

Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps

Love in Deeds of Service

Summer 2005
Vol. VII, No. 2



ILVC in Prison Ministry

Frances Dickey, ILVC San Diego

"I was in prison and you visited me ...I tell you whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me!"

- Matthew 25:36, 40

I have a deep and constant longing to deepen my relationship to God. While I have a strong need to withdraw and pray, I also feel a desire serve God through action.

The Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps is one way of helping me do this. I began volunteering at Las Colinas, the women's jail in San Diego, a year ago, and have experienced an integration of the contemplative and apostolic in my life.

From the moment the heavy metal doors slammed shut behind me and I was inside this locked facility, I found a freedom I didn't know could exist. I have been given the gifts of compassion and humility in meeting these incarcerated women and the other volunteers. I feel I am where God intends me to be.

The women in Las Colinas have a hunger and yearning for God. My ministry is making God's unconditional love known to the women who feel the most unloved and unworthy. I go to plant seeds of faith, hope, and love. I go to water the seeds and nourish the soil so the seeds in the women will give them the strength they need when they leave jail.



The prayers of the women tell their stories. They want, miss and cry for the children they have had taken away from them. They pray for these children and for their families and friends. They pray for leniency from the courts. They beg God to help them overcome their addictions. We also laugh and sing together. The tears and the laughter, along with

Christ's help, bring peace for the present.

I find God's grace in their lives – where I feared it might not be. These women's faces and prayers are engraved in my heart now. Jesus is a central role in my life and as I pay attention to this call to discipleship, I have no fears. I know my journey with the women in Las Colinas has just started.

ILVC Mission

The Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps (ILVC) provides men and women age 50 and over the opportunity to serve the needs of people who are poor, to work for a more just society, and to grow deeper in Christian faith by reflecting and praying in the Ignatian tradition.

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From the Executive Director

Sometimes our name confuses people. They see "Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps" and figure that everyone in ILVC is a volunteer. Most are, but we are deeply grateful for the work of our paid staff.

Locally, an ILVC staff member – generally the Regional Director – recruits agencies, volunteers and spiritual reflectors; plans and runs city group meetings and retreats; manages and evaluates the matches between volunteers and agencies; and works with advisors to publicize and raise funds for ILVC. Our national staff does communications work (like this newsletter, our website, our brochures), handles all the organization's administrative work, launches new regions, raises funds, and evaluates programs and staff.



Many of you are able to support ILVC financially and for this we are deeply grateful. Because you support us, we are able to give men and women the opportunity to serve as volunteers in ILVC.

Our goal is to reach more people (potential volunteers, reflectors, friends and donors), so ILVC can help more agencies with our unique program. We can't be everywhere, but our program works well in urban areas with great poverty. Our partner agencies tell us that ILVC provides a cost-effective way to staff their agencies with experienced, skillful, dedicated people that they otherwise couldn't afford.

This year, thanks to everyone who is and has been a part of ILVC, we celebrate our 10th anniversary. Over the years, many volunteers have talked about feeling 'called' to join ILVC. They thought long and hard about committing to 2 days a week of service for 10 months a year. Happily, many of our volunteers decide to stay in ILVC for 2, 3, even 10 years. Our staff, too, draws remarkable workers – most of whom are over 50.

So, would it surprise you to know that I thank God for the gift of aging? How else would we have so many generous, talented and healthy people dedicated to ILVC?

Suzanne Geaney

Sophomore Service - A Neighborhood Partnership

John O'Hagan, ILVC Cleveland



Sophomore Mike Rasco presents sage Jule Ryan with her biography, "Time Well Spent"

True to its Jesuit tradition, Cleveland's St. Ignatius High School ensures that every student is exposed to the practical realities of service and justice through its Sophomore Service program – and ILVC Cleveland has a part to play.

wisdom of their sages, and to gain insights into the lives of the poor and marginalized. Before each visit, the students meet to read and reflect. This semester they are reading "Tuesday's with Morrie," the story of a college professor with Lou Gehrig's disease who used his illness and death as a teaching project on life.

