

# Jesuit Retreat Center

January 2025

Centennial Newsletter Series

## VITALITY

### The Heartbeat of The Jesuit Retreat Center



*Pic: "Rotunda" - The new lounge room, completed in 1962*

Vitality. It is a life force. It is vigor in the service of change. It is the ability to continue to grow. This is The Jesuit Retreat Center way. The Silver Jubilee that celebrated the first 25 years concluded in 1954 with a sobering address by Father Vincent P. McCorry, S.J. Addressing the Catholic Laymen's Retreat Association at their annual communion breakfast, Father McCorry asked: "May we say that the pioneer stage of the men's retreat movement is now substantially over? They then reflected on what had been accomplished in the past decades as they prepared for a new one.

Since the first retreat in April 1925, 94,600 retreatants had come to the Retreat Center. Over 2000 retreats had been given. The Half-Dollar-A-Month Club had become the Dollar-A-Month-Club and continued to significantly reduce the debt owed on the new facilities. A new dream plan had replaced the old with mastermind, Father William J. Tobin, S. J., at the helm. The Rotunda with its walls of glass and balconies overlooking the valley were completed in 1962 thanks to a generous gift from the Frank Cator Estate and a grant from Carl and Celia Gellert. An enlarged lounge in Loyola Hall created more space for recreation and a permanent library was underway.

The Sixth Decade Commemorative Issue of the Catholic Laymen's Retreat Association cited many improvements. The Retreat Center grounds were ready for more artwork and upgrades. A new main entrance, registration room and outdoor staircase were added. Meeting rooms were refurnished. Christ in the Garden was placed in the olive grove, a gift of John E. Morris, and Our Lady of Guadalupe on the hillside above the Rossi Chapel. Notably, two mosaics were gifts from grateful patrons of the arts. St. Joseph the Worker was placed on the exterior wall of the newly completed St. Joseph Hall, and Our Lady of the Way was placed in Mary's Room next to the Rossi Chapel.



*Pic: Statue of Jesus in olive garden*

## **Flashback**



It was in the year 1530 that an especially weary traveler arrived in Rome. On the wall of a building on a particularly busy side street, was a painting of Mary and her Son, soon after known as Our Lady of the Way. Ignatius of Loyola was the tired "wayfarer" who paused to look at it. Here, in the busyness of life was Our Lady and her Son ready to comfort and encourage all who passed by. And on that noisy Roman street, Our Lady of the Way was a sign of fulfillment to Ignatius. Now, at last, after years of sacrifice and faith, he was in Rome to present his plan to the Pope to establish a new Order in the Church. It would come to be named The Society of Jesus. Meanwhile, as Ignatius

continued to visit the picture of Our Lady of the Way for inspiration and guidance, his desires to possess it grew. It was an ardent pastor, overcome by Ignatius' great love for The Mother of God, who gave him not only the picture but the church that now enshrined it, and gave himself to become a member of The Society of Jesus. It can be seen today in the Church of the Gesu in Rome where Ignatius is buried. There are two replicas in Mary's Room next to the Rossi Chapel.

**1960**

Perhaps Father McCorry summoned Our Lady of the Way for guidance in his address to the Laymen's Retreat Association. The title of his talk: ***Men's Retreats, What Now?*** He warned them of the "dangers of stagnation." Something was happening at the Retreat Center that could alter its future. There were signs. Young men were not replacing their fathers and grandfathers at the annual retreat weekends, and deaths began to reduce the size of traditional groups. It was a new era, and it called for new thinking. It's not hard to imagine that some very good people rose to the challenges of the late 1950's and early 1960's. They simply went to work.

Father Tobin led discussions on expanding the length and topics of retreats and the preparation of retreat masters. The cost of a retreat was raised. The first Women's Retreat was an instant success, and each third Wednesday of the month was Women's Day of Recollection. The first Married Couples Retreat soon followed and Family Day became an annual event in 1967. Individually directed retreats were introduced and remain one of the characteristics of the Retreat Center today. "Topic" retreats were considered; Alcoholics Anonymous was one of the first, and focused retreats on healing, grief, and forgiveness. The spirit of Vatican II (1962-1965) added momentum. Vitality was in the air.

