



Homecoming

Bethany Retreat House

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A Life-Long Friend

by Joyce Diltz, PHJC

Preparing for a recent Lenten program on journaling, I am reminded of what a blessing journaling has been in my life. I know I wrote a diary as a young girl, easily filling the few lines provided in the five-year diary I used then. But when I was a 26-year-old sister, I began in earnest what has become a lifetime practice of journal writing.

That original journal was a steno notebook on which I glued a copy of our final vow program. My first entry read that I wanted to put down things that made me happy to save up for times when life wasn't so happy. Over these many intervening years my journal has evolved to become a real friend for me, one in whom to confide, to trust with my tears, my struggles, my life questions, as well as moments that are happy and clearly filled with God's presence.

I use my journal to reflect on my life, to learn about myself, to work out some current struggle, and to celebrate the gifts and joys of living and loving and growing. It is a place where I've learned most of the time to be very honest, to say what I'm really feeling, things that sometimes, said elsewhere, would be hurtful to people and to projects, but which said in the privacy of my journal become a means of working out conflicts, of gaining perspective, of coming to a greater sense of what I want from life – and of meeting God at work in my life.

Being in touch with the struggles, joys, and events of my life as I explore them in the journal leads me to new self-awareness and to deeper prayer. As I grow in self-awareness, I come to know God in new ways. I become more aware of who I am and so am able to bring myself more fully to God – more vulnerably, more confidently, more aware of my needs and my limits, more aware of my gifts and blessings, and more in touch with God continuing to create my life.

Frequently as I write I am surprised that what comes out my pen is more than I knew I knew. These moments of insight or joy or deep peace that emerge from my pen are clear experiences for me of the Holy Spirit's very personal guidance in my life. I am deeply touched again and again by these experiences of knowing in a tangible way that God is involved in my life, loving me, guiding me, continuing to lead me in my life's unfolding.

The journal has been a rich resource for me as a tool for paying attention to God and responding to God's invitations in my life.

BRH Bookshelf



Paths to Prayer, Finding Your Own Way to the Presence of God

By Patricia D. Brown

Jossey Bass, cloth, 343 pages \$19.95

Reviewed by Deb Szrom Steppe

As people of faith, a common goal we all share is to know the presence of God in prayer. Of course, prayer does not come automatically for any of us, nor does one kind of prayer fit every person's personality.

Patricia Brown writes this book for all those who want to enter into that journey of discovery to mature into a practice-centered life of prayer. In it are over 40 ways to pray – from the Lord's Prayer and Lectio Divina to body prayer and the Korean practice of Tongsung Kido. Background on each style is provided along with step-by-step instructions, questions for reflection and other resources to pursue.

The prayer practices are grouped into four categories: innovative, searching, relational and experiential. There is a self-assessment at the beginning of the book that helps point the reader to the prayer style that fits his or her own personality.

The descriptions of each prayer practice are not meant to be all-encompassing treatises. The author describes them as attempts to whet our appetite for different ways to pray rather than serve as a full-course meal.

I have really enjoyed this book and continue to use it a lot! While not a newcomer to prayer, I think this book would be a great reference to those who are starting out on the journey. The self assessment did point me in the right direction for prayer styles that resonate with my personality, but I found that prayer practices in the other categories worked for me as well in varying degrees.

I found myself following the step-by-step instructions closely for prayer practices that were not familiar to me. Even for others to which I am accustomed, I learned much from the background the author gave.

It is a gift to be able to try new ways to pray and to re-try, with a new perspective, prayer practices that hadn't worked in the past. Patricia Brown's work did just that for me.

Deb Szrom Steppe writes from Milwaukee where she lives with her husband Mike and two sons.

In Memory of

Ethel O'Brien by Linda Friedrich
Sarah Strong by Linda Baker
Sr. Emelia Ficker by Joyce Gertz
Elsie Helzor by Barb Schilling
Rev. Dennis Teles by Kathleen Rathburn
Ramona Sandoval, Dr. David Harey,
Elden V. LaHayne, Thomas R. Bobak,
Brady D. Tabers, Michael T. Golden
by R. Louie and Martha Gonzalez

In Honor of

Lavon Etter by James Etter
Toni Heinzman by Ken Sone
Jerry Bauer by Carol Bauer

Workshop Opportunity

Drawing [on] Dreams

a workshop led by Cheryl Kaper
Saturday, April 26
9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

See www.bethanyretreathouse.org
for more details.

Registration required by April 18.

Save the Date

Garden Day 2013

Saturday May 3
9 a.m.-2 p.m.

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Bethany Retreat House

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Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ

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From the Director's Chair

by Joyce Diltz, PHJC



I have said many times in this long, hard winter that this will be the best Easter ever, since it *has* to be spring by then! Even now, knobs of daffodil green and sprouts of iris poke above the snow to remind us that even this seemingly endless winter will cease and spring will grace us once again. Like most of you, I can hardly wait!

With spring comes Garden Day not far behind. Please consider joining the clean-up, spruce up effort to make our gardens delightful again for summer guests. I am so grateful for new volunteers and for those who come year after year to help make Bethany's outdoors so inviting.

With the new chapter of Bethany history that begins in mid-May, we anticipate guests coming for a 9 to 5 daytime retreat to stop the world for a day of reflection and prayer, using the library, enjoying the meditation garden, possibly journaling, and finding God at work in their lives as they make space in which to hear and respond.

As we discontinue overnight retreats May 16, please be aware that our other offerings continue – ongoing spiritual direction, dream groups, monthly reflection

groups, the spirituality library, the bookstore, the meditation garden, personal silent day retreats, and occasional day workshops and group retreats. I hope you will come to Bethany and find one or more of these offerings helpful in your life with God.

As this long winter begins to wane, may Lent be for each of us a time of more attentive listening for God and responding to God's invitations, uniquely designed for each of us. And may Easter bring the warmth and light and life for which we so deeply long.