



# Homecoming

Bethany Retreat House

Volume 16, Number 3

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## Bethany Retreat House: a 20-year Perspective

*In celebration of Bethany Retreat House's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Sister Joyce Diltz, PHJC, director, reflected on the history and direction of this longtime ministry of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. She shared her thoughts recently with PHJC Curator Jane Bomberger about the retreat house that first opened its doors in East Chicago in 1992.*

**Jane:** Can you describe how Bethany Retreat House began?

**Sr. Joyce:** I had been working in a retreat house in Fort Wayne, and, a year after it closed, I returned to the Diocese of Gary. I free-lanced from 1984 to 1992, doing spiritual direction and a lot of parish programs to help people grow spiritually. In the summers I traveled to various retreat



Sister Joyce Diltz, PHJC

houses and motherhouses where I would join individually directed retreat teams. I wanted so much to be able to do directed retreats during the year, but I needed a place for people to be able to stay for that to happen. In 1992, between prayer times during my annual retreat, I was cutting out some fabric on the floor and I had this sense of, "Well, just do it, Joyce! What are you waiting for?" Practical ideas surfaced, and all of a sudden starting a retreat house seemed so simple and so clear!

As I told that story to my spiritual director and later to my community contact person, Sr. Carleen Wrasman, they affirmed my sense. Doors continued to open to make Bethany possible. Sr. Kathleen Quinn told me about the house, which belonged at the time to St. Catherine Hospital. I looked at the Lituanica location and excitedly spent a sleepless night trying to plot out everything in the house. About a month later I got the word from our PHJC leadership to go ahead. I met with Bishop Gaughan and again with newly-appointed Bishop Melczek to inform them of the plans. On August 28, 1992, I moved into the house and Bethany Retreat House began!

**Jane:** So Bethany Retreat House was a longtime dream?

**Sr. Joyce:** For nine years I kept looking for a way to offer

individually directed retreats, which require a special environment for silence and solitude. I felt like my best work happened in these retreats, and I kept looking for a way to be able to offer them year round without traveling to do so. It was my desire to do the ministry I really felt gifted for that led to Bethany's beginning.

In the PHJC community, we talk about our foundress, Catherine Kasper, being guided by the "voice within." Desire to do individually directed retreats and the eventual founding of Bethany Retreat House is a very keen experience for me of being led by God's "voice within."

**Jane:** What is the essence of Bethany Retreat House?

**Sr. Joyce:** It is space and resources for helping people grow in relationship with God. That's the heart of it. Our anniversary committee has captured this well in the theme "paying attention to the inner life."

**Jane:** Have you welcomed guests from outside Northwest Indiana?

**Sr. Joyce:** Many times! Someone was just here from New York, and I've had missionaries from various countries as well as retreatants from across the United States. Our general superior and her assistant were here a number of years ago from Germany for their retreat. People have come from England, South America, Mexico, various African countries. We have an online presence and do national advertising in *America Magazine* and *National Catholic Reporter* to help people find us.

**Jane:** Can you describe a rewarding moment with a retreatant?

**Sr. Joyce:** That's hard, Jane, because there are so many very meaningful stories. I remember someone who had been very isolated within her family. She had been told as a child to stay in a closet or stand in a corner frequently, and in this particular retreat these memories became front burner for her and were very painful. During the retreat she experienced that God came to stay with her in her isolation, and that reality transformed her. She no longer felt so alone or so afraid because she knew God's presence in her experience.

This kind of transformation happens frequently for people in retreat. We talk together about ways they might be with a particular issue or how they might bring an experience to God. It may be a particular scripture passage to pray, or it might be to take a walk

*See Perspective, page 2*

# From the Director's Chair

by Joyce Diltz, PHJC



Welcome to our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration issue! Celebration is in the air at Bethany as we prepare for our September 30 event.

The committee is excited about inviting friends of Bethany to personally embrace the anniversary theme of Paying Attention to the Inner Life. At the celebration, Vinita Hampton Wright and Fr. Jerry Schweitzer will offer feminine and masculine perspectives on listening to the “voice within,” a very particular way of paying attention to the inner life. In the front-page interview with Jane Bomberger, I offer reflections on Bethany’s beginnings which very much grew out of my experience over many years of listening to the “voice within” urging to find a way to offer individually directed retreats where I live and not just on the road in the summer retreat season.

