

# Living the JVC Values: Spirituality

Ignatian Spirituality Project fills the need for spiritual food

by Erin Donohue Lanzo (Sacramento, CA 1999-00)

“Food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul.” – Dorothy Day

This observation by the great Dorothy Day speaks to the heart of the mission of the Ignatian Spirituality Project (ISP), an organization for which I am privileged to serve on the Board of Directors. Founded in 1998 by Fr. Bill Creed, SJ and his friend Ed Shurna, past Executive Director of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, ISP offers **overnight retreats and spiritual reflection opportunities** for those who have experienced homelessness and are in recovery from substance use disorder (SUD).

ISP’s approach is unique: it blends the wisdom of Ignatian spirituality and 12-step recovery programs to create and offer experiences of God’s love, hope, and healing to those who need it most. **There is truly nothing else like it out there.** When I was asked to join the ISP Board of Directors, I took some time to discern how and where I could contribute to ISP’s mission to provide spiritual companionship that transforms lives. **The JVC values came in strong!** The first thing that came to my mind was the charity vs. justice question, which has been a constant in my life since JVC. I didn’t want to be part of something that simply made the volunteers and “helpers” feel good about themselves without truly walking with and understanding the lives and challenges of those being “helped.” Luckily, as soon as I got to know ISP and experienced their programming, those fears were wiped away. ISP retreats create community among volunteers and retreatants in a profound way. These deep connections become life-sustaining for those who experience them. In the words of one participant, **“If I hadn’t found ISP, I question whether I would’ve made it.”**

Since my JVC year kicked off a now two-decade career of working at the intersection of behavioral health and homelessness,



I have seen firsthand how dehumanizing and demoralizing the homeless services system can be. I have also been moved to tears by the deep and hard work being done every day by individuals in recovery. **ISP fills a serious need: it provides food for the soul.** This spiritual food is foundational nourishment that individuals rely upon to keep going through hard things. Inviting people into **communities of hope and belonging**, as ISP does, is the antidote to the hopelessness and isolation of homelessness and addiction. The welcoming spaces that ISP creates are a refuge where individuals, each on their own healing journeys, come together to love, embrace, and walk alongside each other in community.

Matthew 4:4 tells us that **we can’t live on bread alone.** The food for the soul that ISP provides is essential fuel on the long and winding road to recovery. **As an FJV, I couldn’t ask for a better organization with which to live out my commitment, begun in my JVC year, to build a more just and hopeful world.**

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**To learn more about the Ignatian Spirituality Project, visit [ispretreats.org](https://ispretreats.org).** Based in Chicago, ISP has a national reach and is celebrating its 25th anniversary. On April 25 ISP will welcome PBS NewsHour contributor and New York Times opinion columnist David Brooks as the featured speaker at their annual Company of Grace celebration. Tickets for this hybrid event are available at [ispretreats.org/cog/](https://ispretreats.org/cog/)

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