

A Spring Delight – Quest Writers Appreciation Luncheon

In conjunction with the 25th Anniversary of the Beginnings of Small Christian Communities in the Archdiocese of Hartford, Bro. Bob Moriarty, S.M. hosted an appreciation luncheon on May 5, 2010 especially for those who have written for **Quest** and **Summer Reflections** over the years.

More than 120 people – men and women, married and single, religious, deacons and priests have written for these reflection booklets. About 80 writers, artists and **MusicQuest** producers were on hand. Pat Linehan, the first director of the office and the initiator of the reflection booklets was there to recall the beginnings. Sr. Joan Bernier, S.N.D., the initiator of the **Summer Reflections** booklet and a writer and coordinator for it until just last year was on hand for the festivities as well. Sr. Joan is now dealing with Alzheimer's disease, but she was very much present. Present staff members (Sandy Miller, Dolka Bianchi, Mary Fitzpatrick and Lynne Romano) and former staff members (Fran O'Brien, Linda Wowak and Linda Pellino) were also part of the celebration.

A PowerPoint slide show of some of the artwork from both **Summer Reflections** and **Quest** surprised Fr. John McHugh, **Quest** artist over the years as an introduction to his reflections about doing art for **Quest**. Art as "a trap for meditation" was the theme he addressed. The Department for Small Christian Communities has worked with the same printer for these 25 years. So, Harry and Dan Davidson of the Pyne-Davidson Printing Company spoke of their pleasure printing the booklets, a sharp contrast, they noted, to the usual commercial material they print. And last, but not least, Archbishop Henry Mansell was on hand to express his gratitude for the generosity of those who have prepared, produced and distributed **Quest**, **Summer Reflections** and **MusicQuest** over the years.

In addition to serving as publications assistant, Lynne Romano is an accomplished master pastry chef. She worked with the St. Thomas Seminary chef, Gordon Losey, to prepare the dessert for the luncheon. She also made a standing dark chocolate centerpiece on which **Quest** was lettered in white chocolate. It was surrounded by her own biscotti and strawberries dipped in chocolate. And this was not the dessert. The dessert was *Spring Delight*, a key lime curd with fresh raspberry sauce, topped with whipped cream, a raspberry and mint leaves. As a garnish for the plate, she made a 3 inch dark chocolate medallion in which a white chocolate **Q** was embedded. What a sight it all was! What a taste! It was a *delight!* Now for those who think this extravagant, remember: May 5 was the 32nd day of Easter. And we must celebrate all 50 days!

A sample of the evaluative reflections received from small church community members who use **Quest** were read by a number of the luncheon attendees between the entree and the dessert. Following dessert, several of the writers shared a memory or reflection about their experience writing for the booklets. And then, in addition to his own reflections on the experience of working with the writing teams over the years, Bro. Bob Moriarty shared two anecdotes that capture something of the impact the booklets have had on people, one charming, the other profound.

The first is quite recent. As part of his service last year as a summer intern in the department, one of the seminarians served on the writing team for the spring 2010 **Quest** booklet. He wrote for the Third Sunday of Easter. The gospel has the disciples fishing and catching nothing through the night. In the morning, Jesus calls to them from the shore and has them move the nets to the other side of the boat, whereupon they gather a huge catch. Part of the seminarian's commentary reflected on how we can sometimes get stuck in neutral, just doing the same thing in the same old way. He suggested that we need to listen for how Christ might be calling us to move our nets to the other side of the boat, to do things in a new way. A simple thought, simply expressed. It turns out that the seminarian was to be at his home parish for that Third Sunday of Easter. His pastor had him do a spoken version of his commentary at the Masses that weekend. After one of the Sunday Masses, an eight year old boy came up to him and said, "I've been afraid to take the training wheels off my bike, but after what you said at Mass, I'm going home and take them off today." Charming, indeed, and age appropriate.

The other anecdote is something else. For a while last year, the department had on board an absolutely crackerjack publications assistant and graphic designer in his early 30s. He did all of the page layout for **Quest**, which included incorporating several rounds of Bro. Bob's editing changes. In short, he worked closely with the text. After six months, he left the office for another position. This fellow had a general Christian background, but was not connected to any church. On his last day in the office, he said to one of the members of the staff, "I just want you all to know that working on **Quest** has made a believer out of me."

Sr. Miriam Therese Winter, M.M.S., theologian at Hartford Seminary completed the festivities, by leading the luncheon guests in the singing of one of her own much appreciated compositions, "*Sing of a Blessing.*"

The smiles and joy on the faces of all those who attended told the whole story. It has been and continues to be a deeply satisfying experience for all those who work on **Quest**, **Summer Reflections** and **MusicQuest** to know that what we are doing for

parishes and small church communities around the country, and indeed, around the world, is making a real difference in people's lives and faith.