



MISSION MUSINGS

A Monthly Newsletter Celebrating the Jesuit Tradition and Mission Activities at JCU

Some jottings on prayer...

Howard Gray, S.J.

Prayer will be a pervasive active interest for many of the faculty and staff at JCU during the 2004-2005 academic year. There will be some who have volunteered to join the Detroit Province lay-Jesuit prayer groups. Many other faculty and staff are making one or other directed retreats offered through the Ignatian Spirituality Institute. Others have banded together to follow up on the Heartland/Delta IV gathering of May '04. In the light of these I thought that it might be helpful to jot down a few notions about Ignatian prayer.

First of all, the Ignatian presumption is not that people have to be exhorted to pray but rather that most people have a long established communication with God. God has been present and active in the histories of most men and women. People have been saying prayers since childhood. People have been reflecting over the ethical and religious meaning of their lives without making a big deal out of it. Moreover, people have been praying in all kinds of ways: through music, through art, through nature, through sufferings and joys, through informal discernment about what work to do, whom to marry, and when to have children. In other words, everyone has a spiritual history, a story that includes conversation with mystery, the divine, Jesus, Mary, or the higher power that guides their conduct, or the puzzlements of human existence. There are all kinds of ways to talk about being prayerful. The first Ignatian guideline to prayer is that God has loved and led us much more than we notice. The Spirit is a humble but powerful partner in the life we lead.

Second, the Ignatian priority is that whoever we are and whatever our successes or failures, God loves us as we are. Forgiveness is not "making up with God." It is turning anew to the love that **never** says, "I am sick of you" or "I only have time for perfect people, holy men and women, the spiritually efficient." God's love is enduring and tough. All Ignatian prayer has two movements: accepting love and learning how to love in return. The *Spiritual Exercises* circle these two realities over and over again as they explore a love that is creative, a love that is reconciling, a love that is a partnership, a love that is accompaniment in our sufferings and in our joys, a love that is a filter or prism through which we see God in all things.



Third, the dialogue of Ignatian prayer is a genuine dialogue, meaning that you learn how to talk to God by talking to God. Sometimes that dialogue needs words. Sometimes that conversation is not verbal but rather in quiet affective movements or in a dark, humble searching for meaning or direction or hope. In other moments that encounter is an overwhelming experience of joy, reverence, or awe. Dialogue is not necessarily verbal but it is always mutual, even the silent God listens with attention and care. This third movement in prayer is where talking with a guide or a soul friend or a companion or (though I distrust the connotations of the word) a director can help people.

The guide we seek to help us pray better can sometimes be found in an article or a book. That article or book may not be explicitly Ignatian but reflect profoundly the divine wisdom and human sensitivity dwelling in every sincere spiritual thinker. Such a guide is Frederick Franck whose essay, "The Stereopticon," is reprinted in *The Best Spiritual Writing of 1998*. I have suggested Franck's essay for the October Monday lunch discussion described on the other side of this issue of *Mission Musings*.

Bagging Ignatius Series '04-'05

What we plan on doing in academic year 2004-2005 is to focus on the life and experiences of Ignatius Loyola, as a pilgrim soul, someone searching for the personal meaning of God in his life and for the direction that God wanted him to follow. The first half of these reflections (from September to December) will examine the narrative he has set out in the so-called "Autobiography," a series of reminiscences dictated to one of his fellow Jesuits. Then from January to May we will look at some great followers of the Ignatian tradition—not all of them Jesuits! — and how they found God in their lives. Please join Howard Gray, S.J. and guests on the following dates:

Thursday, October 21
Thursday, November 18
Thursday, December 16
Thursday, January 20

Thursday, February 24
Thursday, March 17
Thursday, April 21
Thursday, May 12



All talks are at noon in the Murphy Room. Please note though our April meeting will be in the Jardine Room. Drinks and dessert provided. Please call Laurie Frantz at extension 1950 with any questions.

Michele Brown &
Chris Somosi

The Changing Face of the Carroll Cleveland Philosophers Program

By all accounts, Shequitia Harris was one of the toughest students to enter Carroll-Cleveland Philosophers Program at John Carroll in fall 2003. The seventh grader did not want to be in school, let alone in a program that many know as a "last chance." Shequitia was kicked out of class day after day in the beginning of school.

