



Summer 2020

Linda Leib Stepping Down as Bridges Executive Director

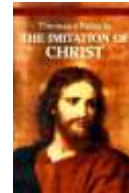
Linda Leib has announced that she is resigning from the Executive Director position on May 15, 2021. She will remain active until then with maintaining the Bridges Retreat sites, facilitating the Bridges site that is re-opening in O'Fallon, Illinois, facilitating one of the Magis small groups, and many other activities. We are grateful to Linda for the outstanding work she has done for Bridges in the Executive Director position for four years.

The search is on for a new Executive Director. Please contact any board member if you have any suggestions or recommendations. △

The Imitation of Christ

Near the beginning of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius indicates that it can be profitable to read from *The Imitation of Christ*. Just what does he mean here? *The Imitation of Christ* is a Christian devotional book attributed to Thomas à Kempis (c. 1380-1471) and first published in the early fifteenth century, about seven decades before the birth of Ignatius. It was quite popular in its day and is still in print. The book has four primary sections of religious instruction, each divided into several short chapters. It emphasizes the point that God is everything, and humanity is of far less importance, that the eternal truth

which humans seek comes from God in abundance, and that imitating the spirit, life, words, and actions of Jesus Christ is the way to achieving a state of grace with God.



The Imitation of Christ is thought to be, next to the Bible, the most widely read Christian devotional work. Originally written in medieval Latin, it has been translated into English and many other languages, more so than any book other than the Bible. It was widely read in Ignatius' day. It is still in print today and available at most major bookstores for prices ranging as low as \$2.50. It had a strong effect on Ignatius' thoughts as he formulated his ideas for the Spiritual Exercises. In addition to Ignatius, among those who have acknowledged the influence of *The Imitation of Christ* are St. Thomas More, St. Francis de Sales, John Wesley, St. Thérèse of Lisieux and Thomas Merton. △

During the Second Week, and also the following Weeks, it is profitable to spend occasional periods in reading from The Imitation of Christ, the Gospels, or lives of the saints.

-- [Spiritual Exercises 100]

Bridges Summer 2020 Information Sessions

Bridges Retreat Information

One-hour information sessions providing information about the Bridges Retreat in 2020-2021 will be held this summer. At the information session, you will have the opportunity to ask any questions you might have about the Bridges Retreat and the application process. Registration for the sessions is not required, there is no cost for the sessions, and there is no obligation or pressure to enroll. You may attend as many of the sessions as you like, however, it is suggested that one is all you really need as they all cover the same material.

As a result of the inconvenience to all caused by the corona virus situation, all of the information sessions will be offered online via a Zoom connection instead of at the locations listed here. Contact Linda Leib at <linda.leib@bridgesfoundation.org> or 314-313-8283 for more information or to receive a Zoom invitation link to one of the sessions. When the Bridges Retreat begins in September, the plan is to do one-on-one meetings and group meetings using a Zoom connection until at least early December, and then review whether it is safe to hold face-to-face meetings. △

Information Sessions for Bridges Retreat Beginning in September 2020

Southwest St. Louis County

Webster Groves Christian Church
1320 West Lockwood, St. Louis, MO 63122
Wednesday, July 15, 2020 at 10 a.m.
Wednesday, Aug 19, 2020 at 7 p.m.

North City

St. Matthew the Apostle Catholic Church
2715 North Sarah, St. Louis, MO 63113
Date in July 2020 to be scheduled.

West County

Annunziata School
9333 Clayton Road, St. Louis, MO 63124
Tuesday, July 21, 2020 at 7 p.m.
Tuesday, August 11, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Midtown

St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church
Ballroom, 3628 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108
Sunday, August 2, 2020: after the 8:00 a.m. Mass
Sunday, August 9, 2020: after the 10:30 a.m. Mass

Metro East

St. Nicholas Spirituality Center
625 Saint Nicholas Dr, O'Fallon, IL 62269
Thursday, June 11, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

St. John Berchmans, S.J. (1599-1621)

St. John Berchmans, S.J. was a Jesuit scholastic who lived in the early seventeenth century in Europe and died at a young age. He is the patron saint of altar servers, Jesuit scholastics and students.

John Berchmans was born in the city of Diest (not far from Brussels) on March 13, 1599, in what is now Belgium, and named for John the Baptist. The oldest of five children, his father was a shoemaker. When his mother was stricken with a serious illness, John spent many hours by her bedside providing her with encouragement, using his naturally cheerful attitude. When the Jesuits opened a college at Malines (Mechlin) in 1615 he was one of the first to enroll, and a short time later announced his intention to join the Society of Jesus. His father was opposed to the idea and took young John out of the school and sent him to a Franciscan convent. An older relative there sought to dissuade him from joining the Jesuits, and his father informed him that he would provide no financial support if that were the case, but John was resolute in his determination and was received in the Jesuit novitiate at Mechlin.

John Berchmans was bright, positive, well-liked by his peers, extroverted, willing to take on tough jobs, kind, diligent, very pious, and blessed with a very retentive memory. He had a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin. After two years in the Jesuit novitiate he was assigned briefly to Antwerp to study philosophy, then proceeded to the Roman College in Rome to further his studies for another three years. John expected a great deal

from himself and insisted on performing even the smallest of acts with perfection. He strictly



John Berchmans, S.J.

adhered to the rules of his order and was zealous in his obedience, his purity, and his charitable works on behalf of others. He sought to attain the highest level of purity by following to the letter the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. It was said that he preferred death to living with having violated any of the rules of the Jesuit order. His spiritual model was St. Aloysius Gonzaga, S.J., as well as the English Jesuit martyrs -- indeed, he had at one time desired martyrdom on the field of battle, if needed. The prefect of studies selected Berchmans to participate in a philosophical disputation at the Greek College under the direction of the Dominicans. He made quite an

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St. John Berchmans, S.J.

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impression there but returned to Rome, was stricken with a fever, and died on August 13, 1621, at age 22. Berchmans was beatified in 1865 and canonized in 1888. His feast day is August 13.

“If I do not become a saint when I am young I shall never become one.”

-- John Berchmans, S.J.

Miracles have been attributed to the saint, particularly one that occurred in the United States. In 1866, just after the close of the Civil War, a novice nun in poor health, Mary Wilson, was living in Grand Coteau, Louisiana. She had enrolled at the Academy of the Sacred Heart in the hope that the mild climate there would be beneficial to her health. She was unable to speak and subsisted on a liquid diet for six weeks. She prayed for help through the intercession of St. John Berchmans that if it was God’s will that her health be restored then so be it, and if not, she asked for patience to see it through to the end. Mary said that at that moment Berchmans appeared to her in a vision and she was completely healed. A boys’ school was added in 2006 and the school was named Saint John Berchmans Academy of the Sacred Heart. It remains as the sole shrine at the exact location of a confirmed miracle in the United States. △



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Ignatian Community Retreat Postponed

The Ignatian Community Retreat that had been planned for July 17-18, 2020 has been postponed as a result of the persistent presence of the corona virus. It is to be held July 10 & 11, 2021 with the same facilitator, Michael Sparough S.J. When the details are settled, they will be posted on the Bridges website at www.bridgesfoundation.org. △

Final Issue

This is the last issue of the *Bridges Newsletter* for this editor, as I feel it is now time to move on. Thank you to those who have read it and provided input to me to help with the newsletter over the years. It has been a joy putting it together. △

This is the newsletter of the Bridges Foundation of St. Louis. The newsletter has been published quarterly and distributed as a PDF file via email, free to anyone who would like to receive it. Thank you to the contributors to this issue: Linda Leib and Tom Simon.

Tom Simon, Editor

