

## **Catholic Star Herald**

*August 4, 2006, Vol. 56, No. 14*

### ***Over 50 and willing to do hard work? You can be an Ignatian Volunteer***

By Rich Luongo

CAMDEN — The Ignatian Volunteer Corps (IVC), based in Baltimore, has several regional chapters across the country, including the Diocese of Camden.

And who are these volunteers?

They have to be 50 years old and older and be able to give at least two days of their time as volunteers over a 10-month period, “although the volunteers can stay longer if they want with many of them giving of their time for up to four years,” according to Suzanne Geaney, national director of IVC in Baltimore. “Some 99 percent of our volunteers are retired.” Many of those who are still working alter their schedule so they may volunteer.

In addition to physical labor, volunteers tutor in inner city schools, assist in food programs for the homeless, provide mentoring for children in foster-care and companionship for the elderly, write fundraising grants, work in prison ministry, assist with office work, help with accounting and public relations, and in any other area where they may be of service. Care is taken to match a volunteer’s expertise to what an agency may need.

This week, while the temperatures were soaring toward triple digits, Thomas P. Frank spent his morning repairing a number of minor plumbing problems at Holy Name School, Camden.

“We have four Ignatian volunteers spending some time here,” said volunteer John Trumbore of Philadelphia, who was also spending the day at the school.

Trumbore, 69, got involved with the IVC 10 years ago, before he retired from advertising. He helps the various Jesuit ministries in North Camden — including the parish, school, Guadalupe Family Services, St. Luke’s Catholic Medical Services, and the Camden Center for Law and Social Justice — with newsletters, special events and in many other ways.

“You reach a period in your life, when your children are grown — in my case, my wife had passed away, and your motivations change,” he said, explaining the influence of Ignatian spirituality on his life.

Ignatian spirituality — based upon the views of St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) — views the world as a place where Jesus Christ walked, talked, and embraced people. It sees the world as a place of grace which is able to give life to others.

“St. Ignatius found God in all things,” said Suzanne Geaney.

Ignatian spirituality also recognizes that there is cruelty, injustice, and abuse of power and authority in the world. As a result it affirms human potential but also is dedicated to the ongoing, day-in-day-out struggle between good and evil.

“Our mission is direct service to the poor,” said Trumbore.

“I had never been to North Camden before,” he said, noting his middle class upbringing and business background. “You have to say, ‘I don’t know the answers. I’m here to do God’s will.’”

Joyce Lively, who will be regional coordinator of the IVC in Philadelphia until September when she will step down to spend more time with her family, pointed out that the IVC, in addition to Camden and Philadelphia, also has volunteers in Chester and other poor communities in the Diocese of Camden and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. IVC partners with Catholic Charities in Camden and Catholic Social Services throughout the Philadelphia region.

She noted that the recipients of the work done by the volunteers cross all religious lines.

“A group or agency doesn’t have to be Catholic to participate,” Lively said.

“For example, we work with the Delaware County Literary Council. Our only criterion is that we must work with the poor.”

“Two Jesuits, Charlie Costello of Philadelphia and James Conroy of Pittsburgh, started the IVC,” said Geaney.

Both found when working with young Jesuits, parents and teachers were looking for ways of working with the poor themselves.

For the past 50 years the Jesuits, through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC), have worked with the poor through the efforts of college graduates who give two years of their lives to live in poor areas around the country. These volunteers must be college grads and most go onto graduate school when their commitment is finished, said Geaney. The volunteers also receive a small stipend and a place to live.

Fathers Costello and Conroy and others decided to find ways to help communities through the efforts of a much older volunteer group.

Thus, the IVC was conceived.

Both Jesuits came up with a “Spiritual Reflection” process where volunteers would keep journals, have one-to-one spiritual conversations with a Spiritual Reflector, meet monthly with their peers, and attend three retreats each year. All of this was designed to transform a volunteer’s service to his or her mission and is what makes IVC a unique organization.

Lively noted there was considerable interest this year from prospective volunteers. However, not everyone who inquired about volunteering with the group was in the position to devote two days a week to serving the poor. So this past spring, Lively initiated a project that she is going to continue for them after she leaves the staff.

The St. Alberto Hurtado, S.J. Partners in Mission program is a day of service and spiritual reflection for people who cannot fully participate in the Ignatian Volunteer Corps, but yet are looking for a way to serve the poor and spiritually reflect on that experience. The day of service will include a full morning of service, followed by a simple lunch at noon. Afterward there will be an opportunity for participants to pray and reflect on their experience. Their first day of service will be Saturday, Dec. 9, 2006 at CityTeam Ministries in Chester.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2006-2007 IVC volunteer year. To apply or for further information, call the Ignatian Volunteer Corps at 215-923-1733 or send an email to Philadelphia@ilvc.org. Orientation for new volunteers will be held on September 12 at St. Joseph University in Philadelphia.

For information about the St. Alberto Hurtado, SJ Partners in Ministry program or to register for the Dec. 9 day of service at CityTeam Ministries in Chester, email Joyce Lively at JoyceALively@verizon.net or call her at 609-707-8590.

*Carl Peters contributed to this story.*

[http://www.catholicstarherald.org/TopStories06.htm#Over\\_50\\_and\\_willing\\_to\\_do\\_hard\\_work\\_You\\_can\\_be\\_an\\_Ignatian\\_Volunteer](http://www.catholicstarherald.org/TopStories06.htm#Over_50_and_willing_to_do_hard_work_You_can_be_an_Ignatian_Volunteer)