

MANNA *in The wilderness*

Autumn 1986

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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First, You Must Cross the Desert

by Julia Occhiogrosso

Pinned to the bulletin board above my desk is a card. On the front is a simple drawing of a very small person, looking quite distressed, as he stands with a huge rock on his head. Inside the card reads: "I hear you're under a little pressure lately."

This card was given to me as a supportive gesture when we decided to begin a Catholic Worker in Las Vegas. It certainly dramatizes a state of being which I can easily identify with. I must admit in attempting to meet this challenge there are flickering moments of doubt and insecurity. This flickering however, is rescued by the daily disciplines of prayer and service to the poor. Instead, what prevails in me, is a solid eternal flame, burning with the radiance and strength of the Catholic Worker vision.

A Catholic Worker in Las Vegas represents a blatant social aberration. Just outside of Las Vegas, nuclear bombs are detonated regularly. On the north edge of Las Vegas the homeless are harrassed by arbitrary arrests. Meanwhile, thousands of tourists flock to fortune city; clinging to the illusion of slot machine glory.

Amidst all of this, the Catholic Worker moves to Las Vegas to offer an alternative set of beliefs and values. The Catholic Worker sees the Arms Race as a gross violation of Jesus' eternal law of love. The unwanted homeless poor are welcomed into the Catholic Worker Hospitality Houses. And when confronted by consumerist, materialist lifestyles, the Catholic Worker proposes voluntary poverty.

Central to these values is the Catholic Workers' belief in the Mystical Body of Christ. We are all members of each other; part of one Body in Christ. The Mystical Body of Christ acknowledges the divine presence of God in all humanity. "The illness of hate, injustice, disunion, prejudice, class war, greed, nationalism, and war weaken this

*Las Vegas, city of
tinsel and glamour,
has its poor.*



*The road to Calvary
will lead to resurrection
and new life.*



Mystical Body, just as the prayers and sacrifices of countless of the faithful strengthen it."

The Catholic Worker focuses on building up this Mystical Body, while resisting the forces which tear it down. Through the corporal works of mercy, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned we give substance to this utopian ideal.

The works of mercy challenges us to invite the rejected outcast back into the family of God. They require that we open our hearts to the suffering Christ, present in the faces of the poor and disinherited.

Like Veronica nudging her way through the uncaring crowd on Calvary, we frequently find ourselves on the periphery looking out upon the world's suffering. Yet the Gospels call us to break through the momentum of the crowd, and to reach out selflessly in acts of mercy and compassion. Although our acts may do little to eliminate suffering, they glorify God's loving presence in the world.

In this, our simple acts become the force behind the ultimate redemptive consequence.

As Christians we believe that the road to Calvary will lead to resurrection and new life. In the same way the Catholic Worker challenge to live the radical Gospel message, can give deep joy and liberation. Our life, our work, and our faith are integrated. Community, service to the poor and prophetic action give us wholeness and hope. Living the values of the Kingdom here on earth we are freed from the heavy load of the world's values. Jesus' comforting words come to mind: "Come to me all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads and I will give you rest . . . For the yolk I will give you is easy, and the burden I will put on you is light."

St. John the Baptist House



THANKSGIVING

When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind; and you will be blessed because they are not able to pay you back. God will repay you on the day good people rise from death."
Luke 14. 13-14

Join us in preparing a Thanksgiving feast for our friends living on the streets. Help serve the meal at St. John the Baptist House on Thanksgiving Day, or help by donating the food we need:

Turkey
Fresh Fruit / Potatoes
Pies, Bread
Apple Cider

L.V.C.W. / St. John the Baptist House
1309 Gold Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89106
Tel: (702) 647-0728

Events at St. John the Baptist House

Thursday, November 13, 7:30 p.m.
Don't miss Round Table Discussion and
Slide Show on Catholic Worker Movement

Thursday, November 27, 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Thanksgiving Dinner with the
Catholic Worker Family

Hang Ups?

We need good used clothes that just might be hanging up in your closet:

jackets
sweaters
pants
shirts
socks

*Two months ago my father died very suddenly of a heart attack. Although he never was able to visit St. John the Baptist, I know he was very enthusiastic about it. Grateful for the gift of love in my life I dedicate this first issue of **MANNA** to my Dad — Frank Joseph Occhiogrosso whose example shaped the person I am and the values I hold.*

DAILY SCHEDULE

Serve Coffee
6:30 - 8:30 a.m. Monday - Saturday
D Street & Bonanza Road

End the Testing Vigil
11:30 - 12:30 Monday - Friday
Federal Bldg., 300 S. Las Vegas

To Volunteer Call (702) 647-0728

SIGN ME UP!

Yes, I want to receive **MANNA**, the L.V.C.W. Newsletter.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone () _____

Send to: L.V.C.W., 1309 Gold Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89106

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