



Homecoming

Bethany Retreat House

Volume 15, Number 3

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Hello...

There is a new smiling face to welcome you to Bethany. Angela Cuevas joined Bethany Retreat House November 10 as assistant to the director. She brings an eagerness to learn the many dimensions of the retreat house and an energy to serve Bethany's clientele.



Angie has lived and worked in north-west Indiana for the past 12 years. She has two children – son Damien, 12, and daughter Isolde, 4. She is a 2003 graduate of Calumet College of St. Joseph with majors in business management and computer information systems. She is currently pursuing a master of science degree in instructional technology from Ashford University.

When asked about her experience so far at Bethany, Angie says she enjoys it here, finding things “challenging, and it keeps me busy!” She looks forward to welcoming and meeting guests and volunteers in the next several weeks.

... and Goodbye

After four years with Bethany Retreat House, Mary Wysock has taken a position with Ivy Tech Community College to return to her career of academic advising. She is serving students in the nursing department at the school's Gary campus.

We thank Mary for her time with Bethany. Her attention to detail has been an invaluable contribution as she has revamped and maintained the database of over 1,300 names, carefully kept track of every tea prize and donation, and made sure that every gift and donation has received a timely thank you. One of Mary's last “touches” here was to make the table centerpieces for the autumn tea.

The Work of Peace

by Joyce Diltz, PHJC

Pope Benedict XVI gathered in Assisi recently with other world religious leaders. Their theme, “pilgrims of truth, pilgrims of peace,” highlights the spiritual journey we each make toward truth and peace.

Spiritual Directors International, an educational resource organization, says in its October *Membership Moments*, “Meeting regularly with a spiritual companion helps us to seek truth, to become peaceful within, and to become courageous peace makers in our communities. In spiritual direction, we listen with a discerning heart and learn contemplative practices that still the busy mind. Over time, our hearts and minds learn to discern truth and to trust peace.”

As a spiritual director and as someone continually on the inner journey, I find that much of our personal work lies in the realm of making peace by mending relationships and learning to respond to life situations from a place of peace rather than of violence. When we do the inner work required to forgive, we heal something between ourselves and another. In doing so, a bit more peace enters the world.

See Work, p. 2

One-day Christmas Sale! Bethany Retreat House Bookstore

Friday, December 16, 2011, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.
(No need to call ahead!)

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From the Director's Chair

by Joyce Diltz, PHJC



The seasons seem to be flying by! Here we are at Thanksgiving and Advent and pre-Christmas. My level of amazement at the increasingly rapid pace of each successive year must be a symptom of my increasing age. The years did not used to go by so quickly!

This fall has brought a lot of people to Bethany for their annual retreat. I have enjoyed the time with those in individually directed retreats and I find it such a privilege to accompany someone in their prayer.

On a particular weekend several weeks ago, I had a very touching and poignant experience in that regard. On Saturday evening I sat down in my recliner for my usual personal daily prayer time. That evening God seemed especially close and present to me. At the end of the prayer, I went to bed with a deep gratitude for this gifted time that we shared.

The next day as I met individually with the two people in retreat, each of them told me of a very graced experience they had Saturday evening. When the second appointment was ended and I had time to reflect, I was very excited to realize how God had been present in a special way to each of us in the house that night. God had been working overtime, as I told a friend! And, on further reflection, it is a deep joy to know that Bethany Retreat House makes space in which this kind of experience can happen for individuals, space in which we can be still and listen to God who is so very present to us and active in our lives.

I want to say a special thank you to everyone who in any way helped to make our annual autumn tea the enjoyable success that it was. About 110 guests attended and received over 60 door prizes and 50 raffle baskets made possible by 84 generous donors. Behind the scenes a wonderful committee and friends of the committee made the day another beautiful and memorable event.

It is moments of grace like the one described above that your donations to the tea and to our annual appeal make possible for people to experience here. Thank you for your support in this very graced endeavor.

Work, *cont. from page 1*

As each of us works to mend relationships and to live from a place of peace, peace grows in our sorely peace-starved world.

We soon begin the Advent season of peace. In the natural stillness of winter, we can easily be drawn into moments of peace. May we let the season lead us there!

