

Special Alumni Issue:

# “Forever Young”

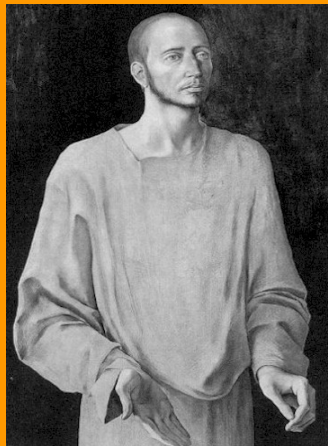
# IGNIS



Newsletter of the Ignatian Spirituality Institute

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Feast of St. Ignatius, July 2010



“The Young Ignatius”

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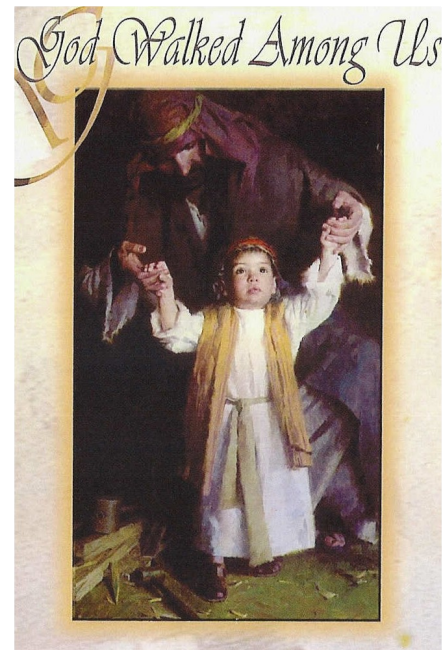
### Message from the Director:

Two years ago, the ISI published its first issue of *Ignis* featuring our alumni/ae, using the theme of harvest to focus on the fact that with three classes certified, the ISI had come of age. The seeds planted in 2003 with the inauguration of the Charter Class had indeed matured, blossomed and borne fruit. Certainly, the same is true today. However this issue will focus on youth, not maturity.

The chief reason is that the focus articles document ISI alums who work with young people, an idea suggested by our Publications Assistant, Megan Wilson-Reitz (who is herself a young person, married to another young person, and with a very young baby). And so Youth became the theme of the whole issue. Some folks sent in pictures of themselves with young people – predominantly grandchildren – which definitely attests to the maturity of ISI grads!

All of this got me reflecting on how in the spiritual life, we are perennially young. We are always beginners at prayer, learning anew how God wishes to interact with us. Ignatius himself said it best. When commenting on his spiritual experiences at Manresa he wrote, speaking of himself, “At this time God treated him just as a schoolmaster treats a little boy when he teaches him” (*Autobiography* 27, trans. William Young, SJ). Shortly afterwards, he, a man in his thirties, was humble enough to attend classes in Latin grammar with young boys. I think many of our alums would agree that going back to school for the ISI was like becoming young again – giving oneself over to learning new and (hopefully) wonderful things!

Last year, Laura Ramella distributed to the 2010 class a wonderful picture of



“toddler Jesus” being taught to walk by his father Joseph. I was quite taken with it, rarely having seen a picture of Jesus as a toddler. I reproduce it here for your pleasure (unfortunately, I do not know the artist – I believe it was from a Christmas card). Jesus too experienced being a baby, a toddler, a young person, learning, as all of us do, the rubrics of living from his elders. He understood the dependence that being a child involved – children need others, and thus they are, for Jesus, the best examples of what it means to be a member of God’s kingdom. “Unless you . . . become like children, you will never enter the kingdom. . . . Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom” (Mt 18:3-4). The spirit of absolute dependence on God is the mark of genuine Christian spirituality. This is a lesson well learned when one begins doing spiritual direction. We are always learning where God wants to lead us and our directees – we learn

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE (CONT.)

how much we need to depend on God – hence we are, in a sense, “forever young.” What a happy thought! Further, children and young people can remind us of all sorts of new possibilities for the future. Life would be drab and much less interesting without the young people we know in our lives.

So I give you our second issue featuring ISI alums. They tell us about their new endeavors and their hopes for the future. Their stories attest to the constant freshness they find in their spiritual direction ministry. In this, no matter how old, they are perennially young! In the Hebrew Scriptures, the vigor of the eagle was

