

words

Words to Live By

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Jesus was teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath. And a woman was there who for 18 years had been crippled by a spirit; she was bent over, completely incapable of standing erect. When Jesus saw her, he called to her and said "Woman, you are set free of your infirmity." He laid his hands on her, and she at once stood up straight and glorified God. Luke 13:10-13

Brought to the Boston area in 2006 by the Jesuit Collaborative, the Ignatian Spirituality Project recently sponsored its third weekend retreat for women experiencing homelessness and addiction.

The women were invited from several area shelters to come away to "a quiet place... to be still" allowing them to find ways that God is active in their lives and to welcome God into their struggle to stand erect.

One could not help but be profoundly moved by the tears, expressions of gratitude and utter surprise as each retreatant discovered she had her own beautiful room overlooking the ocean as well as a special care basket.

Through prayer, reflective music and silence we began the process of entering into our sacred stories, raw honesty in which the women shared stories of unbearable brokenness, loneliness and abuse. Each in some way was able to share an understanding that God had been in the struggle.

On Saturday morning, one retreatant shared that she often wondered in the shelter what it would be like to "wake in the quiet." "This morning, I woke in an aura of God's peace and I am soooo grateful!"



Pictured at the St. Joseph's Retreat House in Cohasset, Mass., are: front row: L-R Leah, Regina, Trisha. Back row: Kathy, Kathy McGrath, RSCJ (driver), Joanne Driscoll, retreat co-director, Mary Lyman, RSCJ (driver), Marianne, Diana, Norma, Eileen Fortunato, retreat co-director. Mary Beth Joyce (driver not pictured)

There were so many moments throughout the weekend when the spirit of these courageous women moved me, in their utter generosity to lift each other up, their gratitude to all who made the retreat possible, their struggle to continue one day at a time and the myriad ways, with God's help, they are learning to "stand up straight and glorify God."

Joanne Driscoll is the mother of four adult children, who works full-time building the treatment matrix for opioid addictions. She is an associate of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Boston, schooled in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and has been involved with the Ignatian Spirituality Project since its inception.



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