

The LIMEX News

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE LIMEX ALUMNI AND STUDENTS OF THE DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

VOLUME 8 ISSUE NUMBER 1

FALL 2009

NORTHERN GROUP GRADUATES

“Come Celebrate Our Great Joy!” So read the greeting on the LIMEX graduation program from the Northern Region. A joyful occasion it was indeed, as six graduates received their certificates on August 8th at Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Hannibal. Under the guidance of facilitators Heidi Buda and Charlene Mitchell, six students were guided through the LIM learning process. The graduates and their areas of study are (left-right):

- ∞ **Deanna Hall**, St. Mary’s Oswego—Pastoral Life
- ∞ **Kathy Andolina**, Holy Trinity, Fulton—Christian Spirituality
- ∞ **Marion Green**, St. Mary’s Oswego—Christian Spirituality
- ∞ **Kathleen Emmons**, Our Lady of the Rosary—Religious Education
- ∞ **David Babcock**, St. Augustine’s Baldwinsville—Religion and Ecology
- ∞ **Sister Francis James**, Sisters of St. Francis—Religion and Ecology



Class of 2009

All of the graduates thought the LIMEX experience was life changing. Some of their reflections on the program are:

- “It expanded my view of what ministry truly is.”
- “It allowed us to share our knowledge and spiritual gifts with each other, building community.”
- “LIM is a very strong path for *beginning* a journey to deeper levels of faith.”
- “Providing time and space for God and experiencing for ourselves the death and resurrection of Jesus over and over again is a key experience.”

In planning the celebration, the group all brought their ideas to the table and worked as a cohesive unit. Their unique personalities were manifested in the scripture passages they chose and in their individual reflections. At the students’ request, their facilitators prayed a special blessing over them. A special memorial reading was done for Erin Mahady-Rolfe, who passed away after the first course. The well organized ceremony was uplifting and inspirational. In attendance were many families, friends, pastors, and LIM graduates and facilitators. A string quartet provided appropriate background music throughout the event. After the ceremony, a sumptuous “table of plenty” was offered for all present to enjoy.

As facilitators we are very proud of our group. We know they will go forth and minister with vigor and their new found knowledge. With their abiding faith they will bring their many gifts and the “Good News” wherever the Spirit guides them.

Blessings, Heidi Buda, Charlene Mitchell, LIMEX Facilitators

AND... A NEW GROUP BEGINS

The excitement was palpable at the Harrison Center earlier this month as the newly formed Western Region LIMEX group met for its Orientation session. Led by new facilitator, Theresa May, they discussed how to download the course book and get it printed, how to order their other course books, took some time getting to know one another a little better, and, of course, spent time in prayer. Please keep these new members of the LIMEX community in your thoughts and prayers, especially on Thursdays, from 4:00 to 7:00pm. We know they are in for an incredible journey of faith!

The group members are: *Regina Harty*, Christ the King, Liverpool; *Caryn Crook*, OSF, Alverna Heights; *Margret Ksander*, All Saints, Syracuse; *Paul Loman*, St. Daniel, Syracuse; *Elizabeth Kahl*, St. Augustine’s, Baldwinsville; *Margaret Lawrence*, St. Stephen, Phoenix; *Patricia Hubbard*, St. Mary, Minoa; *Elizabeth Schafer*, Holy Cross, Dewitt and the Western Region Resource Center; *Elvira Grella*, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Syracuse.

A PASTOR'S POINT OF VIEW

I'm *Father Bill Mesmer*, a pastor in the Syracuse Diocese for 22 years. In both my current parish (Holy Family in Vernon and St. Helena in Sherrill) and the many other parishes I have served, I have found the LIMEX participant to be the exclamation point to a lay person's life of service to God's people.

No matter who we are our first step forward is to acknowledge that God wants us here. We also admit that the most fulfilling acts of service are the ones that grow naturally out of our God-given talents, interests and skills. From *this* pastor's point of view, the LIMEX graduate exhibits the axiom: "Be the best that you can be." For sure, my priestly life and work has blossomed in working with such dedicated, knowledgeable and faith filled people. Let me introduce you to three flesh and spirited LIMEX ladies I know and work with.

