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Manresa

Good News LETTER



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My Manresa

A story by Steven Scaffidi, 5-18-26

Manresa is a very special place to me. The beautiful grounds and wonderful talks remind me of my grandfather, Anthony Plaisance, who introduced me to Manresa soon after my Air Force days, around 1977. My mom had passed away that year while I was a freshman at the University of New Orleans, and I was lost, trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. Manresa was a godsend for me, and it didn't take me long for me to embrace the one thing about this place that stood out—the silence.

Following my graduation from UNO's first film studies program, I continued working as a DJ in top local clubs like 4141. I also began promoting concerts and producing music videos for MTV. I've always loved music, but I wasn't blessed with great talent as a musician or singer. However, I always had a good ear for producing songs and a gift for writing. I had been writing poems since grammar school, but now I was writing songs, using my talent for storytelling and my passion for music.

I continued to attend yearly retreats at Manresa, and I was fortunate to be part of Group 23 with my Uncle Bubby Miller. Bubby was a co-captain of the group and a popular member who had serious pull when it came to getting extra food and wine in the dining room. I sat next to him at his "special table," and he made it clear to me that I should keep my big mouth shut and pay attention.

I never experienced three days of keeping my big mouth shut in my life, but each year I made my Manresa retreat, I got more and more out of it. I could go on and on about the wonderful moments I've experienced here over the years, but rather than tell you about them, I decided to put my words and experiences into a song.

I actually wrote a poem about "My Manresa" many years ago and gave a copy of it to Father Philips, who was the director at the time. He told me how much he loved the poem and said he wanted to publish it in the Manresa newsletter and possibly even nationally. Unfortunately, Father Philips passed away shortly afterward, and the poem never saw the light of day.

Well, as fate would have it, while attending my 2025 retreat last year, I was thumbing through my old Bible and, lo and behold, there it was—my poem! I just happened to be sitting in my favorite spot near the Mississippi River,

and as a cool breeze came over me, I began turning my poem into a song. Before I made my way back to the main building for the evening talk, I had a full-blown song written down in my notebook.

During my drive home on Sunday afternoon, the music and melody for my new song kept floating around in my head, so I started making plans to produce it using a new high-tech studio program I had recently invested in. A few weeks later, after producing the song, I uploaded it to a private YouTube channel and shared it with my wife and a few others. The feedback I received was fantastic, and I knew I had something special.

Eventually, I sent the song to Brother Huck, and the rest is history. One day, I hope to team up with a nationally recognized performer who can take our little song to places I can only dream of and help it reach people everywhere. Yes, I'm a big dreamer, but with God, anything is possible.

Thank you for inspiring me over all these years. I truly hope this little song will inspire you as well.

Here's "My Manresa" on YouTube:
<https://youtu.be/jc1ScEJcHbU>

Steve Scaffidi
Group 23 - Since 1977

Manresa

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FIRST QUARTER STATISTICS		
2026	2025	TOTAL
1	1	2
Jan 1	Byron Adams, Jr.	107
2	8	111
Matthew Bailey		111
3	4	102
15	Evans Schmidt	106
4	22	106
Ron Martinez		97
5	29	111
David Butler		111
6	5	110
Feb 5	Dr. Bruce LeBlanc	110
7	12	108
David Garcia		109
8	8	114
David LoBue		112
19	22	110
Deacon Loyd Huck		110
10A	9	114
26	Richard Duffey	111
11	11	114
Mar 5	Raymond Zornman	107
8	Rene Navarre	107
12A	96	107
11	11	111
12	Lew Derbes, Jr.	111
19	Paul Richardson	112
22	Robert Peek	107
13A	108	111
26	Leon Raymond	111
14	14	1741
TOTAL	1741	1745

FOURTH QUARTER STATISTICS		
2025	2024	TOTAL
1	1	2
Oct 2	Douglas Block	108
40	9	112
Chris Cristasi		111
41	110	112
114	114	105
23	Al Pappalardo	105
43	26	111
43A	Robert Bohne	110
26	30	110
Joseph Exnicios		107
44	108	107
Nov 6	Dr. Erik Van Kujik	108
45	13	107
Mark Truxillo		111
46	20	111
Craig Drez		112
47	27	112
Ken Litiz		95
48	49	102
Dec 4	Paul Richard	111
49	111	111
7	Anthony Buckley	101
49A	18	109
50	William Connick	113
51	11	115
18	Michael Hartenstein	112
1538	16	1522
TOTAL	1538	1522

