

# MANNA *in The wilderness*

Summer 1987

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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## Preparing a Meal for the Hungry

by Julia Occhiogrosso

Las Vegas is an exaggerated expression of the prevailing myth that tells us that wealth, power and conspicuous consumption will provide happiness and inner fulfillment. This myth fuels the success of Las Vegas and is not able to recognize poverty. Traveling "the Strip" can give one the impression that poverty does not exist in Las Vegas. The flashing lights and glittering chandeliers provoke a sense of glamour and wealth. Big bands and star-studded shows are the main attractions. The plush carpeting leading to the lavish buffets makes it difficult to even imagine the reality of the homeless poor scrounging for food and sleeping behind bushes on the other side of town.

The poor have been pushed out of our neighborhoods and out of our consciousness. We are afraid of the poor. We do not want them around us. We do not want to see or touch them. They sleep on the street and are layered with the stench and dirt that are their beds. They roam the hot pavement looking for work, collecting cans. When they settle their weary bones against the shade of an underpass, they find it difficult to rest. The residue of their personal horror stories haunt them. They have known the piercing shine of an open blade desperately demanding the few coins they have remaining. They remember the times when they were jerked out of a peaceful slumber and tossed on the hood of a police car. They are hungry and their stomachs echo with an emptiness that has been there for a life time.

It is difficult for us to acknowledge that our lives are connected to such suffering. But as brothers and sisters in Christ, we cannot turn our backs to the plight of the poor. If we choose to follow Christ, we will journey down the path of the contemporary leper, the beggar, the outcast. We will allow our hearts to be broken and shared.

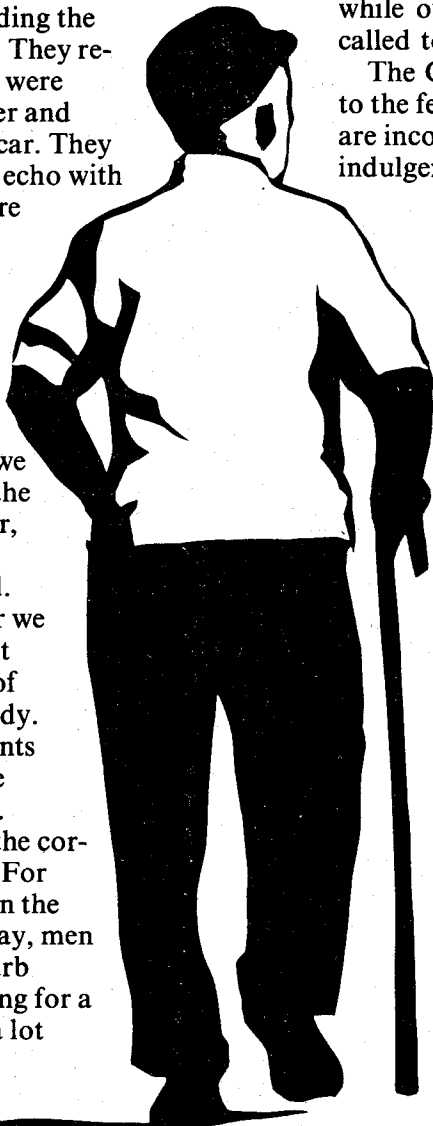
Here at the Catholic Worker we wake up before the sun, to light a flame under a 20-gallon pot of coffee. By 6:30 the coffee is ready. We join hands for a few moments of prayer before loading up the truck and heading out to serve. Within a few minutes we turn the corner at D and Bonanza Streets. For thirty years this corner has been the spot to pick up day labor. Today, men still stand on the edge of the curb waving down trucks and begging for a few hours work. We pull into a lot

across the street from the mission. A line is already waiting patiently for a cup of coffee, hard-boiled eggs, or fruit. The truck doors swing open; someone steps forward to help set up the folding table. The sugar and creamer find a place on the table, and we are ready to serve.

It is a peaceful morning. I stand by handing out cups and gazing at the scene. The pigeons nibble at the egg shells scattered on the ground. The sun streams colors of soft light upon the weary faces that flow by. Someone pauses to extend a gentle handshake; others follow with a warm smile or a grateful glance. The line is continuous. People return for another cup of coffee and a chance to explain the reasons for their predicament.

By our simple touch of loving service, we attempt to embrace the brokenness and model God's message of justice. Our work with the poor should not be perceived as a series of charitable deeds. Rather, we see ourselves as agents of justice. Each person deserves food to live, a place to sleep, a dignified life. This is their rightful holy inheritance. We merely attempt to return to the poor what has been stolen from them. For when we have more than our share of the inheritance while our brothers and sisters have less, then we are called to balance the scales.

The Catholic Worker is here to invite the uninvited to the feast which has been promised to us all. Our lives are incomplete unless we can move away from the self-indulgent daze to the knowledge of Christ's presence in the least of our brothers and sisters. When we believe in the Incarnation, then serving the poor heals our own brokenness. We begin to see that preparing a meal for the hungry is a privilege, setting a place at our table for the homeless is an honor, and to sit down and break bread with him is a miracle.



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# AN INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC WORKER GATHERING AT THE NEVADA TEST SITE CELEBRATE DOROTHY DAY'S 90th BIRTHDAY

For her entire life, Dorothy Day bore witness to the light in the darkness of human suffering and conflict. She fed the hungry, comforted the afflicted and afflicted the comfortable. She clothed the naked, denounced injustice and the scandal of the arms race.

Thus, we have chosen to commemorate what would have been her 90th Birthday with a call to celebration and nonviolent direct action at the place of greatest darkness in our culture: The Nevada Nuclear Test Site.

Dom Helder Camara will be joining us for the event.

We are hoping that this event can be a significant statement of



**A CALL TO CELEBRATION  
AND SACRIFICE  
NOVEMBER 6-7-8, 1987**

the Catholic Worker as a movement. We invite you to participate.

The proposed three-day event would include:

**FRIDAY** — International gathering of Catholic Workers for discussion, presentations, prayer, parties.

**SATURDAY** — Gathering of Catholic Workers and all friends of Dorothy Day for speakers, presentations, nonviolence training, celebration.

**SUNDAY** — Mass, prayer vigil, and nonviolent civil disobedience at the Nuclear Test Site.

For further information:

New York C.W.	(212) 254-1640
Las Vegas C.W.	(702) 647-0728
Nevada Desert Experience	(702) 646-4814
Los Angeles C.W.	(213) 267-8789

## Help Feed the Poor

Despite the summer heat, we are still serving over a hundred meals once a week. We need donations of food: #10 cans of tomatoes, pinto beans, rice, pasta, bread, and canned meat.

We need your help if we are to continue to serve the Las Vegas poor. Your consistent support is essential.

## LVCW Weekly Schedule

**Monday - Saturday, 6:30 - 8:00 a.m.**

Serve coffee at D and Bonanza Streets.

**Monday - Thursday, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

**Fridays, 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.**

Stop Testing Vigil at the Federal Building  
300 S. Las Vegas Blvd.

**Mondays, 6:30 - 8:00 a.m.**

Vigil at the Nevada Test Site

**Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m.**

Liturgical Celebration at St. John the Baptist House, 1309 Gold Avenue. Potluck dinner to follow.

**Thursdays, 4:30 - 7:30 p.m.**

Serve dinner meal at St. James the Apostle Church, 821 N. H St.

**To volunteer for any of these activities, call (702) 647-0728.**

## SIGN ME UP!

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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