

Dominican Retreat & Conference Center

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www.dslcny.org

Solitude on a Busy Highway

The Good News

June 2020



I

n the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen

Almighty and Eternal God, creator of all beauty. I this day, offer to you, my joys and sorrows, my hopes and disappointments, my love and all my creativity for your honor and glory. May this art work I am about to undertake truly be fitting to adorn the walls of your house, to be a song to your love and be an honor to our Lady and all the saints. To ensure your hand in the touch of the Holy Ghost, I rely not on my own merits, but on the merits of Jesus, our Lord and on the prayers of Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Therese, St. Benedict, St. Scholastica and St. Placid. So, I know you will not fail me and I know that this work will be worthy of you, my Father in heaven.

Thomas Placid dePaola OBI—58

With this fervent prayer Tomie dePaola began his work on the vibrant mural that adorns our chapel. He has been quoted as saying of the mural, "I'm happy that it gives many people a sense of peace. As an artist, you never know." Along with a sense of peace, our retreatants find comfort from and connection to the mural's portrayal of strong, female saints...the Virgin Mary, St. Rose of Lima, Blessed Jane of Aza, St. Catherine de' Ricci, St. Mary Magdalene and St. Maria Goretti.

Tomie's last visit was to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the completion of his work and it was anticipated that he would visit once again in the near future. That was not to be. Tomie dePaola died on March 30. Society at large has lost a beloved artist and prolific author while the Retreat Center and the Dominican Sisters of Peace have lost a dear friend. Our consolation is that we are able to appreciate his creativity and enduring gift whenever we choose. We invite you to take advantage of this often.



What Will My Retreat Look Like in a Covid-19 World?

The short answer is that we really don't know yet. First and foremost, we will be following CDC guidelines and the guidelines of our state, region, and county. We want to make sure we are doing everything in our control to make each of you and our staff as safe as possible. In the short term we will be offering some programs online. (see pg.7)

When we can start having people come back into the retreat house, it will look different:

- ◆ Everyone will have to wear masks
- ◆ It may mean having your temperature taken with a non-contact thermometer
- ◆ We may limit the group size to 13 and each retreatant will have their own bathroom stall to use
- ◆ Chairs will be spaced out in order to accommodate social distancing
- ◆ Everyone may be sitting at their own table in the dining room
- ◆ We will be using cleaning supplies known to kill the virus instead of our scent free options
- ◆ The retreat conferences may be videoed so that others can participate on line at the same time as those in the retreat house.
- ◆ Meals may be served instead of having a buffet line
- ◆ We will spread out the bedrooms being used and may not use the same bedrooms two programs in a row
- ◆ More programs may not have mass and those that do will follow the guidelines of the diocese

And these are just initial thoughts. As you know, the more we learn, the more accommodations we need to make and this can change daily. As much as we are looking forward to having you back with us as soon as possible, we will not rush it until we feel comfortable that we have made it as safe as we can.

What would enhance your sense of safety and well-being as you contemplate attending programs at the retreat house?

We would love to hear from you! Please mail or e-mail your thoughts.



✂

In order to safely return to the retreat house, I would like to be assured of the following:

✂



From the Desk of the Administrator:

Blessings to each and everyone of you! As I write this, the doors of the retreat house are still closed because of the state order. We are grateful for the many ways you have supported us through this time with your prayer, your notes, your contributions, your calls and your love! This retreat house is a home to so many... it seems empty without any of you here with us for the time being.

This morning, as I was praying, God gave me the image of a cocoon. Although I have seen birds of many varieties on the grounds these past few weeks, I have yet to see any butterflies. I was reminded that we, as a people, are cocooning. We are staying in our homes – adapting, changing for a world that will be different when we emerge, but no less beautiful.

