m.. I watch how they seem so afraid of every little sound and movement. As I watch them, I don't dare make a move and barely breathe. I want them to stay and enjoy

the bird seed and our time of peace together. What are they so afraid of I wonder? They remind me of me.

Constantly fearful of what might appear, what is around the corner or the unknown. I'm hyper vigilant like they are. What am I so

afraid of??? So, God begins to show me that all I need is Him and when I focus only on Him my fears and worries disappear. It begins by me locking myself out of the hermitage this morning. Thank God I was dressed with a coat and the CITW map. I started to panic...then told myself I'll be ok—go to the main house and Sr. Julia will give me a key. Of course I get there and she is gone. She'll be back in an hour. Not so bad. I realize God is being so gentle with His "lesson" on trusting Him. He tells me that I have everything I need because I am with Him. I feel a peace come over me and spend the next few hours walking along the paths and sitting in contemplation. Why do I always feel the need to over prepare, to make sure I have my "stuff," to anticipate all my needs and end up over packing, or buying too many groceries for my stay here? My life is like the deer...constantly watching out for danger. God showed me this a.m. that when I keep my eyes & heart on Him, I have all that I need and my fears subside. Thank you my Lord.



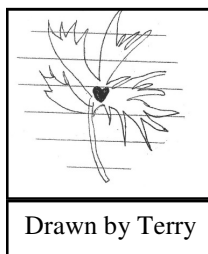
I also want to share with you a gift the Lord gave me this afternoon. I was about to sit down at the chair/table down the path from the gazebo. It was sunny and around 60. Beautiful! It was close to the 3 p.m. hour. The hour of Great

Mercy and I was preparing for prayer time.

The chair was filled with dry leaves and sticks and I swept them away to sit down. One leaf was stuck in the chair so I pulled it out and put it on the table. I began praying and opened my eyes, noticing the leaf.

This was a dried oak leaf. Imbedded in the leaf was a Heart! It appeared to be

like a dried bit of fruit. But it was in the clear shape of a



Drawn by Terry

heart and a reddish brown color. It was so clear and beautiful. Where did it come from? I knew with all my heart and soul that this came from God. His Love was imbedded everywhere in all things, in all—and He needed to show how true this is. That little heart imbedded on that dried leaf was breath taking! I knew it was God showing me his Love. I almost had ignored that leaf, as if it was just another dried up leaf in this wilderness area. I almost overlooked God—I almost didn't pay attention to the fact that God is in all that we experience--He's in the details.

While you are here, I pray that you pay attention to every little detail God places before you. This is your time with Him, to spend completely with him. He will use everything to show you He loves you. Will you pay attention and give Him your all?

May God increase His Love in your life—Blessings,
Written by Terry

In The Wilderness...

This past fall and early winter were relatively mild, but the winter snow arrived about two weeks ago. Fortunately, it has been coming in smaller amounts at a time, so it has been manageable. The snow covered hills are beautiful and the retreatants have been enjoying their time

trekking through the snow. There are still many days available for retreat in the next few months, so give me a call to set up your retreat time. For those who are looking ahead to the warmer months, don't wait too long to schedule your retreat time. We have some hermitages reserved already.

With the summer storms, we had a lot of soil wash away from the creek banks. In order to prevent further erosion and to protect the pathways from washing out, we have done some erosion control work. Since the fall and early winter were mild, we were able to accomplish some of this work on the north half of the creek. We replaced the dirt and covered landscape fabric with RR5 rock. This should prevent further erosion when the heavy rains of spring and summer come. More work will be done when the ground thaws and the temperature rises.



The first weekend in March we will have a booth to advertise our retreat ministry at the Women's Health and Lifestyle Fair in the Quad Cities. If you live in that area, come by and say "Hello." And bring your friends to tell them about Christ in the wilderness.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a letter from our Board Chairperson, inviting you to share your talents with Christ in the Wilderness in whatever capacity works for you. Contact me if you want to explore some possible opportunities.

Enjoy the last months of winter and hopefully spring will roll around in a timely fashion. God bless you and may you be safe in all that you do. Peace, Sr. Julia

Save the Date:

On December 9, 2012, from 1:30 to 4 pm, Christ in the Wilderness will be having a Christmas Concert & Silent Auction Fundraiser. Strings of Faith will be presenting a Christmas Concert for which a free-will offering will be accepted. Enjoy refreshments and visit with others as you browse the auction items to make a bid. We will also have a bake sale and mystery gifts that can be purchased. The doors will open at 1:30 with the concert at 2 pm. Mark your calendars, so you can join us for this enjoyable event.



Spaghetti and Meatball Dinner Fundraiser

For those of you who live near enough to Stockton, you may want to join us on Feb. 29, 2012 from 4-7 pm for Spaghetti and Meatballs. The cost is \$6 in advance or \$6.50 at the door. Children 5 and under eat free and 6-12 years are \$4 per person.