"I'm *Andrea Slaven*, and if I were to choose one word to talk about LIMEX it would be "relationship". The relational aspect of my faith became clear through my LIMEX experience in three ways; first, my relationship with Jesus grew with new insights, new understandings and many "ah-ha" moments. Second, my relationship with the community grew as I came to new understandings of my role in Church and a new appreciation of the "People of God". The relationships I value the most are those that emerged from our group; the sharing of our many experiences, our faith, and our insights helped all of us to grow spiritually, professionally and personally. Compared to all my other educational experiences...LIMEX was by far the most rewarding."

"I'm *Mary LaForest* and my LIMEX experience was an invaluable opportunity to enhance my ministry as DRE. The process of group learning and sharing stretched my personal, spiritual and professional ideas. The courses promoted more awareness and openness and love for our God, Faith, Church and others. It was an excellent opportunity!"

"I'm *Kathy Sledziona* and as I look back at my life and ministry as a catechetical leader before I began LIMEX to the ensuing years after LIMEX, I know that I have changed. In the days before LIMEX, I remember thirsting after knowledge. I wanted to "do it right!" I wanted to serve as a DRE with the education credentials and credibility that the title deserves. I wanted to back-up my convictions with proof...and substance. My personal search for God, for meaning and purpose in my life led me to seek a program that could help me to accomplish my goals. After looking into other possibilities, LIMEX came out on top! LIMEX quenched my thirst for knowledge, formation and personal growth. The friendships that were made throughout my LIMEX years have been lasting and deep. The process of theological reflection, learned early in my LIMEX journey, has proven to be extremely valuable. I soon realized that I will never fully satisfy my thirst for God...in this life. As I continue my journey through life with hope, with joy, and with courage, facing challenges and adversity, changing, growing, living, I feel that because of LIMEX, I am a better

The Annual LIMEX Retreat—Past and Future

The Annual LIMEX Alumni Retreat was held on May 28, 2009 at Christ the King Retreat Center with 29 in attendance. The day included fellowship, good food and an excellent presenter. Fr. Jerry Katz's presentation, *Living the Sacramental Life: Becoming Bread and Learning to Reconcile* not only entertained but challenged us to look at these two sacraments in a new way. His excellent presentation also helped us push envelopes around a little!

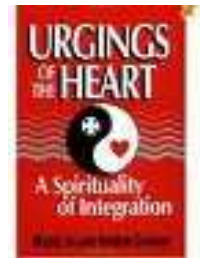
Our 2010 retreat will be held on Thursday, June 3rd at Stella Maris Retreat Center in Skaneateles.

SAVE THE DATE!

Connie's Book Corner

By *Connie Armstrong*

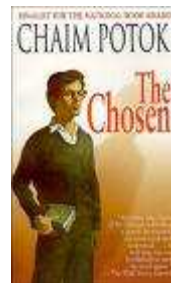
Those of you who have not taken Course Eight (The Personal Context of Ministry) in the last couple of years have missed a great book: *Urgings of the Heart: A Spirituality of Integration* by Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon. "Using stories from a variety of religious traditions, Jungian psychological insights, and pearls of wisdom from spiritual masters, Au and Cannon create a way for all of us to come to self-knowledge and self-transcendence." The book includes chapters on: the shadow self, co-dependency, perfectionism, envy and overwork. If you are looking for growth in holiness and wholeness, this is a great book to read.



Two Classics:

Henri Nouwen's first book on prayer, *With Open Hands* is in its 26th printing. This little book on prayer encourages us to come before God with "open hands" and a trusting heart. "Prayer is a way of life which allows you to find a stillness in the midst of the world where you open your hands to God's promises and find hope for yourself, your neighbor, and your world". (Nouwen)

If you haven't read this book before, read it now. If you read it before, it is worth reading again.



