



Homecoming

Bethany Retreat House

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Ordinary Time by Joyce Diltz, PHJC

The “holidays” are behind us, that span of time from Thanksgiving through New Year’s Day. The rush of parties and preparations is over. The commercialism that encourages us to buy, buy, buy Christmas gifts has waned. So have the daily news stories of how many shoppers are out, how early they’re out for special sales, and how good sales are even on the day after Christmas. We have returned to “normal.”

The Church liturgical cycle names this season “ordinary time.” It can feel like a let down in some ways after the



decorations and reunions and sharing of gifts. In other ways, it can be sweet relief after the busy-ness of this recent season and the financial stress and time pressure that mark the time. For me, I really relish “ordinary time.” This is where

we live most of our lives. It’s where we are invited to integrate into our daily lives the mysteries of faith that we celebrate in the big feasts.

I heard a homily recently in which the priest encouraged people not to forget that we have an awesome God who does extraordinary things – who comes as a baby, who communicates with shepherds, who guides magi to find the child. What I am awed and delighted by in the stories of our faith is that this God who is powerful and loving and wise comes to us and works among us in such simple, human ways.

God does not come in fireworks and fanfare but, rather, in daily human experience – so daily and so unremarkable that we could miss the depths of what is happening. God works in the life of a young woman of faith. God guides her husband via his dreams to navigate the upheaval of a pregnancy not his own and of the need to flee as refugees to another country. God communicates, as the stories go, with shepherds and astrologists who watch the night sky. God works through their longings and their desires and their attentiveness to reveal to them the presence of God in our world.

And so it is with us in the challenges of life – the job losses, the insecurities, both financial and psychological, the struggling and broken relationships. God moves in our hearts and our desires to help us also discover God’s loving, healing, inviting presence in our world.

It’s in the dailiness of life, in the joys and struggles we experience, that God comes into our world today, in 2012. The mystery of the incarnation – of God becoming human – continues today in every moment when God takes on human flesh and lives among us. We don’t always recognize that God is at the center of these experiences, but ever-deepening hearts of faith help us to recognize and to celebrate God who lives among us today. God is here in so many ways – in the gentle care of parents and care givers, in the patience and encouragement of teachers, in the excitement of the creative spark, in a couple whose love persists and grows deeper through many years of marriage, in the joy of deep friendship, to name but a few.

In Jesus, God became flesh to live among us. The profound mystery continues. God has never left! May we have the eyes to see and the hearts to embrace this God who moves among us so faithfully and so creatively to draw us ever closer and deeper in relationship!

Bethany Retreat House: Resource in Ordinary Time

Bethany Retreat House is a rich resource to help people grow in relationship with God who lives among us!

Please consider one of our offerings to help you become more familiar with and responsive to God’s presence in your life:

- **Ongoing spiritual direction** is the opportunity to talk one-on-one about your life with God in an effort to discover God’s presence in the stirrings of your heart and the events and relationships of your life. Together with the spiritual director, you listen for the Holy Spirit’s direction in your life. Sessions last one hour and usually occur monthly. A spiritual director is someone familiar with the spiritual life, committed to his or her own life with God, *See Resource, p. 2*

The Director's Chair

by Joyce Diltz, PHJC



Increasingly more people are finding winter a good time to make retreat. Please give it some thought. We would be happy to welcome you here for your winter break for some inner refreshment!

Please do come to our March book sale. Now that we are doing fewer outside book sales, we need to reduce stock for a leaner, more focused selection. You can find some good bargains in the process!

And, while here, check out our BRH sweatshirts, available for a suggested donation of \$10. You could be a walking advertisement for us!

Bethany Retreat House Bookstore Stock Reduction Sale* March 20-24

Stock up on books and music at great prices!

- 35-50% off most titles – prayer, spirituality, grief, journaling, mandalas, enneagram, Myers-Briggs, music CDs, and more.
- 20% off select greeting cards

Hours: Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday and Saturday by appointment: (219-398-5047)

*on in-stock items only

Homecoming

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Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ
(Ancilla Domini Sisters, Inc.)
congregation of women religious.

Resource, continued from page 1

and trained to accompany others in the process of spiritual direction.

- **Retreat** – Bethany offers silent, personal retreats with the option for daily spiritual direction (called an individually directed retreat). The individually directed retreat offers the opportunity for deep prayer and inner work. The content of the retreat arises uniquely from each person's prayer and life experience. A variety of prayer forms can be helpful during the retreat, such as scripture, journaling, dreamwork, artistic expression, guided imagery, centering prayer, lectio divina, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, and more.

Bethany also provides space and resources for private retreats, which do not include spiritual direction.

- **Dream group** – The retreat house convenes several monthly dream groups in which participants meet regularly to work on their night dreams, discovering together how God speaks through individual dreams for guidance.



