

## A VISCERAL REMINDER

by Julia Occhiogrosso

My shoulders feel the weight of the backpack. It is filled with bag lunches: bologna and cheese sandwiches, a can of soda, chips and cookies. They are prepared each week by parishioners from St. John Neumann Catholic Church. A kind gesture that reaches its completion the moment it passes from my hand to the grasp of a hungry person reaching upward with humble gratitude.

It is a weekly ritual that feels both rewarding and empty at the same time. Fulfilling and lacking.

Getting out of the car, and walking to where people are camped, lodged for the night, the day, the moment. It is a visceral reminder of the harshness of the streets. The smells, the noise, the dreariness is heavier than anyone should have to bear.

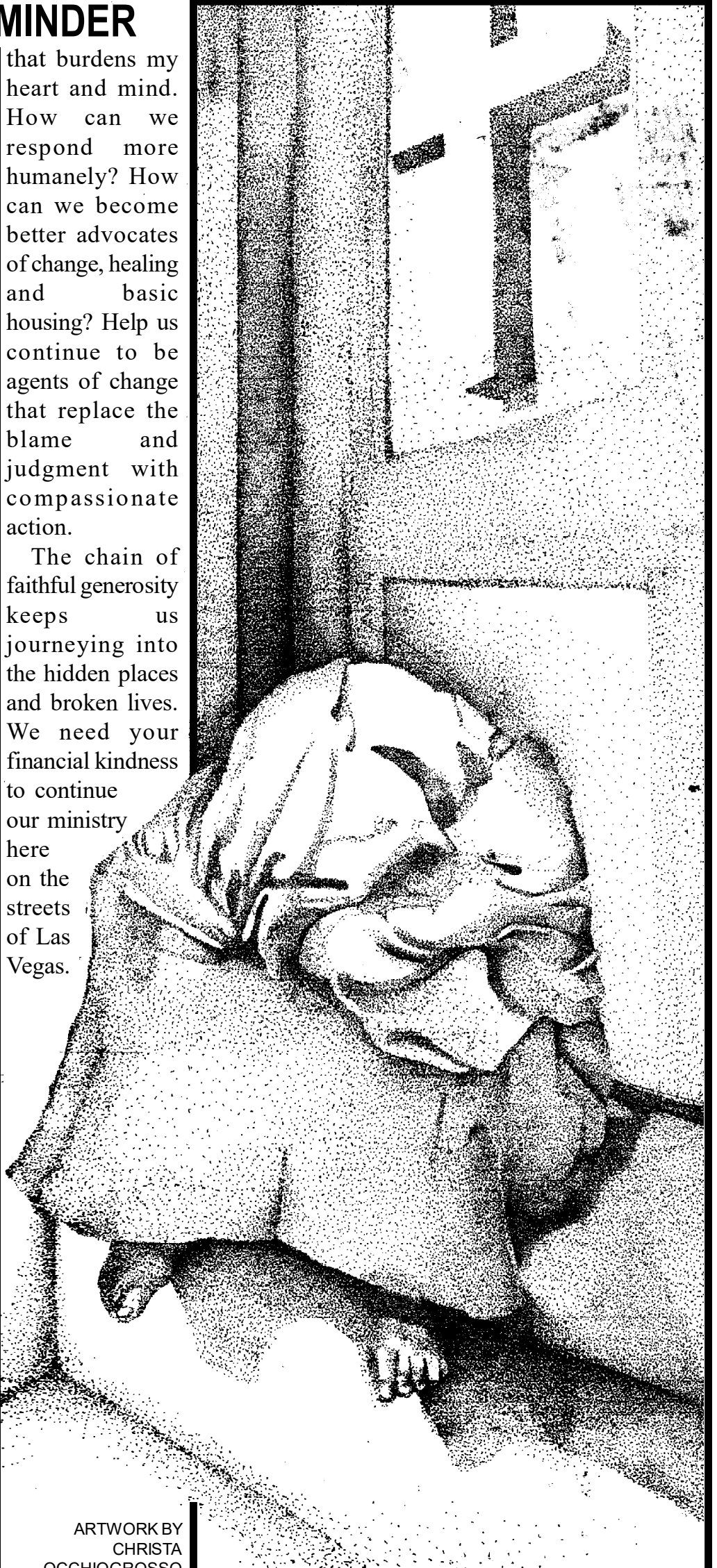
This burden is increased by the uncertainty that haunts anyone who has found a spot on the pavement. At any moment they are vulnerable to being forced to move. We can never count on finding folks in the same place. Recently we were told that we risk being cited for handing out lunches to the people at our usual Casual Labor office stop. We are not permitted to pull into the parking lot anymore.

