**1000 Islands and spiritual childhood**

It is mind boggling to think that we can live our day to day lives oblivious to the awe-inspiring gifts of God’s creation that lie near us, often in plain sight. Perhaps it takes the eye of an artist or a mystic to startle us into awareness.

Such an example is the pictorial *The very best of Ian Coristine’s 1000 Islands.* Coristine lived within an easy drive of “a labyrinth of exquisite granite and pine islands set in clear, green water.” All this just minutes by plane, upstream from his home in the St Lawrence River valley near Montreal.

Today Coristine’s library of 30,000 photos taken over fifteen years is the source of the awe-inspiring images found in *1000 Islands*.

This November I had the privilege of glimpsing some of that beauty of the St Lawrence as I visited St Joseph’s Oratory in Montreal. Both sights were soul animating: the quiet life of St Andre, an ordinary saint of every day lived in service to Christ as a simple doorman at Notre Dame Collage; and the other, ninety-five pages of incredible photos of beauty that surround the more than one thousand islands in the St Lawrence River.

As a child I was oblivious to many of the beauties of the physical landscape of Saskatchewan that surrounded me. My world then ended five miles south of my father’s farm. North, I was aware of towns I saw on occasion, or relatives we visited.

The blessings and beauty of our spiritual landscape are just as elusive if we remain children in our vision and understanding. Unless we grow to know God’s love, we will miss the depth and the gift of a mature spirituality.

Just as it took Coristine’s *1000 Islands* to help reveal nature’s beauty, so the Great Artisan inspires us daily with the brightest cloud, the bluest lake or the tiniest blossom.

The senses are our guide to the enjoyment of God’s beauty; and nature is the language of the senses. Beauty is truth and truth is beauty, John Keats said. God continues to reveal his nature in beauty and majesty and love. Gifts for us!

Psalm 98 echoes these thoughts:

*Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth (4)*

*Let the sea thunder and all that it holds,*

*and the world, with all who live in it;*

*let all the rivers clap their hands*

*and the mountains shout for joy, (7-8)*

And from Psalm 104:

*You stretch the heavens out like a tent*

*…using the clouds as your chariot*

*You advance on the wings of the wind; (1-3)*

*You set springs gushing in ravines,*

*running down between the mountains (10)*

*Yahweh, what variety you have created. (24)*

(454 words)