

# Women & News & Spiritual Warfare

All photos courtesy



Whether we realize it or not, a spiritual battle rages around us every day as the powers of good and evil engage in a never-ending war for our souls. How do we protect ourselves? What spiritual weaponry is available to us? How can Our Lady, the angels and the saints help us?

This year's Women of Grace ® Retreat in Malvern, Pennsylvania attempted to answer all of these questions – and more! Over 300 women attended the retreat, which was held July 31 – August 2, 2009.

Preceded by the Women of Grace ® Leadership Institute, the theme of the retreat was “The Blessed Mother, the Angels, and the Spiritual Battle” and included presentations by Johnnette Benkovic and Fr. Edmund Sylvia, C.S.C., as well as Kathleen Towne, founder of the Our Lady of Unity Apostolate which is dedicated to praying for priests.

Mrs. Towne introduced the women to the fundamentals of spiritual warfare, including the many sophistries of the devil as well as the enormous power of Jesus Christ, Our Lady and the angels.



By the grace of God, we also had three additional priests on hand – Rev. Michael Fitzpatrick, Rev. Richard Fineo, and Rev. Msgr. Robert Laliberte – who were available to bring us the healing mercy of God.

No one walked away unchanged!

“What I’m going to take away from this retreat is that I need to literally put on the armor of God to fight this spiritual battle we’re in,” said Magdalena “Maggie” Miller of Buffalo, New York, (who has been 39 for the last four years).

Natalie Redmond, (who is 50 and proud of it!) of West Chester, Pennsylvania, said, “I’m going to take courage away from this retreat and the idea that we’re not in this fight alone.”

Therese Ryan, 45, of Fairfax, Virginia is also taking away courage and the comfort of knowing she’s not alone in this battle, “but I also learned that it’s our job



Participants in the Women of Grace ® Leadership Institute

# of Grace & Views

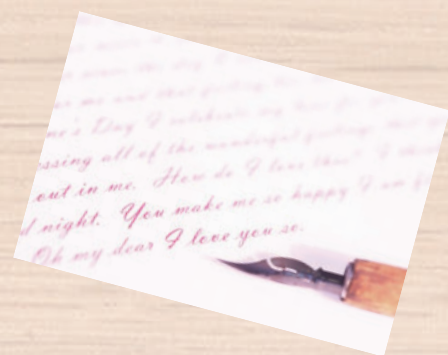
## Comes to Malvern

of Deacon Neil Crispo

to bear Christ just as Mary bore Christ and brought Him into the world. We can do this with great courage because Mary is with us. She's on our side. Together, we have a great power as women to go out and affect our world."

Twenty year-old Deirdre Ryan intends to bring her new knowledge about spiritual warfare back to college with her. "A lot of girls my age really struggle with spirituality and with who they are as women and the relationship they should be having with the Blessed Mother and with the Church," she said. "I attend the University of Mary Washington, a small college in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and we have a very strong spiritual group there, but this is a new aspect of the Catholic faith that you just don't hear enough about."

"There was so much packed into this retreat!" said Caroline Niesley, 51, of Lansdale, Pennsylvania. "We could have used a week to get in all the



more importantly, they prepare us to be strong women who can reflect the vision of our heavenly Father in our world."

Mary Ann Scafidi, (who will always be 20 in her heart) of West Islip, New York admitted that the retreat gave her much to think about in the weeks and months ahead, especially the concept of woman as warrior. "It's a bit uncomfortable for me because I don't know how that fits with the feminine side of me. I like to think of myself as a feminine warrior, maybe a gentle warrior. I've got to work that out."

presentations! And I really appreciated the extra time they gave us for confession because a lot of people I know are looking for spiritual direction that the average person finds difficult to get. You might see your regular confessor, but sometimes the priests don't have the time to speak at length. That's why this is so important."

June Piola, (who is ageless) from West Chester, Pennsylvania, said the Women of Grace© retreat was truly a grace-filled weekend for her. "We all have our individual walks and Johnnette and her team help to facilitate that walk," she said. "They do this by helping us stay close to Jesus and Mary as we navigate all the twists and turns in our lives. Even



Kathleen Towne



Johnnette explains the realities of spiritual warfare