Our ministry here at the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center is also in a cocoon – going through a metamorphosis. We are rethinking what retreats will look like in our new reality. We are planning for some programs that will be virtual, some in person (but looking very different) and some that will allow for both possibilities at the same time. But just like the caterpillar in the cocoon, we have no idea what this new life will actually look like until it is time for the cocoon to break open and we emerge.

When a butterfly comes out of a cocoon, it cannot fly right away. It has to wait for its wings to dry before it can stretch them and take flight. During that time, we will be bringing our staff back so that we will be ready for your return. We are most grateful for your support during our cocooning time here. We know that will continue as we begin to do this ministry in a new way, allowing our new wings to dry and taking flight.

May the beauty of God working in and through each and everyone of us create some glorious new possibilities for our world!

M. A. OP.



In March, we welcomed our newest staff member, Mary Anne Brown...

Peace be with you.

This is the quiet welcome I receive whenever I come onto the holy ground of the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center. My first visit to DRCC was just 50 years ago in May 1970 before I graduated from nursing school and I knew then that I really liked it here. Through the years I have served as an R.N., parish music minister, liturgy team leader and proprietor of a grant writing service. Recently I was invited to join the DRCC staff, where I will happily be able to merge these roles to serve as a co-liturgist, retreat staff member and grant writer. The staff has been most welcoming and I am eager to collaborate with them and see all of you at the Retreat Center where, we will pray, nourish one another and grow more peaceful in our life with God, our Holy Friend.

Peace be with you,

Mary Anne



Theme Weekend Retreats for Women

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart.”

Proverbs 3:5a

September 18-20

Director: Sr. June Fitzgerald, OP

September 25-27

Director: Mary Reddy Reichley, OPA, D. Min.

As of this printing, it is unknown if these retreats will have some retreatants at the retreat house with the possibility of attending virtually as well, or if they will be completely virtual. Contact the retreat house for more information at we get closer to the dates.

Christ did not say, 'You shall not be perturbed, you shall not be troubled, you shall not be distressed,' but he said, 'You shall not be overcome.'

Julian of Norwich



Sometimes, when we find ourselves in a predicament that is beyond our control it helps to “rethink it”. There are a lot of positives to *shelter in place*, other than the obvious health one. There’s time to spend with your children and significant others with whom you live. Time to do projects both inside and outside your home and to get into that deep cleaning that hectic schedules make nearly impossible. Time to sort through closets and drawers to determine what is no longer wanted or needed. Time to catch up on your reading; take an on-line course; learn a new skill; find a new hobby or catch up on an old one; try out new recipes; binge watch your favorite programs and movies and listen to the great podcasts that you’ve just hoped to get around to. Perhaps this is an opportunity to curb our penchant for instantaneous gratification. The list is as unlimited as your imagination. (Just think of the money you can save by not shopping so much or driving so much.)

For those of us whose lives include frequent or occasional retreats this can be thought of as an extended retreat. Time to think and reflect on life, society, spirituality, the value of family and friends and a re-thinking of who and what is essential to our quality of life. Pope Francis said, “Let us turn this time of pandemic into a test case to prepare for our collective future. Without an all-embracing vision, there will be no future for anyone.”

A catch phrase of post-pandemic planning is *the new normal*. What would that look like to you? What are the lessons gleaned from the crisis and disruption of our lives and routines? If, indeed, something good comes out of everything, what do you see as the possibilities for a new and improved normal for you and yours and society at large? We have posed this question to some friends and staff members and **invite your thoughts and reflections via mail or email dslcny@nybiz.rr.com**

The following are responses we’ve received:

This time is a tremendous opportunity for the human race to hit the “reset button” and grow in awareness that we are one with the entire web of life. We have used and abused Mother Earth; we have forgotten that we are one of her creatures. Now we are seeing that our abuse of her directly affects all of us. Will we enter into a new time of consciousness about care of our common home? I look forward to this shift and change; it is already happening!
(Sr. Lin)

