

Corps Connector

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June Retreat 2019

25th IVC Anniversary Celebration

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Notes from the Editor

by Dick Bowling

Ignatius prompts us, “See God in all things,” ; Marty Walsh tells me, “be ready to be surprised by God”; how very true when applied to the lives of our pets.

My first small friend, Willie, surprised me every day. Today as I reflect on his coming into my life I can certainly see God’s hand at work; for God sent me Eleanor who first saw my need for a Willie. Eleanor was a very dear friend. One night early in January, 1989, she called, “Dick, you need a cat!” No preamble, or explanation, “What? A cat? Why?” “You need a cat! I know you do,” was all she ever said. Relentlessly. It being January, I knew there couldn’t be any kittens available; so to please her I agreed. But to my surprise she called back the very next evening, “I found a lady with two kittens to give away.” What was I to do? I had given my word.

See how I resisted you, Lord!

Things moved fast. I called the lady and she indeed did have two; could I come over that evening? “Ahh... Yeah, sure!” When I got to her home she introduced me to two of the cutest black-and-white kittens, running, tumbling over one another. When she finally calmed them down enough, she brought them to me one by one and placed them on my lap.

The first one looked at me so appealingly, he simply stole my heart. I was ready to make my choice. As I was about to speak, the lady looked at me sternly, “If you want that one,” she said, pointing to the one who stole my heart, “you must take both.” Both? Barely ready for one, the prospect of two simply overwhelmed me. “Or if you want only one,” she countered, pointing at the other, “you must take that one,” Well “that one”, was nothing like his brother. A tough guy, standoffish and definitely his own man.

Later on I realized why; she really wanted to get rid of “that one”; for if I took the first, she probably thought, “I’ll be stuck and might never get rid of the other.” So I took Willie and left. All his life, Willie knew he was second choice. I came to love him though I don’t think he ever forgave me

The Lord says, “my ways are not yours,” and from the very start God showed me this.

When you take a cat home there immediately ensues an open warfare over who will be the Alpha cat, the owner or the cat. Never a question, Willie was Alpha.

My brother Earl used to come over and he liked to rough-house with cats. He got Willie down on the floor on his back, rubbed his belly vigorously, mussed his fur until Willie, his dignity bruised, told Earl in no uncertain terms, “I’m the Alpha cat here,” snapped at him, and came this close to slicing Earl’s fingers wide open. Now Earl was a dentist and dentists’ fingers are finely tuned instruments **and also**



Willie age 3

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livelihood. But Earl never really learned; many times he left my house having come very close to getting his fingers mangled; once or twice he did leave openly bleeding.

One morning, after Willie was with me about five years, he thought the carpet in the hallway by the washer-dryer needed watering. Right after he set up his watering business, Willie decided a little jig was appropriate to start each day. I soon caught on and when I spotted him starting his dance, I yelled at him, and chased him; but nothing I did deterred him from hosing down the carpet. I finally put down a plastic runner; but he watered that too. Despite the repeated waterings, the carpet never grew even $\frac{1}{4}$ inch!



Willie's Disease

Shortly after I returned from vacation one year, I went to pick Willie up at the vet's office. Dr. Ruben, his regular vet, was out of town, so I got this new vet. This person had the bedside manner of a hedgehog. Soon as he walked into the room, he blurted out, "I ran some tests on Willie, and they confirm that he has a urinary disease. It is not curable but you can treat it with a special diet." I was dazed, stunned.

Lord, what you got in mind now?

I left despondent, drove Willie home. So why did he wet the carpet? Was he angry at me? Or was it simply an early symptom of his urinary disease? I bought the special diet the hedgehog recommended and Willie and I lived together if not contentedly, at least in mutual respect for each other's point of view.

Willie's Death

We lived this way some more years and I drew closer to him as he aged. His disease gradually mastered him. Toward the latter part of October, 1999, I saw the end was near. I called Dr. Ruben and he thought it time we put him to sleep. Devastated, I made an appointment with him for the following Tuesday, All Souls Day. By now Willie could hardly walk. I made a little bed for him next to mine and laid him on it. The next morning, I woke to find he had dragged himself out of his bed and using his back claws was pushing himself across the floor. Why? **Only you know Lord.**

All Saints Day was Monday. Willie was now unable to drink, yet I could tell he was desperately thirsty. I continuously dipped my finger in water and moistened his mouth. I did this very gingerly as he still actively attacked any fingers. All that day I kept telling him, "Just hold on, Willie, tomorrow is All Souls Day." I made a place for him in the living room on the footstool; called Earl, told him Willie's condition. He came over sat with us for about half an hour. When he tried to pet him, Willie must have recognized his old adversary; with titanic strength, Willie hoisted himself to a sitting position, lunged and snapped at Earl, and, (probably to Willie's eternal disappointment), missed his last chance to retaliate. After Earl left, I sat on the floor next to the stool, petting him telling him it wouldn't be long till tomorrow.

He was so miserable, his tongue frantically lashing about, begging for water. I finally understood. So looking him tenderly in the eye, I told him, "It's okay, Willie, you don't have to wait, go whenever you're ready." It wasn't that long. As I looked, I saw in his eyes his tiny soul take flight and he was gone.