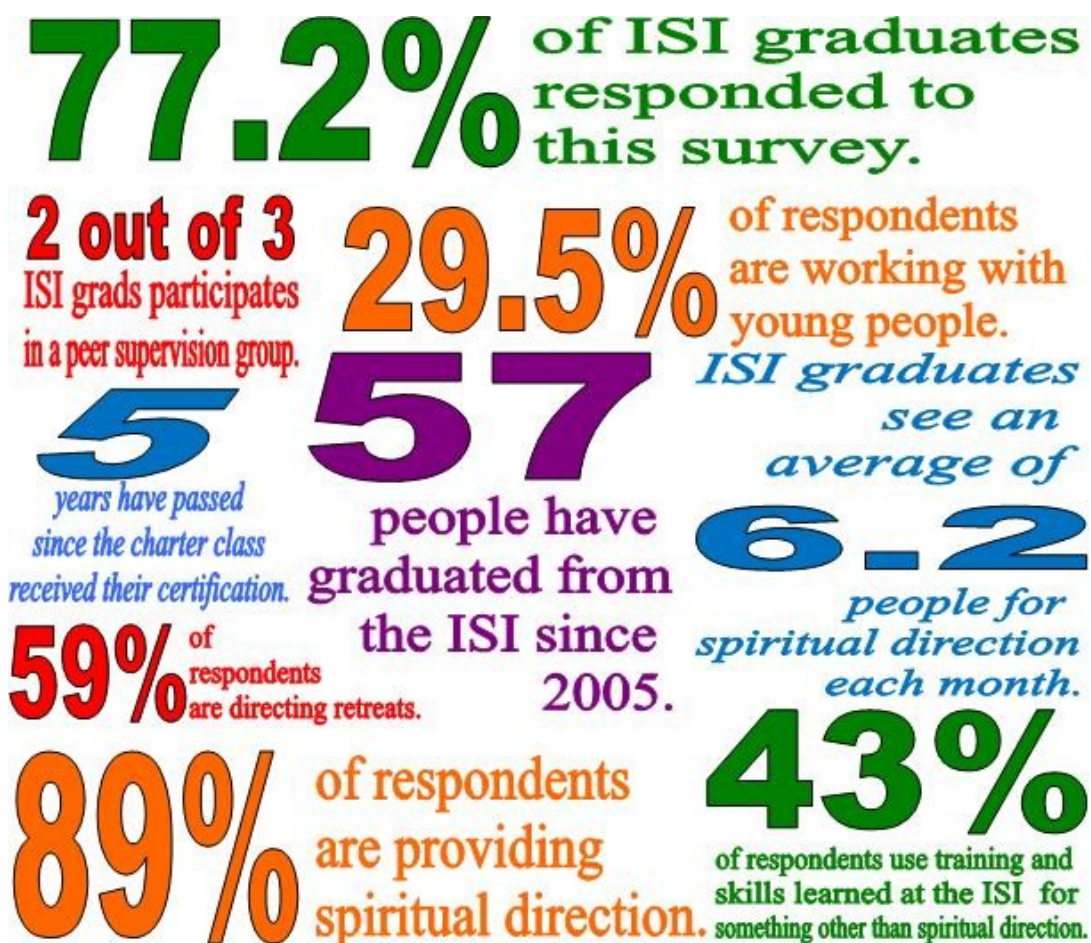
proverbial. Psalm 103 reminds us that God “satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (v. 5). And Isaiah promises, “Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Is 40:31). May it be so. Amen.

Peace and all good things,

**Joan**

## OUR GRADUATES ‘BY THE NUMBERS’

In April of 2010, the ISI sent out a survey to all of its graduates asking them for an update on their lives and work as spiritual directors. The section that follows includes snippets of their qualitative responses. The quantitative responses can be reported in this handful of excellent numbers:



## Charter Class of 2005



### SR. MARY ANN BARAN, SND

"I spend six to eight hours a month providing on-going, individual direction to eight women and men. This year, I also met weekly with one woman making a 19th Annotation retreat. I continue to be awed by how God loves and takes each of us as we are...waits until a directee is ready... and if ready, how God marvelously accomplishes God's work of healing and freeing love in him or her. The horizon in the short term, I think, remains the same: full time teaching and some administration pieces at Notre Dame College and, on the side, a part time spiritual direction ministry."

### REV. BRUCE BATCHELOR-GLADER

"I do ongoing direction with my parishioners through counseling, teaching, and preaching (you know, the sneaky way to direct people). Living out my call in a time of great transition for the world and the church is challenging and also significant. [As for Ignatian spirituality,] I just love those crazy Exercises! If I'd only known how much the Jesuits could have helped me years ago, I might be Catholic today!

Oh, wait! There's still that celibacy thing. Never mind."



### RITA CARFAGNA

"[I am providing] 19th Annotation retreats, leading parish retreats and also providing general direction. [I am also offering the] eight-week [retreat] in the women's prison with the prison ministry group from the Diocese. [My greatest challenge is] continuing to trust that God is doing the directing and keeping myself out of the way! The continued emphasis [in the ISI program] on listening and using evocative questions was always helpful... it has all been essential!"

### SR. MARIAN DURKIN, CSA

"At the present I see three individuals on a monthly basis and will be picking up a fourth directee soon. I worked one Busy Student Retreat since [completing the ISI program]. I am also involved with the Samaritan Women program which supports homeless women. My greatest challenge is not doing enough! I want very much to get involved in the parish retreat program but opportunities have not presented themselves. I belong to a great peer support group. We meet monthly and it is a wonderful support for each of us. I hope to develop a program down the road for Gay/Lesbian Catholics who may wish to explore Ignatian spirituality."



### SHEILA FLYNN

"I am in my fifth year directing all sorts of folks from twenty-somethings to sixty-somethings. I have had several opportunities to direct people other than Catholics. Most recently I worked with a woman from Forest Hill Presbyterian. One thing I appreciate most about this ministry is the diversity. I have done some auditing at Carroll in Ethics to keep current. My own spirituality is being nourished as well in spiritual direction and dream work and a private retreat at the Benedictine Abbey a couple times a year. These hours at Carmel and JCU are my happiest except for the time I spend on my grandchildren, another expected in July."

### EUGENIA GYI

"In the last two years, I have been directing 15 people. I am offering the Exercises in Daily Life in my parish and cluster for the fifth year. Each year I help out at different parishes with the Spirituality Program for Adults. It is a blessing to pray with so many dedicated folks. I am a retreat director for the Busy Student Retreat at Case Western Reserve University and offer days of reflection at the Jesuit Retreat House. My greatest challenge is with students in ongoing direction who are tongue-tied. I always marvel that they are coming back for direction. I am planning to follow the same path in the coming year, [as long as] my energy and health (and the health of my husband) allows me."

*(Photo: IVC Retreat at Franciscan Retreat House in Tiffin, OH—Eugenia in first row, right)*



## TRACKING ISI ALUMS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### MARY KAY JONES

"I am not in spiritual direction as much as I would like to be. My main ministry now, in addition to teaching first grade [at St. Gregory the Great School in South Euclid], is in working with the Office of Catechetical Services. I teach the three courses needed by Catholic school teachers to obtain a religious education certificate necessary for the diocese. What I learned at ISI greatly contributes to my ministry. I use my Ignatian spirituality constantly in my work as a presenter for the Diocese in my role as teacher of catechists." *Photo: Mary Kay surrounded by her first-graders*



### DONNAMARIE KAMINSKY

"I recently finished a ten-week Retreat in Daily Life for a small group of professional women. I was also invited to companion some young women who are in the Capuchin Volunteer program in Cleveland. I am also doing supervision for Joan in the ISI. I really enjoy this dimension of working with new spiritual directors, helping them to find their own style of direction and watching them blossom as they companion others. In the fall I am planning to offer some 'regular programming' at Epiphany Hermitage in Akron. No web page yet...still in the works...but coming soon! I also have a new grandson born on May 24th - Grayson Alexander Kaminsky! to our youngest son Michael and his wife Stephanie. That's number seven and only one girl in the bunch!"



