



CONSTANT COLLOQUY

The Newsletter of the **IGNATIANT SPIRITUALITY PROJECT**

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Spiritual Retreats Ending Homelessness.

FALL 2010

"I WENT ON A RETREAT"

TOM DREXLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We all know it's not healthy to hold on to pain, but we all seem to do it from time to time. For whatever reason, we avoid the necessary grieving or the needed reconciliation and hold on to the painful memories. It might be guilt; it might be our brokenness; or it might just be our fear of letting go. Whatever it is, it keeps us from fully becoming that person God is calling us to be. With time, and usually the support of friends and family, however, we normally are able to let go and move on.

For men and women who are experiencing homelessness and are in recovery from addictions, the letting go seems to be essential if he or she is to move forward out of homeless. The pain and the brokenness that homeless men and women carry too often is debilitating. Healing is needed. Letting go is vital. Both, however, seem to be beyond reach.

Recently I was reminded of this type of healing when I heard the retelling of a story from the inaugural meeting to initiate the ISP women's retreat program in New Orleans.



Tom Drexler,
Executive Director

A woman who works for a housing agency shared that her client, "Daniel," had just moved into his first place after finishing his program. When asked what helped him endure and complete the rigorous requirements he said,

"I went on a retreat."

Daniel was in the midst of his addiction when Katrina struck. At his lowest, he found himself in a crack house as the storm swelled around. Eventually he wandered home where he was staying with his mother. Their house was one of those that flooded in the storm surge. They were trapped in the attic as the waters rose and eventually he watched his mother drown in their own home unable to escape. "For years I was never able to forgive myself for that," Daniel said,

"but on retreat, I let it go."

Daniel was able to let it go on an ISP retreat. With letting go, the healing began, and his journey took on new meaning filled with hope.

You remain in our prayers.

A JOURNEY FULL OF HOPE

Last April, Melissa attended an ISP retreat at Ignatius House in Atlanta which began a journey full of hope and promise. Her experience was even documented in an article for a Diocesan newspaper, *The Georgia Bulletin* ("Retreat Brings Hope to Women in Recovery" by Andrew Nelson).

Melissa's story, like many retreatants begins with a self-acknowledged history of substance abuse. She found herself on retreat and needing a new direction. The retreat was just what she needed. "It's been very touching," Melissa said. "I feel more at one with myself, with God, in tune with nature."

Melissa found the quiet of Ignatius House to be a welcome change from the din of her everyday life: "I couldn't think about [my past], because there was so much noise," in my life she said.

Melissa joined other retreatants in creating a self-portrait to help heal some of the more challenging memories of her past. God is an active force in her life, driving away the darkness and encouraging her spirit.

She left the retreat with an encouraged heart and hopes to remain "just as close to God." She hopes that the tools and exercises she practiced on retreat "stick with me in everyday life."

And by all accounts her journey is one of complete transformation. Since her retreat, Melissa not only found the courage to complete her GED, but also spoke at her graduation ceremony, highlighting the ISP retreat and showing her painting to the 500 people gathered. Following her talk, she was approached by an executive from Coca-Cola, who invited her to speak to Coke employees. Melissa positively glowed for she never could have imagined herself speaking in public, even to a small group of classmates, let alone sharing her story to a formal corporate gathering.

Today, Melissa is thinking of college and beyond: "I am looking forward to starting college by spring and aspire to be a wildlife rehabilitator. I'm just trying to figure out the whole financial aid situation ." Certainly Melissa has had support on her journey, but it all began with the simplicity and power of an ISP retreat!



Melissa holds her self portrait.
Photo by Michael Alexander

Kathy Powell and ISP Staff Contributed to article.

A TABLE OF EXULTATION

by Jordan Skarr

“Come on in everyone,” Theresa called from the kitchen. “We have a table in here that will work just fine for our group.”

In late August, I travelled to **Denver** to meet with the team for a training. A helpful practice many cities are discovering as their teams grow and develop is gathering periodically for a day of **reflection and training**. Though our volunteers are enormously generous and exceptionally talented, having a core set of competencies to draw upon during retreat is critically important. As one person mentioned during the training, **“we owe it to our retreatants to arrive at retreat well prepared to meet their needs.”**

And so, the team in Denver gathered. It can be a **dangerous thing** really, to have a small band of believers gathered around a simple table talking about things like homelessness, Ignatian

Spirituality, and our desires to be of service. The discussion flowed easily and questions came readily. Our agenda was directed by the desire to learn more and to share of our expertise. Time and time again I was struck by the talents of the group God had called here.

As the discussion continued and the potluck lunch was served, I was reminded of a scene in scripture, when the nascent faithful, likewise filled with the Spirit were encouraged to **make a difference**:

Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with **exultation and sincerity of heart**, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:46-7).

