



Homecoming

Bethany Retreat House

Volume 18, Number 1

March 2016

FEC Operations Grant Received

The Foundations of East Chicago has awarded an operations grant of \$7,754 to Bethany Retreat House. This grant will pay office expenses at the retreat house for the 2016 calendar year. The donation helps provide the infrastructure that supports Bethany's various programs and services as a quiet place in the midst of demanding lives where people can find both space and resources for prayer and reflection.

The Foundations of East Chicago exists to strengthen and improve the quality of life in East Chicago. "Conceived by the citizens of East Chicago. . . , FEC derives funding from East Chicago's local casino and uses this money to support local churches, schools, and nonprofit organizations who know the community best and put the money in action where it can do the most good" (FEC website).



Save the date:

Bethany Retreat House Autumn Tea
Sunday, September 25, 2016
2-4:30 p.m.
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Social Hall
Hammond, Indiana



Annual Volunteer Garden Day Saturday May 21, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Join the fun! There's pruning to be done, beds and pond to be cleaned, containers to be planted, and mulch to be hauled and spread. Regardless of your skill, there is a job for everyone. Lunch is provided. Please let us know if you are able to join us: bethanyrh@sbcglobal.net or 219-398-5047.

BRH Bookshelf

Joan Chittister: Her Journey from Certainty to Faith by Tom Roberts

Orbis Books, cloth, 248 pages, \$28
reviewed by Deb Szrom Steppe

Joan Chittister has become one of the most influential voices of our time in the Church. Religion, spirituality, peace, justice, and equality are just a few of the areas where she has lent her clear, prophetic voice. As the author of over 50 books and 700 articles, her impact on the Church and the world is significant.

This book is a biography of Joan Chittister written by Tom Roberts of the *National Catholic Reporter*. As a friend of Chittister, he navigated well the transition from being friends and colleagues to being biographer and subject. I appreciated that Chittister had no editorial role in this book, nor did she desire such a role.

While one can get a strong sense of an author by the works he or she produces, this biography gives much new insight into this woman's life – from a childhood that was well beyond difficult to religious life and beyond into international prominence.

The story of the Erie Benedictines, Chittister's religious community, is naturally woven into this book. Chittister entered the Benedictines in 1952. Her story then involves the changes the community underwent after Vatican II and in future years. Roberts takes the reader inside Chapter meetings and community gatherings as well as to interviews with Chittister's colleagues, friends, and community members. I am not a member of a religious community, but I found fascinating and most inspiring the story of how this community moved forward through decisions that changed them forever.

Joan Chittister is an impressive woman. After reading this biography, I am more impressed. She chose to share deep personal pain and vulnerability. The honesty with which she sees issues she and the community had to face, coupled with her utter reliance on doing what is right in the eyes of God, is inspiring. In her book *In Search of Belief*, she defines the opening line of the Creed to mean, "I commit myself to make God a presence in the center of my heart, in the humdrum of my days, in the dregs of my struggles." It is clear from reading Tom Robert's biography that Joan Chittister has done just that.

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

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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.

From the Director's Chair

by Joyce Diltz, PHJC



Daffodil greens and iris shoots here at Bethany are peeking up from their winter nap, and temperatures are flirting with the 50s and 60s. What a joyous time of year when spring emerges from winter, green returns, and we humans emerge as well into the out of doors! Lent has been called the “springtime of the soul,” a time when new life rises in us as we open ourselves more to God’s action in our lives even as we see evidence of God’s touch of life all around us.

This newsletter alerts you to things germinating at Bethany. A journal group is “graduating” from six monthly sessions and a new dream group is forming. We only need four more sign-ups before this group will begin meeting monthly. Might this be your time to be one of these new members? Our annual volunteer garden day is on the calendar (May 21) as is our annual autumn tea (September 25). Please mark your calendars for each of these events.

We are so very grateful to the Foundations of East Chicago for the operations grant received from them for this calendar year. Their gift, along with your donations, help us continue to welcome and accompany people who want to pay attention to their inner life and discover God, who dwells both in us and among us. It is a deep joy and a great privilege to accompany people in this process.

Bethany’s spirituality bookstore is periodically available to go on the road to parishes. If your parish is interested in such a visit, please call the office for details.

May these remaining days of Lent bring us closer to the heart of God. May Easter joy abound in us and among us as we experience God’s power to bring life out of death, meaning out of meaninglessness, and hope out of despair.

In Memory of

Lydia Kennedy by Cheryl Kaper

Jean Jamsa by Cheryl Kaper

Harold J. Nagel by Betty Pierce

Sr. Helen Koeppen, PHJC

by Joseph Kluszynski

Robert B. Ladendorf

by Daniel Ladendorf

Bea Tjernagel by Barbara Kudirka

In Honor of

Sr. Jeanette Schutte, PHJC

by Sr. Mary Carolyn Welhoelter, PHJC

Sisters who taught at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, Hammond

by Daniel Ladendorf

A new dream group is forming to meet on the third Wednesday of each month from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Listening to dreams for divine guidance is a longstanding practice. Join us to explore your night dreams in supportive community. For more information and to register, visit www.bethanyretreathouse.org or call 219-398-5047.

If you would like to support the work of Bethany Retreat House, you can make a donation through our secure online site by clicking on this link:

<http://bethanyretreathouse.org/index.php/support-us/donate>