



## ‘Trust in Providence’

By Audri Talmadge *Audri works at Health SET*



Audri and Max at Health SET

“May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.”  
– St. Therese of Lisieux

**T**his quote given to me by one of my community members has a conflicting effect on me. Depending on the day, this phrase incites an emotional response in me ranging from quiet peace and satisfaction to that teeth gritting frustration when things don't work out the way I've expected them to be at all.

“May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.”

Through this year I've experienced my spiritual life as the connection between my head, my heart, and my faith, and it is where I want it to be in every way. God feels close, gazing at me, and peace seems attainable. It's

like a feeling that you get when you breathe in the mountain air, surrounded completely by God's beauty found in nature. The sun shines down and kisses your face and you feel truly content.

But I've also learned from my time here that faith can be mind-numbingly difficult. I've experienced a totally new type of stress – concern for the patients at Health SET and my community members can overwhelm me. When I first experienced spiritual direction I felt like a hot mess. Tears, tissues, red-eyes, and a broken, discouraged spirit were the remains of what my spiritual director had to put back into place.

“May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.”

Now I know that I AM exactly

where I am meant to be. Life isn't always sunshine and rainbows. But God is always present. I'll never be abandoned. I can trust that God is shaping me, smoothing me, molding me to be who He needs me to be. I am so blessed to have my community, family, and worksite supporting me in this journey.

St. Therese finishes the quote with this, “Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love.” I'm aiming to let God's companionship settle deep in. That will take a lifetime to do, but my journey with CVV is nudging me to settle in deeper waters where I hope to feel the true freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love. 🙏

## A New Understanding of Community

By Thomas Lux

Thomas works at St. Francis Center

Very recently, our CVV community went on a retreat to the Cistercian Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado. My preconceptions of this retreat were mixed. Monasteries are notoriously silent places where prayer is the main pursuit of the monks. I was apprehensive about being silent all weekend because the presence of silence has a way of making situations uncomfortable and awkward. However, as we were on our way to Snowmass I realized that a visit to a monastery could be a great revitalizing experience; and could give me an opportunity to reflect on life rather than to get caught up in the chaos that surrounds our worksites at CVV. When we arrived in Snowmass and got a full view of the mountains next to Aspen, I knew this retreat was going to be special. That night we joined the monks for Vespers. The monks sat on chairs in an oval and led the prayer as a group. I could see that the monks were united in their prayer, reciting low Gregorian chants together and moving their bodies in unison. Our silent breakfast and lunch were not as challenging of an experience as I thought it would be. The silence brought a calm presence and a stress free environment in which we were able to read by ourselves, view the mountains in the distance, or just reflect on our experience at the monastery thus far. I don't think I would want to have silence during all of my meals at CVV, but it was a tranquil communal event.

Later in the evening after Vespers, we remained silent as we all went back to our dwelling places. What will we do with the rest of the evening? The more I pondered that question the more I realized that we had limited options. In their life of solitude the monks have fewer distractions. I think that a lack of options and fewer distractions makes their lives more simple than mine, but also



Thomas and Bernard at St. Francis Center

more difficult. During our visit, our options came down to reading one of the many books in the monks' book collection, praying, or going to sleep. I viewed these options negatively the first night we stayed at the monastery. Then I compared these options to my normal weekend plans. On weekends back in Denver I am typically concerned about being social and trying to soak up as much Denver as I can. Multiple options often create stress. With limited options between prayer times at the monastery, there were fewer distractions and I became more focused on what was important to me.