During the visits, the sophomores ask questions about their sages' life, family work, values and lessons learned. Back at Arrupe House they share what they have learned with their colleagues, and then spend time journaling. At the end of the program, the students write a short biography of their sages and present it to them at an end-of-semester 'book party.'

As a new member of ILVC Cleveland, I facilitate the innovative "Sophomore and Sage" program at Arrupe House, home of the neighborhood partnership between St. Ignatius students and the local community. The Sophomore and Sage initiative pairs up students with local senior citizens. On a weekly basis, sophomores visit their 'sages,' typically in subsidized low-income apartment complexes.

The sophomores do a great job. They are enthusiastic and receptive to new experiences. The sages, for their part, are generous with their time, patient when necessary, and invariably upbeat despite lacking many material comforts. What I find most rewarding is watching a bond of friendship develop between sophomore and sage over the course of the semester.

The objective is not only to provide companionship for the seniors, but for the sophomores to learn from the accumulated

Charlie Costello Fund for Growth

Dedicated to connecting the experience and talents of retired men and women with the real and many needs of people who are materially poor.

Ten years ago, the Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps began in three cities with 11 volunteers. Today, 185 men and women in ten states and the District of Columbia provide 12,000 hours of service each month, reaching out to countless numbers of children, adults and families – truly faith in action!

Thanks to all who have invested in ILVC to make this growth possible. And thanks to all who continue to respond and invest in the future of ILVC through the Costello Fund for Growth.

The Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus has made a challenge grant of

\$50,000 to ILVC, agreeing to match dollar-for-dollar new gifts received through March 2006 – resulting in \$100,000 for ILVC to expand current programs and move into new areas where poverty needs are the greatest. As of May 2005, ILVC has received \$19,250 towards this important challenge.

ILVC has a bright future as long as God continues to send people ready to respond generously to God's call. Please help us meet our exciting challenge and walk

confidently into the future, as our Jesuit co-founders did when creating and building our Ignatian program. Make a gift today using the envelope provided in this newsletter, or contact Tamara Zavislan, ILVC Director of Development, 888-831-4686 or tzavislan@ilvc.org, to make a multi-year pledge.



A Tribute to Roseanne Casey

June 27, 1930 – May 10, 2005

Roseanne Casey touched all those who knew and worked with her. These tributes are offered by members of the ILVC Board of Directors, Fran Butler and Fr. James Conroy, S.J.

ILVC was fortunate to have Roseanne Casey as a member of our Board of Directors. Roseanne died on May 10. We have lost a good friend and a tireless advocate.

In the early years of ILVC's development we were looking for people to join the Board who had experience in fund raising and who could connect us to people who would want to know about ILVC – its Ignatian roots, the opportunities it provided older people to volunteer in meaningful ways to serve the poor. Who could have been a better choice than Roseanne Casey? She has been described as “the Google of Catholic philanthropy” and credited with raising millions of dollars for Catholic causes. In fact, she was such a successful volunteer fundraiser as a “Gonzaga Mom” at the Jesuit high school in Washington, DC that she was later hired by her alma mater, Trinity College, as a professional fundraiser. Later on she became Director of Development for Catholic Charities in the Washington Archdiocese. After her retirement she served on a number of Boards for various Catholic causes, including the Jesuit's Weston School of Theology, Holy Cross Abbey, and Support Our Aging Religious (SOAR!). Then she brought all her expertise and connections to ILVC.

Roseanne had a clear vision about the important role of the laity in the social ministry of the Jesuits. That vision, and her love of the Jesuits, is what inspired her loyalty to ILVC. She worked tirelessly with ILVC staff, board members, and volunteers. She came to each meeting armed with ideas, and was always willing to roll up her sleeves and work on the details of implementation.

