

SACRED HEART JESUIT RETREAT HOUSE

SEDALIA, COLORADO

I just returned from a magical three-day silent retreat at the magnificently cared for Jesuit Retreat House in Sedalia, Colorado.

I felt drawn to the solitude, the prayerful direction and intuitive aura of this ancient way to connect with God.

In lieu of journaling my experiences, I chose to create an artistic journal similar to my experience on the lower Mississippi three months ago in April. There colorfully complex creations are drawn intuitively, often without my understanding their meaning until I see the finished product.

As with all retreats or events (like at The Monroe Institute), the halfway point can be brutal. And this three days at the Retreat House found day two winding me into a spring ready to pounce upon any and all inner conflicts. Good thing it was a silent retreat because I wanted to scream out of frustration with my inability to center my emotions and absorb the lessons from the way cool Father Paul, my Spiritual Director.

I was consecrated and confirmed in the Reformed Jewish faith, so I had no education on the New Testament. Pitifully, I have had to reparent myself and seek out Theosophical as well as classical knowledge. During my past year after baptism and confirmation in the Catholic Church, the comfort of richness of scripture has opened to me like a fresh rose on a dewy morning, Although I had spent time with scripture during my adult years, I missed a lot. A lot!

So, here we go – Day One of the silent retreat began with the Monday full moon and lunar eclipse. Synchronicity? I found myself drawing a steeple similar to the one on the chapel here. Then, the sacred heart image led me into scripting some prayers in French. I am Creole. My birth in New Orleans still holds me dearly in the arms of that city at the bay.

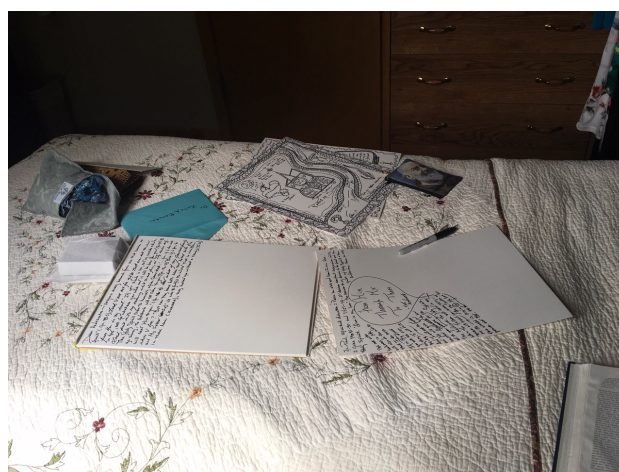
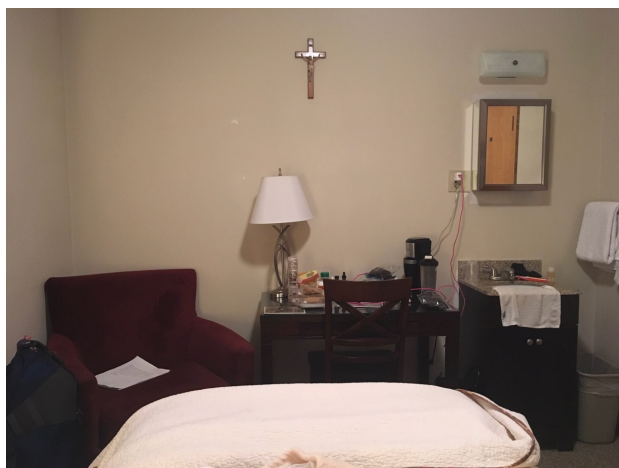
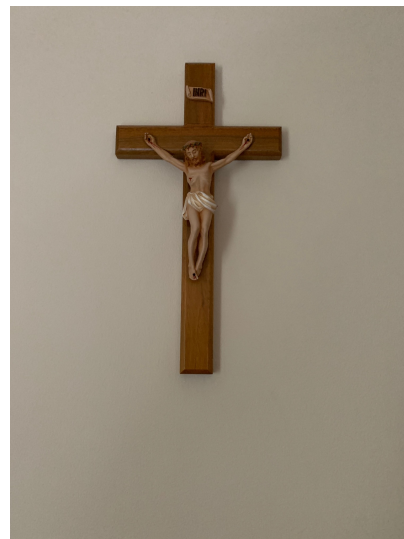
The figure in the right corner represents the gorgeous statue overlooking the valley of Sedalia.



