

MANN A *in the wilderness*

December 2014

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

Volume 29, Number 2

Nourishing the Body and Spirit

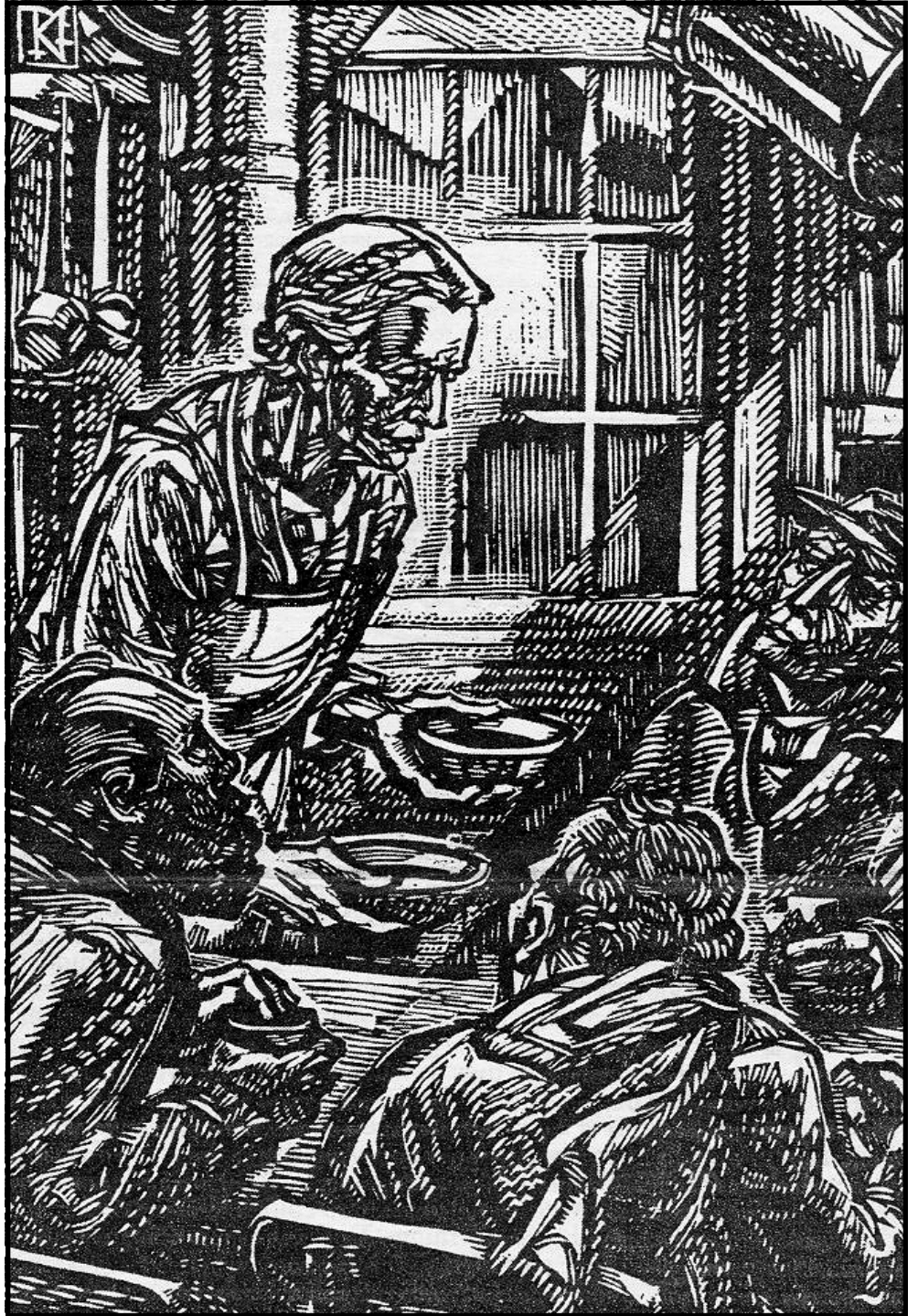
by Julia Occhiogrosso

It is hard to turn away when you know them by name. We pass Eric each evening, retired to his solitary spot under the bridge. Thomas paces on a slab by the D Street off-ramp. Frank wears a face mask over his mouth as he strolls a shopping cart down the middle of the street. Sandra barter cigarettes out the side door of a junky vehicle, piled high with the mess of her life. Gustavo awaits from a distance for the serving to begin. His hollow angry glance is intensified by his sporadic aggressive outbursts.

Most of the guests on our soup line present with a lesser degree of brokenness than those I describe. On any given morning, we the “servers” are recipients of gratitude, humor, patience and generosity from our “needy” guests. With such graciousness it is difficult to remember the daily reality of life on the streets. The struggle to stay safe, the effort to secure meals, the hassle of getting rest and meeting one’s personal needs of health and hygiene. Street life brings the emotional burdens of being estranged, isolated and demeaned.