When I was in Barnes & Noble recently (one of my favorite places to be), I noticed a paperback reissue of Chaim Potok's wonderful book *The Chosen*. It is the coming of age story of two Jewish boys, one from a Hasidic family and one with a more assimilated background. It is a story of friendship amid generational and traditional conflict. Potok also gives you a good look into the Hasidic culture. It has been a long time since I read this book but some of its many insights have stayed with me throughout the years.

PROFILES IN MINISTRY – MARY SINNOTT



Mary Sinnott graduated from the Syracuse group in 1994. Since LIMEX she has availed herself of many opportunities to continue her faith formation and her transformation. Mary spent many years as an elementary teacher. After retiring, she had the opportunity to be more fo-

cused on spiritual growth and social justice, two of the ways she feels particularly called.

Mary pursued more education after LIMEX at St. Bernard's in Rochester. The LIMEX experience whetted her appetite to go deeper in studying theology. She delved into the academics of her coursework, but upon reflection, realized that there was something missing from this traditional approach of didactic presentations, research, and papers. LIMEX had introduced her to contextual ministry, and having learned the ability of making connections between new learning and the personal, traditional, institutional, and the cultural contexts of life, Mary missed this process approach to learning.

Mary says of the contextual approach, "I have never experienced anything else like it and I still use the process, which for me is the movement from the head to the heart." There is a saying, "The longest journey you make is from head to the heart in this age of reason". Mary uses the contextual process in her everyday life and brings it to every ministry she pursues.

When doing Campus Ministry at Cortland College, Mary found herself using many of the skills she developed in the learning group, especially in her discussions with the students. She felt she could be present to each person's journey and appreciate the uniqueness and acceptance of different ways of thinking. One of her best experiences at that time was to accompany the students in the area of Social Justice.

LIMEX enlivened Mary's commitment to social justice and it found further expression for her when she lived at a Catholic Worker house. "It was a time of growth in being with people who were in need." The experience yielded a surprising revelation. Mary desired to help those who are serving in this very intense ministry. She saw the need for people to be mindful of nurturing themselves in order to continue to reach out to others in need.

As a result of this intense period of "doing", Mary felt she was being called to a time of "being". And so she found the balance in a hermitage in Ithaca in which she remained,

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW – STEPHANIE PIETRAS

Seattle, Washington! That's where we have tracked 2004 LIMEX Graduate Stephanie Pietras. She told me that "On her 40th birthday she packed up all her belongings and moved clear across the U.S. in search of a new beginning and a position at an agency where her heart has been for years." After much soul searching, prayer and processing, the move to Seattle came with a career offer at a non-profit organization called Multifaith Works.

Before landing her dream job, Stephanie was the Director of Religious Education at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Liverpool where I first met her many years ago. She had a desire to share her faith with others and volunteered as a catechist in the Confirmation program. Quickly she became an integral part of the Confirmation team and her hunger to learn more and grow in her faith was obvious. After completing Basic Catechetical Certification courses it was apparent that God was calling Stephanie to professional ministry – she became the parish Confirmation Coordinator and entered into the Formation for Ministry program for Catechetical Ministry.

It wasn't long after her commissioning when Stephanie was promoted to Catechetical Leader at IHM and entered into the LIMEX learning process. "I had a desire to learn more about my faith, myself and to move forward in ministry... I chose for my concentration – Pastoral Life and Administration. Looking to the future, and 'priestless' parishes. My goal was to be available to the parish in either role."

"My LIMEX experience helped me understand that faith is a journey and there are no wrong turns. When I was a parish DRE, it let the parish know that I was serious about my role and that the children and youth were worth my continued education. Having the parish understand that the DRE position is vital to a healthy parish is key to a good program. My peers and mentors in the Western Region validate that each day."

Multifaith Works, where Stephanie is now, unites communities of compassionate care and inclusive spirituality with people living in isolation and loneliness." Stephanie combines her pastoral care skills and education to assists homeless people, those with substance abuse issues, mental health needs and people with HIV. Stephanie coordinates support services for those in need as well as volunteers who work with them.

