



Catholic Women Physicians' Retreat

A call for renewal, spiritual growth and friendship

BY KATHLEEN RAVIELE, M.D.

FAR AWAY FROM NIGHT CALLS, BUSY DAYS IN THE office or hospital, technology and family responsibilities, the Catholic Women Physicians' Retreat truly is a time for recollection and spiritual renewal.

Dominican Sister Mary Diana Dreger, an internist in the Nashville Guild, along with her order, the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in Nashville, have hosted this retreat at the Bethany Retreat House for the past four years.

From the moment the date of the next retreat is scheduled until I get on the road with a fellow physician for the four-hour drive from Atlanta, Georgia to Dickson, Tennessee, where the sister's retreat house is located, I savor the thought of returning. It was no different this past fall when I and four other physician friends made our way to Bethany for the 2015 retreat.

By the time we arrived, the sun had set. Turning in at the white picket fence and driving past the sisters' house, we wound our way up the long curvy gravel driveway in the dark. When we came around the bend and saw the whole retreat



house lit up with a flood of welcoming lights, including the new chapel wing, we let out a cry of delight. We were back!

Forty-five minutes from the Nashville airport, Bethany is perched on a hill in the country overlooking a scenic valley of farmland and ponds. It is reminiscent of a hunting lodge with a massive great room, full of comfortable sofas and



chairs with all kinds of seating arrangements, conducive to reading, needlepoint or conversation. At night there is a fire roaring in the fireplace and the loft upstairs has a library full of great spiritual books and comfortable chairs. I have gone on weekend retreats for many years and this is the best retreat center I have ever visited.

Two of the sisters greeted us with smiles and hugs on that cold, windy night and showed us to our rooms. Over the weekend we had the opportunity to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. These opportunities were optional, but almost all gathered in the chapel to pray together. Praying together creates such a bond of unity that continues after we return home. We participated in the Mass together each day, as well as in two conferences with the retreat master and informal group discussions. Confession was available the whole weekend.

Father Basil Cole, O.P., from the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC, was the retreat master and he had so much wisdom to impart not only in his conferences, but also in his homilies. There was plenty of time for personal prayer and reflection, and spiritual reading that Sister Mary Diana usually provides us with to read on the retreat or to take home and read later.

The magnificent new chapel that we had seen the year before as a shell was completed in time for the 2015 retreat. It was absolutely beautiful with stained glass windows, rich, dark wood pews and stalls and a magnificent crucifix. It rivals many of our parish churches.

On Friday night we had adoration all night, each taking our turn, as well as silence for 24 hours thereafter. The chapel is such a beautiful place in which to spend time with Our Lord. In the middle of the night it may just be you with the King of Kings. Believe it or not, we women can be silent! Even though we were not talking to each other, there was still that spiritual bond of being physi-



cians together on retreat, as well as being women with all the other responsibilities we have of caring for parents, patients, children and/or husbands.

The meals the sisters so lovingly made for us were out of this world. We could sit in the dining room or out on the deck or on the screened porch with our delicious repast, and get to know the various women on the retreat. We all asked the sisters for recipes of our favorite dishes that they had so masterfully prepared for us. After meals you could walk the grounds, walk around the deck that surrounds the whole second story, or go down to the outside Stations of the Cross. We left Sunday afternoon, after lunch, refreshed and inspired for another year already planning our return.

The next retreat will be held Nov. 3-6, 2016. All Catholic women physician are invited. Won't you consider joining us this November?

To register for the retreat, email
BETHANYRETREAT@OP-TN.ORG