The Beautiful Young Man in the Soupline

by Sonja Brower

On that Saturday morning the soup line was busy. It was at the end of the month, when the numbers of those who come for our early morning breakfast are the greatest. I was serving soup from the large aluminum pot, and even though the line was long, I made a conscious effort to make pleasant remarks to the gentlemen as I filled their bowl. That is what I was there to be—the do-gooder bringing a bit of cheer to the needy in my hometown. I have often been accused of being a person who means well.

Good morning, Sir. The soup’s nice and hot. It’s chilly out today; this ought to warm you up. Yes Sir, it smells good enough to eat.

I looked at them, the gentlemen in line, but I didn’t really see them. They were grim and grey, young indistinguishable from old, dirty and scarred. Some were mentally ill, and some just drunk or drugged out. Some were African-American, some white, some Hispanic, some Asian, but they all really looked the same to me. Anonymous and identical.

Then I saw him—a bright color in the sea of grey. He was a beautiful young man, clean and attractive with clear eyes and smooth skin. Movie-star handsome. He wore a long, stylish coat, well-cut, expensive-looking, and quite new. The Beautiful Young Man stood in line with the grey men and said nothing, but he held out his bowl for me to fill when he approached.

I was dumbstruck. Who was he? Why was this handsome man here, standing in line with the poor and ugly and homeless? Was he a journalist, perhaps researching a story on the indigent in Las Vegas? Maybe he was a wealthy benefactor mingling with the homeless in search of a deserving recipient of his charity? Or could he be a director of some local social service agency seeking firsthand knowledge of the Catholic Worker system? Whoever he was, this Beautiful Young Man certainly did not belong here.

I looked around when I finished my work, but I did not see the Beautiful Young Man again. He was not crouched down on the curb eating his meal with the other men, nor was he standing near condiment tables socializing and drinking coffee. I asked my fellow Catholic Worker volunteers if they had seen him, but they had not. I offered my speculations about who he was and why he was there that morning, but the more experienced of my comrades shook their heads at my naiveté.

He was probably a gambler, they said, as gambling is known to result in such an abrupt change of fortune. Good luck turned bad and he came to the soup line for a hot meal.

Time passed and although I looked for him, I did not see the Beautiful Young Man. I was relieved, believing that his absence meant he was okay. He did not (continued on other side)

Above: Donal Babbitt as a young soldier during the Korean War. Right: Donal in the 1980’s, street person and poet. One poem appears on back. Donal has been a guest and is a friend of the Catholic Worker.

"If I enter the world of touch, The world of compassion, The world of the homeless, the handicapped, the hungry: My whole way of life is in danger of falling apart. I am in danger of entering a world of insecurity."

-Jean Vanier

by Gary Cavalier
We base our salary on Acts (4:34), taking according to our need as the early Christian communities did. We realize that every dollar donated to the Catholic Worker is to help the poor; hence, every dollar we take for our personal “salary” above what we need is a theft from the poor. Our “salary” is based on room (our home utilities, property tax & fire insurance), board (use of donated food), a small weekly stipend of $10 each ($15/week each for our family of four) and the use of the Catholic Worker car.

Monthly “salary” for Julia & Gary:
Each receives:
Room (our home utilities, etc.): $121
Stipend ($30/week): $130
Monthly “take-home”: $251
Other monthly benefits (each):
Major Med. Health Insurance: $81
Social Security payment: $39
Julia and I also have part-time jobs: I do bookkeeping for Nevada Desert Experience and Julia works for the From Violence to Wholeness program of Pace e Bene. This extra income pays for our second car, milk and vegetables, extra home costs, other needs for our boys, etc. We also receive the Earned Income Credit for families that are working but don’t earn enough to pay Federal Income Tax.

FIFTEENTH YEAR CELEBRATION!
Mark your calendars! Saturday August 4: Mass, Dinner and Party! Sunday, August 5, morning service at the Nevada Test Site. More info in next newsletter.

Thank you for your support & generosity!

THE ROSE
by Donal Babbitt
It is only a tiny rosebud, a flower of God’s design, but I cannot unfold the petals with these clumsy hands of mine. The secret of unfolding flowers is not known to such as I, the flower God opens so sweetly, in my hands would fade and die. If I cannot unfold a rosebud, the flower of God’s design, then how can I think I have wisdom, to unfold this life of mine. So I’ll trust in Him for his leading, every moment of this day, and I’ll look to him for his guidance, each step of this Pilgrim’s way. For the pathway that lies before me, my heavenly Father knows, I’ll trust Him to unfold the moment, just as He unfolds the Rose.

Lot Next to Hospitality House Bought
We plan to build a small homeless ministry/retreat center in a year or two.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED
Las Vegas, NV 89106-3039
P.O. Box 728
Las Vegas Catholic Worker

EMPTY BOWLS BENEFIT
A lunch and auction on Sat. April 28 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. will benefit the L.V. Catholic Worker. Each attendee receives a hand-made ceramic bowl. We will send more info to our local readers, mark your calendars!

PLEASING JOIN US:
Wednesday-Saturday, 6:00 a.m.: Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.
Wednesday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m.: Breakfast meal served at St. James Church parking lot (G & McWilliams St.) to the poor and homeless.
Tuesday, 5:30 p.m.: Mass or Liturgy, potluck following. Call for location.
Seven Days a Week: Hospitality (HHN) to 3 to 5 homeless families, call 638-8806 to volunteer.
Last Saturday each month; 8:30 a.m.: Deliver food to homes in need, gather for reflection & prayer, call for info.
PRINTING DONATED BY ACCPRINT