



Providing The Way



Jesuit Brother Dick Hittle Continues to Live and “Give” Sobriety!

Editor's Note:

We consider Richard D. Hittle, SJ one of the many blessings here around Guest House! Not only is Brother Dick a recovering alumnus of Guest House and a very dear friend, he also manages our “Recovery Residence” in Lake Orion, Michigan. The Residence houses up to four priests or male religious who need a longer-term setting to achieve a quality sobriety. Brother Dick found his sobriety in Lake Orion in 1979. We also take this opportunity to congratulate Brother on a milestone: 2009 is his 30th year in recovery! Here, in his own words, is his story.

After my dad had a heart attack and recovered, he moved the family to Traverse City, Michigan where I grew up and attended Immaculate Conception Grade School and St. Francis High School, graduating in 1955.

It was on our first family vacation trip to Montreal and Quebec in the summer of 1955 that I became aware of a call to religious life, the spark being ignited by Brother Andre at St. Joseph Oratory on Mount Royal in Montreal. After one year of college, I was received into the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Milford, Ohio, where I pronounced my religious vows in February of 1959 on the Feast of St. Joseph.

I completed my college work at the University of Detroit in the field of English and then did my graduate work at Boston College in theology and literature, taking my graduate degree from B.C.

It was while teaching at our Jesuit High School in the suburbs of Akron, Ohio (of all places!), that my disease of alcoholism kicked into full bloom. I barely made it through ten years of teaching theology, American and British Literature before being remanded (by virtue of my vow of obedience), into the arms of Guest House in Lake Orion, Michigan.

The disease of alcoholism passes on my mother's side of the family (the Decker family from the far reaches of northern Michigan's “Copper Country”). On this side



Brother Dick Hittle

of the family there have been, at last count, four to six deaths attributable to alcoholism. This fact of itself does not in any wise absolve or minimize my attempt to become an even better alcoholic than the others in the Decker family. It simply confirms my belief that I have a genetically based disease that I willingly and whole-heartedly gave in to.

I am fully responsible for all the consequences of my drinking career, including three jail stays, the longest being one month (all related to traffic violations while under the influence).

In the fall of 1979, after making a fool of myself at our Jesuit Community meeting at Walsh Jesuit High School, my rector gave me the order to go to Guest House, Lake Orion. I was met at the door by Eamon Higgins (then Treatment Center Director), and Billy Lovett (former counselor), one fine fall morning and welcomed into the safe harbor of that place.

Upon “graduation” from Guest House in January of 1980, I was assigned to manage our province offices in Detroit which I did for ten

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I was born April 5, 1937 in Detroit, Michigan, the second child of Bernadette and Walter Hittle. Subsequently, three other children, one daughter and two sons were born, making our family complete with five children.

My dad was a Detroit fireman and my mother a pianist in Detroit. My dad's firehouse was at (and still is), Joy Road and Southfield, and in the 1940's the open fields in the area provided plenty of cover for pheasants and other game which my dad hunted from the firehouse. My mother, among other venues, played piano for WJR radio station in Detroit.

Ours was a family close in frugal living and devotedly religious. My dad was a Lutheran when he married mom but after the birth of my oldest brother, Ken, he became a Catholic due to the admiration he had for my mother's faith life.



Brother Dick Hittle

Continued from Page 1

years. I was also given an assignment at our Jesuit headquarters in Rome, Italy, before and after the election of Pope John XXIII, where I worked on the American desk.

In the early 1990's, I felt called to be more of service to those suffering from my disease of alcoholism and thus I asked my provincial for permission to do addiction studies at the University of Detroit Mercy. It was from UDM that I completed these studies and became a certified

alcoholism counselor, subsequent to my employment at Guest House in Lake Orion.

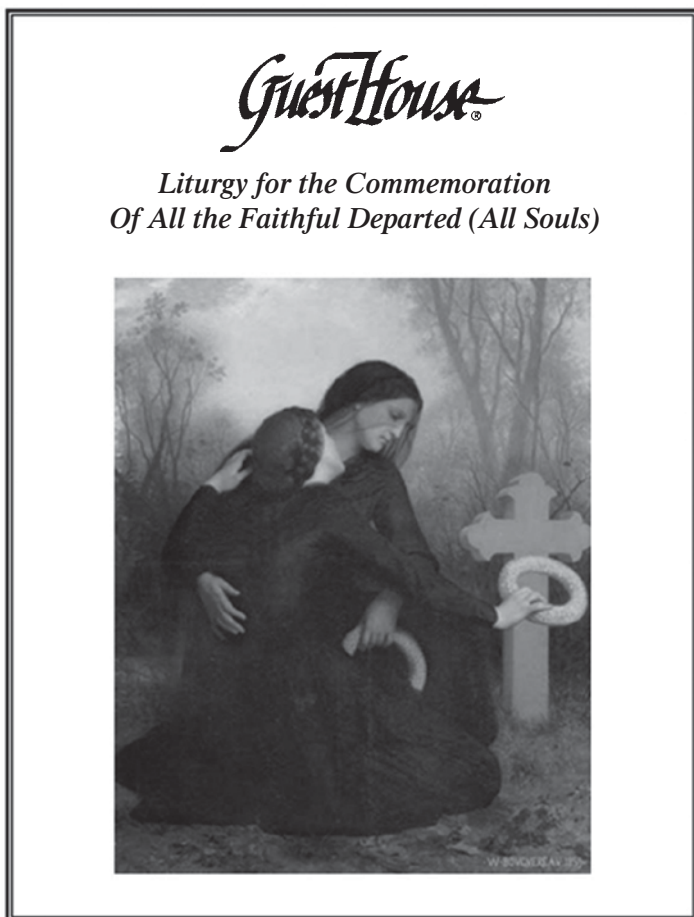
The curious but solid fact (miracle!) is that I remain in recovery—happy beyond belief and eternally grateful for what Guest House has given me from The Lord. Also curious is the fact that in 2004, after 25 years, I replaced a former Guest House counselor/administrator who was the “new man on the block” when I entered treatment in 1979.

