

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**

Spring 2008



New ISP Executive Director Tom Drexler started April 1

A DIRECT START

by Katie Sullivan

On April 1, 2008, the Ignatian Spirituality Project welcomed its first full-time executive director – Tom Drexler. Drexler comes to ISP with over 20 years of experience working in Catholic education and formation programs, most recently at DePaul University as Assistant Vice President for Mission and Values. Educated at Jesuit institutions, Drexler also views the Spiritual Exercises as “one of the greatest gifts” that has been given to the church and world.

When asked what led him to pursue the executive director position at ISP, Drexler explained that while he was happy in his work at DePaul, he was “looking for something more.” He had heard about ISP through Father Bill Creed, SJ, who was his spiritual director, and knew about the work that the program did. When he heard about the opening from Bill, he decided to pursue the job because the connection between homelessness, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, and recovery intrigued him. He felt a “real sense of peacefulness and gratitude” when thinking about working with ISP.

One of the things that Drexler finds most exciting about working with ISP is that he is entering the organization at a time when things are ripe for “significant expansion,” as he puts it. He hopes to expand to a minimum of two new cities a year for both men and women. He also would really like to

Continued on page 3

POSITIVE DECISIONS

by Suzanne Zuercher, OSB

It has been about a year now since I became involved with the Ignatian Spirituality Project. Father Bill Creed, SJ, called me to be part of a brainstorming session about the newly-created, official organization that ISP was moving to. When I arrived for that meeting, I met several talented and interesting men who had also come at his request. We spent a stimulating evening, each of us wondering what we might have to offer to the project, and each of us finding that we did have at least a little to give. The various backgrounds of the group that gathered are a testimony to Father Bill's care and concern for all aspects of the newly created organization: the ministry itself, its funding, its fiscal and legal responsibilities.

Shortly after this gathering, Father called and asked whether I would be willing to be on the founding Board of Directors. I had had many years working as a Board Member at St. Scholastica Academy and later as Executive Director/CEO of the school; and, frankly, I was not too excited to think of more Board involvement. However, the brainstorming meeting had been so energizing that I eagerly agreed to be part of this wonderful effort that is ISP.

Everything that has followed has positively reinforced that decision. It has been thrilling to watch ISP grow into what it is today. As the only woman on the Board until recently, my special interest has been the expansion of its ministry to retreats for homeless women. There will be some differences in approach in ministry to them, I feel sure. I am also confident that those who are working with the women's retreats are aware of this, and that they have the creativity, wisdom, and sensitivity to adapt programs to best benefit this group. Indeed, it is already happening.

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

DECISIONS from page 1

I say this because I have been able to observe just a bit of the work in this area. A number of women's retreats have taken place on our monastery grounds. Our fourteen acres of fields and gardens form a peaceful space open to nature and away from the turmoil of the city. This is also where the women's team meets for learning and planning, and I had the good fortune to speak to this group one evening. The members who attended were most impressive; I am sure that their experience and knowledge will be a rich addition to the ISP mission as it continues to develop among women.

Sharing with those in other cities where women's retreats are taking place is also happening. The annual gathering of team members from around the country which took place in March provided an informal beginning to discuss not only the similarities but also some differences in the issues of men and women who are homeless. This gathering, like our Board meetings, was energizing and

inspiring. There are times for certain things to appear in the world, and the relative ease with which doors are opening, hurdles are being crossed, and dedicated and talented people are joining this ministry indicate to me



ISP staff, board members, and regional directors gathered in March for a day of collaboration

that now is, indeed, the time for ISP.

Probably the most encouraging sign for me has been the recent hiring of Tom Drexler as executive director. We were at a crossroads this winter with the choice to continue with the structure we had had until this point or to invest in full time pro-

fessional leadership. We chose the latter course, and that means that all of ISP's efforts will provide benefits, not only for Chicago, but for other places throughout the country. I think the decision we made will open up opportunities we can only imagine.

The Society of Jesus has recognized the value of ISP as an empowering of lay people, team members and retreatants both. I know that such empowerment is a priority for the Society, and I am delighted to be part of such an effort, also dear to my Benedictine tradition. The past year has been a joy for me, and I look forward to our exciting future.

Suzanne Zuercher, OSB, a founding member of the ISP Board, worked in Jesuit ministries for 15 years, as a campus minister at Loyola University Chicago's Water Tower Campus and as co-director of The Institute of Spiritual Leadership. Additionally, she spent 12 years as the president of St. Scholastica Academy on Chicago's North Side.

REACHING OUT

by Jordan Skarr

"Hey Brother, I really appreciate this opportunity. I've learned a lot about myself and about my relationship with God." Kevin slapped my back as we headed to the vans, after taking a group picture of the last



Denis Weber, SJ, and Clarence Irvin cement a connection made on a Chicago men's retreat with a hug

retreat for the program year. "Hey, we're excited to have some folks from Inner Voice Network join us," I told him.

The Men's team finished another dynamic and inspiring year completing over ten retreats and days of reflection. Most excitingly, we were able to bring the light of the project to new areas of Chicago.

In January, Ed Shurna, facilitator of the men's team and ISP Board Member, helped to coordinate introductory meetings with ISP staff and shelter directors.

Our outreach efforts were incredibly successful; the men's team now has four additional shelters to pull from and has started another weekly follow up session.