Contact Sr. Julia for tickets or for more information. 815-947-2476 or citw@dishmail.net



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Spring April 2012

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

Silence is a place where lovers meet

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior”. Those words can only begin to express how I feel about my “desert experience” even in the mid winter. The desert is a place of silence where lovers meet. That was the totality of my seven day retreat at Christ in the Wilderness. It was all summed up around this mysterious



word “silence”. This was my second retreat at CITW. I couldn’t wait to come back again and even now look forward to the future for my third visit. I shouldn’t say visit because silence is home to me where ever I am at. I cherish it like the next beat of my heart. I also came to pray. Pray for the world, pray for my brothers and sisters who are in torment and pain, for the suffering of the world. God needs more people to pray! Prayer is a call and silence is a call. A call to come deeper into the heart of the Trinity, to hear the heart beat of the Father and listen to what He has to say. You have to be very quiet to hear the heart beat of the Father and the cry of men.

The call of the desert is to come deeper into the heart of the Trinity, deeper into that fire of silence, deeper into the fire of love. I was called to listen and learn. I will share some of what I learned. Jesus is the greatest teacher.

Silence is a place where lovers meet.
Where my mouth was filled with fine food,
And divine wine.
O’ the kisses of your mouth!
Come to the clefts of the rock.
Hidden is the manna and
Sweeter than honey is the wine,
Choicest of wine for my beloved.

I learned that prayer is silence and love is silent and so is living in the presence of God. In the book Poustinia, Catherine Doherty says, “to hear the voice of the Lord we must know how to listen to HIS silence and above all to learn it ourselves. The spiritual masters know from experience-‘if one does not know how to give a place in his life to recollection and silence it is impossible for him to arrive at a higher degree and be able to pray in public places’. Recollection opens our souls to heaven--but also to other men”.

I felt the Lord telling me “silence offends most people--but I call a few to the vocation of silence. Silence breaks the broken because they have nothing to hold on to. The key to love is silence. It breaks the bonds off people and gives them the living Word to hold on to. It is a flame that burns within them, a fire that ignites the whole world.” I understood that broken and wounded people need many things to hold on to. TV, food, conversation, and a thousand other things. Silence is a scary thing unless you have experienced the beauty. Silence is rare in this world of continued noise and business.

I came into a deeper understanding about sin especially obedience vs. disobedience and how God longs for each one of his children to listen, hear and obey. As I learned about my sins I asked for forgiveness, then I could hear and see sins of others and beg for mercy. After all what else do we have but His mercy which is love. This time of quiet, silence, solitude gave me time to hear and see things I probably wouldn’t have heard if I was at home.

I am grateful to have Christ in the Wilderness as a place of rest and retreat. It is for me a place of healing, freedom and liberation. A time to step back and look deep within myself and deep within the heart of the Trinity and pray for all.

By Cyndi Jarvis

Retreatant Jottings...

As I prepare to leave this blessed place, I give thanks to so many:

Thanks to my God for your wondrous creation and more for your Wondrous, Bountiful, Merciful Love!

Thanks to my father, whose birthday it is today (102 were he still with us—10 years in heaven already). Thank you, Dad, for gifting me with a childhood growing up on a farm--the beginning of love and respect for Mother Earth and all God's creatures.

Thanks to my mother who knew how to live simply so that this experience comes easily.

Thank you to the turkeys flying among the trees one evening, the many deer who displayed their



beauty and grace as they bounded away from me. And a most grateful thanks to those that stopped to "ponder" me as I pondered them, especially my last walk when I was able to capture a pix or 2!!

Thank you to the grey squirrel that stopped a moment with a nut in his mouth to notice me. Thank you to the bunny I surprised in the underbrush. You all "speak" of God's gift of life to me--in your very presence.

Thank you to the gurgling stream, the knobby tree, the whistling wind moving the tree tops to and fro as I was delighted with a bit of snow blowing fiercely around me.

Thank you to the profound Silence of the woods the following day after such fierce wind.

Thank you to the profound, healing silence of this hermitage.

Thank you all who had a part in creating this place of Christ in the Wilderness. Those who had the vision. Those who persevered when it seemed impossible/improbable. Those whose generosity and hard work made it possible

Thank you to Sr. Julia, Frank, the board members, all who continue to maintain and improve it.

Thank you to all who come to this place to listen to their God in the silence, to be healed, to be directed, to be challenged to just give Honor and Glory to our Awesome God! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Amen!

JS March 2012



In The Wilderness...

We were blessed with a mild winter and now we have a very early spring. All of the wild flowers and trees were blooming up a storm in March and early April. We are not usually blessed with their beauty until May. Mowing and trimming of course have had to start earlier also.

