



CONSTANT COLLOQUY

The Newsletter of the **IGNATIANT SPIRITUALITY PROJECT**

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Spiritual Retreats Ending Homelessness.

Spring 2009

THE POWER OF TELLING YOUR STORY

Your story. It's the one thing you have that's uniquely yours; yet, because we all have one, it's also intrinsically relational. It's personal. It's valuable. It's powerful. And it's the very heart of the Ignatian Spirituality Project retreat experience. Our stories are our history; and, when we openly share them, they can become the seed of one another's future.

This point was crystallized at the recent ISP National Gathering of retreat coordinators from the 12 cities with ISP programs. Speaking at the event, Baltimore retreatant and witness Jimi Fardan shared his experience, telling those in attendance how an ISP retreat offers a rare opportunity: An opportunity to:

- Tell your story to yourself
- Tell your story to others
- Tell your story to God and then
- Let God tell your story to you

On an ISP retreat you allow God to tell you your story.



Tom Drexler,
Executive Director

What a frightening yet beautiful experience. You allow God in, letting Him give you *His* impression of your life. Your story, the trouble and the beauty, the pain and the joy, the broken and whole, taken up by God. In letting God in, we discover that trouble does not trump beauty, pain no longer restrains joy, and brokenness becomes the place where healing begins. This experience is not unique to those who are homeless and in recovery from addictions. It is universal. It is one way, maybe the principle way, that we achieve solidarity.

During these precarious economic times prudence dictates cutting back on expenses and putting a little extra into our personal savings. Thankfully, this hasn't been the case with ISP benefactors. ISP is blessed with hundreds of people who look beyond what prudence might dictate and continue to support our ministry to the homeless and addicted population.

Please join our efforts. As the homeless population grows, your contribution will make sure their stories of brokenness and despair are transformed into realities of wholeness, productivity and hope.

You remain in our prayers.

2009 ISP NATIONAL GATHERING



Darryl Zink (left) and Karen Clifton (right) exchange best practices, while Sue Gomez (back) mines the resource table.

The ISP National Network **never looked stronger** than during the recent 2009 National Gathering in March. A record **33 Retreat Coordinators** traveled to Chicago to share their experience and wisdom of providing Ignatian retreats.

Karen Clifton (Washington, DC) and **Denice Foose** (Houston) presented their experiences of starting up an ISP team. **Sr. Patricia Crowley, OSB**, coordinator of the Chicago women's team, shared about on-going formation. **Fr. Bill Creed, SJ**, founder of ISP and **Ed Shurna**, ISP Board member and Executive Director of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, shared the origin of ISP and the connection between Ignatian Spirituality and the 12-Step Program.

Our network is growing and we are grateful for your continued support in this exciting endeavor.

Did You Know?

In just the past 9 months in 11 different cities, ISP has offered over 40 retreats to over 400 women and men who are homeless and in recovery from addictions.

EVEN FOR ONE

by Jordan Skarr

“So this is the first time we’re going here huh?” David, a long time retreatant and witness, asks me. We’re on our way to visit a shelter in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood in Chicago. “Yeah,” I say, “so we’ll see who comes.”

David and I have developed a bit of a routine by now: I sketch an overview; he colors it with his experience. About half-way through we pause for questions.

Larry, has been eyeing us cautiously and asks, “**Will you come for just one?**”

“Well, as I was saying, ideally we’ll have three or four participants from each shelter...”

“I heard you,” Larry interrupts, “but will you come for us if there is just one.”

I glance around the room at the five other faces, and turn back to him.



Jordan Skarr
Associate Director

“Yeah, I mean we can,” I stammer, “but again, at least three is what we’re looking for.”



Retreatants from Chicago.

“But,” he pauses deliberately, “you will come for just one.”

I look back at him, and, beneath his leery brow, I finally hear what he is asking: What if I am and the only one who wants to go?

I immediately thought to the Gospel passage (Luke 15:3-10) where we hear of Jesus’ ultimate concern for each of us, not for the ninety-nine of the flock, but for the one who is lost. ISP, like many Ignatian Ministries, accepts this invitation to walk with those who are at the margins, those for whom time, patience, and compassion has run out. We meet

them and through our retreats provide spiritual companionship many are desperately seeking.

“Yes, Larry,” I say now with confidence, “we will come for just one.” He nods appreciatively and rests back in his chair.

We finish the meeting with little other fanfare and head out. On the drive back David and I are in good spirits. We must have felt in some small way, like the man in the parable, rejoicing over new found connection. “That went well,” he says. “I think we were supposed to be there.”

