

**FALL 2015**  
**DESERT HOUSE OF PRAYER**

***THERE IT IS***

In *Servants of the Lord*, **Karl Rahner** writes, “In the moment of insufficiency of everything attainable, we learn that ultimately in this world there is no finished symphony.”

One’s spiritual quest seems to be the dimension of life as we know it that cannot give us everything for which we yearn. In *Sacred Fire*, **Ron Rolheiser** states, “We are always somewhat frustrated, unfulfilled, diseased, out of rhythm and restless.”

In my experience, the desert is a sacred place that engages our human restlessness and disease. The desert offers timeless space to discover silence and solitude. The desert welcomes the opportunity to go deep inside and wrestle with restlessness. The discovery of what is on the other side of the restlessness is the quest! It requires silence, stillness, waiting, and the suffering of “not knowing.” It demands letting go of self-proclaimed goals, objectives, plans, and “bucket lists.” There is only waiting, silence, stillness, and emptiness one breath at a time.

Yet in the heart of the stillness and emptiness **THERE IT IS**. As **Ken Wilber** reminds us in his *Essential Writings*, “There it is...the mysterious impulse to sing, to shine, to radiate, to send forth, reach out and celebrate...to effervesce and bubble over.” In the emptiness! In the desert! Some call it the Divine Creative Impulse. **THERE IT IS**.

### **Desert House of Prayer News**

We are pleased to report that in the 2014-2015 retreat year we had the highest occupancy since we began keeping detailed records about twelve years ago. We broke monthly records from November 2014 through March 2015. We are grateful for the statistical analyses **Charles Miller** has been doing for us the past two years.

During the DHOP summer recess, **Bro. Bill Coughley** supervised a number of important projects. The chapel roof was completely re-shingled. The exterior of the dining room/kitchen received a new coat of paint. The roads leading into the DHOP property have been partially repaved and sealed.

A summer emergency occurred when the commercial freezer in the kitchen went dead without any possibility of repair. The air-conditioning system that supports the refrigeration units also went defunct. With the generous support of two benefactors we were able to replace both the freezer and air-conditioning system.

**Michael Gibson** supervised the first major deep cleaning of DHOP in many years. A local Tucson company was contracted to deep clean all of the living quarters, dining room/kitchen and library. Everything seemed to be sparkling clean when we reopened for the 2015-2016 retreat year.

### **Other Points of Interest**

One of the blessings of having **Fr. David Louch** as part of the DHOP team is that he has time and flexibility to take care of tasks and responsibilities in the wider Redemptorist world. In his Canadian Edmonton-Toronto Redemptorist Province he serves on the Partnership in Mission Commission (a collaboration of laity and Redemptorists in the mission of the Province.) Fr. David also represents the Edmonton-Toronto Province on two secretariats of the Conference of Redemptorists of North America, namely *Spirituality* and *Partnership in Mission*.

For the Spirituality Secretariat, Fr. David, with the help of Wendy Barnes of Liguori Publications, is shepherding a project to publish in English the Divine Office for the feast days of Redemptorist saints. Together with Anne Walsh a Canadian Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer, Fr. David is co-chairing the newly established

Secretariat of Partnership in Mission. Like the commission named above, it is also a collaborative endeavor of Redemptorists and lay people.

Fr. David also serves as an occasional Collegial Judge for the Vancouver Regional Marriage Tribunal in British Columbia. In addition, Fr. David receives occasional special assignments from the Superior General of the Redemptorists in Rome to help with official visitations of other Redemptorist Provinces around the world, most recently in northern Germany, Flemish Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the Philippines.

This past spring, **Sister Marilyn Omieczynski** enhanced her professional skills in massage therapy by earning her certification as Medical Massage Practitioner. This will allow her to more intensely treat clients who come with specific injuries.

**Fr. Tom Picton** serves on the advisory board of Praesidium, Inc. Praesidium has helped over 4000 organizations, including most Roman Catholic religious orders of men in the United States, with eight organizational operations to help prevent sex abuse of children, minors, and vulnerable adults: policies, screening and selection, training, monitoring and supervision, internal feedback systems, consumer participation, responding, and administrative practices. Praesidium has built a comprehensive array of products and services that allows organizations to assess gaps in their child-serving programs and implement best practices in each of the above eight operations called the *Praesidium Safety Equation*.

**Fr. Ricardo Elford** continues his work at Clinica Amistad. After twelve years at the original site, Clinical Amistad, a free clinic for the uninsured, is now operating at a new location with much bigger space on the east side of Tucson. The clinic now has 16 primary care practitioners, three optometrists, several integrative health providers, and a total of 94 volunteers. It looks like this year the clinic will break last year's record of 2000 patient visits. Fr. Ricardo thanks all desert companions and friends of DHOP who support his ministry. If anyone wishes to visit Clinica Amistad they can contact Fr. Ricardo at 520-237-5434.

We are grateful to **Rev. Tom Letts**, a Presbyterian minister and friend of DHOP, who is currently serving as our part time weekend chef until we can hire someone to take this position. When Tom is not using his culinary skills, he continues to work on a grant from the Lily Foundation involving a DVD series on contemplative prayer. **Chris Russell** continues his fine work as head chef.

### **Current Needs**

The income we receive from retreatants covers only a portion of our ongoing operating expenses. We invite you to remember Desert House of Prayer with a gift in your estate planning. More information about how to do so is available by contacting Rev. Thomas Picton, C.Ss.R. at [deserthop@live.com](mailto:deserthop@live.com) Other gifts can be made by means of the enclosed envelope or through Pay Pal on the donations page of our website: [www.deserthouseofprayer.org](http://www.deserthouseofprayer.org).

### **Final Thought**

Life at the Desert House of Prayer on the boundaries of Saguaro National Park continues to teach us that we can't make up our own rules in our relationship with the earth. **Margaret Wheatley** reminds us that there is only one way to interact with the planet, and life is pushing back forcefully right now: *We need to learn how to be good neighbors. We are experiencing dramatic and frightening climate changes all around the globe, destructive floods, more deserts and barren soil, new diseases and pandemics. We can't pretend that our modern ways of relating to life are working.* Here at DHOP we are learning that the easiest way to become partners with life on the planet is to get *outside, to be in nature, and let her teach us in silent contemplative awareness.*



Rev. Thomas Picton, C.Ss.R., Desert House of Prayer Director