



Jesuit Retreat House
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The Jesuit Retreat House in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, fosters spiritual enrichment rooted in the Gospels, the Catholic tradition and the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Our ministry is dedicated to creating a rich variety of retreat experiences and providing an atmosphere of quiet, peace and prayer in which men and women of all faiths are encouraged to discover and respond generously to God's personal invitation to wholeness and holiness.


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Upping our game in social media

Readers of our newsletter may be aware that the Jesuit Retreat House has had a presence on Facebook for a few years. Now we are “upping our game” to reach out to younger people in search of retreats by reactivating our Twitter account and initiating a new Instagram account. Both of these social media platforms are used daily by the younger population and our presence in this social media can satisfy the curious seeker looking for a spiritual retreat.

We invite you to join us on these platforms and share the information with your children, grandchildren, neighbors and friends. We are looking for “likes” and “followers” so please check these out:

 **LIKE us on Facebook: Jesuit Retreat House**

 **FOLLOW us on Twitter: @JesuitRetreats** (two words run together after the @ sign)

 **FOLLOW us on Instagram: JRHOshkosh Jesuit Retreat House**

We publish on Facebook weekly, often sharing an article or photos and inviting your comments. We follow the business protocol of tweeting (Twitter) at least once daily and have been sharing encouraging words from Scripture. Occasionally, a second tweet goes out if there is something significant to share, e.g. Fr. Jack's monthly reflections on the Sunday readings published in the Green Bay diocesan newspaper. Instagram is a marvelous platform to showcase photos of JRH. We post one a day while a retreat is in session.

Employee spotlight:

Abby Davis – enjoys serving people

Abby, who was born in Oshkosh, will be graduating from Oshkosh West High School in June 2018. Nearly four years earlier, in June 2014, Abby was encouraged by Melanie Jungwirth a former JRH employee to apply at the retreat house. Abby was assigned to the dining room staff and has truly enjoyed her time at JRH.



“I love working with the staff and serving the retreatants. I've learned a lot working with Chef Jeff and recently I helped Sr. Susan set up a Twitter and Instagram account for the retreat house. The retreatants are very kind and appreciative. Over the years, I have gotten to know many of the retreatants ... it's nice to recognize them each time they visit and they recognize me as well.”

Upon graduation from high school, Abby has been accepted into UW Stevens Point and will begin pre-studies as a Physician Assistant (PA) with a minor in Spanish. After college, Abby hopes to work in a hospital emergency room with a sub-specialty in trauma care.



Photo by Sr. Martha Meyer, SSND

In the midst of winter

Many of us pine for the first signs of spring.

The bright greens that come with spring are my favorite. When and where they appear, the multiple hues broadcast life: a hope realized, a promise fulfilled, a harbinger of more to come. Spring greens are a welcomed sight when they arrive.

Yet, as much as I wish for the greens of spring, now I must wait and relish less obvious signs of life. One such sign is this delicate design that winter frost left in the corner of a retreatant's sliding door.

St. Ignatius of Loyola saw our world as imbued with God's majesty and grace, and his Spiritual Exercises that are the basis for all of our retreats help us find God in all things. No matter the season the natural beauty surrounding the retreat house, and our lakeview, bring the majesty and grace of God's creation to our doorstep. During this time of year less obvious signs of life – animal tracks in the snow, leaves long ago brown still clinging to their branches, berries ready for the birds to take, water gurgling through thin ice, and our evergreens – sustain us.

Yet it may not be wintertime, after all, when it is most difficult for us to find God. More likely it is times of tragedy, sickness, loss, pain, criticism, conflict, injustice, etc., that stymie us. In those difficult times what are the signs of life upon which we rely, trust, and hope? If we do not see, hear, touch, smell, or taste God's majesty and grace around us or within us, then what?

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My older and wiser sister, Kate, would say when asked difficult questions, “Good question. Good question. Keep asking those questions.” Answers to difficult questions take time, her response implied, so one needs time to ponder, reflect, and seek those answers. When a loved one dies, when we face a painful and debilitating illness, when all of our efforts seem to fail, when I feel discouraged, in despair, or disliked, what then?

Ignatius suggested that in times of desolation, when it seems God is ‘absent or we are far from God, that we recall bits and pieces of goodness and joy in our life, and rest with those consolations for as long as we need. Recalling consolations when we are presently in desolation can help restore balance to our psyche and keep us from sinking further into despair. It takes time. It may require that we “stay in place” and not make any rash decisions or changes until we again feel that God remains a part of our life.

The value of taking time is addressed by Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, whose studies of fossils added the knowledge of evolution, in his reflection “Patient Trust” contained in “Hearts on Fire: Praying with Jesuits”:

*“Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability – and that may take a very long **time**. . . . Your ideas mature gradually – let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don’t try to force them on, as though you could be today what **time** (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow.”*

In this wintertime, a time of well-hidden signs of life, let us be patient and trust God is at work not only in nature but in our lives. The spring greens will come.

Fr. Chris Manahan, S.J.

Fr. Christopher J. Manahan, S.J.
Director



Nearly four centuries later and we're still here

Did you know the Jesuits first came to what is now Wisconsin in 1634 with the French explorer Jean Nicolet? It's one of the facts we've been reminded of this year as the Green Bay Diocese, where we are located, celebrates its 150th year. Here are some others:

- Menominee Park in Oshkosh has a tablet and boulder memorializing the first Catholic Mass on the shores of Lake Winnebago by Fr. Claude Allouez, S.J., April 20, 1670. The memorial was unveiled in 1921 before a crowd of 1,200 to 1,500.



- Father Allouez wrote about that Mass in one of his many annual letters to his superiors in France: “On the twentieth, which was Sunday, I said Mass, after voyaging five or six leagues on the Lake [Winnebago], after which we came to a River [upper Fox], flowing from a Lake bordered with wild oats [Grand Lake Butte des Morts]; this stream we followed, and found at the end of it the River [Wolf River] that leads to the Outagamis, in one direction, and that which leads to the Machkoutenck, in the other. We entered this first stream, which flows from a Lake [Lake Poygan]; there we saw two Turkeys perched on a tree, male and female, resembling perfectly those of France the same size, the same color, and the same cry. Bustards, Ducks, Swans, and Geese are in great number on all these Lakes and Rivers, — the wild oats, on which they feed, attracting them thither. There are large and small Stags, Bears, and Beavers in great abundance.

- The annual letters that French Jesuits sent to their superiors in France number in the thousands and today provide valuable historical, anthropological, geographical, cultural, and scientific observations about the explorers, missionaries, and indigenous nations from that period in North America. The letters fill 72 volumes: *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*.

First time retreatants – come and see

Sister Susan Kusz, SND, our associate director has been sending postcards since May 2017 to each person who comes for a weekend or summer retreat for the first time at the Jesuit Retreat House, and that number reached 261 by the end of January.

The number of first-time retreatants is a testament to our experience that personal invitations work in leading people here to deepen and grow in their faith.

“Come and see,” Jesus’ response to the question, “Rabbi, where do you live?” is from the first chapter of the Gospel of John and reminds us of the personal invitation Jesus extended to those he chose as disciples. Their response to Jesus’ invitation was to leave everything and follow him. Jesus’ personal touch brings newcomers to the Jesuit Retreat House, too.

Consider inviting someone for a retreat. Ask a young man or woman to “try it out” with you. Invite those in their 20s, 30s and 40s to consider a retreat during this very hectic, demanding time in life. Ask them to bring one of their friends, too. Andrew brought his brother Peter to meet Jesus, and John and James followed Jesus together. May your “come and see” invitations bear much fruit.