### DARYL KONING

"We have been three years now in New Mexico; nearly every day, yet, we look up at the Sandias bordering Albuquerque to the east, and say something to each other about how much we like it here. I am Human Resources Manager for four US Cotton plants here. I have done some, but little, spiritual direction or retreat work since moving. We think we've found a church home 30 minutes away in a UCC congregation. The first Sunday I visited I walked into an adult education class - about 15 people were engaged in a broad discussion about the divinity of Jesus. I think we're 'home.'"



*(Class of 2005 members Debbie Dacone and John Ropar are featured on pages 11 and 13 of this issue.)*

## Class of 2006

### DR. KAREN BROER

"Over the last two years I have been doing ongoing spiritual direction. I would like to do more spiritual direction; however, other commitments (working at the Cleveland Clinic and teaching at John Carroll) prevent me from doing more. I continue to appreciate the focus on Rahner in the ISI as I see threads of Rahner in what I read and study. The information on human development and faith development has [also] helped. I am helping to plan a program with other Gesu parishioners for an Ignatian year at the parish. I'm open to wherever God leads me at this point in my life."



### SR. MARY ANN BURKE, SND

"I have provided spiritual direction for a number of people. [Some new discoveries have been]: a discernment tool made up for sisters in transition that has been helpful for people in spiritual direction; our peer supervision group; video clips online about spiritual direction; and programs that the Jesuit Retreat House offers. My community provides me with materials, ideas and workshops that I find helpful to share with my directees. This is my last year in leadership [in my community], so I will be in discernment to see where God leads me next."



### PAT CLEARY-BURNS

"Spiritual direction is my full-time ministry. I am currently directing 12 people. Two of them are making the 19th Annotation retreat. I also regularly offer retreats [around the country]: eight-day discernment retreats, Celtic Spirituality weekend retreats, New Year's Eve retreats, and day and weekend retreats focused on the liturgical year. I am on the faculty of the School of Spiritual Direction at the Pecos Benedictine Monastery. My greatest challenge is maintaining the balance of life and spiritual direction needed to be available to the Spirit."



## HARRY FINKBONE

"I presently have 12 directees that I see on a monthly basis. I am now a licensed local pastor in the United Methodist Church, and, this fall I will be picking up my D.Min. studies again, after a one-year hiatus. My life is very busy but full of grace. [My greatest challenge is] keeping up with everything. [My greatest new discovery is] that time is not actually fixed; it expands to accommodate all my tasks! I will [also] become a grandfather for the first time this August."

*Photo: Harry in liturgical garb with a young acolyte.*



## RICH JERDONEK

"[I am offering] individual direction and several group retreat presentations, small group retreats, or workshops each year. These include: 19th Annotation Retreats through the Spirituality Program for Adults at St. Ignatius High School (SIHS); Busy Student Retreats at Cleveland State and Case Western Reserve Universities; directing five people monthly; supervising an ISI student; serving as an animator for the Ignatian Volunteer Corps; serving as a small group leader for the eight week retreat at SIHS; presenting at the SIHS Faculty and Staff Retreat; and co-presenting the Peer Supervision Workshop for the ISI graduating class. I am continuing to discover and am in awe of how God is working dramatically in the lives of so many people and how they are responding to know, love, and serve him and others more."

*Photo: Rich with his newest grandchild, Mac.*

## JANET LEHANE

"I am currently a spiritual director at Saint Ignatius High School. I am the Assistant Director for Spiritual Programs for Adults. I also do spiritual direction at River's Edge and have helped support Maureen Haggerty (ISI '09) with her programs exploring The Universe Story, evolution and spirituality. Most helpful to me in the ISI program was the world of theology Joan shared with us and the focus on the Exercises. I led five people in the 32 Week Exercises this year and see about eight to ten others each week. I continue to be very grateful for the opportunity to become certified at the ISI."



## REV. PETER NIELSON

"I have been seeing three persons for on-going direction and one person for vocational discernment. I am also a student at Ursuline College and recently completed the Pastoral Counseling Theory and Praxis courses. The interface of my work as a spiritual director has been greatly enhanced through this study. I belong to a Supervision group made up of Episcopal Clergy, all having a background in spiritual direction; however, it is extremely difficult to find time together. Change is 'in the wind' for me. Financial ambiguity and mission exploration may totally redefine my ministry. I have often thought of growing my ministry of spiritual direction as we address change."

## DR. ED PECK

"I direct two people for ongoing spiritual direction. I also direct five people for one week as part of the Magis National Retreat program. [My greatest challenge is] carving out time during my day for the direction. I need to set apart 15 minutes before and after sessions. [My greatest discovery is] discovering more experiential material pertaining to the discernment of spirits."



## CAROL ROALDI

"I am not presently involved in Spiritual Direction. I have moved to Florida and am trying to begin the nine-week retreat in my parish. I am a newcomer there - they aren't real sure yet. Hi to everyone!"

## Class of 2007

### JACKIE BLUETT

"I have five directees at this time. I've been blessed to have companioned four people through the Exercises. I am also one of the retreat leaders for 'Praying with St. Ignatius' for the Jesuit Retreat House. I work with low income and homeless [people]. I attend bi-weekly Samaritan Women Ministry prayer groups. My biggest challenge is building a private practice. I now have a room for spiritual direction in my house and hope the Spirit gives me more opportunities. My most joyful times are when I am directing! I hope to find a way to bring 'Praying with St. Ignatius' to more parishes whose parishioners could not usually afford it. I hope to continue helping recovering alcoholics and addicts expand their prayer life through spiritual direction."



