



Homecoming

Bethany Retreat House

Volume 8, Number 2

August 2005

Retreatants Enjoy Summer Season at Bethany

Summer at Bethany Retreat House is fondly dubbed “retreat season,” and that is the case again this year as more people than usual take advantage of summer vacation to come for their annual retreat. During this season the fridge is stocked and re-stocked, the dishwasher is filled and emptied and filled again, and bedrooms are turned over quickly to accommodate the flow of guests. There is a special sense of stillness and sacredness that settles over the house as retreatants move about quietly in their desire to be attentive to God in their time of solitude.

Each season at Bethany has its own gifts and discoveries. The meditation garden this year is lush and full, well established in its seventh year of existence. It continues to be a restful, inviting space for prayer. This is the year that the arbor’s “roof” has become completely covered with vines. A wonderful discovery made by various guests over several weeks is that, even in the high heat of the afternoon, the patio inside the arbor is cool and inviting.

Retreat evaluations give a glimpse into the retreat experience at Bethany.

What did you find especially helpful to and supportive of your prayer in your time at Bethany?

- the prayerful atmosphere: silence, lovely surroundings, flowers, colors, etc.; mostly, the welcoming spirit and the offer of music and readings to assist in discernment;
- the space here: the chapel space, the garden, the bedrooms and the office;
- the quiet, gentle, refreshing environment both within the

home and in the garden;

- excellent direction and a non-intrusive but helpful presence at other times;
- the silence and space to be alone with God; the privacy and ability to schedule myself according to my needs;
- the entire atmosphere of the house, the garden, the quiet; the incredible assortment of tapes, CDs, books;
- especially the “homey” feel;
- the quiet, the space, the freedom;
- the general ambience of beauty throughout the house and garden.



The arbor’s lush foliage of trumpet vine, Dutchman’s pipe, and Virginia creeper provide a haven for rest and reflection.

What would bring you back to Bethany or encourage others to come?

- the director has made a difference for me in my life; Bethany is holy space for me;
- the graced experience I had personally as well as the pleasant surroundings and affordability;
- the quality of the spiritual direction and accompaniment; the gracious feminine environment;
- the silence, the

privacy, the location – I walked around the neighborhood and was extremely impressed by the pride people take in their homes;

- wonderful patient direction, surroundings, and excellent food;
- a great place to unwind;
- easy to fit in my schedule and near by; I like it here!
- a great place for someone who wants to set her own daily schedule; the flexibility of preparing and eating breakfast and lunch on my own timetable appeals to me.

From the Director's Chair

by Joyce Diltz, PHJC



Summer has been my favorite season for a long time. As a child and later as a teacher, I liked summer because it meant a break from the stresses and routine of school. In the mid '70s I liked summer because it had me back in school, studying Christian spirituality at Creighton University in Omaha with friends from around the country. From 1978 until 1992 my summers were spent directing retreats on the road, joining teams at a variety of religious communities and retreat houses to work with people in individually directed retreats. Since moving to Bethany in the summer of 1992, I continue to treasure the opportunity to accompany individuals as they make their annual retreat – with the added joy of staying home to welcome people here rather than being on the road.

I cherish the time of each individually directed retreat where God's presence is so evident and God's unique love and respect for each person is so tangible. Each time I am privileged to accompany someone on retreat, I marvel at the way God is in relationship with each of us so personally and individually. Like human relationships, God's relationship with each of us has its own flavor and beauty.

Please read the back page description of our office position. My hope is that one of our readers can put us in touch with just the "right" person for the job. We also are in need of volunteers for a variety of roles and would welcome a call from you to see how you might assist in the ministry of Bethany.

May you enjoy the remainder of your summer!

Special Garden Offer

Bethany's ornamental grasses are thriving better than anyone could have dreamed 6 years ago when the meditation garden was developed. Now some plants need to be thinned out and others removed to create another seating area in the yard. As a result, several varieties of mature grasses are available to the public.

If you are interested in one or more of these large plants, please call the office (219-398-5047) to set a time for you to choose and dig your plant(s). A donation of \$20-\$25 for the large grasses and \$10-15 for the smaller ones is requested – what was paid six years ago for the then baby grasses.

Memorials

When a loved one dies, it is traditional in our culture to memorialize the deceased by making a donation to a worthy cause in that person's name.

Please consider Bethany Retreat House as a way to memorialize a loved one, both as your personal memorial donation and as the memorial of choice when making funeral arrangements for a loved one. Envelopes that are suitable for use at the funeral home will be provided upon request.

Your memorial donation will honor your loved one and will assist Bethany in its ministry of helping people grow in relationship with God.

Bookstore Ship-to-Home

Through its Ingram/Spring Arbor book distributor, Bethany is now able to have small book orders shipped directly from the warehouse to your home via parcel post for a nominal fee. These shipments take about one week to arrive. Quicker shipments of in-stock items here at Bethany will continue to be sent UPS.

