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*Desert House of Prayer*

**Spring 2018**

Dear Desert Companions and Friends,

Gentleness is one of the characteristics of contemplative practice. It is necessary for wholesome living. What about feelings of anger and aggression?

It seems anger, aggression, harassment and vulgarity are becoming the new norm acceptable in the highest places of power and influence. We risk their becoming the new normal for navigating politics, the work place and interpersonal relationships.

I must admit embracing a gentle contemplative approach to the hostile environment we live in is difficult. It requires a greater consciousness that gentleness does not necessarily exclude anger so that we do not act out aggressively. On the contrary, gentleness helps us to bear with the unreasonable anger we are not yet able to overcome. Communication and assertiveness rather than aggression can help people learn how to live in our world of great diversity and treat others with respect.

Centering prayer helps to maintain a gentle lifestyle when unresolved danger lurks within us. Moments of anger expressed in the right way to the right person become temporary interruptions of a basic style of gentle living, passing incidents that do not touch the serenity in the inmost region of gentleness. The urge to act out aggressively is experienced as only an incidental emergence to be channeled into assertiveness. Assertiveness is sometimes necessary in certain social situations for defense of rights and truths. It is necessary also for psychic relief and for keeping the gentle lifestyle from being coopted by hostile environments.

Centering prayer enables us to gently hold the tension of accepting and working through feelings of anger and aggression. Insight into these feelings liberates us for a gentler life and frees hidden energy, talents and abilities. Taking a healthier view of my potential for anger and repression of aggressive tendencies fosters better health of mind, body and spirit.

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

**Sr. Marilyn Omieczynski** will be leaving the core community of Desert House of Prayer for Fargo, North Dakota by the end of June 2018. With prayer and discernment with her spiritual director and religious superiors, Sr. Marilyn has made the decision that it is time to move into senior ministry that will ease the stress of arthritis on her mind and body.

Sr. Marilyn has been a member of the DHOP Core Community for seven years. She has generously served our community as spiritual director, massage and energy therapist, sacristan, and technology consultant. She has been responsible for working with a webmaster to manage and update the DHOP website. There is nothing Sr. Marilyn has not been willing to do when needed. Her gifts and talents are extensive. We will grieve the loss of Sr. Marilyn to our Core Community – not just her commitment to her work but most of all her prayerful, compassionate servant spirit and dry sense of humor.

**Vint & Associates Architects.** The Desert House of Prayer has arranged to retain the services of Architect Robert Vint and Associates. Mr. Vint will build a team of civil, electrical and mechanical engineers to design a Master Plan to update and refresh the Desert House of Prayer facilities. The DHOP buildings are forty years old and in serious need of upgrading and refreshing. Looking into the future we would like to go green and solar. Some of our facilities and walkways need to be handicapped friendly. We need more office space, art space and exercise space. The list of needed improvements is lengthy. Vint and Associates will take a comprehensive approach to develop a **Master Plan** that can be gradually implemented over the next four to five years. We will eventually embark on a **Capital Campaign** to support the Master Plan. Please keep the project in your prayers.

**Sr. Katherine Ann Smolik**, a member of the DHOP Core Community has enrolled in the **Hesychia Spiritual Direction Program** at the Redemptorist Renewal Center to become a certified spiritual director. She will complete the program by the end of April and will be an additional resource available for spiritual direction.

**Grants.** Sr. Katherine Ann Smolik has been writing grants requesting help for some of the plant management/maintenance projects that cannot be delayed until we have a master plan for future renovations of buildings. This summer we would like to replace the roof and a/c unit in the library as well as replace some of the flooring with new tile. Also, there is a need to upgrade some of our computers and their software programs.

**Koch Foundation Grant.** As we go to print with this newsletter we received notice from the Koch Foundation of Gainesville, Florida that DHOP was awarded a \$10,000 grant. The grant will be used for new furnishings where needed for the guest rooms and hermitages. We are grateful to the Koch Foundation for their generosity and to Patricia McCullough of St. Louis, Missouri who worked on writing the grant.

#### **Final Thought**

**Francesca Moulinier** a DHOP Desert Companion and volunteer musician for Sunday liturgy, shared some excerpts from a Buddhist Meditation on Peace which I would like to pass on:

***Go easy. Go in gentleness. You may have to push forward, but you don't have to push so hard.***

***At no day, no hour, no time are you required to do more than you can do in peace.***

***Do not be in hurry to begin. Begin with ease and relish the process.***

***Do not be in too much hurry to finish.***

***Let the pace flow naturally.***

***Start. Move forward. Keep moving forward, go gently and do it in peace.***

***Breathe deeply. Keep breathing. Breath is our life force.***

Easter blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Tom".

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