### JOAN CARNEY

"Over the past several years, I have been privileged to direct individuals in 19<sup>th</sup> Annotation retreats through JCU and Saint Ignatius High School (SIHS). I have also had the opportunity to work with JCU students making eight-day silent retreats, to present ten-week retreats at SIHS through their Spirituality Program for Adults, and to see several people for ongoing spiritual direction. The greatest challenge is always staying present to the retreatant in a way that both supports and challenges him or her and encourages growing awareness of God's loving presence. The systematic approach to the Exercises [in the ISI] was particularly important for me. The experience of being supervised throughout my practicum was invaluable. [On the horizon,] I hope to continue to direct retreats and present eight- and ten-week retreats to parishes and other groups."



### EILEEN NOVOTNY

"I direct several people for ongoing spiritual direction. [One] challenge is continuing to listen and be still, but I constantly pray to curb all impulses to be a fix-it person. I have discovered that I can do that. Margaret Silf has become one of my favorite authors—a pleasant discovery. I continue to discover things about myself and I continue to be humbled by the honesty and deep faith of the directees. God's love and caring are constants and the process of spiritual direction makes that very apparent. I continually thank God for the ISI. I had started out in another program and I truly believe that the ISI gave me a much better formation and theological foundation for the ministry. Also all the role playing (as much as we hated it) is essential. Joan is the real gift, and the other [instructors] all were excellent."



### NANCY ROWELL

"I am doing both individual and group spiritual direction. Group work is almost weekly with homeless ministry retreats and *lectio*. I recently guided members of the Lakewood Baptist Church in a four-week Ignatian program on prayer. Self-care is my biggest challenge. Working with homeless individuals and hearing their tragic life stories is heartbreaking. Not only homeless but also many individuals have terrible stories and I need to keep a normal sense of distance and detachment. The greatest aspect of the ISI is the supportive community that continues to provide wisdom and encouragement. I am grateful for both the peer supervision group and the supervision group that I have participated in over the year and the loving concern of the individuals in both groups."

*Photo (opposite—see Deborah Zawislan): A recent retreat co-led with other ISI alumnae. (Nancy is in back row, top right.)*

### MARIA SKRABEC

"I have been directing two people in the 19<sup>th</sup> Annotation through the Spirituality Program for Adults (SPA), along with some individual ongoing direction. I find that material used [for the] Spiritual Exercises must be individualized to each retreatant, and presented at [each one's] pace, [so] I am always learning, reading, [and] growing with each new retreatant. The ISI was wonderful in providing excellent resources and training that I turn to often, such as the books and notes used in class. [On the horizon,] I hope to continue at SPA, or wherever God may lead me. This has been such a rewarding ministry."



**DR. MELINDA SMITH, MD**

"I have continued to offer the eight-week Ignatian retreats through my parish once or twice a year and have several people in ongoing spiritual direction. Currently, I have two people I meet with on a regular basis (every four to six weeks) for direction and two others I meet with periodically. My greatest challenges are finding time outside of my medical practice to spend doing direction and to be very conscious, in the midst of direction, to maintain a contemplative stance. My best discoveries are that God really does do the work and I have grown in trust of that over time."

*(Class of 2007 members Andy Kereky and Mary Ann Spangler are featured on pages 10 and 14 of this issue.)*

**Class of 2008****ARLENE (GLADURA) ANDERSON**

"Over the last two years I have worked with approximately five different people. The challenge that I face is getting persons motivated to move to new places, but it is slowly happening. Some who have found it easy to pray for others have had a great deal of difficulty praying for themselves or don't do it at all. As far as what is on the horizon, our church denomination is putting together a pool of Spiritual Directors as part of a program for new pastors coming on board. It will be a mandatory part of their education. I am excited about this as our denomination has not had this type of help for new candidates to the ministry." *[N.B.—You may notice that Arlene's last name has changed. She was married on April 17th of this year. Congratulations, Arlene!]*

**CHUCK HERBRUCK**

"I have been doing very little spiritual direction over the past two years. Currently I have one directee. We meet every two weeks. My greatest challenge is to remember I am not there to fix his problem, but rather to encourage and help with his prayer life and to discover God in his life. *[On the horizon,]* I plan to retire soon! (I hope.)"

**JOANNE SHELDON**

"I volunteer with the Samaritan Women *[helping]* women in shelters, and have also facilitated two eight-week Parish Retreats. I also provide spiritual direction to four members of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps (IVC).

All are new to spiritual direction. My greatest challenge is providing spiritual direction to individuals who had not chosen it and knew little if anything about what it involved; yet it is required of them if they want to participate in the IVC program. It has involved a great deal of explanation and teaching about Ignatius as well as prayer and the Spiritual Exercises. Their challenge presents an excitement as they discover new things about themselves and their relationship with God and continue to seek Him in all things."

**DEBORAH ZAWISLAN**

"I have been involved in directing Busy Student Retreats at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland State University, Oberlin College, and Notre Dame College. I have also been involved in Samaritan Women, a nationally sponsored Ignatian Spirituality Project that ministers to homeless women and women in transition through day-long and weekend retreats. I have also been involved in small group facilitation for the eight-week Lenten Ignatian parish retreats. I meet regularly with my peer supervision group and continue to discern my next steps." *Photo (left): a recent retreat co-led with other ISI alumnae. (Deborah is in bottom row, far right)*



## Class of 2009

**ROBIN CRAIG**

"I am directing someone through a 19th Annotation Retreat and I see a couple of people for monthly direction. My classmate Eric Muller-Girard and I organized a week long Busy Person's Retreat for our home church during Lent. I serve on the advisory board of Pneuma, the spiritual direction training program at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. My big news at the moment is that I graduated from PTS on June 4 with my M.Div., completing an educational adventure that in many ways began with a few tentative questions during my own 19th Annotation Retreat five years ago!"