In this issue Rosemary Balczo offers 20 ways we might pay attention to the inner life. Further, gift baskets to be raffled at the celebration offer resources for paying attention to the inner life in a variety of ways. I think you will enjoy the creativity, and I know you will be enriched by the presentations. Please do order tickets and plan to join us for the celebration. Conversation and memory sharing over delicious refreshments will be a delightful part of the celebration.

As I personally reflect on these 20 years of ministry at Bethany, I am so grateful for the stories I have been privileged to hear, the experiences of God I have witnessed, the desire and courage of so many who listen for and respond to God’s voice within their own lives. It is to encourage this attentive listening and courageous response to God that is Bethany’s reason for existence. It has been a rich and fruitful first 20 years! Please join us, both for the September 30 celebration and for the dance of life that is this paying attention and generously responding to God within and among us.

*Perspective, continued from page 1*

or have a cup of tea with God and share one’s heart – something like that. So often, God meets the person in the experience and moves powerfully in ways that transform beyond what one could even hope for.

**Jane:** How has Bethany Retreat House improved?

**Sr. Joyce:** Over the years, there have been things like when the library came together, and when the lackluster backyard got transformed in a couple days into this lovely meditation garden with so many people helping to make that happen. Now when we have the annual tea, it’s such a labor of love on the part of so many people. These are all very wonderful experiences, and God is very much at the heart of each of them.

**Jane:** This year, instead of your annual tea, your anniversary celebration on September 30 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Hammond will honor and celebrate 20 years of Bethany Retreat House!

**Sr. Joyce:** Yes, we have a lot to celebrate, and the committee is very excited about our anniversary theme of “paying attention to the inner life” – which articulates the core of what Bethany is about.

**Jane:** Since tomorrow becomes today’s history, can you describe where you would like Bethany Retreat House to be 10 or 20 years from now?

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Bethany Retreat House  
is a ministry of the  
Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ  
(Ancilla Domini Sisters, Inc.)  
congregation of women religious.

**Sr. Joyce:** Part of that will depend on what the future of the retreat house is beyond my being the director. That will need to be decided by the PHJC congregation at some point.

**Jane:** And for today?

**Sr. Joyce:** I would like to continue to welcome people, especially for individually directed retreats and spiritual direction and dream groups. I hope the word about what’s offered here will continue to spread so more people will take advantage of the opportunities Bethany provides. I find this work to be an immense privilege, giving me a front row seat to see what God is doing in people’s lives. That’s very exciting!

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“The soul craves experiences that offer it rich depths of God. Silence, solitude, holy leisure, simplicity, prayer, journaling, the Eucharist, rituals that touch the space of Mystery, symbols and images, the Bible, laughter, delight in the Divine Presence, deep encounters with creation, and the merciful coming together of human hearts. All these feed the soul, producing energy for living the transformed life.”

Sue Monk Kidd, *When the Heart Waits*, p.199.

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# BRH Bookshelf



***Negotiating the Inner Peace Treaty:  
Becoming the Person You Were Born to Be***  
**By Chelsea Wakefield, LCSW**  
**Author House, paper, 293 pages, \$20**  
**Reviewed by Deb Szrom Steppe**

Did you ever find yourself saying something like, “A part of me wants to do ‘x,’ but another part of me knows I should be doing ‘y’ instead”? That simple awareness of those two internal positions is the first step in doing the work of this book – negotiating your own inner peace treaty.

The author tells us that our impulses, thoughts, moods, reactions and patterns of behavior can be thought of as characters within us, much like characters in a drama. Each has its own role to play in our lives. When we outwardly feel agitated or anxious, inwardly some of our characters are at odds with one another. For example, my “Devoted Mom” character struggles with my “Independent Woman” character when I want to go kayaking without my kids.