The Lord works wondrous deeds for those who cry for help and turn to Him in the company of the people of

Guest House. I have asked myself why my journey into Ignatian spirituality took so long. I now recognize that I was blocked by a disease and that I needed someone to address the problem.

In God's providence, Guest House and the spirituality of the AA program was that person—the person who with God's grace most made me who I am today as a Catholic Christian, a member of the Society of Jesus, a sinner but called to serve others who suffer from the same incurable—but fortunately treatable—disease.

Thousands Remembered At All Souls Mass & Vigil



To all of our friends who provided the many thousands of names to read, and to all of our friends who found it within their resources to help us with an All Soul's donation—**THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU!**

Many thousands of individuals—all deceased family and friends of our donors—were recalled in prayer and at a special oral recitation during our 11th annual *All Souls Mass & Vigil* in November.

Fifty staff, clients in treatment, volunteers and local benefactors all joined us at the Mass. They also assisted with the reading afterward in the Chapel of the former Women's Program Treatment Center, now called the William E. Scripps Mansion on our Lake Orion, Michigan property. (The Women's Program is now housed in the new treatment center on the property.)

Our Celebrant at Mass was Guest House Alumnus Reverend Andrew J. Tomasko (Lake Orion, 1990). Father entered treatment as a young seminarian. He is presently Pastor at St. Therese of Lisieux Parish in Shelby Township, Michigan.

Guest House Vice President of Development, Joe Stong, who welcomed the guests to the Vigil following the Mass, spoke about how “very Catholic it is to read aloud the names of those we love (and who have passed away).” He also spoke of the “lost and found” nature of the Vigil.

“It's a litany of saints and a litany of souls we've ‘lost’ to death but whom we hope to ‘find’ again in the Lord when we too pass through the veil and see our eternal homeland with ageless eyes.” (See a full summary of Mr. Stong's reflections on page 3.)



Lost and Found:

A Reflection on Guest House’s Mission

BY JOE STONG, VICE PRESIDENT, DEVELOPMENT

At an All Soul’s Day Mass celebration, staff, Icon Dei supporters and other local donors assembled in the Scripps Mansion chapel to celebrate Mass and pray for the souls of the faithful departed whose names were read aloud for hours following the Mass.

In that place—the chapel where several thousand religious and clergy recovered their faith and sobriety—we few sat in silent contemplation and prayer. I had thoughts of the “cloud of witnesses,” separated from us by the veil between Heaven and this “valley of tears.” This made me think of how very Catholic it is to read aloud the names of those we love.

It is a litany of saints and a litany of souls we’ve “lost” to death but whom we hope to “find” again in the Lord when we too pass through the veil and see our eternal homeland with ageless eyes.

Lost and found...Haven’t we all lost someone, a child perhaps? And how human it is for us to call out their name! Haven’t we too all been lost at one time or another? And didn’t we too call out the name of our loved ones, our parents or Savior? The speaking of the name is a sacred thing because Our Lord calls us by name and He promised to come shepherd us home on the last day.

So at Guest House today we pray for those who have gone before us and we ask them – and all the former alumni of Guest House who recovered their faith and sobriety here before returning to ministry and souls—to pray for us.

Of all the ministries of the Church, Guest House is unique in that we rescue, we find the “lost shepherds.”

Our Lord spoke of the Good Shepherd who left the 99 to go in search of the one. But what should happen if the shepherd himself becomes lost? Wouldn’t all 100 be lost too? And so it is with these clergy and religious...until you and I and Guest House come to their aid, call them by name, and restore them to the fold and their ministry.

Think of the innumerable souls a single Priest or religious can reach in their lifetime! By “finding” the lost shepherds and restoring them, Guest House has an enormous impact on the good of the whole flock of Christ!

Thank you for joining me in helping these helpers, “finding” these good shepherds who are lost and restoring them not just to the one, but to the other 99. God loves you!

Please consider a gift to our “Now More Than Ever” Campaign! Contact Joe Stong in Development at Guest House by calling 1-800-626-6910.