Walking under the roar of the freeway, through the underpass by the Rescue Mission, I have to remind myself that giving hungry, poor people a sack lunch is not the crime. The dazed woman sleeping beneath a ragged blanket is not “the problem.” The trash I step over, the smells that offend my breathing are not the fault of individual malice. They are signs and symptoms of the human tragedy of homelessness.

As I trace my footsteps back to the car, the backpack is empty now. There is a different heaviness

that burdens my heart and mind. How can we respond more humanely? How can we become better advocates of change, healing and basic housing? Help us continue to be agents of change that replace the blame and judgment with compassionate action.

The chain of faithful generosity keeps us journeying into the hidden places and broken lives. We need your financial kindness to continue our ministry here on the streets of Las Vegas.



ARTWORK BY  
CHRISTA  
OCCHIOGROSSO

## Pope's World Day of Peace 2017 Message on Non-Violence

Pope Francis will dedicate the 50th World Day of Peace message on January 1, 2017 to promote non-violent strategies to prevent and stop global violence. The Vatican announcement for the theme, Non-Violence: A Style of Politics for Peace, offers insight into the pope's forthcoming message:

"Peace ... promotes social positive consequences and it allows the achievement of real progress... We should act within what is possible, and negotiate ways of peace even where they seem tortuous and

impractical."

"Non-violence can acquire a more comprehensive and new meaning. . . It will not only consist of desire, of moral rejection of violence, barriers, destructive impulses, but also of a realistic political method that gives rise to hope."

"If the rights and the equal dignity of every person are safeguarded without any discrimination and distinction, then non-violence, understood as a political method, can constitute a realistic way to overcome [armed] conflicts."



from left: Robert Majors, Laura-Marie Taylor, Ming Lai, John LaLone, Mark Kelso, Gary Cavalier and Julia Occhiogrosso pose in front of the sunflowers and garden.

## The Widow's Mite

by Robert Majors

Through the cold the tires squeak  
in the dark and quiet streets  
a heavy load of food to eat  
hot and warm on trailer seats

a kitchen full of close critique  
measures careful recipes  
through the blood the coffee seeps  
to wake the Worker from their sleep

the people come with joyous words  
happy to be hard at work  
chat about the week at home  
they grab a mitt and help to load

the trailer that is full of drinks  
bounces up and slowly leaks  
the morning sun begins to peek  
to see the grace the trailer brings

busy lines full of life  
decades long with quiet eyes  
watch the life as it arrives  
and brings an ending to its night

they talk about the news this week  
of all the places they have seen  
the walk alone in poverty  
without a home for them to speak

the trailer pulls up to the curb  
its cracking frame and rusting form  
the people come to take its worth  
and set the space to start to serve

bowl by bowl and cup by cup  
the pots abundantly fill up  
to the last grain and the last drop  
to make the thirst and hunger stop

the lines vanish in the lot  
and so does food within the pot  
they load the trailer to depart  
satisfied to do their part

and one last man comes up to eat  
they tell him they are set to leave  
and all the food that they have brought  
has been given and now is gone

and then a man who heard his need  
comes aside the trailer's wing  
and gives the bowl that he's received  
the deed the sun has raised to see

## the one who disappeared

by Laura-Marie Taylor

I dreamt of you  
the way I dream of dead people.  
I saw you in the distance and thought,  
"Is that her?"  
You wore your backpack,  
your black knit hat.  
I admire the way you travel light.

Where have you gone?  
The hospital, the other world,  
moved on to California.  
You like the heat,  
so I thought you'd stay here.  
Maybe your luck ran out.

You're like me.  
I loved you for a short time.  
I remember our park mornings,  
when you shared your blanket with me.  
You explained field hockey.  
I liked the sound of your voice,  
the time you showed me your hair,  
your loveliness.

*Laura-Marie met the woman in this poem at our soup line and later met her while volunteering with Las Vegas Food Not Bombs while they were serving their meal at Huntridge Circle Park.*

**Thirty-first Annual Christmas  
Breakfast to the Homeless  
(Hosted by Knights  
of Columbus)  
Sunday, Dec. 25, 2016**

**EMPTY BOWL BENEFIT:  
April 1, 2017**

**SOUPLINE CLOSED:  
Dec. 28 - 31, 2016**

**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.

**Second Saturday of the month:**  
Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast to the homeless.

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