

Lurana's Star

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF ATONEMENT
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WINTER

No. 1

Sisters' Ministries--Graymoor



Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House



Saint John's Church



Sisters' Gift Shop

Franciscans...
Missionaries...
Lovers of Creation...
Lovers of the Lord!

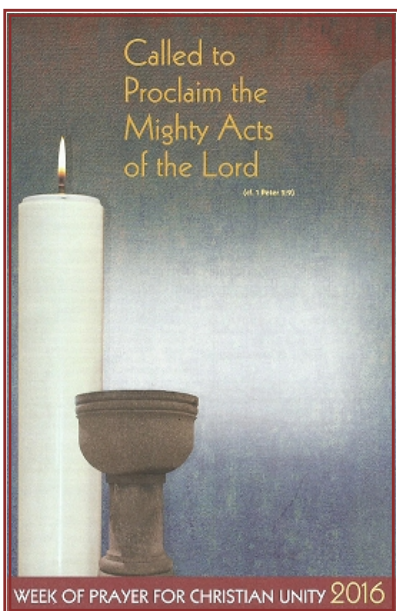


Sister Eilish Sweeney

Dear Friend,

As we begin this New Year of 2016 we have so much to be grateful for. My New Year's wish for you is that God will bless you and your family in countless ways. Happy New Year to each of you.

It is customary for us in our January Edition of *Lurana's Star* to share with you the theme of that year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. "*Called to Proclaim the Mighty Acts of the Lord*" has been chosen for this year 2016 and it is taken from the First Letter of Peter 2:9. This Theme was submitted by the people of Latvia.



The Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute who prepares all the material to be sent out throughout the world writes: "As Christians seeking the unity of the Body of Christ we are called to recognize the mighty acts of God in our own lives and the life of the Church." We extend a warm welcome to you to join us, the Franciscan Sisters and Friars of the Atonement, in praying for

Christian Unity in a special way from January 18th to the 25th.

During the past couple of years we have tried to bring all our good friends and benefactors up to-date with our Sisters who are actively involved in our mission and ministries near and far beyond Graymoor. Many of you have written to express how much you enjoyed reading about our missions here in the East coast, West Coast, Canada, Italy, Brazil, Japan and most recently in the Philippines. Some of our readers wrote to share their delight in reading about various Sisters whom they remember from years gone by when they ministered in their home parishes.

In this January 2016 Edition we would like to focus on our three main ministries here at Graymoor. They are: Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House ministry, Our Sisters' Gift Shop and Saint John's Church. Many of our readers have been a part of any one or all of these ministries over the years. We thank you for your support.

On the afternoon of November 5, 2015, the transferred Feast of the Commemoration of all the Deceased of the Seraphic Order, we received the sad news of the death of Sister Bettie J. Wilms. A native of Canada, Sister Bettie has been at Eagle Park Health Care Facility in Qualicum Beach, BC, Canada for the past few years. May she Rest in Peace.

During the month of November we also celebrated Sister Colette Duffy's 101st Birthday, Sister Barbara Bernauer's 100th Birthday and Sister Mary Bride Spratt's 99th Birthday. Greetings and best wishes to three great missionaries.

Gratefully,

Sister M. Eilish Sweeney

Sisters' Ministry- -Graymoor

Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House

As I have already mentioned in my opening letter, in this edition of Lurana's Star we will be sharing with you, our friends and benefactors, the history and present activities and ministries of Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House, our Sisters' Gift Shop, and St. John's Church.

For those of you who are familiar with Graymoor and all that is a part of our lives here you have, no doubt, seen that impressive Tudor Style Building as you enter the lower portion of our grounds which leads you to the Sisters' Convent. For almost fifty years this beautiful house had been known to so many people as: Our Lady of the Atonement Guest and Retreat House. It was officially named Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House 2005.

Way back in the early days of our congregation's history what is known today as Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House took on many forms. In April 1910 Mother Lurana first spoke to the local contractor, Joseph Davis, about the need to build a little Guest Cottage.

This original proposal soon became a bigger project because not only would it accommodate guests and family members coming to Graymoor but a portion of it would be used for the "Proposed Rosary League's" need for printing the necessary literature and taking care of the required correspondence.

