



THE WEST VIRGINIA INSTITUTE FOR SPIRITUALITY

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NEWS FROM WVIS

2025 #1

Message from our Board President

Reverend David S. Lake

Dear WVIS Community,

We are not the only creatures of habit. We are not the only ones that do something a certain way. Read on:

If you put a *buzzard* in a pen that is 6 feet by 8 feet and is entirely open at the top, the bird, in spite of its ability to fly, will be an absolute prisoner. The reason is that a buzzard always begins a flight from the ground with a run of 10 to 12 feet. Without space to run, as is its habit, it will not even attempt to fly but will remain a prisoner for life in a small jail with no top.

The ordinary *bat* that flies around at night, a remarkably nimble creature in the air, cannot take off from a level place. If it is placed on the floor or flat surface, all it can do is shuffle about helplessly and, no doubt, painfully, until it reaches some slight elevation from which it can throw itself into the air. Then, at once, it takes off.

A *bumblebee*, if dropped into an open tumbler, will be there until it dies, unless it is taken out. It never sees the means of escape at the top but persists in trying to find some way out through the sides near the bottom. It will seek a way where none exists, until it completely destroys itself.

In many ways we are like the buzzard, bat, and bumblebee. We struggle about with our problems and frustrations – living in the past and trapped by what was. We at times have forgotten that Almighty God has given us the ability to look up! The answer is always above! Our hope always comes from above.

How simple the answer can be. But it takes a lifetime to learn and remember. As we continue into this New Year, it is good to remember that we can always look up. We were created with free will and yes, this at times gets us into trouble...when we make wrong choices. Yes, God created us this way...but we were also created with a mind and with the ability to make responsible decisions. We are always in need of grace and forgiveness. This grace and forgiveness comes through the life and love of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

May we always look up!

Rev. David S. Lake

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Rev. David S. Lake'.



Visit the WVIS website (www.wvis.org) to learn more about spiritual direction, retreat options, and upcoming programs.

What a Celebration!

On December 18th, under the direction of Sister Mary Irene, Sister Carole's piano students performed for parents, siblings and grandparents in Cenacle Hall at the WVIS. While she was ill, Sister Carole had asked Sister Mary Irene to continue the piano lessons with her students. Sister Mary Irene graciously agreed.

The lessons continued throughout the Fall, culminating in a Christmas Recital with each child choosing and performing their favorite holiday song. Such a celebration, as after the recital everyone enjoyed light refreshments and merriment. Sister Mary Irene declared, "Everyone did a wonderful job, and the parents and grandparents as well as myself were very proud. Such joy was had by all!"



Photo of Sr. Mary Irene Sorber, SCC, with her piano students. Photo used with permission.



Photo of Sr. Carole Riley's family at the January 15th Mass of the Resurrection. Photo used with permission.

Celebrating Sr. Carole Riley, CDP

On December 7th, WVIS hosted a Celebration of Life for our beloved Sister Carole. Held in the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of Sacred Heart in Charleston, WV, the mass was officiated by Father Bill Petro and was attended by the Most Reverend Bishop Mark E. Brennan of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and the Very Reverend Fr. Donald Higgs, Rector of Sacred Heart.

Two additional celebrations have been held; first, on December 10th, a special Mass was held at the Duquesne University Chapel where Sr. Carole was professor of music and spirituality from 1969 to 2017. Then on January 15, 2025, a Mass of the Resurrection was held at Kearns Chapel in the Commons of the Sisters of Divine Providence in Allison Park, PA.

Ongoing Opportunities at WVIS

Weekly Programs at WVIS via Zoom

Third Tuesday: Merton Chapter, 7–8:30 pm
Wednesdays: 11th Step Contemplative Prayer, 7 pm
Monday - Friday: Contemplative Prayer, 7 pm
Thursdays: Women's AA Group, 5:30 pm

To learn more, email: exec.director@wvis.org

Ignatian Spiritual Exercises

Have you thought about doing the Ignatian Exercises? St. Ignatius, even in the 16th Century, recognized that not everyone could take time away to do the Exercises as originally conceived. WVIS has certified

spiritual directors who offer the 19th Annotation in Daily Life (Spiritual Exercises over the course of 10 months). For more information including available directors, please visit our website at <https://www.wvis.org/retreats/19thannotationretreat> or email exec.director@wvis.org.

Spiritual Direction

Are you curious about spiritual direction? Would you like to learn more? WVIS has spiritual directors that can meet with you in-person or via Zoom. Learn more on our website at <https://www.wvis.org/spiritual-direction>. Questions? Email exec.director@wvis.org.