All seemed to enjoy our spaghetti dinner in Stockton, and the leftovers were snatched up quickly by those who did not make for the dinner. We had the guided retreat over the past weekend and it was a very enjoyable experience. The ladies were wonderful and loved walking the grounds. Our booth at the Women's Health and Lifestyle Fair in the Quads Cities was a great experience again. I had some wonderful help staffing the booth from some of our retreatants. We always love the assistance of our volunteers. A lot can be accomplished with their help.

Over the next couple of months we will be sending out the Memorial Day raffle info as well as the Birdies for Charity information. We hope you will support us through these fundraisers.

For those who are looking for retreat time away, we still have three groups of days open. The summer months on through fall still have plenty of openings. Call to arrange your retreat.

Blessings on the rest of spring, and on your days of early summer! Peace, Sr. Julia

Save the Date:

December 9, 2012 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM

Christmas Concert and Silent Auction Fundraiser.

Mark your calendar and invite family and friends to join you for a wonderful afternoon of music and fun. Free-will offering will be taken at the concert. Silent auction items will be available to bid on. We will have Mystery gifts to purchase and bakery goods as well as jams, jellies, etc. Looking forward to seeing you then.

Have you ever thought of remembering us?

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Christ in the Wilderness

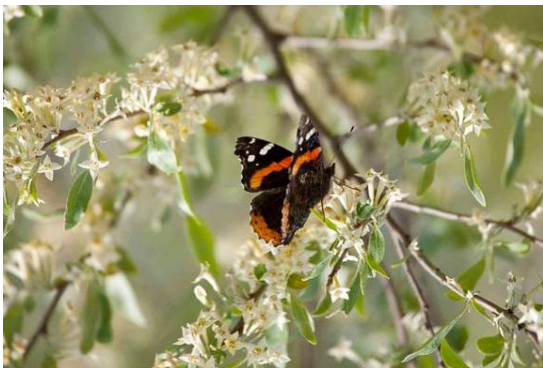
Hermitage Retreat Center

Summer July 2012

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

Retreatant Jottings...

My first time here. This trip was a Mother's Day gift from my daughter. It has been a wonderful experience. God's world and all of God's creatures here are blessings to behold.



I pray and give thanks for the people who made this place possible and open to all. The beauty and peace and the closeness

to nature are healing and uplifting. I am a five year cancer survivor and have come to understand the importance of coming away and drawing closer to God. While here I read in a book about people in an African tribe greeting each other by one saying, "I see you." And the other replying, "I am here". They are rejoicing to be on earth together.

Praise God and God's blessing to all who come here.

CK June 2012

Praying for those who have come before me and for you who come after me.

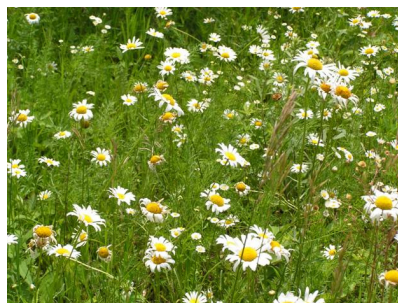
Be in God's time here; leave all worries, thoughts, to-do lists, and "should have's" and "ought to's" behind.

Revel in God's beautiful creation!!!!

General Tips:

1. The daisies are in bloom. Pick some and put in one of the vases here (they will perk up in water).
2. The deer start to come out to play and feed around 7:30 pm. Go down to the gazebo early for a good seat. Use bug repellent!

Listen to the continual symphony God has provided, full of woodwinds and reeds (bird song), brass (mourning doves,



owls, and the occasional cow), strings (the wind) and percussion (crickets, frogs, the leaves). How I will miss this!

I have been blessed in my time here. I pray blessings for you, too.
LJB May 2012

I am 65 and soon to be 66 on June 21st. What a blessed life I have lived---I am very healthy and God only knows when I will be called home. There have been Bumps in the Journey of Life, but our God has always been reaching out to pull me back to the Light. I decided to come to CITW because of a neighbor and his shared experience. Much peace and introspective prayer--a time of union with our God.

Live the life you love!! For as long as you have.

BB May 2012

In The Wilderness...

Well, we had an early spring and things started growing rapidly here at CITW. However, the lack of significant snow and rain this past winter and spring has created dry conditions, as many of you also experience. The grass paths don't look the greatest with the lack of moisture, but the retreatants are still enjoying traversing across the wilderness. We will end the fiscal year this month just a few days short of 70% occupancy for the year. That is great, and we hope even more retreatants come next year!

As you read in the retreatant jottings, some of our retreatants have come because of a gift given to them by a former retreatant or after hearing of the experience from a friend. I always say, "You are CITW's best advertisement," so continue to spread the word.

