



NEWS

from the Northside

Come Visit Our Place of Rest and Delight!

by Brian Mogren

As I write this article from my lower level living space at the St. Jane House, friends from the PEACE Foundation and Northside Achievement Zone are holding a day-long retreat upstairs...conspiring how their program can positively impact the lives of hundreds of families on the Northside, with a promise that the children from these families will all graduate from high school. It is a bold initiative that they are embarking on, involving the collaboration of dozens of organizations, and they sought out an inspiring, peace-filled space to do their important visioning.

Since its inception in the Spring of 2008 as an urban retreat center offering hospitality in the spirit of Jane and Frances, the St. Jane House has hosted numerous gatherings of individuals and organizations working to make a difference on the Northside and beyond. It is also a guest house with lovely gardens and quiet places for people to be in prayer and discernment.

As a Visitation Companion and the manager-in-residence at the St. Jane House, I have been privileged to not only share daily life with our Northside neighbors, but also meet and converse with people from all over the country and world who have spent time at this "place of rest and delight."

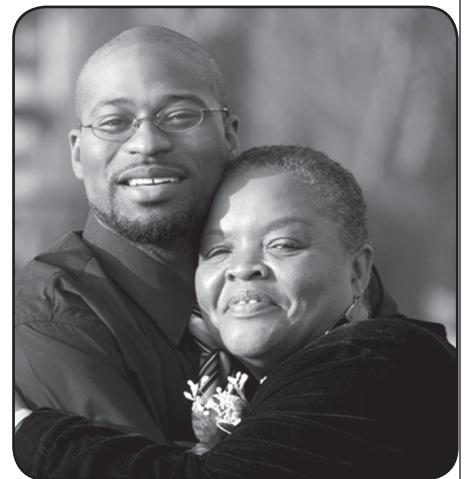
Looking through our guest book of overnight visitors, one finds entries from friends who live around the corner as well as those who live on the other side of the globe—and everywhere in between—places like Mendota Heights, Portland, New York, Rome, Mexico City and Uganda. We have hosted neighborhood mothers and others for personal day-long or overnight retreats as well as groups of college students participating in week long "urban plunges." In addition to enjoying plenty of time for reading, prayer and reflection, retreatants have opportunities to pray and break bread with the Sisters and our neighbors, as well as participate in service opportunities if they wish.

Regular events at the St. Jane House include a weekly centering prayer group, teen cooking classes, dinners and evenings of reflection for women in our neighborhood, men's spirituality groups, and Visitation Companion gatherings.

St. Jane House is also the home base for our dear friend, Mary Johnson's "From Death To Life" organization. Every other Saturday morning, Mary holds healing groups here for parents who have lost children to homicide. She also reaches out



Teen baking class at St. Jane House



Mary Johnson with Oshea Israel, who was recently released from 17 years in prison for taking Mary's son's life. See story (left) for more about this story of forgiveness.

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www.visitationmonasteryminneapolis.org

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We are an urban monastic community. Please contact us for more information about our way of life.

Join us on Facebook: Visitation Monastery North Minneapolis

You can read the newsletter online at our website. If you prefer this format, please contact S. Joanna at Vmonastery@aol.com.

A Day in the Life of an Urban Monastic Community

by S. Mary Frances Reis & S. Suzanne Homeyer

I have had the awesome privilege and honor to live the greater part of my years (50+ of them!) as a Visitation Sister. While the essence of that life—a unique blend of Prayer and Community, as our founders describe it, “one of great humility toward God and gentleness toward the neighbor”—has remained a constant, new expressions have emerged throughout the 400 years this legacy has endured.

Twenty years ago, after ten years of prayerful discernment, four of our Sisters were invited by the Holy Spirit to bring this time-honored lifestyle to the City...“to express the Mystery of the Visitation in a new way—a commitment to be one with economically challenged and marginalized persons.” (Mission Statement)

Sister Suzanne and I will attempt to share some snapshots of what a monastic contemplative life “in the midst” looks like—how we combine a life of stability with brothers and sisters who struggle daily to get the basics of food, clothing, employment and shelter, and how our spirituality nourishes them and us to “keep on keeping on.”

“A Day in the Life”

6:00 am We begin our day with an hour of **personal prayer and meditation.**

7:00 am We gather in our small chapel near the front door, where neighbors have access and are welcome to join us for our **Morning Prayer of chanted psalms, readings, and handing over of our day.**

8:00 am Our daily Eucharist is celebrated here and is followed by **table fellowship**, or if the priest does not come here, we go to one of the neighboring churches.