*To get more information on any of these offerings,
please call Sister Joyce at 219-398-5047.*

**"I have a sense that Bethany is a 21st-
century hermitage."**

Bethany Retreatant

BRH Bookshelf



*The Night Pilgrimage:
Dreams for the Interior Journey*
by Cori Pursell
2011, paper, 82 pages, \$15

Reviewed by Deb Szrom Steppe

Pilgrimage – a journey to a sacred place. Intuitively, it made sense to me that the journey into the inner world of dreams would be a sacred one. There was a large gap, however, between my intuitive knowledge and actually entering into my dreams to work toward wholeness and to get to know that place within where I leave off and God begins.

Cori Pursell's book is not only an invitation to set out on this interior journey, but a guide book on what to expect on the way and a comprehensive list of other resources to use as well. The author explains that bringing into consciousness the work that is going on in the depths of one's soul is, "to welcome the Word. The Word Incarnate in Christ is to know the writer of the dream and to know the place within us where the incarnation is to be made manifest," (p. xi).

This book is an opportunity to grow toward wholeness – to get to know the part within us where God dwells. The landscape of our dreams can be an unfamiliar one. The psychology of Carl Jung is relied upon in the book. The Jungian understanding of symbols, archetypes and phases of our journey (individuation) are great tools in defining the landscape of the interior. The author seamlessly blends the work of Jung with Christian spirituality.

Pursell provides experiential exercises in the book. I found these helpful, especially in getting started.

As with any journey, it is helpful to have companionship as we do dream work. The author advocates participation in a dream group as a way to do this.

Pursell provides a myriad of resources for dream work – everything from books on symbolism, myth, and the work of Jung to websites to identify one's personality typology and the location of dream groups in which to participate. The comprehensive bibliography alone is a treasure.

Scripture has many stories of listening to God's voice through dreams. This book gives us the tools to set out on that path for ourselves.

This book and many others can be purchased through Bethany Retreat House bookstore: 219-398-5047.

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We are very grateful to all our donors and we apologize if we may have inadvertently omitted someone's name.

An Invitation. . .

We invite you to receive a copy of Homecoming via e-mail. Send us an e-mail request at brhsecretary@sbcglobal.net and we will send you a .pdf version of the newsletter which you can print to read with a cup of tea as you do now, or read on your monitor. If you are comfortable with the electronic version, we will put you on our "e list" for future editions of Homecoming.

You will receive the same version that we print, but you will have the advantage of color, and you will receive it as soon as we take the print version to the printer.

We now have 1400 people receiving Homecoming. For each reader who converts, we will save fifty cents per issue in printing and mailing costs. It is good stewardship, both financially and ecologically. Thank you in advance to all who give this a try!



Bethany Retreat House
a place away close by

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

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From the Mailbag

This letter from last January so well reflects the theme of this issue. It has been edited for size. We thank its author for her gracious words.

The week before Christmas, at the height of my pre-Christmas frenzy, Homecoming arrived. Despite at least a million other things to do, I opened it immediately, almost like instinctively grabbing for a life jacket on the sinking ship of culture's exhausting consumer frenzy! Reading it, I could breathe again... could re-center and gently smile with remembered deeper truths and hope. Just listen to Sr. Joyce's words to us on the front page!

"... Many of us focus exclusively on the image of the Child in our experience of this season. But there is much richness for us to look deeply into our days to discover the God who lives among us today. . . .

"We simultaneously live with a deep desire for God's coming in fulness among us, for God to be here without the 'veil' that keeps God from view. We long for a time when God's reign will be here in fulness, when the Isaiah prophecies will be fulfilled: no more war or preparing for war, no more tears, no more death, a time when everyone is welcome and no one is excluded, where everyone is treasured and revered.

"May we take time in this precious Advent season to lean into our longings, to let them live in our consciousness so they make room for God in us."

This is why I travel 60 miles one way at least twice a

month to Bethany Retreat House for spiritual direction, for a dream group, and for various workshops. Sr. Joyce *lives* these words of hope and grace, creates a space where I and others can 'lean into' our longings... a space where indeed "everyone is welcome and no one is excluded, where everyone is treasured and revered," where the "veil" of God-with-us is thin, helping us to make room for God in our lives. The books on spirituality and the faith journey which she finds and sells are the best selection I have seen anywhere. (Also the cards! What an amazingly beautiful and meaningful selection of cards for all occasions!).

And *this* is also why I look forward to my first week-long silent retreat with her this coming year. I am among hundreds who are so thankful to God for the existence of Bethany Retreat House in the midst of a world that exhausts, distracts and confuses. The gentle, strong, warm, creative, compassionate, wise and intelligent ministry of Sr. Joyce is a gift of God – indeed, is part of Christ's Light shining in the darkness.

Yours in this shared journey of Christ's love and new life,

Rev. Marcia Smith-Wood,

Spiritual Director and Presbyterian Minister