The gift the Lord gave me, the Lord took back.

In this reflection, I've seen the face of God in Willie's and in his life was definitely surprised.

Where God Lives and Dwells... Loyola in June

O H, HOW THE RAIN CAME DOWN SO BITING AND COLD . . . and what a mad scramble it was, umbrellas flying as we raced into the welcoming halls of the Loyola Retreat House on that gloomy Monday morning in June. An inauspicious beginning, but in very short time we were laughing and hugging, catching up and settling in. Before long the sun came out and for 3 glorious days we enjoyed its warmth, its beauty, and its “enlightenment”. From sun-up to sun-down we prayed, we listened, we sang, we sat in silence and we shared with one another the meaning of all that we were experiencing.



Kathleen Curtin, founding IVC Spiritual Reflector, retreat leader, Director of Spiritual Exercises, grandmother of 12, and all-around wise and wonderful woman, led us through 3 days of reflection on **“Where God lives, and dwells and has God’s being. . .in, with and through you.”** Kathleen insisted that we not turn away from the powerful truth that God dwells within each of us; we have been called by name. We were baptized into the Light and meant to be a living tabernacle of God’s love and being. In silent reflection we were encouraged to contemplate the gifts we bring to the world and to consider if there are qualities yet to be developed or perhaps, there are renovations needed to this spiritual home of ours - God’s true dwelling place.

Fr. Bill Noe, a sprightly Jesuit presence and leader of two of our 3 Eucharistic celebrations, enjoined us to pray with spirit and gusto. He engaged us in the liturgy by declaring how much he loved to pray with us and by inviting us to enter fully into the experience. Caroline Park, a musician extraordinaire, lent melody, grace and beauty to every gathering. Mike Goggin led us in song at liturgies; several volunteers shared Morning and Evening Prayer leadership and Mike Mothes kept the schedule moving smoothly throughout.

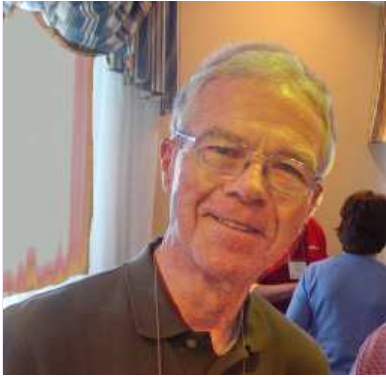
Kathleen focused one session on Mary, highlighting her role as a woman who walked with God from “her peasant domicile in Nazareth to the house church in Jerusalem.” Mary experienced moments of intense joy and unspeakable suffering and yet, she continued to walk the path, always keeping faith with her gracious God. Author Elizabeth Johnson has described the aging Mary as “on fire with the Spirit in a mystic’s old age . . . igniting hearts with hope in the living God.” As we prayed and reflected on how God lives and dwells with us, we were encouraged to engage with Mary around our feelings, fears, joys and challenges. The metaphor of a dwelling place for God was expanded as we considered how many rooms or spaces we were allowing for God to take up residence within us. Kathleen shared a playful reading in which God is knocking at our door asking to come in and live with us because, “I like what I see.” We all squirmed a little as we recognized how little space we actually allow for God to dwell within.

Finally, we centered on how God moves through us and out into the world. Kathleen unpacked the scripture story of the wedding feast of Cana asking us to consider how many times we encounter someone who “has no wine”. “In our IVC service”, she said, “aren’t we all waiting for Mary to whisper in our ear as she did with the servants and say, ‘Do whatever He tells you.’” In small groups we pondered this question and so many more as we shared what was moving in, with, and through us inspired by this cascade of rich and inspirational experiences.

And so, the Sun came out and shone upon us the whole time that June weekend at Loyola. My heart is filled with gratitude for all those who so carefully planned this special time together. I will remember the inspiring images, the challenging ideas, the spectacular sunsets, the peace-filled quiet, and so much more.



Gloria Mog, Spiritual Reflector



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

...EVERY THING!

BY TIM O'CONNOR

IT'S LABOR DAY, 2000, NINETEEN YEARS AGO. For the first time in over 30 years, I was at home and not at school frantically trying to get ready for the new groups of students I would start teaching the following day. My family and I could finally actually celebrate the end of summer. **I was retired.**

Most of those early days of retirement, however, were not exactly celebrations. I am not a golfer, I'm definitely not handy around the house, and I certainly couldn't fill all my days reading. Yes, retirement was causing problems. I now had a lot more time on my hands than I knew what to do with.

One Saturday, I decided to drive up to Baltimore to visit my brother, Frank, a Jesuit priest stationed at St. Ignatius Church. As we talked, he asked me what I was doing now that I had retired. "Not much of anything," I told him. Frank was not impressed, and as only an older brother can, the look on his face told me he was not pleased.

He then began to talk about the Ignatian Volunteer Corps, a group he had sometimes directed retreats for. As he finished, he wrote a name on a piece of paper of an individual in Northern Virginia that he wanted me to contact. Many of you can guess that the name on that paper was **Jim Kelley!**

After Jim told me about IVC in Northern Virginia, he suggested I visit a homeless shelter near Fairfax Circle called The Lamb Center. He himself had been a volunteer and a staff member there and was very familiar with it.

