

MANNA

in the wilderness

Spring 1997

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

Volume 11, Number 3

THE ONLY SOLUTION IS LOVE

by Gary Cavalier

"Are you trying to make me hate my boy?" my eighty year old neighbor asked me as I shared one of many visits over the years on her porch. I was telling her she should get her drinking forty-year-old son to help with rent and do some work around the house, but this time I had overstepped my bounds. In this neighborhood many have had to deal with children, brothers and sisters who have stolen their possessions, and amazingly they are able to reconcile and forgive over and over. We too have been put in the position of having to forgive. The gentleman who we have caught breaking into our home and stealing has come to our door asking for medical help. Each morning at our coffee-line I know many who have blown their day-labor pay the night before on riotous living and get mad at us if we serve a meager meal. One of the men I serve each morning spit on my face last year and still steals containers of sugar and creamer when I'm not looking. As you can guess, after 6 years at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker I no longer picture myself as a Saint serving the kneeling appreciative saintly beggar, both of us with little glowing halos. Sadly, the people we serve, like us, are deeply wounded, and we can only serve them our little offering of a very simple breakfast each morning and be a presence to their suffering. Underlying our tentative connection, though, is a deeper invisible bond. People who have been rough to us at the coffee-line have come to our home when they really needed help in a crisis.

The story of the prodigal son does not make either son a hero. It is the father who is the model for Christian action. The prodigal son does not have a deep conversion experience or realize how much he loves his father and wants his forgiveness. He is only tired of sleeping with the pigs each night and sees a way out. The prodigal son's brother is jealous of his messed up brother, who is still probably going to fall into his old habits of riotous living. It is the father, whose strong love

overpowers all else who shows us how to love and forgive as Jesus and God love and forgive us.

In this era when the poor are being told to take care of themselves, when the wells of concern for the poor have run dry, we need to maintain compassion. If a poor mentally ill man blows his whole \$430 dollar government disability check the first night at a casino when he should have gotten an apartment and food, a part of me says; "too bad, you blew it". But, I have worked with a few of these men helping them get an apartment, and some can hardly add or tell the difference between a \$20 bill and a \$1 bill. And, many actually believe the casino ads, believing they'll win. Not through the government, but only through our personal encounters can these folks find help and housing. I have helped a few men get rooms who have been chronically homeless, just by going with them to the bank and apartment manager and showing them what to do.

I know those things I want to change about myself I find difficult to impossible, and I am blessed to have had a good childhood. As I learn of these men's childhoods (or lack of them) I wonder how well I would have done in their situations. To meditate on this seriously; frightens me. I was helping one man get an apartment on the third floor, he was crawling slowly against the building, terrified of the railing because his father held him over the balcony as a child when he misbehaved (We got a ground-floor room).

The thing most homeless folks have in common is they have no support system. They wander the streets, the victims of their history, like a person in a foreign country trying to understand people speaking a different language, victims of the American Dream turned inside out. At any rate Jesus calls us not to judge deserving or undeserving, worthy or unworthy. The prodigal son's brother shows us where that can lead us; bitterness, jealousy and separation.

The beauty of living in this neighborhood and going to the coffee line each morning is the chance for me to be served spiritual food. Our presence and simple morning meal may not help any of those we serve to get out of their problems and mire of brokenness, although we see many simple successes. For myself, as I learn to forgive the deeply broken people I meet daily, I know I am learning to forgive those painful broken unforgivable parts of myself. And the seeds are sown for friendship and relationship between us, we call each other by name.

This spring, I hope to sit on the porch more with my 80 year old neighbor, a real witness to the message embodied in the story of the prodigal son.



ENGRAVING BY FRITZ EICHENBERG

PLEASE JOIN US:

Wednesday-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.

Seven Days a Week

Hospitality (IHN) to 3 to 5 homeless families, we need volunteers.