The road to Almost Heaven...a winter memory

I dread the drive in winter, although former Buffalonians never lose their mad snow-driving skills. Still, I do not want to put those skills to the test my last weekend of spiritual direction training. I start humming to soothe my growing anxiety as I snake my way through the bends of the turnpike to Charleston. Somewhere near an exit a caravan of semi-trucks grinds to a halt, and I watch drivers jump out of their cabs. Confused and concerned, I pull over to the shoulder and join the drivers.

Suddenly, the drivers begin running in circles, arms spread wide, heads tilted upward, mouths wide open trying to catch snowflakes on their tongues. Their laughter fills the skies as snowflakes dance around these road-weary long-haul drivers. Minutes later, one of them spots me. *"Hey lady!"* he calls. *"Look up! We got us an angel showering us with lil' bits of heaven!"* I smile and walk toward the group. We stand in silence as snowflakes lit by street lights, pillow silently into the slow-moving creek in the valley below us.

The driver nearest me whispers in a husky, awe-filled voice, *"Bout as close to heaven as we're gonna get, don'tcha think?"* *"I do,"* I say with a smile. The drivers huddle closer. *"Listen, lady,"* one of them says. *"You follow us, and we'll keep you safe. These mountain roads can get real icy real fast, and it's pitch dark. I seen yur Georgia license."*

The drivers climb into their cabs like a well-rehearsed line of Rockette dancers. One of them reassures me, *"Consider us yur angels, lady, keepin' you safe to wherever yur goin'!"* He thinks for a moment, *"and where would that be?"*

"Charleston," I shout as I maneuver my car between the two last trucks. Accompanied by strangers along a deserted highway to Almost Heaven, I sing at the top of my lungs, grateful for 18-wheeler angels.

Rindy Troutaud is a retired Presbyterian pastor and the WVIS Facebook Administrator from Tucker, GA.



Almost Heaven Retreats 2025

Is God inviting you to a deeper relationship at this moment in your life? Are you discerning an important decision or a deepening and renewal of a choice already made? Each year, WVIS offers Almost Heaven: Ignatian Silent-Directed Retreats. This year retreats are being offered between May 16 to July 21.

The Almost Heaven Retreat is an opportunity for you to set aside time to listen to the voice of God and hear what is in your own heart. Retreats can last a single day or up to eight days. They are a wonderful chance to unplug from the outside world and recharge your spiritual batteries. For more information and/or to schedule your retreat, visit www.wvis.org/retreats.

Visit our website at www.wvis.org

Reflections and Happenings

The True Pause that Refreshes Your Soul

This title, inspired by the Coca Cola ad campaign, is a perfect description for the WVIS Contemplative Prayer Community, which meets Monday through Friday from 7 p.m. to 7:20 p.m. I was introduced to this prayer in 2020 in the midst of COVID. An affirmed “Martha,” busy about many things, I didn’t see myself as a “contemplative,” but later I felt the call. I went on the Zoom meeting from WVIS and these 20-minute gatherings became my sacred time.

When I started attending, I was joining a community seeking to pause, reflect and renew their spirits in quiet stillness. This time has truly become a response to Jesus’ invitation to his followers in Mark 6:31 to: “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” It acts on Pope Francis’ remarks: “Meditating, so to say, is like stopping and taking a breath in life. To stop and be still.”

This Zoom gathering is a time of renewal. I am grateful to WVIS for this opportunity to discover the contemplative within me. A time to stop, breathe and renew my trust and understanding of God’s plan for me: opening up my heart, mind and soul to the Master Potter shaping me, discovering the depth of God’s love and attempting to respond to that love.

I hope you consider joining us when you are able for a time where you can truly pause and refresh yourself and thirst no more. To receive the Zoom link, email Sally Orcutt at sally@sayyes2yourlife.org.



*Dr. Shannon Lenet D. Min, M.Div, MS
Shannon is a part-time chaplain and a
spiritual director, Schenectady, NY*

WVIS Advent Retreat: Giving Birth to God

At this year's Advent Retreat, Sr. Cheryl Clemons, OSU, reminded us that *"the incarnation is not simply remembering an event that happened more than 2000 years ago; we are all called to be mothers of God, for God is always needing to be born."*

What was so powerful and so different about this year's retreat was going through the four moments of giving birth—moments Mary would have experienced and moments that each of us experiences as we seek to bring Christ's light into the world. These are:

- Impregnation with the Holy Spirit
- Gestation of God within one's body and soul
- Stretching and the agony of giving birth
- Nurturing an infant into adulthood

Like Mary, we too can allow ourselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Through prayer, retreats, and spiritual direction, we invite God to fill us and we say yes to the gestation process that lets God grow within us as God fills us with God's self. This is not always easy, as bringing God into the world often feels countercultural. Jesus was countercultural too. So there is a stretching of ourselves as we continue on our journey, to remain faithful to our yes, even when it is hard or painful and those around us and maybe those in our own families do not understand.