Since the pandemic arrived, it is evident that handshakes, hugs, and fist pumps are no longer safe to use as greetings, expressions of care or goodbyes. Even the clumsy elbow-bump is too close for the required social distancing. Perhaps we will adopt the graceful greeting of the bow that is traditional in East Asia. I look forward to offering a small nod of the head to a deep bend at the waist to show respect, reverence, emotion, and gratitude to others. Perhaps the bow will become an essential part of our culture. Because of the pandemic, we are now invited to introduce a new tradition at the Exchange of Peace and other times in our Earthly sanctuary. We put the two palms of our hands together, place them near our heart and bow the head slightly and wish one another, “Peace.”
(Mary Anne)



The New Normal

What will life be after this Pandemic has passed? In some ways it is hard to imagine. I think that the way we view “work” will be different. Perhaps more people will work from home, saving time and money usually spent on traveling. Hopefully we will become more reflective, naturally taking time to think about our God, our world and our relationship to them both. It has been clear that our “pause” has allowed our earth to “heal” a bit: There have been pictures of clear water in the canals in Venice; the Himalayas are visible for the first time in years; and wildlife taking back their territory - lions have been seen lying along the road in South Africa. This is not our earth, it’s God’s and all of God’s creatures.

However, the thing that has become so glaring to me during this time is the disparity among people. As a former Math teacher, I appreciate “data.” I like to look at numbers to see patterns. One set of the numbers that make me both sad and angry is the set that shows the disparity of how different ethnic groups have been affected by this Pandemic. (By the way I think we need to name it, like we do storms. If I were to name this one, it would be *Pandora*, as in Pandora’s box.) Persons of color have had a much higher incidence of the disease. I have heard of the use of zip codes to identify where people affected by this disease live, which is a way to look at socio-economic status. I don’t want to get overly political here, but whatever the reason - socio economic status, race, or something else, it is clear that the virus seems to be blind to things that we use to group people. Whatever the reason these groups of people are more affected, I hope that this pandemic, *Pandora*, will help us to see it and more importantly address it.

On a personal level, I hope that we see that we are all PEOPLE, created by a God, who knows no bounds. I have been known to pray, “Let me see me the way God sees me.” Perhaps we could all make that part of our prayer. I’m not sure what the new normal will be. As we have navigated *Pandora*, I have thought about how we have changed since 9/11. Before that, if we had someone tell us that we would be going through metal detectors at airports or taking off our shoes to get on an airplane, I am sure we would have scoffed at it. Now, I think little of it other than how I have to get there earlier. Whatever the new normal is, we will adapt, like we have before. It’s part of human nature. However, I hope that we will do so, looking through the new lens of lessons learned from *Pandora*. (Sr. Jude)



More Than Just Desserts?

This October, we will not be listening to lovely classical guitar music while perusing interesting auction items and nibbling on tantalizing hors d’oeuvres and desserts. After 20 years, we will *not* have 100 + of our friends enjoying our More Than Just Desserts event at the Retreat House. In order to ensure your safety and well-being, as well as that of our staff and volunteers, we have reached this difficult decision.

That being said, we depend on the funds that this event provides for the Retreat House to keep this ministry available to all who are seeking a deeper relationship with God and with themselves. So just as we are doing with our programming, we are doing our well loved fundraiser...we are adjusting!

For this year, we will continue to send out our letters to many of you in July, as we have in the past, regarding how you might contribute as a Sponsor, Underwriter, or part of our Honorary Committee. We will also be sending these letters to those who have simply attended. While, there will not be a program in which to list our contributors to this event, we will do so in the next edition of our Good News.

In addition, we could not leave the desserts completely out, so...everyone who makes a contribution toward this event will have their name put in the basket. In August, we will draw 10 names who will receive a dessert in some form (gift card or item from a bakery or chocolate shop, etc) While all of you will receive our deepest gratitude, some of you will also receive a sweet reward!

Thank you for your continued support and understanding!