During the years of 1911, 1914 and 1916 at least three small cottages were erected on Graymoor's grounds. These included "the Sisters' portable laundry house, purchased from Sears Roebuck, Chicago for \$143 as well as an old business office purchased from the New York Aqueduct for \$10."

Our Society's History also states "The plan was to weld the three buildings together." The foundations for this "guest cottage" were

already blasted in the winter of 1914. There would also be a section called the "House of Retreat" where "converts to the Catholic faith could be instructed and received into the Church" and where Catholic women could make a retreat.

A couple of months later the plans for a guest cottage were changed considerably because of the death of a Brother Christopher at Graymoor who had not been able to receive immediate medical attention, together with other mishaps. The new plans called for a "Cottage Hospital." It was to have a "central hall, an office and north and south wings." A portion of this Cottage Hospital would be devoted to housing summer visitors.

In the Rosary League page of *The Lamp*, June 1916, Fr. Paul asked for members to give their opinion about the construction of the Cottage Hospital. The query was to gain support for the project. By December 1916 it was determined that the hospital annex of the hostel would be named after St. Luke, the Physician Saint, and it would even have a surgical operating room.

On August 5, 1916, Saturday of Atonement Week, Fr. Paul blessed the ground for the proposed cottage hospital. Mother Lurana indicated it's formal name in her diary of that day, saying that Fr. Paul, "blessed the ground for the proposed new Hostel of Our Lady which is to have one section fitted up as an emergency or small hospital - the other part will be occupied by the Tertiaries and visitors." *The Lamp*, our society's early publication, for March 1916 mentioned the desire to house the "Tertiaries" of the Sisters in the proposed cottage.

Four years later it was written that, "On July 2, 1920, the "Inaugural Retreat" of the Hostel took place. It was composed of the 38 Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity—an organization of women missionary workers. Fr. Thomas Judge,

Sisters' Ministry- -Graymoor

C.M., gave the conferences. They stayed for three and a half days and were followed by another band from the same organization.

Mother Lurana wrote that food, lodging, etc., were given to the group free “for the love of God” and then added, “This act of Charity seems providential for us as for them as it opens in a very edifying manner, so it seems to me, the retreat work, for which the Hostel was actually built.” What a history!

In the more recent years, the 40's, 50's and 60's, Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House was simply known as the Hostel, then again as the Guest House. In those days women came for retreats while others during the summer months spent a week or two or more on vacation. These women often knew our Sisters on our missions in New York City, Philadelphia, Boston and New Jersey. It was our own Sisters who met the needs of these women as Guest House hosts and as cooks and graciously provided all their meals. Our Community prayers and daily masses were also available to these summer guests.



Sister Kathleen Ryan, Sister Attracta O'Neill and Father Coleman Gallacher with a group of retreatants back in 1965.

Today, because we are so blessed to have the availability of such a beautiful building, retreat ministry has become a very vibrant ministry for us, the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement, here at Graymoor. These retreats are available to both men and women of all faiths and are

held on most weekends from September through June of each year. Parish groups or others are also welcome during the week.



From left to right, Sisters Mary Mulligan, Nancy Sargent, Frances Flynn and Eileen Waldron.

Presently, Sisters Frances Flynn, Eileen Waldron, Mary Mulligan and Nancy Sargent minister at Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House. In reflecting on their Retreat Ministry in today's church, Sister Frances writes: “Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House at Graymoor with its atmosphere of solitude and prayer is a place of spiritual refreshment. All who come here believe that Graymoor is a special place of peace and blessing. Here, the Franciscan way of life, a blending of prayer and work, is lived daily.

The Atonement Sisters, in Franciscan hospitality, invite all to experience this atmosphere of peace and blessing. Renewed in body and spirit many have found the courage and the confidence they need to return to the obligations and demands of their daily lives.”



Father Bob Labrano and retreatants at a recent retreat.

A Retreatant Shares her Story!

At one of our recent retreats here at Graymoor I had the pleasure of meeting a very warm, friendly and outgoing lady who was being honored for her many years of sobriety by fellow retreatants and good friends. Knowing that I was planning to write a future article on retreat ministry I asked if she would be willing to share her story. She graciously accepted and within days she shared the following:

“May 25, 1985 is my sober date in Alcoholics Anonymous. At this writing which is May 2015, I just celebrated 30 years of sobriety.

