



SHARING THE SPIRIT: Sr. Marlene Weber, a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration, is a spiritual director at Monte Alverno Retreat Center in Appleton. (Amanda Lauer photo)

Spiritual direction: On the journey together

Finding out how God is working in your life

By **Amanda Lauer**
Compass Correspondent

Lay person or religious, we're all on a spiritual journey. Spiritual directors throughout the Green Bay Diocese are available for those people who recognize their voyage and want to consult with someone about the direction in which they are heading. Many of those directors are women religious.

Franciscan Sr. Anne Marie Lom, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, is spiritual director at St. Raphael Parish in Oshkosh and for her religious community. She defined spiritual direction as "a process whereby one person companions another person in their spiritual life. I

would be a person to listen and reflect back to a person what I hear is going on in their life to help discern together where God is in this whole process, and then perhaps to make some suggestions for further spiritual growth."

With a master's degree in applied spirituality from the University of San Francisco, Sr. Anne Marie has been in this field since 1988. She generally sees four to five people a day.

"Discerning for a religious vocation is one aspect of spiritual direction," she said, "but most of my time is spent with married men and women discerning how God is working in their life, in their family life, through their children, how they can deepen their own faith journey, how they can learn more about the scriptures, and how they can better participate in the Eucharist."

Sr. Anne Marie has an outcome in mind for her clients: "I would hope to see that they feel and understand God's tremendous love for them personally. 'God loves me personally, individually, with all my faults, with all my talents, with all my challenges and I'm secure in that love.' That would be the main goal of spiritual direction."

Her religious background made this job an ideal vocation for Sr. Anne Marie.

"I've intensely studied the spiritual life and lived it for the 38 years I've been a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. Priests and sisters aren't the only spiritual directors, but having lived a religious life and having studied the spiritual life in order to live a religious life well, does have a certain aspect to it."

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Spiritual direction deepens our relationship with God

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Sr. Marlene Weber, a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration, works as a spiritual director at Monte Alverno Retreat and Spirituality Center in Appleton.

"During retreat times," she said, "we always have an opportunity for people to stop in and talk. People who just want to spend some time talking about their spiritual journey — where God is in their life, where they feel they're being led by God, what the Spirit is trying to tell them. I don't give them the answer. We find the answer within ourselves."

Sr. Marlene took her training for spiritual direction and retreat work through the Franciscan Spirituality Center in La Crosse, where her community is based, and has been in this ministry for 25 years.

"I like to think of this as being a companion with somebody on their journey," she said, "a person they can talk with in a very safe, confidential environment."

"They can say whatever is in their heart. It's basically helping a person sort through their lives, clarify what's going on, where they're coming from, and help them to discover by themselves what way



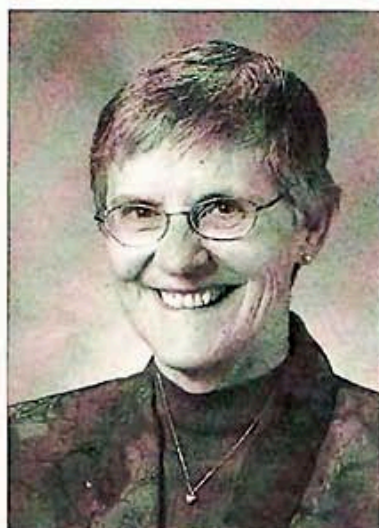
Sr. Anne Marie Lom, OSF

they are being called to go."

"To me it's a very sacred ministry," Sr. Marlene added. "People sharing the deepest part of themselves share a gift with us. It's not to be taken lightly."

The Norbertine Center for Spirituality in De Pere is where spiritual director Sr. Donna Koch, a Sister of St. Francis of the Holy Cross at Bay Settlement, works. She said she consults with people from all walks of life.

"It's all denominations," she



Sr. Judy Miller, CSJ

said, "it's no denominations, people just searching and seeking a deeper meaning in their life and their relationship with God."

Spiritual direction is not counseling, Sr. Donna said. "Spiritual direction is looking at deepening that relationship with God and how it affects all other aspects of life. I see it as very holistic — incorporating body, mind and spirit."

She has a spiritual director herself.

Sr. Donna sees about 30 to 40



Sr. Donna Koch, OSF

people a month.

"Many people I see come regularly, every three to four or four to six weeks," she said. "Others may come and see what it's like and decide it's not for them at this time."

"My job is to listen with an open heart — not judging, blaming or giving advice but being there as a facilitator of the relationship between God and the person I am talking to. I'm very much inspired by the depth of the personal growth and attention to the spiritual life

that many of the people share with me. It's very humbling."

Carondelet Sister Judy Miller offers spiritual direction from several venues — The Norbertine Center, the retirement home for the Sisters of Sorrowful Mother in Oshkosh, The Bridge-Between Retreat Center in rural Denmark, and St. Rose Parish in Clintonville and St. Mary Parish in Bear Creek.

"A spiritual director facilitates unearthing or tapping into the wisdom that each of us has inside of ourselves," said Sr. Judy, a familiar figure locally.

"I was a parish director for 20 years for the Green Bay Diocese," she said. "I was aware of the need and the desire in people to become more in touch with, 'What is God asking of me?' and 'Where is God leading me?' There emerged in me a desire to devote more energy to that."

Sr. Judy knows first-hand that spiritual direction is helpful.

"In my own life, it's been tremendously helpful. As a spiritual director, I also have a spiritual director. Spiritual direction is not just something for people who are well along on their spiritual journey, it can be for people who are simply discovering that there is a spiritual journey to take."