



"A new state of affairs today both in the Church and in social, economic, political, and cultural life, calls with a particular urgency for the action of the lay faithful. If lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so. It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle."

(Christifideles Laici, St. John Paul II)

Lent, 2021

Dear Friends of COR Expeditions,

THE CHALLENGE: As the demand for our ministry of renewal grows, so too does our need for access to the wilderness areas that are so vital to our mission. As a professional organization, we are required to have annual permits for the wilderness areas in which we operate. COR Expeditions simply doesn't have the requisite permit days to continue expanding our apostolate. But, with your help, God has provided a solution!

Over the past 5 years, COR Expeditions has grown faster than any of us could have imagined. We have run over 250 trips for nearly 3000 people in dozens of wilderness locations around the country and the world. Since our founding, we have consistently doubled the number of trips we offer each year and have increased our team to 11 full time staff who work year-round and nearly 20 additional field instructors and logistics staff during the summer. We now work with over 40 organizations (including FOCUS, the St. John Institute, and the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal), and continue to develop custom courses and programming for each of them. However, the real story is not our growth, but the fact that every course has come back with stories of evangelization, conversion, and renewal. The clearest message we hear from our participants--a message demonstrated in these statistics--is that there is a vital need for our ministry.

In addition to the needs we see and meet in the lives of our individual participants, we are increasingly aware of the vital ways in which COR supports other communities and ministries. We provide high-level leadership and skill training for the staff of other Catholic ministries, give seminaries and religious orders opportunities for formation, and enable youth group, highschool, and university programs to grow in community. Further, COR provides support for ministries who want to work in the wilderness but lack the trained staff, permitting, and other resources to do so.

Our broken world is calling for wilderness ministry more than ever before. People are overstimulated by technology, filled with anxiety, and overwhelmed by the chaos of voices calling out to them from across the political and ideological spectrum. They are isolated and cut off from their communities, removed from the beauty and wonder of the created world, and live in a world that no longer respects or provides opportunities to grow in virtue. Worst of all, many of these same people are drifting away from their faith, finding themselves increasingly disconnected from the Church and the sacraments. Polls are telling us that 36% (or more) of young Catholics do not intend to return to Mass after the pandemic. Many of our course participants have shared the fact that live-streaming Mass on Sundays has made it easier to skip Mass altogether, and this has, in turn, weakened or even destroyed their prayer life. This lack of connection to the Church and the life-giving power of the sacraments has opened the door to a whole spectrum of misbeliefs, fears, and addictions.

This slow destruction of the faith is not a new challenge. While the pandemic may have accelerated some of these tendencies, the loss of the Church's younger generations was already a pressing issue. Overcoming the challenge of disbelief was the main impetus behind Pope Saint John Paul II's call to a New Evangelization, as well as the founding of COR Expeditions, Wyoming Catholic College, and so many other programs and ministries. In this time of profound societal isolation, we realize that we must renew our commitment to the New Evangelization even more fervently.

COR Expeditions is offering a revolutionary response to the Pope's call. We provide amazing adventure experiences with expert guides, but we do so in a profoundly Catholic framework, promoting wonder, community, leadership, virtue, and the opportunity to encounter Christ in a deeply personal way. Immersed in prayer, sacraments, the wonder of the wilderness, and far from the distractions of the world, COR's participants are given the opportunity to embrace their unique identity as sons and daughters of God. These practical experiences in the wilderness--overcoming hardships and experiencing unprecedented joy, beauty, and accomplishment--create lifelong memories for our participants, enlivening their experience of Christ and His Church.

It is surely providential that COR is growing during this time, when so many are isolated, afraid, and confused. While COVID-19 has affected us all, we are grateful that COR is uniquely positioned to adapt to these circumstances and, by the grace of God, to flourish amidst this time of adversity. With your help, COR will continue to provide these experiences, and will not shy away from the pressing call of the Holy Spirit to provide even more to those ministries and individuals that are in need of the renewal we offer.

This exciting growth, however, is not without its challenges. We know that we must transition from the temporary and limited wilderness access permitting we currently have to a more permanent and sustainable system. Without it, we will struggle to achieve the longevity, permanence, and growth which the Church calls for from our ministry. At this time, our main goal is to guarantee COR's access to the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming, a range that is easily accessible from our Lander headquarters and among the best backpacking areas in the entire country. Since the Forest Service no longer issues new permits, the only way to ensure this access is to purchase an existing outfitter that already holds long-term permits in the area. With your help, this is exactly what we hope to do in the coming weeks.

THE OPPORTUNITY: Two outfitting companies in Pinedale, Wyoming have agreed to sell their businesses to us, which include permit days that provide yearly access to the Wind River Range. Purchasing these companies will make it possible for COR to have 500 more days of use annually. Most importantly, it would change our access to the Wind River Range from temporary to permanent status, giving COR priority use and opening up the opportunity to increase permit days in the future. This is truly a ground-breaking opportunity for COR Expeditions and its future participants.

In recent weeks, a benefactor of COR Expeditions, himself an alumnus of one of our trips, has come forward with a tremendously generous pledge: If we can raise \$160,000 between now and Easter, he will match that amount, dollar-for-dollar. With his (and your) help, we have the opportunity to raise the entire combined price necessary to purchase both of these outfitting businesses--\$320,000 to ensure the future of COR Expeditions. Please consider joining this Lenten Match Campaign; your generosity will have profound and long-lasting effects on our ministry. With your support, COR will be able to offer its extraordinary trips to even more people, and to transform the lives of many who are in desperate need of Christ and His Church.

In Christ,

Thomas Zimmer, PhD
Executive Director
COR Expeditions

P.S. You gift can be made in a number of ways:

- **Online:** Visit www.corexpeditions.org/match21
- **Mail:** Mail your gift to 306 Main Street, Lander, WY 82520
- **Phone:** Call a member of our COR staff at (307) 335-4334.
- **Planned Giving:** please contact Joseph Susanka at (307) 335-4466.