Up to this point in my life, my only contact with homeless people had been periodic encounters with panhandlers on the street or seeing them asleep on steam grates when I visited the District. To be honest, I really wasn't looking to increase my familiarity with this segment of society. Yet, so I could tell my brother I had followed through on his suggestion, I visited the Lamb Center.

Seeing the homeless indoors, many of whom were quietly interacting with staff, volunteers and each other, altered some of my earlier impressions. What impressed me most on that visit was the kindness, the respect, with which the staff and other volunteers treated the homeless whom they called "guests." I reported to Jim Kelley that I would give The Lamb Center a try. For the first three months or so, I showed up, but basically that was all—merely fulfilling an IVC requirement.

Just about that time, during an IVC day of recollection, I was talking with an old friend and current IVC member, Marty Walsh. As we talked about the homeless, Marty told me that many of them are not addressed by their proper names. Even their buddies on the street will refer to them by their acquired "street" names. The rest of us don't call them by name simply because we don't know them. Marty was convinced that this was just one more way the homeless are disrespected, ignored.

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WHAT'S IN A NAME? CONTINUED

For the first time, I found myself moved by this aspect of the painful lives of homeless people. I decided I would make every effort to find out, remember, and use the real names of the guests at The Lamb Center.

The response was immediate, overwhelming, and lasting! I frequently didn't have to say much more than, "Hi Fred! It's good to see you." It was not just the smile. It was in their eyes, the look of gratitude that said, "You cared enough to use my name." The guests seemed to feel that they could now call me by my first name. Relationships were being formed that I had previously thought impossible.

It's not difficult to believe that my brother's encouragement to join IVC, Jim Kelley's suggestion I visit the Lamb Center and Marty Walsh's inspiration regarding the importance of names, were definitely nudges by the Holy Spirit. And those nudges keep coming each day I am at The Lamb Center. I'm now in my thirteenth year. With the exception of my wife and family, volunteering with the homeless has been the greatest gift God has given me.

Last year, John MacPherson, Executive Director of The Lamb Center, said to me, "You know, Tim, we come here with the generous, the lofty intention of bringing Christ to the homeless, but the homeless end up bringing Christ to us." John's words encapsulate the experience so many of us have who volunteer at The Lamb Center: we are truly blessed.

Our Collective IVC Experiences

by Mike Mothes

THE JUNE RETREAT GAVE US A CHANCE TO REFLECT ON who we have become as an IVC community, and who we are becoming. In the planning conversations between Mike Goggin, Kathleen Curtin, and me, we tossed around different ideas on how best use the time on the second night of the retreat. In the past, we have spent this time learning about a new regional director, hearing the experience of one of our volunteers on the US/Mexico border, playing games, watching inspiring movies, and seeing how our IVC program has touched the continent of Africa. This year, we decided to make sacramental the stories that have formed our collective identity as one way to mark the 25 years of IVC.

After these stories were shared, we did a quick exercise to raise our awareness of just how many years of experience were present in that basement room of Loyola Retreat House. In rapid succession, we went around the room and each person told how long they had been with IVC. 46 people, including volunteers, regional directors, regional council members, spiritual reflectors, and the president/CEO of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps combined for an inspiring total of 436.5 years of experience. That is an average of 9.5 years per person (a very high average considering it included people like me who have been in the community for less than a year). Nine and a half years being transformed as we have walked alongside our sisters and brothers who live on the margins of our society. 436.5 years serving and being served. Wow! And to think that this was a program formed 25 years ago and modeled after Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Jim Conroy and Charlie Costello, IVC founders, expected the average tenure would be, like JVC, no more than one year. We confirmed on Tuesday night that we are a healing church in our world.

Thank you for being the shoulders the rest of us has the privilege to stand on. Thank you for being the foundation of this house we have built together. Thank you for being Contemplative Leaders in Action!

A Road Near Paradise

All innocent
I walked the road
near paradise.

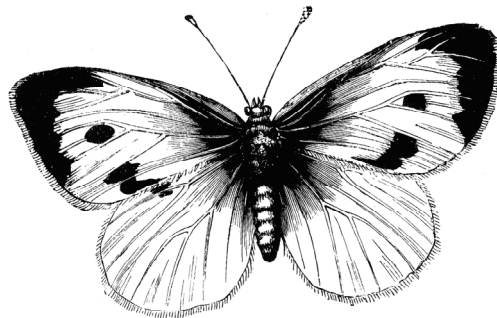
When out of green
a butterfly
came waftily
all black and white
to greet me.

Stunned by such sudden beauty
I could only say
"I love your dress"
and thus went on my way.

Perhaps God smiled
to watch me go
upon my way.

Perhaps nearby angels
heard him say
there goes my child
upon his way.

Tony Albrecht
IVC DC/MD Volunteer
6/11/19



TIRE**D** of seeing photos in the Newsletter taken by Dick but few of them with him in them, Pedro Turina took Dick's camera and decided to make recompense
— Editor



The Wine & Cheese Party



