



IHM Sisters – *On Mission*

Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Happy 10th Anniversary, IHM Spirituality Center!

The IHM Spirituality Center, a dream for the congregation for many years, became a reality in 1993. Years of planning by a group of sisters organized by Sister Ann Bernadette MacNamara and Sister Eunice Marie Timoney along with months of construction and renovation had turned what was once the Novitiate into a 38-room retreat center that would grow to be known as “the best sacred space in Chester County.” Along with bedrooms, reading rooms and quiet corners, the Spirituality Center houses a serving kitchen, dining room and offices for the staff.

The transformed wing of the Motherhouse fulfilled a dream that had been requested by sisters for a “kind of house of prayer,” a “retreat house like Stone Harbor, but closer to home,” as well as a “staffed center where both sisters and lay people could come and pray.” The mandate of the Chapter of 1988 had called for such a place. When the IHM Spirituality Center opened its doors in September, 1993, the mandate reached its fulfillment.



The IHM Spirituality Center opens its doors in a warm and inviting welcome to all those seeking a place to prepare, update, renew or rest in the Lord.

The first two sisters assigned to the Spirituality Center were Sister Suzanne Marie Mayer (S. John Eleanor), director, and Sister Mary Angela Menna, coordinator. In her eight years at the Spirituality Center, Sister Suzanne developed many of the interesting, informative programs and presented some of the talks.

During the first year, the Center offered day programs and twilight evenings of prayer and reflection. In its second year of existence, accommodations were ready for overnight stays. This



Sisters Suzanne Mayer, Mary Angela and Jane Michael are the past and present “keepers of the keys” for the IHM Spirituality Center.

proved especially timely since numerous outside groups were seeking housing for week/weekend retreats and times of discernment and our own IHM delegates for the Chapter of 1994 were gathering for weekends of organizing, planning and discussing.

As word spread about the “best sacred space” in Chester County, more parish groups, religious communities, Cursio teams, school faculties, CCD organizations and Pastoral Ministry teams began to book weekend retreats, mid-week renewal meetings, day and evening gatherings for prayer, revitalization, refreshment and education. Soon, several groups were occupying the Center in a single weekend with quiet chant echoing from the first-floor chapel and prayer forming the background for meals in the dining room.

With growth came the need for more room. The first extension was the transformation of a storage area into a lovely and surprisingly spacious second dining room allowing those wishing a more silent meal setting to share meal time without distraction from conversing groups across the hall. The next improvement and expansion was the conversion of a former novitiate trunk room into a lovely Terrace Room. With its peaceful green décor and warm, welcoming furnishings, this room soon became the most popular meeting room in the Motherhouse.

So many interesting, wonderful groups have enjoyed the IHM Spirituality Center and, hopefully, have been enriched from the experience. Its varied programs, beautiful surroundings, comfortable, lovely rooms and delicious meals have brought many groups here on an annual basis. The chart shows a few of the groups who have shared our IHM hospitality during its ten-year history.

As the Spirituality Center marks its tenth anniversary, special gratitude is extended to Sister Mary Angela – an amazing person who radiates abundant energy, devotion, generosity and warmth. All who



The Daughters of Charity plan their day with Father John Maher, C.M.



The Vietnamese Christian Life group enjoys an informal work session in the lounge.



The Temple University Vocational Professors pose for a group picture before beginning their comprehensive workshop.

- St. Francis in the Fields
- Oblates of Divine Providence
- Mexican Neocatechumenal Way
- Bethesda Mercy Mission Corps
- Jefferson Hospital Pastoral Team
- North American Alliance for Mentally Ill
- Rachel's Vineyard of Greater Philadelphia
- Habitat for Humanity International
- Progoff Intensive Journal Workshop
- Vietnamese Christian Life Community
- Global Health Ministry
- IHM Mission Group – Scranton
- St. Francis Inn
- Office of Evangelization
- Villanova Nursing Program
- Archdiocesan Priests & Seminarians
- Stewards of St. John Neumann
- Christian Brothers
- Centering Prayer Groups
- Charismatic Prayer Groups
- Third Order Dominicans
- KAIROS
- Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral
- Franciscan Friars of New York
- St. Asaph Vestry
- Eastern Baptist Seminary
- Lutheran Church Groups
- Temple Vocational Professors
- Lancaster, West Chester, Glen Mills Presbyterian Churches



A few of the IHM sisters "Over 80" group share the wisdom of their life-experiences with their coordinator, S. Marie Jerome (right).

Shomper (summer helper) assist Sister Mary Angela with groups. Both sisters add their special charisma, graciousness and kindness. In addition, Sister Jane Michael Yablonski is the current program coordinator enriching the center with her joy and gentleness.

With all the changes and modifications, however, one reality has stood the test of time. As one looks out the many windows that open from the Spirituality Center, the visitors still see the most beautiful sunrises and sunsets in Chester County. Beauty without and peace within characterize our IHM Spirituality Center. Possibly, you, too, might sometime heed the Lord's invitation to "Come and See!"

come through the doors of the Spirituality Center have been blessed by her gracious and loving spirit along with her hospitable and efficient manner. Nothing is too much for Sister to do to help visitors enjoy a successful, pleasant, refreshing stay.

Through the years some other changes in personnel have occurred. Because of the great demand for the Spirituality Center throughout the year, Sister Miriam Patrice Pyle as well as Sister Marie Damian



Throughout this newsletter, we hope you enjoy some of the letters of appreciation written to the Spirituality Center staff.