

MANNA

in the wilderness

Fall 1995

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

Vol. 10, No. 1

LIKE THE EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES: THEY WILL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS BY OUR LOVE

"The most significant thing about The Catholic Worker is poverty, some say.

The most significant thing is community, others say. We are not alone anymore.

But the final word is love. At times it has been, in the words of Father Zossima, a harsh and dreadful thing, and our very faith in love has been tried through fire.

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know God in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more.

Heaven is a banquet, and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship.

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."

-Dorothy Day

by Gary Cavalier

If one were to scrape all the layer's of gold and bric-a-brac off the Pope's gilded throne, one would find an old rickety wooden kitchen chair that St. Peter sat on while visiting one of the early Christian communities in Rome.

One of the things the Catholic Worker movement does best, is to grab chisel in hand, and scrape down to the roots of the early Christian church; before the Vatican, before Canon law, before Cardinals, before Cathedrals, before Christians even had church buildings, to the time when our first Pope Peter perhaps sat in that kitchen chair after scrubbing dishes from an early worship meeting. One of the biggest differences between now and then was that the early Christians lived in community. The Bible tells us: "all who shared the faith owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed. Each day, with one heart, they regularly went to the Temple but met in their houses for the breaking of the bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone (Acts 2:45-47).

For the early Christians there were three main elements to community life: praying and worshipping together, living together as a family, and the practice of the works of mercy. Many religious orders still strive to live in community, but for most lay Catholics it is difficult to imagine living this way.

Here at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker we struggle to form community modeled after the early Christians. Since the founding of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker almost ten years ago, many people have



THE LORD'S SUPPER BY FRITZ EICHENBERG (1953)

come to live here in this home, both volunteers and those who had no home. Since our return in April of this year Julia and I have been living alone with homeless guests, and recent experiences have been forcing us to realize our weakness in taking in more guests without other community members. Our last guest broke seven windows with his bare hands, spattering blood and glass throughout the dining room while screaming at us at 2 a.m. (we had kicked him out that afternoon for drinking).

Just as we were dealing with our failure to form community and live with the homeless successfully in Las Vegas, we were excited to learn of a new project forming. Catholic Worker co-founder Peter Maurin dreamed of the churches taking in the homeless and in early 1996 this will happen in Las Vegas. Around 12 churches and synagogues in the Interfaith Hospitality Network will take in homeless families during the night, each taking turns one week every three months. Our house will be used as the day center seven days a week, a home until the families get back on their feet. We will need volunteers to help get the house in shape for this project and to help run it.

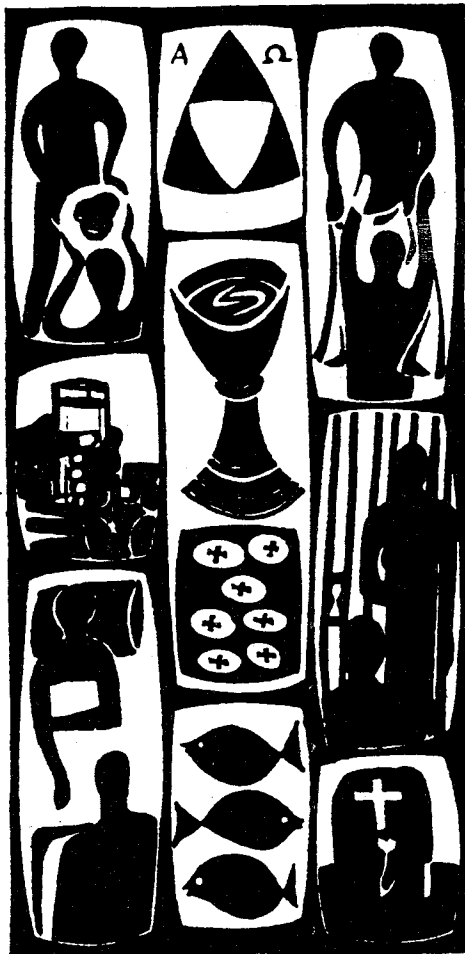
We are also excited about the possibility

of having an African-American seminarian live with us in 1996, this man or woman will work with Lighthouse Aids Ministry and the local African-American churches. We will still continue our other Catholic Worker projects; the morning coffee line and breaking bread together on Tuesday nights.