My own friendship with Roseanne deepened as we served together on the ILVC Development Committee and spent time together driving to Cape May, New Jersey, for our Board Retreats. What I will always remember about Roseanne is her positive outlook and the sense of gratitude that she had for everything that she experienced in her daily life. She never dwelt on the negative. Roseanne was a widow, but



when she talked about her husband, it was not with a sense of loss, but with a sense of gratitude to God for the years and joys she shared with Frank Casey. It is in this spirit that I am so grateful to ILVC for being the source of my friendship with Roseanne.

Roseanne Casey was a remarkable woman. How grieved we feel over the loss of such a good friend. How fortunate we are as people of faith to be confident that Roseanne's spirit lives on, as does her advocacy for ILVC.

- Fran Butler, ILVC Board of Directors

Roseanne came to ILVC as a board member with a well deserved reputation as a fund raiser. She knew almost everyone, or at a minimum someone who knew the person you wanted to get to. She is aptly described as a pure energy. Much can be said in this regard as she embraced the ILVC mission and spirit.

If I may, let me offer this reflection. Roseanne was a deeply spiritual person. Her uncanny ability to see to the heart of a person and understand their desire to do good enabled her to move among rich and poor, black and white, conservative and progressive people. I saw her as a driving force behind the retreats and spiritual development for the Knights and Dames of Malta. I know she related well to the people of the McKenna Center in Washington, DC. She was the exact same person to everyone. Roseanne would never lose sight of the outcast or the humble, yet she traveled with style among people of means.

In many ways, Roseanne was a selfless person who concerned herself with the needs of others. She became a larger-than-life character because she embraced the wholeness of life. I shall miss her unflinching support and encouragement. Roseanne Casey was one of a kind and a glorious example of what giving all you have for the greater glory of God means.

- Fr. James Conroy, S.J.

My Friend Eugene

Charles McJilton, ILVC Minneapolis/St. Paul

I first met Eugene in late December 2001. I was assisting and learning from Patrick Wood (People, Inc.) the locations of camps and gathering places of the men living on the streets. We met Eugene and gave him a sleeping bag and some other items. Eugene had a regular overnight spot in the corner of a metal recycle yard. Walls on two sides provided wind break and a degree of safety since it was back from the street traffic and inconspicuous. The location had an additional feature of considerable value - an outside electrical outlet which allowed him to have a small TV.



*Eugene and Chuck,
Christmas 2004*

I tried to meet with him on a regular basis, which meant standing on the street in the cold of a Minnesota winter. One scene remains imbedded in my memory. It was a very cold afternoon in January with the afternoon shadows beginning to lengthen. Eugene was wearing an undetermined number of layers of clothing and, as always, seemed not to notice the cold. He was pushing a grocery cart loaded with various black bags across a snow packed street and it was no easy job. He insisted that he did not need help to reach the car wash dumpster two blocks away.

As I stood there, visibly shivering with cold in spite of my heavy parka, I found myself comparing the rest of my day

to the rest of Eugene's. I would drive home in a warm car, have supper, kick back for the evening with a book and a cup of hot chocolate. At the same time, Eugene had to be back at the recycle yard before it closed up, crawl under whatever tarps and blankets he had, eat some cold sardines, get his cold boots off to be able to massage and warm his feet to prevent frostbite and wait for morning.

Throughout the winter, I tried to visit him almost every morning with a cup of hot coffee, some sort of breakfast sandwich and the newspaper. There were mornings I could not find Eugene; he moved frequently among the doorways, warehouses, and buildings downtown. Other mornings, I fully expected to find him dead. In fact, I called 911 on one especially cold night and he was taken to the emergency room, dried out, warmed up, and sent back out to the streets.

We worked to convince Eugene to move to a single room occupancy unit, an SRO, if and when one became available. Eugene felt that he was doing fine and there were fellows who needed help more than he did. In the end, his case worker was able to get him a room. The staff expected he would last no longer than a couple weeks. In fact, it turned out much different - Eugene is now one of the favorite residents.

An Easter Story

James Kelley, ILVC Washington DC/Northern Virginia

One of our ILVC volunteer members serves at a day-time drop-in shelter for the poor and the poor in spirit. Late in the season of Lent, he observed a severely mentally ill guest at the shelter admiring a holy card of Christ crucified. Many times the guest snapped his fingers, pirouetted around the room, and talked to his imaginary friends and enemies, but he kept returning to the picture of Christ to admire it.

The volunteer commented to the guest that he seemed to really like the holy card. The guest agreed and, when offered the card, accepted it with alacrity. He turned the card over and pointed to the title, "Prayer of Thanks." The volunteer asked the guest what he was most grateful for. Without hesitation and with a clear voice the guest replied, "The promise of resurrection."

Such faith! Such trust! This guest is truly among the poor in spirit who belong to the kingdom of Heaven!

"Radical Compassion" in Philadelphia

Dan Campbell, ILVC Philadelphia

For the Philadelphia Region, the March City Group was not a typical ILVC monthly meeting of praying and sharing. We had been preparing for discussion of chapter nine 'Jailhouse Prayers' of Gary Smith's book *Radical Compassion*. Lou Naglak, an ILVC Philadelphia member in prison ministry, arranged for the visit of Anthony. Anthony, a former inmate, and Lou became acquainted during Lou's ILVC work. They have maintained a friendly relationship since Anthony was released. Anthony shared his experiences with candor, grace and patience.

Anthony's reactions to life in prison were not positive. He was subjected to harsh and humiliating treatment from both guards and wardens. As one might expect, the emphasis was overly controlling. The fear was that if anything was overlooked, chaos would result. It was, and remains, an onerous system, ever present during Anthony's tenure, and very discouraging to prisoners.

Overwhelmed by his incarceration, Anthony found solace in a Bible study program and his contact with Lou. Anthony, a very articulate man, searched his own mind for answers to explain his confinement. He joined Lou's weekly group and began to read a lot. His favorite books included *Awareness* by Anthony DeMello and *Catholic for a Reason* by Scott Hahn.

For Anthony, the road to rehabilitation started with God's love. He read about forgiveness in the Bible, and thought a lot about guilt and his family. He began to believe that "you can't do it without Christ." Or, as St. Paul said, "I can inform you, the Holy Spirit will transform you." Lou brought the words of Ezekiel into Anthony's story: "I will open your graves and have you rise from them; then you shall know that I am the Lord. I will put my spirit in you that you may live."

Today, Lou is forming a mentoring program at the prison, with the approval and support of the warden. Contrary to the popular belief of 'once a criminal, always a criminal,' Anthony feels that 80% of those in prison today could benefit from education and spiritual growth programs. Both Lou and Anthony agree, "We can be channels for God's work!"

Your Most Important Work May Begin When You Retire

William Buckley, ILVC New York

Bill Buckley is an ILVC volunteer member in Manhattan, a member of the ILVC Board of Directors, and a parishioner at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola in New York City. His reflections are from an article he wrote for the March 6, 2005 parish bulletin.

At the end of 1999, at the age of 52, I retired from a 24-year career on Wall Street. I hadn't spent a lot of time "preparing" for retirement - after all, how hard could it be? I had set up a part-time consulting business and figured it would be easy to fill in the rest of my spare time. I tried some adult education courses. I had high hopes for dramatic improvements in my golf handicap.

What a gift I had been given! I'm sure I'm the first in my family to have been able to retire at such a young age. Yet after two years of this new life I was increasingly dissatisfied. I really wasn't accomplishing anything meaningful. In addition, I had more time to feel guilty about all of my good fortune - a great family, good health and all the material comforts I could want.

Then, I noticed a small listing in the St. Ignatius Sunday bulletin for ILVC. I was initially attracted because I was unsure as to what type of volunteer work I was best suited for. I was hesitant to volunteer with a single-purpose organization without knowing that it would be a good long-term fit. However, the ILVC Regional Director was able to present to me a variety of volunteer choices and together we determined a great fit.

The ILVC experience also includes Ignatian Spirituality. I had no idea what this was all about. While I was a bit embarrassed at the prospect of demonstrating my spiritual immaturity, I was curious to learn more. I was matched with a Spiritual Reflector with whom I meet individually roughly every six weeks. He's very experienced in dealing with spiritual rookies like me and I have found these sessions to be quite helpful. The spiritual component of ILVC is based upon the Exercises of Saint Ignatius Loyola and helps us to see the deeper meaning of our volunteer work.

For the last three years I have been tutoring seventh and eighth grade students at St. Aloysius School in Harlem and I absolutely love it.

While there is plenty of frustration, there are days when I am convinced that I have done more important work than I ever did on Wall Street.

Friends and Supporters of ILVC

We are proud to recognize the individuals and organizations whose generous financial support helps to provide ILVC members opportunities to serve the needs of the poor, to work for a more just society, and to grow deeper in Christian faith by reflecting and praying in the Ignatian tradition. *Listed alphabetically. List represents gifts received between January 1, 2005 and May 27, 2005.*

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 in the Future of ILVC.**

Estate gifts and bequests are investments in the future, helping to continue the work of ILVC today and for generations to come. Like any other investment, an estate gift is an important decision that can give to great personal satisfaction. We would be happy to talk with you or your financial planner about opportunities to make a lifetime gift to ILVC through a bequest, life insurance, retirement funds, or other assets that best serves your interests. Contact Tamara Zavislan, ILVC Director of Development, 888-831-4686 or tzavislan@ilvc.org, for more information.

Faith Sharing

Pat Bush, ILVC San Diego



At St. Vincent de Paul Village, one of the students I tutor is a young woman who seems to be testing me much the same way my daughters tested me when they were teens. She doesn't like the story we're reading, the exercises are too hard, she only likes the easy ones, or she doesn't want to do the drill involving opposites.

Recently I started a session determined to follow the lesson plan point by point. The first drill involved using "less" at the end of each word to create a new word with a different meaning. As she read through the list my student announced that there were two words she was not going to use: worthless and useless. These were words she heard from her father and stepmother when growing up and there had terrible memories attached to them. Now she was working on building her self-esteem and when she found herself saying something mean to her young son, she tried to immediately apologize and to let him know she loved him.

This was the first time my student had talked about her life to me and her sharing moved me. When we came to the sentences that required "useless" and "worthless" we looked at each other and I told her to skip them. This experience changed me. I saw this young woman in a new light. It helped me to let go and to journey with her on her path.

Third National Ignatian Spirituality Conference

SHARING GOD: THE IGNATIAN WAY

Thursday, July 28 – Sunday, July 31, 2005
Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri

Workshops include special presentation on the Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps, with George Sullivan, ILVC Chicago; Kathleen Curtin, ILVC Washington DC/Northern Virginia; and William Buckley, ILVC New York. For more information, contact Saint Louis University, 314-997-8880 or www.slu.edu/conferences/isc/

ILVC Chicago

Joanne Twomey volunteers at the Howard Area Community Center (HACC) on Chicago's north side helping unemployed men and women in their job hunt. After volunteering at HACC and seeing the needs of those she was helping, Joanne sought and received a grant from the USG Foundation (a foundation established by her former employer) to offset the cost of public transportation for job hunters using HACC services.



(Front Row) George Sullivan, Regional Director; Mike Tyrrell, Mike Monnelly, Nina Pierre-Louis, Jean Shea, Maureen Treanor; (second row) Don Gimbel, John Howard, Theresa Stanner, Peter Goschy, Dana Hayes; (third row) Ernie Lausier, Warren Grienenberger, Dan Lynch, Joanne Twomey, Jorge Caicedo; (back row) Mike Schrauth, John Meade, Dick Johnston, Frank O'Hara, Pat Fahey

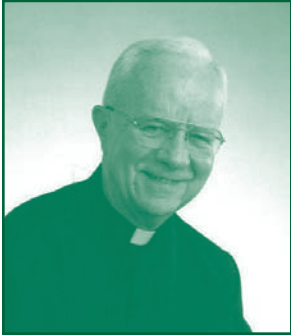
Peter Goschy was recently featured in a story in *Senior Connections*. Peter volunteers at San Miguel school in the Little Village neighborhood, helping the children in the middle school and mentoring young teachers. Peter spoke of being drawn spiritually to the inner city schools when he began teaching in the 1960s during the Civil Rights movement, and of not wanting to be cut off from that when he retired. As Peter notes, "Ignatian spirituality, an inner journey that leads you out into the world, has formed my life."

Dick Johnston was featured on the cover of the annual report of the Howard Area Community Center, where Dick is in his third year of volunteering as he helps in the food pantry, the alternative high school and the energy assistance program.

Jorge Caicedo will attend the Jesuit/Hispanic ministry conference in Omaha on June 13-16. Jorge volunteers at Stroger Cook County Hospital, assisting the Jesuits in their chaplaincy ministry.

Grace and Action

Francis M. O'Connor, S.J.



In the last issue of *Love in Deeds of Service* from ILVC, we reflected on two words, “Experience” and “Wisdom.” These two words, along with two others, “Grace” and “Action”, were used by ILVC’s Jesuit co-founders, Fathers Jim Conroy and the late Charlie Costello, to accurately and succinctly express the vision of the then aborning

ILVC. The four words are still found in ILVC brochures and stationery in various arrangements to capture the spirit of ILVC as envisioned by Jim Conroy and Charlie Costello. Having savored some of the richness of the first two words, experience and wisdom, let’s turn now to the two others, grace and action, and briefly explore their meaning for ILVC today.

Flying last year on British Airways from Lagos, Nigeria, to Baltimore, I passed away some of the hours reading a wonderful book called *The Mystery of Faith* by Michael Himes, a diocesan priest from New York who is presently a professor at Boston College. I found the chapter on “Grace” to be very appealing, expansive and refreshing.

Realizing that in Catholic theology there is no one uniform definition of grace and borrowing perhaps from the profound writings of the German theologian, Karl Rahner, S.J., Michael Himes suggests that grace is simply God’s immense love of creation. Grace is God’s love for everything outside the Godself. In creation God loved everything into existence and that love holds everything in being. The author could have had in mind consoling words from the book of Wisdom: “For you love all things that are and you loathe nothing that you have made.” (Wisdom 11:23-24a). There is therefore no possibility of falling “out of grace” without ceasing to exist. The very existence of every creature is an expression of God’s love. Even the tiniest elements in the universe coming from the hand of the Creator are God’s self-gift, the divine self-communication in creation. This is grace and it has implications for all of us.

Each of us, I suppose, has known moments of darkness when we feel unloved, unappreciated, disheartened, alone. If grace is God’s love for us, we can’t be unloved. Some lines of a poem I suggest to people in spiritual direction say it well:

Come as you are, that’s how I want you.
Come as you are, feel quite at home...
No need to fear, love sets no limits,
No need to fear, love never ends...

I came to bring peace, not to condemn.
Each time you fail to live by my promise
Why do you think I would love you the less?

Come as you are, that’s how I want you.
Come as you are, trust me again.
Nothing can change the love that I bear you.
All will be well, just come as you are.

Grace is God’s acceptance of us as we are. This love leads to gratitude in us. We desire to say “Thank you.” And this gratitude leads to action, doesn’t it?

St. Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises* offers a helpful prayer often called “The Contemplation of God’s Love” or sometimes “Learning to Love as God Loves.” It is a prayer that invites us to recognize God’s love in the countless created gifts we have received; that is, in the grace God has given us in creation. God’s presence in creation is not a static, indifferent kind of presence by a very active, personal, dynamic presence. St. Ignatius suggests that God labors for us in the creation, in every tiny detail. And every tiny detail is the effect of God’s love – that is, grace.

St. Ignatius doesn’t stop there, however. He reminds us that authentic love is always mutual; it asks for a return of love. And true love is expressed not so much in words, but in deeds, in action. The grace, then, that is God’s love for us invites us to mutual and action-filled love. It is gratitude’s invitation to action.

I have often been impressed at gatherings of ILVC members when the volunteers are asked: “Why do you serve as a volunteer?” The typical response is: “I want to give something back.” Underneath the words of that response lies something like: “God has loved me in the many gifts I have received (grace); now I want to say ‘Thank You’ by deeds of service.”

Experience. Wisdom. Grace. Action. Four words that still accurately and succinctly articulate the spirit of ILVC.

Journaling – A Path of Discovery, Part II

The When and How of Journaling

Kay Sempel, ILVC Washington DC/Northern Virginia

In the last issue, Kay wrote about the purpose and benefits of journaling. In part II, she explores techniques and offers insights from her personal experiences.

As members of ILVC, we are encouraged to keep a journal as one means for reflecting upon our work and how God is asking us to use our gifts in service to the poor.

Since journaling is such a personal and intimate expression of creativity, deciding how you record your thoughts and when to set aside time to do it is a matter of personal preference. We each need to find what works best for us. The journal should be kept at the time of day when you are most alert, quiet, and capable of being in tune with your deepest self.

Many people find the first hour of the day is their ideal time to pray and then journal. Some people have a quiet time after the noon meal when they sit down to journal. Others find the end of the work day - say 4 or 5 p.m. - the perfect time to recollect by writing. And for others, the end of the day, that last hour before bedtime is an ideal time for prayer and reflections followed by journaling.

What kind of book makes an ideal journal? Again, it is a matter of personal preference. Some like blank pages, which can be filled with writing, drawings, thoughts found elsewhere and pasted into the book. Others like bound books with ruled pages. There are bound books, spiral notebooks, large, small, fancy or plain. The outside doesn't matter, as long as it is functional and convenient.

There are some people who do not feel comfortable putting pen or pencil to paper. You can journal using a recording device. You can journal using your computer if you know what you record will be private and confidential. Whatever method works for you is the right method for you. It's not HOW you journal but that you gather your thoughts in a way that allows you to revisit them for further reflection.

Your Way...

of keeping a journal is the right way. Your journal should be a place where you can record anything, including the thoughts and feelings you do not wish to share with other people. If you live alone, you probably won't have a concern about others reading your journal. If you live with others, you will need to decide how to insure your journal will remain personal and private.

The most important step is getting started.

Find a quiet spot where you will be uninterrupted. Some like to have music playing in the background as they journal. Others like quiet.

Be honest. Write how you really feel and not how you think you should feel. Record what you really think, not what you believe you ought to think.

Get at the feeling level. You'll get more benefit from journaling if you include your feelings about what happened during the day. You diffuse the feelings by expressing them in a harmless way, begin to see them objectively and perhaps discern their causes and their solutions. Did this situation—person—event make you feel happy—sad—angry—excited—frustrated—fearful—confused—joyful—hopeful—exhausted? It helps to get onto paper all that is joyous and distressing.

Don't take your journal too seriously. Journal writing should never be a grim chore. Think of your journal as a loyal friend. Let your journaling time be a Sabbath time – an enjoyable, quiet time, a gift you give yourself. Think of the solitude connected with journaling as part of the abundant life God wants you to have. Relax with your journal, enjoy.

Begin the Journey

Before writing, take time to be still and quiet, and to pray, asking the Holy Spirit to be your light and guide in this moment. Then, bring to mind and heart your day, your experiences, the people you have encountered, etc.

After allowing time to write about whatever comes to mind, pause, relax, listen, and allow the Holy Spirit to respond. Record what you are hearing in your heart as part of your journal. When you sense that your journaling is “complete” for this moment, end with a prayer - written, spoken, or simply thought.

Your journal can be your best friend, or it can be a little used book sitting on a shelf somewhere.

If you'll give journaling a try for 15 minutes a day for 21 days (psychologists say it takes 21 days to establish a new habit or routine) you may discover the most rewarding “gift” of your life

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