



IGNATIAN LEADERSHIP FOR MISSION ROOTED IN THE GRACES OF THE EXERCISES

In August, the Maryland Province sponsored a retreat that brought together Jesuits with lay colleagues for six days of prayer. The retreat took place at The Jesuit Center in Wernersville, Pa., and the theme was Ignatian Leadership for Mission: Rooted in the Graces of the Exercises. The retreat experience was designed to be a major step forward in preparing Ignatian leaders for the continuing renewal of Jesuit apostolates in service to the world. On these pages you can read quotes about how the retreat affected some of the participants. For more information on Jesuit/lay activities, contact kobrien@mdsj.org.

“The best part of this retreat was the powerful experience of praying together with so many diverse people in varied ministries, all connected by Jesuit institutions and our Ignatian spirit.”

*Helen Cole, SSJ
Holy Name Parish of Camden/JUST*

“I experienced the Paschal Mystery in an unexpected and very concrete, personal way as an interior ‘letting go,’ a surrender of part of myself that needed to ‘die.’ I am already feeling a growth in new life and responsibility for mission and collaboration.”

*Dan Ruff, SJ
Loyola College in Maryland*



Photos by Kevin O'Brien

Retreatants share a meal at Wernersville.

“The retreat has been one of welcome, hospitality and structure. Praying with suggested scripture texts and other selected readings that reference the grace prayed for each day, plus having time for this purpose is an absolute gift from God.”

*Rose M. Wright
Holy Cross Parish, Durham NC*

“I have found this retreat to be a great reminder that before we can hope to accomplish anything together, we should begin by praying together. In this retreat, we were able to set aside our own personal agendas to really be open to how God was speaking to us as a group. This experience has disposed us well to any future discussion on collaboration.”

*Brad Hamrlik, SJ
Jesuit Scholastic, Loyola University, Chicago*

“Every day of the retreat offered opportunities to encounter God in this beautiful place. Wernersville is peaceful and serene; there is a certain rhythm to each day – a perfect setting for God to challenge and console my heart.”

*Michele Murray
Loyola College in Maryland*

“For me, the retreat has been a blessing in many ways. It has forced me to slow down physically, emotionally and



Photos by Kevin O'Brien

The Jesuit/Lay retreat included prayer, study and reflection.

even intellectually, to allow me to reconnect with my God.”

*Harry Dammer
University of Scranton in Pennsylvania*

“From the moment I heard about this retreat, I wanted to attend and I sought permission to do so. I have been collaborating with members of the Society of Jesus for many years as an active parishioner at Holy Trinity and now at St. Aloysius. I’ve also engaged in social justice work in El Salvador and Washington, D.C. I guess you could say that I was yearning for a deeper relationship with the Jesuits.”

*Tom Howarth
The Father McKenna Center at
St. Aloysius Church, Washington, DC*

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

A fundamental concept of Ignatian spirituality is “finding God in all things.” God can be found anywhere and everywhere - in the physical world around us, in our experiences and in our interactions with one another. The Creator is infused in all of creation. We acknowledge the basic goodness of creation and God’s accessibility to us. We merely need to dispose ourselves by opening our eyes, our ears and our hearts to this reality. Perhaps “merely” isn’t the best word to use here. It implies a simple action or conscious affirmation on our part. But we know it is not always that easy to recognize God’s presence in the world. Sometimes it seems nearly impossible. The numerous and often necessary distractions we have in our daily lives can obscure anything but the task at hand. Add to this the reality of evil in the world, the headlines reminding us of the pain and suffering around us, and at times it seems absurd to try to find God in all the mess. Nevertheless, St. Ignatius

proclaims that God is present - even in the bad stuff.

In our action-oriented society, there is a danger of treating this as a game of hide and seek. We may mistakenly assume that our task is to go looking for a well-hidden God. But the reality is just the opposite, God is seeking us. Again, we merely need to dispose ourselves to acknowledge God’s presence. A good friend of mine prefers to use the term “encountering God in all things.” To him, “finding” implies action, and it is God’s action, not ours, that brings us to God. In encountering, God finds us.

The Ignatian Leadership for Mission Retreat in August brought 90 lay and Jesuit colleagues together to collectively pray for the graces needed to dispose us for encountering God in the reality we face as partners on common mission. It was a blessing to have the opportunity to step out of our day-to-day surroundings and commitments and have several days of quiet time and reflection. However,

as active partners on mission, we cannot leave this encounter at the door of the retreat house. Nor should we assume that the only way to God is by stepping away from our day-to-day routine. The upcoming Year of Prayer is designed to provide a similar retreat experience in the middle of the nitty gritty of our daily lives.

Our institutions, our Church and our world are in a period of change and uncertainty. We are being called to something new, and we’re not yet sure what that may be. But we know that God is present, even in the uncertainty. Our hope is that the upcoming Year of Prayer will help us prepare for that new world by collectively encountering God where we stand today.

Kevin O'Brien
Director of Ignatian Partnerships