We are now using Constant Contact as our provider for our emails. This is an easy way to share information with a friend, coworker or family member. If I do not have your email address, let me know and I will put you on the email list. If you need flyers to give to someone, let me know. I can send as many as you need. Perhaps you belong to a group and would like to share about CITW with them. I can send you some flyers or even come and speak to your group, if that is what you would like.

Some upgrades and additions have been taking place

here also. New mattresses in all the hermitages are one of those upgrades, so I hope you will be resting well when you come to visit. A small free-standing shelf unit has

been put under the bathroom sink to hold all of your toiletries and other items that you use while you are staying here. John Jankowski and Pat Harrington spent many hours staining the gazebo and free-standing porch swing this spring. They look great and should be good for several years again.

Lori & Dan Ertmer donated a split rail fence that they took down from their yard. We needed a few extra split rail posts, and those were donated by Spahn and Rose lumber company in Stockton. With these items in hand, John, Pat,



Joe and I went about the task of getting them in the ground at the entrance to the upper meadow at the top of the main path to the meadow.

They look great and remind us of the farmstead history of CITW.

We have also been planting more prairie plants in the upper meadow. Many of the invasive plants are being removed in order to provide a better environment for the prairie plants to grow. However, the process is not without it's challenges. Because of the lack of rain, we have spent many hours watering the little plants to keep them growing. The other challenge is to keep the critters from digging up the new plantings. The animals smell the freshly dug soil and are looking for grubs and other bugs to eat. So we have to go back and check on the plants to keep them in the ground. The exciting thing is that we also see some of the prairie plants coming back and growing well that were planted years ago. We also discovered some beautiful Jack in the Pulpits that were not planted by us, so, "Thanks, God, for your gifts."

If you are looking for retreat time, we still have a few opening in July. There also are more days available later in the summer, and into fall months. Give me a call. God be with you. Peace, Sr. Julia



Save the Date:

Strings of Faith Christmas Concert and Fundraiser

December 9, 2012

Join us on Sunday afternoon for a beautiful concert by Strings of Faith. We will be taking up a free will offering for the concert.

Invite your family and friends to come to rejoice in the beauty of song before Christmas. In addition to the concert, we will be having a silent auction, bake sale and mystery gifts that will make the afternoon a fun one. What better



way to get some of those gifts you need for "the hard to buy for" person! Refreshments will be served after the concert as well. Join us for a great day. Visit with friends and celebrate the season.

Auction Items

We are accepting items to be included in our Silent Auction on December 9, 2012. If you would like to donate or would like to solicit items for CITW. Call me for more information.

Have you 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.



Christ in the Wilderness

Hermitage Retreat Center

Fall October 2012

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

Retreatant Blog...

Since my involvement in Christos, I have initiated several spiritual disciplines into my life. I keep a journal that is part diary, part record of AHA! moments. I go on silent retreats. Along with retreats run in conjunction with the Tending the Holy course I help facilitate for Christos and the occasional men's retreat either by my church or the Men as Learners and Elders group (founded by Richard Rohr), I would be "off-grid" 3-4 times a year. But my last solitude retreat was back in November 2010 at Christ in the Wilderness (CITW).

Now, calling this cabin a hermitage would probably make St. Francis roll his eyes at a high rate of speed. I've seen the hermitages frequented by the monks of his time and they are pre-rustic compared to Mariglen at CITW. (You'd have to fly to Italy to find them, too.) I had air conditioning, a wide assortment of appliances for cooking, hot and cold water, a CD player, and obviously electricity for lights as well as a comfortable bed, a great glider-style rocker, and desk with chair and lamp. Further, there's a great screen porch with a view to a bird feeder and down the hill to the forest, plus an outdoor deck with table and chair.



Along with the cabin came 80 acres of farmland wilderness. I could walk down the hill from my cabin, across a fairly dried up creek and then up a steep path to a wide meadow with several different paths from which to choose. Deer,

wild turkey, birds, and insects share this part of the property with three retreatants at any given time of the year. Yes, just three. During the 50 hours I was there I saw each of the others once; both times, on the trail even though I had a view of the main path from my cabin, porch, and deck. Solitude, indeed.

I'm pretty accustomed to this experience by now. I imagine some people might think of this "time with God" as requiring you to be on your knees and praying. This may be someone's else's practice but I am more companionable and merely share my activities with the Lord. I try to be open to His promptings but I journal and read. I have music both to listen to and, with my guitar along, to create. I also just sit and do nothing but it takes awhile for the interior noise or impulses to work themselves out. Simplify and be

still.

