



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.

www.JesuitRetreatHouse.org

Divine Whispers

Some may say that stepping away from conversation, screens and electronic devices, and noise is pulling away from life, but the opposite is true when experiencing a multiday retreat at JRH. The opportunity for more depth comes from not doing more but from being more fully present where you are.



As the mind quiets through silence, peace and prayer, distractions lessen, and we can hear divine whispers. These sacred pauses offer more than just rest; they invite a deep listening into one's soul and God's voice.

All our retreats maintain silence to encourage the space and time to connect deeply with God. Participating in liturgies and meetings with spiritual directors are two places where speaking is welcomed. To help retreatants fully immerse themselves in the retreat experience, we discourage the use of cell phones or electronic devices even in the privacy of guest rooms. If emergencies arise and you need to make a call or have a conversation, consider doing it in an isolated location (other than guest rooms) where you won't be affecting the silence others are seeking.

*"Silence doesn't mean unfriendly. Smiles are allowed!"
A March 2025 retreatant*



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Director's Message

Spring has definitely been in the air. At JRH this means that lake flies occupied the air for a couple weeks in May and that pelicans, herons, and egrets glide along the lakeshore. Songbirds' chirping now welcomes each morning and the lawn-mower regularly roars and leaves us with the smell of fresh cut grass.

Summer—just around the corner—seemed to arrive early. In late May we transitioned into our "summer" directed retreat season. Two of those are already behind us. Although the lengthier 5-day and 8-day retreats mean that JRH is more occupied in the summer, these directed retreats have a deeper quiet to them than the preached retreats.

Directed retreats, unlike preached retreats that are delivered in group settings, have an individualized approach. Rather than days being structured around a set of preached conferences, those making a directed retreat meet daily one-on-one with a spiritual director to help guide their spiritual journey. Together they listen to God's presence in the person's life and the director offers guidance for prayer. The experience of a directed retreat is much more personalized than a shared group experience of a preached retreat. Both retreat formats are a way to experience the graces of the Spiritual Exercises.

Another way to experience the Exercises is through a retreat in daily life. This fall we will again offer a format of the Spiritual Exercises spread over eleven weeks. Each of the program's eight sessions will include group prayer, guided meditation, faith sharing and reflection, an orientation to scripture readings, and an overview of the individual prayer exercises to be practiced in the week ahead. Fr. Jim Shea, SJ, will lead this retreat in everyday life. Click on "Meeting Christ in Prayer" under our website's RETREATS & REGISTRATION tab to register.



Behind the scenes, Tanya Biermann has joined the JRH team as a new part-time assistant for advancement and communications. Tanya is helping JRH move forward with a new communications plan.

This summer and fall you will notice a change in how JRH communicates with you. Since 2020 we've emailed a weekly Monday Moment containing a short reflection to start the week. Almost all of JRH's staff participate in authoring a Monday Moment at least once a year. Readers appreciate the spiritual message, variety of perspectives, and continued connection to the retreat house. Beginning this summer look for Monday Moments to arrive in your email in June, July, and August. Monday Moments are no longer taking a summer break and now will be sent year-round!

Our newsletter will continue to be delivered quarterly; however, this June issue of our newsletter is our final mailing of a hard copy. Increasingly, our readership has moved online. Beginning this fall, JRH's newsletter will be delivered electronically and posted on our website. Our annual retreat schedule and annual appeal will continue to be delivered as hard copies.

May you enjoy the Lord's abundant blessings this summer. Please keep our ministry and our summer retreatants in your prayers!

Blessings!

Mark A. Carr, SJ.
Fr. Mark Carr, SJ, Executive Director

Celebrating Manresa’s 10th Anniversary

In January 2015, our Manresa guest wing opened to retreatants after more than five years of design discussions, architectural plans, construction work, and move-in chaos. All this occurred simultaneously with JRH maintaining its regular preached and directed silent retreats. As we celebrate this 10th Anniversary, it is with gratitude and awe that we reflect on everything this project has accomplished for our retreat ministry and to secure the future of Jesuit Retreat House.

Following is a portion of the groundbreaking prayer by then Associate Director Sr. Kerry Larkin, OSM:

“That like the pilgrim, St. Ignatius, we remain true to the path of prayer and service that You desire for us. That all benefactors who make this building possible be richly blessed with freedom, peace, and sustained generosity. That all who lend their creative and physical skills to this project be safe from injury and filled with satisfaction in their work.”

Leading the effort was Fr. John Schwantes, SJ, Executive Director at the time. His collaborative approach began with numerous discussions with retreatants and others about the need to



improve the deteriorating Manresa guest facilities. The consensus was that it made more sense to build a new guest wing with updated facilities, including individual bedrooms each with a private bathroom, than to direct substantial funding to repair and renovate the cinder block building from 1950. This vision also expanded guest capacity from 41 to 60 people.

