



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat and Spirituality Center

3989 South Moon Drive
Venice, FL 34292

www.olph-retreat.org
(941) 486-0233

Newsletter

January 2024

Windows to the Divine

John O'Donahue, an Irish spiritual writer, once spoke poignantly about "thin places," which are instances or places where our heart and mind seem to transcend an imperceptible barrier and we are momentarily in the presence of something sublime and otherworldly. For an instant, it seems we see a distant shore. These are sometimes very brief but very intense periods that rejuvenate us. Give them a chance to pass over you. "There are no words for the deepest things," O'Donahue said.

My initial impression of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat Center is that it is a "thin place." When you enter its gates, elegant angel statues convey that you are drawing close to heavenly realities. As you drive through, Blessed Sacrament Lake communicates peace and the reality that our souls reflect the image of God. Our staff is warm and welcoming, with volunteers who serve cheerfully and generously. Simply arriving on the scene puts one in a state of prayer and opens one to God's working in the soul.

All this leads to the retreat experience itself. The *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* release the power of the Spirit, helping retreatants recognize and develop their gifts, while growing in faith, hope and love. Saint John Paul II called them the lungs or oxygen of the spiritual life for souls and for Christian communities:

"The Exercises are, in fact, a set of meditations and prayers in an atmosphere of contemplation and silence, and above all a special interior impulse—deriving from the Holy Spirit—to open ample spaces of the soul to the action of grace. In the strong dynamic movement of the exercise, the Christian is helped to enter within the ambit of the thoughts of God and his plans, in order to entrust himself to him, Truth and Love, so as to take binding decisions in the following of Christ, clearly measuring his gifts and his own responsibilities."

St. Ignatius himself strongly urged people to make his Exercises: "For I know that the Spiritual Exercises are the best means I can think of in this life both to help a man benefit himself, and to bring assistance, profit, and advantage to many others ... You will see how they help you to serve others beyond anything you ever dreamed of."

Retreats are how we work on the interior life, the life of the soul. They are vital for our own spiritual growth, renewal, transformation, and development. Psalm 46:10 tells us, "Be still, and know that I am God." Through devotions, almsgiving, acts of service, prayer, and penance, we are drawn ever closer in union with Our Savior. If we desire authentic friendship with Christ, we must spend time with him. A retreat is a wonderful, uninterrupted way of doing so.

In Christ and Our Lady of Perpetual Help,
Rev. Gregory Cleveland, OMV

Contact Us (941) 486-0233

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Carol Miller, Operations	ext. 3011

A Look Back and a Look Forward

Welcome to Carol and thank you to Simona.

A New year brings a new direction. We welcome our new Operations Manager, Carol Miller, who settled into OLPH in mid December. Carol is a long time Venice, FL resident, attending Venice High School, University of South Florida, and completing a MA in Business from Webster University. After working for large international financial institutions in London, Tokyo, and Dubai, Carol can confirm "There's no place like home. Finding faith in a familiar setting is comforting after a long period of globe trotting, and being near family and friends again after living and working overseas is precious, and time that must be cherished. I look forward to spending my time ensuring that OLPH be engaging and enthusiastic."



We also wish Simona Handley all the best in her new direction as she hands over administrative duties and all that entails in making OLPH a welcoming retreat and spirituality center in a natural, calming, yet rejuvenating environment. Simona was instrumental in helping OLPH get back to business after all the coordination effort necessary in rebuilding and refurbishing after Hurricane Ian. Huge thanks for her perseverance, hard work, and generous contribution to OLPH. She will be sorely missed.

Welcoming Our Guests

Since fully reopening at the beginning of September, OLPH has been busy with both group and individual retreats. We would like to thank all the volunteers who helped us during these retreats. Without the time and talent they put forth, we wouldn't be what we are today. THANKS VOLUNTEERS!!

Winter retreats included Advent events for Epiphany Cathedral staff, Diocese of Venice staff, Incarnation School and Parish Office staff, St. Agnes staff, as well as retreats for Youth Ministers, Cursillo, Spiritual Book Clubs, Bereavement Groups, and of course all the individuals who attended silent and directed retreats who came from as far as Colorado, Ohio, Minnesota, New York & New Jersey.

The 30-day retreat is starting on January 21. This is a special time because it gives us the opportunity to offer the full 30-day Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. This time, 30-day retreatants will be coming from New York and Florida. OLPH is their home away from home.



Happy Birthday

Volunteers!

Ruth Rabalais

Do you celebrate a January birthday and we missed it? Happy Birthday!

Please send an email to

isabelle@olph-retreat.org

with your birthday month and day so we can add it to our database!

New Volunteers Needed!

[Click here if you are interested in volunteering.](#)

Volunteers receive
an OLPH uniform shirt,
name tag, and training!

Just bring your helpful heart!



A Big “Thank You” for Our Refurbished Villas!