"We're so glad you are able to do these follow up sessions; they're the most well attended group meetings in our building," a case manager told me after a particularly inspiring meeting with the men. These rela-



Kevin, Jerry Mundy, Bob Cloud, R.C., and Tony gather for a group photo on the April Cincinnati retreat

tionships are bearing fruit that promises to last.

Back in the van, Kevin slides into the back seat, next to Mike, a new-found friend. "I've never been on something like this," he tells him. "Yeah, I never have either," Mike says. "And I don't feel like I was told to go anymore. I feel like I was chosen. God chose me for a purpose."

CONTINUED EXPANSION

by Katie Sullivan



Participants on the first ISP women's retreat in Atlanta in March

During the months of January, February, and March, women's retreats occurred for the first time in Atlanta and Cleveland and the second time since September in Baltimore. These retreats were all part of the expansion process of the Ignatian Spirituality Project.

Teams in each of the three

cities worked in conjunction with the National Office of ISP to implement and adapt the overnight retreat format for each retreat. In addition, Cleveland modified the one day format for a one day retreat prior to their first overnight, giving them added retreat experience.

Women who attended all the retreats had positive things to say about their experiences. One woman from the Cleveland retreat shared that she wants "everyone to experience the invigorating feeling" of the retreat. Another woman in Cleveland explained how, because of the retreat she hopes "to always keep putting God first in everyday life." A woman on the retreat in Atlanta expressed gratitude for having time to "reflect on my life, my God and myself."

All three retreat teams expressed interest in facilitating more retreats and are eager for that to happen in their cities, a topic that was discussed at the March National Gathering. Sue Cesare, of the Baltimore team, came to Chicago for the National Gathering and was a vital part

of the meeting, sharing about her experiences with the women's team in Baltimore.

Ultimately, the National Office hopes to implement sustainable retreats for men and women in every city and looks forward to seeing how the teams in Atlanta, Baltimore, and Cleveland progress.



Geraldine Hilton and Lemetris Little, wait for the next exercise to start on the Baltimore women's retreat in January

START from page 1

increase the number of men and women who are formerly homeless who participate in the facilitation of the retreats.

Likewise, working with a strong network of regional directors, who are the heads of the men's and women's teams in their respective cities, is important to Drexler because it offers an opportunity to make sure that there is consistency in the retreats that are offered. He also views this network as an important model for the collaboration between the laity and Jesuits. In his opinion, incredible groundwork for this collaboration has already been laid, as he witnessed at the National Gathering held in early March.



ISP Executive Director Tom Drexler, Winston Rosette, Mike Robinson, and Harold Poynter on the San Francisco men's retreat in April

In seeking to expand the national network, Drexler recognizes the need to make sure that there are resources available so that this expansion occurs. Underscoring the point

that the problem of homelessness is a great one, Drexler also acknowledges the generosity that has already poured into ISP: "Unfortunately, there's no shortage of men and women who are homeless. Fortunately, people have been incredibly generous."

Collaborating with Jesuit schools and parishes throughout the country may provide new resources of many kinds for the project. Specifically, Drexler points out that working with these institutions to advocate for the end of homelessness is one of the "hopes of the project" as it moves forward.

Editor: Katie Sullivan
Contributors: Jordan Skarr, Suzanne Zuercher, OSB
Spring 2008: Volume 6

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.

June 2008- July 2009

ISP National Program Calendar

Calendar based on information as of May 15. Please call Nat'l Office with retreat dates for your city as soon as possible.
Additional retreats to be scheduled in Baltimore (2 men's and 2 women's) and New York (2 men's).

July 2008

July 12 Chicago Women One Day

August

TBD Chicago Men's Team Day
Aug 9 Chicago Women's Team Day

September

Sept 6-7 Chicago Men Overnight
Sept 13 Chicago Women One Day
Sept 27 Chicago Men One Day

October

TBD Cleveland Women
Oct 4-5 Chicago Men
Oct 11-12 Chicago Women
Oct 17-19 Boston Women
Oct 25 Chicago Men
Oct 25-26 San Francisco Men

November

TBD National Training
Nov 1-2 Chicago Men
Nov 8 Chicago Women

December

Dec 6 Chicago Men
Dec 6-7 Chicago Women
Dec 13-14 St. Louis Men

January 2009

TBD Wash DC Men
Jan 10 Chicago Women
Jan 10-11 Chicago Men
Jan 31 Chicago Men
Jan 31-Feb 1 Cincinnati Men

February

TBD Cleveland Women
Feb 7-8 Chicago Men
Feb 14-15 Chicago Women
Feb 28 Chicago Men

March

TBD National Gathering
March 2-3 Atlanta Women
March 7-8 Chicago Men
March 14 Chicago Women
March 28 Chicago Men

April

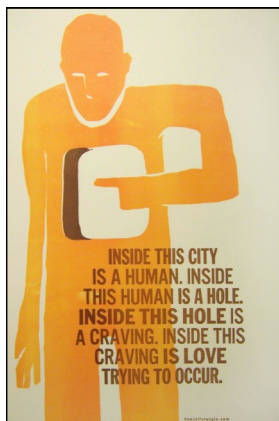
April 4-5 Chicago Men
April 18-19 Chicago Women
April 18-19 San Fran Men
April 25 Chicago Men

May

TBD Cleveland Women
May 8-9 Atlanta Men
May 9 Chicago Women
May 23-24 San Fran Women
May 30 Chicago Men

June

June 13 Chicago Women
June 27-28 Chicago Men



Ignatian Spirituality Project

6214 N Glenwood Ave 773.465.8699
Chicago, IL 60660 www.isporg.org