

Thanks to all those who visited us in 2009...

A few photos from the past year...
We look forward to
welcoming you in 2010!

- Would you help us by writing a positive review online?
1. Go to TripAdvisor.com
 2. Click "Write A Review"
 3. Select "Hotel"
 4. Type in "St. Joseph's Dwelling Place", Click "Search"
 5. Then tell the world about us! You can even add photos!

Private Retreatant from New Jersey



Newlyweds from Pennsylvania



Family and friends from Wisconsin



Nazarene
Couples Retreat



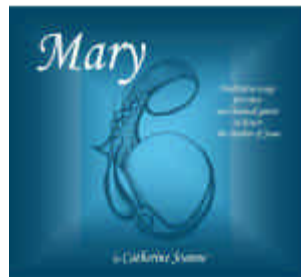
Young Adult Tourists from Germany



Campfire with Youth



Aging and Grace Retreat Weekend



Advent/Christmas listening from Catherine Joanne...

The original cassette *In the Womb of a Virgin* has been remastered and is now available on CD

Mary: 17 Meditative songs for voice and classical guitar to honor the Mother of Jesus.

To order: \$20 to St. Joseph's Dwelling Place (includes shipping)



30 days *Continued from page 1...*

Being back "in the world" has not always been easy. God was in my life before this retreat, but He is more so now. I'm more aware of the people, places and things that keep me from Him - and they still do. When that happens, I open up my notebook and read, meditate, or more naturally turn the situation over to God and talk to Him. My days are best when they start and end with Him. I just have to ask for help, and then trust—sometimes a lot. We live in a difficult world and I must still remind myself that I don't have to be perfect. God loves me just the way I am!

Courage *Continued from page 3...*

Before leaving for the pilgrimage, my friend Jan and her two young daughters had given me a basket of little wrapped gifts, instructing me to open one a day. The day I came home from the pilgrimage, the gift I opened was a small stone with the word Courage etched into it! Isn't God amazing? What an affirmation that I had been given the gift of Courage to face my cancer and treatments. I will not say the journey was easy, but I never again felt the fear that had consumed me.

Since that pilgrimage, I have been able to share my story with several friends who were fearful about some life event. I was given a gift by Catherine, it was confirmed by the gift from Jan. God gave me the gift of courage, and I have gifted it to others. May you also find the courage to face your life's challenges!

**Lord, grant me
the courage
to face what I must
each day.
Allow me to find
peace in You
and to know that
with Your courage,
I need never fear.
Amen.**

St. Joseph's Dwelling Place: a guest-retreat house in Southern Vermont



Stepping Stone

141 Wright Road, Ludlow, VT 05149 * Phone: 802-228-4952 * Email: sjdwellingplace@comcast.net * www.stjosephdp.com

Joseph said "Yes" *by Catherine Joanne*

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:18

With love beyond all telling, the Father sent the angel Gabriel to Judea to ask a glorious favor of a teenager, Mary of Nazareth. With love and faith beyond all telling, she agreed to bear the Christ in her womb, a child conceived out of wedlock, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel reports that Mary "was found with child." Outside of her own immediate family, who was the first in her home town to recognize that she was pregnant, to notice a change in her physical shape, size or bearing?

Could it have been Joseph? Did he discover her condition the moment he eagerly greeted her on her return from her three-month visit to her cousin Elizabeth?

Did he embrace her with joy without noticing the anxiety in her eyes? Did he feel the effect of three months of pregnancy which even the customary robes of their culture would not completely conceal? Or was it her first words to him which simply and momentarily communicated a new reality that would turn his world and all his life plans upside-down?

Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly.

Matthew 1:19

Some scripture scholars believe that it was incredulity that prompted Joseph to come to the decision to break the betrothal contract and divorce Mary. If he were unable to believe her story of divine conception, infidelity of this magnitude would have been grounds, not only for divorce, but for death by stoning.

Others think that Joseph did know and



believe that this child was conceived in Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. But, being a man of integrity, imbued with Jewish sensitivity to the significance of lineage, Joseph could not---would not pretend to have fathered a child who was not his son, but the Son of God. To take Mary as his wife and step into the role of foster father of Jesus would require special permission from God.

In any case, overwhelmed by doubt and fear, Joseph would have had nowhere to turn but to God alone. Falling asleep in

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Liz Walsh, who lives in Kennebunk, ME, made her 30-day retreat in July of 2009. She is a faithful and energetic supporter of St. Joseph's Dwelling Place.