The one rule I try to keep: do one thing at a time. Eat, don't read or listen to music. Read without music. Listen to music and that is not so easy, really focusing on the music. Here an exception crops up, and that's what makes it a good rule, it has exceptions. If so moved I would dance to the music. That does enhance the listening, giving focus to it, inviting it to move my body. If I go for a hike, I don't listen to music and try to meditate, letting thoughts fly past and not letting them, in the metaphor Martin Luther used, make a nest in my head.

My agenda is minimal: read my journal since the last retreat. However, I have been reviewing my collection of journals since 2005 this year. At the time of the retreat I was reading from winter of 2007 through summer of 2009. I also wrote a lot this time in my ongoing journal. It was while I was writing that I realized that dancing was a form of listening to music and remembered our Christos retreats where Wai Chin would lead us in body prayer. The whole retreat is prayer, but not limited to folded hands and bended knees. In a way, the question you ask yourself on retreat isn't "Are we having fun yet?" but "Are we praying yet?" Usually the answer redefines prayer and lets God out of the box I've conveniently placed Him in.

My Enneathoughts for the weekend were all about conquering my Seven tendencies to jump from one activity to another and living in anticipation of the next thing to do. A retreat is a great opportunity to witness this tendency apart from the must-do things of regular life. On retreat there is no Must Do. "Be still, and know that I am God." That is the overriding mantra for Christ in the Wilderness and a reliable foundation for all spiritual disciplines worth pursuing. Not sure how one measures success but I'm guessing that the act of measuring could be a Fail in and of itself.

I'm really not trying to be mysterious or obtuse.

Here's the best example: I went up to the meadow at 8:20 p.m. or so, before sunset. It was hot and still, the insects weren't respecting my Citronella wrist band but they weren't biting me, either. I managed to get the swing chair that looks west and sat still while the sun went down. But it



takes much longer for the stars to come out, so I did some hiking in the dark to another location, the Hope chair, and sat there, waving away the buzzing when it got too close to my ears. I was rewarded with a sky filled with stars, the Van Allen Belt very evident. No Aurora Borealis but I saw "shooting stars" but made no wishes. My heart was full enough without needing anything else. The deck of Marigold also affords a view of the night sky, framed by trees that back the hermitage and by the trees on the hill across the modest valley from the hermitage. From the meadow, however, the experience is a view where it is nothing but stars.

Was this all according to my intention, my agenda, or was God working in it? Or is this just a silly question?

When I discussed this with my spiritual director the following weekend, I recalled that during my long wait for the night to fall, I listed some of the irrational fears that arose from being in the dark: vampires, zombies, coyotes,* and arrows striking me. These fantasies have at one time or another pumped adrenaline in my bloodstream while out at night, whether in campgrounds or while walking from the garage to the back door of my home. In a sense, I named my fears as I awaited the star show and they evaporated. Maybe I was so far from safety I couldn't afford the luxury of those fears giving me an excuse to flee. Maybe the walk down the very steep, long hill in complete darkness once the star field no longer lit my way was so much more real that the irrational fears held no sway. We concluded that these were important insights into my psyche, so I consider my back patted and yes, the idea of measuring success as well as laying credit or blame to motivations unnecessary.

Was it prayer? My fears melted away because I was with God, under His mantle of the heavens. Therefore, it was prayer.

*I'd heard what I thought were coyotes howling together the night before, so I was waiting to hear them. What made it irrational was that what I'd heard, after sharing this story with Jessie, was more likely wild turkeys gabbling than coyotes.

The retreat experience has instilled in me an ability to be still in my daily life. Simplify, savor, accept everything as a gift. The compartmentalization of my life is an unnecessary construction that gets in the way of making it unceasing prayer. I'm not there yet, but I'm beginning to know what it feels like.

Don Vicha wrote about his time at CITW: to read the entire blog entry, visit this url:

<http://greathotshave.tumblr.com/post/28016113866/retreat01>

In The Wilderness...

The fall colors are shining throughout the woodland and meadows of CITW. The turkey and deer are usually on the hillside below the main house when I get up in the morning. Mike Harrington and John Jankowski have been bringing in the wood for the upcoming winter. I have



been making apple butter, pear butter and other jams and jellies. Someone gave me some grapes which made great jam.

We have been clearing out the invasive plants in the area below the Granary and have planted some prairie plants there, as well as seeding the ground. We hope to have a beautiful remnant of prairie there in the next couple of years. The challenge with all our prairie plants this year has been the lack of rain. John and Mike have spent lots of time watering the plants and very little time mowing the paths.

Included with this mailing are two flyers for our 2013 Guided Retreats. If you would like to attend either of them, give me a call. They can fill up fast. Pat Bonavia and Deborah Hansen will be presenting two great retreat experiences for you. Pass the information along to others who may not have been here before, or hang the flyer on a bulletin board for others to see.