At the Las Vegas Catholic Worker our intention and hope is that our approach to feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless will help alleviate and heal some part of this burden. Since 1986 we have been preparing morning meals for the hungry. With humble ingredients we strive to create a feast that nourishes both the body and Spirit. And at least for a time while we are together they are in a place where they are greeted with kindness and respect. A place where they are recognized and known by name.

Please help us continue our efforts to care for the poor in Las Vegas. We need your financial support to provide for our ministries.



Robert McGovern

“We cannot love God unless we love each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone anymore.” - Dorothy Day, from *The Long Loneliness*

The Future is None of Our Business

by Susan Schaller

Life is strange and gloriously unpredictable. When I was a teenager, under the illusion that I had any control over the future, I thought I was on my way to studying for medical school and becoming a doctor. Life unfolded much differently. When I was seventeen, a catering truck hit me and my bicycle, putting me in the hospital with a bruised brain. For a while I couldn't read and was excused from all my classes. Bored, I wandered to the nearby university and chose a classroom door at random. As I walked in, I saw the professor signing what looked like Van Gogh or Da Vinci paintings in the air. I fell in love with that visual language and its owners, deaf people. Entering that door changed my life.

Decades later another car accident left me bed-ridden or on crutches, for six months. All my work and ties with deaf people and their superior visual world were severed. I never have regained the access to the deaf community I once had, and my signing has suffered as a result. I've had many days of wondering if I should keep trying, after many failed attempts.

Life's river laughs in gurgles and rushing breath as it takes me through new rapids, around bends, and into new territory.



Lisa Fritz began volunteering with us about six months ago (shown above with Randy). Thursdays became her regular soup line day. Soon she was offering her hairstylist skills and providing haircuts for our Wednesday hospitality guests. Our guests are very pleased to receive their haircuts. The attention and conversation Lisa offers is a special gift as well. A simple haircut can go a long way in communicating care and helping folks feel better about themselves. Thanks Lisa!

Perhaps a river is the wrong metaphor as I was brought to the drought-ridden Mojave Desert at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker where I now live and work, serving food to the homeless. In the first five minutes of my first day on "the line," I saw two deaf men signing. Three days later, I met a third who taught me the sign for *Guatemala*. Now, I sign regularly and am teaching an American Sign Language class at the Catholic Worker where some of my students have served one deaf man for over a decade, and never knew his

Our 29th Annual Christmas Breakfast for the poor and homeless

will take place on
**Thursday, Dec. 25, 2014
starting at 6:30 a.m.**

This year, Knights of Columbus members will cook about 1,920 pancakes, 720 eggs and 480 sausages. We will also cook 120 pounds of potatoes with 18 pounds of gravy, 20 gallons of coffee, 20 gallons of hot cocoa with whipped cream, 5 gallons of tang, along with butter, salsa, syrup, creamer and sugar. Church groups will be giving out wrapped socks as gifts. To volunteer, please call (702) 647-0728 or e-mail: mail@lvcw.org

**SOUP LINE CLOSED:
Dec. 31, 2014 to Jan. 3, 2015**

**EMPTY BOWL
BENEFIT:
March 21, 2015**

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.

name. Instead of a doctor, I became a bridge over a grand canyon between two cultures.

The lesson is obvious and simple, but never easy to remember: the future is none of my business. Deciding who I am or what I **should** do is not my business. I need to let the river steer, trusting the current will carry me. Or, to mix metaphors, my job is to always remember who my employer is, and always be ready to serve where needed.

Susan is the author of the book A Man Without Words, available as a gift, on request. She has been living and working at the Catholic Worker since September.

Abundantly Increased

by Robert Majors

In a field of gravel, glass, and weeds
Await the traveling kings and queens

They are tall and they are lean
Sometimes kind and sometimes mean

With royal blood and great prestige
The road they walk may be unseen

With mercy brief and far between
The King of Kings will give them peace

And I a servant to their needs
To fill their bowl and pour their drink

And even if they do not speak
I cannot help but stop to think

That such a crown it is I feed
To steam machines of noble deeds

And who am I to do these things
To serve their journey is a dream

I'm careful where I lay my feet
I pray the food is good to eat

The more I give, I do receive
And still it grows after I leave

For mercy shown is mercy seen
And seeing that it's shown to me

By people that I've come to meet
I am treated as royalty

Such glory could be God's to keep
But it is spread to us like seeds

To be abundantly increased
That everyone may know and see

That what we do is what we'll be
The seed we sow, the same we reap

Robert Majors lives and works at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker.