

# SACRÉ-COEUR RETREAT CENTER HISTORY

## KING'S HOUSE – 1962 to 2009



For nearly five decades, the center borne the name of “Christ the King House of Retreats,” and was more commonly called King’s House.

Located atop a bluff on the east bank of the Illinois River four miles northeast of Henry and about 30 miles north of Peoria, King’s House served tens of thousands of priests, religious and lay Catholics of the Diocese of Peoria over the course of the retreat center’s 46 years of history.

The center was built at a cost of \$375,000 on the “Cloud 77” property of John Law. It was designed by Oblate Father J. Vincent Fitzgerald, a native of Mendota, and architect Hamilton Dox of Peoria as a one-story, 66-room complex, featuring a main entrance lounge, a 96-seat main chapel, 12 small Mass chapels, 34 double rooms and 32 single rooms.

Construction on the 46-acre site began in June of 1962 and was completed by January of 1963. The new center hosted its first event, a three-day retreat for married couples, on January 18 to 20, 1963. Bishop John B. Franz presided at blessing and dedication ceremonies on Aug. 22, 1963, and on the same day Msgr. George Dzuryo of Streator celebrated a Solemn Mass of Dedication in the center’s chapel.

The retreat center was built by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and the Oblate Fathers directed the center for the next 33 years. The technical name for the center was “King’s House III,” because the Oblate Fathers already were conducting King’s House I in Belleville, and King’s House II in Buffalo, Minnesota.

The first staffers of the rural Henry center were Father Vincent Fitzgerald, OMI, director; Father A. Bruce McLean, OMI, retreat master; and Father Dennis F. McCarthy, OMI, promotional director, assisted by 11 Oblate Brothers.

In 1996, the Diocese of Peoria obtained the center from the Oblate Fathers. Deacon Fred Kruse and his wife Gail, from Des Plaines in the Archdiocese of Chicago, were hired as directors of King’s House, succeeding Father Wayne Like, OMI, the last Oblate Father to serve as director.

The Kruse’s served at King’s House for more than 12 years, retiring the fall of 2008. They were succeeded in September of 2008 by the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary, led by Sister Juana, who was assisted by Sister Silvia M. Tarafa, Sister Sonia R. Mancuello, Sister Delia Morales Alvarez and Sister R. Isabel Romero.

## NAZARETH HOUSE – 2009 TO 2018

On September 15, 2009, there was a Mass of Renaming celebrated by Bishop Daniel R. Jenky, CSC. The new name, “Nazareth House” was chosen to reflect and represent the mission and identity of the retreat house under its then current directorship. Since September 2008, King’s House had been directed and staffed by five members of the

Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary, a community of women religious based in Miami, Fla., and founded by Mother Adela Galindo.

After meeting and praying with Mother Adela and Sister Anna Lanzas, SCTJM, the community's vicar general, Bishop Jenky decided "Nazareth House" would be a perfect emblem of the retreat center's identity and mission — "to be a home and school of the life of the Holy Family and of the life of the Church, the Family of Jesus," the bishop wrote.

Christ's home in Nazareth, the bishop continued, "was a home and a path of love, hope, light and truth; a home and school of love, a place of intimacy and communion of the hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph." As the dwelling place of God Incarnate, Nazareth was "the place where Our Lady's maternity was totally and freely lived and communicated," said Bishop Jenky. In their home could be found love, prayer, silence, the praise and the worship of God, pondering God's word and listening to his will, the Bishop said.

The Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary led Nazareth House until it was razed in 2018.

## **SACRÉ-COEUR RETREAT CENTER – 2021 to Present**



The current facility built in 2021, is new and improved from the original King's House. Bishop Louis Tylka in a letter dated February 22, 2021 announced the name of the new retreat center as the, "*Sacré-Coeur Retreat Center*". He stated, "*As we now prepare for the opening of our new facility, the scale of our new endeavor calls for a new name. While the facility will retain its primary purpose as a place of retreats, the addition of new rooms along with the conference rooms and enlarged chapel allow for much more to occur than was previously possible. As such, it is much more of a retreat center than simply a retreat house. Additionally, as we envision the many ways the new facility will serve the larger role of evangelization, this is a fitting time to bestow a new name on our retreat center. It was our desire to find a name that is rooted in the history of the Diocese of Peoria and that honors the contributions of those who have served before – going as far back as the French Missionaries who brought the Gospel to our region, and more recently the service of the Pierced Heart Sisters.*"

Hence the Sacré-Coeur Retreat Center was established. It includes a four-story building containing 70 sleeping rooms, 3 Suites, and living quarters for The Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary. All rooms have one Queen-Size bed, individual temperature controls, and larger bathrooms than in the former facility. Other features include a prominent large chapel, a small chapel, a state of the art conference center designed to seat up to 250, a two-story entry and gathering area, dining and kitchen facilities, a library, and several coffee serving spaces. The Large Meeting room can be divided into two spaces, the Saint Francis Meeting Room and the Saint Clare Meeting Room. The Smaller Meeting Room can also be divided into two

rooms, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary Meeting Rooms. The Gathering Area features a large, wood burning fire place, two tables and comfortable seating.

The Grounds of the **Sacré-Coeur Retreat Center** features an enlarged pond with an upper pond and lower pond, divided by a water fall and stocked with fish. There are walking paths around the pond and throughout the property as well as a garden area outside of the meeting space, a back deck off of the Gathering Area complete with a fire pit and seating areas overlooking the scenic Illinois River. The “Solitude of the Sacred Heart” — a small hermitage built on the property in 2011 and not affected by the razing of the old Nazareth House, offers individuals a quiet place for prayer and reflection.

Hired in 2021, the center is led by Executive Director, Deacon Terry Stalsberg, a Deacon of the Catholic Diocese of Peoria since 2012 and a native of Wisconsin. Deacon Terry resides in Metamora, IL with his Wife Brenda and Son Jonathan.