



Creighton University  
Retreat Center  
Griswold

-By Anne Marie Cox

Looking for a way to  
grow your personal relationship  
with God?

Spiritual direction might  
be the answer.

Having a spiritual director  
means having someone who  
walks with you on a journey to  
"become more attentive to those  
inner movements, the voice of  
God" said Amy Hoover, of the  
Creighton University Retreat  
Center in Griswold.

The number of Catholics  
doing spiritual direction is  
small but growing she said.  
"We haven't helped the

masses recognize the grace of being  
a reflective people," she added.

There are opportunities.  
About a third of those who come  
to the retreat center in the woods  
near Griswold are from Creighton  
University, another third from  
various high school groups and a  
third from church groups or people  
looking for silence.

Spiritual direction  
is offered by Jesuit Father Bob  
Dufford and Hoover at the former  
Boy Scout camp. The late Father  
Lavern Wingert purchased the  
property in the 1970s and made  
it into a retreat center, where he  
hosted primarily people in addiction  
recovery.

Today, retreats such as  
Kairos, Christian Experience  
Weekend, Christ Renews His  
Parish and similar encounters  
invite people to enter into a  
relationship with Jesus, Hoover said.  
"As that grows, the need  
and the desire for spiritual direction  
grows," she said. Spiritual direction is  
deeply rooted in the Catholic  
faith tradition she added, suggesting  
the mystics such as St. Catherine of  
Siena, St. Theresa of Avila,  
St. Ignatius of Loyola and  
St. John of the Cross advocated  
for a personal relationship with  
God.

How does one start a  
personal relationship with God?  
Hoover compares it to  
dating.

"When entering into a  
relationship with your spouse,  
you start with that first date,  
you're attentive to each other,  
sharing about yourself and listening,"  
she said. "It doesn't go  
anywhere unless you continue to  
do that.

That's how I imagine it."  
She recommends people  
find a quiet place and imagine Jesus  
sitting across from them.  
"In your imagination,  
what is Jesus sharing with you  
and what do you want to share  
with Jesus?" she said. And continued  
"God is in us. The words of God will  
come out. The key is to sit in silence  
and be mindful, appreciate the  
beauty in the surroundings."  
Hoover sees spiritual  
direction as a ministry of being a  
companion. She asks what's going  
on in a person's prayer, where  
have they encountered God,  
what's their struggle with God,  
"so that we can together listen for  
where God is working and moving  
in our lives," she said.

It takes courage to seek  
out a spiritual director because  
it suggests vulnerability, Hoover  
said.

"If there's a stirring in  
your heart or you sense you're  
being called to a different or deeper  
relationship with God, a spiritual  
director can walk with you " she adds  
"it might be helpful."