



# CONSTANT COLLOQUY

The Newsletter of the **IGNATIANT SPIRITUALITY PROJECT**

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Spiritual Retreats Ending Homelessness.

Spring 2010

## READY TO LOVE AGAIN

By Tom Drexler, Executive Director

For a few weeks now, at one of the Spirituality and Recovery groups we facilitate at various shelters throughout Chicago, “Dave” (not his real name) had been sharing how his life slowly fell apart. One misfortune followed another as one bad choice led to the next. Eventually he lost it all – job, friends, self-esteem, family, and finally hope. As the spiral downward progressed, it became harder and harder to break away from those things keeping him from healthy relationships. Once he hit the streets, **fear became the driving force in his life** as he lost the freedom to choose that which is life-giving rather than all the junk in our lives that keep us from loving relationship with God, others and self.

The ISP facilitator of his group encouraged Dave to go on the upcoming ISP retreat. The facilitator knew he needed a safe space where he could take small steps and begin to trust, sharing his story in all its pain and brokenness. Anyone who has



Tom Drexler,  
Executive Director

ever been on an Ignatian retreat knows that when we make the slightest movement, and **allow God into our lives, grace abounds, and transformation begins.**

Dean Brackley, in his book *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, speaks of “getting free” to love. He writes in the introduction to the first section:

“To respond to our world we must get free to love. That involves personal transformation, which includes coming to terms with the evil in the world and in ourselves, accepting forgiveness and changing.”

This is exactly what Dave experienced. By sharing his story, honestly and openly, he **came to terms with the brokenness** in his life (the evil, the sin) and accepted for the first time, in a very long time, the forgiveness that God unconditionally offers each one of us. With that forgiveness, the stone was rolled back and he could once again experience the Easter resurrection. Dave was ready to love again.

**Please help us continue our ministry of offering Ignatian Retreats to men and women throughout the country who are homeless and in recovery.**

*You remain in our prayers.*

## ENGAGING THE SPIRIT WITH PAPER CRAFT

by Marybeth Joyce, Boston Team Member



Showing off artwork on retreat in St. Louis.

Several years ago the **ISP team in Boston** began a new art activity on Saturday afternoon. One of the team volunteers brought a variety of cards, stamps, inks, punches and papers and set them up on several large tables in the meeting room. The women making the retreat were invited to come and see; they could join in as they wished.

The finished products in most cases were a variety of cards, including birthday, thank you and Mothers’ Day cards. The activity has proven to be popular and almost all the women have participated. No real art skills are needed, just the desire and **encouragement of the group**. This activity provides space for the retreatants to think of important people in their lives they would like to remember., as well as giving them something to bring home with them after the retreat. Linda shared that it had been a long time since she had the space and supplies to create something for her friends and family. She believed it was **another gift from God** - given to her in addition to the time and space away.

This activity has become a regular event, and it's easy to plan. The supplies are minimal but important: cards and paper, scissors, glue, colored pens, and other art media **allow different creative energies to emerge**. So even if the women choose to go for a walk or take a nap or enjoy another activity instead, most will stop by the art table and check out this Papercraft exercise. The women share about what they created and why, and the crafts offer another chance to affirm the stories emerging on retreat. Sometimes this event has even extended to after dinner time!

## BREAKING BREAD

by Jordan Skarr

In writing about the founding of the Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day writes in the postscript to her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*:

“We cannot love God unless we love each other. **We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone anymore.** Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too...where there is companionship. We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community...”

As we contemplate the Easter mysteries, I’m reminded of how connected ISP is to the disciples’ experience on the road to Emmaus. They recognized Christ only after he “was made known to them in the breaking of the bread” (Lk 24:35). Something about sharing a meal together, sharing in a very

human act of companionship, brings forward the face of God who is generous and abundant.

Recently at a team meeting with ISP volunteers, Roosevelt, who is living in a shelter and just gave his first witness talk, commented: **“I never thought a few years ago that I’d be in a circle like this with you all.”** Before entering Pioneer House his life was awash in despair and disordered desires.

“Now I know that I’m a part of something. I want to pray for those who went on retreat that they **have the same conversion I did.**” Roosevelt had tasted the heavenly banquet on retreat and, again, as Day wrote, “the love that comes with community.” His life is different now, just as the disciples’ lives had changed after sharing in that meal with Christ.

A few months ago ISP hosted our 5<sup>th</sup> annual national gathering. From all corners of the country our teams



Jordan Skarr | Associate Director

arrived and brought with them energy and enthusiasm. We shared best practices, learned from each other, and prayed together. Looking around the room, I noticed new faces and wise veterans to our growing network.

I am left hopeful during this Easter season of birth and rebirth that like the Catholic Worker, and like those first disciples, we at ISP could likewise be graced with **“hearts burning within us,”** (Lk 24:32) as our movement continues.

## HOME

by Francis Nguyen, SJ, Chicago Team Member

We were strangers... We came from many spiritual and physical places in our lives. Yet we came together to the Angela House outside Chicago to make an ISP retreat. And thus, we twelve men entered into the silence. This **silence is not the absence of noise**, but the full presence of oneself in oneself – the awareness that we are at home with each other. This is the moment, as one of the twelve shared, that “I realized that God is wherever we are. He seems to be **closer to the homeless**. I could feel Him like never before. My fears were replaced by peace and I see Him in my brothers.”