In October of 1985, I went with my AA sponsor, Karen, to my first Women in AA Recovery Spiritual Retreat weekend. It was a retreat in honor of Matt Talbot, who for the sake of God took the pledge not to drink anymore. He gave it up as it was destroying his life physically, emotionally and spiritually, which alcoholism is a threefold disease. AA retreats are common in his name and common in recovery of alcoholism, drug addiction, food addiction and etc. as the list goes on for recovery for many types of addictions we humans suffer from. I still have my Matt Talbot Retreat medallion given me on that first retreat that weekend

That Retreat House was at St. Ursula's Retreat House in Blue Point, LI, NY (closed now). I was both thrilled and terrified to be there. My sponsor assured me I was in a safe place and to just be myself and share whatever feelings come up without worry. That weekend I also did my very first sharing of my drinking history, which we call in AA qualifying. I was 5 months sober and “telling my story” as we also call it. We come into recovery and believe me we all have a story to tell and share to help others in recovery. It takes away our uniqueness and helps us be part of.

I have actually lost track of how many spiritual and recovery retreats I have been on in thirty years. I attended Blue Point once a year or a few years but was also introduced to other Retreat Houses. They all offer a safe place to be

and spiritual sustenance in many forms while doing some 12 step work and enjoying a social aspect of our fellowship.

There was also Mariandale in Ossining, NY; Cora Maria in Sag Harbor, NY; and my favorite of all, Graymoor in Garrison, NY. Now Graymoor offers Graymoor Spiritual Center for Retreat, up the hill as it is called and Our Lady of Atonement Retreat House, down the hill. It's all called the Holy Mountain as it is a place where comfort and God can be found. There are beautiful landscapes and grounds, in all seasons, to go walking, meditating and praying to the many beautiful statues of Our Blessed Mother, Jesus, St. Francis, St. Anthony, St. Theresa, St. Clare and many others. Angel statues grace the halls and walk ways along with flowers and rabbits and birds and nature at its best. In thirty years I have been to Graymoor more than any other retreat as it feels like home to me. I have been on an emotional recovery retreat, some spiritual weekends unrelated to recovery, of course 12 step weekends, and even arts and crafts weekends to enlighten our creative juices. Mostly though it has been the Women in AA Recovery Retreats that I need the most to keep enhancing my sobriety.

The beauty is year round. I have gone in every season to Graymoor and have written poetry about each season experienced there. Two years ago my friend Karen (yes, same friend for 30 years) and I drove up in a snow storm to get to the Love n Action Retreat at Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House. We laughed thinking how we never imagined doing such a thing. Out of 27 women expected that weekend, 20 of us braved the storm which lasted all weekend and ended up being almost 4 feet of snow. The Sisters were shocked that we made it.

I remember at about 2am in my bed listening to the snow plow plowing the road going up the hill and found such comfort in the quiet of the snow falling and hearing the only sound of the plow and feeling God in that moment of serenity. We call it in our program, “going to

A Retreatant Shares her Story!

any lengths!” But that is what we do to get what we need out of a retreat weekend. It’s something I wish everyone could experience. The nurturing, the wonderful meals, the Sisters, the Friars, the scenery, the time with your Higher Power, a time with friends, a time for Mass with the boys of St. Christopher singing, or Mass at Sisters’ Chapel or St. Johns. Or no Mass, just a spiritual jaunt around the labyrinth, the grounds, and receiving the recovery information and work we need to do. I must say doing it at Graymoor is and will always be a very special place for me. I am so fortunate to have been given this place to go a couple of times a year.

I think it is safe to say, that I have gone on about two retreats a year, and even some years 2 or 3 retreats, so I may guess and estimate if I can, I have been on somewhere in the neighborhood of 65 to 80 retreats in 30 years. Now let me tell you, that is quite a welcoming neighborhood!

Last week I was at Our Lady of Atonement Retreat House for the “God Is On It” Retreat and my friends brought me this big Happy 30th Anniversary cake into the dining room singing to me. The Sisters who helped run the retreat and do so much, all came out of the kitchen singing with them. AND... We all enjoyed the cake.

That is what sobriety is about for me, enjoying my life and living as it is meant to be and not some poor unfortunate drunk sitting in a bar or home alone, getting drunk. That is what Alcoholic Anonymous gives me, one day at a time, a bridge to my life. It’s a clean and sober life. And the retreats help me continue my spiritual recovery of knowing myself better and getting closer to others and God.