We have also realized why we returned to Las Vegas, our loving supportive community. Although we don't all live together, our community of supporters and volunteers share themselves and their love and their gifts and possessions with us generously. Volunteers have shared their homes, vehicles and pools with us and the homeless. A Saturday morning coffee line volunteer owns a printshop and prints this newsletter. We have generous financial donors, some who give monthly. We have volunteers who bring fruit, candybars, popcorn, cake, peanuts and other surprises to the coffee line. Volunteers have run the coffee line so Julia and I can get away. There are a dentist and pharmacist who generously take care of our needs and those of the homeless, and even a veterinarian who takes care of our pets and homeless pets. Church groups bring us

(Continued on back page)

THE WORKS OF MERCY
 FEED THE HUNGRY.
 CLOTHE THE NAKED.
 GIVE DRINK TO THE
 THIRSTY. VISIT THE
 IMPRISONED.
 CARE FOR THE SICK.
 BURY THE DEAD



THE WORKS OF WAR
 DESTROY CROPS
 AND LAND. SEIZE
 FOOD SUPPLIES.
 DESTROY HOMES
 SCATTER FAMILIES
 CONTAMINATE
 WATER. IMPRISON
 DISSETERS. INFLECT
 WOUNDS. BURNS.
 KILL THE LIVING

RITA CORBIN

AT A SACRIFICE

by Peter Maurin

In the first centuries
 of Christianity,
 the hungry were fed
 at a personal sacrifice,
 the naked were clothed
 at a personal sacrifice,
 the homeless were sheltered
 at a personal sacrifice.
 And because the poor
 were fed, clothed and sheltered
 at a personal sacrifice,

the pagans used to say
 about the Christians
 "See how they love each other."

In our own day
 the poor are no longer
 fed, clothed and sheltered
 at a personal sacrifice,
 but at the expense
 of the taxpayers.
 And because the poor
 are no longer
 fed, clothed and sheltered
 the pagans say about the Christians
 "See how they pass the buck."

Imagine if we could live together as family and commit to each other as family. Imagine how much warmer a feeling it would be to know that others in our committed community would care for us when we are sick or aged instead of having to rely on money tucked away in a cold bank vault. In the present world our fears can force us to rely more on things than people, but when we share with each other and those in need, then we truly begin to live the truth; that Christ lives in each of us, that we minister to Christ himself when we share with those in need.

As Dorothy Day said: "The only answer to this life, to the loneliness we are all bound to feel, is community. The living together, working together, sharing together, loving God and loving our brother and sister, and living close to them in community so we can show our love for God." So please join us in the continuing experiment. With these new projects we will need your continuing support and prayers.

(continued from front page)

supplies for our coffee line. Our coffee line brings so much more than food. Through our volunteer's personal acts, friendship and presence, community is formed.

Like the early Christians, we gather in our home Tuesday nights to break bread together and share our food in a potluck afterwards. We also go to the temple on Sundays to adore Jesus, but we break bread together on Tuesday nights to try

to follow Jesus in a radical way, to share our faith journeys together, to challenge each other, to share our weaknesses and strengths.

Community these days can become a watered-down word, just as going to church on Sunday can become nothing more than a spiritual filling station. But, when we look at the three components of Christian community (family, worship and sharing with others) we can see the true challenge and joy of true community.

WE NEED COFFEE LINE VOLUNTEERS
 ESPECIALLY WEDNESDAYS

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PLEASE JOIN US:

Thursday-Saturday, 6:00 a.m.

Morning Prayer at the house.

Wednesday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m.

Serve breakfast at Ethel Pearson Park (E and Washington St.) to the homeless.

Tuesday, 5:30 p.m.

Mass or Liturgy at Catholic Worker House, potluck following.

Wednesday, 6:50 a.m.

Morning Prayer in Ethel Pearson Park with those homeless that wish to join us.

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