

**Why this special Bulletin?**

The first ever SlgN Conference at High Leigh in October 2006 was a remarkable, inspiring and challenging experience. Once the Core Group saw what the participants had said in their Evaluation forms and the spontaneous messages left on the Flip Charts, they realized that they needed to reflect deeply and see what the membership may be suggesting for the future of SlgN.

So they **started the process of reflecting** at the Core Group meeting 16th November 2006.

They soon realized they needed more than just a short time to do this and arranged to meet for a whole day for **deeper reflection at The Well** on the 13th February 2007.

At the end of that day, **a small group was entrusted to distill all the reflection** and recommend a practical way forward to be presented at the next Core Group meeting. The group did this in **a short paper presented on 19th June 2007**.

It was now time for us to share with all of you, the membership, the fruits of the Conference and these subsequent attempts at discerning the way forward. We believe that there is in all this an invitation for the whole Network to listen carefully to all that has been suggested. The Bulletin does not just set out our recommended Steps Forward, it tries to place them in the context in which they have germinated.

We start on this page with some memories of the **three keynote speeches** at the Conference.

On **Page 2** you will find a summary of the relevant suggestions in the Evaluation forms while those left on the flip charts are on **Page 3**.

Also on **Page 3** we include the distilled shared reflections of the day as guests of Sr Eugenia at *The Well* in North London.

Finally on **Page 4** we set out the practical recommendations made by the working group and which were approved at the Core Group meeting in June.

The Core Group offers this to you all for your information and reflection. If you feel so moved please let us have your views and suggestions by writing to the Secretary.

**The Core Group**

# Something New Every Day



## Memories and Impressions from the Conference

**T**his talk was remarkable for the new insights on the life and experience of Pierre Favre. Pierre was Ignatius' room-mate in Paris and helped Ignatius with his studies and he was made leader of the group as they journeyed from Paris via Venice to Rome. It was fascinating to follow the journeys around Europe that Pierre Favre accomplished in the 7 years from 1539 to 1546. In each place, rich and poor, powerful or weak, made the Spiritual Exercises with Pierre Favre. He preached, gave spiritual direction, helped form early Jesuit communities (in Germany and Spain and in Portugal) taught in Germany, undertook missions to Emperor Charles V as well as being a papal ambassador to the Portuguese Court. In the talk Fr Gero spent time describing Pierre Favre's spirituality, the evident Carthusian influence, his internal struggles, his low self esteem and dark periods. Much of this comes to us from the *Memoriale* that Pierre Favre wrote during the last 4 years of his life (he died at the age of 40 in Rome on his way to the Council of Trent). Fr Gero described the nature of the book and highlighted for us the most significant traits that helped understand the depth of Pierre's spirituality and the possible reasons for so much confidence placed in him by Ignatius. ....

**Gero McLoughlin SJ**

**F**r Michael talked about *The Mission of Ignatian Spirituality in contemporary Britain*. The challenge was to reflect that the greatest need in Britain today is to re-evangelise the people and society. Many efforts over the last 20-30 years have actually failed and we need to ask ourselves why. He did this by reviewing his experience of the Spiritual Exercises. He recalled how as a young man he joined the Jesuits and in those days the Exercises were done in the early months - some may think that was too early and possibly there is an element of truth in that, but at the same time it gave him a foundational orientation of wanting to go out and live out the mission arising out of the love received.

**Michael Holman SJ**

Fr Michael then reviewed the experience of studying spiritual direction skills and giving the Spiritual Exercises in America. He reviewed the discussions they used to have and the difference in emphasis between how the Exercises were given there and in Canada. Were the Exercises being made too easy? Were candidates actually being directed towards desiring and praying for the grace to be able to suffer with Christ? "Having appreciated what Jesus Christ did for me, am I ready to do his will, live his life, and even suffer because that's what he did? Have we 'gentrified' the Exercises?"

These questions led Fr Michael to review his next experience of the Exercises. This time it was as Headmaster of Wimbledon College and working with others in developing a school ethos and way of doing things that was rooted in the dynamic and content of the Exercises. Finally he referred to his experience during his sabbatical period at St Beuno's and the sharing he had with those giving the Exercises.

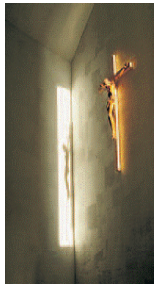
After the talk we asked questions and a number were on the point Fr Michael had made about suffering. He emphasized that he was not "glorifying" suffering in itself

(Continued on page 2)

## From the Evaluation forms

### What can SigN do for you?

- ⌘ Specialised groups at gatherings – using Exercises in other contexts – shared experience of directing 19th Annotation.
- ⌘ Make tangible links with other Networks – proactive in Networking and use of internet. Provide way of networking to share experience. Look at the Epiphany Group model for prayer and working with the Exercises.
- ⌘ Knowledge base for Weeks of Accompanied Prayer – Possible group sessions with input for Weeks of Accompanied Prayer, 8-day retreats, training in approaches to 19th Annotation, feed info re books.
- ⌘ Links and database of ministries.
- ⌘ Closer links with Jesuits, particularly for support in 19th Annotation
- ⌘ Make SigN known in parishes.
- ⌘ Local support groups – meeting monthly to pray, support and training
- ⌘ Keep up the present good work – 2 gatherings.
- ⌘ An association in the North West. ... Hospitality offered in Ireland.
- ⌘ The conference was an inspiration and filled many gaps.