We have welcomed many new retreatants over the past summer months. We are always happy when new people find out about CITW. Some find out from others who have retreated here, but many are finding us by Googling "retreat centers". We have openings yet in November and December, so if you are looking for some "be still" time, check us out. It is not too early to think about your 2013 retreat dates.

Have a blessed fall and enjoy the cool temperatures. Peace, Sr. Julia

Save the Date Christmas Concert and Fundraiser

Join us on Sunday, December 9 from 1:15 to 4:00 pm for a Christmas Concert by Strings of Faith, followed by refreshments. The concert and fundraiser will be held at Congregation of St. Joseph LaGrange Center in LaGrange Park, IL. We will also have a Silent Auction, Bake Sale and Mystery Gifts for you to enjoy while visiting. The concert is a Free-Will Offering. Invite your family and friends to an afternoon of great Christmas music. Info will be sent out later on.



Have you 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.
- Our legal title and address are
Christ in the Wilderness
7500 S. Randecker Road
Stockton, IL 61085-8922



Christ in the Wilderness

Hermitage Retreat Center

Winter January 2011

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

SUSTAINING SECRETS OF SOLITUDE

(continued)

By Carla Waterman

- o But there is a second movement which seems more challenge than gift. Having shed the perpetual noise and movement of the world outside...
- o ***The re-creating Spirit of God presses into our internal noise***

"To invoke the Holy Spirit as Creator upon oneself is to open oneself to a newness and is also to enter into an awesome silence."



- o An awesome silence can also be a daunting silence. Coming to terms with external silence is often the easy part. It's dealing with the internal roar inside that is so much more taxing. The outer silence gets too loud. When the silence without gets too awesome I frequently feel the compulsion to fill it—so I will not have to be alone with the noise within me.
- o Years ago I discovered Henri Nouwen's little book, *The Way of the Heart*. Written thirty years ago, before Protestants were paying much attention to the desert abbots and ammas, (fathers and mothers), it came into my possession in the mid-nineties, when I was just beginning to come into touch with the internal motions of my own soul.
- o Early on, Nouwen writes, "Solitude is the furnace of transformation." Wait a minute, that doesn't sound very pleasant. It doesn't gibe with counting how many different species of birds are showing up at my bird feeder, or what the clouds look like when seen from the fabulous swing overlooking the rolling hills around Stockton, or what it means to just begin to hear the songs of the morning stars singing for joy.
- o But while re-creating newness is fed by birds and clouds and trees and stars, (although not by wild turkeys), it is the battle for internal silence that often comes as a shock to the novice solitude-seeker, and as the old, exasperating companion of solitude to those of us who have sought her for awhile.
- o If we will cry out, "Come Creator Spirit", then we will find ourselves enveloped in an "awesome" silence—one that will not let us go—but keeps pressing in.

o Why, Carla, do you keep replaying that particular conversation over and over again? What is it that makes you want the brilliant punch line, the irrefutable last word?

o And dear one, why do you keep worrying about the "what ifs?," allowing your imagination to run down one unfruitful avenue after another. Do you not know that re-creation always occurs in the "what is," and never in the "what ifs"?

- o When I start to be bombarded with the internal noise, CITW is, momentarily, not my best friend. I want to run, to find some distraction. I recently sent a new retreatant up here, and she told me about wandering the paths hoping that she would run into someone—I pointed out that such encounters were rather difficult in this great expanse with a population density of five if all three hermitages are full and Sister Julia and our dear friend Frank happen to be around.

It is here, in this awesome, at times daunting, silence that the potter says again to the clay, "Come, let us reason together." What other potter does this? What potter talks to its clay, and, moreover, listens to its clay when she talks back?



"Daughter, let the conversation go. Release it to me. Your security does not rest in what that person thinks of you. I will give you what to say if there is a time to speak... You have only to listen to me."

"My son, why are you so filled with so many imagined horrors. Are you safe today? Are you fed today? Is there meaning in life today?"

And it is here, in this holy place called Christ in the Wilderness, that one after another of God's children are renewed and remade, as the beauty of the exterior quiet opens the door to the internal quiet in which we clay vessels are re-made, over and over again.

In solitude, the re-creating Spirit of God gifts us with life-clarifying moments.

Theologians differentiate a moment from a minute as the difference between *kairos* and *kronos* time. In *kronos* time the clock ticks, the days are measured in hours, or in the passage of day to night. It is a period of time.

But like Elijah, rested and alone, I am often in need of a different kind of time, a kairos moment, a decisive point in time that meets me in the midst of all my internal earthquakes, fire and wind—even on a retreat of solitude. I am waiting for a still, small voice, for a potter that presses in—in that unique way that this particular lump of clay can understand, and when that voice comes, I am made new once again to return to my life with clarity and in peace.