**ELAINE FECHKO**

"I am directing a group of ladies using the 18th Annotation. We are working on regular prayer and contemplative prayer. I am also part of the Ignatian Spirituality Project group that puts on retreats for the homeless women of our area. The practical experience of direction in the second year [of the ISI] and having a supervisor was most helpful and instructive [and so] I am in a [supervision] group that I feel is a great experience. I am still job hunting, although I have a few strong leads. The Lord willing, I will be serving God in a new ministry soon."

**KATHY HAAG**

"I have been directing one person and helped with an eight-week parish retreat. My greatest challenge is finding people to direct. Most of the people I meet who need directors are entering the Pastoral Ministry process for the diocese of Cleveland. Unfortunately [due to my position at the Pastoral Ministry Office], that could be seen as a conflict of interest. As difficult as supervision [in the ISI program] sometimes seemed, my supervisor helped me grow in ways I am still just discovering."

**BECKI HALLER**

"It is so uplifting to hear about [my directees'] new discoveries...the graces they have received, and how creative they can be in their own prayer life. Everything I absorbed through my experience at ISI has been instrumental in giving me the tools I need to be a good listener, a prayer partner, and a spiritual companion. I am looking forward to offering retreats to homeless women and men soon, as well as offering the nine-week retreat in a local parish and at Loyola Retreat House. My joy is my 10 grandchildren, ranging from 9 months to 12 years!"

*Photo: Becki with granddaughter Lola Sophia*

**MARCIA LEWAN**

"I find [spiritual direction] seeps into my everyday life quite readily through all my relationships. My greatest challenge is finding more people to direct. My best new discoveries have come from participating in our peer supervision group. It's been a great source of support to meet with others and share experiences of like-mindedness. I am so grateful for my experience in the ISI program, my peer supervision group and the treasured relationships I have in my 'ordinary time.'"

*Photo: Marcia with grandson Amir*

**ERIC MULLER-GIRARD**

"I currently have four directees. My best new discovery is the persistence with which God keeps helping me! I serve on a couple of committees at the regional level of the Presbyterian Church. I feel that there is a strong need for our pastors to have spiritual direction made available to them... I wonder if we shouldn't have an ISI referral list [to produce] more 'crossover' pairings of Directors and Directees [by denomination]."

*Photo: Eric waterskiing — "forever young"!*





**AGNES STRADA**

"I've been blessed to accompany two women through the 19th Annotation Retreat, have continued ongoing direction with the three I began directing during my internship, and have added three more. I was also a small group facilitator for a parish retreat. I discovered that I really enjoyed facilitating the small group. It was beautiful to watch the women grow together and support one another during the course of the retreat. I'm looking forward to some 19th Annotations in the fall, and also hope to add a few more ongoing directees."



**JEAN SULLIVAN**

I directed one JCU faculty member through the 19th Annotation during the past academic year. I also co-directed an eight-week retreat. Within my own parish, I worked alongside our pastoral ministers to present two films for discussion. I am more deeply discovering who I am as a director and as a person through a peer supervision group, in which I participate monthly with some of my classmates."



**CARL TOOMEY**

"I have been directing three people. I've [also] been a table leader at two Praying with Ignatius retreats, and have been writing articles about Ignatian Spirituality for my parish newsletter. My greatest challenge is making sure my direction is meaningful to my directees... making sure that what they pray about and what we talk about relates to their real life experience. My greatest discovery is that GOD IS GOOD. At times when I feel lost even in the middle of a session, God always brings me back. Also, it is very true that God is in everything. It's important to be aware of where God is revealing himself to me and to my directee. Something I learned from ISI that I use a lot: when my directee is describing the previous week the question "Where is God in all this?" brings both of us back to the center and gets us headed in the right direction. On the horizon, I would like to design some type of spiritual direction program to help the unemployed."



**MICKY WOLF**

"I meet with three to five people per month. My greatest challenge, at times, is trusting the gut instincts of discernment—the subtle movements of the good spirit—in leading me to offer the kinds of questions or comments the directee can ponder in their own discovery of who they are and where/how God is moving in their life. A pleasant antidote to this challenge is the 'reminder rediscovery' that God always has the best interests of both director and directee in His heart. There really isn't such a thing as an awful mistake when our eyes and hearts are fixed on Him—He uses it all in continuing to mold, shape and lead us in our desire to love, follow and serve Him. What is presently on the horizon for me is writing and program development. I endeavor to take each day step by step and savor the journey, trusting that even those things that may seem to be detours are really great adventures, hidden in the disguise of His Divine touch on the GPS."



**Looking for ways to connect with your colleagues from the ISI? Here are some opportunities!**

**Annual Day of Reunion and Reflection:** An all-day Saturday workshop with lunch, designed for the continuing education of spiritual directors, open to all alumni, current students, and other interested participants. This year we will welcome back Brian McDermott, SJ, on October 23, who will offer a workshop entitled "Famly Systems and Spiritual Direction."

**Annual Certification Ceremony:** All alumni are always invited to attend the ISI certification ceremony to celebrate the new graduates and join us in a reception following the ceremony. This year's date: August 29, 2010. Bruce Batchelor-Glader (ISI '05) will give the address.

**Opening Retreat Wine and Cheese Social:** Join us on at the Saturday evening wine and cheese social for our opening retreat. If you wish, you may spend the night at the retreat house and join us for the Sunday liturgy as well. The dates for this coming year will be August 28-29. Please come. The more the merrier!

**Ignis Jr.—** Our e-newsletter is an easy opportunity for ISI alums and students to keep each other up-to-date on their lives and work, announce upcoming events, issue invitations to retreats and other programs, and share their questions, ideas, or discoveries with their colleagues. Have an announcement, an idea, a question, or a book recommendation you'd like to run past the ISI community? Drop us a line!

