

Corps Connector

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IVC 2019
SPIRITUAL
REFLECTORS'
CONFERENCE

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Notes from the Editor

Journaling using *Lectio Divina* —by Dick Bowling

Praying the *Lectio Divina*: First: Choose a text from Scriptures. One of the daily readings from the liturgy; or work your way slowly through a particular book of the Bible. The amount of text is in God's hands, not yours. Second: Turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for what speaks to you. Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In *lectio divina*, God is teaching us to listen to him, to seek her in silence. God does not reach out and grab us; rather, gently invites us ever more deeply into the divine presence.

One afternoon Peter and John were on their way to the Temple for the three o'clock hour of prayer. A man who had been lame from birth was being carried along in the crowd, for it was the daily practice to put him down at what was known as the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, so that he could beg from the people as they went in. As this man saw Peter and John just about to enter he asked them to give him something. Peter looked intently at the man and so did John. Then Peter said, "Look straight at us!" The man looked at them expectantly, hoping that they would give him something. "If you are expecting silver or gold," Peter said to him, "I have neither, but what I have I will certainly give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!"

Then he took him by the right hand and helped him up. At once his feet and ankle bones were strengthened, and he positively jumped to his feet, stood, and then walked. Then he went with them into the Temple, where he walked about, leaping and thanking God. Everyone noticed him as he walked and praised God and recognized him as the same beggar who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate. ACTS 3:1-11

Good morning dear Jesus.

"He leapt up, stood and walked around and went into the temple with them walking and jumping and praising God."

This quotation is what touched my heart this morning, Lord; the sight of this man crippled from birth, now "walking and jumping and praising God." I see him skipping like a little child—as far as his legs and ankle bones are concerned he is the child he was never able to be. I see him yelling "Yippee!" in the joy of knowing he was now free, no longer having to be carried to the temple, no longer having to beg.

The cripples among us, the poor, the blind, the broken, the emotionally disabled, provide us the opportunity to serve them, and care for them. This is why, though I just now thought about it, from the very beginning of my affliction, my neuropathy, I was inspired to "let it happen"; I observed how many are eager to come forward and lift me upright, take my arm and guide me. Often, in my heart I know I think I could "do it myself," nevertheless I let them "be of service." (Yet in spite of what I just said, I wonder how often I would have tripped or fallen save for the assistance I received.)

How many of those we serve in the Ignatian Volunteer Corps have my attitude of mind I just mentioned; though maybe they cannot "do it myself," they have the patience of heart to smile inside and "let it happen" glorifying God as we serve them. When this happens, and I believe it happens more often than we expect, we each serve one another. The Jesus in the poor, the blind and the lame smiles on the Jesus in us as we lead one another on our sojourn back to you, Lord.

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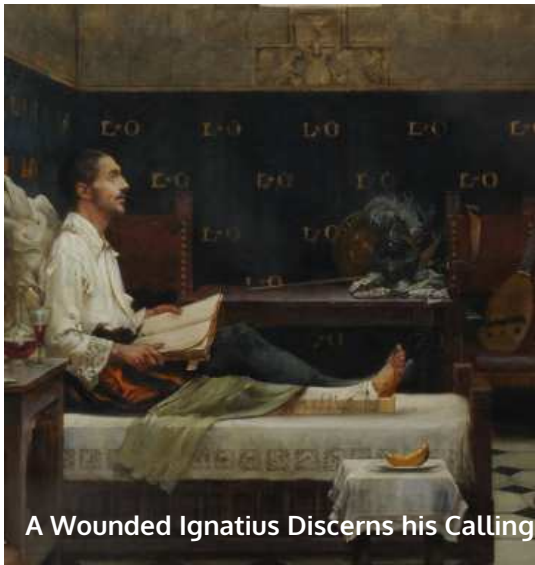
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A Wounded Ignatius Discerns his Calling

The Examen Meets Discernment

by Marty Walsh

On May 16, thirteen IVC spiritual reflectors met for our annual day of reflection and discussion at Mt. Tabor Catholic Community, Vienna, VA. This annual retreat is always a rich personal and group spiritual experience. The topic changes from year to year. This year's theme focused on Consolation and Desolation in Discernment.