I drew next a pathway leading from the earth to the sky. Our own paths are an archetype for searching. The lower right corner displays the dove Holy Spirit descending into the Eucharist, above a downward arrow with the words "the lost", leading into the final statement of "All who fall together...pray for these pitiful ones."

I wrapped the piece in green leaves and the purple of spirituality. I decided to use the same colors on all three artistic journal pieces. I do that sometimes to create a triptych of continuity.

Accommodations at the Sacred Heart Jesuit Retreat House are clean, minimalist and similar to the monastic cells of monasteries. Combined with the silence, the fresh air of Colorado and the gentle generosity of the staff, I found a petri dish of potential for insulated prayer and intuitive uncovering.





On Tuesday, day two, I restlessly wandered the grounds after a fitful night. Did I really expect such a sacred space to be bereft of dead monks?! I was awakened every hour by yet a different dead dude “checking in on me”, shuffling through my notebook or noisily rummaging around to see what I was about. Finally, around 4 a.m. I stuffed my pillow over my head and unceremoniously directed them to get the hell out of my cell. I then dreamed of snakes, representing the kundalini and wisdom, not an unpleasant theme for me.

By the time I met with Fr. Paul at 10:00, I was exhausted but exhilarated by finally having an hour to talk with a live priest.

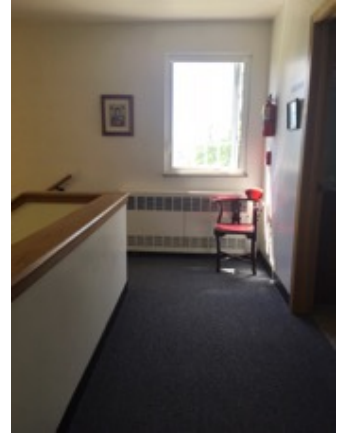
Another coincidence was that he and I are both native of lower Louisiana. As he gazed at me copper bracelets, tattoos and long red nails, he grinned and commented that “You know Zoli, Louisiana Catholics are rather, well, plain.” His smile broadened as I said “Yeah, well, I AM and eccentric artiste!”

Fr. Paul suggested I read John 15.30, focusing on The Advocate, who is The Holy Spirit. Jesus says that He leaves us so that He can send The Advocate. I am totally in love with the Holy Spirit – how She moves and inspires God’s Will through active direction. As I returned to my cell to get my rosary for Mass, I got a bit dizzy and stopped as I gazed down the long hallway housing the cells in the dormitory area. I heard in my minds voice, “The Advocate’s House has



many doors. As is repeated several times in John, we can ask anything of Him if and only if we are in alignment of what is His desire for us – to love one another.

Still a bit dizzy, I sat down in a chair at the far end of the hall, seeing myself walking down it jiggling doorknobs, all of which were locked as though not mine to open, until I came to one already cracked open, see?



So, this drawing mirrors the frustrated Zoli, impatient and rebelliously avoiding her innermost voice that day. As you read the copy on it, you can see it is not without humor. As I walked the grounds, I had a vision of a person excitedly yelling that Jesus was here, then there, then all over the place. That person is the ego, chasing after God. Stop. Just stop.

When I awakened on the third and final day of my silent retreat, I was joyful but still exhausted by the nighttime visitations from the several priests in spirit who had been busying around my cell for two days and nights. There were three of them, delightful but nosey, rifling through my art pad and notes, curious about my pile of vitamin pills and admiring, actually, the ankle length, long sleeved dresses I had brought for my daily wear. One of them had scared the poop out of me when I was heading into Mass yesterday. He was sitting in the chair to the left of the few stairs leading into the great room, saying he was Fr. Baldacci.

But during Mass today, when Fr. Paul spoke the words of prayer for all those laying in their graves awaiting resurrection, I felt myself transported to dark damp catacombs, God knows where. My feet were bare, and the earthen floor felt cool. I felt the heavy coarseness of a long-hooded robe scratching me as I ran. I held a torch aloft in my right hand and grasped a rosary in my left. As I ran, I yelled "Wake up, wake up! He is here! Wake up!" The catacomb walls were lined with coffins and lit torches. No one else was there.

In this third art piece, I find yet another path leading symbolically from one state of consciousness to the next. The communion cup is filled with the tears from the lost ones. Pray for them.







This silent retreat felt ancient, as though I were transported in time to a monastic experience from another life.

As I return to my wonderful life with my husband in Montana, I carry with me a hope that my experiences there will decrease my ignorance, allowing more light into my personality and soul.

My prayers are that I do good, love mercy and walk humbly with my God. Blessed be in the name of Spirit.