Almost four years ago to the day, I was at CITW and had a kairos moment that was recordable. This is what I wrote in my journal:

"I almost didn't go up into the far meadow—head aching, body aching, fighting a cold—and I would have missed the brilliance—fields of goldenrod and sumac, red berries and white berries, purple thistles, bright blue sky, white fluffy clouds and a brisk, alive wind. But while I was up there it hit me...this day is a complete picture of the season I am in. Late summer, just a few



days before fall. And so am I. With a husband turning 50, and my own life cycles keeping pace, with the preceding generation finishing their race and my own son primed to begin his own. And in the far meadow I hear the Lord remind me that this is not a gentle sea-

son—the lovely springish summer of being and babies. It is, rather, a season as brisk as the wind that whips around me. 'Tis a season to be lived intensely with everything the Lord has already given and will give. "Work, for the night is coming." Even with my body protesting, a reluctant "get on with it" lands me in a very different season than succumbing to "I no longer can." (Waterman journal, Sept. 18, 2006)

Here is the great news of these kairos moments: they can break into kronos time whether we have two days or ten. They are gift from the Creator Spirit of God, neither entitlement nor reward. We have only to be creatures here. Sleeping, and listening to birds and wind, reading books and watching the sun cross the sky, facing the internal noise that would block the one voice we are all longing to hear—that quiet voice that restores and reassures, refocuses and renews.

In The Wilderness...

Winter is definitely here with snow on the ground since December 4th. We have had 13 different retreatants here in January and are looking forward to more next month. We still have hermitages available most of February and part of March. It is stunning to experience the snow reflecting the Moonlight and the shadows created on the snow by it.

We are welcoming new retreatants and continue to hear great things about their experience of solitude and silence at CITW.

A special thanks goes to all who made contributions to our ministry over the past couple of months. God bless you.

Frank Retires

Greetings and Salutations from the hills of Elizabeth! This is your humble caretaker of Christ in the Wilderness wishing you many blessings and warm thoughts while deep in this January winter. For those of you who are not aware, I had to retire in December; alas poor "Brother Ass" (as Saint Francis said of his body as to having treated it harshly), i.e., my body finally gave out. My back pained with arthritis and bursitis, hence it is time for me to move on and await some much needed healing and to seek what the Holy Spirit wants me to do next, including using my Spiritual Director's Certification.

I shall not be completely absent from CITW as I will be helping to spell some time for Sr. Julie to attend meetings and allow her some much needed R and R from time to time. I shall also be available for anyone who would like me to direct a guided retreat and/or to do Spiritual Direction for him or her.



Christ in the Wilderness, the wonder of nature and the glory of creation, forever blesses me. However, it is you, the retreatants, who have come to seek the HOLY ONE all these years who have truly blessed me. Oh, the MIRACLES I have seen in YOU! The JOY in your hearts. The PEACE I have seen in your eyes. I thank you for all the gifts and graces you have given me.

Pax et Bonum Frank

"Surrender to the unknown marks the great Transitions of the Spiritual Journey"

Scrapbook of Memories

If you would like to share any memories, stories, or notes with Frank to commemorate his retirement, you can send them to Julie at CITW. You can send them by postal service: 7500 S. Randecker Rd, Stockton, IL 61085 or by email: citw@dishmail.net. I will put them together into a scrapbook for him along with pictures, etc. Please have all contributions to this memory album to Julie by Feb. 28, 2011. Thanks.

Guided Retreat Opening:

We have one opening on April 14-17 for the "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Ps: 143:10" retreat.

Spaghetti and Meatball Dinner

Christ in the Wilderness Fundraiser February 26, 2011 will be held at Holy Cross Parish Center from 4-7 pm. Dine-In or Carry out. \$6 per person or \$6.50 at the door. **Contact Christ in the Wilderness at 815-947-2476 or citw@dishmail.net for meal tickets.**

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 CITW 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.

Christ in the Wilderness

Hermitage Retreat Center

Spring April 2011

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

Christ in the Wilderness Wine Tasting Fundraiser at Artale Wine Co.

Friday, May 20th

5:30-8:30 PM

\$15 per person

(proceeds support Christ in the Wilderness)

Please join us Friday, May 20th at Artale Wine Company for fine wines and hors d'oeuvres. At the same time, pick out the perfect bottle of wine to take with you when you retreat at Christ in the Wilderness. 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 enjoy great wine and refreshments!

Enjoy fine wine, delicious hors d'oeuvres and great company while supporting Christ in the Wilderness. \$10 of your entry fee is tax deductible as a donation to the Christ in the Wilderness ministry.

**Artale Wine Company,
6876 Springcreek Road, Rockford, IL
815-877-9463**

"We live in a very tense society. We are pulled apart...and we all need to learn how to pull ourselves together...part of the answer lies in solitude."

