

MANNA *in the wilderness*

December 2015

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

Volume 30, Number 2

SOMETHING MORE THAN FOOD



CHRIST OF THE BREADLINES, WOOD ENGRAVING BY FRITZ EICHENBERG, 1953

by Julia Occhiogrosso

Sunlight breaks through behind the morning skyline. Rays of light rain down, blurring the view of human forms that appear through the windshield. We drive up with the trailer full of soup pots for the morning meal. The silhouetted scene brings to mind Fritz Eichenberg's iconic image of "Christ of the Breadlines."

I am standing now, prepared to serve. As the blurred features of each person come into focus, I see more clearly my

own woundedness, limitations and failings. In the face of the overwhelming stream of suffering that shuffles past with the ladling of each bowl of soup, the smallness of my gesture aches within my heart.

I am comforted finally by the people I am there to serve. Their heartfelt gratitude, humor and encouragement give me the idea that something more than food is being shared in this morning ritual. Perhaps, beyond what I can fully grasp.

Together with the many volunteers that

join us, we continue to be activated by faith in the profound mystery of the Incarnated Christ among us, dedicated to searching out this divine presence through acts of mercy and compassion.

As we approach our thirtieth year of ministry in Las Vegas, we come to you with our annual appeal for support. Our projects continue to be the morning soup line, three hospitality houses, hospitality day services and a food box delivery ministry.

The Son of God was Homeless

Excerpted from Pope Francis' talk at his meeting with homeless persons at St. Patrick's Parish in Washington, D.C.

by Pope Francis

Saint Joseph had to face some difficult situations in his life. One of them was the time when Mary was about to give birth, to have Jesus. The Bible tells us that, "while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Lk 2:6-7).

The Bible is very clear about this: there was no room for them. I can imagine Joseph, with his wife about to have a child, with no shelter, no home, no place to stay. The Son of God came into this world as

a homeless person. The Son of God knew what it was to start life without a roof over his head. We can imagine what Joseph must have been thinking. How is it that the Son of God has no home? Why are we homeless, why don't we have housing? These are questions which many of you may ask, and do ask, every day. Like Saint Joseph, you may ask: Why are we homeless, without a place to live? And those of us who do have a home, a roof over our heads, would also do well to ask: Why do these, our brothers and sisters, have no place to live? Why are these brothers and sisters of ours homeless?

Joseph's questions are timely even today; they accompany all those who throughout history have been, and are, homeless.

Joseph was someone who asked ques-

tions. But first and foremost, he was a man of faith. Faith gave Joseph the power to find light just at the moment when everything seemed dark. Faith sustained him amid the troubles of life. Thanks to faith, Joseph was able to press forward when everything seemed to be holding him back.

In the face of unjust and painful situations, faith brings us the light which scatters the darkness. As it did for Joseph, faith makes us open to the quiet presence of God at every moment of our lives, in every person and in every situation. God is present in every one of you, in each one of us.

I want to be very clear. There is no social or moral justification, no justification whatsoever, for lack of housing. There are many unjust situations, but we know that God is suffering with us, experienc- (see Pope Francis, on back page)

(Pope Francis, continued)

ing them at our side. He does not abandon us.

Jesus not only wanted to show solidarity with every person. He not only wanted everyone to experience his companionship, his help, his love. He identified with all those who suffer, who weep, who suffer any kind of injustice. He says this clearly: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35).

Faith makes us know that God is at our side, that God is in our midst and his presence spurs us to charity. Charity is born of the call of a God who continues to knock on our door, the door of all people, to invite us to love, to compassion, to service of one another.

Jesus keeps knocking on our doors, the doors of our lives. He doesn't do this by magic, with special effects, with flashing lights and fireworks. Jesus keeps knocking on our door in the faces of our brothers and sisters, in the faces of our neighbors, in the faces of those at our side.

Learning to Wait

by Thomas Merton, Christmas, 1966

The heart of man can be full of so much pain, even when things are exteriorly "all right." It becomes all the more difficult because today we are used to thinking that there are explanations for everything. But there is no explanation of most of what goes on in our own hearts, and we cannot account for it all. No use resorting to the kind of mental tranquilizers that even religious explanations sometimes offer. Faith must be deeper than that, rooted in the unknown and in the abyss of darkness that is the ground of our being. No use teasing the darkness to try to make answers grow out of it. But if we learn how to have a deep inner patience, things solve themselves, or God solves them if you prefer: but do not expect to see how. Just learn to wait, and do what you can and help other people. Often it is in helping someone else we find the best way to bear our own trouble.

"Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters. . . Together, we must say no to hatred, to revenge and to violence, particularly that violence which is perpetrated in the name of a religion or of God himself." - Pope Francis, Nov. 24, 2015

DETAIL FROM A WOOD ENGRAVING BY FRITZ EICHENBERG



Dear Migrants and Refugees!

You have a special place in the heart of the Church, and you help her to enlarge her heart and to manifest her motherhood towards the entire human family. Do not lose faith and hope! Let us think of the Holy Family during the flight to Egypt: Just as the maternal heart of the Blessed Virgin and the kind heart of Saint Joseph kept alive the confidence that God would never abandon them, so in you may the same hope in the Lord never be wanting.

Pope Francis, Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2015

**Empty Bowl Benefit:
Saturday, March 12, 2016**

**SOUP LINE CLOSED:
Dec. 30, 2015 - Jan. 2, 2016**

**Thirtieth Annual Christmas
Breakfast for the Homeless:
Friday, Dec. 25, 2015
(Hosted by Knights of
Columbus members)**

**WE NEED VOLUNTEERS
Thursdays: Jan. 7, Feb. 4 & March 3
for Christ the King Hot Dog Party**

PLEASE JOIN US:

Wednesday-Saturday, 6:00 a.m.:
Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.
Wednesday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m.:
Breakfast served to 150-200 poor & homeless people.

Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.:
Hospitality Day, we invite 20 homeless men home for showers, to wash clothes and for a great lunch.

Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.:
Vigil for Peace in front of Federal Courthouse, 333 Las Vegas Blvd. S.

Thursday, 10:30 a.m.:
50 lunches taken to the homeless.

Third Saturday of the month:
Deliver food boxes to homes in need.

The Widow's Mite

by Robert Majors

Give with your left,
Without your right hand knowing.
Give out of faith,
Without favor showing.
This is the treasure
That is most worth owning.
True love of a soul
Needs no trumpets blowing.
Empty your thoughts
Of return or withholding.
Let your intentions
Serve God, pure and holy.
In these you find all;
Abundance, peace and growing.
In this will God's truth
Conquer your fears controlling.

Nearly 1/3 of U.S. Homeless Live in 10 Cities:

New York City	67,810
Los Angeles (city and county)	34,393
Las Vegas / Clark County	9,417
Seattle / King County	8,949
San Diego (city and county)	8,506
Washington, D.C.	7,748
San Jose/Santa Clara (city & county)	7,567
Denver	6,621
San Francisco	6,408
Chicago	6,287
Source: The 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress	