

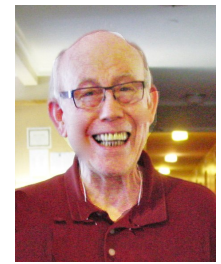
Corps Connector

Volume 11, Number 1

March 2016



Fr. Gap Lo Biondo and Joanie Coolidge Share Their Insights into God's Mercy at the January Day of Reflection. See Page 3



- Washington DC/
Metro Maryland
& Northern
Virginia Regional
Council:
- Joanie Coolidge,
Regional Director
- Mike Goggin,
Regional Director
- Marsha Echols
Ollie Johnson
Joseph Jones
James Kelley
Pamela Lucey
Dennis Lucey
Joseph Raia
Michael Silveus
Grace Risetto
Joe Sobierajski, SJ
Richard Urban

Inside this Issue:

Page 2 Notes from the Editor

Page 3 –4 An IVC Journey into God’s Mercy

Page 5 June Retreat

Page 6 OAR: IVC Partner Grateful for ‘Right Hand Man’

Page 7 Evening of Gratitude Kickoff

Page 8 Save the Date: EoG

Page 9 Northern Va Christmas Party Photos

Page 10 Upcoming Events

Corps Connector

is published four times annually by the Northern Virginia and DC/Metro Maryland Regions of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps.

Dick Bowling, Editor
Send submissions or comments to dbowling@ivcusa.org.

Photos by Dick Bowling unless otherwise noted

THOUGH I MAY HAVE TOLD YOU THIS STORY BEFORE, I’d like to tell it to you again. This is the story of my mother and how something she said has guided me for the rest of my life. Mom and I were cutting a large sheet of linoleum for the floor of the new addition to our kitchen. This was way back in nineteen-forty five when I was ten years old. Mom was holding the linoleum and asked me to cut it. We had only a rather dull pair of scissors around the house to use.

Not only were the scissors dull, they were hurting my hand; and I kept straying off the line Mom had drawn on the linoleum. The harder I tried the more difficult it became and the more frustrated I got; the end of the linoleum seemed miles away. I kept saying, “Mom, I can’t do this. You do it and I’ll hold the linoleum.”

All she said to me was, “You *can* do it. Just keep trying.” Her words filled me with such enthusiasm I felt a great burst of energy and in no time at all found my way to the end and staying pretty much on the line.

“You can do it. Just keep trying” shall live in my heart forever. Throughout my life I’ve become so practiced in listening to her voice inside me; so much so most of the time, I’m not even aware that I am following her counsel. Let me show you what I mean. Back in January, Joanie—another source of great inspiration—and I were putting the finishing touches on the program handout for the January Day of Reflection. We were at the most time-consuming part: arranging the names of those attending, into their respective small groups. Since we were expecting only about fifty people to sign up, Joanie reckoned we’d need about six groups. So I designed a table layout for that many. (This is that set of little boxes on the back of the program where you find your name and what group you’re in.)

It always happens! As soon as we get everything designed and the spaces filled in; a whole lot more people decide to sign up at the last minute. It soon became obvious that we needed to add a seventh group to the list and Joanie asked me if I could do it; I said yes, while inwardly I groaned at the prospect of what this would entail. After fiddling with it for about an hour I was able to squeeze the new group in among the others, while Joanie helped me fill in the newly available spaces.

The day’s program was now finished and ready to print. To make it easier to print, I converted the document I was working on to a PDF format. (This is the same format we use when we send you the Newsletter.) Unbeknownst to me some devilish spirit decided to invade my computer. As I began to print, the computer demon wanted to have some fun and pushed the words sideways half on and half off the page.

It was a mess! To straighten it out, I had to close the PDF, open up the original document, adjust the words in the opposite direction, save the new document and re-convert it to a new PDF. Whew! Yet the demon stayed right there jinxing my every move. Did you ever have days like that? All told I think I tried eleven or twelve times of going back to the original, adjusting the words, re-converting to PDF without success. Like when I was cutting the linoleum, I got so frustrated I wanted to quit. Joanie just watched my frustration probably with great amusement.

As it was lunch time, Joanie suggested I heat up my soup and eat. After I ate I felt better, and Mom’s ever-present ‘you can do it,’ must have prompted me to try printing one more time. It didn’t take one more, it took five more. But with Joanie’s timely lunch suggestion and Mom standing beside me, the demon decided to flee and I was able to get you the program for the Day of Reflection on time.

Once again Mom’s, “You can do it. Just keep trying,” had sustained me through yet another ordeal.

Dick Bowling

An IVC Journey into God's Mercy with Marty Walsh

CONFESS IT'S BEEN MANY YEARS SINCE I'VE reflected on God's Mercy. For me, Mercy had become more an intellectual theological concept than a lived, personal experience. That is, until I attended the annual IVC Day of Reflection on Monday, January 18, led by Fr. Gap Lo Biondo, SJ, Superior, Gonzaga Jesuit community, Washington D.C. and interacting with Joanie Coolidge, Regional Director of the Northern Virginia IVC Region.

Little did I know when I showed up at the Washington Retreat House that this day would take me on an inward journey to the heart of God's love revealed in His Mercy. Imagine my surprise reading Pope Francis' 18-page document beforehand, proclaiming 2016 as the Jubilee Year of Mercy within the Church (December 8, 2015—November 20, 2016). It begins with the eye-catching statement: "Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy," then proceeds to highlight the many references to Mercy in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, church history, and the liturgy today. I couldn't believe how often I've missed seeing/hearing the word, "Mercy" in Scripture and at Mass. I quickly learned I was not the only IVC volunteer with "Mercy" amnesia!



Gap, as he is lovingly known, opened the morning general session, describing God's Mercy at work in the lives of two homeless men at the McKenna Center, and a 25 year old, South American immigrant, locked in solitary confinement at the DC jail. Gap is a chaplain at both places. His intent was to help us understand the difference between God's Mercy and God's Justice in Pope Francis' document. A difference that is not easily understood when first heard.

Yet something transformative happened within the large conference room as Gap related his DC jail experience.

"It was late on a Sunday evening when I received the call in the rectory. A prisoner wanted to receive Communion. I went over to the jail more out of a sense of obligation. I was tired; not totally present. When I arrived at the cell block, two guys were talking loud. It was hard to hear. At his cell, all I could see were Jimmy's eyes and the general outline of his face through a small opening in the door against a dark background. I heard an angry voice in the darkness: "I changed my mind, I don't want Communion!" I asked:

"Would you like to talk?" "Yeah!" I listened. After 10-15 minutes, I asked; "Would you like to go to confession?" "Yeah, Father." He began to cry, "I've done bad stuff." He realized he had hurt many people especially his family."

As Gap spoke these words, his voice quivered and broke. Tears welled up in his eyes; obviously still moved by this experience. He said: "God was locked up in Jimmy's heart. But I went to see Jimmy locked up in myself. I was not totally there for him. Jimmy unlocked my heart, guiding a finger into my side!" At that moment, Gap recognized that he too was "broken" and in need of God's Mercy, which is what Pope Francis means, when referring to himself as a "sinner."

In his afternoon session, Gap explained more about the transforming power of Mercy—as the very foundation of community. "Just as God is merciful, so too are we called to be merciful to each other." He pointed out that Mercy starts from within ourselves, when we get in touch with our own "brokenness." This is why the first week of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises focuses on Mercy in response to our sinfulness. Once we ponder God's loving Mercy and forgiveness, we experience gratitude and thanksgiving. It is in this spirit of grati-

tude and thanksgiving that we move forward into a deeper relationship with God and touch the world around us, especially the people we serve in IVC.

What makes the January IVC day of reflection such a powerful spiritual experience is the cumulative impact of the entire program, beginning with the general sessions, followed by half hour silent reflection and small group discussion in the morning and afternoon, lunch in-between and Mass to close the day. The small group discussions were particularly helpful in sharing experiences, insights, and the meaning of God's Mercy in our lives.

Normally this would be the end of my report. But I felt we hadn't had enough time to process this jarring experience. So I waited two weeks before personally contacting a representative sample of IVC participants about their take away from the all-day conference. Here's some of the feedback I received:

- "The day was an epiphany of sorts. After Fr. Gap's second talk, "How is God Opening the Doors of Your Heart?" I sat alone to reflect on the meaning of the term "brokenness". And in those moments, I finally realized that I indeed was broken, and I could no longer go it

Continued page 4

An IVC Journey into God's Mercy from Page 3

alone. I needed to let go of the reins and hand them to Christ. My question: "Can I turn 'aloneness', loss helplessness into something good?" Yes, I realized; I can—but only with God. Give in; hand it over to Him."