In Ignatian spirituality, discernment does not stand alone. It is intimately connected to the daily Examen, which is a form of prayer (approximately 15 minutes) that enables believers to find God in their daily lives. St. Ignatius considered the Examen so important that even if Jesuits hadn't time for meditation, they must not neglect this daily practice. Today, the Examen is often referred to as an "examination of consciousness" (*looking for signs of God's presence in my life today*) rather than "examination of conscience" (*which has narrow, moralistic overtones of sin and confession*).

I found this year's spring meeting to be the most powerful personal and group experience of spiritual reflectors in my eleven years as an IVC Spiritual Reflector. So did all the participants. The reviews included comments such as "*Best retreat.. Everyone really engaged... Everyone went deeper into themselves... Much more personal, practical and honest.*"

The key to success was Mike Mothes, our new, IVC Director. He not only chaired the discussion, but also set the example for openness, honesty and listening. Mike asked us a series of simple personal questions that, together, formed a spiritual examen. With each answer, we increasingly relaxed and revealed more of our inner selves; thus, creating a deeper sense of trust and community. For example, one of the questions he asked was "where did you experience God today?"

Afterwards, the group discussed two important issues; **First**, we identified the difference between consolation and desolation. As background, Mike introduced Margaret Silf's excellent book: *Inner Compass: Invitation to Ignatian Spirituality; a practical and experience-based guide to the Spiritual Exercises*. *By being attentive and aware of the deepest desire of our hearts helps us to discover that God's will is already implanted in us rather than somewhere 'out there' which we are in search of.*

The group began by identifying the signs of consolation that help us turn towards God: "*being balanced, clear; having energy, passion and vision.*" Whereas the signs of desolation that turn us away from God include "*being lukewarm, negative, cut off from community, self-absorbed, lack energy.*" We all have experienced consolation and desolation in our lives. Becoming aware of the signs deepens our knowledge, understanding and appropriate response.

Once this foundation was established, Mike moved on to the **second** issue, which was the focal point of our meeting: Discernment. Here, he shared his own life experiences to illustrate the difference between a positive experience and a negative experience of Discernment. (*To avoid any confusion regarding confidentiality, Mike gave Marty permission to share these remarks.*)

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His **positive** experience was discerning which graduate school in theology was the best fit after his time at Boston College, which has one of the best Jesuit faculties in the country. He considered three post-graduate programs: Harvard, University of Chicago and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Only after he had done in-depth research and spoken with a number of professors did he select Union Theological. One of the key reasons for his choice was the presence of several Jesuits on the faculty.

His **negative** experience, on the other hand, was painful. After teaching religion at Bishop O'Connell high school for seven years and enjoying close friendships with fellow teachers, Mike felt it was time to make a move. Gonzaga high school offered him a teaching position. He never considered another option. Nor did he speak with anyone about his decision. It wasn't long after he began teaching religion at Gonzaga, he realized it wasn't the right for him; especially his daily commute that took two and a half hours each day. Nor did he experience a close comradery with fellow teachers as he had at O'Connell. He resigned after a year.

Mike recalls "I wasn't sure where I wanted to go next. It felt like a desert experience, being in the wilderness. I also knew I was being called to dig deep; that God was leading me and to trust in God." After several months of deep reflection, *"out of the blue, a friend from my JVC (Jesuit Volunteer Corps) days mentioned an opening at Our Lady, Queen of Peace in Arlington."* Mike applied for the hands-on management/social justice/discernment position which changed his life. He says: "it was a *Surprised-by-God experience.*" It eventually led Mike to apply for the IVC Regional director position.

After lunch, our day of reflection closed with Mass in the chapel, celebrated by Fr. Don Heet, OSFS, Parochial Vicar, Saint John Newman Church, Reston, VA. Although he had sat in on our morning discussion, he did not say a word. He simply observed and took mental notes that became his homily. He was impressed with our dedication, openness and understanding as spiritual reflectors, and the powerful insights we shared together. He then focused on IVC volunteers as "being sent on a mission", and on our role as spiritual reflectors to assist volunteers to discern what God is calling them to do in their mission. What made Fr. Heet's homily so powerful to me was his humility, reverence and what I call, *"holy presence."* It was the perfect ending to an extraordinary day together.

A few days later, I contacted a number of the IVC participants about their experience. By then, a conference "high" has traditionally worn off and participants have difficulty recalling what took place. Not so with the IVC Reflectors. Jean Sweeney best summarized our communal experience, offering such gems as *"Mike did a fabulous job as moderator, allowing the silence! There was a deep sense of respect for each person's calling: 3 priests, 2 nuns, a Jesuit and a former priest, with at least as many lay people; all disciples. All filled with the sense of being one with the Lord!"*

Isn't this what the disciples and the early Christians experienced in the weeks and months after the Lord's Resurrection? And what we experienced together at Mount Tabor on May 16!





THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

On May 16, I had the pleasure of sitting down with Pat Durkin, certified spiritual director and spiritual reflector for the Northern Virginia Region of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps for the past ten years. We talked about how she came to be involved in IVC as a spiritual reflector

and the role of the spiritual reflector within the IVC community. The following transcript of our conversation has been edited for style and length.

How did you learn of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps (IVC)? I first learned of IVC when I was a Director of Religious Education (DRE) at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Alexandria. Jim Kelly had a table for IVC at a Ministries Festival at the parish. He's a great ambassador for IVC. I remember thinking, 'this is perfect for when I retire!'

What was your path into the ministry of spiritual direction? By the time I retired, 12-15 years later, I decided to enroll in a certificate program at the Washington Theological Union in Spiritual Direction. I like to talk about God with people and it's not really something we usually do in our day-to-day lives. I really enjoyed this aspect of being a DRE. And, this fits in with what we do in spiritual direction – we talk about where we see God working in our lives.

How did you come to be a spiritual reflector in IVC? I had a lot of friends who were already in IVC, so in 2009 I joined. I have also spent a lot of time at the Benedictine Monastery in Bristow. Many sisters there were DRE's in the diocese when I was a DRE. Spiritual direction is also offered at the monastery. I retired as a DRE at the same time that I entered formation to be a spiritual director. I consider spiritual direction my retirement vocation.

You are a spiritual director by training but in your role in IVC, you are called a "spiritual reflector." What differentiates a "spiritual director" from an IVC "spiritual reflector"? All IVC spiritual reflectors are trained spiritual directors. I think the word "director" in "spiritual direction" is a misnomer. It is the Spirit that is directing. I'm not directing. Spiritual directors aren't directing. I am someone who receives stories. It is an honor to hear people's stories. And, I think being listened to and being heard, especially today, is a gift. In my opinion, the word that IVC uses, "reflector" is a better word than "director."

Are there aspects that are unique to the role of Spiritual Reflector for IVC? In IVC, we have a mandate to work with the materially poor. Seeing others struggle is really difficult. We do our best to assist and be helpful but this kind of service raises a lot of questions and spiritual questions that are specific to those working in social service - specific to IVC'ers in spiritual reflection. We reflect on their experience of God in their service site but, of course, the reflection extends to their whole life. Spiritual reflection shines a light on God working in your life. We ask, "Where is God in this? Where do I feel God in this – or not?"

In IVC, I offer one-on-one spiritual reflection and I also facilitate a City Group. We have seven City Groups now throughout our IVC service area. Most of these groups are facilitated by spiritual reflectors. In these groups, we reflect on our experience of God in our day-to-day service within small communities of faith. We also pray together using the *Examen*, *lectio divina*, and the sacraments, including Mass.

What is your favorite part of being a spiritual reflector? I love hearing other people's stories. A while back, I attended a conference on storytelling and, from that moment on, I became a collector of stories. Jesus taught through stories. The wonderful thing about them is that we remember stories. There are many places to enter into a story. Our story defines us and is a sacred thing. I have heard some really awesome stories. Hearing them is a gift to me. Hearing and telling our stories helps us from "getting stuck in a rut." Before spiritual reflection, I always think, 'I wonder what story will come today?' When I see a person, I may not always know their name, but I will always remember their story and I ask, "How's it going? Tell me the rest of the story."



Rebecca Ruiz.
Writer for Loyola Press. Author of numerous articles on Ignatian Spirituality..
Member IVC Regional Council

Save the
Date:

June Re-
treat

June 10-12
2019

Facilitator:
Kathleen
Curtin

Theme:
Where God
lives, dwells
and has
God's being.

