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## Desert House of Prayer

Fall 2017

### DEAR COMPANIONS AND FRIENDS,

In the political, cultural and ethical turmoil of our country, I find myself distracted from the presence of God. The desire to address the injustices and pain of conflict at every level of society and the world, not to mention my own everyday work and pursuits, leaves me frustrated, depleted, and wearied. Complacency in prayer is a risk as I hunger for the Holy Mountain views of life, even as I remain stranded half way up! However, something inside of me keeps pushing me to resume the sacred path looking beyond all the obstacles to the One who I desire the most - the One ahead of me, within me, behind me, above me, below me, outside of me, the One who leads me to peace and hope.

Thich Nhat Hanh understands the struggle. He reminds us: "Our ability to make peace with another person, with the world, depends on our capacity to make peace with ourselves." Stillness opens the soul to the Divine Source of All Being, allowing the Holy Spirit to penetrate our thoughts and actions and transform them into a powerful force for justice, peace and love.

As you breathe in and breathe out, let the words of Psalm 46:10 take over, one word at a time: Be. Be still. Be still and know. *Be still and know that I am God.*

### AN URGENT REQUEST

In May, after the spring newsletter went to press, the DHOP phone system collapsed. It is amazing it served its purpose for twenty years! **Sr. Marilyn Omieczynski** went to work with a thorough research for the best and least expensive replacement of a new system. She discovered that many new and inexpensive phone systems such as a wireless system are not feasible where DHOP is located on the boundary of Saguaro National Park. In this part of Tucson, the phone companies have not built the infrastructure to support many of the new systems. With no other alternative, we were left with replacing the old system with a traditional line system. To put in the new system required extensive trenching between buildings and new wiring according to a current building code. **THE TOTAL COST OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND PHONE SYSTEM WAS \$31,000. Desert House of Prayer had to take out a loan to pay for the replacement. We seek your help to repay the loan as soon as possible. Any extra financial assistance you can give us to offset this debt would be appreciated.**

### DESERT HOUSE OF PRAYER NEWS

We wish to welcome, **Sr. Katherine Ann Smolik OSB** to the Desert House Core Community. Sr. Katherine Ann is a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration near Clyde, Missouri. The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration are a contemplative, monastic community dedicated to prayer. DHOP is Sr. Katherine Ann's second ministry position in a small retreat center as she was part of her community's Osage Monastery; Forest of Peace Ashram in Sand Springs, Oklahoma. Sr. Katherine Ann will be writing grants for the Desert House of Prayer. She is responsible for the library and is an executive assistant to the director. She loves reading, art, hiking and the Desert Fathers and Mothers.

**Balbina (Bina)Durazo**, our DHOP housekeeper, underwent knee replacement surgery in July 2017. Due to her surgery Bina will no longer be able to work full time for DHOP. Bina has worked for DHOP for eleven years. She embraced her responsibilities as housekeeper with careful attention to each guest making sure every room was cleaned and properly arranged for each new

arrival. DHOP guests were her first priority. We will miss her. Depending on her recovery and the condition of her knee, Bina may return to DHOP in a part time capacity when needed. We are indebted to Bina for her eleven years of faithful and committed service.

During the first week of August, **Bro. Todd Patenaude and Bro. Brian Poulin** and four young adult volunteers - **Michelle Khawam, Nina Lokarc, Zach Schumacher, and Tom Carvallo** spent a week at DHOP as part of a Marist Brothers Volunteer Contemplative Prayer, Work, Community Week. The work experience of the Contemplative Week was assisting Bro. Bill in painting the interior of the dining room. Time was also set aside each day for centering prayer and a nature experience hiking in the nearby mountains. Fr. Ricardo Elford was invited to do one of his justice and peace seminars on immigration/border issues. This was a successful collaboration between DHOP and the Marist Brothers Volunteer Program. Bro. Bill and I were blessed by our guest's presence, sense of community, hard work and commitment to prayer. An additional benefit that warmed our hearts was the outstanding meals prepared by our guests. Each person took their turn cooking – each one turned out to be a gourmet chef. It was a joy for Bro. Bill and I to be with the Marist Volunteer Group as friends and fellow travelers on the spiritual journey.

#### **OTHER DHOP NEWS:**

**Brother Bill Cloughley** accomplished many projects this summer. The St. Joseph Hermitage has finally received a new roof and a new ac/heat pump! It will be a welcome change for those of you who are fond of St. Joseph Hermitage. Part of the DHOP paved road was sealed. Next summer we hope to pave and seal the rest of the road. All the plumbing, ac/heat pump units and electrical systems have been checked and repaired. Many of our ac/heat pump units are aging. We try to do our best to keep them repaired and running. **If anyone has a favorite room and would like to contribute to replacing an aging unit please let us know!**

Just before we open at the end of August, **Michael Gibson** our guest master will have all the guest rooms, hermitages, dining room and kitchen deep cleaned for a sparkling new beginning of the 2017 – 2018 retreat year.

The income we receive from retreat guests 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 this is available by contacting Fr. Tom Picton 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 donation page of our website: [www.deserthouseofprayer.org](http://www.deserthouseofprayer.org).

#### **FINAL THOUGHT**

In the name of the **All Holy One**, the prophet Jeremiah reminds us: ***“Listen to my voice; then I will be your God and you will be my people.”*** Our attention often focuses on familiar symbols of success – activities to be recognized, credentials to be acclaimed, objects to be collected. Such strivings are not bad in themselves. However, such symbols of achievement do not necessarily bring us an enduring sense of joy and an abiding sense of worth and belonging. Jeremiah reminds us that ***listening*** is the primary way of becoming, of being created anew in the eye of God, in my own eyes and in the eyes of others. We must continually relearn how to ***listen***.

Faithfully,



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