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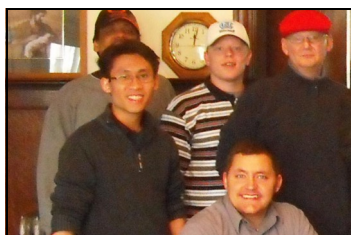


Pictured are the men who participated in the first ISP Retreat outside of New Orleans. Fr. Clyde LeBlanc, SJ (front left) helped facilitate the retreat with support from Chicago.

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**I am a Jesuit scholastic** studying to become a priest. I flew halfway across the country from Seattle to Chicago two years ago for studies, and have been involved with ISP since. **On the retreat with a group of homeless men, I found a home.**

St. Ignatius poses three questions in the Spiritual Exercises: What you have done



Nguyen, SJ (L) on retreat.

for Christ? What are you doing for Christ? And what will you do for Christ? On retreat, I felt my heart respond to God, "I don't know what I am doing, but I am living with You in this house."

In this house, we shared our fears, sometimes with tears. We shared our hope. We listened to each other's life stories. We held them in our prayers. We were thankful for the trust and friendship we had found. **We prayed for our benefactors** and all of those who took care of us. And we smiled to those we met. Truly, none of us owns a house, but we have a home... **we are brothers.**

*Retreat*

God blessed me with another retreat, the last this I visited was really neat. I fed my spirit with his word, listened closely and his voice I heard. He said my child follow me and see how sweet your life will be. From that day on I've done my best to stay out the way and let God do the rest. What he's done for me, he'll do for you, just be faithful, honest and ever so true. Study his word every day let go and let God have his way.

*Janet H.*

Janet Hawkins joined the Baltimore team and composed her poem, *Retreat*, in 2009.

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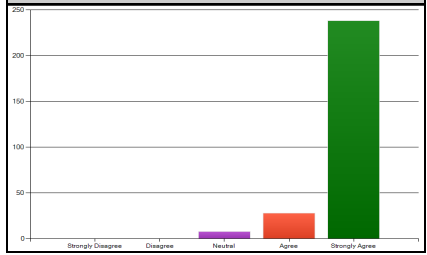
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*By the Numbers*

**87% of ISP participants after an ISP retreat strongly agree:**

**"I think change is possible."**



## RETREAT SCHEDULE JANUARY — JUNE 2010

Month	Dates	Location	Gender	
<b>January 2010</b>	9	Boston	Women	
	9	Cleveland	Women	
	9-10	Baltimore	Men	
	16	Denver	Men	
	19-20	New Orleans	Men	
	23-24	Houston	Women	
	22-24	Boston	Men	
	30-31	Chicago	Men	
	30-31	St. Louis	Women	
	<b>February</b>	6-7	Cleveland	Women
27-28		Chicago	Women	
27		Chicago	Men	
<b>March</b>		5-7	Washington, DC	Men
		6	Cleveland	Women
		13	St. Louis	Women
		15-16	Atlanta	Women
		20	Houston	Men & Women
		20	Chicago	Women
		27-28	Chicago	Men
	27-28	Cincinnati	Women	
	<b>April</b>	10-11	Chicago	Women
		10-11	St. Louis	Men
17-18		Denver	Women	
17		Cleveland	Women	
16-18		Boston	Women	
17-18		San Francisco	Men	
<b>May</b>		20-21	Atlanta	Women
		23-25	Boston	Men
		24	Chicago	Women
		1-2	Milwaukee	Men
	1	Cleveland	Women	
	7-8	Atlanta	Men	
	8-9	Baltimore	Men	
	8	St. Louis	Men	
	8	Chicago	Women	
	15-16	Houston	Men	
<b>June</b>	21-23	Washington, DC	Women	
	22-23	Chicago	Men	
	22-23	San Francisco	Women	
	22-23	Baltimore	Women	
	22	Cincinnati	Women	
	22	Cleveland	Women	
	29-30	Omaha	Men	
	5-6	Cleveland	Women	
	5	Chicago	Women	
	8-9	Morristown, NJ	Men	
15-16	New Orleans	Men		
19	Chicago	Men		

*That's 49 Retreats!*

**Please support our growing national network.**

## WE'RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

by Cathy Reid, Jesuit Volunteer

When I first met “Jenny” (not her real name) on retreat, she was warm, friendly, and eager to enter into community, but clearly holding something back. She remained reticent, engaging in everything and encouraging others, **but keeping her own story distant.**

I saw Jenny several more times afterward at the shelter where she stays. In the reflection group we’ve started at her shelter she began to open up.

**Jenny is now preparing to transition out of her shelter and into permanent housing, and very much wanted to make one more retreat before moving out.**

This second retreat was an incredible blessing. The quiet movement of her spirit I’ve witnessed this year came to a new fruition: Jenny, finally, opened up in our small group and shared with an **honesty and vulnerability** that is admirable. Her depth encouraged other women to share their own stories of pain and triumph. Through this, we found a profound sense of peace and healing.

“I’ve finally found a way to talk about what happened to me,” Jenny said at the end of the retreat. “I can share it with others, **and that means I can heal.**”



Retreat conversations like these make a difference.

### Five Ways YOU CAN HELP

1. Share this letter with your faith community
2. Join Us! Volunteer or pray for ISP
3. Visit a shelter near you and share this letter
4. Donate a Van: help men and women attend retreats that are ending homelessness
5. Return the enclosed envelope and sponsor someone on an upcoming retreat.

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