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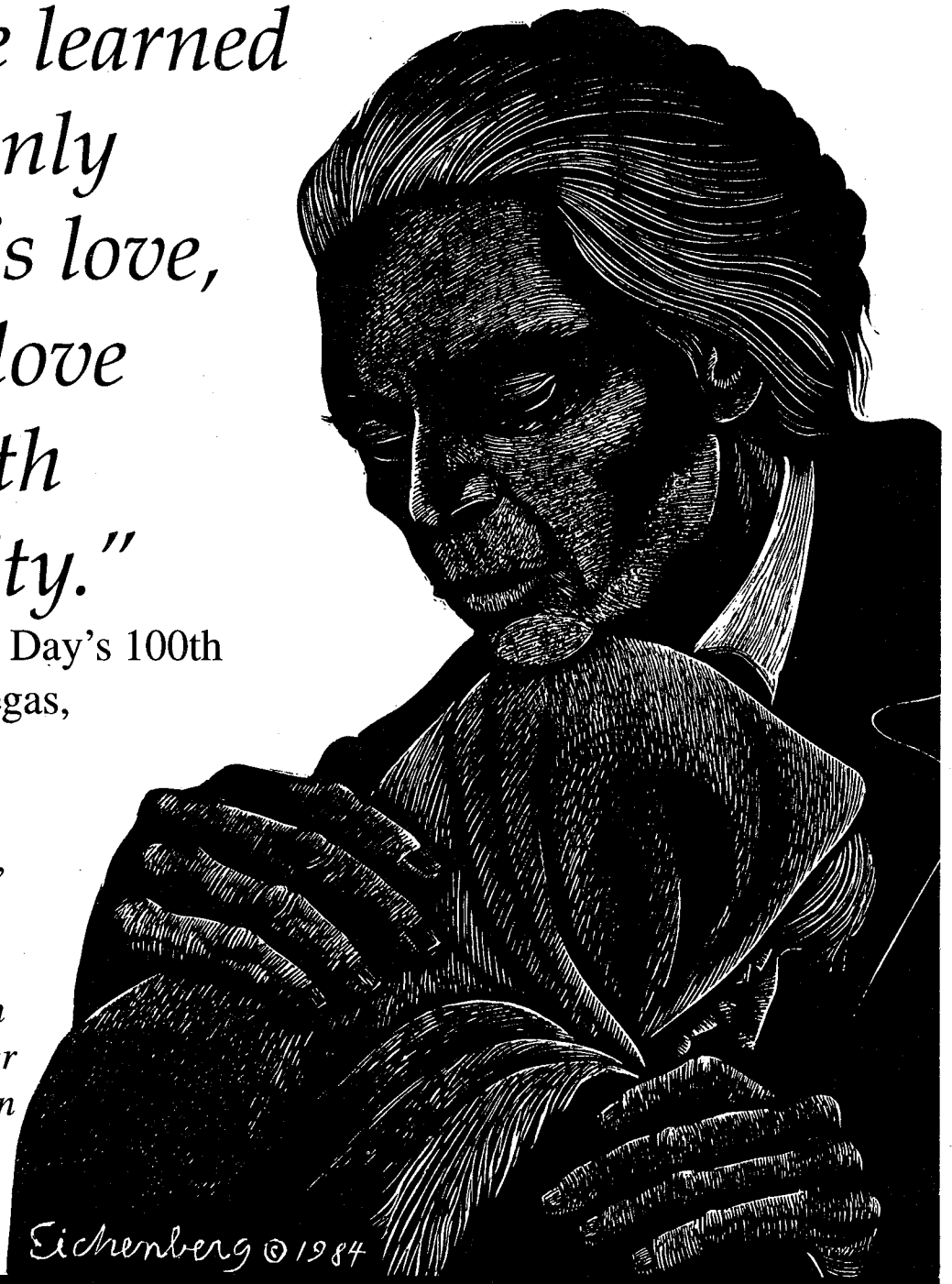
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*“We have learned
that the only
solution is love,
and that love
comes with
community.”*

Celebrate Dorothy Day's 100th
Birthday in Las Vegas,
Nevada and at the
Nevada Nuclear
Weapons Test Site,
Nov. 7-9, 1997.