The Christian faith was founded in small, intimate gatherings, where “exultation and sincerity of heart” are bountiful. ISP teams gather for training and reflection across our national network



Jordan Skarr | Associate Director

because breaking bread together, spiritually and physically, is not just important for team solidarity, it is a **foundational grace** of the *Exercises* and the ISP retreat: we form relationships with each other and with a God who leads us home.

My hope is for many more of these gatherings to take place, and that God may “add to our number” those who companion in faith those on the streets.

THE INVITATION TO WALK

by Wayne Richard, Retreat Formation

When it looks like nothing is going on, God is up to something! I was recently at home one evening, enjoying the beginning of a much-needed vacation, when my phone rang. On the other end of the line a long time friend was going through some tough times and thoughts.

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His job was no longer secure; he felt **wounded and fearful**.

He was reaching out to me and I needed to respond! What could I do I thought, what could I say that would help him. I panicked. **I became afraid**, not for him but for myself. “I should know what to do or say at these times,” I thought.

As my fear gripped me, the Lord’s Spirit came upon me, and I suddenly knew what we needed: **I invited my friend to Pray**. Afterwards, he said he felt better and was ready to get some sleep and he hung up.

I sat thinking about the Scriptures that speak to our fears, reflecting specifically on the Gospel of Matthew (14:22-34) where Jesus, walking on the lake during a storm, spoke to the disciples who were in a boat tossed by that very storm. **“Take courage! It is I** don’t be afraid,” Jesus said. Peter shouts out to the figure in the storm, asking if it is really the Lord. My own life has shown me that sometimes it’s hard to see God.



Wayne Richard, Retreat Formation

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What I always find is that He truly is in the storms of life.

The Lord beckons Peter to come out of the boat, which was unstable, but familiar and seemingly safe enough in comparison to the tumultuous waters before him. Peter responds to the Lord's call. **It isn't an easy walk**, and when Peter's fear begins to take him under, the Lord is there to save him!

Before bed that night, I thanked God for His Love and Grace, for surely without God where and who would I be? I was reminded through the gift of my friend's circumstances that God does not want us to be afraid, and just as importantly, **calls to us** to come out of where we are, whether it be fear, doubt, depression, mediocrity, etc and **to walk with Him**. God Bless.



The Denver team poses after their team training. Photo by Steve Yavorsky, SJ.

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ISP First's

This year ISP will hold its...

1st retreat in Dayton

1st retreat in Akron

1st retreat in Mpls-St.Paul

1st retreat in Pittsburgh

1st Alumni retreat in Baltimore

RETREAT SCHEDULE					
JULY—DECEMBER 2010					
July 2010			October (Con't)		
10-11	Denver	Men	22-23	Dayton	Women
18	Omaha	Men	23-24	Milwaukee	Women
24	Chicago	Women		Denver	Women
28	Morristown	Men	29-31	Boston	Women
30	Houston	Alumni Co-Ed	31	San Francisco	Men
August			November		
14	Denver	Men	6-7	Cleveland	Women
21-22	St. Louis	Women		Houston	Men
24-25	Atlanta	Women	8-10	Washington DC	Women
September			9-10	New Orleans	Men
11	Cleveland	Women	13	Cincinnati	Women
18	Chicago	Men		Washington DC	Men
25	St. Louis	Women		Akron	Men
25-26	Houston	Women	13-14	Baltimore	Women
	Chicago	Women		Chicago	Women
October			16-17	New Orleans	Women
1-3	Baltimore	Alumni Co-Ed	20	Chicago	Men
	Washington DC	Men		Denver	Women
2-3	Boston	Women	December		
9	Cleveland	Women	4	Cleveland	Women
9-10	Cincinnati	Women	4-5	Baltimore	Men
	Chicago	Men		St. Louis	Men
16	Chicago	Women	7-8	Morristown	Men
16-17	San Francisco	Men	11-12	Denver	Men
19-20	Atlanta	Women	18	Chicago	Women
21	Cleveland	Women	18-19	Chicago	Men
			21	National Homeless Memorial Day	
			26-27	Atlanta	Men

WELCOME LUCIA AND TIM!

ISP is blessed once again with talented individuals joining our staff.

Lucia Reed,

part of the JVC Magis program, will co-coordinate the Chicago Women's retreat team with Sr. Patricia Crowley, OSB, and provide on-going spiritual companionship to retreat alumni. Lucia comes to ISP after spending a year with JVC volunteering in a drop-in center for homeless men and women. Lucia is pursuing a Masters in Divinity at Loyola University.

Tim McCabe, S.J.,

is in his second year of regency (part of the formation process of a Jesuit priest) and will coordinate the Chicago Men's retreat team. Like Lucia, Tim will provide on-going spiritual companionship through facilitating "Spirituality and Recovery" groups in shelters. Tim will also help in the Development of ISP given his long and successful tenure as Executive Director of JVC Midwest.

Their talents and time will allow us to continue our needed ministry. Thank you for your ongoing support, now more than ever, in our mission.



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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