The good news; we are not alone. Each of us in the WVIS family and community are committed to walking with each other as we nurture God's life in each other. Watch for the WVIS Lent Retreat. Details coming soon.

*Sally Orcutt, O.P. M.P.A. is a
WVIS Associate Spiritual Director
and WVIS Associate Ministry
Director, Cumming, GA*



Leave a legacy that will help others by contributing to WVIS through The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation. You can donate online by going to [The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation \(tgkvf.org\)](http://The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation (tgkvf.org)) and donate to the WVIS Endowment Fund or mail your donation to WVIS Fund, c/o The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, P.O. Box 3041, Charleston WV 25331. Contact Michelle Foster, at 304-346-3634 for more information.

Donegal Dance - A Reading

"I think I'd like to read a bit of Irish literature - it's anonymous but it's a story I can relate to of two friars out doing parish visits. Something so ordinary happens it takes on the quality almost of a miracle..."

This is the way Fr. Paul Bresnahan begins this wonderful tale of humanity. As you nest inside your home these next winter months, you might enjoy listening to this quaint, cozy and comforting tale about these two friars recalling the winter ritual of "tea" with an elderly couple in the Irish country side.

To watch Father Paul read the story, visit our website at <https://www.wvis.org/2025/01/27/donegal-dance-a-reading>. As you listen, I invite you to imagine the miracles God has given you in your life.



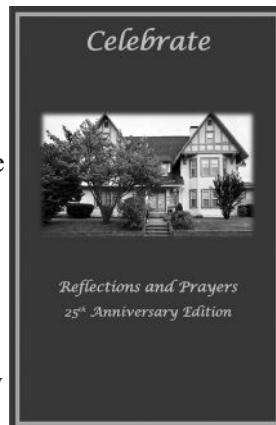
Fr. Paul Bresnahan is an Associate Spiritual Director, Boston, MA

Celebration Booklet

The *Celebrate* booklet is now available from WVIS. This beautiful collection of reflections, including a reflection by Sr. Carole (appeared in the last edition), is the culmination of the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the West Virginia Institute for Spirituality (WVIS).

The themes explored in this booklet of prayers and reflections invite us to trace the arc of a day, mirroring the rhythm of our spiritual lives. Each moment reminds us that, just as dawn gives way to sunrise, our lives can flourish through intentional connection with the Divine and one another. The shifting hues of twilight and nightfall teach us to embrace the cycles of our journey, acknowledging God's ever-present guidance toward clarity and hope.

As you engage with this collection, may you find inspiration in the words that invite you to deepen your relationship with the Divine and foster community. Let these reflections and prayers empower you to face life's challenges with renewed hope and unwavering clarity. May this 25th Anniversary serve as a



beacon of hope to remind us that every moment is an opportunity for spiritual awakening and service to others, a commitment that we at WVIS hold dear and strive to uphold.

To receive your copy, email wvislorena@aol.com or call 304.345.0926. The donation for the booklet is \$15 which includes shipping and can be made by check or through the website (www.wvis.org/donate). If you haven't already made a donation to Sr. Carole's Memorial, you can do that through the same link. All donations over \$50 will receive a copy of the Celebrate booklet in appreciation for your donation.

Creation Cares...

Little things you can do to make a big difference!

Canticle of the Creatures

Pope Francis encourages us to see God's presence in all of creation—in this instance, through St. Francis of Assisi's beautiful Canticle of the Creatures, in which all of creation bursts forth in praise of the Creator. During these late winter days of increasing daylight, may we do our part to help banish the darkness of those who live in poverty, hunger, and darkness of any sort.

<https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/documents/canticleofthecreatures-whitebackground.pdf>

"When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them. This sentiment finds magnificent expression in the hymn of Saint Francis of Assisi..."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* #87



Creation Cares is offered by Donna Becher, WVIS Associate Spiritual Director

WVIS Wish List Items

WVIS receives many gifts on our needs list each month. Thank you in advance for your generosity. Our most pressing needs at this time are:

1. Donations to help offset utility bills (water, heat, Internet)
2. Amazon, Kroger, Walmart, or Sam's Club gift cards

Donations can be mailed (check) or you can visit the website www.wvis.org/donate, click GIVE. You can make a General Donation (dropdown menu) in any amount

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