*Through prayer,
dialogue, celebration
and action; we gather
together to strengthen
the legacy of love
which Dorothy
left to us all.*



Eichenberg © 1984

“If God pardons Las Vegas, God owes Sodom & Gomorrah an apology.” -Ciaron O'Reilly, Brisbane Catholic Worker, Australia

TEN YEARS AGO, OVER 400 PEOPLE GATHERED IN LAS VEGAS FOR DOROTHY'S 90TH BIRTHDAY. ADD YOUR NAME TO THE GROWING LIST OF THIS YEAR'S ATTENDING CATHOLIC WORKERS & FRIENDS: *ARIZONA* TUCSON: Jack, Felice, Cassidy & Emma Cohen-Joppa. *CALIFORNIA* GUADALUPE: Tensie Hernandez, Dennis Appel, Frank Nolan. LOS ANGELES: Jeff Dietrich, Catherine Morris, Pat & Sandi Huckaby, Donald Nolar, Eric DeBode, Martha Scarbrough, Lisa Nollette, csj, Patty Carmody, Jim & Joyce Parkhurst. REDWOOD CITY: Larry Purcell, Jan Johanson. SACRAMENTO: Dan & Chris Delany. SAN BRUNO: Peter Stiehler, Kate Chatfield, Ella Clare Chatfield-Stiehler. SAN FRANCISCO: Larry Holben, Louie Vitale, OFM, Fr. C. River Sims. SAN PEDRO: Curt & Helen Grove. SANTA BARBARA: Toni Flynn. SANTA CRUZ: Mario Carota, Peter & Lucy Lumsdaine. SHEEP RANCH: Chris & Joan Montesano, Xandi Adams. *GEORGIA* ATLANTA: Murphy Davis, Ed Loring. *KANSAS* KANSAS CITY: Mary Kay Myers. *ILLINOIS* PEORIA: Terri Brink, Jack Ryan. ROCK ISLAND: Chuck Trapkus. *IOWA* MALOY: Brian Terrell. *MARYLAND* BALTIMORE: Willa & Brenden Walsh. *MASSACHUSETTS* WORCESTER: Claire & Scott Schaeffer Duffy. *MICHIGAN* SAGINAW, Rosalie Riegle. *MINNESOTA* DULUTH: John Heid, Jane Hosking, Jeff Hilgert, Steve O'Neil, Erik Torch. *MISSOURI* COLUMBIA: Lana & Steve Jacobs, Andy & Silvia Tribble. St. Louis: Karen House. *NEBRASKA* WISNER: Gail Cantinella. *NEVADA* LAS VEGAS: the Las Vegas Catholic Worker Gang & Friends (too many to mention). *NEW YORK* MARLBORO: Ellen Naney, Kenny Gould, Deirdre Cornell, Rachel Gould, Thomas Gould. *OHIO* CINCINNATI: Jerry Witschger, Brendon Cull, Natasha Collins. PENINSULA: Mary & Pat Murray. *SOUTH DAKOTA* MARION: Mike Sprung & Beth Preheim. *PENNSYLVANIA* PHILADELPHIA: Johanna Berrigan & Mary Beth Appel. *TEXAS* HOUSTON: Mark & Louise Zwick. *WASHINGTON* TACOMA: Bruce Triggs, Harlan Landon, Jose Flores, Karen, Tom & Mark, Bill Bichsel, Carrie Little. *WASHINGTON, D.C.* Bill, Sue, Isaac and Anna Frankel-Streit, Art Laffin, Reba Mathern, Cinnamon Sarver, Matthew Smucker. *WEST VIRGINIA* BAKER: Wendy Zolla. *WISCONSIN* MILWAUKEE: Phil Runkel, Margaret Gould, Wicks Rodriguez, Laura Rodriguez Gould, Don Timmerman, Mary Durnin. This gathering presented by the Las Vegas Catholic Worker & Nevada Desert Experience.

Add me to the list! Clip and mail to: Las Vegas Catholic Worker, 500 West Van Buren Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89106

Name(s): _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Workshop Ideas: _____

Talents you can share: _____

Special needs (diet, sleeping space, etc.): _____

___ The enclosed donation is to help with food, transportation and other costs. SCHEDULE DETAILS WILL BE SENT SEPT. 97

___ I will have transportation available in Las Vegas (extra space for _____ people) ___ I will need sleeping bag space

___ I will desperately need financial help with transportation to get to Las Vegas (send letter with amount needed & details)