A Journey of 30 days *by Liz Walsh*

I had thought about the idea of making a month's retreat for a long time and discussed it often with Catherine. But almost until the time I arrived, I still was not sure I was making the right decision. After all, it was a big commitment! I am a 62-year old perfectionist and searcher who just wanted to find happiness. Nonetheless, after my first meeting with Catherine, I knew I had made the right decision.

I was determined to do the interior work asked of me. Unlike most retreats, mine was unstructured, except that Catherine and I usually met every other day. Saturday I was free to come and go as I chose.

In between, I read, prayed, meditated, walked, and wrote. I went to Weston Priory, then prayed and read some more.

My Spiritual Direction sessions with Catherine were over the top. She reads me like a book! We talked about my life, my expectations, my flaws, my gifts, and my struggles. Being in Ludlow for 30 days versus just a few days or a week made a big difference in what we could cover. I had some real ah-ha moments and a few when I didn't get the answers I wanted to hear.

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“Yes” ...continued from page 1

his pain and grief, Joseph resolved to divorce Mary, but to do it quietly, so as not to expose her to shame. Then we read of the dream, the wonderful dream in which the angel of the Lord appears to Joseph to assure him:

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus...

Matthew 1:20-21

With love and hope beyond all telling, Joseph, the dreamer, was able to follow the will of God as he perceived it. He took Mary into his home as the mother of God's Son. It was Joseph's privilege to give this extraordinary child the name of Jesus. And because of

Joseph's obedient receptivity to God's design, Jesus would also have a family name. In his home town of Nazareth and beyond, the Messiah would be called Jesus, son of Joseph.

Joseph's yes turned what could have been a tragedy in his time and culture—an unwed mother; a fatherless child—into the happiest ending possible: the Holy Family.

Is there an aspect of your life in which you feel challenged as Joseph was to believe, to trust, to continue loving?

In this Advent/Christmas season, we are invited to reflect on the giants of our salvation story and to follow their example.

O Holy Family, pray for us, that we may follow your way, and always do the Father's will with faith, hope and love beyond all telling. Amen.

Innkeepers Corner by Becky Lieber



As my second year at St. Joseph's Dwelling Place comes to a close, I am once again thankful for the opportunity to share such an amazing place with all of our guests. The retreat house is a wonderful environment to grow in faith through the experience of solitude and the many aspects of nature.

God's creation never speaks clearer to me than through his design on nature. As I was working on our nature path with a youth group from St. John Cantius Parish this summer, spreading wood chips, moving rocks, and picking up trash, I was reminded of a bible verse shared with me at a work bee camp weekend in my youth:

But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you, or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?

Job 12:7-10



Surely that includes the snake-like fish with legs that my nephew, nieces, and godchildren discovered in the brook and screamed about this summer while visiting!

I know God designed the sheep that grazed in our meadow this summer and fall. I learned first-hand what it means to take care of God's creation when our little lamb developed a cut in her foot and limped even though the veterinarian came twice and gave her two shots of antibiotics. I worried and researched until I came up with a plan to disinfect her foot and bandage it to keep it clean. It was quite an accomplishment the day I was finally able to hold her leg up, administer some first aid, and wrap her in a bandage. In a few days the bandage came off and she was healed! The day our two sheep had to leave us I shed some tears, but was grateful for the opportunity to learn about a farm animal that I had never given much thought to before.

Wouldn't you like to experience for yourself what the hand of God has created in nature by visiting our retreat house this coming year? Use the coupon below for a free night midweek with a stay of two nights or more. Hope to see you soon!

**One Free Night Midweek
with a stay of two nights or more
\$65 value!**

Courage by Edie Brown

Edie Brown resides in Chester, Vermont, with her husband Wally and youngest daughter. She serves on the Board of Directors of St. Joseph's Dwelling Place



In May, 2000, I was diagnosed with breast cancer found by a mammogram that I almost didn't get. My mother in law had a mammogram that showed a lump just a few months earlier, and I promised her I would get checked too. I thank God now that she encouraged me to go!

From the first knowledge of the cancer, my every waking moment was consumed with fear and worry. My first and last thought each day was, "I have cancer."

Lymph nodes removed from under my arm during the lumpectomy showed cancer cells. Not only were there cancer cells in my lymph system, but the lumpectomy had not removed all the breast cancer.