“It was a bold move,” said Fr. John Schwantes, SJ. “Our retreatants urged us to move ahead. Fortunately, God’s Providence provided us with the people and resources to complete the project.”

Other members of the Manresa team at that time included Emily Benedict, Sr. Kerry Larkin, OSM, Sue Philipp, JRH Business Manager, and Chuck Linde, Construction Manager. This group had daily conversations about nearly every aspect of the project, with everyone’s opinion being valued. Sr. Kerry stated that this was “the most empowering experience of my life.” We remain grateful for each and every volunteer who donated their time and expertise in so many different ways insuring success in the effort.

As approval and support was granted from what was the Wisconsin Province of the Jesuits, significant fundraising was needed to raise the original \$4 million cost, which grew to \$6.2 million by the completion of the project. Dcn. John Ingala led the advancement team with a solid group of volunteers supporting fundraising efforts and secured nearly 1,300 gifts from donors.

Even with the completion of the building there was still work to be done. As the construction costs escalated, JRH had to secure a construction loan to complete the project.

In 2015 Fr. Chris Manahan, SJ, stepped in as Executive Director and assumed the goal to “burn the mortgage.” By the summer

of 2019 JRH made its final payment on the \$6.2 million project. Sue Philipp shared that she cried at that moment. When asked if she cried tears of joy, “No relief!” she chuckled.

Just as there was consensus about the Manresa project, there was consensus from the team after its completion. When asked if they were proud, there was a pause, and then a humble reply, “No, grateful.”



New Build Helped Us Through the Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic shut down the world in March 2020. JRH had to temporarily close its doors to in-person retreats for three months until allowed to reconvene with limited capacity and under strict precautions and guidance from public health officials.

The ensuite guestrooms were a necessity in our ability to reopen. Without them our reopening would most certainly have been delayed. Our housekeeping staff did an amazing job keeping common spaces disinfected and clean, and retreatants safe from the virus.



While each year we have increased the number of guests, several retreats are still shy of their pre-pandemic numbers. If you haven’t joined us for a few years – PLEASE COME BACK – we miss you!

Scan to Register

Increased Capacity to Serve

In addition to the 60 new guest rooms, our Manresa project included the new lower-level Manresa conference and multimedia center, the Chapel of the Annunciation, an art/guest snack room, exercise room and massage room. We also gained two new lounges and a seasonal porch on the first and second floor of Manresa.

The La Storta Conference Room and seven spiritual direction rooms were also renovated. All these ADA/barrier-free facilities and the 50-spot parking lot have increased our capacity to welcome hosted groups whether for a single day or overnight stay. Outside groups that use our facility between regularly scheduled retreats typically bring their own presenters and content. Whether groups gather at JRH for retreat, a meeting, or other event, their purpose aligns with JRH’s mission.

If this sounds like the meeting space your organization has been seeking, contact Tanya Hielke at thielke@jesuitretreathouse.org to check availability and discuss options.

On-site Construction Manager

Many said that having Chuck Linde on site each day was a gift from God. Chuck, who currently oversees JRH’s facilities, served as the construction manager for the project starting at the design development stage through final completion in this capacity full-time for three years. Chuck has a degree from UW Stout in building construction and worked for several years after graduation as a commercial construction project manager and construction manager before returning to the Jesuit Retreat House as facilities manager. He will tell you that his thirty-plus years at JRH has been his vocation. While our campus remained silent during retreat, there was a constant flurry of activity outside of retreats, keeping the project on schedule.



Partnering with Fr. John and the leadership team which met nearly every day, Chuck planned and oversaw the construction, renovation, and destruction of the multi-faceted project. Chuck’s attention to detail identified errors made by contractors when they occurred and demanded corrections be made. Chuck also valued the previous facility and salvaged scrap steel, copper and brass. Old and unneeded fixtures, cabinets and windows were donated to Habitat for Humanity. He was also meticulous about repurposing equipment and furniture for use in the new Manresa. It was said that once the new Manresa was opened, and the old one ready for destruction, the original building was but a shell of its former self, and easy to tear down.

Given the deep history of serving both novices and retreatants for 63 years, memories remain for those who had been sheltered during times of deep prayer. Back in 2014 one retreatant commented, “The next time I come, I fear the dear old Manresa building will be gone and just a memory. I’m leaving many tears, much growth and much gratitude behind in this dear “brick mother.” Her work is done. I hope she has passed on all her sweet secrets to the new kid on the block. Farewell old friend.”