



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Madonna House apostalate introduced at Saskatoon information night March 7. 2011

BY ANNE-MARIE HUGHES

“Mercy within mercy within mercy: a reflection on the spiritual-ity of Madonna House” was presented March 7 at St. Anne’s parish in Saskatoon

Speaker Helen Hodson was introduced by Bishop Don Bolen, who first encountered the spiritual-ity of Madonna House some 30 years ago. “As a 21 year old I had never seen a community character-ized by so much integrity. Their message was proclaimed in every-day life. The Church in Canada has been blessed by it,” said Bolen.

Born in England, Hodson joined Madonna House over 30 years ago, and as a member of the community, has served all over the world, including Edmonton, Toronto, Michigan and in England, where she served as local director of the house there for seven years. For the last 15 years she has been involved in presenting Ignatian retreats.

Founded by Catherine and Eddie Doherty in 1947 in Combermere, ON, the Madonna House Apostolate is a Catholic community of lay men and woman and priests dedicated to loving and serving Jesus Christ in all aspects of everyday life.

Those in community make a promise of poverty, chastity and obedience. Priests, woman and men all receive spiritual direction and work together as one community.

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A session about the spirituality of Madonna House with Helen Hodson and Nancy Topping (left to right) was held March 7 in Saskatoon.



Often the work done is giving simple subsistence to the people who come to the centre, and just be-ing with them as they are. “To listen someone’s soul into existence,” is how Hodson described it.

A number of “Field Houses” of the Madonna House Apostolate have been established throughout the world, including the Marian Centre in the Archdiocese of Regina.

Every House has a call from the bishop of the diocese. “At each House the bishop of that diocese asks us to do something in partic-ular,” explained Nancy Topping of the Marian Centre in Regina. “In Vancouver we were asked to be a presence in the diocese, to look at the needs of the area, do presentations and be a religious education office,” she said.

“In Regina our mandate was to serve the poor; to be a presence for men downtown; to give them a place out of the cold that is peaceful,” said Topping. “It is a gift to be able to be there and trusted by the poor. We are not there just to serve the poor. We are all poor. We all need God.”

Many people choose to live at Madonna House during a time of discernment. Six-week summer programs are available, and many houses include working guests. Retreats are also offered as a time “to be alone with God and just quiet enough to listen.” Spiritual direct-ion is also offered.

The evening also included a time of spiritual reflection on “*The Icon of Resurrection, The Descent into Hell.*”

“This is a special icon, a very powerful one,” Hodson said, de-scribing the icon’s image of Jesus descending into hell to find Adam and Eve. “Jesus doesn’t take Adam and Eve back to the original paradise but one better. After the resurrection, all healings of Jesus are outside time. In every com-munion, Jesus descends into our hell, our darkest pain, and comes to find us.”

The intent of the evening was to introduce Madonna House and how it functions as a community, how mercy is extended through the different communities, and to give listeners a taste of mercy through the Ignatian way of prayer.

The evening also echoed the Saskatoon bishop’s motto, chosen for his episcopal ordination one year ago: “*Mercy within mercy within mercy.*”