

WORKING ON THE BORDERS

The author is founder and director of the Institute for Spirituality in the Workplace, a spirituality center in the midst of busy New York. Trained in spirituality, she participated in Rome Consultation 2003. She collaborates with Jesuits in their retreat houses, in spirituality in the workplace, and in VENI, an unusual cross-cultural training program in spiritual companionship. She responds to paragraphs 7 and 11, writing from New York.

Reading report on the retreat houses filled me with great joy, gratitude, excitement. It made me feel truly blessed to be an integral part of two vibrant retreat houses in New York that can proudly take their place among the outstanding retreat houses: St. Ignatius Retreat House (“Inisfada”) and Mount Manresa Jesuit Retreat House. Younger retreat directors are no longer a rarity these days: Fr Edward J. Quinnan, S.J., the director of Mt. Manresa and Joseph S. Costantino, S.J., the director of Inisfada, are in their mid-forties, and they bring fresh ideas and an openness to ground-breaking innovations.

At Inisfada in 2000, an Adjuncts Program was introduced by Karen Doyle, S.S.J. and Fr. Quinnan, (on staff at that time). I was one of the first seven lay women who were trained for two years to be spiritual companions and retreat directors. We were given on the job-training with close supervision as well as professional days of for mal training throughout the two years of our internship. We are now among the staff associates of the house, and as such, we can minister as spiritual directors, presenters at retreat weekends, facilitators of prayer and ritual, and directors of the Annotation¹⁹ Retreat. We offer days of prayer, evenings for spiritual growth and formation, and the week of directed prayer in the parishes. We feel we represent a genuine

Jesuit-lay collaboration or partnership.

At Mt Manresa, also in 2000, a Lay Preachers Program was introduced. Articulate and faith-filled retreatants were invited to prepare to give retreat talks. They received training and were assigned to a mentor. When they were ready, they began giving talks as part of the weekend retreats.

In 2002, the New York Province introduced another innovative program at Mt. Manresa: the VENI (from *Veni Creator Spiritus*) Program. A brainchild of Fr. Quinnan, VENI is a two-year program that provides members of various cultural communities a cross-cultural training in spiritual companioning and retreat direction. I am blessed to be able to assist Fr. Quinnan with the cultural component of this project, the only one of its kind in the country.

By training in the context of other cultures, trainees grow in appreciation of their own culture and learn to guide individuals outside their communities. The trainees participate in supervised preparation that develops their gifts and skills, enabling them to return and serve their communities through the ministries of spiritual companioning and the guided retreat. In addition to training in the art and skills necessary for those ministries, cultural sensitivity is developed through presentations and discussions of different cultures and their influence on spirituality. In its first year, the program included two Chinese, a Filipino, four Koreans, two Hispanics, and a Caucasian.

A *different adaptation* of Jesuit-lay partnership has been demonstrated by Mt. Manresa by informally “adopting” the Institute for Spirituality in the Workplace, Inc., giving it an office and a home in the retreat house. In return, the Institute works with Jesuits, uses Jesuit retreat houses as venues for its activities, and spearheads and supports much-needed fund-raising efforts.

I founded the Institute for Spirituality in the Workplace in 1997 on realizing the very real need for developing spirituality in the workplace. The catalyst for this was a very dear friend who found herself at the helm of a billion-dollar business after the untimely death of her husband. The institute was incorporated in 1999 and got its 501(c) 3 status [a tax-exempt entity] in 2001, with a Jesuit (Fr. Quinnan), an international businesswoman (Loida Nicolas Lewis, Esq.) and myself composing the initial board of directors.

Although the institute is open to other forms of spirituality, its primary goal is to bring ignatian spirituality to the workplace. Unlike similar organizations that focus on company heads and managers, the institute aims

to touch all personnel, from the very top to the very bottom of the organization. Its initial offering was a weekend retreat, at the end of which I felt the need to nurture the fruits of the retreat further. As follow-ups, I scheduled monthly evening recollections (which became bi-monthly Saturday recollections in the Institute's third year) around themes from the four Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises, but geared towards the workplace. Each recollection had 5 components: a talk given by a Jesuit, discussion, Ignatian meditation or contemplation, prayer, and fellowship.

I could not describe what I felt I wanted for my retreatants until I heard Fr. General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach mention "incarnated spirituality" in the talk he gave at the Rome Consultation 2003. I realized that what I wanted was for those who experienced the Spiritual Exercises in the weekend retreat to be, in Fr. General's words, "enabled by the Spirit to make those choices which Christ made, and to make them now in our historical situation." I wanted them "not to stop observing the prerequisites of the Exercises when the retreat ends but to continue observing them long into the future." I believe that is what we should work and pray for in our retreat ministry.