-Helen Hayes

Retreatant Musings:

What a joy to be here—the peacefulness it brings. Thank you God for making this place possible. And for every heart it touches may it continue to bring peace in our daily lives.

I feel loved.

I feel protected.

I feel cared for---

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!

JEO 10/30/2010



I have found such a safe haven here from my worries and fears. Like the seeds that have dried in their pods in the meadow, I am learning to be patient with the Lord's timing...to simply germinate, and as Mary did, to be willing to simply be a servant and to be open to God's will. It is a scary venture, not to be in control, but also one filled with wondrous mystery. Thank you!

KS 11/14/2010

First time here—I can feel the peace and willingness to surrender that other residents have felt here. I can tell this is a very special place. I needed this time and it has been a great reward. God is so good!

Bless the people who make CITW possible and so enjoyable.

DV 11/18/2010

This is my 3rd time here at CITW. Each time has been a different and rewarding experience for me. I am so glad that I am able to come here and renew so much of what seems to get "covered up" by the business of everyday life. For me, it takes well into the 2nd day here for me to stop hurrying to relax! Then, at some point, I find that I have been just sitting, staring and taking in all the quiet and beauty of nature. And...I just continue.

My Winter Solitude
Blue skies, Breathtaking walks
Brave deer, Bitter cold
Beautiful birds, Bubbling creek
Beloved hermitage, Blessed Chapel
Bountiful silence, Becoming still
Beneficial Solitude

With prayers of peace to all.

JR 12/8/2010

Clean n Green

You may have noticed Jay and Heather Hermes around the grounds since July 1 of 2010. They have been doing the cleaning of the hermitages for us since



that time. They are a family owned, environmentally conscious cleaning service. They have been doing a great job at accommodating our fluctuating schedule and have been able to get the hermitages ready for the next retreatant on time. Their cleaning products are environmentally friendly. They live relatively close to CITW and have been a great asset over the past months. Jay and Heather are the parents of Liam, Gracie, Aiden and Olivia. You may occasionally see their children with them, especially Aiden and Olivia. If you pass them sometime you may want to say hello to "Team Hermes" as they often refer to themselves. We thank them for their professional service to keep CITW sparkling clean.

In The Wilderness...

CITW has been pretty soggy lately with the cold wet weather. We need a few days of wonderful sun to dry things out and to help the leaves and plants start growing well. Some daffodils, crocuses, hyacinths, pasque flower and Virginia bluebells have been blooming around the main house.



In the woodlands, I have seen the violets and bloodroot blooming as well. The first blue bird has been sighted, so there is hope of warm spring time to come.

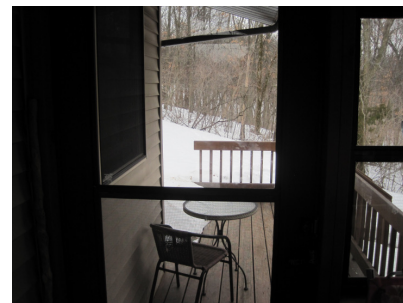
We have kept pretty busy over the past few months and have many retreatants booked through May and June. There are still quite a few vacant hermitage times from July through December yet. If you have been considering a retreat, give me a call and we can get you on the calendar. We are headed towards a 72% occupancy rate for our present fiscal year (July '10-June '11). We look forward to increasing that rate in the months ahead. Thank you for continuing to spread the word about CITW. We have also gotten many new retreatants through searches on the internet.

We are continually sprucing up the hermitages. A new counter top was put in Paul of Tarsus because the old one was deteriorating badly. Mariglen and Sabbath Place will have new carpeting on the porches in the next few months. The storm doors on Sabbath Place and Paul of Tarsus porches will also be replaced, as well as the main door of Paul of Tarsus, because they are in need of repair. Thanks to the generosity of many of our benefactors these repairs,

as well as the roof of the main house, will be completed this spring and summer.

Our Guided Retreats in February, March and April were a success and we introduced

some new people to CITW for the first time. Christ in the Wilderness has had a booth at several fairs and expos, some large, some small. This is one way to get our name known to the publics that we have not reached yet.



Among our new fundraising efforts to support CITW, notice the announcement about the Wine tasting in Rockford. Come, if you are close enough, or if you know friends or family in the area, invite them to come. Other things coming up are the Memorial Day Give Away and Birdies for Charity, which we have done in the past. Another new one is Strings of Faith Concert on July 31, at 2 pm, at CSJ La Grange Center in La Grange Park, IL. More info to come later. Our Fall Fundraising Luncheon will also be held at La Grange Center on September 10, 2011. So mark your calendars for some great events to support CITW. God bless you and may you have a blessed Easter season and spring time.

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.