

“You Will Be My Witnesses”



In Acts 1: 8, Jesus says to His disciples: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” Not until the day of Pentecost did the disciples receive the full measure of the Father’s promise – the gift of the Holy Spirit – to be living witnesses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter, for example, on the night that Jesus was arrested denied Him three times. However, on the morning of Pentecost after having received the gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter was the one who gave a lengthy public testimony about Jesus Christ that led to many conversions (see Acts 2: 14-37). Indeed, it was Peter’s transformation that vivified his public witness to the love of God, which led to the transformation of over three thousand people in one day. It was the same Spirit who touched the life of Blessed Catherine Kasper, whose partners in the work of the Spirit would be moved to create a ministry like Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center, a place where transformation continues to happen in North Central Indiana.

Young people in today’s world are seeking ways in which to discover their purpose in life; why they were born. As they prepare for the sacrament of Confirmation, the youth of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese are taught that Jesus has a specific mission for each of them as individuals, and that they too, like the disciples, will be guided by the Holy Spirit. As a part of their Confirmation preparation, some of the youth of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese are coming to Lindenwood to participate in Lindenwood’s new *Embrace Confirmation Retreat* program. We have designed this program to reflect the core values of the PHJC Community – Openness

to the Spirit, Community, Simplicity, and Dignity and Respect for All – by including young people in the work of the Spirit. With these principles in mind, Lindenwood created a new *Embrace Confirmation Retreat* program that sends the youth on retreat to visit the residents of Catherine Kasper Life Center (CKLC) in order to be living witnesses (cf Acts 1: 8) of Christ’s love to those at CKLC. Lindenwood’s motivation for collaborating with CKLC is driven by a recent study that shows that nearly twenty-five percent of American citizens over the age of sixty-five are at risk of becoming elder orphans, those lacking family or a surrogate support system (see *Elder Orphans: Hiding in Plain Sight* by J. Fujiwara, et al). With great energy and enthusiasm for new experiences of human interaction, young people from Lindenwood’s *Embrace Confirmation Retreat* program bring their hope and joy to those whom they encounter at CKLC, all the while undergoing their own transformation. When the retreat participants are asked how they would live out the themes of the *Embrace Confirmation Retreat* after they had gone home, one said, “When I get home, I will pray more often and really visit a nursing home to meet those in need.” Lindenwood’s *Embrace Confirmation Retreat* helped strengthen this participant’s relationship with Jesus Christ and commitment to the broader church community.

These two benefits that Lindenwood had in mind when creating its *Embrace Confirmation Retreat*, i.e. to strengthen the individual’s relationship with Jesus Christ and to increase his or her commitment to the church community, has drawn attention to partners in the community who share the same vision. Most recently, Lindenwood has accepted with gratitude an investment from *Our Sunday Visitor* that will help transform the lives of many more young people. In his letter of congratulations, Jerome Kearns, Executive Director of Our Sunday Visitor Institute, affirmed Lindenwood for the “wonderful work that Lindenwood is doing for the Church.” With *Our Sunday Visitor*’s investment, Lindenwood will be able to provide scholarships to over 375 youth in the coming year.

 Christopher Thelen, Director, Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center