



Desert House of Prayer

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Dear Desert Companions and Friends,

Fr. John Kane, C.Ss.R., the founder of Desert House of Prayer, wrote there are two things that make the Desert House unique: its **desert** and its **community**. I would like to share Fr. John's founding perspective.

The Desert

Desert House of Prayer is housed on 33 acres of property neighboring the Saguaro National Park 15 miles west of Tucson, Arizona. There are four hermitages (small casitas) and 12 motel style rooms that open onto primitive, unspoiled desert.

Solitude

The beautiful pristine desert that surrounds Desert House of Prayer brings solitude, a basic human need. -Thomas Merton writes: "Not all people are called to be hermits, but all need enough silence and solitude in their lives to enable the deep inner void of their own true self to be heard." In the solitude of the desert one begins to perceive the wisdom of these words of St. John of the Cross: "God our Creator only utters one Word: The Son, in an eternity of silence. God is saying it forever. The soul too must hear it in silence." On the lips of Hosea, the prophet, we hear the words of God: "I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart."

Community

Besides solitude, Desert House offers community which includes five core members – currently three men and two women (originally one man and two women). According to Fr. John, "The heart of community is prayer. We believe in the necessity of prayer." The quotations that follow express this belief.

"I say and repeat and will keep repeating as long as I live that our whole salvation depends on prayer." *St Alphonsus Liguori*

"Faith without prayer is impossible, as life is impossible without breath." *Romano Guardini*

"Many a soul has been saved without sacraments, but never without prayer." *Karl Rahner, S.J.*

In the words of Fr. John, "we believe that a house of prayer is not a school in the academic sense; nor a place for dilettantes and talkers about prayer; it is a place quite simply where one gets down to the real business of praying, alone and in community. As a Core Community we feel that our main job is to make prayer the center of our lives and to invite all who come to join us in praying."

After 33 years, the Desert House Core Community believes that Fr. John's insights continue to ring true: "that our prayer together and our attempt at open dialogue are moving us closer to one another: the need to test the genuineness of our prayer by caring for each other; the need to have our solitude balanced by togetherness; the need to have our insights tested, our decisions weighed, our stupidities detected, our concerns affirmed; and the need to share laughter, humor and humanity."

We want to continue to build a community at Desert House that will reach out joyfully in genuine care for all who come to us. Fr. Kane concluded: "A community that prays should be open, welcoming, inclusive and human."

DHOP NEWS

Dr. Diana Lamps, M.D., a psychiatrist from Palmyra, Wisconsin, retreated at Desert House of Prayer for 36 continuous months (three years). Diana became a significant member of the Desert House retreat community. This summer on June 20, after seeing a play at the Goodwin Theatre in downtown Chicago, Dr. Lamps was taking a taxi home when she was killed in a tragic auto accident.

Diana graduated from the University of Wisconsin Madison School of Medicine. As a psychiatrist, she dedicated her life to helping others, spending most of her professional life at the Great Lakes Psychiatric Center in Manitowoc which she founded, owned and operated. She also practiced in Prescott and Tucson, Arizona.

She was a gifted musician, writer, poet, and performer, both as pianist and guitarist, and a student of the Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago. Desert House became a spiritual center for Diana during her transition from her clinic practice to retirement and beyond, a journey she found profoundly personal and spiritual. She will be remembered for her compassion, kindness, creativity, healing and enthusiasm for life that was spontaneous, bold, and daring. Diana's death is a deeply felt loss. She will be greatly missed.

There will be a memorial for Diana in Tucson at St. Mark's Methodist Church on Sunday, Nov. 11 from 1:30-3:30 p.m.

We are also saddened by the passing of **Dr. Phoebe Lindholm, Ph.D.** of Rockport/Fulton, Texas. Phoebe periodically retreated at DHOP for 25 years. She was a friend of Liguori House, a community of **Redemptorist seminarians** attending universities in San Antonio, Texas. A professor of mathematics at **Trinity University** before retiring, Phoebe assisted seminarians for whom English was a second language with their studies in the mid to late 1990's.