Nine months later, it was a different story. Shequitia's guardian sat proudly with a smile on her face and a look of amazement as Shequitia's name was called time and time again for top academic and behavioral honors at the 2003-04 CCPP awards ceremony on June 9, 2004. At the ceremony **Roslyn Smith Crumb**, the program's director of operations and "mother" of the group, said of Shequitia's transition, "I have never witnessed such a change in attitude as I've seen in Shequitia this year."

Shequitia's success is just one example of the important work that the CCPP, a unique program highlighted in *John Carroll* magazine a year ago, has been doing since its inception in 2000. Some 80 students have gone through this satellite school that provides a safe haven for under-served Cleveland children, a place to continue their junior-high education in an enriching and focused environment.

In an e-mail to supporters of CCPP, the program's director **Dr. Jennifer Merritt** explained sadly in June that the program had become a victim of the Cleveland Municipal School District's (CMSD) budget cuts. The district reassigned the two CMSD

teachers that had been teaching in the philosophers program. "Without 'official' CMSD teachers assigned to our program, we will no longer be legally able to operate a satellite school for the CMSD on the campus of John Carroll," Dr. Merritt explained.

Just as the program's nine seventh- and eighth-grade students will move on to other schools next year, CCPP will move in a new direction as well. This new direction has developed out of a collaborative relationship between the program and **Dr. Sharon Kaye**, associate professor of philosophy at John Carroll, who has taught a weekly philosophy class for CCPP students this past year and a half. Dr. Kaye and her colleague in philosophy, **Dr. Paul Thomson**, plan to expand their curriculum to allow students to experience a more comprehensive immersion into philosophical dialogue. The two will work with **Dr. Krystyna Nowak-Fabrykowski**, assistant professor of education, and Dr. Merritt to study the program during the second term.

The CCPP is currently operating as an a tri-fold program including philosophy, service-learning, and enrichment for 100 juniors and seniors from East High School, one of the district's most under-served schools and students from the Cleveland School of the Arts. Plans are to expand to Jesse Owens Academy and Cleveland Heights/University Heights School District. The students will come to John Carroll each Friday where they will attend a specialized

philosophy class in the morning followed by breakout sessions facilitated by John Carroll students and teachers from East High. On Friday afternoons, the students will participate in the service learning curriculum coordinated by Roslyn Smith Crumb, and throughout the year they will have enrichment opportunities that match their interests.

"We feel hopeful that this change in the strategic focus of CCPP will allow us to grow the program as we continue to benefit from the talent and resources the John Carroll and CMSD communities have shared so generously," said Dr. Merritt.

The keynote speaker for the final CCPP graduation ceremony, **Rev. Val Lassiter**, said in his closing remarks to the students: "Let no one tell you what you cannot do." That advice, while meant for Shequitia and her classmates on their last day of school, seems to be the wisdom that keeps the CCPP growing and evolving at Carroll.



Ignatian Spirituality
Institute

Joan Nuth

The Ignatian Spirituality Institute is a two-year non-degree program which prepares people for the ministry of spiritual direction. Its first class began in fall 2003, and those fifteen students are now engaged in an internship in spiritual direction in various venues. This fall we welcomed fifteen more students. You can read about them on our bulletin board on the Garden Level of the Administration Building just behind the Café.

Eight interns are presently offering the Ignatian eight-week or thirty-week retreat to faculty, staff and students at John Carroll. The response to the retreat was most gratifying; there were more requests than interns to cover them! Nine people are currently making the eight-week retreat, and ten people the thirty-week retreat. Four more are waiting for the spring to make an eight-week retreat. If you are interested in making this spring retreat, please call Mary Thompson (1599) for an application form. We will offer the same opportunity next academic year.



Mission-Focused Monday

Peggy Finucane

Each Monday, staff, administrators, students, and faculty gather to celebrate Mass with Fr. Gray. Following Mass, we adjourn to the student dining hall to share a meal and discussion. On the fourth Monday of each month, we will discuss Fr. Gray's column from Mission Musings. Please join us to nourish your mind, body, and spirit.

Frederick Franck's essay, "The Stereopticon," reprinted in *The Best Spiritual Writing of 1998* is the suggested reading for the October Monday lunch discussion.

If you would like a copy, please contact Laurie Frantz at extension 1950 or lfrantz@jcu.edu.