

THE LEO HOUSE

A Catholic Guesthouse for Travelers



332 WEST 23RD STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10011 212.929.1010

A heart in New York City

Fall 2016

“You shine so finely it surpasses understanding”

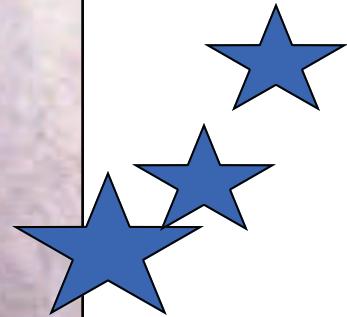
“God does not require us to succeed, only that you try.”

“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.”

“I’m a little pencil in the hand of a writing God, who is sending a love letter to the world.”

“If you judge people you have no time to love them.”

“If you can’t feed a hundred people, then just feed one.”



The words quoted above, from a poem by 12th Century Benedictine Abbess, Hildegard of Bingen, aptly describe the awe that the world holds for Saint Mother Teresa MC, at this time of her canonization. In particular, Leo House appreciation of the event was beyond great. Mother Teresa holds a special place in Leo House history; she had been a guest here on November 7th, 1960.

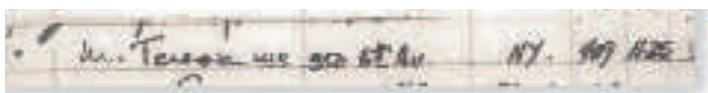
The Mother Teresa Connection

Leo House History

For years, but with no real proof, the story circulated here at The Leo House that Mother Teresa was a guest years ago. She and other companions had traveled from Europe, landed at Kennedy Airport, and were left stranded because an arranged ride failed to show up. Confusion and consternation, where do we spend the night? A cab driver overheard their conversation and came to their rescue. "I'll take you to a safe place. Hop in" and drove them to The Leo House. Adding credence to the above, a short published biography of Mother Teresa mentioned that she and Mother Anna Dengel, founder of the Medical Mission Sisters, stayed here and met at Mass, and again at breakfast. **End of Story**

When announced in March 2016 that Mother Teresa, founder of the Missionaries of Charity, would be canonized on September 4, 2016, serious efforts were made to locate definite proof and facts. Sister Marilyn Ellickson, Development Manager, took the lead and worked with one small clue contained in the original tale. Anna Dengel founded the Medical Mission Sisters here in the US with headquarters near Philadelphia. Why was Mother Anna in New York? Knowing that any information about past community leaders is kept in Archives, Sister Marilyn emailed the Archivist in PA, asking if they had any of Anna Dengel's travel records, or if any correspondence existed between the two founders. Jenna, the Archivist, replied back saying that all of Mother Anna Dengel's papers were located at their General Headquarters in London. So a similar email went directly to England. While waiting for a reply, Jenna the archivist in PA, emailed again and sent three pages copied from a biography of Mother Teresa, named "*Such a Vision of the Street.*" The text was written in the first person, so someone was right there recording the actual Leo House visit. Eileen Egan was that writer and had been traveling with Mother Teresa for over a year.

"...but our plane arrived so late that I engaged rooms instead at Leo House, a plain hospice founded originally for Catholic immigrants. With its chapel and quiet dining room, it was a convenient stopping-off place.....Mother Teresa had often mentioned her gratitude to the Medical Mission Sisters."



[Briefly] It needs to be noted that Anna Dengel, a medical doctor from Austria, founded the Medical Mission Sisters in 1925, and they started their medical work among Muslim women in northern India and Pakistan. It is also important to know that originally Mother Teresa had joined the Sisters of Loretto at age 18, was sent to Ireland to learn English and to teach. For the next twenty years she taught geography in English-speaking schools in colonial India. Surrounded by dire poverty, she was distraught by the suffering, and could no longer continue as a teacher. She left the Sisters of Loretto, and worked with the Medical Mission Sisters, and learned how to care for the very ill and the dying. In 1950 she received Vatican approval to begin the Missionaries of Charity and by 1970 there were 4000 members.

An email arrived back from London, and it said, "Mother Anna Dengel was in New York in November 1960." Bingo! This was the lead needed to start tracking in Leo House Records. The leather-bound ledger from 1960 contains the signed names of all guests, month by month, date of arrival and room number assigned. November 1960 alone had close to 10 pages of names, and searching those took some time. On a left-hand page the name *Anna Dengel* appears and on the next right-hand page is: *M. Teresa MC, Room 409, Nov 7, 1960*. Directly below Mother Teresa's name, is that of Eileen Egan, the author. She wrote:

"We went to chapel for an early Mass...Directly in front of us...I realized that it was Mother Anna Dengel, foundress of the order. I looked at the two small women, neither one over five feet tall....I could not help ponder on the mighty spiritual force incarnated by these two twentieth century Mother Foundresses."

Mother Teresa passed away on September 5, 1997. Thoughts of slipping away quietly because all media attention was on Princess Diana who died five days prior on August 31, 1997, did not happen.

