

MANNA

in The wilderness

Fall 1991

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

Vol. 5, No. 1

An Inheritance of Injustice

STILL NO ROOM IN THE INN

Dear friends,

His innocence and pure joy give glory to God. I am filled with gratitude in his presence. At two years old, Nicki has already experienced a more seamy side of life than most adults I know. He lives across the street from us in a tiny two-room apartment with his Granny, four-year-old brother and a host of needy relatives who stream in and out from day to day.

Nicki is still too young to know he is poor. He has not yet discovered gunshots, hunger, and drug raids are not a normal part of every child's life. It will take a few more years of television for him to realize he is not as important as other children. He will not have the right clothes or lifestyle, and he lives in an area frequently referred to as the "bad" side of town.

Like many of the children we've come to know at the Catholic Worker, Nicki has inherited a litany of injustices that will take an extraordinary amount of personal strength or indeed a miracle to conquer. Certainly little Nicki will have to struggle through many obstacles to avoid the circumstance of needing to eat in a soup line in his adult life.

There are many grown-up "Nickis" in our soup line. Some of whom have taken the pain and injustice in their lives and turned it in on themselves. Some find ways to project this pain onto others. And still many who act in both these ways. While I am aware of these dynamics, there are days when the work of feeding the hungry can be quite difficult.

So, I am especially thankful for Nicki because he helps me to recognize the child in those adults we serve. When his little body bounces into my arms with a warm embrace, there is a part of me that wishes I could hold him safe forever. I want to protect him from growing up in a world that has already turned its back on him. I do not want him to discover that he is one of the tens of thousands of poor that our society in its inaction, has declared negligible. But, Nicki wiggles out of my embrace, and I realize that it is not my task to save Nicki or any of the suffering ones who come to us. But, it is my task as a Christian to be engaged in a human



encounter of mercy and compassion.

Certainly in these times when the numbers of homeless are growing at alarming rates and our human frailty is being stretched in our attempts to respond to their needs, our simple gestures of feeding and sheltering and responding with compassion become the most prophetic acts we can perform.

We (Gary & I) need your prayers, participation, and financial support to continue our work here in Las Vegas. We are feeding close to three hundred meals each morning. We need to buy an additional stove so that we can cook enough food to keep up with the growth we are already seeing this winter. We continue to operate a hospitality house where we live and provide shelter for some of the homeless persons we meet. We depend on your support for the continued funding of our efforts to serve the poor.

Christ's peace and special blessings to you and yours,

The Las Vegas Catholic Worker Community,

Julia Occhiogrosso

Julia Occhiogrosso

Gary Cavalier

Gary Cavalier

SIMPLE SUCCESS

by Gary Cavalier

Success can be clearly seen when one of our guests reaches his or her goal, whatever that may be—financial independence, a job, health, or even just a shave and shower.

However, I feel more of a real success in terms of the Gospel when I see that we can affect what those goals are. It is wonderful to celebrate when a guest gets a new job or a place of his/her own. But it is a bittersweet success when I realize that they are then on the road to the middle-class materialism that our lifestyle tries to repel.

What I want to see is a person choosing to live a life that reflects Christ's love, not society's vices. This is something we at the Catholic Worker try to model for our guests by our lives of nonviolence, voluntary poverty and community. There is no way to accurately measure if or how much this gentle and powerful gift is picked up by our guests. I have great hopes that our example has sown many seeds which may yet flower.

The other day, however, I saw something that made me question whether it is I who am sowing the seeds. I was among a group of homeless men one cold morning. There was a man who had an extra jacket draped over his arm. The fellow next to him pointed out, "Hey, that guy over there doesn't have a coat, and you got two." Immediately upon hearing the word he gave the jacket away, naturally, as if that's the way it should be. It struck at the heart of the gospel and my soul. I realize what a burden my own eight or nine jackets and sweaters are, and how I am attached to each one, and how easily I could get another. I felt a chill inside me. Who needs to be learning from whose example, I wondered?

In our society, success is associated with conquering the complex. But as I hunt after the meaning of the Gospels, and merge my life with that of the poor, I become aware that God's success comes from conquering the simple. It is found in peeling off the intricate layers of modern life to get to the simple acts; washing pots after serving soup, giving a ride to the clinic, listening, and yes, learning to enjoy my sweater when it is warming someone else, rather than sitting cold and dead in my closet.

Gary Cavalier has been in the Catholic Worker movement for five years and joined the Las Vegas Catholic Worker community in July.

ADVENT PEACE VIGIL

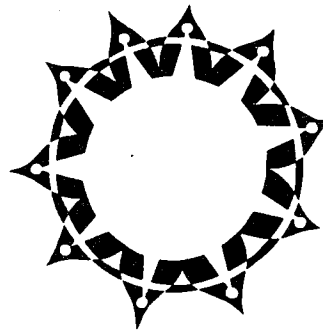
every Sunday of Advent, please call for more information

CHRISTMAS BREAKFAST

We'll be serving close to 400 meals Christmas morning, we need boneless cooked hams by
December 22

**Las Vegas Catholic Worker
St. John the Baptist House
500 West Van Buren
Las Vegas, NV 89106
(702) 647-0728**

HEALING THE EARTH HEALING OURSELVES



LENTEN DESERT EXPERIENCE XI MARCH 4 - APRIL 19, 1992

Join Lenten Desert Experience in seeking healing and expressing prayerful protest at the Nevada Test Site.

For information on various events contact:
Nevada Desert Experience, P.O. Box 4487, Las Vegas, NV 89127
(702) 646-4814

L.V. Catholic Worker Schedule

Monday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m. - 7:30 a.m.

Serve breakfast at E and Washington St.

Thursday, 4:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m.

Prayer Vigil in front of downtown Federal Building

Wednesday, 5:30 p.m.

Mass or Liturgy at Catholic Worker house, 500 W. Van Buren, potluck following.

FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER NEEDED

To join our community, please call or write for information

LAS VEGAS CATHOLIC WORKER

The Catholic Worker is a spiritually-based community convinced of the radical truths of the Gospel and inspired by the life of Christ. It was founded in New York in 1933 by Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day. Since then, over 100 Catholic Worker communities have formed in cities all over the United States.

We seek to heal a broken world through the simple yet powerful acts of justice and love involved in feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless.

In keeping with our faith in the Incarnation and the reverence for all life we oppose all war and acts of violence. We embrace non-violence in the tradition of Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dorothy Day.

As Christians we believe we are called to transform the world by individually taking the call of the Gospel into our heart and reflecting it back into action in the world around us. This is most effectively done by our service to the poor.

We invite you to join our community by helping us with our projects, supplying us with our needs, participating in our vigils, and attending our liturgy. Together we can transform the world.

WE ARE NOT TAX EXEMPT

All gifts to the Catholic Worker go to a common fund which is used to meet the daily expenses of our work.

As a community, we have never sought tax-exempt status since we are convinced that justice and the works of mercy should be acts of conscience which come at a personal sacrifice, without governmental approval, regulation or reward. We believe it would be a misuse of our limited resources of time and personnel (as well as a violation of our understanding of the meaning of community) to create the paperwork necessary for obtaining tax-deductible status. Also, since much of what we do might be considered "political," in the sense that we strive to question, challenge and confront our present society and many of its structures and values, some would deem us technically ineligible for tax-deductible, charitable status.

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