



HOMECOMING

Bethany Retreat House

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July 2007

BETHANY TO CELEBRATE 15TH ANNIVERSARY

Friends of Bethany Retreat House are invited to gather on Sunday, August 19, to celebrate the rich resource Bethany has become in the community as it celebrates its 15th anniversary. The afternoon event will include a reception and talk about “God’s Desire to be in Relationship with Us” by guest speaker, Sister Dianne Bergant, C.S.A., Ph.D.

In the summer of 1992, Bethany Retreat House was a dream about to come true. Today, it stands as a beacon and an anchor for the faith community of northwest Indiana. Providing a quiet place and resources for prayer and reflection, Bethany has become a haven for over 3,100 laity, priests and religious throughout the last 15 years.

Bethany’s primary focus is to provide ongoing spiritual direction and quiet space for individually directed and private retreats. “I am privileged to hear the stories of many of Bethany’s guests,” said Sister Joyce Diltz, director of Bethany Retreat House. “Most people come here precisely because they hunger for deeper relationship with God.

“Our mission of providing quiet space and resources for prayer and reflection continues, and the numbers of people coming continue to grow,” said Sister Joyce. She attributes this growth to the fact that Bethany offers a respite away from the ever-increasing demands of daily life. It has become a haven for those who seek a quiet place in which to be with one’s self and God. “We find space in which to listen... to our lives, to our own hearts, to God,” she continued.

For most, life is so filled with near constant noise – radio, television, music, traffic – that finding quiet becomes an intentional choice. In that silence, one is able at last to turn inward and begin to hear and honor the voice within.

See ANNIVERSARY, p. 2

BERGANT TO SPEAK AT ANNIVERSARY EVENT

Sister Dianne Bergant, C.S.A., Ph.D., will give the keynote address at this summer’s 15th anniversary celebration for Bethany Retreat House. Sister Dianne, a professor of Old Testament Studies at Chicago’s Catholic Theological Union, will explore God’s desire to be in relationship with God’s people. Sister Dianne is the author of several books,



most recently *People of the Covenant: An Invitation to the Old Testament* and *Preaching the New Lectionary*.

According to Sister Joyce Diltz, PHJC, people continue to seek a closer union with God even in the midst of frantic schedules, constant communication, and continuous distractions. The message Sister Dianne will bring to those gathered will reinforce the mission of Bethany Retreat House – a mission dedicated to helping individuals “nurture their inner life and respond to the God who dwells within.”

The anniversary reception and presentation will take place from 2 to 5 p.m. on Sunday, August 19, at the Casa Maria Hall at St. Maria Goretti Parish, 500 Northgate Drive, Dyer, Indiana.

Tickets are available through the retreat house office at \$20 per person in advance or \$25 at the door. To purchase tickets or to help sponsor the event, please call 219-398-5047.

BETHANY FUND DRIVE ANNOUNCED

In conjunction with the 15th anniversary of Bethany Retreat House, Sister Joyce Diltz, PHJC, has announced the establishment of the Bethany Fund.

Over the years, the retreat house has been partially subsidized by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ as one of its ministries. This subsidy supplements Bethany’s regular income from fees for services, the bookstore, and donations. In a time of tighter budgets and rising costs, the goal of the drive, according to Sister Joyce, is to raise \$300,000 in

capital over a three-year period in order to help make Bethany a financially self-sustaining ministry.

“Through our various services, many people have experienced significant spiritual growth and have seen their lives changed because of the ministry of Bethany Retreat House,” Sister Joyce said. “We are now inviting others to participate financially in the continuation and growth of this important ministry.”

See FUND DRIVE, p.4

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

by Joyce Diltz, PHJC



If you're thinking that it's been a long time since our last newsletter, or if you've wondered if you've mysteriously been dropped from our mailing list, rest easy. It *has* been a long time and you have *not* been dropped! What has happened over the past couple years of sporadic issues is that, because of increased retreat and spiritual direction appointments and group meetings, I am no longer able to personally produce the newsletter which I have done since our first issue in 1997. And, as you will read on page 4, these are the same reasons I am also no longer able to be the supper cook every night.

Bethany is growing! When it began 15 years ago, I was Bethany's staff of one and did most of the infrastructure of office work, advertising, cooking, housekeeping, and gardening, with a small group of very generous volunteers. Over the years Bethany has come to depend on others to help further its mission.

We invite you to join us August 19 in celebrating these 15 years of Bethany Retreat House and the many lives that have been impacted by this ministry. Besides Dianne Bergant's presentation, there will be informal time to visit and share stories. We are also looking for business sponsors for the event. Perhaps you could help us make some connections in this regard.

With this issue we welcome writer Debbie Bosak to our pages. With her gifts for writing and her focus on meeting publication deadlines, we should do much better at providing you four interesting issues per year on a regular basis.

EXPANSION OF MEDITATION GARDENS

F. Frankfort Moore once wrote, "I think that if ever a mortal heard the voice of God it would be in a garden at the cool of day."

Nine years ago the backyard of Bethany Retreat House was transformed from a sea of sad grass to a mecca for meditation and relaxation. For many of the retreatants, the meditation garden has become a haven of peace and tranquility for their prayer and rest. Bethany director, Sister Joyce Diltz, PHJC, points out that what once was just a yard with no shade or beauty has now become "a gentle, quiet soothing place in which to rest and to be with God in nature. Flowers, birds, squirrels and butterflies, along with the growing herbs, provide beauty and simple lessons about life."

This year, we began to make plans to create a similar place of beauty and refuge in the front of the house. In a stance of reverence to the earth and God's creation, our original goal was to maintain the grounds organically, avoiding chemicals that pollute the ground water.