## DR. ANDY KEREKY (ISI '07)

*“How can I share this with children?”*

Plenty of books, workshops and retreats attest to the value of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises as a tool to deepen and enrich the prayer lives of adults. On the subject of children’s spirituality, however, most of the Ignatian guides are silent. Can children reap the benefits of the Spiritual Exercises? According to Dr. Andy Kereky, ISI class of 2007, they certainly can. To that end, he has adapted the Spiritual Exercises particularly for children. His adaptation is scheduled to be published in book form by Loyola Press later this year.

Andy developed his adaptation as a part of the practicum experience in his second year of the ISI program. Working with six classes of fifth and sixth graders at St. Raphael School in Bay Village, as well as a group of families at St. Christopher parish in Rocky River, Andy developed two distinct eleven-week retreat models.



Andy’s adaptation places emphasis on two primary elements of the Exercises: the process of the “journey” through multiple weeks, and the identification of particular “prayer tools” such as praying with the Bible, praying backwards through the day [the Examen], and faith sharing.

“Even if they weren’t able to get something from the journey itself, they came away with some tools that they could apply to their prayer life,” he says of the children in his practicum groups. “I knew that I wouldn’t be able to have every one of them turn their life around and become a deeper pray-er. A lot of it was planting seeds to germinate later.”

The seeds of this book were planted long before Andy arrived at the ISI. After his marriage of 19 years ended in divorce, Andy was thrust into life as a single parent to his son, Andrew III, who is now married and living in Cleveland. Once his son was grown, Andy started to ask himself, “what do I do with my life now?” A crisis in his professional career around the same time led him to reconnect with his spiritual life.

“It was like a ‘reawakening two-by-four’ that God finally used to get my attention,” he says, as though God said to him, “I’ve been whispering to you all along, you’ve been ignoring me, now let’s see if *this* helps.” The “whispers of God” finally led him to the seminary, where he began formation for the priesthood.

After four years in seminary, Andy took a year off to participate in a formal discernment process. During that year, he worked in a parish leading children and teens in church activities and retreats. “After that one year,” Andy says, “I discerned that God was calling me to serve the church, but as a layperson. And it seemed like God was calling me to use the gifts I had been given to work with children, to enhance their faith journey.”

With this direction in mind, Andy returned to the seminary to complete his Master’s degree, and then, his doctorate degree. He planned to focus his doctoral program on “deepening children’s spirituality through retreat experiences.” Many years of experience working in children’s spirituality informed his studies. “I had to go through that – knowing what works, what doesn’t, for kids— in order to know what would work as I learned about it.”

These plans for his doctoral dissertation, however, were complicated by a last-minute decision to

participate in an eight-week Ignatian retreat around the same time. “I fell in love with the Exercises,” he says, “and I felt this hunger to learn more about them. That’s when I applied to the ISI.”

He decided to complete the ISI program concurrently with the doctoral program at the seminary. “I treated them as two parallel things,” he says. “Somewhere in the first year, I’m not sure exactly when or how, it became evident to me that there was this opportunity to link the two programs. So my doctoral project became, ‘adapting the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for children.’ Once that happened, a lot of what I was learning in the ISI, I experienced through the lens of ‘how can I apply this to children? How can I share this with children in a way that they can relate to?’”

Andy’s years of experience both as a parent and as a children’s retreat leader helped him to understand which elements of the Exercises would be more helpful for children and which would not be understood. “I was inviting them, pleading with them, to make this part of their life on top of everything they’ve already got going,” he says.

“When an adult does the eight-week retreat, they’re encouraged to pray up to an hour a day. But

children, there’s no way to get them to do that on their own, it’s probably not even healthy. So I say, ‘even if you can build up to fifteen minutes, try it.’ I brought in a 50 pound dumbbell and curled it up over my head, saying, ‘this is like our prayer life – if all we’re doing is an Our Father before bed, we’re probably not going to be able to jump right in and do 15 minutes at a time. But this –’ and I brought out a dinky little half-pounder – ‘this, this, is the way to start. But don’t be afraid to just start.’”

“Just start” is the message he passes along to the many children and adults with whom he works in spiritual direction. It is also the message he is repeating to himself as he puts together his final manuscripts to send off to the publisher. “I’ve not been able to uncover anyone, at least in the US, who has published anything like this,” he says. He wants other children to benefit as much as the children with whom he has worked. “It has made a difference,” he says of their experience. “There are things that have deepened their faith, their connection to the Church. It was just taking from the life experience that I’ve had to guide children to deeper spirituality with God, with the Church, than they had before. And I know that that happened.” Ω

### **DEBBIE DACONE (ISI ‘05)**

“What was I thinking?” Debbie Dacone asked herself, shortly after graduating from St. Mary’s Seminary with a Master of Divinity in Theology. “It was a transitional time for me,” Debbie remembers. “I had loved the stimulation of academia and college life, but I was wondering what I would do now.”

Around this time, the possibility of joining the ISI’s charter class presented itself. She had benefited greatly in her own life from spiritual direction, and the idea of becoming a spiritual director appealed to her. Debbie liked the way the ISI program is structured, with a good balance of academic and experiential knowledge. “The comprehensiveness of this program, including the supervision piece, really appealed to me,” she said.

What she found was a program that was “a lot of fun,” she says. “I loved meeting new people, and the friendships and camaraderie that developed were really good for me. I was extremely grateful for the ISI.”

She was in her first year of teaching at Our Lady of the Elms in Akron by the time classes began in the fall. That led to a pretty full plate. “I was both teaching in school and in school myself. I really wanted to do a good job at both,” she says. “It was a lot, but it was a very nourishing time for me. I found the ISI to be manageable. I was really committed to and invested in this. I made time for the reading and prayer that was expected of me, and I tried not to miss classes. But some of those evenings were exhausting, both mentally and physically. Joan never let us go home early.”

Debbie’s practicum involved working with four JCU students doing eight-day silent directed retreats at the Jesuit Retreat House. She also directed one person through the 19<sup>th</sup> Annotation and did ongoing direction with several individuals. “Going into the practicum, I actually felt pretty secure with what I had learned,” she says. In fact, she says her work with JCU students “was especially satisfying and eventually led to my leaving Our Lady of the Elms and moving to the college environment where I felt my credentials would be better used.”