We request prayers for long time retreatant: **Sr. Adeline O'Donoghue, CCVI** of Houston, Texas, who is currently in hospice care. Sr. Adeline and her sister, **Sr. Hannah O'Donoghue, CCVI**, regularly retreated at DHOP. Sr. Adeline became the first director of the **Ruah Spirituality Center** in Houston Texas. The Ruah Center is a ministry of the **Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word** that focuses primarily on promoting the recreation of the human spirit in an environment of beauty, quiet, and reverence for all life. Sr. Adeline informs me that engaging **living into dying** is the most profound stage of her spiritual journey.

DHOP sadly bid farewell to **Sr. Marilyn Omieczynski, PBVM** in June. After seven years of service to Desert House of Prayer as a Core Community member, Sr. Marilyn discerned it was time to move on to take care of the increasing demands of her health and restrictions of physical mobility. Sr. Marilyn served DHOP in many capacities: spiritual director, massage therapist, technology consultant, sacristan, development assistant, chapel environment and liturgy coordinator. She will be missed not only for what she did but for who she is: a generous woman of deep faith committed to the spiritual journey. Her direct, practical, common sense approach to life with a twist of humor will be missed. Sister Marilyn will be living and ministering at **Presentation Prayer Center-Sacred Heart Convent**, 1101 32nd Ave S, Fargo, North Dakota 58103.

We welcome to the DHOP Core Community **Sr. Deb Giles SND**, a **Sister of Notre Dame** and a member of the **Toledo Province**. Sister Deb obtained a **BS in Education from Bowling Green State University** and has taught in elementary and secondary schools. She obtained an **MA in Christian Spirituality with certification in retreat and spiritual direction from Creighton University**. She is also a mental health and addictions therapist licensed in the state of Ohio where she obtained an **MA in Community Counseling from John Carroll University**. Sr. Deb will be available for spiritual direction throughout the 2018-2019 retreat year. In her spare time Sr. Deb enjoys catching up with friends and family, travel, nature photography, movies and long cups of coffee.

Core Community member **Sr. Katherine Ann Smolik, OSB** has completed her certification for Spiritual Direction in the **Hesychia School of Spiritual Direction** at the **Redemptorist Renewal Center**. She is available during the 2018-2019 for spiritual direction. Please keep in prayer Sr. Katherine Ann's mother **Margaret Smolik**, who is recovering from stage four cancer.

We also welcome back **Sr. Dorothy Lescher, CSJ**, a **Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet**, to DHOP. Sr. Dorothy is the only living member of the original founding Core Community of Desert House along with **Fr. John Kane, C.Ss.R.** and **Sr. Peg Williams, C.PP.S.** While continuing her part-time ministry at **Villa Maria**, a senior assisted living/nursing facility in Tucson, Sr. Dorothy will volunteer two days a week at DHOP. She is willing to fill in where needed with a special interest in helping with the liturgy and worship environment of the chapel.

Other DHOP News

Architect Robert Vent of Vent & Associates continues to work on developing a **Master Plan** for improving the facilities of Desert House. During the summer, meetings between the civil engineers of the project and Pima County named some issues that will have to be resolved before the Master Plan can move forward. Once the Master Plan is completed it will need the approval of the leadership of the **Redemptorist Denver Province** before a Capital Campaign can be organized and initiated.

St Paul Hermitage is now **fully air conditioned** and received a new roof. Thanks to the generosity of many donors, all **four hermitages** now have **ac/heating units** in place of the old swamp coolers!

Special Needs

This summer, **Bro Bill Cloughley, C.Ss.R.** had an emergency with the septic system of the east guest room building #2. It required a major repair that was not anticipated in the budget. In addition, the a/c unit of the library is old and needs to be replaced, and the upper and lower paved roads at DHOP need resurfacing. These issues may need attention before any renovations of the Master Plan can be realized.

Final Thought

Brother David Steindl-Rast, OSB writes, "One of the great surprises is that the fire of mysticism can melt even the rigor mortis of dogmatism, legalism and ritualism. By the glance or the touch of those whose hearts are burning, doctrine, ethics and ritual come aglow with the truth, goodness and beauty of the original fire. The dead letter comes alive, breathing freedom."

Faithfully,



Fr. Thomas Picton, C.Ss.R.

Director/Desert House of Prayer