Loyola
Retreat
House

The theme for the June retreat will be: Where God lives, dwells and has God's being. We will prayerfully reflect on how that takes place in, with and through us. Since this is the twenty-fifth anniversary of IVC, we will take a loving look back on all that the IVC experience has meant to each of us.

Something about Kathleen

In June 2013 we created a special edition of the Corps Connector reflecting the early days of IVC. In this interview I asked Kathleen to tell us how she got involved with IVC. The following is an excerpt from that interview.
—Dick Bowling, editor

“In 1999, I made the Spiritual Exercises under Jim’s [Conroy] direction, he became my spiritual director. A year later he and Charlie [Costello] felt that the organization had now grown to such an extent; there were more people here and more people in Baltimore and the two of them could not do all the spiritual reflection. Jim then enlisted the aid of other people who had made the spiritual exercises. People who were trained to be spiritual reflectors and we would take on that duty with IVC which was wonderful. And so things had changed.....

“I remember Mike O’Donnell [Baltimore, Washington, DC, Northern Virginia Regional Director] saying to me would you please come to the City Group meeting. At that time it was at Georgetown Prep. And as everybody realizes I kept coming and in fact Mike asked if I would also come when they began the Virginia group because it was very, very small, at the time there were only about seven people. So I started going to the City Groups in Virginia ...”





When did you see the face of Christ this week?

I was walking through a hallway at Culmore Clinic one day when a smiling, joyful face greets me: Hola Pedro! Me recuerdas? (Hi Pedro! Do you remember me?) I look at the face and the rest of the body and I am surprised, gratefully surprised. This is Luis, a man I met over a year ago under very different conditions. His face at this time showed that he was lost, maybe scared, and hoping for a solution to his problem. He had come to the Culmore Clinic for help, a deep need for help. He had been released from the emergency room of the hospital after treatment for a critical health condition; he needed to continue his treatment with a specific medicine but he didn't have money to pay for it. He

didn't speak English, and had no idea how to get his medicine at a discount price. His previous delicate and dangerous condition was returning, his strength diminishing, his body was reacting badly, he had difficulty walking, and was tired and desperate. Someone recommended he come and seek help here at the Clinic. "They will treat you well and care for you," he was advised!

I didn't know any of this when I was getting ready to leave and one of my colleagues asked me if I can help take up a collection so this patient can buy the medicine he needs. We had finished work for the day when Luis appeared asking for help; there is one medical provider, an interpreter and the administrator still there and it is me who is being asked to help. The place is already shut, but the medical personnel goes to work on a solution to the problem.



After checking with different pharmacies there is one that can provide the medicine at the lowest cost, the only problem: it's located in downtown Washington, DC! How to get Luis the medicine he needs? He has no idea where Washington is, has never taken a bus or metro, has no friends with a vehicle to take him to the pharmacy. The four of us at the Clinic have commitments after we leave our workplace. I have the best chance of helping because my next volunteer activity is in downtown DC, only about ten blocks away. So here I am driving this new patient whom I barely knew ten minutes ago; trying to get to know him. Who is he? Where is he from? Any family here? Where is his family? Does he have a job? During our trip to the pharmacy we get acquainted with each other; I find out where his country in Central America is in relation to my home country in South America. At the same time I learn we both live in the same area of Falls Church. He hopes he can improve his life here in this country; and is willing to learn and start a new life. We finally get to the pharmacy; I go with him, interpret for him and explain to the pharmacist what he needs and how to get the lowest price for the prescribed medicine. The pharmacist helps us through the whole process and we finally get the medicine. He takes his first dose right there and we are ready to go. To go where? I am already late for my next commitment, so I ask him if it is OK if I drop him off at a bus stop to take him to his destination. He looks at me with a very puzzled look on his face. He says he has no idea where he is, which bus to take or where to get off.

So now is my turn to face reality! Is this the end of the story? No! I drop him off where he lives. On my way home I'm thinking: today I made a new friend.

This week I was reading the story of Zaccheus in the Gospel of Luke and thought of my adventure with Luis. I was up in the sycamore tree looking around with curiosity when I was called to serve, I saw the face of a Suffering Christ in one of my brothers.

