



HOMECOMING

Bethany Retreat House

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FRONT YARD LANDSCAPE PROJECT COMPLETE!

The months-long front yard landscaping project has finally come to completion! The yard now displays expanded flower beds, a row each of holly and azalea bushes with magic carpet spirea ringing the yard, two tall magnolia trees, a redbud tree, some ornamental grasses, and flowing beds of perennials to delight the senses through the seasons. A bench on the new patio near the front door faces west for enjoying the evening sunset.

Many volunteer hours and donor contributions have made the project possible. In July volunteers gathered to work on the lawn, suppressing much of the grass by covering it with thick layers of newspaper and mulch, planting bushes and ground cover, and filling the new beds with flowers and trees. In September the flagstone patio near the front door was completed and planted with ground cover. In mid-October a brick sidewalk was laid along the side of the garage to the backyard. And recently cement brick-like borders have been installed around the new beds to keep grass and mulch each in their own domains. The result is a joy to behold, joining front yard to back yard in a seamless flow of natural beauty.



This patio near the front door invites retreat guests to enjoy the evening sunset.

In addition to volunteer labor by many folks, the project was made possible by a grant from the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ and a donation of perennials and trees from Rob Szrom of Lakeshore Landscaping. Memorials in honor of Angel G. Acevedo and Elder William O'Brien Blakely also contributed to the undertaking.

The last piece of this major project fell into place when the retreat house received 32 memorial contributions in honor of Richard C. Diltz, recently deceased father of Sister Joyce. Those contributions made it possible to circle the new flower beds with an attractive and durable concrete brick-like border that defines the flower beds and will keep the grass from invading them.

Besides Bethany now having a beautiful front yard, Sister Joyce points out that nature and outdoor space can play a significant role in a retreat experience. "If you provide a peaceful, natural setting, it can become a part of people's prayer," she said. "There is something about being outside – the beauty of creation, the fresh air, the creatures – that connect us with God through nature."

BETHANY CELEBRATES 15TH ANNIVERSARY

On Sunday, August 19, 110 guests gathered at Casa Maria Hall in Dyer to celebrate the 15th anniversary of Bethany Retreat House. What began as a dream in 1992 has now served the spiritual needs of more than 3,100 lay, religious and clergy throughout Northwest Indiana and beyond.

The guest speaker for this special day of celebration and remembrance, Sister Dianne Bergant, C.S.A., Ph.D., teaches Old Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

Sister Dianne began her talk by relating to the original Bethany in the Gospels. The small village located on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives in Israel was once home

to Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Today, it is now a Palestinian town called El-Azariya and suffers the fall-out from the ongoing Middle Eastern conflict.

Referencing the infamous wall, which continues to be built by the Israelis to contain the Palestinians, Sister Dianne recounted that when she and other professors from CTU take study groups to the Holy Land, they stay at two different religious houses in Bethany. The infamous wall that is being built between Israel and Palestine is being built between these two houses. She challenged those who come to Bethany Retreat House to commit themselves to be people

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

by Joyce Diltz, PHJC



As we move gently this year from summer through a mild fall, change is visible around us. It is also evident within when we are able to be attuned to our inner stirrings.

Change has been in evidence at the retreat house over the last several months with the front yard landscape project in its various stages and the piles of mulch and gravel that have occupied the driveway from time to time. It is a great sense of accomplishment to have that project completed and we owe a debt of thanks to so many generous volunteers.

Change is evident in my family as well with the death of my father, Richard Diltz, from myeloma at the end of September. From time and effort shared together around my father's illness and death, our family knows new and deeper webs of connection between us. That is gift even in the midst of a time of significant loss. I want to thank so many of you who have sent kind thoughts and words of encouragement and prayer which have been a special blessing during this time.

I also am grateful to so many of you for sending memorial donations in honor of my father, and to my mother for designating Bethany Retreat House as one of the charities for memorial contributions. These gifts have helped significantly with the landscape project which will be dedicated in memory of my father and Angel G. Acevedo and Elder William O'Brie Blakely.

ANNIVERSARY, *continued*

of reconciliation, which the city of Bethany in the Holy Land so sorely needs today. "We need to pray for the needs of the people suffering from this separation and containment," Sister Dianne said.

The speaker reflected on the covenant stories found in scripture, beginning with the Old Testament story of the flood. "God wants to be in relationship with us," she said. "This is the retreat experience and what Bethany Retreat House is all about – growing in relationship with God."

According to Sister Dianne, relationship with the divine is about how one responds to God's invitation to be a part of the life experience and it is very much about reconciliation. "What blocks our hearing God's call and what stops us from responding to God's invitation?"

"I think people found it to be a delightful afternoon," said Sister Joyce Diltz, director of Bethany Retreat House. "It was nice to walk into the celebration and enjoy fellowship before sitting down for the speaker."

By way of an icebreaker and conversation starter, guests were asked to build their own nametags, indicating their different connections to Bethany: retreatant, reflection group, spiritual direction, volunteers, etc. The nametags were conversation starters, and some people wore icons indicating six or so different ways that they are part of Bethany's story of 15 years.

Sister Joanne Marie Schutz, SSCM, and pastoral associate at St. Mary in Crown Point, was impressed by the obvious influence Bethany has had on so many over the years. "Looking around the room, you could see at a glance how they

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Bethany Retreat House
is a ministry of the
Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ
(Ancilla Domini Sisters)
congregation of women religious.

have built relational nets and connections through the various ministries."