### Where does SigN need to focus for the future?

- ⌘ Recruiting new and young members –evangelising and spreading the word
- ⌘ To do things together as SigN regularly – an annual event eg. pilgrimage to sites in Spain, conference etc. etc. Keep the enthusiasm and dream alive.
- ⌘ Find ways to bond members to continue to give support and inspiration to ministry
- ⌘ Be free to take risks – time to pray and be quiet together at meetings – build and strengthen sub-groups related to SigN
- ⌘ Use SigN days as on-going formation in contemplative prayer for members. Small groups for action! Quality talks related to Ignatian life and conversations.
- ⌘ Expand and deepen understanding of the Exercises – hold on to the authenticity Michael Holman spoke of.
- ⌘ A SigN mission to parishes – expand membership,

share experience, publicise to other Ignatian Networks and beyond.

- ⌘ Re-look at Mission Statement – agreed vision and purpose, goals and aims etc.
- ⌘ Regular conferences (2 or 3 years apart) with balance of input and informal time to consolidate group etc. Have a SigN day with issues raised from the conference to discuss re future.
- ⌘ Further links with the Society of Jesus particularly to support 19th Annotation work ...
- ⌘ Publicity issues /internet / evangelisation

### Memories and Impressions from the Conference

(Continued from page 1)

but he made the point that if while contemplating Jesus and his life we see that to “give life through the Love of the Father” involves suffering, would it not be right to desire, nay pray that I accept suffering if that is what it takes to “continue his mission on earth”.

Gemma’s theme was *Freed for Service: The Spiritual Exercises and Pastoral Imagination*. There is

**Gemma Simmonds CJ**

“spirituality” and spirituality. The current popularity of “spirituality” is good but it is not of much use if it is an alternative to a psychological or psycho-analytical healing. The ultimate purpose of the Spiritual Exercises was always the mission – going out there and carrying the message on.

There needs to be an engagement to “take the Exercises where they have not been before” to the most unlikely places and groups of people. Gemma mentioned the early Jesuits in France giving Exercises to sailors in Marseilles, to servants travelling with their masters. Essential to Ignatius’ approach is to carry the Exercises to where others were not taking the message. She mentioned the success of [pray-as-you-go.com](http://pray-as-you-go.com). She encouraged every one to use their imagination and to have the courage to go in the most “unlikely” places. She mentioned for example some prisons where the Exercises are being delivered; or the case of someone making an election at the end of her Exercises to find a practical way to help other lawyers like her deal with stress. The last part of the presentation was a slide show of mostly Sieger Koder’s paintings that left me feeling enthused to dream the dreams, pray for the courage to find imaginative ways how to take forward the message through the Exercises to where it is most needed. Even to places where it may initially seem so unlikely.

## Reflecting at 'The Well' - Core Group Reflection Day—Tuesday 13th February

After the Conference the Core Group arranged a day together to reflect on the Evaluation sheets that the participants had completed (see page 2). The aim was for the group to pray beforehand on the suggestions and to come to the meeting with their own reflections. This aim was to help the Network move forward and to determine the vision for the future of SIgN. These were the distilled shared reflections of the day

### Suggestions

1. The development of a **web-site** got a resounding YES - All of the following would be enhanced through this.
2. **Promote small groups on a regional basis** - with support from the core group both practical and financial. Suggest possible people and support them to build in situ.
3. **Re model SIgN Gatherings** to encourage (a) reflection together, (eg a place to pray for those who come early etc.) , (b) regional and/other networking etc. It was felt that it is crucial to keep the focus on the Spiritual Exercises as that emphasizes the Ignatian spirit. Maybe we could have the morning for input and the afternoon for networking etc. It seems that the most likely place is London given the make-up of membership. Using the Ignatian Centres - Mount Street and London Centre for Spirituality?
4. **Promote SIgN Quiet Days.** These would be reflective times. Invite people to lead and have them in a variety of places - encourage regional groups. Explore possibilities such as a member's prison ministry maybe. These would be in addition to Gatherings and give

more opportunities for more of members to meet together.

5. Set up **Training Courses/Workshops** to train in the 'Art of Spiritual Conversation' - maybe in the areas around outer London. Central London seems well provided for in Mount Street and London Centre. May be a peripatetic team to go at invitation of regional groups etc.. Enhance skills etc to further Apostolic Ministry.
6. **Future Conference** - Yes possibly at 4-yearly intervals (therefore next 2010). Link to a focus e.g. Scripture and Spirituality. Planning group - encourage representation wider than Core Group with greater involvement of whole membership.
7. **Publicity** to promote SIgN - Explicitly ECUMENICAL at all times; A STRAP LINE FOR SIgN. An input on the Ignatian courses etc. Network among and with other organizations - Epiphany Group, Mount Street Centre, London Centre, Retreat Association and others
8. SIgN Ignatian Pilgrimage for . Possibly Rome or Northern Spain. Gero organising a pilgrimage in 2010 to Northern Spanish sites.