DRCC Recovery Corner

Step 7

Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings

Having “readied myself to have God remove My defects of character, I now ask my Higher Power to do just that- to remove from me those shortcomings that thwart my growth and progress in becoming the person my Higher Power desires me to become.

Step 6 is about **willingness**.

Step 7 is about **humility** –

truly seeing myself as I really am.

Having worked Steps 1 through 5, I now have a better understanding of myself. I am aware of unwanted character defects that seemed to help me survive life at one time, but ultimately sabotaged everything within me.

I am conscious of the many defense mechanisms that no longer work for me in my day-to-day life. I have uncovered harmful resentments, that if not let go of, will only fan the flames of anger, something I cannot afford in my new found life of recovery. And, I am cognizant of the many fears that ruled my life, causing me to act in rather impulsive ways, bringing unnecessary pain and Suffering into my life and into my relationships with others.

Left unchanged, any one of these things could cause a disorder in this wonderful gift of recovery that is mine.

So, Higher Power, I now bow before you, I surrender myself into your hands, that you may do for me that which I am unable to do for myself. Remove from me those shortcomings that impede my growth toward wholeness, that hinder the change that you most desire in my life. Give me the grace that I need to make the transformation necessary for sustained and prolonged recovery.

Where there is pride, grant me a humble spirit. Where there was once anger and resentment, fill me with your peace and a caring attitude. Where there was envy and jealousy, give me acceptance and a grateful heart for all that is mine. Where there was dishonesty and criticism, infuse me with integrity and a compassionate spirit towards all.

I know the process will not be swift and easy, but I trust your power, O God, to do the best in me.

Give me a humble and open spirit, receptive to your most holy will.

PRAYER

Higher Power, I stand before you in need of healing. There is so much within me that needs changing. I cannot change on my own. It is you, alone, who have the power to change me. Help me to be open and honest with you about my shortcomings. Give me insight and wisdom that I may know what it is that you ask of me; and courage to follow your most holy will for me. Amen.

SPIRITUAL GROUNDWORK

Review your list of shortcomings, and with the guidance of your Higher Power, decide on one or two character defects that you need to work on at this time in your life so that you may experience the peace and contentment that God desires for you. In your journal, describe the shortcomings as they take on negative tendencies in your life. Then spend some time in prayer and meditation, asking your Higher Power to open up to you a new way of conducting your life that is more advantageous for you. Write this down.

At the end of the day spend some quiet time reviewing your day:

- *Did this character defect manifest itself in a negative way in your life today? How? Simply express sorrow to your higher Power, asking for the grace needed tomorrow to accomplish God’s will for you.*
- *Did you notice any changes for the positive as regards this shortcoming in your life today? How? Thank your Higher Power for the grace given you in this day.*

You may want to work on the same shortcomings the next thirty days before moving on to other defects of character, as it takes that amount of time to make a significant change in one’s life.

Reproduced by permission from Sister Judith A. Terrameo, OSF, *Pathway to Peace and Inner Freedom: Reflections on the 12 Steps* (Allegany, NY: The Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, 2018).

12 Step Afternoon via Zoom - “Anger, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation”

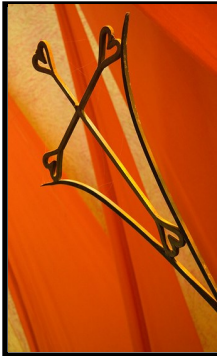
Sunday, August 2nd - 1:30-3:30 Suggested offering \$15

To make a reservation, email us at dslcnj@nybiz.rr.com

As we go through life, we have all experienced times when we have been recipients of hurtful behavior and have been angry. While this is true of just about everyone, it is certainly true of those who grew up in a family where substance abuse was present. Sometimes, we can hold onto this anger for decades. In order to bring healing to ourselves and to others with whom we are in relationship, we must work through the often difficult process of identifying and letting go of our anger in order to work towards forgiveness and reconciliation.

