



P.O. Box 570
Cortaro, Arizona 85652
Ph: 520-744-3825
Fax: 520-744-0774
deserthouseofprayer.org

Desert House of Prayer

Fall 2016

Dear Friends,

Sometimes I ask myself what the Desert House of Prayer should be. Should it be more than what it is? What should its environment do for those who come? Often the House of Prayer is spoken of as a place of hospitality that invites people into a sacred space of prayer, silence, solitude and the natural beauty of the desert. But might there be something more?

Perhaps that *something more* is simply the invitation to **Come & See!** To simply come and *contemplate!* To **contemplate** suggests *sighting* one's course, to look, to keep one's eyes and ears open, to listen.

Listen is the first word of St. Benedict's Rule for monks. St. Benedict reminds one to keep one's eyes and ears open to receive the "the silence of God like thunder." Situated in the desert and surrounded by the beauty of God's creation we are to *listen* – to attune ourselves to the harmony to which the whole universe dances. (St. Augustine). Alertness, wakefulness, aliveness teach us how to be free, to move with the silent, thunderous music of God's presence in the universe.

DHOP NEWS

We are happy to report that, in terms of occupancy, the 2015-2016 retreat year, with 2,661.5 bed nights, was the second highest in 13 years. This is roughly 4% lower than 2014-2015 retreat year (our busiest) and 3% higher than the 2011-2012 retreat year (our third busiest). We are grateful to **Dr. Charles Miller, Ph.D.** for his generous ongoing service to DHOP in compiling and interpreting our numbers.

In 2016 we received a generous grant from the **Koch Foundation** in Florida (not the political Koch's) for our library. The gift is to be used for books, media, and new furnishings. Most of the grant has been used for new books and for transferring talks on cassette tape to CD. The tapes were deteriorating in the desert heat, and we needed to save this treasure trove of talks, both published and unpublished. Many of the talks were given during the summer St. John Neumann Institute Seminars in the 1970's & 80's at Holy Redeemer College in Waterford, Wisconsin. Over 700 CD's of talks are now housed in the lower library in an attractive blond wood display case. **Sr. Marilyn** and **Lynn Kozubal**, a DHOP volunteer, assisted **Fr. David** with the **CD Project**.

Other DHOP News

July 11-31, 2016 **Fr. David Louch** participated in a three-week course on Redemptorist Spirituality in Rome that included a pilgrimage to the founding sites of the Redemptorists in Italy. Fr. David experienced a hopeful vigor, joy and energy of many Redemptorists participating in the course especially those from the southern hemisphere including Asia.

Aug. 21 – Sept. 5, **Fr. Tom Picton** participated in a two-week course in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin on Redemptorist Spirituality and Community conducted in an atmosphere conducive to personal and spiritual conversation. The course fulfilled Fr. Tom's hopes and expectations and he came away with renewed hope and energy for his life and work at Desert House of Prayer.

Bro. Bill Cloughley is the caretaker of DHOP when we close for maintenance and repairs July

1 – Aug. 15 of each year. This year was the third hottest July in recorded history in the Northern Sonoran Desert with daily temperatures between 102 & 110 degrees! We are grateful to Bro. Bill for his diligent care of the buildings and property in the midst of the desert inferno.

Besides routine summer maintenance and deep cleaning the major project this year was the water system replacement project for building #2 (the laundry room wing). **The project was not part of Bro. Bill's summer plans but was a serious emergency in the middle of May that needed immediate attention.** The estimated cost of the project was \$18,000. **You our generous Desert Companions, friends and benefactors contributed \$23,000 for the project.** With the permission of some donors the extra funds raised will be used for other needed projects such as roofing, painting, and equipment upgrades. **We wish to thank each of you who came to our assistance with the water system project.**

Fr. Ricardo Elford had a busy summer at **Clinica Amistad** that cares for the uninsured, including migrants and immigrants. The clinic is staffed by volunteer doctors, nurses, administrators and students from the University of Arizona and the private sector of Tucson. This past August the clinic had twice as many patient visits as the same time a year ago. **Congratulations to Clinica Amistad and its dedicated staff and volunteers.**

Sr. Marilyn Omieczynski returned to Orange County, CA for a relaxing and refreshing vacation. In addition to spending time with her religious community, she enjoyed fishing off the coast. She came back renewed and fulfilled.

Michael Gibson and Charles escaped the summer desert on the East Coast and visiting family and friends there.

Prayers are requested for **Mr. Dave Richen** a long term retreatant who is suffering from cancer. Dave and his wife Mary Sue had to cancel their annual retreat at DHOP due to his illness. Our thoughts and prayers are with Dave and Mary Sue during this difficult time.

Anne Shubitz a long term volunteer and Desert Companion of DHOP will soon be a grandmother when her daughter gives birth to twins expected at the end of September. Our thoughts and prayers are with Anne and her daughter during this joyful occasion.

Current Needs

Due to the water system replacement project in Building #2 we have had to delay our plans to replace the old water cooling units in two hermitages with new ac/heat pumps. This project is estimated to cost about \$16,000 including some reroofing and painting. The paving and resurfacing of the roads on the property needs to be completed by the end of this retreat year. The estimated cost is \$5000-\$7000. We also continue to look for creative ways to improve the interior décor of our guest rooms.

A Final Thought

In one of his letters, **Karl Rahner** confessed that for him "God is and has always been absolute mystery. I do not understand what God is; no one can. We have intimations, inklings; we make faltering, inadequate attempts to put mystery into words. But there is no word for it, no sentence to contain it. Understanding God lies outside the usual categories of human thought." All that is left is to dance with the silent, thunderous music of God's presence in the universe!

Peace & Joy,



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