

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 **IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY PROJECT**

Winter 2008



Lunch provided a good opportunity to network with others from around the country.

LEARNING THE ROPES

by Katie Sullivan

From November 2-4, the Ignatian Spirituality Project held its first national gathering aimed at training those from Chicago and other cities. While ISP has held national gatherings in the past, none of these have focused on training. This training provided an opportunity for those throughout the country who were new to their respective teams to come to Chicago and learn more about the organization as a whole.

Todd Keough, SJ, ISP's National Coordinator, organized and led the training program with the help of ISP staff members Jordan Skarr, Katie Sullivan, and Denis Weber. Keough viewed the gathering as "a great success in terms of team building" as ISP gains "more and more speed." He also stated that "we are so blessed to have so many great volunteers and staff," a sentiment echoed by Skarr, who sees the coming together of so many volunteers and staff as "a testament to the good work that our organization does."

ISP team members from Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Cleveland attended the two day training session, where they spent time learning about the history of ISP, the basic format of an ISP retreat, and how to reach out to different shelters or transitional facilities. Likewise, the group enjoyed time together in prayer during mass on Saturday after which a social gathering and dinner were held. Hopefully, this training will occur annually each fall as ISP continues to grow.

Katie Sullivan is a JVC Magis volunteer working with ISP in Chicago.

SHARING OUR STORY

by Jordan Skarr

"I think we're going to start!" I chime out across the din of the gathering crowd. It's early for me, much earlier than I'm used to waking up, but for these folks, guests at Franciscan House of Mary and Joseph, it's practically mid-day. The 5:30am wake up and 6:30am exit make for long days. The yellowish glow from the humming sodium vapor lights casts an odd sunrise on the dark, nearly windowless warehouse turned shelter.

"Why don't we take a few minutes to quiet ourselves here before we begin," I offer to the suddenly attentive crowd. Quiet and calm are precious commodities in the shelter where private, reflective space is nearly anathema to the throng of movement when hundreds of people are crammed into a small space.

"Hey you don't have another sandwich do you?" The silence can only last for so long. After welcoming any strangers into our family, I introduce the topic for the day. Loosely following a theme of connection, something we've tried to develop and foster in this group to combat the pernicious sense of isolation and despair at the root of addiction and homelessness, today we talk about what brings us the most peace. I recount my own spiritual journey which involves ever widening circles of compassion and moves away from earlier themes of selfishness and pride, finishing my reflection with a question for the group: "I'd like for us to think about who specifically brings me peace in my life?"

It can be daunting to face a group with lives so drastically different from my own. How can I possibly say anything that will be relevant, how can I be present, how can this group be meaningful when led by an individual so different from them? And yet, in the humbling mystery which is God's presence, we share our story, and in that, we find our commonality. In sharing our story, no matter how broken, we find our community.

Continued on page 2

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.

IgnatianSpiritualityProject.org | 6214 N. Glenwood Ave. | Chicago, IL 60660 | 773.465.8699

CINCINNATI HISTORY

by Jerry Mundy

The Ignatian Spirituality Project is alive and well in Cincinnati. In July 2000, seven years ago, the first retreat for men who are homeless took place at the Jesuit operated Spiritual Center in Milford, Ohio.

Since then ISP has facilitated thirteen retreats for men in the Cincinnati area; seven at Milford and six at the Moye Spiritual Center in Melbourne, Kentucky. Retreats are offered in the spring and fall with ten to thirteen men attending each on average. Five shelters and treatment centers have sent men on these retreats. Four of these have been located in Cincinnati and one is in northern Kentucky.

ISP has also stimulated the beginning of retreats for women who are poor. Two retreats thus far have been offered at Mt. St. Joseph Motherhouse, located in a western suburb of Cincinnati.

Jerry Mundy became the first regional coordinator for ISP in Cincinnati in March 2007.

A GRACED EXPERIENCE

by Sue Cesare

Greetings from ISP in Baltimore. Our first women's ISP retreat occurred the weekend of September 21-23. It was a truly graced experience held at Loyola Retreat House in Faulkner, MD (about 2 hours away from Baltimore), on the Potomac River. Sister Pat McDermott there graciously offered the retreat house at no charge, which was truly a blessing.

