



Keeping Faith: An Experience of Spiritual Deepening in Community

St. Mary's Sewanee is developing a new program to be a spiritual resource for individuals. I am inviting you to consider participating in the pilot offering of **Keeping Faith: An Experience of Spiritual Deepening in Community**. I believe this experience will awaken you to new discoveries in your own journey with the Divine through spiritual guidance and discernment, practices of prayer and contemplation in the setting of a spiritual community.

Our guide and resource in this exciting endeavor is Patience Robbins. Patience is a Roman Catholic laywoman who has been on the Shalem Institute's associate staff since 1997. She was the Director of Shalem's Personal Spiritual Deepening Program for five years and continues to serve on the staff of Shalem leading Contemplative Prayer Groups & Retreats and Clergy Spiritual Life & Leadership Programs.

Patience has an M.A. in Religious Studies from LaSalle University. She completed Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program in 1988. She has been a spiritual director for over 20 years. In addition, she has participated in and worked with group spiritual direction since 1997. She is an author of a booklet: Parenting: A Sacred Path (www.cctheo.org)

Working with Patience will be Elizabeth Hill, M.D. who has been instrumental in the development of this project at St. Mary's Sewanee. Beth has completed the Personal Spiritual Deepening Program at Shalem and has worked with Patience as support staff for this program. She is a practicing psychotherapist and spiritual director.

Keeping Faith is guided by the following assumptions:

- *A desire or intention to deepen our life in God is what brings us together
- *Community can powerfully assist our deepening in God
- *Each person's unique path with God is respected and honored
- *Spiritual practices nurture awareness, openness, receptivity and acceptance of what is real/of God in all things
- *Living fully in God is manifested in the world through our presence, lifestyle and actions

Keeping Faith trusts our life in God and with each other is deepened when we:

- *share our lives in community with others
- *are encouraged and given ways to listen prayerfully
- *stay connected to our own souls and bodies and the earth and seek integrated lives
- *are encouraged to see discernment as an on-going awareness to the Spirit in all of life
- *value the necessity of prayer and solitude for developing our capacity to listen to God

Keeping Faith will explore:

- *What is the contemplative life
- *Contemplative presence and practices
- *Prayerful listening
- *Discernment
- *Spiritual community
- *Contemplative activism/social transformation

Keeping Faith Program Outline:

Recognizing that it is our desire and intention to deepen our life in God which brings us together and that each person's path with God is to be respected and honored there will be a minimum of expectations for participation in **Keeping Faith**. A willingness to be open to the experience itself is the primary requirement. We will ask participants to covenant with each other to:

- *Attend 3 residential experiences (3 days each)
- *Be in spiritual direction
- *Read and ponder 4 books
- *Journal experiences during the program
- *Attend at least a 2 day retreat that incorporates silence
- *Participate in monthly group (this will be assigned during the first residential)

The three residential experiences will incorporate prayer, reflection time, periods of silence, sharing and discussion on a theme. The monthly groups will allow for further conversation and experiences of spiritual community.

The cost for participation in this pilot year of **Keeping Faith** will be ***\$1500***. This includes the three resident experiences at St. Mary's Sewanee and all written materials. It does not include any cost associated with personal spiritual direction or if your monthly group decides to meet at St. Mary's Sewanee.

The dates for the three residential for **Keeping Faith** in 2010 are **February 21-23, June 27-29** and **October 3-5**. If you are interested and feel drawn to exploring the possibility of participating in this new offering please complete the attached Questionnaire and return to SMS by **January 8, 2010**. Please feel free to be in touch with me with any questions.

Faithfully,

Thomas

Thomas Morris

Executive Director

St. Mary's Sewanee

Office Phone: 931-598-5342

Office E-mail: smsdirector@bellsouth.net