Working with those parts of us, those internal characters – getting to know who they are, resolving conflicts, balancing critical voices with other characters, welcoming new characters, etc. – is a way to fulfill our greatest potential. It is a way to center ourselves in our own strengths and wisdom. It is a way to face the challenges of the world in a balanced, grounded way. It is a way to be comfortable in our own skin.

The author has laid out a four-step process to work with our inner cast of characters: naming, knowing, negotiating, and integrating. Each step has excellent exploratory exercises to lead one through the work. The author provides a wealth of material around the steps to guide one’s journey.

This focus on internal sub-personalities could easily seem foreign or the exercises too different to try, but Wakefield’s use of her own story and stories from her clients makes this material relatable, accessible, and attainable.

The author also wisely points out that sometimes in doing this work one needs a guide – a soul friend or a therapist – to help, especially when there is a history of abuse or trauma.

I love this book! Several years ago I did a very similar kind of therapy myself, so this framework is how I continue to see my internal world. As the author says, this journey takes courage, but it is so worth the effort. I wholeheartedly recommend Chelsea Wakefield’s book as a guide for that journey.



*This and many other fine books can be purchased through Bethany Retreat House bookstore: 219-398-5047.*

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*Please join us for an afternoon of inspiration and fellowship  
in celebration of 20 Years  
**Bethany Retreat House***

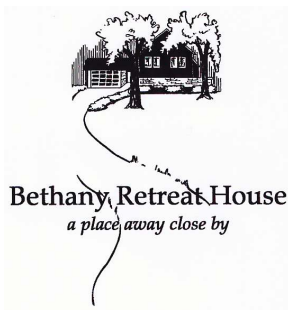
***Paying Attention to the Inner Life***

*Reflections on  
“Listening to the Voice Within”  
Vinita Hampton Wright  
and  
Rev. Jerry Schweitzer*

*Sunday, September 30, 2:00 p.m.  
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church  
7132 Arizona Avenue, Hammond, IN 46312*

*Reception follows in parish Social Hall:  
refreshments, conversation, book sale, drawing at 4:00 for  
raffle gift baskets & door prizes*

*To purchase a ticket (\$20 each), contact Bethany Retreat House :  
(219) 398-5047 or bethanyrh@sbcglobal.net*



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Bethany Retreat House serves as a quiet place in the midst of demanding lives where people can find both space and resources for prayer and reflection. Rooted in the mission of Jesus Christ and the tradition of Blessed Catherine Kasper, Bethany is dedicated to help individuals nurture their inner life and respond to the God who dwells within.

*Mission Statement*

## Paying Attention to the Inner Life by Rosemary Balczo

In honor of Bethany Retreat House's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, here are 20 ways *you* can pay attention the inner life. Most activities can be accomplished at Bethany Retreat House. Many of the activities can also be completed at your own house or at a destination of your choice:

1. Sit in nature;
2. Journal from the heart;
3. Read and discuss spiritual books with kindred spirits;
4. Play with a craft or art project;
5. Garden;
6. Write down your night dreams. Share and reflect on them with a group;
7. Practice yoga or tai chi;
8. Begin spiritual direction;
9. Cook a feast for a friend;
10. Meditate;
11. Listen to enchanting music;



12. Take a walk in a beautiful place;
13. Make a retreat;
14. Pray in a new way;
15. Take your Bible outside and read it;
16. Make a cup of tea. Have a little ceremony;
17. Light a candle at dusk;
18. Take a long, soaking bath;
19. Put a birdhouse in your yard. Delight in whoever shows up!
20. Listen to speakers addressing spiritual issues.\*

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\* *For a special opportunity, attend presentation given Sun-day, September 30, at 2 p.m. for Bethany Retreat House's 20th anniversary celebration held at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Hammond. Hear masculine and feminine perspectives on the subject of Listening to the Voice Within, reflected on by Catholic priest, Father Jerry Schweitzer, and writer, Vinita Hampton Wright. See page 3 for details.*

*As a side note: The baskets to be raffled at this celebration are themed to match the ways of paying attention to the inner life mentioned above!*

*Tickets are available through Bethany office for \$20 per person. Call 219-398-5047.*