Perhaps a meaningful advent practice this year could be to notice areas of life in which we do not experience peace. Once noticed, we might focus on one aspect of our life to see what we can do to nurture peace there. Perhaps it means addressing a wounded or broken relationship. Possibly it is working with a personal attitude or way of approaching life. It may be working with some inner conflict that needs resolution. However we work to nurture peace – and it is *work* – we bring an increase of peace to our relationships and so to our world.

Homecoming

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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.



Yolan Fabian, Brenda Ihasz, Frances Felus, and Joann Schmitt enjoy conversation at Bethany's autumn tea September 25. Their church quilting group reserved a table to share the day together.

BRH Bookshelf



*Our One Great Act of Fidelity:
Waiting For Christ in the Eucharist*
by Ronald Rolheiser, OMI
Doubleday, 2011, cloth, 139 pages, \$18
Reviewed by Deb Szrom Steppe

Ronald Rolheiser is an accomplished author and speaker on spirituality. He is currently the president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.

This book, while drawing on the works of scripture scholars, church teachings and theologians is a statement of Rolheiser's personal understanding of the Eucharist. His understanding is wide-ranging, thought-provoking and reflects a great depth of faith. The book is primarily composed of essays and reflections on the Eucharist and finishes with three sermons on the Eucharist by St. Augustine.

Many parts of the book touched me, but what I was drawn to, over and over again, was the author's essay "The Eucharist as God's Physical Embrace." In it Rolheiser tells us that even though Jesus gave us his words, in the end they weren't enough for us, so Jesus gave us the Eucharist – God's kiss. Just as the experience of a kiss can never be completely defined in words, so too, asserts the author, it is for the Eucharist.

The idea of the Eucharist as God's kiss resonated with me deeply. I thought of the kisses I've given, like the kisses to my sons when they were born and placed in my arms for the first time. I thought about the kisses I've received, from the daily kisses from my husband to the kiss from my friend a few hours before she died. Eucharist as a kiss from God is a beautiful concept and one that will stay with me.

Other essays include the Eucharist as an invitation to justice as sacrifice, as an invitation to a mature discipleship, as a memorial to the Paschal Mystery. All are well written and compelling to read.

As difficult as it is to put the meaning of the Eucharist into words, this book is an opportunity to grow in understanding of the Eucharist. Fr. Rolheiser's sharing of his understanding Eucharist, the center point of his faith, does that in an exceptional way.

This and many other fine books can be purchased through Bethany Retreat House bookstore: 219-398-5047.

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Volunteer Corner by Mari Casas

Do you ever wonder who writes our “BRH Bookshelf” column? Deb Szrom Steppe writes the book reviews from her home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She actually grew up in Hammond, Indiana, and has known Sister Joyce for over 30 years, serving as her secretary when Sister Joyce was the vocation director for the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. Deb spent a short time as an affiliate with the PHJC community. Spending time with Poor Handmaids while she was a young adult was significant in helping Deb develop the spiritual focus her life has now.

Deb has been writing book reviews for Homecoming for about four years. To begin the process, Sister Joyce suggests a few titles to Deb. Deb picks one of them, or sometimes the book picks Deb who continues to be surprised at always finding something relevant to her life in the books, no matter what the title. Her hope in writing the reviews is to get other people interested in what these authors have to say by conveying significant

parts of the book in her own reflections. While her focus is writing the reviews to help others, Deb has found on so many occasions that writing the reviews has helped lift her out of one sort of spiritual funk or another. Deb truly loves doing the book reviews and appreciates being stretched by various authors to think differently about God, the world, and our lives.



Deb has been married to her husband, Mike, for 17 years. They have two sons, Brian, 16, and John, 13. She is a member of Our Lady of Lourdes parish where she serves on the liturgy committee and on the core team for the multi-generational learning program. While Deb holds a master’s degree in social work, she is currently a devoted mom and wife and has earned her first degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do.

When Deb thinks about how the reviews gift her, she realizes, “It’s hard to turn away from God when I have a book about prayer in front of me.” We thank Deb for her book reviews that are a gift to our readers!