I’ll end with.... Graymoor. Thank you, you are always more!!!”

I am most grateful to my new found friend for her honesty and openness. I wish her and all the retreatants both men and women who have

sought out and found in places like Graymoor, countless blessings in their lives.

St. John’s Church

Saint John the Baptist Church here at Graymoor which was originally built in 1785 as an Interdenominational Chapel became a part of our lives in 1898 due to the fact that it was discovered by three ladies enjoying a Sunday afternoon ride through the countryside. This little chapel which was renovated and expanded several times over the years continues to be a very active church each Sunday. Friends, neighbors and visitors from the local area and parishes come together to participate in the Sunday Liturgy celebrated by one of our Franciscan Friars of the Atonement. The church is also used on occasions for Liturgy and for private or common prayer by some of our Retreatants who come to our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House.

Sister Eileen Waldron who ministers at Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House and is presently the sacristan at Saint John’s Church shares the following: “I often think about Sister Benedicta McWeeney, who, as sacristan years ago, reached out to the congregation for volunteers who would become the Ushers, the Lectors, the Eucharistic ministers and for those who became the Music ministers. They are wonderful people and very generous with their time and talents. I am most grateful for the opportunity to be a part of their lives.



Sister Eileen with Father Bob Warren outside St. John’s Church.

St. John's Church ... cont.

Many people come to St. John's because they feel welcome. They like the active participation of the congregation, the liturgy with uplifting homilies, and they like singing. For many it is an opportunity to get together to meet new friends. I have enjoyed this ministry because it gives me an opportunity as well to meet and chat with the congregation."

Sister Eileen also gives her time and provides the space at Our Lady of the Atonement Retreat House for a group of men and women who gather each Wednesday afternoon for Shared Prayer. All are welcome.

Sisters' Gift Shop

Our Sisters' Gift Shop which provides a wide variety of Religious Articles from rosaries, statutes, religious symbols, house blessings, cards for all occasions, prayer books as well as handmade baby outfits and blankets is a favorite place to shop for many Sisters, retreatants friends and neighbors. Sister Ann Merrill, well known to many of you today, writes: "The Gift Shop evolved from the custom of sending hand-made articles to our Foundress, Mother Lurana Mary White, on our Foundation Day, December 15, 1930. These items were made by the Sisters on the Missions as well as the home Sisters. These gifts were displayed in 'Bethlehem' every Foundation Day. From this display came the Sisters' Gift Shop, which was established by 1945."

Many Sisters have shared in the ministry of the Gift Shop. You may remember Sisters Gabriel, Cyril, Mary Peter, Mary Arthur, Kathleen Ryan, and more recently, Sister Margaret Ann Ryan who is presently at our Lurana Health Care Residence, Sister Mary Trinitas Mayer and myself.

With the changing of the times the Gift Shop has included Religious items that are seasonal in the Church year.. Today orders may be filled

over the phone, and the technology of a computerized cash register and credit card service is used.

The Gift Shop is a Ministry of and for the people as many wonderful people come to see us on a regular basis. It might be to purchase a gift for a friend, to ask for prayers for a special intention, to inquire about a Sister or Priest, or to just say hello!



From right to left - Sisters Ann Merrill and Mary Trinitas Mayer.

We try to spread the Gospel by welcoming all with Franciscan hospitality, being helpful and courteous. We never know who we are welcoming."

As we, the Franciscan Sisters and Friars of the Atonement, continue to follow in the footsteps of Mother Lurana White and Father Paul Wattson one hundred and seventeen years after their foundation here at Graymoor back in 1898, we are pleased to be able to provide these three life-giving ministries to our local neighbors and many friends who come to Graymoor.

I am most grateful to Sister Frances Flynn and staff, Sister Eileen Waldron and Sister Ann Merrill for their input in sharing their ministry here at Graymoor with all of us. God bless them and all those whose lives they touch.

We Celebrated...



*Sister Colette Duffy's
101st Birthday on
November 8th*



*Sister Barbara Bernauer's
100th Birthday on
November 10th*



*Sister Mary Bride Spratt's
99th Birthday on
November 22nd*

In Memoriam



*Sister Bettie J. Wilms
September 18, 1927 - November 5, 2015*

The Lord is my Shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.