This has proved to be somewhat of a challenge in terms of a healthy and attractive front lawn. Our plan for the front, provided by a landscape professional, includes bushes, perennial beds, trees, and pavers that will create a path flowing to the backyard. The plan also calls for a minimum amount of grass, which translates into low maintenance.

Because of the obvious cost factors, we have chosen to create the front garden with the help of volunteers, and the work has already begun. If you can lend a hand, we will be gathering on Saturday, July 14, from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and hope to transform as much of the yard as possible on that day. Bring your gloves and gardening tools if you have them. Wheelbarrows would also come in handy if available. Please call the retreat house at 219-398-5047 and let us know you're coming, both to help us plan the work and to be sure we have enough lunch for everyone. If you'd like to help but are not free July 14, we'll welcome your help on a day that is convenient for you.

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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.

ANNIVERSARY, *continued*

"When we take a step into silence, we are able to reflect on our relationships, our work, our loved ones, and our feelings about what has happened in our lives or what is about to happen," she continued. "We deal with questions of meaning. If we can stay with the quiet long enough, we can begin to discover how God is with us in our life situation and what God invites us to."

In addition to retreat opportunities and spiritual direction, Bethany offers reflection groups to help people recognize God in the midst of their experience.

In looking back over these 15 years of Bethany Retreat House, Sister Joyce feels privileged to be part of this ministry. She has a sense of gratitude and reverence as she welcomes and accompanies those who come seeking God. The foundress of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, Catherine Kasper, listened to the "voice within" for guidance. "It is this inner voice of God that we long to hear," said Sister Joyce. "Bethany is a place where this voice can be heard and where such listening is encouraged."

BOOKSHELF



*Spiritual Direction: Wisdom
for the Long Walk of Faith*

by **Henri Nouwen with Michael J. Christensen and
Rebecca J. Laird**

Harper San Francisco, 2006, \$22.95

Reviewed by Deborah Ormechea

Technically, Henri Nouwen did not write this book, yet the words and wisdom are his. This is a posthumous book on spiritual direction by Henri Nouwen himself, “developed by the editors as they identified strands of timeless wisdom and personal guidance in his many sermons, articles, journal records, class lecture notes, unpublished manuscripts, and published writings, and adapted the core material for practical use,” as the acknowledgement states.

It was important to the editors of this book that it be finished prior to the 10th anniversary of Nouwen’s death as their gift to, and labor of love for him. During those years they were able to compile a tremendous amount of information and insight and were able to present it to the reader in an easily accessible format.

According to Nouwen, spiritual direction involves three distinct disciplines – looking within to the heart, looking to God in the Book, and looking to others in community. Three chapters are devoted to each of those disciplines.

Ten parables have been attributed to Nouwen, and they help illustrate the lessons being shared throughout the pages. The parables, as well as the questions they help to answer, can

be found in the first appendix. The second appendix was written by Laird, and addresses her personal quest for spiritual direction.

I was personally exposed to Nouwen’s works while still in high school. (At that time he was very new to spiritual readers!) Throughout the years I have continued to appreciate the prayerfulness that surrounds me as I am led on journeys of the heart and soul through his works. I never knew, until very recently, the extent of his works. I never knew too much of his personal “history with God.” I learned a lot about Henri, and myself, from this book.

The editors state that *Spiritual Direction* is intended for those who are spiritual directors as well as those seeking direction. It is suggested that readers go through the book at least twice; the first time quickly, and the second time perhaps a chapter at a time. It is further suggested that readers share responses to the questions at the end of each chapter with their spiritual director, soul friend, or small group. Journaling is an important tool toward that end.

Perhaps summer is a good time for you to slow down a bit and take more time for the spiritual journey. This book can be quite helpful in that process. Invite a few friends to do the same and you have formed your small group. Or, ask your spiritual director if he or she is familiar with the book and explain why you feel called to this particular process. Or, invite your soul friend to share this journey with you. Or, sign yourself up for a self-directed retreat using this book to discover new meaning in your relationship with God.

However you decide to use Nouwen’s work, you will find it awesomely worthwhile. Enjoy!

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As part of your summer vacation,
consider spending some retreat time
at Bethany
for a day away, a weekend, or more
to be scheduled at your convenience.
Gift certificates are available.

Call 219-398-5047 for details.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Volunteerism comes in many shapes and sizes. If you are looking for a unique way to support Bethany Retreat House and like to cook, here's an opportunity you might want to consider.

You might know that up to now Sister Joyce has been the chief cook for the men and women who come to Bethany on retreat. Over the past year, she has more late-afternoon appointments and groups than previously, both at the retreat house and away. Because of this, cooking supper for retreatants on those nights has become difficult.

So, if you enjoy cooking and would be willing to prepare a meal for up to four people once a month, depending on how many guests are in retreat on that day, this is a challenge you might want to explore – help feed the bodies of our guests while their souls are being fed during retreat. Meals would be prepared in the comfort of your own kitchen and delivered to Bethany either the night before or by late afternoon on the day it is to be served.

The retreat house would be happy to reimburse you for the food, or, while you're cooking for your family, you might consider that extra casserole, salad and dessert

another way of contributing to the work of Bethany Retreat House. For more information or to sign up, please contact the office at 219-398-5047.

Volunteers are needed to help with gardening and occasional book sales out on location. Others are welcome to help with mailings and light cleaning.

FUND DRIVE, *continued*

According to the director, there are numerous and varied ways those interested can make their donations. "In addition to gifts of cash, donors might consider gifts of appreciated stock, life insurance, bequests, or IRA charitable distributions for donors over age 70," Sister Joyce explained. "It can be a one-time gift or a monthly donation spread over the three-year period." Donors should always consult with a tax advisor when considering charitable contributions of any nature.

For more information on how to contribute to the ministry of Bethany Retreat House, contact Sister Joyce at 219-398-5047.