



IGNATIUS SPIRITUALITY PROJECT

Spiritual Retreats Ending Homelessness



Homecoming by Steven Diogo

I first told my story on a retreat with homeless addicts... though I was living in a halfway house at the time, the retreat master invited me to come along. Once there, he asked me to tell my story. I believed I had nothing to offer. My guilt and shame strove to silence me. My fear choked me... I prayed, "Please let me see that my entire life has been a preparation for this moment." Then I told my story. "My name is Steve, and I am a drug addict..." Nervously, I played with the Buddhist charm that hung around my neck, inscribed with the phrase, "enlightenment is suffering." As I spoke, I felt the truth of that phrase, and the power of community for the first time. My experience began to make sense. For the first time, too, I felt at home... I began to recognize the source of my spiritual homelessness that led me to the streets – For the first time, I felt whole. I felt... And a voice in my heart said, God's love is here.

From "Homecoming" in *America Magazine*,
December 2, 2000.

Who We Are

The Ignatian Spirituality Project began in 1999 when Fr. Bill Creed, SJ was invited to begin making the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius available to people with experiences of homelessness. The *Spiritual Exercises*, a retreat program with some 450 years of tradition, focuses on seeking union with one's higher power through inner freedom.

In our experience, because persons who are experiencing homelessness can struggle with feelings of isolation and hopelessness, retreats are a helpful resource. Our retreat is designed specifically to focus on building community, fostering hope, and finding freedom to spark further transformation.

Who's a Right Fit?

To be successful, the retreats invite candidates with similar struggles. In our experience, people seem best able to benefit from the *Exercises* on retreat when they are:

- In a recovery program
- Sober for about two months
- Capable of sharing their story
- Willing to companion others on their spiritual journey

Openness

People of all faith traditions are welcome on retreat since we do not evangelize or preach any particular faith practices. Similar to 12-Step programs, the participant is welcomed to connect with their higher power as they find helpful. We hope all can arrive with an open mind and open heart.

Is There a Cost?

There is no cost to the participant or your agency. We provide the lodging, food, and transportation. We only ask for your professional discretion to select candidates for our retreats.

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Who's the right candidate?

A Professional's Guide to Discerning Who Should Make a Retreat

A Good Candidate:

- Experiencing homelessness
- In recovery
- Sober for two months
- Ability and willingness to share their story and spiritual journey
- Ability and willingness to listen and appreciate another's story
- Comfortable in multi-racial environment
- In general good physical health

Someone that is Not Quite Ready:

- No experience with or appreciation for the issues of homelessness
- Too newly sober
- Not comfortable sharing in large group and partners
- Not comfortable listening
- Not comfortable in spiritual settings

Check with ISP Staff if:

Your client has a medical condition:

- Which prohibits them from walking up two flights of stairs
- Might prove distracting in large group (sleep apnea, narcolepsy, etc.)

ISP staff are always available for consultation. Thank you in advance for your careful and professional recommendations.