Presenter: **Rev. Sally Heiligman** is an Episcopal priest with a background in Pastoral Counseling and Chemical Dependency Counseling.

In June we began some virtual programming and will continue to transition various presentations so that they will be available to you at home. Please watch for emails or check our website for updates as we hope to expand our virtual programming.



Sung Vespers in the Spirit of Taize
7:00-8:00 on Facebook Live
Find Dominican Retreat and Conference Center and look for the live video.
Thursday, July 2
Thursday, August 6
Thursday, September 3

Feast of St. Dominic
Vespers
Saturday, August 8
7:00-8:00 on Facebook Live



You do not have to have a Facebook Account - search for Dominican Retreat and Conference Center Facebook Click on "Live" button

For those of you joining Taize or Vespers for St. Dominic, you may make a free will offering at dslcn.org OR mail donation to DRCC 1945 Union St. Niskayuna, NY 12309

How many losses have you had since March 2020?

Since the pandemic hit our area, we have all had to cope with a drastic change in our lives. One day we were stuck in our "normal"; the next day there was no "normal". Houses became schools, offices, gyms and a place of refuge and safety. Some people have lost a loved one; we have all lost our sense of security and have to adapt to a new way of being. Where has God been in all of this? These two sessions will offer time to sit and reflect and pray about our losses and what God maybe saying to us at this time.

Wednesday, June 24 & Wednesday, July 29 7-8PM Via Zoom
Cost : \$10 for one session or \$15 for both

Presenter: Rev. Thomas Konopka, MDiv, LCSW, Pastor of St. Mary's in Clinton Heights, clinical social worker and Director of the Consultation Center



Weeklong *Virtual* Preached Retreat for Women and Men

Monday July 6 thru Sunday July 12 beginning at 10:00 am each day.

Daily Bread: The God of Ordinary Time

Jesus teaches us to pray for daily bread, the food of ordinary time. Although special days and feasts often delight us, we spend most of our days, as the Church reminds us, in ordinary time. So ordinary time calls us to holiness to find God in the stuff of everyday, and to rejoice in the commonplace (which sometimes, as we know, turns out to be amazing!). We will explore Jesus' teaching on this topic and perhaps our own history.

Sr. Kitty chose this theme before our lives changed so drastically, yet the topic still applies!

Each day will involve a prayer and conference during which Sr. Kitty will give suggestions for how you might spend some of your time later in the day.

Director: Sr. Katherine (Kitty) Hanley, CSJ is a Sister of St. Joseph. She is currently director of *Holy Ground*, a diocesan program to form spiritual directors. For the last ten years Kitty was Associate Dean and Director of St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry in Albany. Kitty continues teaching for St. Bernard's and is a presenter and facilitator for dioceses, parishes and other groups throughout the country.

You may attend all or any part of the Zoom retreat. Suggested offering is \$20 per day or \$130 for the whole retreat.
To make a reservation, email us at dslcn@nybiz.rr.com

Address Service Requested



Connecting



Our new reality has caused many of us to “figuratively” step out of our comfort zone and into a more technological world. Many of us have dipped our toes into the world of Zoom, Facebook, Youtube, Skype, What’sApp, and so many more in an attempt to stay connected to others.

Perhaps you are emailing more with family and friends. We at the retreat house have been sending out weekly emails providing “*Thoughts on Prayer*” and updates on the status of programs here.

If you have not been receiving these emails and would like to, or would like to receive the newsletter in full color via email when the next one comes out, please contact us!

Call us at (518) 393-4169 or email us at dslcny@nybiz.rr.com to request that we put you on our email list. If you are emailing us, PLEASE INCLUDE your Name, Email address, Mailing address and Phone number so that we can accurately match your information to our database (You would be surprised at how many people have the same or similar names!)

Just a Note: Spiritual Direction during this time IS AVAILABLE

via phone or Zoom!

Contact Sr. Chris at (518) 393-4169 for more information.

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