The day concluded by three of the Core Group being asked to take the reflections and distill them further into an Action Plan (see page 4).



Another Sign conference!

"Where will each one of us be in 10 to 20 years time ? ... Where, then, will SIGN be in 10 to 20 years time ?"

Interest in realisation of the links with Carthusians

European aspect of Pierre Favre's connections ... Sign to follow this example?

A SIGN Ignatian trip to the Holy Land ... Or Monserrat ... Or Loyola

Need for gathering and networking is vital ... More opportunities to socialise at Sign Days ... Can

gatherings be midweek and on a Saturday every year? ... A NigN (North West ?)

Apostolate of compassion of Pierre Favre...Links with Servites who are encouraging a ministry of compassion Or others

Ministry to children : how to encourage silent encounter ...

Advice/help from other members re teenagers

Free twelve months membership of SIGN for New SD students and newly fledged directees

How can we pray contemplatively in a busy world/life ?

## A Plan of Action The next stages of the journey

The Report

Following the Core Group day reflection at The Well (see page 3) Sr Eugenia (Geraghty) and Diana (Tear) met with Margaret (Palladino) to formulate proposals for the future.

'In presenting this report' said Diana, 'we believe that some clear and workable suggestions have now emerged from the Conference last October, from our Day of Reflection on the Conference at The Well in February and from the subsequent Working Party in May.

'In conclusion we feel that this is a shared vision which hopefully will be accepted by all members of SigN. We pray that this in turn will lead not only to a deepening of our own faith and love, but also enable us to play our part in the Apostolic ministry as described in the Spiritual Exercises and the continuing growth and development of SigN.

We considered all 8 items and have made proposals for all. However we have prioritized for action items 3, 4 and 6. We feel the website is underway and the action on 3,4, and 6 will utilise this greatly.

**SigN Gatherings (3):** We propose that we utilise the London Centre, (with the addition of St Mary Woolnoth for the morning input) for Spring gatherings and Mount Street for Autumn gatherings. This really keeps the ecumenical in focus and supports the London Ignatian Centres

We suggest an one-page guidance for negotiating with speakers detailing general needs, including building in reflection time (Andrew's model for Spring gathering recommended) . Possibility of area based groupings for afternoon (2)

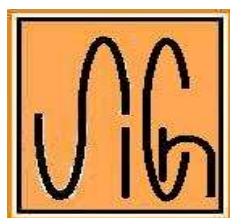
**SigN Quiet days (4).** At the Spring gathering we already received offers to host such days. We propose two Quiet Days for 2008 one in Spring at The Well (Eugenia to host), one in September in Wadhurst (Margaret Anderman to host). Possible leaders Yvonne Walker (The Well) Sue Cash (Wadhurst). Small events, maximum 15 people. Advertise in Autumn newsletter. As these will aim to promote local groups, suggest the day to end with a 'talking tea' Suggest we produce A4 sheet of guidelines for these events. Possible links to Retreat Centres locally and encourage suggestions from members for such events. The days should be self-funding but possible help for leaders' fees. Margaret to contact Margaret Anderman for dates etc.

NB This we consider to be the building block from which a) local groups might begin to be formed (2) and the need for training courses could arise(5) We did feel we should not be creating without an actual need or purpose identified. Suggest too we explore the idea of **joining Retreat Association** and listing etc in magazine (link to their website and retreat centres for events etc.)

Propose we **plan a conference for 2010 (6)**. Beginning of October Tuesday - Thursday at High Leigh. Small group to begin preparation now. Broaden group as necessary eg treasurer etc. Link person from previous conference (possibly Eugenia) plus new core group member plus one or two others. Scripture and Spiritual Direction. Possible speakers Nicholas King SJ, John Rackley (Baptist) and one other (woman Anglican?)

**Publicity(7)** Suggest the organisation of distribution of information might be part of the role of the secretary. Once a year to send publicity and to organise the date for a visit to possibly year 2 of Ignatian course. A member of the core group to go. Provide an A4 Guideline sheet of information. Also to send publicity to appropriate places once a year (Retreat Association, Mount Street, London Centre, etc. etc.) We did not feel particularly able to further logo or strap line!!!

Expanding the vision - we thought it would be good to consider a SigN pilgrimage to Loyola and/or Rome possibly in 2012. We did feel it important to check out with Gero concerning his in 2010.



### JOURNEYING TOGETHER IN THE IGNATIANT SPIRIT

The **Southern Ignatian Network** is a membership organisation and registered charity drawing members mainly from the south of England . It provides a means for people for whom the Spiritual Exercises are fundamentally important to:

- meet together on a regular basis
- grow with support from each other and from the resources provided, in their various works and ministries
- exchange news and information
- develop their understanding of the Exercises

**We're on the web:**  
[www.signuk.net/](http://www.signuk.net/)