



HOMECOMING

Bethany Retreat House

Volume 13, Number 2

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BETHANY REFLECTIONS

by Mary Wysock

For a recent open house, we asked some former guests of the retreat house to share their thoughts about what Bethany has meant to them. These reflections were put into picture frames and positioned throughout the house. We are grateful for these words since they tell the story of our ministry and how being here has nurtured and transformed individual lives. They also tell the story of what Bethany can be for those who choose to take time out for spiritual renewal. Thank you to all who shared your thoughts. We regret that we could not quote all of you here.

Together let's walk through the retreat house and let our guests tell you what Bethany has meant to them.

"As I walk through the door of Bethany, I can feel the weight of the world being lifted from my shoulders. The soothing colors, the wind gently blowing through the screen door, the chimes I hear in the garden, and the invitation to the gentle rest of Christ greet me every time," says Mark from Munster.

Once inside and up the stairs, you'll see the chapel area where the Blessed Sacrament is. Jeannine of Columbia City says, "I loved the solitude of the darkening evenings in the chapel with the reserved Eucharist and soft music of my choice. Different evenings brought the hunger for different music and deepening thoughts of God's love for me and my service of God's people."

Some find their prayer time challenging and the chapel brings them comfort to stay the course. "My time in the chapel was difficult because of the focus of my prayer, but the large window and the soft colors still welcomed me and added to the sense of safety as I talked with God," says Vinita of Chicago.

And others, like Vicki of Batavia, find the peace of Christ there. "The chapel is enlivened with Divine Mystery as the subtle scent of eucalyptus and candlelight illuminate the sacred space. I find peace here."

Turn left down the hallway to the three guest rooms. Mary's room is the largest and a favorite of many repeat guests. "As soon as I put my suitcase down I go to the window of the 'Mary' room and look out at the garden. I find the statue of Mary seated in the garden and begin to reflect

upon all these things I have been keeping in my heart. I listen and am at peace," says Mary of Valparaiso. The private backyard garden provides a place where guests can relax under the shaded arbor or sit quietly in one of the other garden areas and pray, read, journal or *just be* with the visiting birds and butterflies and the Spirit within.

Another guest room is Martha's Room where Sharon of Sauk Village stayed and found healing and forgiveness with a family struggle. "When I was in retreat at Bethany, I was struggling with broken relationships between my adult daughters. I realized that I was extremely angry at my middle

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BETHANY HOLDS DAYS OF DEEPENING FRIENDSHIP RETREAT

by Nancy Walter

The customary quiet at Bethany Retreat House was disturbed for the best of reasons on Saturday, June 27. A gathering of 27 women from all ages and stages of life came together for a day-long retreat. Vinita Hampton Wright facilitated the retreat based on her most recent book, *Days of Deepening Friendship: For the Woman Who Wants Authentic Life with God*. She led the women in an examining of their lives, past and present, to discover how their perceptions of God have been shaped and what must be encouraged or changed to develop more intimate connection with God.

The retreat was a wonderful balance of Vinita's guidance, small group sharing, and individual work which gave participants the opportunity to be creative in expressing their sense of God's presence in their lives.

Vinita also shared the spiritual disciplines of writing a simple psalm and of chanting, giving those gathered yet more useful tools for building a deepening relationship with God.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

by Joyce Diltz, PHJC



This summer the gardens here are especially lush because of all the spring rain. The abundance of foliage and flowers offer a warm welcome at the front door and a haven of beauty and stillness for retreat guests in the back meditation garden. It is a joy to drink in nature's abundance!

I am so aware of the many individuals who make this beauty possible, especially our Garden Day volunteers. Neighbor Desmond Purnell is part of maintaining this beauty, as is Kathy Zaehring whom we will introduce in another newsletter.

So much at Bethany depends on the generosity of those who believe in our mission. At this time we have yet another way for volunteers to be involved in this ministry as we look for people with painting experience to refresh bedrooms and the upstairs hallway. See details on page four.

If you regret missing the *Days of Deepening Friendship* retreat, be sure to read Deb Steppe's review of the book on page 3 and order a copy so you can make the retreat on your own with the book. You will be glad you did!

As summer moves along, we still have room for *you* to come for summer retreat days! Please give that some thought and let us know when you would like us to save space for you.

May this last month of summer bring you closer to your heart's deepest desires and to the One who desires to draw you ever closer.

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congregation of women religious.

BETHANY REFLECTIONS, *cont. from p. 1*

daughter for a series of accumulated offenses that I had not walked through to forgiveness. Sr. Joyce gave me an exercise of prayer and meditation to walk through as the Lord led. As I sat in the Martha room that afternoon, I talked with my daughter in my journal, and the Lord and I walked through every hurt I was holding on to. Then I looked at her through God's eyes. I saw her as his precious hurting child as well as mine. The anger disappeared and that relationship is fully restored."

The third guest room is Lazarus where Margaret of Highland found retreat from her burdens. "In no time at all, the worldly concerns melt away, revealing that which is most sacred and dear."

The kitchen, dining area, and library are also on the upper level. Some guests find the neighborhood sights and sounds comforting. "One of my favorite memories is of eating dinner in the dining room and looking out the window watching some children play peacefully and joyfully in the street," says Michael of Toronto.

Down both flights of stairs you'll find yourself on the lower level which houses the bookstore, office space, and living room where groups meet and Sr. Joyce sees guests for spiritual direction.

Linda of Ventura, California, writes, "The comfortable homey room at Bethany where I met with Sr. Joyce was many times an oasis of peace from my busy and often hectic workplace. Our conversations enabled me to integrate the many pieces of my life and discover God's presence and activity in

all of those pieces. And the wonderful bookstore sent me home with new resources to nourish me as I reach out to others."