The last highlight of the retreat for me was our two hour dialogue with the monks on Saturday afternoon. It was very interesting to listen to the monks' responses to our questions. They had wise input and it was great to hear them speak and learn more about their personalities outside of prayer time. They mentioned that they are very tied to the monastery and so they remain on

location for most of the year except when they must tend to their families and relatives. I sensed that family and community are very important facets of monastery living for the monks. I believe this way of thinking about community is very beneficial to maintain a healthy communal experience. I learned some important lessons from monastery living that I can strive to utilize at CVV: the importance of silence as it fosters reflection and renewal in me; the importance of living a simple life with fewer distractions causing less stress and leading me to become more focused on my priorities. Lastly, the value of community. This was manifested by the monks' unity during prayer times and by their commitment to permanently reside at the monastery regardless of events that may be happening outside the monastery. These three facets of monastery living were inspiring to me, and they foster a desire in me to live my life in a similar way. 🕯



Snowmass Monastery

## A Change of Heart

By Elizabeth Downes, Elizabeth works at Mount St. Vincent Home

I recently had a conversation with one of my coworkers about the students who will be discharging from the Mount Saint Vincent Home in the near future. We stood there for a few minutes laughing at the silly and cute things they do and reflecting on the strides they have made. Our conversation took a sad turn when we came to the realization about how much we will miss these students. It took us a minute before we remembered how much work is required to get to a point where a student is able to discharge. A student comes to MSV with a traumatizing past, which makes it difficult for them to act as they are expected too. In order to discharge, a student must make vast progress on their therapeutic goals.

I have developed a strong relationship with a student who discharged in March. At first he came to me in a cloud of jubilee, expressing nothing but excitement and joy, and giving me many reminders about the hard work he has put in. As time passed and his days at MSV drew to a close he began telling me about his apprehensions, worries and fears. He explained that MSV is a school where he has always felt welcomed and would miss the students and staff tremendously. His last week here was filled with stories about his past and how he is a different student now. He asked for countless hugs and one-on-one staff time because he needed to "save up," not only so he wouldn't forget us, but more importantly, so we wouldn't forget him. He explained that his increasing nerves were because he knew a bully at his old school and didn't want to tie



Elizabeth with students at Mt. St. Vincent Home

in with him. But he would be okay this time because he had his tools and "knows exactly how to use them."

The transformation he underwent was not easy; in fact, it took a lot of time and patience (on our end and on his). But one thing is for sure: he is a more centered, focused and determined child. Change is not easy for any of us. Transformative moments are generally approached with a great deal of trepidation. With only three months left with CVV I sometimes feel like I have missed these moments because I've been too worried about living it instead of reflecting on them.

But these are the most important and molding stories, so I'll continue to let them change my heart as they wish. I have come to realize that in the quiet moments my mind drifts to my own discharge from CVV and the tools I have been provided to practice kindness, patience and compassion. All tools I use everyday at MSV, that need to be constantly practiced. My most transformative stories, however, come hidden throughout the chaos of my day, because despite what people say about me changing their lives, it's them who have had an irrevocable affect on my heart. 🕯

## The Garden

By Sarah Ault who works at the Urban Peak G.E.D. program

Walking out of the house one morning, I saw a little flower beginning to bloom out of the snow. For many of you, I am sure that this does not seem magical, but for someone who grew up in New Orleans, where it never snows, seeing this true sign of spring immediately sent joy to my heart. Soon after witnessing this little flower, my community and I headed up to the mountains of Snowmass for our silent spring retreat. As I was sitting on the porch of my little hermitage, looking out at the mountains covered in snow, I found myself meditating on how that little flower blooming in the snow was very similar to our human journeys.

Winter is usually seen as a time of gloom and despair, because of what we can see from the outside. With our eyes, we see leaves falling from trees, flowers wilting, grass browning, and we use the term "death" to describe all of these things. In reality, there is great life and growth happening under the surface—this is much of what life is like. For plants, there is great growth happening in their roots. There is much we can learn from plants about how God intends our hearts to be. For trees, while their leaves fall off, their trunks stand tall through snow, wind, and ice; it is their roots that keep them grounded and soak up the essential nutrients, whilst ever growing deeper and wider into the ground. Flowers, though their blossoms decay, wait patiently in the ground for spring to come, so they may bloom yet again to bring great joy and color to the world. We, as humans, are called to do the same.

In the face of adversity (similar to a snowstorm), with God's aid, we should stand tall and grow our roots deeper into the very thing that gives us life—Christ. Though things around us may tumble, be it job opportunities, a stable living situation, or even just knowledge of what the future will bring, our core being is still a model for the world.

