Catholic Women’s Conference presenter recalls friendship with Blessed Mother Teresa

BY KATHERINE JASS LOPEZ
FOR TODAY’S CATHOLIC

SAN ANTONIO • Women looking for a weekend of spiritual refreshment should circle October first and second on their calendars and plan to attend the ninth annual Catholic Women’s Conference, “Come to Me,” sponsored by the Pilgrim Center of Hope, a Catholic Evangelization Ministry. The two day conference will be held at Antonian College Preparatory High School and features inspirational talks, time for prayer and reflection, an opportunity to participate in the sacrament of reconciliation and a eucharistic healing service.

Since 2001, women from San Antonio and surrounding areas have gathered at the conference, who many refer to as a ‘spa for the soul,’ to spend time rejuvenating their faith while building friendships with other women. “We have built a strong foundation rooted in promoting the dignity of women and it’s been beautiful to see this ministry grow over the last nine years. The steering committee has cast out the net and brought together a lot of women who had been searching for this type of event — planned for them specifically,” said Mary Jane Fox, co-director for the center.

To ensure the women experience a ‘spiritual haven,’ the steering committee begins preparations a year in advance. “We have 12 ladies on the committee and through a very thoughtful and prayerful process, we come together to discern and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in preparing a wonderful weekend for the women,” Fox said.

Having nurturing and dynamic speakers present at the conference is a top priority for the committee and this year’s five presenters bring a wealth of knowledge and insight on women’s issues. One of the presenters, Donna Marie Cooper O’Boyle, will share her personal story of how she came to know and have a decade long friendship with Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta and how women today can carry out her mission to help the poor.

“It was by the grace of God in 1987 that my family and I were cast out the net and brought together a lot of women who had been searching for this type of event — planned for them specifically,” said Mary Jane Fox, co-director for the center.

In her talk at the conference, Cooper O’Boyle hopes to motivate the women to serve others, beginning in their own homes. “Love begins at home; we don’t have to run to Calcutta to serve those in need. Sometimes we just need to look around and take a closer look at those around us — our families, friends, communities. My hope is that women will see that God has a mission for each of us and part of that mission is taking our faith to the streets — no matter where those streets might be.”

In addition to being an author, Cooper O’Boyle is a EWTN-TV host of “Everyday Blessings for Catholic Moms” and has appeared on radio and television championing the dignity of women and mothers. She serves God both at home with her family and throughout the world. For more information on the Catholic Women’s Conference or to register visit http://pilgrimcenterofhope.org/.

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The Rev. James Heft, S.M., Ph.D., serves as the University of Dayton’s Provost, Chancellor and Chairman of Religious Studies before joining the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles as the Alton Brooks Professor of Religion. At USC, Heft has founded the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies, of which he is president and Chairman of the Board of Trustees. A past member of the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on Education and Chairman of the Board of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, Heft co-founded a scholarly journal, Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice. In addition, he has published and edited eight books and written more than 150 articles and book chapters. He served on the St. Mary’s University Board of Trustees from 1995 to 2003.

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