The hospitality offered by women became an integral part of each retreat experience. Having their own retreats and days of recollection led to a new community of volunteers. Women became leaders, hosts for retreats and greeters to new groups. Their presence was indispensable and their love for The Spiritual Exercises was imbedded in their contributions as retreatants and as students of The Spiritual Exercises. (More about these women in future newsletters).

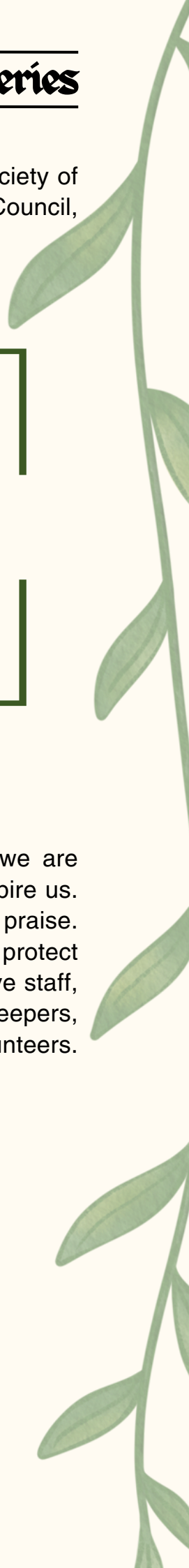


*Pic: First Women's Retreat led by Fr. Frank Harrington, S.J. in 1969.*

Father Pedro Arrupe Gondra, S.J., the 28th Superior General of The Society of Jesus from 1965 to 1983, and an attendee at the Second Vatican Council, captures the spirit of the 1960s in his prayer.

*Grant me, O Lord,  
to see everything now with new eyes,  
to discern and test the spirits  
that help me read the signs of the times,  
to relish the things that are yours,  
and to communicate them to others.  
Give me the clarity of understanding  
that you gave Ignatius.*

Vitality, the heartbeat of The Jesuit Retreat Center. We feel it when we are there. We recognize it in those who welcome us, provide for us, and inspire us. We give back to the pioneers in the Ignatian way of love and service and praise. It is with this vigor in service of change that we thank all who continue to protect and grow the Retreat Center: the Jesuit fathers and faculty, administrative staff, maintenance workers, the excellent chefs in the kitchen, our housekeepers, grounds keepers, financial planners and donors, and the army of volunteers. You carry us forward in the company of Our Lady of the Way.



## Conclusion

Found on the last page of a Catholic Laymen's Retreat Association Bulletin (1960), an anonymous retreatant offered his prayer:

### For Our Senior Retreatants: A Prayer for those Growing Old


*Lord, Thou knowest that I am growing older.  
Keep me from becoming talkative and  
possessed with the idea that I must express  
myself on every subject. Release me from  
the craving to straighten out everyone's  
affairs. Keep me from the recital of endless  
detail. Give me wings to get to the point.*

*Seal my lips when I am inclined to tell of my  
aches and pains. They are increasing with  
the years and my love to speak grows  
sweeter as time goes by.*

*Teach me the glorious lesson that  
occasionally I may be wrong. Make me  
thoughtful but not nosey; helpful but not  
bossy. With my vast store of wisdom and  
experience, it does seem a pity not to use  
it all. But Thou knowest, Lord, that I want  
a few friends at the end. Amen*

**Next issue: The Vitality of the 1970's.**

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# Upcoming Events

January 2025

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## **Choosing Presence: Listening to the Voice of Love**

February 7-9, 2025

## **WORKSHOP: Introduction to Ignatian Discernment**

February 14- 16, 2025

## **42nd Annual Retreat for Members of the Legal Profession**

February 28 - March 2, 2025

## **Ash Wednesday**

March 5, 2025

## **Married Couples Retreat**

March 7 - 9, 2025

## **A Prayer Journey with The Psalms**

March 21 - 23, 2025

**FOR MORE EVENTS**



## **Centennial Mass & Reception**

March 15, 2025

10:00 am - 3:00 pm

<https://www.jrclosaltos.org/centennialmass>