As Eileen Egan wrote: "She seemed to be a poet of the poor and the lowly after the manner of Saint Francis...a woman who found new and creative ways to express compassion and love of the Creator in the upheavals of the Twentieth Century."

This is why Mother Teresa is so loved and revered.

Mother Dolores Hart O.S.B.

An Impressive Evening



Mother Dolores appreciating the audience



Mr. Michael Lucci and Mother Dolores Hart



Mr. David Smith, Executive Director, Mother Dolores Hart, and Sister Marilyn Ellickson CSA

Wednesday evening, July 6, 2016, The Leo House sponsored the 1st lecture in its new Summer Lecture Series. Guest speaker was **Mother Dolores Hart, O.S.B.**, from *Regina Laudis Monastery* in Bethlehem, Connecticut.

The event had been publicized in the *Catholic New York*, on the Leo House web site, in Sunday bulletins of Catholic churches located along the east coast, and personal invitations had been sent to former guests with names on the current mailing list. Nearly 200 persons arrived, and most got seating in the dining room. The overflow sat in the board room or watched on the TV in the lobby. The program was streamed live to those parts of the house.

Mother Dolores was taken aback to be speaking to such an attentive audience and enjoyed speaking to the crowd which included a cardinal, two bishops, many priests and also religious from the Chelsea neighborhood.

Recently a Leo House guest, Patricia McCormick, who had attended the evening lecture, recalled what the event had been like for her. "Having read her biography *"The Ear of Heart,"* I was amazed at her recall and memory, and the sequence in which she detailed her family life as a child, the road to stardom, and her career in Hollywood as a well-known actress. Most of all, it was hearing about her personal call from God (listening with 'the ear of the heart'), *to leave it all behind*, that made the biggest impression."

Hearing how she lives with that mystery as a Benedictine Sister, was a gift to everyone present at the lecture.



Amanda Rodriguez (center), her mother, Cathy Rodriguez (left), and Mother Dolores



Sean Cardinal O'Malley greeting Mother Dolores Hart O.S.B.



To the left, Mother Dolores is seen live on the wide-screen TV in the Board Room. To the immediate right of the TV screen hangs the new oil painting of Mother Agnes Hazotte, CSA. In 1889 she was on site when The Leo House opened.

Another example of the past reaching into the future to bless present-day endeavors of The Leo House.

They're Back



While renovations were taking place here at The Leo House, the four memorial garden plaques shown above, were kept in storage. Gentle, but persistent reminders from the parent of Lyric M. Benson, was the motivation needed to 're-plant' them in the garden in early summer, 2016, along with the new flowers and shrubs.

We remember:

Lyric Benson, a young actress, died in NY in 2003. She was an organ donor.

Sister Anne Karlin, a Sister of Saint Agnes, beloved friend of The Leo House staff, and an avid gardener.

Francis Pilecki, Executive Director at The Leo House for six years, died in 1999.

Elizabeth Reismann, long-time resident at The Leo House, died in 2005. She was 99 years old.

Make-Over



No one can quite forget the two antique phone booths located in the Computer Center. For years, and prior to cell phones, they had been the only way to place a long distance call. In recent years, thinking that cell phone users

would use them to make private calls, the idea didn't take. On a hunch, a 13x13x13 square cube/crate was inserted in the empty space reaching from the seat to the back wall and touching the edge of the small platform near the coin slot. It was a perfect, snug fit. Two more got stacked above this one, and thus, library shelves were born. Not one nail was used, and nothing got de-faced with this make-over. "*Take a Book, Leave a Book*" is the motto for this NY 'freebie,' and the library is already well used. Two recent replacements were paperbacks written in French, and two days later, those were gone. The cycle continues. You are welcome to come and read, enjoy, and 'leave a book', but *take note*, you cannot sit in a phone booth to read!



Bridesmaid, Dharla Martinez, Bride Jennifer Martinez Cochovski, and Flower Girl, Rihanna Matos

Newlyweds Jennifer and Martin Cochovski, are relatives of Leo House employee, Mr. José Salazar. On Sunday June 5th, 2016 a wedding reception was held in their honor in The Leo House dining room. Prior to the celebration, a prayer service was held in the chapel for the newlyweds, conducted by Sister Joann Sambs CSA. Numerous family members and friends attended. The photo above was taken just seconds before the bride, her attendant, and the flower girl stepped into chapel. Smiles on their faces are a testimony to the joyful event that it was.

Sister Carole's Farewell



Sister Carole Gurdak CSA resided at The Leo House; she had ministered for many years as a teacher, grammar school principal, a Regional Coordinator for the Sisters of Saint Agnes, and as a volunteer at the *St. John the Baptist Parish* food program. On Friday July 29th, a farewell luncheon was held in her honor and all staff on duty attended. Pictured above is Sister Carole surrounded by six housekeepers. Everyone present wished her well in her retirement to Nazareth Court and Center in Fond du Lac, WI. Groups and individuals had photos taken with Sister Carole, and there were few dry eyes among those in attendance. The party was such a grand send-off, a second one was held; a picnic in the garden featuring her favorite summer ball-park food, *Hot Dogs!*