

# BETHANY HOUSE HANDBOOK

## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT: THE PRIMACY OF FREEDOM

This document is an articulation of the life of a community: it seeks to express and set down in a formal way the set of practices, relational rhythms, guidelines, expectations, commitments, and rules that encircle and protect the gift of this communal life and call given to us by Jesus. The rule exists for sake of abundant life; the law for the sake, and under the primacy of, freedom.

This document is a living work, not an absolute dictation. It reflects forward and backward. It speaks into being and forms what already is into something more clear, more refined. It is a garden where things may grow, may be torn up, may be moved, reimagined, here may be taught to climb upward, and in another place may be planted in orderly rows. The revision of this document, which is the tangible expression of the expansion and growth of a living community, seeks to imitate the creative process of God— speaking, unfolding, reflecting, affirming, refining. These changes do not indicate a lack of rootedness or identity, but a responsiveness to the Spirit of God; the flowing water is always new, always moving, yet the essence of the river is perennial, forever.

## PART I: FOUNDATION

### IDENTITY & PURPOSE

Bethany House is a missionary community of women seeking to bring the Healing, Hope, and Joy of Jesus to our mission field through prayer, community, formation, and mission. In imitation of Mary of Bethany, who sat at the feet of Jesus and poured out her life in imitation of His Eucharistic heart, the women of Bethany place themselves before Jesus loving gaze to be transformed into His image “from glory to glory” by the Holy Spirit, equipped with His Power and Peace, and sent in with missionary zeal and joy into our spheres of influence. [1]

### SPIRITUALITY: EUCHARISTIC, MARIAN, CHARISMATIC [2]

Modeled after the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and desiring to partner with the Holy Spirit’s work of Healing, Hope, and Joy in our diocese, the life of Bethany House stands on the pillars of Poverty, Presence, and Praise. Poverty is complete honesty and vulnerable before Love; it is a sharing in Jesus’ Eucharistic Humility, Mary’s “ecce ancilla domini” and a total openness to the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit. [3] To live Poverty is to “set out from an anthropology of humility” toward the great horizons of love, of glory, of beauty. [4] It is to inhabit the tension of humility and magnanimity. Presence is the discipline of wonder and the way to intimacy, imitating Jesus’ Eucharistic Presence, Mary’s “fiat” and an unwavering attentiveness and responsiveness to the Holy Spirit who leads the dance of life. [5] Presence is to dwell richly in the “now” where Jesus always meets us, a lived expression of Hope, which exclaims with wonder and joy: Behold the Lamb of God! He is here! Praise is the heart of the Bride totally given in Love, imitating Jesus’ Eucharistic thanksgiving to the Father, Mary’s “magnificat,” and a joyful welcoming of the Spirit of God who is poured out upon us. [6] Praise is to be wholeheartedly, scandalously, boldly, tenderly given, and through it, the totality of our life is directed toward, fixed on, addressed to God.

In a word, the spiritual character of Bethany is purity of heart—the unreserved openness of our entire being to Love. This openness is not left unanswered; in His tenderness and love, God draws near and makes His home in our hearts. [7] The central charism of Bethany is that of a monstrosity: to carry the presence of God, hidden yet revealed, to the world. Like the Host broken in two, like the alabaster jar broken open and the lily broken into bloom, like the dawn from on high that breaks through the darkest of nights, we are broken open into the fullness of Love, that the fragrance of Love might fill the world.

### BETHANY AS A MISSION: A YEAR OF JUBILEE

Bethany is a home for young women to come restfully and expectantly before Jesus, intentionally seeking His heart, His dreams, and His call for their life. It is a space of simplicity, security, and interior silence that expands the horizons of life. Bethany is an intentional season of Jubilee, where each woman may receive Jesus’ Healing, Hope, & Joy, where she may return home to the Father’s House, and where He may illuminate and equip them for the “next step” in their lives. Through a shared community life, formation weekends, and personal discipleship, each woman is accompanied as she grows humanly, pastorally, intellectually, spiritually, and in mission “to the measure of the full stature of Christ”. [8]

## BETHANY AS MISSIONARY: ANOINTED BEARERS OF JESUS' PRESENCE

The Mission of Bethany is the mission of Jesus: to bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim freedom to captives, and joy to the sorrowful. [9] Living in the gaze of our Father, we are transformed “from glory to glory” into the image of Jesus and bring His real presence and love to each person we encounter.[10] We walk in the power and anointing of the Spirit of Jesus and demonstrate His love through healing, prophetic words, and miracles. [11] The first place the mission happens is within the sisterhood of Bethany, then in each woman’s sphere of influence, particularly in the context of work, school, and the mission field. As a community modeled after the Church in Acts, we are continually in dialogue with the Spirit, allowing Him to reveal new targets and strategies for mission both individually and as a community. [12]

## STRUCTURE: TWO HOUSES, ONE COMMUNITY

We recognize that the women called to Bethany House have vastly different life experiences and needs. Desiring that each woman at Bethany would be met in her individuality in a way that is fitting for her age and state of life, and following the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Bethany Community is made up of two kinds of Houses: Formation Houses for post-high school women who have encountered Jesus and are seeking and open to deeper human and spiritual formation, discipleship, and accompaniment as they continue to grow in maturity; and Mission Houses for women who are humanly and spiritually mature, confident in initiating and moving on mission, and ready to take on greater responsibility. The Formation House is fitting for young Disciples; the Mission House is fitting for mature Missionary Disciples. [13] The relationship between these two houses is that of Paul and Timothy; of one heart and mind, united on mission, sharing a common way of life, and cultivating the mutual gift of discipleship. The Bethany community prays together, shares meals together, and moves on mission together while living in separate homes, with commitments fitting to each House.

## COMMUNITY LIFE: A SCHOOL OF LOVE AND MISSION [14]

As a household, Bethany strives to imitate the communal life described in Acts 2: 42-47 by living a ministry of presence in the context of our mission field, pursuing human, pastoral, intellectual, and spiritual formation, growing in risk-taking with the Holy Spirit, cultivating a disposition of gratitude, celebration, and wonder at each other, cultivating a restful and welcoming home and heart, and focusing unwaveringly on mission. The women of Bethany have been given by Jesus to each other as sisters on a journey toward heaven, a mission to bring heaven to earth. Bethany fails if its members live only as roommates; it is assured victory if they choose to love and lean into friendship and sisterhood with each other through conflict and difficulty by spending time with each other, asking questions, affirming, receiving, challenging, forgiving, and serving each other.

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and following, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. [15]*