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Bethany Retreat House

is a ministry of the

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(Ancilla Domini Sisters)

congregation of women religious.

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BRH Bookshelf



A HIDDEN WHOLENESS:

The Journey Toward an Undivided Life

by Parker J. Palmer

John Wiley & Sons, 2004, cloth, 208 pages, \$ 22.95

Reviewed by Deborah Ormechea

Teacher, author, lecturer, companion, and guide are just some of the many titles Parker Palmer holds true. And the true self is what Palmer is all about. This, his latest book, is divided into two main parts. The first deals with personal integration and the second deals with taking that integration (as well as those parts of self that are not integrated) into “circles of trust.” From those circles participants can emerge more integrated, more compassionate, and more in tune with forces within and without their experiences.

Palmer refers to integration as “undivided” and spends a great deal of time helping us understand those aspects of our lives that, at one time divided, can indeed become undivided. It’s not as simple as it sounds and the process will never be really finished, but the tools offered and the stories shared should be sufficient for most seekers to prayerfully journey and work toward weaving community in a wounded world.

“Circles of Trust” are places where we sit with a certain group of people in a neutral setting, creating a type of community where “we learn to neither invade nor evade the reality of each other’s lives but rather to find a third way of being present to each other” (pg. 182). Circles engage participants and offer them a safe haven where they will not be

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criticized or condemned; they will not be offered advice; they will share what their souls call them to share and nothing more. One can be in a circle of trust for quite a long period of time before feeling called to share secrets of the soul.

A prayerful consideration of the poem entitled “The Woodcarver” on pages 95 and 96 will give those on the journey a feel for what can happen as the work is digested personally and communally.

When I am asked to review a particular book I always ask myself who should read it. Who is the intended audience? As I reflect on this one, I have to admit that the audience is large. For those on a strictly personal journey, there is much to be gained. And I’m sure it will encourage those solitary seekers to find a circle of trust. For those who share with others through Christian communities or Bible study groups, many insights can be found. For those in the process of spiritual direction, or for spiritual directors who meet on a regular basis, the emphasis will be slightly different. Most surprisingly of all, those connected purely by working together can find a tremendous avenue for respecting and reverencing one another.

Prior to reading this book I was unfamiliar with the works of Parker Palmer. I now look forward to reading some of his previous six books. What a gifted man I have found! What a gifted teacher and seeker I look forward to sharing with others.

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

Deborah Ormechea lives in Flint, Michigan. Married and the mother of four children, she has many years of experience in parish ministry, religious education, and spiritual direction.

With Heartfelt Thanks

To Our Recent Donors:

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

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consider spending some retreat time at
Bethany
to refresh your spirit.

Gift certificates are available.
Call 219-398-5047 for details.

Secretary/Bookkeeper/Staff Assistant Needed

Bethany Retreat House seeks readers' help in locating an exceptional candidate for the office position at the retreat house. The position has been open since April and is a challenge to fill because of the breadth of skills needed in one person. Since Bethany is a very small organization with two paid positions and some volunteers, the employees wear many "hats" and need a wide array of skills to cover all the areas of responsibility.

A part-time person with excellent secretarial, bookkeeping, computer and receptionist skills and experience is needed to work 18 to 20 hours per week. This individual will need precise attention to detail for maintaining address lists and library card file, tracking bookstore deliveries and returns, preparing deposits and financial reports, justifying check book, preparing and tracking billing, and implementing advertising schedule. The qualified candidate will assist in other daily operations of the retreat house as needed, including making beds as guests leave, doing some laundry each week, picking up guests at the train or bus, and occasionally making a salad or putting a dish in the oven for supper.

The secretary/bookkeeper/staff assistant will articulate Bethany's mission to those who inquire, schedule appointments, orient guests as needed, assist guests with bookstore purchases, and work with volunteers on specific projects. A self-starter, this individual must be able to work as a productive team member. This part-time position offers the

opportunity to work in a pleasant, peaceful environment while providing sacred space for guests who seek silence and solitude.

Bethany asks **Homecoming** readers to encourage any suitable candidates to e-mail a resume to bethanyrh@sbcglobal.net.

Volunteers Needed by Anecia Ventura

Don't ever question the value of volunteers. Noah's Ark was built by volunteers; the Titanic was built by professionals. Bethany is a modest retreat house whose existence relies greatly on the efforts and kindness of volunteers.

Consider volunteering at Bethany as a resource for personal spiritual growth.

We currently need help with gardening; cleaning, both touch-up between retreats and a regular housecleaning; bulk mailings; and newsletter production, both writing and layout.

Whatever your strengths or joys may be, volunteerism is a wonderful thing. It brings people together in ways that are mutually beneficial on so many levels and always has the potential for experiences and human contact that are profoundly life-changing. A single spark can start a prairie fire! *Call 219-398-5047 to be a Bethany volunteer.*