We waited while the Cancer Board discussed what treatment they would recommend. Mastectomy? Chemo? Radiation?

It was July before we had a plan. I would have a Mastectomy on July 31 and chemo treatments would start soon after.

Somehow I got through day by day, week by week. Family, friends and neighbors helped out with food and housework. But all through the months of waiting, I was consumed with fear.

In 1999, I had traveled with Catherine Joanne and Mary Pisaniello on pilgrimage to the Canadian shrines. We had a fantastic trip and I was eager to go again. When

I discussed this with my oncologist. He encouraged me to go on the September, 2000 trip and begin chemo when I returned. My three youngest daughters would go along too.

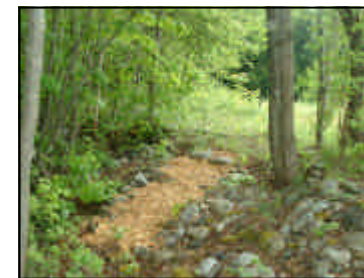
We arrived at the first shrine and settled into the routine of prayer and devotions there. Each evening, Catherine played some of her wonderful songs and led us in prayer. My personal prayer was for guidance, hope, peace. I begged God for reassurance that I would have the strength to get through this. I wanted some word to hold onto.

Catherine's first concert seemed to have a theme: be not afraid, have courage. Suddenly, I felt the peace I was searching for. I would pray for courage. I did not mention this to anyone, but throughout the whole pilgrimage, Catherine continued with this theme. For the first time in months, I was able to sleep and wake without fear. I returned home ready to face with courage whatever happened.

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Meditation Along the Brook Path by Danielle Genovese

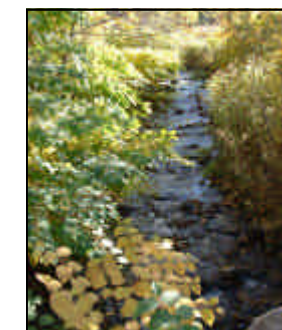
Dannie Genovese is a frequent visitor and long-time friend to St. Joseph's Dwelling Place. She resides in Kingston, NH, with her husband, Paul.



awareness of his Mother's pain, only added to the suffering he endured. I understood how it felt to watch your child suffer as you stand by helplessly.

I was reminded of how we need help sometimes, as Jesus did in carrying his cross. I know that times of deep sorrow are only bearable through the kindness of others. I was deeply touched as Jesus fell again and again, and yet again. It helps me to remember that it doesn't matter how often we fail. What matters is that we ask for the grace to get up again. I know that He understands human weakness.

At station ten, I realized that after all the physical pain and exhaustion, yet another form of abuse occurred: the pain of humiliation. As Jesus was stripped and mocked, he was at his lowest point.



Last summer I spent some time at St. Joseph's Dwelling Place with Catherine Joanne, my friend and Spiritual Director. She asked me to take an hour and reflect on the Stations of the Cross using the meditations she wrote, "He Knows My Pain." I had been coming to Vermont for years, but had never taken the time to walk along the brook where the Stations are nestled. It was an experience I will never forget.

As I stopped at each station, I began to feel a powerful connection to Jesus and especially to Mary, who was a woman and a mother, like me.

So much of the writing spoke to my own personal experiences of pain and fear. I could relate to the sufferings of Jesus more than ever before. It's hard to describe all the thoughts that filled my mind as I gained new insights into Mary's helplessness to stop the pain of Jesus, and I realized that Jesus'

Yet he was able to forgive his tormentors. I can recall times when I have felt misunderstood or humiliated. Forgiveness wasn't even a conscious thought at those times. Yet, that is what He asks of us.

The last Station brought me back to a reflection on Mary and I recalled the times I have stood at the graves of loved ones and felt an unbearable loss. I can only imagine the deep, dark sorrow she felt, as she watched her Son laid in his tomb. How empty and sad she must have felt as she left the tomb.

I can only pray that I will remember that there is no pain, no sorrow, or no humiliation that I can ever suffer that is greater than that which Jesus and Mary experienced. Knowing this makes them all the more real in my life and helps me to realize that they truly "Know my Pain" and walk the paths I walk each day, by my side.

I will be forever grateful for the hour I spent in the woods that day. May I never forget the lessons I learned along the "Way".