

MANNA *in the wilderness*

December 2018

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

Volume 33, Number 2

From Scarcity to Abundance: Our Humanity Enriched

by Julia Occhiogrosso

You could barely see her from behind the sign, standing at the curb in front of a row of our soup line guests. The words came into focus as we drove up after our summer break: "Welcome Back!! Missed You."

Kathy is one of our main cheerleaders, always ready to share her appreciation and affirmations. She makes her bed on pavement and decorates the chainlink fence she leans on like you might a wall in a master bedroom.

Time and again we witness it: people who have next to nothing, living on the streets, who suffer a deprivation of essentials; who have physical, emotional, and mental disabilities; who endure the constant exposure to weather extremes; who are hassled and robbed; and who are shunned and not welcomed by society. These are the ones who have the capacity to be generous with gratitude, with humor, with kindness, and with hope.

The incongruence surprises our volunteers. People often share that they expected to find bitterness, anger, and a somber environment when they come to feed the hungry. Instead, they find that they are the ones nourished.

I am careful not to romanticize the inhumane destitution we see in our work. This crisis of homelessness should be a scandal to all those who value the sacredness of all life. We must continue to work ceaselessly to do our part to alleviate the suffering of the homeless and hungry.

Remarkably, when we allow these values to lead us to care about the ones on the margins, to those who have been forced to reckon with their powerlessness, vulnerabilities, and mortality, we are the ones to be gifted and filled. Our humanity is enriched as they show us, even in their scarcity, life in its abundance.

Thank you for your financial support, it sustains our work serving the poor and homeless.



DRAWING BY CHRISTA OCCHIOGROSSO

Room for Christ

by Dorothy Day

It is no use to say that we are born two-thousand years too late to give room to Christ. Nor will those who live at the end of the world have been born too late. Christ is always with us, always asking for room in our hearts.

But now it is with the voice of our contemporaries that he speaks, with the eyes of store clerks, factory workers and children that he gazes; with the hands of office workers, slum dwellers and suburban housewives that he gives. It is with the feet of soldiers and tramps that he walks, and with the heart of anyone in need that he longs for shelter. And giving shelter or food to anyone who asks for it, or needs it, is giving it to Christ.

We can do now what those who knew Him in the days of His flesh did. I'm sure that the shepherds did not adore and then go away to leave Mary and her Child in the stable, but somehow found them room, even though what they had to offer might have been primitive enough. All that the friends of Christ did in His lifetime for Him we can do. Peter's mother-in-law hastened to cook a meal for Him, and if anything in the Gospels can be inferred, it is surely that she gave the very best she

had, with no thought of extravagance. Matthew made a feast for Him and invited the whole town, so that the house was in an uproar of enjoyment, and the straight-laced Pharisees—the good people—were scandalized. So did Zaccheus, only this time Christ invited Himself and sent Zaccheus home to get things ready. The people of Samaria, despised and isolated, were overjoyed to give Him hospitality, and for days He walked and ate and slept among them. And the loveliest of all relationships in Christ's life, after His relationship with his Mother, is His friendship with Martha, Mary and Lazarus and the continual hospitality He found with them—for there was always a bed for Him there, always a welcome, always a meal. It is a staggering thought that there were once two sisters and a brother whom Jesus looked on almost as His family and where He found a second home, where Martha got on with her work, bustling round in her house-proud way, and Mary simply sat in silence with Him.

If we hadn't got Christ's own words for it, it would seem raving lunacy to believe that if I offer a bed and food and hospitality for Christmas—or any other time, for that matter—to some man, woman or child, I am replaying the part of Lazarus or Martha (continued on back page)

Life

by Robert Majors

Life
still at night
on the corner of a sidewalk
head in the ground
I get chills
looking at them sleep
It is uncomfortable
making it easy to ignore
But who can?
Snow Birds
Migrate to desert places
cold asphalt beats snow
Begging for candles
on an empty stomach
You've never seen such a smile
when you get a blanket
not a ticket
because you're sleeping on the street
But who can?



Detail from *Christ of the Homeless* by Fritz Eichenberg (1982)

**Knights of Columbus
Christmas Breakfast
for the Homeless:
Saturday, Dec. 22**

**Soupline Closed
December 26 - 29**

**Empty Bowl Benefit
Saturday, March 30, 2019**

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: On first Thursday of the month in front of NNSA building on Losee Rd. (call for parking directions). All other Thursdays in front of Federal Courthouse, 333 Las Vegas Blvd. S.

Thursday, 10:30 a.m.:

50 lunches taken to the homeless.

Second Saturday of the month:

Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast to the homeless (not Dec.).

Third Saturday of the month:

Deliver food boxes to homes in need.

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(continued from front page)

or Mary and that my guest is Christ. There is nothing to show it, perhaps. There are no haloes already glowing round their heads—at least none that human eyes can see.

In Christ's human life there were always a few who made up for the neglect of the crowd.

The shepherds did it, their hurrying to the crib atoned for the people who would flee from Christ.

The wise men did it; their journey across the world made up for those who refused to stir one hand's breadth from the routine of their lives to go to Christ. Even the gifts that the wise men brought have in themselves an obscure recompense and atonement for what would follow later in this Child's life. For they brought gold, the king's emblem, to make up for the crown of thorns that He would wear; they offered incense, the symbol of praise, to make up for the mockery and the spitting; they gave Him myrrh, to heal and soothe, and He was wounded from head to foot and no one bathed his wounds. The women at the foot of the cross did it too, making up for the crowd who stood by and sneered.

We can do it too, exactly as they did. We are not born too late. We do it by seeing Christ and serving Christ in friends and strangers, in everyone we come in contact with. While almost no one is unable to give some hospitality or help to others, those for whom it is really impossible are not debarred from giving room to Christ,

because, to take the simplest of examples, in those they live with or work with is Christ disguised. All our life is bound up with other people; for almost all of us happiness and unhappiness are conditioned by our relationship with other people.

All this can be proved, if proof is needed, by the doctrines of the Church. We can talk about Christ's Mystical Body, about the vine and the branches, about the Communion of Saints. But Christ Himself has proved it for us, and no one has to go further than that. For He said that a glass of water given to a beggar was given to Him. He made heaven hinge on the way we act towards Him in his disguise of commonplace, frail and ordinary human beings.

Did you give me food when I was hungry? Did you give me something to drink when I was thirsty? Did you take me in when I was homeless and a stranger? Did you give me clothes when my own were all rags? Did you come to see me when I was sick or in prison or in trouble?

And to those who say, aghast, that they never had a chance to do such a thing, that they lived two thousand years too late, he will say again what they had the chance of knowing all their lives, that if these things were done for the very least of his brethren they were done for Him.

Dorothy Day co-founded the Catholic Worker movement in 1933. This article is edited from a longer article in The Catholic Worker of December 1945.