Debbie has just completed her fourth year as a campus minister at Oberlin College. She loves the energy and creativity of campus ministry. She designs campus liturgies as well as various prayer experiences, retreats and student events. Wherever she goes, her ISI training goes with her. “Whenever I provide retreats or prayer services, any event where I share prayer with students, there are components of Ignatian spirituality there, especially the Examen,” she says. She has many opportunities to share her own reflections, and has even been asked to preach at their liturgies by some of her Protestant colleagues.

“Preaching is not only done at the ambo,” she says. “It’s more than just the Sunday homily.” At the



*“They are moving from what their parents said they should believe to a whole new sense of who God is for them and who they are for God.”*

seminary, Debbie majored in sacraments and liturgy. She wrote her thesis on the possibility of allowing lay preaching of homilies. Her campus ministry has only strengthened this interest, and she has recently applied and been accepted to the Aquinas Institute of Theology’s Doctorate of Preaching program.

In addition to allowing opportunity for preaching, her ministry at Oberlin also allows for one on one spiritual direction of students. “Several of my directees are graduating this year,” she says. “They’ve been with me the entire four years I’ve been here. I’ve also been involved with eight-day

silent retreats with students at Oberlin. During the month of January there are opportunities to do things that are not in the course catalogs. I offer the eight-day and we join up with the JCU group.”

Debbie says one thing she has learned about working with college students is that being flexible with schedules is very important. “These young people are seeking, but not as seriously as an older person might be,” she says. “Schedules may have to be adapted to fit around academics. Another thing I’ve found is that I often have to phrase for them their own questions. They are only beginning to acquire a vocabulary of spirituality. They are moving from what their parents said they should believe to a whole new sense of who God is for them and who they are for God.”

Another big area for young people is discernment. “We move from classes to relationships to careers to where to live next,” she says, noting her ISI training has given her tools to help students sort these things out. “It’s always amazing to me,” Debbie says. “Sometimes you’ll think they are not listening at all, then they will come back and say ‘Remember when you said (this or that)?’ I’ll say to myself, ‘You really heard that?’ There are always surprises.”

“I love my life,” she says. “God is good. When I think about who I am, I am always full of wonder and amazement when I see where I am today. God has been good to me. Nothing trains you better for life than doing the Exercises. I think the ISI, for me, was really good all around.” Ω

## DR. JOHN ROPAR (ISI '05)

*“It’s important to meet young people where they are.”*

Dr. John Ropar, Director of the John Carroll University Counseling Center and member of the ISI class of 2005, admits that when he was an undergraduate at the University, many years ago, he paid very little attention to Ignatian spirituality.

“I was wild and crazy at the time,” he says. “I did not invest myself in that part at all.” He was a different man when, years later, he returned to the University as an employee. He soon began a 19<sup>th</sup> Annotation Retreat with Father Tom Schubeck.

“By then I was in my 40s,” he says. “The 19<sup>th</sup> Annotation exposed me more fully to Ignatius. It began a wonderful time for me, a time for exploring my faith and spirituality. A few years later, Dr. Nuth and Father Steve Krupa recruited me for the first ISI class.”

He says the program was, for him, a truly formative experience. “Even though I was by now in my 50s, this really nurtured my growth,” he says. “Whatever spiritual exploration I had done before really took off as a result of the ISI,” he says. “It became supercharged. Instead of just struggling with my doubts, I was exposed to a more thoughtful and structured exploration.”

John says that now, he is always reading something about spirituality. This summer, he plans to read theologian Elizabeth Johnson’s newest book. “To be able to savor and enjoy this material, to have it be so important, is a gift,” he says. “I never would have become invested with this measure of passion if it had not been for ISI.” But at times the process was difficult.

“Every two weeks I’d have one very late night. Physically, it was quite demanding for me. I had been notorious for going half mast at 8:30 p.m., and those classes ran pretty late,” he says. “It was also intellectually challenging. It was tough stuff, but wonderfully engaging. The ISI is not just an intellectual exploration, which is wonderful in itself, but inevitably it challenges your faith, affirms it in some areas and raises questions in other areas.”

John well remembers his practicum experience,



supervised by Father Howard Gray. “Howard walked on water, for me,” he says. “I had to recognize my own compulsion to perform and have him approve of my performance. And, I’ve always hated paperwork. Even the paperwork that is required for my work as a counselor makes my skin crawl. But the verbatims were an important part of the experience. They help make you thoughtfully reflective. Howard was not there to judge. Howard was completely supportive and affirming.”

In the first few years after his certification, John worked with several exercitants on their 19<sup>th</sup> Annotation retreats, but he was unable to continue due to the demands on his time as a college counselor. He still companions a couple of adult men for ongoing direction, and usually directs a few students in the eight-day retreat sponsored by Campus Ministry. His ministry has taken a different turn with more involvement in campus ministry and immersion experiences.

During those experiences, John partially dons his spiritual director’s hat in helping the students reflect on their experiences. In his counseling work he is aware that some students are seeking spiritual guidance as well

as psychological, and is prepared to bring up the topic if he thinks it is appropriate.

“It’s important to meet young people where they are,” he says. “As a campus counselor, most often the focus is on symptom relief, such as managing depression and anxiety and learning coping skills. If I find, and this is an intuitive thing, that a client is open to it, I might ask where they are in their faith life. I want to find out whether faith is a means of support or something they turn to when they are distressed. At other times the language of attachments and disordered affections might be enough to open a crack. It’s not my agenda, but if I sense that it fits for a given client, then yes, I am open to exploring it.” In the main, though, he says most of the work he does with young people is not spiritual

direction. “In this work, we are mainly mentoring young people and affirming where they are,” he says.

