

# CONSTANT COLLOQUY

“The colloquy is made as one friend speaks to another...asking some grace, communicating one’s affairs, and asking advice.” -*The Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius-

The Newsletter of the **IGNATIUS SPIRITUALITY PROJECT**

FALL 2008

## HUMAN DIGNITY AND HOPE

When I think of my first six months here at the Ignatian Spirituality Project, two things immediately come to mind: **Human Dignity** and **Hope**. What is most edifying about an ISP retreat is witnessing a retreatant move from despair to hope, and in this movement, reclaim his/her dignity as someone unconditionally loved by God.

Our retreatants are really on hard times. *At best*, they are living in some sort of transitional housing, and generally are in the early stages of recovery from drug or alcohol addiction. Maybe it is because of the severity of life on the streets, but the **transformation** begins as soon as the retreatant walks onto the retreat



Tom Drexler,  
Executive Director

grounds and into the retreat house. The respect and dignity everyone is afforded simply because he/she is a human being, created in God’s image and likeness, is standard fare on any retreat—and most of us experience this on a daily basis. However, for the men and women who are homeless and in recovery, the retreat setting may be the first place in a *very long* time that they experience this very basic and very human need.

From here it only gets better. God, not easily found in the chaotic shelters and the cut-throat culture of the streets, is now uncovered. A sense of belonging grows as the retreat progresses. The healing of one’s brokenness is experienced, and a new found sense of hope emerges.

On page two, Steve Diogo, a former retreatant, shares his story and the transformative power of the ISP retreat. His story, and countless stories like his over the last 10 years, are only possible because of your generosity. **Thank you** for sharing in this important and successful ministry.

*You remain in our prayers.*

## ISP NATIONAL NEWS AND HAPPENINGS

*During the 2008-2009 Retreat Year a total of 13 cities will hold over 50 ISP retreats. This is possible due to the hard work of all of the ISP retreat team coordinators in the ISP cities. A special thanks goes out to each of them!*

### ATLANTA

A women’s retreat this Spring and men’s retreat this Fall are scheduled for the Jesuit Retreat House. **Bob Fitzgerald**, Director of the JRH, **Frank Craft**, and **Jane Gerety** will coordinate the retreats.

### BALTIMORE

The first men’s retreat was held in September facilitated by **Sue Cesare**, **Jimi Fardin** and **Seamus Dockery**. A week later the three came together again to facilitate the Baltimore Retreat Team Day of Formation. Part of the day centered on the Spirituality of Addiction Recovery.

### BOSTON

**Brian Christopher, SJ**, **Eileen Moran**, and **Clare Walsh, MSHH**, will be coordinating two men’s retreats and three women’s retreats this year. Spiritual companionship will continue as they facilitate a bi-weekly faith sharing groups in Fr. Bill’s Shelter.

### CHICAGO

**Bill Creed, SJ**, **Michael Noser**, **Jordan Skarr** and **Denise Steinhauser** are leading weekly faith sharing groups at the Franciscan House of Mary and Joseph and Catholic Charities: St. Leo’s Veterans. Coordinated by **Patricia Crowley, OSB**, and **Jordan Skarr**, overnight and day-long retreats are now occurring monthly.

### CINCINNATI

**Jerry Mundy** and **Bob Cloud** will facilitate two men’s retreats this coming winter and spring.

### CLEVELAND

**Joan Nuth, PhD**, Director of the Ignatian Spirituality Institute at John Carroll University, **Denis Weber, SJ**, from Gesu Parish, and **Nancy Rowell**, ISP women’s team coordinator will collaborate this year, strengthening the retreat program with hopes of beginning weekly faith sharing groups in some of the shelters.

### HOUSTON

**Denice Foose** gathered a spirited group of chaplains, spiritual directors, and shelter service providers to lay the groundwork for the first ISP retreat to take place in Houston this year.