Some find a renewed sense of direction for their lives while working with a spiritual director. "During my years of companioning and direction with Sr. Joyce, it was in her office that I processed a call to religious life. It was the bookstore and its offerings that broadened (and continue to nurture) my ever-growing and deepening spirituality," says Bob of Plymouth.

One group participant describes a monthly gathering: "We sit in a circle in the comfortable living room, the seven of us who have met with Sr. Joyce monthly for dream group for almost two years. The long sofa and each chair have become a prayerful and joyful 'home,' welcoming each of us back to this safe place where, with increasing trust, we share our inner and outer journeys. In the corner, colorful mugs, a selection of tea bags, and baked goodies sweeten our laughter, our deepening conversations, and our inevitable awe and thankfulness when we realize that God's grace has happened, bonding us, again and again," says Marcia of Rensselaer.

Michael sums it up beautifully when he shares that "Bethany Retreat House itself has a very peaceful presence. It's like an oasis of peace in a very busy and difficult world, a little hidden place where we can come, rest, and experience the God who is love. The whole house itself is a wonderful place."

We hope these reflections might encourage *you* to discover what Bethany can be for you.

BRH BOOKSHELF

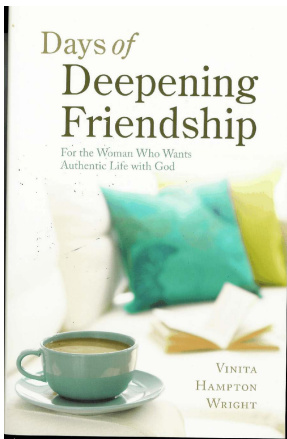


Days of Deepening Friendship: For the Woman Who Wants Authentic Life with God

**by Vinita Hampton Wright
Loyola Press, 2009, paper, 318 pages, \$ 13.95
Reviewed by Deb Szrom Steppe**

In the beginning of this book, we are issued an invitation to imagine a room where “divine love waits for your arrival.” In this room – where we can enter for rescue or for rest, where lies and fears cease to exist – is where we are led to make friends with God.

Friendship implies an incredible amount of intimacy.



Whether that depth of intimacy with God is something new and kind of scary or something we have been developing for a long time, Wright’s book would be incredibly helpful.

The book is divided into eight parts, each part reflecting a component of friendship. With forty chapters in all, we are led to look at our spiritual life from its beginnings to maturity through beautiful, well thought-out reflections on

attentiveness, engagement, love and passion.

I found much wisdom in the pages of this book. Some of the reflections took my breath away. As a woman, I found the writing focused on women’s perspective to be comforting and familiar.

Wright gives the reader a variety of activities in the reflections. This was very helpful. There are opportunities to let the images flow in your own imagination. There are also reflective activities to walk, write, and draw – using all of your senses to develop this intimate relationship with God.

Working through *Days of Deepening Friendship* has made my days this summer ones of awareness and intimacy with God that I never anticipated. This book is a great resource for anyone seeking a more intimate relationship with God.

This and many other fine books can be purchased through the Bethany Retreat House Bookstore by calling 219-398-5047.

WITH HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR RECENT DONORS:

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from Melvin & Jeannine Nix

BETHANY HOLDS, *cont. from p. 1*

After a week of rain and heat, the weather cooperated beautifully so that a delicious lunch and fellowship could be shared in the garden, lush with growth and bursting with color. Feedback on the day offered these reflections:

- I loved the balance of time together, time in smaller groups and time alone; also the chance to use creativity.
- I am now slowly working through her book, enjoying my time with God and processing where I am in that relationship.

The day passed far too quickly, and it is hoped that this is only the first of many opportunities for these women to discover or rediscover Bethany as a place where friendship with God is encouraged.



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As summer blooms
brighten your day, consider
spending some retreat time
in Bethany's garden for a day away,
24 hours, a weekend or more
to be scheduled at your convenience.

Gift certificates are available.

Call 219-398-5047 for details.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

by Mary Wysock



Thanks in part to our new volunteer, Desmond Purnell, Bethany's garden is especially beautiful this summer. Desmond is a wonderful young man from East Chicago who devotes time weekly to diligently weeding and completing various yard and garden tasks.

Desmond was given information on Americorps in high school which got him inter-

ested in volunteering. He started volunteering in his church, Family Christian Center in Munster, where he assisted with concessions for special events and plays. He believes volunteering is an "adventure and a way to put your idealism into action." Currently he is building up volunteer hours for an Americorps program that assists with education costs. His goal with Americorps is to volunteer in the Vista Program which focuses on reducing poverty.

Desmond became aware of the volunteer gardening position at Bethany through the USAService.Org/United Way websites. He lives nearby and said he was interested in volunteering at Bethany because of "the possibility of work

ing in a beautiful garden that I often passed in the neighborhood." He likes learning about the different plants and volunteering for a place that works "for a great cause."

A student at Ivy Tech in East Chicago, Desmond is taking general education courses like math and critical thinking. He is considering going into the Culinary Arts program as he enjoys cooking. Another interest of his is collecting baseball cards.

We are most grateful for Desmond's courteous and diligent support of our work here at Bethany Retreat House. The garden is a beautiful reflection of the depth of God's love for us, and many retreatants and guests are moved by it. Thank you, Desmond, for helping us do God's work. We are blessed to have you as our garden volunteer.

VOLUNTEER PAINTERS NEEDED

Bethany Retreat House is looking for volunteers with painting experience to do some touch-up painting of trim, doors, and an occasional wall. The work can be broken down into segments that fit with the time you are able to give, whether it be a day or a couple hours. Please call the office at 219-398-5047 to let us know of your interest in giving us a hand. We will then coordinate the work.