- "Overall, my lesson learned was mercy means choosing love over judgment. Gap was excellent. So was the program. The topic—a reflection on God's Mercy in the context of justice issues and through the lens of Ignatian Spirituality—was profound and rich in content, though initially difficult to grasp, understand and personalize. Mercy is the most overlooked, under explained and misunderstood concept in our modern theology. It wasn't until the closing liturgy that my ears perked up and noticed MERCY as if for the first time; so powerful was the day's experience!"
- "The exploration of mercy and justice took me to a deeper place within myself. At first glance they appear to be in conflict with each other. But the deeper I went into exploring them—by penetrating the Scriptures and through prayer/ reflection/discussion, I began to see with new eyes that the two are not only compatible but life-giving. That's because it was about us—the IVC volunteers—not the people we serve. Mercy is not an easy notion to grasp because we have seldom explored this dimension of our spiritual life: namely, we need God's Mercy, so that we can embrace our "brokenness." It's only by coming to grips with our own "brokenness", that we can help others in their "brokenness." Isn't this the Gospel message?"

Not everyone I contacted came away from the Day of Reflection with fresh insights about Mercy. The good news is that God meets each of us where we are. As Teilhard de Chardin SJ reminded us in this month's discussion guide: "Trust in the Slow Work of God". So don't be surprised if the idea of "God's Mercy" comes to mind, sometime in the months ahead.

When it does, as it most likely will—for God has a way of getting our attention—you may discover how truly special you are. In the meantime, consider spending some quiet time reading the poem, *Honey from the Rock*, and reflecting on how you, as an IVC volunteer, are a "messenger from the Most High." "Who knows? You may get a new insight into God's Mercy!

Honey from the Rock

Some seem, to be born with a neatly completed puzzle.

And so it goes.

Souls going this way and that

Trying to assemble the myriad parts.

But know this. No one has within themselves

All the pieces to their puzzle.

Like before the days when they used to seal

Jigsaw puzzles in cellophane. Insuring that

All the pieces were there.

Everyone carries with them at least one and probably

Many pieces to someone else's puzzle,

Sometimes they know it.

Sometimes they don't.

And when you present your piece

Which is worthless to you,

To another, whether you know it or not,

Whether they know it or not,

You are a messenger from the Most High.



The Incredulity of Thomas

Rabbi Lawrence Kushner

P.S. I am a minister to the homebound at Holy Trinity Church, DC (Georgetown). On Sunday, I took Communion to a bright, accomplished, retired couple, and read excerpts from this essay. When I mentioned the Year of Mercy, the woman said, "What's that?" followed by "I never heard anything about God's Mercy from the pulpit! It was always about sin, hell, and damnation!"

I realized that was also my experience, and probably that of IVC members attending the Day of Reflection. God's Mercy is a radical concept within many Catholic churches, even

today! No wonder Pope Francis has made God's Mercy the focus of our prayer and reflection this year!



Marty Walsh

Keep These Dates Open: June 13 –15 June Retreat



Fr. Bob Hamm

Internet Photo

REV. ROBERT E. HAMM, S.J. is the director of the St. Francis Xavier House at St. Ignatius Church in Baltimore. Before coming to Nigeria in 1988, Fr. Hamm was the Director of the Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth in Wernersville, PA. Between 1977 and 1984 he served as Rector of Loyola High School and as assistant Tertian Instructor of the Jesuits of the Maryland Province.. He has given retreats and training programs in spiritual direction and apostolic spirituality in Kenya, Australia, Canada, and the United States. Fr. Hamm currently resides in the Columbiere Jesuit Community in Baltimore.

Loyola On-the-Potomac Retreat House Faulkner, Maryland

Proposed theme: "Deepening our service experience through the lens of Ignatian Spirituality."



Loyola Retreat House Photo

IVC PARTNER GRATEFUL FOR THEIR 'RIGHT-HAND MAN'

IGNATIAN VOLUNTEER **BILL STIEGLITZ** “mans” the front desk and teaches Life Skills classes to clients of OAR of Fairfax, an organization in Northern Virginia whose mission is “to rebuild lives and break the cycle of crime with opportunities, alternatives, and resources for offenders and their families to create a safer community”. OAR clients are men and women who have been released from the Adult Detention Center in Fairfax, VA. The organization provides a variety of programs to support these individuals and welcome them back to the community.