Ignatian Spirituality Project

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PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

by Jimi Fardan

My name is Jimi Fardan and I serve as a witness/facilitator for the ISP retreats in Baltimore Maryland. To those that have known me and even to myself sometimes this is a surprising endeavor, yet I am learning not to be surprised by the power of God and how spiritual growth can affect one’s life: In this case, my life. I am a 62-year-old African American man, a Viet Nam veteran, father and artist. Today I use my art as a vehicle of expression. It keeps me grounded when I have things to say.

Principles keep me grounded in spirit. Wherever I turn I see evidence that principles work: The military taught courage, duty and humility; my NA

group teaches honesty, open-mindedness and willingness; and religion highlights faith, hope and more. I thought I knew what these things meant, but I found that I needed to begin with honesty. I don’t mean what I tell others. What I tell myself is of the greatest importance. How do I internalize the world and its attractions, distractions and sometimes trying situations and still keep my spirit on an even keel?

Some of the answers came for me at my first retreat. I was at a low point, a point of needing to put my life together—again—when two facilitators, Fr. Bill Creed and Wayne Richards introduced me to a process of

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ON THE WEB

Check out the new look, and ways to get involved, at the redesigned ISP Web site! Tell a friend!

ispretreats.org

Sofas: Explore the digital autobiography of Wayne Richard, longtime ISP retreat facilitator and witness and senior community organizer for the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. Visit our website and click on “Stories.”

ISP on YouTube! Be sure to view our video, located on our homepage, and on YouTube. Go to YouTube.com and search for ISP Retreats.

GOD IS PRESENT—GOD LOVES ME

by Michael Noser

We had a really wonderful session this morning. This was to be our final session for the foreseeable future. I was very moved by God's Presence and Grace once again.

I was especially moved when Robert told us **they would always remember us**, “You always remember a kind person... a mean person you forget right away, but we'll remember you... like Martin Luther King, you can say that you tried to help somebody.”

My group at the Franciscan House of Mary and Joseph was today, as from its conception in June 2007, a place for me to experience “a felt sense of God's Loving Presence.”

I was reminded that You (God) constantly fill me up with Your Love. I can't make sense of it or explain it, but it is the most wonderful feeling.

I have a very difficult time articulating what this feels like - I suppose



Michael (left) greets a guest at a reflection session.

it is necessarily impossible to describe. The closest I can think of is that it is like feeling utterly connected, overwhelmed by emotion, completely safe, and entirely loved.

It is to have a glimpse of the Beloved Kingdom.

I must remember that my sanity, happiness, and the health of my relationship with God is directly affected by my willingness to pour God's Love out into the world. And I must remember that this is a GIFT, not a burden.

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self reflection which turns out to be step 11 of the NA principles and what Jesuits call the Examen. This was instrumental in honest reflection, and it provides an aid to making viable choices that fit in with all the principles that govern the affairs of everyone.



Jimi (right) and Marcus at Loyola Retreat House in Faulkner, Md.

I also have found that principles are something that you *do*, as opposed to something you *have*. Faith is action, as is love, patience, duty, hope, courage and any of the other principles by which we strive to live. This was news to me because I was a person who put most of the focus on my feelings. With my focus on feelings I was stuck in distraction and made choices that were not in my best interest. But they felt good. Practicing principles doesn't always provide the best feeling in the moment, but it always is the best choice for my life. My friends in NA say, “It works, when you work it.”

By using the time given to me by the ISP retreat to get out the worldly distraction and practice honest reflection, I am able to see changes I would not have imagined.

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Michael Noser, Jordan Skarr

Please contact us with comments, future stories, or more ways to stay involved.

SHARING STORIES, WITNESSING HOPE

Q&A with Bill Creed, SJ

Interview by Steve

Q: What miracle occurs on ISP retreats?

BC: The miracle is seeing hope come alive. We continually witness the retreatants identify the true source of their thirst... not for water, not for alcohol, not for security... but for God. Simply through sharing stories they begin the process of identifying their cravings and insecurities for what they are: a misplaced yearning of their souls for God.

Q: How does this happen?

BC: The primary bearer of hope on retreat is the witness, who shares his story with transparency and vulnerability. This environment—the opposite of impressing and dominating—creates a safe environment and gives the retreatants permission to be vulnerable as well. In that sacred space, in sharing our hopes and fears, we begin to see the moments in which we have been close to God, we identify the true source of our thirst. We come on retreat with the hope that this transformation is possible for everyone.



Bill Creed, SJ, founder and chairman of the Ignatian Spirituality Project, shares during one of ISP's on-site reflection sessions.

Q: How does this experience transfer to the regular routine of life once the retreat is over?

BC: The best news we receive is from the leaders of the shelters when the retreatants return from retreat. In each case, the men and women return with a sense of peace about them, which has a good influence on their environment. Together the facilitators, witnesses and retreatants, through God's grace, create that safe space; then the retreatants extend it to others.

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