The retreat had 12 women from different locations in Baltimore. Of the 12 women, 10 came from My Sister's Place Lodge, a home in downtown Baltimore for formerly homeless women, one was from Lanvale, a transitional housing facility for families, and one woman came directly from the street.

Additionally, we had nine team members on the retreat, which is more than was needed but having everyone attend provided a good opportunity for those interested in ISP to see how the program works. All of them returned from the weekend at Loyola Retreat House enthusiastic and quite moved.

As mentioned above, the weekend was incredibly graced. Seeing the changes in the retreatants' faces and body countenance's from Friday night to Sunday afternoon was something akin to miraculous. One of our retreatants, who has experience with digital graphics, will be putting images together for us from the weekend.

end. We hope to share these images at some point down the road.



Baltimore's First Women's Retreat

Following the retreat, our biggest concern has been follow-up because without follow-up the retreat will be a mountaintop experience and a wonderful memory but may not be anything more. We want more for these women, which is why we planned a follow-up gathering for supper and spiritual conversation on Sunday, October 21st. In addition to this follow-up, two team members planned to bring several of the retreatants to St. Ignatius because they expressed interest in coming to church.

We are truly grateful for all the assistance we received in making this retreat possible. We thank you for your support and ask for your continued support as we journey with men and women who are homeless via the ISP retreats.

Sue Cesare coordinates ISP retreats in Baltimore.

STORY from page 1

The group shares more of their lives— where God is finding them in this moment. We laugh, we listen, sometimes we snooze, but mostly the group is grateful to be together.

“Thank you all for sharing so honestly and openly today. I thought it went really well.” We pause for a

brief moment to remember the addict still suffering, and close by intoning the Serenity Prayer and the Our Father. A few people dart out, hoping to catch a bus to work or for an appointment, but most stick around for a few moments, chatting and slapping backs.

As we reassemble the dorm, the cleaning crew comes in and starts preparing for tonight's crowd. After

the last carton of orange juice is tossed, the last good-bye shouted across the echoing hall, I turn to look back at the now empty room, the only noise coming from the gigantic, rumbling fans. And the light, from the high tiny windows, still streams down.

Jordan Skarr is a JVC Magis volunteer working with ISP in Chicago.

EXPANDING HORIZONS

by Katie Sullivan

Since its inception in May 2006, ISP's Chicago women's team has made tremendous strides, particularly by increasing the number of retreats given from September to May each year.

In 2006-2007, the plan was to have one overnight retreat for women in January, but the women's team decided that one retreat was not enough and started with a one day retreat in November. Following the first two retreats, the team added one day and overnight retreats for women in March and April, respectively.

In May of this year, Sister Patricia Crowley, OSB, joined the women's team as facilitator. Since then, the women's team has grown in many ways, including expansion of the team from seven volunteers to fourteen and counting.

Additionally, the group has met once a month since May, including a team day of reflection, which has helped team unity to grow and has

helped us realize how much we can accomplish for women in Chicago.

The team brings women of varied backgrounds and experiences together, which has been highly bene-



October Retreat Participants at Angela House in Michigan city, IN

ficial in terms of making contact with new shelters, transitional facilities, and recovery homes.

Nine retreats, both one day and overnight, have been scheduled from September to May. Our first

one day retreat of the year occurred in September with nine women and five team members at St. Scholastica Monastery on Chicago's north side, which is run by the Benedictine Sisters, sister Pat's order, who generously donated the use of their facility to us. In November, we held another one day retreat at St. Scholastica with eight women and three team members.

Then, in October, we had our first overnight retreat of the year with eleven women and four team members at Angela House Retreat and Prayer Center in Michigan City, IN, which is run by the sisters of the Holy Cross. An additional overnight retreat was held in December at the Loretto Center, which is run by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wheaton, IL. They allowed us to use their facilities at no cost. Ten women and three team members participated in this retreat.

We look forward to continuing to grow as a team to better serve women who are homeless and in transition throughout Chicago.

