

MARYMOUNT: a gem rediscovered

A Letter from Fr. Jim Lee:

As I sit here on my fourth day of a retreat began late because of pastoral responsibilities in my parish—a sudden drowning of a couple's only two children—I listen to the symphony of wind, birds and silence, and I realize that only now am I beginning to truly enter my retreat. It is Wednesday, a day of Great Silence for deeper solitude and more time for personal prayer. So Lauds are private and Mass is later this evening and it feels like a holiday! It is also May 1st, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, the beginning of Mary's month.

All of these images make up what this holy place is about. Situated in rolling cattle land, solitude and solace abound. There is "room" for the Almighty, Gentle God, the God of our Ancestors, the God ever so close and intimate. There is "room" to encounter and to be encountered by God in all His fullness that overwhelms one in the might of the wind, the awesome snow-covered mountains, ablaze at dawn, the vistas that stretch for miles as well as the deep brown look of a deer grazing outside your hermitage window, the call of a yellow-chested meadowlark and the delicate beauty of spring wildflowers next to a mountain waterfall.

Marymount is kairos, God's time, not chronos, human, overly-scheduled, stress-filled time. You have all day to do nothing—yet the one thing that is necessary, just "being" with God and yourself and all of humanity in prayerful communion, and there is simply not enough time. Simply sitting in Our Father's House, the elegantly simple chapel in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament becomes a "homecoming" of salvific proportions: prodigal son, lost coin, lost sheep. How glad God is; how utterly blessed we are.

I first came to Marymount six years ago in October for my annual retreat. With broken wrist in cast, I knew that God wanted me to rest in Him. It was such a time of healing grace. As I walked and walked the hills allowing the wind to whisk away the sweat as I climbed ridges and draws, God's presence surrounded me in the solitude. Here I confronted old angers and deep darkness. Here I struggled to be free yet again only to find anew the prison was of my own making, not God's.

Six years later I have had the grace to return twice in less than six months. Each season has its own incredible beauty—and its own call from God. In the two days that remain, I have only one agenda—"to be" with God and for God as humbly, as openly, and as lovingly as I am able.

I am grateful to the Hermit Sisters of Marymount, Sister Rebecca Mary and Sister Mary Beverly, for their faithful response to God's call to serve Him and the Church in such a simple way. I am grateful to God for those who have assisted them in making this call a reality in this holy place.

If you feel the call to solitude, if you dare to enter into God's overwhelming embrace, if you desire abandonment in such simplicity, then come on retreat, come to the silence, come to the hills and allow the symphony of God's love fill you, transform you, and embrace you.

In gratitude and praise,

Father Jim Lee

Bellingham, Washington

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