OAR of Fairfax is grateful to the Ignatian Volunteer Corps and to Bill for supporting its mission. “Our funds are limited. Without volunteers like Bill, the organization itself would literally crumble,” says Lyla Novakowski, their Volunteer Coordinator.

“Bill is my right-hand man,” Lyla continues. “Without Bill there are a lot of things we wouldn’t be able to do. I feel he really makes us more accountable as an organization because he is so passionate. We’ve always held ourselves to a high standard of integrity. His personality has raised the bar for us as an organization.”

Bill’s work at OAR addresses a pressing need. Lyla shares some statistics, “65 million people in the US have a criminal background. That is 1 in 4 adults. The number of people impacted is tremendous.”

“The big overall mission of OAR is to help people get back into society and decrease recidivism. There are great benefits to the individuals and to society,” Bill describes.

Bill works at the front desk two days a week, where he is the first person clients see when they arrive. “When people come in, I do everything I can to take care of them and to refer

them to the programs and staff members who can serve their specific needs. I give out clothes, food, bus tokens for them to get back home, do whatever I can,” he describes.



“The front desk is very customer-centric, very interactive. Bill has been able to communicate warmth and compassion to each client, which is critical. He’s always looking for the best solution for each client. He truly cares about our work and our clients and it shows with every interaction,” Lyla says.

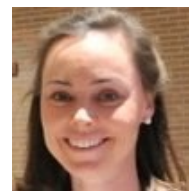
Bill also teaches weekly Life Skills classes to twenty to twenty five men and women on work-release. Topics include Decision-Making, Communications, Budget Management, and Mental Health.

“What’s so valuable about what Bill teaches,” says Lyla, “is that people can take the lessons and apply them immediately, while they are working. It helps smooth the process of transition for them.”

“We serve a very diverse population,” Bill says. “We get all ages, all nationalities, from all social stratum. Most are poor but some have fairly decent financial backgrounds but for some reason have run afoul of the system. It’s a population that really needs some help. They’re probably not too well viewed in the community as a whole, and probably need help more.”

“Pope Francis says that we should pay attention to the poor. This is a part of the poor that really needs attention paid to them,” Bill says.

By Catherine Albornoz
 An IVC Blog



[IVC Volunteer Christopher Munford will soon join the OAR, Fairfax Team]

OAR Arlington

by Mike Bates

My work brings me face to face with folks who are very poor and have had a difficult life. The folks I serve are in many cases homeless, unemployed, and have no identification card or clothes beyond what they are wearing. My service site is Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR) of Arlington, a small non-profit where we help folks coming out of jail or prison. The property they had when they were arrested may be gone. I often hear directly of significant prison terms by adults who were young when they began their incarceration being released after 25 years in prison, for non-violent crimes, often involving drugs.

The United States has a higher proportion of its citizens in prison than any other nation. Fortunately there now seems to be a lot of interest in improving criminal laws and reducing incarceration. There seems to be more support for rehabilitation and giving folks a second chance.

Continued on Page 7

Mike Bates: OAR Arlington (from Page 6)

My role with OAR is in the Reentry Emergency Services group. We provide our clients with services such as clothes, and referrals to help stabilize their situation. Others at OAR work in the Intensive Reentry Program. Here the staff and volunteers work with clients for months both before and after release. The Community Service Program oversees individuals sentenced to community service or are working off court costs.

I think often of Jesus' message: "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." I know that my God is loving and forgiving. I try to see Jesus in the individuals I serve. My Christian faith calls me to help in that effort. I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to serve at OAR, and I am grateful to IVC for placing me here and supporting me.



Mike Bates

[Sandy Cleva is also an IVC volunteer for OAR, Arlington]



< Grace Risetto, Pam Lucey, > Margie Speir, Ollie Johnson & Austin Acocella, at the EoG Kickoff Planning Meetings.



Mike Goggin at the Gonzaga Business Network representing IVC in its ongoing search for interns and corporate support.

Save the Date: 10th Annual Evening of Gratitude Sunday, April 3, 2016

IT DOESN'T SEEM POSSIBLE THAT OVER TEN YEARS AGO, my husband Dennis and I hosted a small gathering in our home to honor IVC's volunteers, spiritual reflectors, donors and others in support of our mission.

There were about 50 people present meeting one another and sharing stories of their service. Mike Curtin, Jr. gave an inspiring address to the group as CEO of DC Central Kitchen (DCCK), one of our partner agencies. He spoke of our mission to match the talents of experienced volunteers with the greatest social needs of our times and how that played out at DCCK.

