

Letter of Support for Patris Corde Hermitage

It is hard to imagine a time more desperately in need of silence than our own. Every day brings the latest technological advancement and ever-increasing productivity. Despite the goods these provide, life in the modern world is being experienced as *de-humanizing*. The desires of the heart are being drowned out in the noise of our machines—and more than ever, we crave silence.

Life in this technocratic age is not just dehumanizing for man—it is rendering the God question irrelevant. The Church has thus reached that critical moment when the fallout of secularization is upon her; and the more our world keeps doing, moving and noisily pursuing its own ends, the more semblance our restless activity gives in nullifying the human desire for transcendence—that desire to which only the person of Jesus Christ corresponds. As the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar writes:

In a technological age, is man actually still able to see and experience this living form of the Church? This uselessness of holiness, of the divine, of beauty and glory? For this belongs to the perfect form. He sees everywhere only purposes and structures and asks about results.¹

With each passing year, it is becoming harder to find islands of contemplation—places where we can flee the mechanical life of urban society and recover the truth of our being in God. We need places that are not efficient, not technical, not productive—but truly *useless* (in the sense of the squandering of love). Reaching of point of desperation, we need spiritual solace and a place in creation where the living God is once again experienced as alive.

Silence, stillness, and solitude—these are the conditions of what the Russians call *poustinia*—the inner hermitage where God is to be rediscovered. The spirituality of *poustinia*, or hermitage retreat, descends from the most ancient days of the Church, when Christians fled a godless world to rediscover the world of God. The lonely place, *eremo* in the original Greek language, is where we derive the word *hermitage*—a solitary moment of retreat from the cares of self and into the care of God. In hermitage we learn again a basic truth: solitude is not an absence, but a deeper presence.

It is to this purpose that *Patris Corde* Hermitage Retreat Center has been founded. The first of its kind in the Colorado Rockies, it is a providential gift to our local church, but one that needs your support. In a church deeply committed to the *activity* of the new evangelization, we need a complementary *contemplation*; and this requires a physical place where, heeding the words of Christ, we “come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while” (Mk. 6:31). We may do many things for God; but we will only be fruitful if those things flow from

¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Spirit and Fire*, pg. 584.

the life of prayer. For this reason, there seems to me no more important initiative in the Archdiocese of Denver than the foundation of *Patris Corde* Hermitage Retreat Center.

As a member of the of board, I write to you, asking for your support of this unique, timely and providential project. The fruits of the contemplation that will fill this land will be of inestimable richness to the future of our Church—if only we have the faith once again to embrace silence and hear the Word of God anew.

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