GROWTH AND CONNECTION

by Katie Sullivan

Since attaining its official status as a non-profit organization in the fall of 2006, the Ignatian Spirituality Project has grown exponentially. At that time, ISP held retreats for men in five cities and was on its way to holding retreats for women in three.

With the addition of Seattle, New York, and St. Louis this year, ISP now holds retreats for men in ten cities around the country. The women's retreats this year have likewise expanded, from three cities to seven, with retreats now being held or planned in seven of the ten ISP cities: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and San Francisco.

Our expansion to new cities would not be possible without some

of the connections that our staff members have made with people throughout the country. For example, Denis Weber, SJ, has been instrumental in creating a women's team for retreats in Cleveland.

Weber, who lived and worked in Cleveland as a social worker for 19 years prior to entering the Jesuits, knew a number of women from, as he explains, working "in the homeless realm in Cleveland" and wrote letters personally inviting them to get involved with the Ignatian Spirituality Project. This outreach has been effective, as there are now six women working together with the Chicago staff to hold a one day retreat in Cleveland in January and an overnight retreat in March.

Another example of the importance of connection comes in the form of Todd Keough, SJ. Keough, ISP's National Coordinator, explains

why retreats will be happening in both New York and Seattle: "We decided to expand to New York because of interest from a Jesuit there, and we chose Seattle because we received a grant from the California province to do retreats in the Northwest and the connections and resources we have in Seattle made it the perfect fit" (Keough is originally from the Seattle area). Both Keough and Wayne Richard, ISP's Consultant for Leadership Development and Social Transformation, will be attending these retreats and working with Jack Fagan, SJ, and Pat Twohy, SJ, in New York and Seattle, respectively.

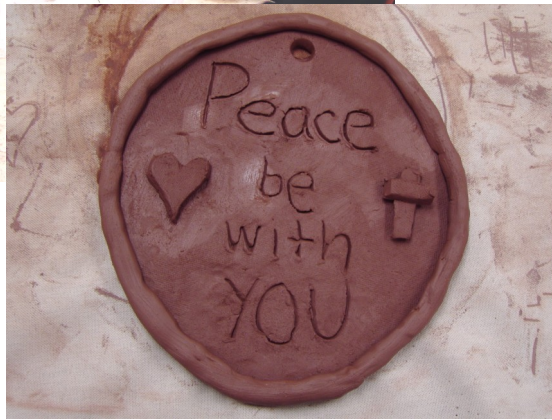
These are just two examples of the many connections that have been forged at ISP. Our hope is to continue making connections around the country as our organization grows.

Reflections

Poems and art by those in our community about the Project's affect on their spiritual journey



Women pray though clay on a retreat in December.



WOMEN TO WOMEN

by Shelly

We gather together to share our stories and strength and even our pain in a place where we don't feel any shame. Welcome to bond and complete ourselves where maybe something has been left out with other women.

Who share similar stories, and only then we can allow God and our new bonds with these women to take their rightful place in our lives while we are together in peace of mind body and soul.

So as women to women we can take a healing journey together and we all can be like beautiful butterflies and spread our wings and grow from these experiences.

Shelly participated in a women's retreat in the Boston area in November.

THE FACE OF GOD

by Jim Vaughan

Dear Lord,

I saw your face today.
In fact, I saw many of your faces.
The consoled and the desolate,
those who were dealt a fate of loneliness,
poverty and addiction.

How lucky I am.
How lucky I am.

But do I have the faith and belief
of those that I met today?
I wonder what they did all day.
Where they are tonight.
As I reach into my refrigerator,
as I work on my computer,
as I watch the nature in my yard,
and lay my head on my pillow,
I wonder where they are.

Why do you provide me with so much
and them with so little?
Am I better than them?
I think not.
Take my blindness from me
that I might see and be more like you.

Jim Vaughan, an ISP supporter, participated in the Spiritual Exercises with Father Bill Creed, SJ, this past summer.

Editor: Katie Sullivan

Contributors: Sue Cesare, Jerry Mundy, Jordan Skarr, Jim Vaughan, Shelly

Winter 2007: Volumes 4 & 5

Thanks for your continued support of our ministry through your generous tax-deductible donations. Please contact us with comments, future stories, or ways to stay involved.

We look forward to hearing from you.