

Letter of Support for Patris Corde Hermitage

Dear John and Ashleigh and Friends of *Patris Corde* Hermitage,

Blessings to you and your family as you continue to answer God's call to develop this treasured gift of the contemplative life in this Archdiocese!

Sadly, many still tend to reduce Christianity to a body of doctrines or a set of moral principles. While it certainly is that, the heart of the Christian faith and life is first and foremost a mystical encounter with the Incarnate Son of God. Jesus, crucified and risen, is the Eternal Word of God made flesh. He makes known the uttermost depths of the Father's love, and His Pierced Sacred Heart contains "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3).

Without a doubt, this work to create the space to encounter Him anew is the most crucial work in our time. We need to learn to hear his voice with ever deeper sensitivity and to delight in His goodness and merciful care. St. John tells us, "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made him known" (Jn 1:18). Even more, Jesus dares to call us his friends as He desires to share with us *everything* He has heard from His Father (cf. Jn 15:15). His generosity holds nothing back and, as St. Paul describes, God "has blessed us in Christ with *every* spiritual blessing in the heavens" (Eph 1:3). I think it is easy to forget how much has been given to us in the grace of our baptism and how abundantly the Lord's blessings continually shower upon us without reserve! This overwhelmingly hopeful truth, though forgotten, beckons remembrance. This is *Patris Corde's* task.

To learn to rest in God, to be still and receive the gift of His love like a little child, is a longing of every human heart, but it is surprisingly difficult. Thomas Merton once described the demon of the age as noise. The tyranny of the virtual robs us of the capacity to delight in the truly real. I am convinced that the recovery of our humanity will only happen through an intentional choice to pursue the Lord in silence and solitude. To recover our senses and reacquire a taste for reality, we must venture into the desert. Only then will we be able to appreciate its goodness, delight in its beauty, and be convinced by its truth. The unique retreat experience that *Patris Corde* offers, the simplicity of a hermitage and the tranquil beauty of the mountain wilderness, is the remedy.

In the desert, we allow God to teach us the wisdom of His Heart. He is anxious to reveal afresh His purpose for creation, His plan of great hope for our lives, and His desire to bring life into this world so broken by sin. He strengthens us not merely so that we can work harder, but so that we might enjoy the gift of His love and have within us a renewed zeal for His goodness. He wants us to know the freedom of who we are in His eyes and to have a deep conviction about His call in our lives. Truly, "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21).

All Christians are called to this intimate life with God, but especially priests. Jesus commissioned the first apostles to go and make disciples of all nations and to bear the fruit that brings glory to His Father, but falling into the trap of activism is not what He had in mind. Instead, He challenges them with the one thing necessary: to abide in Him (cf. Jn 15:4). If we abide in Him, He will make our lives fruitful in ways that we cannot imagine. Indeed, the Roman dictum, *nemo dat quod non habet*, simply summarizes this reality, no one gives what one does not have. Without an intimate and

unceasing union with the Lord, priests will have little to offer. As the director of the Spirituality Year at St. John Vianney Seminary, a year dedicated to development of the spiritual life of seminarians, I am thrilled that *Patris Corde* will be able to offer priests the solace of silence and solitude to renew their love for Christ and His Church and to become experts in the encounter between God and man, profound guides in the spiritual life for all the faithful.

Thank you, *Patris Corde*, for committing to this most important of works for priests and laity alike: the art of a life lived with God, filled with the wisdom of His love and radiating the beauty of His grace.

Blessings in Christ,
Fr. Brady Wagner