REQUIRESCANT IN PACE		
RETREATANTS	RETREATS	TOTAL
38	16	54
Richard Bard		38
44	4	48
Clarence Dagle		44
12	12	24
Jeff Day		12
28	28	56
Ellis Gauthier		28
42	23	65
Allan Covillion		42
42	16	58
114	114	228
23	23	46
Al Pappalardo		23
43	43	86
26	26	52
Robert Bohne		26
43A	30	73
Joseph Exnicios		30
44	44	88
Ronald Legnon		44
42	42	84
Leonard Knowles, Jr		42
36	36	72
24	24	48
Donovan Hudson		24
24	24	48
Stephen Perry		24
37	37	74
Timothy Maloz		37
30	30	60
Gerard Ruth		30
47	47	94
Nicholas Sardagna		47
2	2	4
Glenn Singleton		2
16	16	32
Larry J. Tortorich		16

Chairman's Reflection

Neal Johnson



LD18

Manresa House of Retreats was founded by the Jesuits in 1931. What happens at Manresa is tied to St. Ignatius of Loyola's spiritual pilgrimage and his ten-month period of prayer in a cave in the small town of Manresa, Spain, which Manresa House of Retreats is named after. Manresa, Spain, sits along the banks of the Cardener River. This 10-month period was a life-changing experience and would lead St. Ignatius to develop the Spiritual Exercises, which is the heart of the Manresa retreat experience. Just like the experience of St. Ignatius of Loyola in Manresa, Spain, Manresa House of Retreats has provided many life-changing and God-filled experiences for the men who make retreats here in Convent, Louisiana.

The Men of Manresa are so fortunate to receive a special blessing and a grace that also includes the unique physical qualities of this holy place. Some of the historic and picturesque buildings on the 130-acre Manresa campus date from the early 19th Century, when Manresa was the site of Jefferson College (founded in 1831), a private school for the sons of the plantation owners. Between the Civil War and the Great Depression, the Marist Fathers assumed control of the college and turned it into a Catholic school, which they operated until they closed it in the late 1920s during the Depression. The Jesuits purchased the property in 1931 as the site for a retreat house. In just a few short years, Manresa House of Retreats will be 100 years old, and the campus will turn 200 years old. Our 2031 Centennial Committee has started planning our year-long celebration.

Of all the facilities on our property, one of the most special is the Sacred Heart Chapel. A few interesting facts about the chapel include that a 1950s renovation removed the original stylized letter "M"-shaped wooden arches. These decorative wooden arches were restored in the 2009 restoration. Manresa lore has it that the original arches were intended to pay tribute to both Mary, the Mother of God, as well as to the Marist Fathers who staffed St. Mary's Jefferson College. Today, some men of Manresa maintain that the "M" stands for Manresa. Conrad Schmitt Studios' website states that the interior design and restoration of the Sacred Heart Chapel included painting and decorating the chapel's interior, faux wood graining, trompe l'oeil, stencils, and gilding. The artists applied maroon and gold painted highlights, the official colors of the Loyola family, to the sanctuary wall. The warm, natural tones of the wooden chapel ceiling create a sense of shelter and solidarity between the congregation and nature.

Manresa has recently completed numerous projects that are not readily visible. These include replacing all the roofs to current hurricane wind compliance, replacing the main HVAC chiller equipment, and completing numerous interior improvements including HVAC equipment, flooring, and painting. Ongoing projects include adding ADA-compliant door assist openers at major entrance and exit doors and replacing the walkway between Loyola Hall and St. Peter Canisius Hall. As our website states: Manresa House of Retreats is a special haven.

I am deeply humbled to serve as your current chairman of the board. I am thankful for Fr. Penn Dawson, S.J., the resident Jesuits, Brother Larry Huck, S.J., the Manresa staff, and my fellow board members for their dedication and service to this holy place we call Manresa House of Retreats.