Asked about the vision for Bethany in the future, Sister Joyce commented, "We will continue our mission of providing space and resources for guests to experience quiet and solitude, to support and nurture those seeking deepening spirituality, and to help people recognize and embrace God present in their lives," she said.

BETHANY FUND PROVIDES WAY TO SUPPORT

Bethany Retreat House recently announced the establishment of the Bethany Fund with a goal of raising \$300,000 over the next three years. "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," said Sister Joyce Diltz, director. "We are now inviting others to participate financially in the continuation and growth of this important ministry."

Trish Alt, director of Development Services for Ancilla Systems, the support arm of PHJC ministries, explained, "People are aware of the important, unique work of Bethany Retreat House, but we found they didn't always know how to be supportive. Now there is a direct path through the Bethany Fund."

Contributions to the Bethany Fund can take the form of direct contributions, IRA distributions (for those 70½ and older), appreciable assets such as stocks, and also bequests. Anyone considering a substantial gift should consult an investment advisor or attorney, Alt added. To make a contribution or for more information, contact Sister Joyce at 219-398-5047.

BOOKSHELF



At the Name of Jesus

by Michael O'Neill McGrath, OSFS
with prayers by Richard N. Fragomeni
World Library Publications, Paperback \$24.95.
Reviewed by Deb Szrom Steppe

Imagine walking into a prayer space – a room, a chapel – and being instantly aware of the intimate presence of Jesus. Imagine staying for a while and in that time encountering Jesus in ways that just never happened for you before then. That is how I felt with the book *At the Name of Jesus*.

This book is a collection of 20 paintings by Michael O'Neill McGrath. Prayers written by Richard N. Fragomeni accompany each painting followed by commentaries by O'Neill McGrath. The paintings are of the life of Jesus, both familiar moments as well as wonderfully unexpected images, such as an adult Jesus with an elderly and frail St. Joseph.

In his introduction, Fragomeni recommends taking time with only the paintings first, then advises the reader to go back and read his prayers and O'Neill McGrath's commentaries. That very sound advice makes the reader's experience with the book multi-dimensional. The paintings themselves are very powerful images. Reflecting the artist's intimate experiences of Jesus, the paintings are rich opportunities for the reader to encounter Jesus.

I found Richard Fragomeni's prayers beautifully written and fitting complements to the paintings. His prayerful words, sometimes with a different perspective than I expected, add a second dimension to this book.

After the visual richness of the paintings and the poetic beauty of the prayers, the prose of the artist adds yet another inspiring element to this work.

Each dimension of this book provides new opportunities to encounter Jesus in unexpected ways. I think we all look for occasions where intimacy with Jesus flows a little easier. Spending time with *At the Name of Jesus* provides just such an opportunity.

This book and many others can be purchased through Bethany Retreat House bookstore: 219-398-5047

Bethany's HOMECOMING newsletter is now available as a .pdf file on our web site. If you would like to help conserve resources and receive our newsletter electronically, please send us an e-mail to that effect: (bethanyrh@sbcglobal.net). We will then notify you via e-mail when each issue is available on our website and will e-mail you a copy that you can read online or print for your leisure reading. If you want to continue to receive the print version, do nothing and it will continue to arrive in your mail box in its present form.

WITH HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR DONORS FROM JULY 2007 TO PRESENT:

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IN MEMORY OF . . .

Angel G. Acevedo
Elder William O'Brie Blakely
Richard C. Diltz



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for a day away, 24 hours, or a weekend
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Call 219-398-5047 for details.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

As the ministry of the retreat house continues to grow, assistance is needed to prepare supper for guests. We are making a request for help in this regard, and one of Bethany's volunteers has come up with a relatively easy way to help the retreat house with supper preparation.

We are looking for individuals who would be willing to freeze a couple portions (two to four servings) of the main entree you prepare for your evening meal and share these frozen packets of meat or pasta or casserole with the retreat house. Then, on a night when Sr. Joyce has late appointments and is unable to devote time to cooking for guests, she has a good start on the evening meal with your main entree.

We thank Carol Nault for introducing us to this creative way of addressing our need for help with supper. It is much easier than delivering a meal for a specific day as we proposed in the July issue of *Homecoming*. We have two volunteers who are helping us with supper preparation, but we need several more and welcome your assistance. And, though we are focusing on the main entree, we won't turn down dessert!

REFLECTION GROUPS INVITE NEW MEMBERS

Bethany's ongoing monthly reflection groups have room for new members.

The Ministry Reflection Group meets from 4 to 6 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month.

The Dream Group meets from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

Spiritual Directors Peer Supervision Group meets from 3 to 5 p.m. the second Thursday of the month.

Because of the personal nature of each of these groups, members are asked to commit to regular participation throughout the year. Please call for registration information.

MEMORIAL DESIGNATIONS

When you have a loved one die and are faced with a choice of charities to which memorials will be encouraged, please consider Bethany Retreat House as one of those charities. Your doing so will honor your loved one in one of the deepest ways possible, by contributing to the spiritual development of guests who come to Bethany seeking a deepening relationship with God. We will be happy to provide envelopes to facilitate the contributions at the funeral home.