Other times, we need to humble ourselves and turn to inward growth that perhaps the rest of the world does not see, in order for us to be better stewards of God's love. Sometimes, this involves stripping away judgments that we have been taught, so that our roots may grow and change us to more loving beings. Sometimes, God uses situations that make us feel bare to help cultivate the garden of our souls, so as to bring about His kingdom in a brighter manner. And often times, this cultivation happens without us even noticing. It is in these times that we become impatient and look for help elsewhere. But like flowers, we are called to be patient and wait for our time to bloom, for our time to use our talents and gifts in a fulfilling manner. As our year with CVV comes to a close, I wait, like that little flower, for God to show me where He needs my joyful blossoms to spring up next, perhaps in the midst of the snow. 🕯



Sarah and Mariela at Urban Peak



Iram and Kevin at Metro CareRing

## 57 Miles, 57 Hours

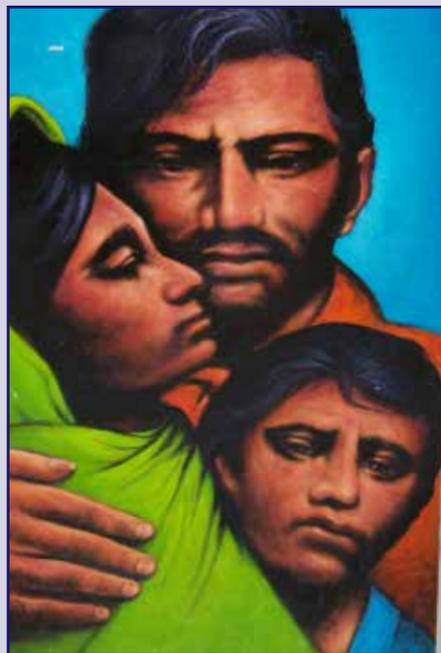
By Iram Ruiz *Iram works at Metro CareRing*

Turning around, I realized I was holding the dinner line up, which for the residents of the Guadalupe Shelter in Greeley, CO, about 57 miles from downtown Denver, was a couple seconds. Two seconds too long. Without hesitating, an older person behind me stepped in front of me and gave me the

5-second guide to the medium-sized cafeteria essentials, which included pointing to the following: trays, utensils, main dish, dessert, condiments, coffee area, and donuts and pastries. As I grabbed my tray of meatloaf, cornbread, and a cupcake, I thought of how nice the next two days were going to be with someone else cooking all three meals. I also thought of how I had no clue where to sit. I scanned the room and spotted the quietest 4-person table I could find and figured I'd feel most comfortable eating there. As I sat at the table, the man to the left said, "You know, feel free to sit wherever you want; no one really cares around here." In the 57 hours that followed, I learned about the policies at the shelter, engaged with and spoke to a handful of residents, and attempted to blend in. It seemed (and still does) that the shelter was set up for people to genuinely succeed by people in charge who genuinely care and feel that this is what they have been called to do. It was great to witness the mutual respect the residents and staff have for each other.

As I put down my fork after my first delicious bite of meatloaf, the man sitting directly across from me looked at me, smiled, and introduced himself as Marty. After asking me if I spoke Spanish (in his broken English), he re-introduced himself as Martín. Next thing I knew, Martín and I were carrying on a 3-hour conversation in Spanish. Over the course of our conversation, he gave me a tour of the male dormitories,

where I would spend a night, and we even kept our conversation going while he completed his bathroom cleaning chore. He immigrated to the US when he was 22 years-old and was undocumented for the first seven years he was in the U.S. In all honesty, most of the details as to the reason why this happened were lost in translation due to my inability to keep up with the rate at which he spoke. But I believe his father, who is a U.S. citizen, forgot to claim him as his child. I also gathered that he had 5 daughters and a wife living out-of-state until he could work to save enough money. Marty ultimately ended up at the Guadalupe Shelter because of a speeding ticket he received while driving his wife to the hospital while she was in labor in the backseat. As I saw the nook in which two bunk beds provide a place to rest for Marty and three other men, I noticed his reading material was simply two different versions of the Bible. He looked at me and told me that the two things that have patiently gotten him through his troubles is being able to speak to his wife and girls everyday and to God. When he is not working, running errands, using a computer, or watching Univision, Marty is looking for strength in God and his family. My conversation with Martín was the first (and longest) of multiple interactions at the Guadalupe Shelter that humbled me and made me think twice about the way I approach my own obstacles and difficulties. All this and more I learned in 57 hours. ✚



## Sounds of Silence

By Christina Konkey  
*Christina works at Urban Peak*

"He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence." (1 Kings)

Sometimes I believe that I am best conceptualized as a force of nature: Hurricane Christina. I'm often surprised that my laugh doesn't split the Rockies with its hearty echoing guffaws, that the earth doesn't quake beneath my rambunctious dance moves, and that I don't spontaneously combust in the all-consuming flame of my excitable and passionate personality. But this year I have discovered God in the most surprising of places: the sound of sheer silence.

At the beginning of this year, I was invited to participate in a centering prayer (a form of Christian meditation) workshop by one of my wonderful community members. There, we were introduced to the teachings of Father Thomas Keating: "Silence is God's first language; everything else is a poor translation." As a girl who prides herself on her gift of gab but is not especially adept at learning new languages, this concept was all at once intimidating and relieving. For weeks after that Saturday morning workshop, I practiced centering prayer.

Silence has continue to "speak" to me and was recently affirmed as we participated in a retreat with the Cistercian monks of St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, CO. When I told my friends and family about my plans for the weekend, I was met with belly laughs and wheezes: How could anyone expect you not to speak for the better part of a three-day weekend? But I have truly found God in the sound of sheer silence - God's first language (not mine!) - and I appreciate the way my prayer life has been forever changed. ✚



Christina with Urban Peak Youth

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**A few needs at CVV...**

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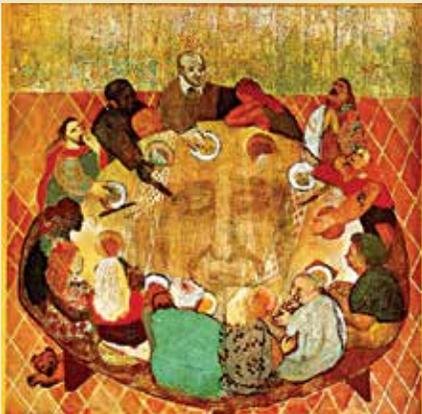
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## Without You, What Would We Do?



Thank you for the myriad ways that YOU are part of our CVV Community: offerings of financial donations, food, household items, trucks, house repairs, office help, mailing assistance, prayer, advocacy, etc. Without YOU, what WOULD we do?!

The CVV food budget is supplemented by support from Spinelli's Market, King Soopers Reclamation Center, Steve Compton's Pepperidge Farm franchise, Food Bank of the Rockies, Regis University's "Fr. Woody Holy Week Food Drive," the Catholic Worker Soup Kitchen and Panera Bread through Jean McMahon's effort; thanks to all.

Regular donors who contribute monthly through Colorado Gives and donors who contribute via newsletters, checks, Foundations - you make a difference in the day-to-day operations.

March Madness at CVV... The following universities participated in service trips coordinated by CVV... De Paul U., St. Edwards U., Creighton U., St. Scholastica, St. Benedict's/ St. John's University. ✚

**"Without prayer, I should be of little service."**

*-- St. Elizabeth Ann Seton*

Special thanks to Gloria Padilla de Garcia, who has gifted our Board of Directors for the last several years! Gloria's expertise and gentle, compassionate nature will truly be missed!

And to Ryan Martin, who worked with us on staff, we bid a fond farewell with blessings and prayers! Ryan and Maura and their 3 children Honora, Clare Rose and Patrick, are headed to Cameroon for 3 years with Lay Mission Helpers. Ryan's and Maura's commitment to CVV has graced us abundantly, and now they will bless others as a family in Africa.

**"Our Lord has no use for our knowledge or our good works if he does not possess our heart; and even this heart he does not wish if we do not give it to him when he asks." -- St. Vincent**