

## The Beginnings... from Windsor to Detroit

Roots leading up to first Faith & Sharing Retreat in Detroit in 1976



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I arrived at the Jesuit Retreat Center in Guelph Ontario on October 1 1971, looking forward to making a 30 day retreat.

In early June, I had packed all my belongings from a parish where I served as associate pastor for two years, my sixth and seventh in priestly ministry. I didn't know where God was leading me, whether to continue in ministry or change course. A priest friend recommended I attend a six week House of Prayer for priests in Lake Orion Michigan. With God's grace, new friendships developed in August and September. When an Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) sister from Monroe Michigan encouraged me to make a 30 day Jesuit retreat in Guelph, I was ready to respond "Yes" to the invitation. It was in the middle of October that my spiritual director on that retreat, Fr George Leach, took several retreatants to Toronto to hear Mother Teresa and Jean Vanier. That night I first heard about a Faith & Sharing Retreat from Jean Vanier. The seed was planted.

Four years later, in the summer of 1975, when I heard that Fr George Leach was animating a five day Faith & Sharing retreat in August at Assumption College in Windsor Ontario, I felt a strong pull from within (no doubt the Holy Spirit) to attend. There were several IHM sisters who also attended the retreat. At the end of the retreat, Fr Leach encouraged retreatants to bring the Faith & Sharing retreat (begun by Jean Vanier in 1968) to their locale.

The IHM sisters invited me to meet with them for dinner and a planning session at their house in September 1975. The focus of planning was: how and where to introduce the Faith & Sharing retreat to Detroit.

As a result of our many meetings, the first Detroit retreat was held at Sacred Heart Seminary in 1976. Then came the question: who would be willing to lead a committee to plan the second, the third, etc. retreats? I was asked to help discern some leaders.

As an associate priest at a nearby parish, I came to know some spirit-filled parishioners, Grace & Harry Gomula. I was thinking about whom to approach as possible leaders when I came across Grace and Harry in a local park. They were quick to say "yes" to my invitation (really the Holy Spirit's!) to lead Faith & Sharing in Detroit. They gathered local lay people and began planning the 1977 Detroit retreat!

The rest is history.... up to the present day. Blessed be God! 💙



Fr. Larry Kaiser, Grace Gomula, Rita Oleksiak, Harry Gomula

To read a short history of Faith & Sharing in Detroit, see [Heart-to-Heart bulletin of April 2017](#), p. 2-3