A significant part of the rebuilding efforts after Hurricane Ian were the improvement of our accommodations for overnight guests. Although we began with a furniture company whose job was to coordinate ordering and installation of furniture, we soon realized that buying the furniture directly would lead to better quality and lower prices. New beds with memory foam mattresses; sturdy desks with built-in outlets and recharging ports; an accent wall in each bedroom; luggage racks; and new dressers, nightstands, and floor lamps are among the improvements. We are so grateful to all who contributed to the rebuilding efforts, because your generosity allowed us to go beyond replacement to improvement!



The Third Joyful Mystery in Villa I



Common Area of Villa III

However, of paramount importance was fostering the religious atmosphere in the new villas. After all, we are more, not less, than a hotel! To remind our guests that we are a retreat center dedicated to Mary, we obtained and framed new artwork that illustrates the mysteries of the Rosary for the hallways of each villa. Villa I displays the Joyful Mysteries, Villa II the Luminous Mysteries, Villa III the Sorrowful, and Villa IV, the Glorious.

As you may know, OLPH is staffed by the Oblates of the Virgin Mary. Regarding the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, which we use as the basis for our retreats, our founder, Venerable Bruno Lanteri said, “They call themselves Oblates because they are totally dedicated to giving the Holy Exercises . . . they call themselves Oblates of Mary . . . because they are particularly consecrated to so great a Mother in order to obtain her special protection and blessing on these same Holy Exercises.”

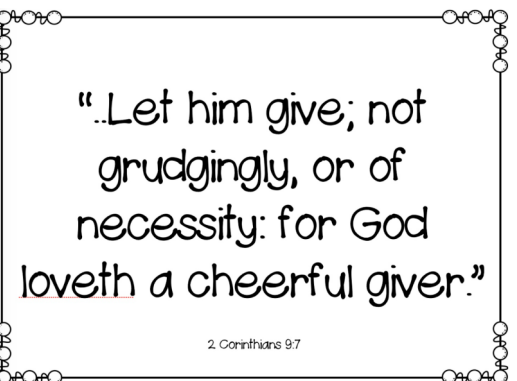
Ways to Give

At this time, we are still in need of help and support as we continue with many small things that still need to be done after our Hurricane recovery.

Making a recurring monthly donation is especially helpful as it ensures we can rely on a dedicated income source needed to fulfill our monthly financial obligations. This allows us to offer retreats that uplift the soul as well as ground one’s spirituality.

Making a one-time donation is also helpful as we can address our incidental needs and item replacements that were storm damaged, such as donating the cost of a particular item:

- ♦ Murphy bed to make good use of our extra room (\$1,250.00)
- ♦ White rock for Chapel border walkways (\$5,000.00)
- ♦ Outdoor bench for behind Chapel facing lake (\$475.00)
- ♦ BBQ Grill for summer retreats & outside youth events (\$600.00)



Upcoming Events



Rosary Group Retreat

Jan. 30—Feb. 1, 2024

The purpose of the rosary is to help keep in memory certain principal events in the history of our salvation as seen through the eyes of Mary. We are excited to offer this 3-day/2-night retreat led by OLPH's [Fr. Greg Cleveland, OMV](#). The retreat will include four conferences, group praying of the rosary, time for personal prayer and reflection, and daily Mass. The price is \$400 for a private room and \$275 for a double occupancy shared room, and includes all meals, taxes, and fees.

To register, click here: <https://olph-retreat.org/rosary-group-retreat>

Monthly Day of Prayer

Feb. 11, Feb. 14, and following months

The Monthly Day of Prayer, held on the second Sunday and Wednesday of each month, will resume in February and continue until May. The next sessions are on Sunday, February 11th and Wednesday, February 14th (Ash Wed.). The day begins at 9:30 am with continental breakfast and includes two conferences, lunch, Eucharistic Adoration, and opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, private meditation and prayer. The day concludes with Mass, ending at 3:15 pm. The cost is \$40.00. (Note: the conference topics are the same for the Sunday and Wednesday sessions in each respective month, so please choose the day that is compatible with your schedule.)

To register, click here: www.olph-retreat.org/monthly-day-of-prayer

Matt Talbot Retreat for Men

Mar. 15-17, 2024

A Matt Talbot retreat is for people of all faiths and is an opportunity for recovering alcoholics to enhance their spirituality and sober way of life. Those who participate in these retreats also attend the 12-step program through AA. Fr. Dennis Mason, the Retreat Leader, will bring valuable insights into the spiritual elements of alcoholism and recovery. The Matt Talbot retreat is private and everything is confidential. The cost is \$350 for a private room, \$250 for a shared room, or a \$150 commuter rate.

To register, click here: <https://olph-retreat.org/matt-talbot-retreat>

Triduum Retreat

Mar. 28-31, 2024

OLPH's annual Triduum Retreat is scheduled for March 28-31, 2024. It begins with supper on Holy Thursday and concludes after sunrise Liturgy and breakfast on Easter Sunday. There will be five conferences, led by both Fr. Mark Yavarone, OMV and Fr. Greg Cleveland, OMV, throughout the weekend. The cost is \$475 for a private room and \$325 for a shared room, inclusive of FL state tax and fees.

To register, click here: <https://www.olph-retreat.org/group-retreat-registration>

Go to
www.olph-retreat.org/schedule-of-events
to view all our events.