Reflecting on what ISI has brought into his life, John says, “Every day brings new discoveries and challenges. There are always more questions than answers. When I began ISI, I didn’t even know what the term ‘soteriology’ meant, or that there was such a word. Today, some days my faith is challenged, other days my beliefs are challenged. On still other days, it feels like an intellectual hunger – but all the time I have the knowledge that this is an exploration of mystery. The experience is marvelous!” Ω



### SR. MARY ANN SPANGLER, HM (ISI’ 07)

adults.” This permits Mary Ann to provide spiritual direction without cost to young adults.

Two major obstacles prevent most young people from seeking spiritual direction: cost and scheduling. For Sr. Mary Ann Spangler, HM, removing these obstacles is a huge part of her work with young people. A 2007 graduate of the ISI, Sr. Mary Ann’s ministry focuses in large part upon providing opportunities for spiritual direction and retreats for college students and young adults.

Removing the first obstacle, cost, requires a great deal of creativity. In order to provide spiritual direction to young people who cannot afford it, Sr. Mary Ann partners with a number of sponsoring organizations. “It’s because of a lot of collaboration between the diocese, campus ministers and my religious community that I’m able to do this,” she says. “It’s not a stand-alone model.” The Newman Campus Ministry programs of the Diocese of Cleveland provide an “umbrella” under which Sr. Mary Ann is able to provide spiritual direction to college students. When some participants in the Busy Student Retreats suggested to Sr. Mary Ann that a few days of spiritual direction during a retreat “isn’t long enough,” she began to seek out other ways to provide ongoing spiritual direction to these students during and after their college years.

A ministry grant from her religious community, the Sisters of the Humility of Mary, filled in this gap, providing funding for “spiritually companioning young

The second major obstacle for young adults seeking spiritual direction is the problem of scheduling. “I saw a need for somebody who had the flexibility and the availability to be present when the young adults had a need and were available,” explains Sr. Mary Ann. “Their schedules are unpredictable, very full, very compressed, very stressful, and they’re really seeking some face-connections.” She provides these “face-connections” by making herself available at days and times that most spiritual directors would find unusual, if not outlandish.\*

It is worth the hard work, says Sr. Mary Ann, to remove these obstacles, because in spiritual direction, young adults experience so much rediscovery of their faith. “They’re beginning to realize that some of the faith is more complex and they’re sorting out as a young adult. They’re independent from previous family, parish, and school influences, and they’re recognizing that a lot of choices now fall upon them. There are many voices surrounding them that are also strong influences: peers and media, of course, and also educational avenues. When they start studying world religions, it opens up new venues that weren’t an influence before. They need to explore faith as a young adult, questions about how to pray, what does Eucharist mean, what do the sacraments mean, what do I believe as a Catholic? It’s a lot of discernment.”

Discernment for young people is a process that Sr.

Mary Ann knows well. She has spent much of her career working with young people, as a teacher and school administrator, religious educator, and most recently, vocations director for the HM sisters, a position which inspired her to develop her current ministry with young adults. “I see discernment and vocation as ‘broad-based,’” she says. Young adult ministry, she points out, deals with vocation constantly, because young people are always asking, “how do I integrate what I believe with who I am and what I am becoming; how do I integrate what I believe with what I’m beginning to do with my life?”

Sr. Mary Ann came to the ISI in 2005 with young adult ministry in mind. “I really was in transition in terms of ministry,” she says. “I wanted to continue working with young adults in spirituality, and my community thought the training was important.” In her work since completing the ISI, she has found that certain elements of Ignatian spirituality resonate particularly well with young adults. “I’m really using a lot of the materials on discernment of spirits, consolation and desolation,” she says. “I’m also doing a lot with the life of Jesus in Scripture, because I use that as a basis for developing ways to pray. I do a lot of praying with the imagination and senses.” This kind of prayer, she says, is a discipline that many young adults have never experienced.

She has worked with the Jesuit Retreat House to present eight-day silent retreats for young adults, but this requires a great deal of preparation on the part of the participants. “The eight-day is an adult model, requiring a high level of maturity and self-discipline,” she explains. “We did three sessions of pre-meeting before the eight-day retreat in order to provide context. It’s not for everyone.” She has found that for some young adults, two and three-day adaptations of the eight-day retreat are a good introduction at this point in their lives. “Because of the lack of silence in young adults, that’s a very challenging experience for them. It’s not just something they walk into.”

Sr. Mary Ann is also helping young adults build connections within their parish and diocesan context. For the past few years, she has participated in the development of the Coalition with Young Adults (C-YA) in the Diocese of Cleveland. This project is an attempt to nurture young adults’ faith formation as well as encourage greater leadership among young adults. Sr.



*“They’re really seeking face-connections.”*

Mary Ann describes it as “a process, rather than a program.” This development is exciting, she says, because it moves people such as herself into a different kind of ministry. “I now see myself as a resource person, to help young adults make connections. It’s working not only *for* young adults, but *with* young adults.”

What does the future hold for Sr. Mary Ann? For the foreseeable future, she says, more of the same. “I continue to see a great need for journeying with young adults.” Ω

*\*[Editor’s note: during my own undergraduate years at Baldwin-Wallace College, I remember being astonished by Sr. Mary Ann’s willingness to show up for spiritual direction appointments at all hours of the night, usually with a plate of brownies in tow. Her willingness to adopt the odd hours of a college student with good cheer and chocolate made her seem a bit of a saint among those of us who were lucky enough to work with her then. – MTWR]*



On June 7-8, 2010, many current ISI students and alums attended the program at Villa Maria presented by Bill Barry, SJ. The topic was "The Life and Faith of Directors and Its Effect on Spiritual Direction." After the program, the group posed with Fr. Barry (in the back row, sixth from right).

## 'RENEWED LIKE THE EAGLE'

Effusive thanks are in order for ISI staff members Andrea McGovern and Megan Wilson-Reitz, who produced the content and layout of this issue. Both feel "forever young" these days: Andrea welcomed a new grandchild, Billy Martin McGovern, this year, and Megan's little girl, Olive Ellen Reitz, just turned a year old and had great fun "helping" to type much of this issue of *Ignis*.



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