Memorials

When sending in your memorial gift, please print all information. Please also include street addresses so that we can be sure to be accurate when notifying next of kin or friends of the deceased. For Special Memorial gifts of \$500 or more, you can have permanent plaque recognition at our treatment centers for your departed relative or friend, while providing a major gift to our work. Call our Development Department at 1-800-626-6910 for more information. Thank you and God bless you for your kindness! Memorials listed are from 5/28/08 to 11/24/08.

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Two Events – Two Great Successes

Portland and Detroit Support our Programs Again!



A combined 300 friends and benefactors, along with staff and volunteers of Guest House, participated in two recent, successful special event fund raisers for our patient care programs.

In Portland, Maine, more than 100 individuals attended the *Annual Bishop's Reception to Support Guest House* (formerly called the *Portland Bishop's Dinner*), at the Martindale Country Club in Auburn, Maine on October 3rd.

The event included a concelebrated Mass by Portland Bishop Richard J. Malone with local priests at the Basilica of Ss. Peter

and Paul in Lewiston, Maine (photo above); and, the special guest appearance of popular Maine storyteller John McDonald. Our special guest alumnus speaker at the event was Father Lionel Chouinard, Vicar Forane in the Diocese of Portland.

A week later on October 10, Guest House held its *50th Annual Detroit Bishop's Dinner*, our longest running special event fundraiser. It took place at The Westin Southfield-Detroit. Two hundred friends, benefactors, staff and volunteers were on hand to watch Guest House alumnus Bridget Bearss, RSCJ, receive the annual "Bishop Kevin M. Britt" award (photo at right).



Presentation of the award was made by Monsignor John Zenz, last year's award recipient. He is Pastor of Holy Name Parish and Episcopal Vicar for Oakland County. The award is given in recognition of a significant ministry to clergy and religious affected by addictive disease. It was created in memory and honor of Bishop Kevin M. Britt, former Bishop of Grand Rapids, Michigan and formerly an Auxiliary Bishop in the Detroit Archdiocese where he also served as Guest House's Episcopal Moderator.

Our special guest Master of Ceremonies at the Detroit event was local media personality Dave LewAllen, Weekend Anchor, Channel 7 Action News Reporter. We were also honored to have among our guests long-time Guest House friend, benefactor and advocate, Edmund Cardinal Szoka, President Emeritus of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State and President Emeritus of the Governatorate of Vatican City State. The Cardinal is also Detroit's former Archbishop.

In Appreciation

Guest House acknowledges with gratitude the following permanent endowments and trusts which have been set up by donor friends.

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Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace, Amen.



The Third and Final Stage of Alcoholism

The alcoholic has finally “arrived.” He or she has reached the third and final stage of the disease. Without help, death will result, usually preceded by malnutrition and insanity.

But let’s back up a bit and show how it is that the third stage of alcoholism progresses.

The alcoholic drinks at any time of the day now. The first thing in the morning (often to “help” with a serious hangover!), before and after lunch; before, during and well after the evening meal, if any. This individual simply must have alcohol. It’s the body demanding it, overriding reason and instinct.

Eventually, he or she will start to lose weight, as the body receives more and more alcohol and less nutrition from food. The alcoholic may also totally isolate, so others will not see how bad off he or she is.

Coupled with the fear, aggression, remorse and shame in the second stage of alcoholism, there is a new “wrinkle.” Sleeplessness. The alcoholic often finds that he or she cannot get a good night’s sleep, so why not get up for another drink?

Another very serious issue often arises: if the alcoholic cannot find any alcohol in the house he or she will, in sheer desperation, drink anything with alcohol *in it*, such as cologne, cold medicines, mouthwash—even rubbing alcohol!

The alcoholic in the third stage can often begin to have hallucinations. The mind begins to lose its grasp on reality. It is often at this stage that, sadly, the alcoholic may attempt suicide.

Another way out of the misery is through the “DT’s,” or delirium tremens which can be fatal in one out of four cases. DT’s often take place when the alcoholic tries to stop drinking, or is forced to stop because of incarceration or admission to a treatment program. DT’s are not like the hallucinations of earlier, although the alcoholic can certainly “see things” at this point. Violent shaking is always present, and convulsions are common.

Yet another way for the alcoholic to end the misery is by accident. More specifically, *because* of an accident. Prone to major mishaps, he or she may die in a car accident they caused, may accidentally fall down a flight of stairs, or die in a fire unintentionally set in their residence.

With intense medical intervention at the beginning of the third stage of alcoholism, there can be hope for recovery. The key is for the individual *to enter treatment!*

Management Services Offices

Development Department

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Lake Orion, Michigan 48360
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www.guesthouse.org

The Guest House Facilities:

- Management Services Offices Lake Orion, Michigan
- Lake Orion Treatment Center and Recovery Residence Lake Orion, Michigan
- Rochester Treatment Center Rochester, Minnesota
- Guest House at St. John Vianney Downingtown, Pennsylvania

*Guest House, fully accredited and licensed, is listed in the Official Catholic Directory (OCD).
Donations to Guest House, which is non-profit and tax-exempt, are deductible as allowed by law.*

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