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St. Jane House, Continued from page 1

to parents on the other side of the tragedy—those who have lost children to prison because of homicide. Ultimately, her dream is for these two groups of parents to lead the entire community in healing and reconciliation, and an end to violence. Five years ago, Mary participated in the restorative justice process that led to her meeting and forgiving Oshea Israel, the young man who took her only son’s life. Recently, Oshea began the process of re-entering free society after having served 17 years in prison. On March 7, 2010, Mary hosted a very special party for him at St. Jane House in which the Sisters and other community members welcomed him home, with wide opened arms and offers of support. It was an extraordinary, grace-filled day that those in attendance will not soon forget. Enjoy photos from this amazing day on our website.

The St. Jane House is located at 1403 Emerson Ave. N., just two blocks from the Monastery’s Fremont house. To see photos and read more about the wonderful things that happen here, or to reserve your own personal stay, please visit: www.bewhoyouare.info/stjanehouse. You may also call Brian at 612-965-9446. We hope you will come and visit us soon!



Brian Mogren

A Day in the Life, *Continued from page 2*

It's not at all unusual for someone to come to our door even as early as 7 am. A sign lets visitors know we are at prayer and they are welcome to ring the bell to join us. More often than not they do and as we offer our prayer and praise together their needs and concerns emerge. After prayer one or more sisters will be present to the visitor. Needs are met in a personal way and new relationships formed or existing ones strengthened. Some guests might be the couple in need of tokens to get to a morning court appearance or a meeting with a social worker. Some days a child who has missed a bus may ask for a ride to school. As former educators one of us would probably respond after making sure our young friend has at least a glass of juice and piece of toast to sustain him/her at work.

Each of us has specific community work which is part of our day. It could be cooking the main meal, weeding the garden, organizing a field trip or getting materials ready for a group we will be welcoming to our home. These activities may be our plan on a given day but the reality of our life is that each day is a series of short visits with God who is present at the door or on the telephone or out on the street. We welcome Jesus in this way ---in the disguise of our neighbors.

Our Eucharistic meal, whether shared at 8:00 am, 11 am or 5 pm is immediately followed by a simple meal. Table fellowship with the priest presider and others present continues at the dining room table. Conversation is lively, informative, free-flowing and from the heart—civil discourse in a safe environment. Homeless friends and judges, single parents and struggling college students gather to share more than food—we share the very lives we have been given and we are all strengthened for the journey.

Noon We pause for **Midday Prayer, a time dedicated to local and global Peace.**

We are firm believers in thinking globally and acting locally. An afternoon may find a few sisters listening to a presentation about a new project starting up in North Minneapolis such as Women Achieving New Directions (for women in transition) or NETWORK (for people returning to life in the neighborhood after a period of treatment, rehab or incarceration). Some networking is less formal like hearing about plans for a community garden from a person on the next street. New homeowners on the block might pause from their yard work to introduce themselves and see who we are. As the conversation develops we share hopes for this place we know as sacred ground.

4:45 pm Evening Prayer followed by personal prayer time, evening meal and community recreation.

Our evening meal includes sharing about our day. Who have we seen? What have we learned? We share plans, ideas and amusing stories. After dinner we work and play together. Table clean-up and dishes give way to a short game of Scrabble or Banana for some; a few hands of Solitaire or knitting for others or maybe all of us will attend a neighborhood event like the Ascension Peace Dinner, a block club meeting, a community talk at the St. Jane House, or the performance of someone we are encouraging to dream and develop skills at the Lundstrum School of Performing Arts.



On behalf of the Catholic Church Father Michael O'Connell welcomed Linda Goynes into the faith community at the Easter Vigil at our neighborhood Church of the Ascension.

8:15pm Night Prayer-In this prayer, we hand over our neighborhood for a peaceful night, and make a commitment that if we awaken in the nighttime hours, we vigil with those who may be in chaos or pain. We use this in place of the Office of Readings in Common.

While we frame our day with prayer and community, we find that a similar fidelity to the present moment and a flexibility that makes charity primary, have nuanced our life in new and generative ways. The Visitation is alive and well here, and our hearts sing Mary's Magnificat of justice and praise in ever new and life-giving ways! We listen, pray and support. WE are changed in the process of being present to others; some people in the neighborhood are changed, too! May Jesus live in YOUR hearts, as together we celebrate 20 years and 400 years of the Gospel Story of VISITATION!



—St. Francis de Sales

“Always walk in the presence of God because
God’s shade is healthier than the rays of the
sun.”

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IN ANNECY, FRANCE

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in honor of the birth of our Order
on June 6, 2010
9:30 am Eucharist at the Church of the Ascension

1723 Bryant Ave. North
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Followed by a BIRTHDAY PARTY on the church grounds

RSVP
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**Celebrate 400 years of the Order
of the Visitation with us!**