

ROOM IN THE INN

WEEK 1 REFLECTION: **NOVEMBER 1-7**

The Room In The Inn Experience

Room In The Inn's 41st winter season has begun. As we gather in a circle of reflection and prayer to begin this season, we know that we are part of a much larger circle in this community, filled with thousands of people who have been changed by this experience through the years.

Room In The Inn is not about giving, it is about receiving. It is about everyone, both guests and hosts, receiving a blessing —an encounter with God in the midst of suffering, hardship, pain, and grief.

Room In The Inn is an opportunity, not an answer. It is an experience, not a solution. In short, Room In The Inn is an opportunity to experience the presence of God in a different way.

Prayer

Creator of us all,
We thank you for forty-one years of blessings
shared through Room In The Inn.
Teach us again that this ministry is not about giving,
but about receiving—receiving your presence in one another,
in joy and in hardship, in hope and in need.
May Room In The Inn continue to be a place
where all encounter your love made real among us.

Question for Reflection:

Think beyond the ways you gave tonight. What did you receive?



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WEEK 2 REFLECTION: **NOVEMBER 8-14**

An Alternative Way

Room In The Inn is more than an organization, a program, or a place. It is a community. Each member of this community can embody our core values and share them with the rest of the world. Room In The Inn offers an alternative way to live:

When society encourages us to compete for privilege and possessions, we turn to the power of **spirituality.**
When we are tempted to fear one another or remain indifferent to the struggles of others, we choose to practice **love.**
When efficiency becomes the highest value or we become comfortable being surrounded by people who are just like us, we remember the transforming possibilities of **hospitality.**
When others demean and dehumanize, we remember the inherent value of each person through **respect.**
When the world tells us that things will never get any better, we hold fast to **hope.**
When isolation and loneliness are all too common, we build **community.**
And when people act with violence, we respond with the courageous and creative force of **nonviolence.**

Prayer

Gracious One,
You call us to follow a different way of life. Set our feet on the path you set before us.
Form us into a living example of that alternative way. Help us demonstrate that, even in a world that is dangerous and divided, it is possible to live as neighbors.
Amen.

Question for Reflection:

Where did you see one of the core values of Room In The Inn – spirituality, love, hospitality, respect, hope, community, and nonviolence – come to life?



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WEEK 3 REFLECTION: **NOVEMBER 15-21**

Sanctuary

Last season, St. Augustine's Episcopal Chapel posted photos of their Room In The Inn set up. While many of our congregations place beds in fellowship halls and classrooms, St. A's prepares space for its guests in the worship space of their intimate A-Frame chapel on Vanderbilt's campus. The image of a bed laid next to the altar reminded us of the idea that Room In The Inn is a sanctuary. The hospitality of our congregations truly creates a sacred space.

Our work of hospitality can be chaotic at times, because the lives of Room In The Inn guests are nearly always chaotic. But the work done by host congregations invites people into something different: rest for body and soul. It offers a chance to heed that ancient call to, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Prayer

Holy One,
As we welcome our neighbors tonight,
let our hospitality be a sign of your peace.
Calm the chaos of our hearts
and in the lives of those we serve.
Amen.

Question for Reflection:

Where do you find rest in your own life?
How can something similar be offered at Room In The Inn?



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WEEK 4 REFLECTION: **NOVEMBER 22-28**

Gratitude

On this Thanksgiving week, take a moment to hear this quote from Brother David Steindl-Rast:

"The greatest gift one can give is thanksgiving. In giving gifts, we give what we can spare, but in giving thanks we give ourselves."

The work of Room In The Inn is not simply providing beds, meals, or other material things. Those are vital, generous gifts, but they are simply things. What transforms those gifts into something holy is the spirit in which they are given. When we encounter the people we serve not as problems to solve but as neighbors to love, we give something deeper than supplies or services. We give ourselves. Our guests, in turn, offer that same gift back through their stories, good humor, strength, and resilience.

May this be a place where thanksgiving is not a holiday, but a daily way of life.

Prayer

Divine Creator,
All of life is a gift.
The way we live is our gratitude.
Help us always to be thankful.
Amen.

Question for Reflection:
Where did you notice gratitude showing up tonight?



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WEEK 5 REFLECTION: **NOVEMBER 29-DECEMBER 5**

Sharing

The statue in Room In The Inn's courtyard is affectionately known as "Skippy" because it depicts a man holding out a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. The actual name of this installation is "Sharing." The explanatory plaque says this: **"This figure represents every man, woman, and child at Room In The Inn whose heart is moved to share. For in the sharing of gifts, time, and talents, relationships are formed, nurtured and grown. When there is such sharing, equality emerges among us. One becomes both the giver and the receiver. And as the figure suggests, it is impossible to tell the difference."**

This season, that spirit of sharing is all around us: people are donating food, many are participating in Giving Tuesday campaigns, and this week, our participants at Room In The Inn will use the points they have earned in our education program to purchase gifts for their children and grandchildren.

Room In The Inn is at our best when it is difficult to tell who is doing the serving and who is being served. As Saint Francis prayed, may we once again discover that "it is in giving that we receive."

Prayer

God of Grace,
In this holy season,
help us to experience
the miracle of sharing.
Erase the barriers between us
so we might all know
the blessing of human flourishing.
Amen.

Question for Reflection:

Did you witness any moments tonight when the line between giver and receiver seemed to fade?