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*The Ignatian Spirituality Project, since our inception in 1998, continues to help men and women who are homeless and addicted reclaim their spiritual lives. Using the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, ISP retreats foster a faith that invites personal and social transformation and builds an encouraging, life-giving community.*

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## NEW RETREAT SEASON BEGINS

by Jordan Skarr

Towards the end of August, I was visiting with a group of men at St. Leo's Campus for Veterans in Chicago. The group of former retreatants and neophytes are as faithful and dedicated to their spiritual lives as they are inquisitive: "Hey Jordan," they ask rather pointedly, "when those retreats staring up again?" Quite excitedly I responded, "In September; and we have one every month."

From September to June, ISP hopes run over 50 retreats across our national network. This is quite an accomplishment especially considering that just twenty four months ago we were still trying to get our phone line installed.

The growth and expansion is a testament to not only the positive effect that the retreats have had on the men and women who make them, but



Jordan Skarr  
Associate Director

of the generosity of our friends and benefactors who ensure the Project's success. It will undoubtedly



Todd Keough, SJ and Charles Allen on retreat at Angela House.

be a busy year, but we are excited to continue to witness incredible transformation in the lives of the retreatants.

Beyond the sheer number of retreats, this year also hopes to bring an increase of depth within each city. Chicago's commitment to bringing more witnesses into the team; Baltimore's and San Francisco's commitment to team formation; and Cleveland's outreach to parish and university resources are all examples of this and we look forward to benefitting from their efforts at the National Gathering in March 2009.

Back at St. Leo's the men are excited to hear about the retreats starting again. "Yeah, I remember going on that retreat," Bruce says. "It really helped me come to peace with myself and my past." The new guys, suddenly interested, listen attentively. "It helped me put my life in perspective and remind me to lean on God when the times get rough." We all pause in respect of his honesty. "Hey Jordan," R.C. chimes in, "when I get to go!?"

Indeed, we all are looking forward to the new retreat season and to "leaning on God" just a little bit more.

## ONE MAN'S JOURNEY

by Steven D.

Almost a decade has passed since I came in off the streets, allowed God to free me from addiction and found myself in a room with a dozen other men sharing our stories of living in the shadows, on the street and on the margins of U.S. society. I spoke then of my addiction, my yearning for a home, and my growing realization that my true yearning was (and today remains) to find my home with God.

I would like to say that my history since that time has been filled with nothing but joy and success, but that is not the truth. Like so many recovering addicts and alcoholics, I found myself, as things outwardly improved over the years, becoming seduced by

those exterior trappings of success, and turning away from my solace in God's grace. I mistook appearances for cure, pleasure for happiness. After eight years of abstinence, I found myself back in active addiction, returning to a life of lies, hiding, loss, loneliness and pain.

Amazingly, even with a six-figure salary and the respect of an entire profession, I found myself facing unemployment, illness and homelessness. It is a lesson I had to learn. It was the wake-up call I needed in order to remember that I needed only to ask for God's merciful Grace, that, without Him, I am just a man who is fully at the whim of my own ego and disease.

I am blessed to say that upon making that simple admission and request

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for help, I am again living a sober life, and my priorities are back in proper alignment. I have admitted I am an alcoholic and drug addict and have re-awakened to the reality that no human power, including my own, can relieve me of my obsession. I have again given over my will and my life to God's care. I have accepted the truth about myself as a flawed and imperfect human, shared that truth with others, and daily asked my Lord to remove my shortcomings in whatever way He sees fit in order to mold me to His best use for me. I am beginning to make restitution for the harm I did to others, not just when I returned to addiction, but even throughout all those years when I believed I was being a good person.

Most importantly, I have again accepted my calling to help God's other children. With God and Service returned to their proper place in my life, I am enjoying the greatest peace I have known. The peace of home, even though home is now a sober house I share with seven other men in a city I

barely know.