These were the early days for our DC/MD/No VA Regional Council and excitement was running high. Jesuit fathers Jim Conroy and Charlie Costello first conceived the idea for IVC in 1995. They began with just a small group of 11 retired men and women. Then the word began to spread, and now a decade later there are 17 regions each with a council and over 500 volunteers nation-wide. Praise God!

As the Jesuits say, "The attitude is gratitude!" No one can ever say thank you too many times or in too many ways. So now as we approach this Tenth Annual Evening of Gratitude (EOG) we have even more for which to be thankful in the lives of those in need whom we have touched and been touched in return.

The EOG is no longer held in a private home but has grown to an event that is attended by almost 200 people. Through the generosity of Gonzaga College High School we are able to have a Mass in St. Aloysius, followed by a reception and dinner. For the Mass this year, we are blessed to have Fr. Tom Reese, SJ as our principal celebrant and homilist. The number of fellow priests who have joined in our celebration increases each year. We are eternally grateful for the support that their parishes provide to IVC.

As a major part of the EOG, we have instituted an annual award to some one person(s) who exemplifies the Ignatian principle of a person for others. We are delighted that this year's Della Strada awardee is Mark Shriver, President of Save the Children Action Network. Mark is a fierce advocate on behalf of kids living in poverty and author of *A Good Man: Rediscovering My Father, Sargent Shriver*. He is also author of a forthcoming book on journeying with Pope Francis soon to be published. This year the combined choirs of Holy Trinity and Our Lady of Mercy parishes will provide music for the Mass as a tribute to our Della Strada awardee. The Shriviers have a long association with both parishes.

Personally, my journey with IVC began as a member of the National Board of Directors in 2003. The idea of forming regional councils in each of the areas in which IVC existed was a new concept. I was to be a liaison with the Board to the DC metro/MD/No VA council. And although my term on the National Board ended, I remain on the regional council. Once involved with IVC and its mission you are hooked! I continue to be in awe of our dedicated RC directors Joanie Coolidge and Mike Goggin, our fabulous volunteers, and spiritual reflectors!

It is my hope that this year's EOG will be an even greater opportunity to once again say, Thank You IVC!

Pam Lucey



"It is refreshing and consoling to me in a time of twisted or no religion to find a young man like Mark Shriver who articulates and demonstrates a faith with such vibrancy and integration. He combines the persistence of his mother Eunice with the idealism of his father Sarge."

Fr. Gerry Creedon



Mike Curtin Addressing First Evening of Gratitude at the Lucey's



2015 Northern Virginia Christmas Party



Upcoming Events

Save the Date
**Sunday April 3,
 2016**
**Evening of Grati-
 tude**
 Honoring our
 Della Strada
 recipient:
Mark Shriver

June Retreat
June 13-15, 2016
Loyola Retreat
House
Faulkner, MD
 Facilitated by
Bob Hamm, S.J.

Fall Retreat
Sept 12-14, 2016
Loyola Retreat
House
Faulkner, MD
 Facilitator
TBA

Northern Virginia Region 2015-16 City Groups

Our Lady Queen of Peace 2700 19th Street South Arlington, VA 22204 2nd Tuesday 10:00 am-12:00 noon	Saint Ann's 5300 North 10th Street Arlington, Virginia 22205 2nd Thursday 10:00 am-12:00 noon	St. John Neumann's 11900 Lawyers Road Reston VA 20191 3rd Tuesday 10:00 am-12:00 noon	St. Joseph's 711 Columbus Street, N. Alexandria, VA 22314 3rd Wednesday 10:00 am-12:00 noon
April 12, 2016	April 14, 2016	April 19, 2016	April 20, 2016
May 10, 2016	May 12, 2016	May 17, 2016	May 18, 2016

DC/Metro MD Region 2015-16 City Groups

The Albrecht's 5814 Ogden Court, Bethesda, MD 20816 1st. Thurs.—9:30-11:30	Wash. Jesuit Academy 900 Varnum St., NE Washington, DC 20017 2nd Tuesday—11:00-1:00	Riderwood 3140 Gracefield Rd. Silver Spring, MD 20904 Last Wednesday—10:00- 12:00
April 7, 2016	April 12, 2016	April 27, 2016
May 5, 2016	May 10, 2016	May 25, 2016