In addition, Stephanie is now the Director of Youth Ministry at a small congregation near her home in a very welcoming community. She now has her dream job but her soul is being fed by working with the youth in her community. "I am very excited about this new venture – and may be calling my LIMEXian friends for some resources!"

I am so proud of the work and ministry you are doing Stephanie!

By Theresa May

For more information on Multifaith Works go to:
www.multifaith.org.

LIFELONG AND ONGOING

By Catherine Cornue, Diocesan Liaison

Are you a LIMEX graduate? Are you hungry? Are you thirsty? Do you have cravings for things like small faith sharing groups, Ignatian prayer experiences, thought provoking books, challenging questions, insights from other seekers? Are you interested in focus areas other than the one you have already taken? Then you just might be looking for the ***Advanced Continuing Education Certificate in Pastoral Studies***.

To obtain the certificate, you will complete two different focus areas, for a total of four courses. You can set the schedule of courses to suit the needs of your learning group. Group members do not have to be taking the same focus courses, just as in the original process. It's always an adventure to see how the various focus courses enhance our understanding of our own focus.

There is always a connection.

All you need to start is a group of at least four people, one of whom will act as the facilitator, and a willingness to meet at least three times: once to decide on your other meeting times and place, and twice to share your insights and reflections from your course work. A written assignment is expected for each week and all assignments are mailed to an adjunct faculty member. Tuition is \$375/course, the same as the common curriculum courses.

Interested? Excited? Call me at 315.797.4030 or email me at ccornue@syrdio.org for more information about starting a learning group in your area. What a wonderful way to continue to live out "faith formation is lifelong and ongoing".

Focus Areas and Course Titles:

Christian Spirituality for Ministry

- Spirituality for Ministers
- History of Christian Spirituality

Pastoral Life and Administration

- Parish Life and Ministry
- Contemporary Issues in Pastoral Ministry

Religious Education

- Foundations of Religious Education
- Curriculum Development

Youth Ministry

- Foundations of Youth Ministry
- Adolescent Spirituality and Methods of Faith Development

Hispanic Ministry Education

- Hispanic Experience of Religion and Culture
- Pastoral Ministry in Hispanic Communities

Marketplace Ministry

- Spirituality and the Theology of Work
- Ministry in the Marketplace

Small Christian Community Formation

- Inner Life of Small Christian Communities
- Public Life of Small Christian Communities

Religion and Ecology

- The Universe as Divine Manifestation
- The Emergent Universe: Our Sacred Story



Alumni Anniversary Dinner Celebration

Celebrating **15** years of education and ministerial leadership in the Diocese of Syracuse, New York
on Friday, October 23rd, 2009
at Bella Domani
5988 East Taft Road
Syracuse, NY 13212

For Directions visit: www.belladomani.com

All are welcome! Dinner is \$25 per person with a \$5 discount for members with current Alumni membership. Look for your invitation in the mail or call Theresa May at 472-6753 or email: tmay@syrdio.org to register.

Watch for the Flyer!

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even being isolated from her social network, for 6 months. This quote from Maya Angelou has informed her of how to continue to minister in a healthy way, "A woman in harmony with body, mind and spirit is like a river flowing". So this way of balancing her life has become her way of living.

Mary was trained in massage therapy, and has presented Wellness Workshops for those in ministry. Mary is now a part of the L'Arche community which enables her to live the "seamless garment" of being present to the needs of body, mind and spirit. "For me, it is who Jesus is. He is the ultimate being and has integrated the head, heart and being incarnated in the body. He is the harmony which integrates mind, body and spirit."

LIMEX was the bridge that re-appropriated her traditional Catholic background. "The process gave me new learning tools in communication, a breadth of knowledge, people to support me, self-understanding, and the ability to go deep." Her reflections on the experience after 15 years: "I carry our learning group with me. It has left a heart print on me; it is the wind beneath my wings." As she felt embraced by this group of co-learners, so she now tries to offer the same to others.

Interviewed and submitted by: Marge Babcock