Years ago, I wrote that my time on the streets was a great grace. And today, I honestly can say the same thing about my return to addiction. My faith, awareness, and dedication to helping others, though far from perfect, remain the keystone of my life. Each morning and night, I pray, simply, "Father love me, Jesus heal me, Spirit guide me." Love, healing and guidance. It is what I need; and it is what all of us with the disease of addiction need.

So many of these lessons I learned on that retreat years ago. And so many

of them got crowded out by the whirl and noise of my ego and this world's demands and expectations. They got crowded out because I stopped searching, or started searching in the wrong places. I am pleased and proud to know that in cities throughout the nation, men still gather in small rooms as part of the Ignatian Spirituality Project to share their stories, to be heard and respected, to find that they are worthy of respect and care, and that they have something to offer. I vividly recall those moments when we men of the streets lay down our defenses and shared, and God was there.



*Group pictured is from the Chicago Men's Retreat September 6-7, 2008*

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MILWAUKEE

**Eileen Ciezki** from Gesu Parish, **Gerry Fischer** from Marquette University's Campus Ministry and **McCannon Brown** from Repairers of the Breach, met with the ISP in hopes of hosting a retreat in Milwaukee before the end of the calendar year.

NEW YORK

**Todd Keough, SJ** and **Jack Fagan, SJ** will be coordinating the men's retreat to be held this Spring.

SAN FRANCISCO

**Jim Neafsey, Paul O'Connor, SJ**, and **Bill Kueppers** will be facilitating two men's retreats this year and **Melissa Behrle**, third year student at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, is forming a women's retreat team in preparation for the Spring women's retreat.

ST. LOUIS

**Ann Rotermund** of the St. Patrick Center, **Jerry Holden** of the IVC at **St. Xavier (College) Church** and **Gretchen Shipp** will co-coordinate the first ISP retreat in St. Louis in December. Special thanks to **Sean Agniel** of the Missouri Province and **Tom Auffenburg** for their assistance in getting this off the ground.

WASHINGTON, DC

**Holy Trinity Parish**, one of two Jesuit Parishes in Washington, DC, will spearhead the first women's retreat and first men's retreat this Spring.

JESUIT RETREAT HOUSES

Thanks to the follow JRH Directors for their generous in-kind support of ISP: **Jim Carr, SJ** (Gloucester, MA), **Tom Carroll, SJ** (Los Altos, CA), **Bob Fitzgerald** (Atlanta) and **Pat McDermott, IHM** (Faulkner, MD)

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Contributors: Steven Diogo, Thomas Drexler and Jordan Skarr  
Please contact us with comments, future stories, or more ways to stay involved.

# JOIN ISP'S JOURNEY TO END HOMELESSNESS

## 10 Ways to Connect with ISP

1. Volunteer to be a driver for the days of reflection and/or overnight retreats.
2. Keep all those suffering from addictions and living on the streets in your prayers.
3. Join the women's retreat team or men's retreat team in your city and become a retreat facilitator.
4. Sponsor a retreat for \$2,500, thus providing an overnight Ignatian retreat for 10 men or women who are homeless and in recovery.
5. Live in Boston or Chicago? Volunteer weekly or bi-monthly and help facilitate the faith-sharing groups occurring in the shelters
6. Donate a Mini-Van to the Chicago retreat teams, cutting down on the growing cost of transportation: twice weekly trips to shelters for reflection groups and three retreats per month.
7. Tech savvy? Provide in-kind services by helping out with our website.



*Nilda Martinez (left) and Sr. Marybeth Martin, HMPJ take a break during the September Chicago Women's Retreat*

8. If you have experience in Spiritual Direction and/or Spiritual Accompaniment, you can help out on the follow-up day of reflection by meeting with a retreatant for an hour of spiritual conversation.
9. Donate \$250 and cover the cost for one retreatant on a weekend retreat.
10. Provide a meal or two during a one-day retreat or follow-up day of reflection.

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