

Transformative experiences

Sr. Tisot on Fr. Bernard Youth Center

By Mary Owen

Sister Jeanine Tisot has been a Sister of Mercy for about 40 years, having entered her community in 1980.

"We are an apostolic, vs. monastic, community dedicated to the poor, sick and uneducated," said Tisot, who was raised in Michigan and is now serving in Mount Angel. "I have worked in hospitals throughout the Midwest doing social work, pastoral care, ethics, administration and mission services. Then my community asked if I would move to California to work with the women who were becoming members of the community – formation."

After 10 years in California, Tisot was hired in 2011 to work for the Benedictine Sisters at the Shalom Prayer Center in Mount Angel. Her one-year commitment turned into five and ended when the sisters chose to close the retreat house, and she moved on to administration, strategic planning and policy development for the Iconographic Arts Institute. Her

most recent role is director of the Father Bernard Youth & Retreat Center.

"Then I received a phone call from my boss from Shalom Prayer Center who was consulting with the FBYC on their executive search and after several interviews, I was hired," she said. "I really enjoyed the challenge of being the director of a retreat house. It is a wonderful ministry to all kinds of persons seeking to deepen their faith."

"I remembered my own experience of going on youth retreats at my home parish in Michigan, and found them to be transformative," she added. "These weekend getaways were the roots of my religious vocation, and I still remember them fondly."

Add to that FBYC's history of getting through hard times, her new position was a perfect next step for Tisot.

"Founder Tony Morris and previous director, Don Robison, found multiple creative ways to keep FBYC's doors open, all with the support and generosity of the

community," said Tisot, who took over the directorship in August. "I and the entire FBYC staff, want to serve with that same level of dedication and enthusiasm so that FBYC can meet the needs of future generations of young people seeking to deepen their faith."

Tisot acknowledges FBYC is not unique among retreat centers in that "making ends meet is always a problem."

"Strengthening its financial stability, making its operations more efficient, ensuring programs are meeting the needs of the community and setting goals for the future are some of the areas I will be focusing on," she said. "I will be working closely with the board of directors to make sure FBYC has a sustainable future."

"Also, we are blessed with many donors who have kept FBYC solvent and open," she added. "About 50 percent of our income is from individual donations, and I cannot express my gratitude for all those who believe strongly in fostering the faith of young people."

Currently, FBYC uses the old Mt. Angel College Casey Commons student union building for its offices and meeting room space. Overnight accommodations are currently in the south wing of the old dorms across the street, owned by Catholic Community Services, which plans on expanding their emergency housing for the homeless. FBYC is now in final negotiations with the Benedictine Sisters to rent the previous Shalom Prayer Center for its new lodging space.

"It requires some asbestos abatement and other major renovations, but it will be an excellent space to continue and expand our ministry to the community," Tisot said. "We are raising funds to maintain operations while asking donors for help with renovation costs will be a big challenge."

To help with expenses, FBYC will host its annual fundraising dinner and auction on March 14, 2020.

For information, call 503-845-4097 or email adminoffice@fbyc.info. *