

MANNA *in the wilderness*

February 2000

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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The Beautiful Young Man in the Soupline

by Sonja Brouwers

On that Saturday morning the soup line was busy. It was at the end of the month, when the numbers of those who come for our early morning breakfast are the greatest. I was serving soup from the large aluminum pot, and even though the line was long, I made a conscious effort to make pleasant remarks to the gentlemen as I filled their bowl. That is what I was there to be—the do-gooder bringing a bit of cheer to the needy in my hometown. I have often been accused of being a person who means well.

Good morning, Sir. The soup's nice and hot. It's chilly out today; this ought to warm you up. Yes Sir, it smells good enough to eat.

I looked at them, the gentlemen in line, but I didn't really *see* them. They were grim and grey, young indistinguishable from old, dirty and scarred. Some were mentally ill, and some just drunk or drugged out. Some were African-American, some white, some Hispanic, some Asian, but they all really looked the same to me. Anonymous and identical.

Then I saw him—a bright color in the sea of grey. He was a beautiful young man, clean and attractive with clear eyes and smooth skin. Movie-star handsome. He wore a long, stylish coat, well-cut, expensive-looking, and quite new. The Beautiful

Young Man stood in line with the grey men and said nothing, but he held out his bowl for me to fill when he approached.

I was dumbstruck. Who was he? Why was this handsome man here, standing in line with the poor and ugly and homeless? Was he a journalist, perhaps researching a story on the indigent in Las Vegas? Maybe he was a wealthy benefactor mingling with the homeless in search of a deserving recipient of his charity? Or could he be a director of some local social service agency seeking firsthand knowledge of the Catholic Worker system? Whoever he was, this Beautiful Young Man certainly did not *belong* here.

I looked around when I finished my work, but I did not see the Beautiful Young Man again. He was not crouched

down on the curb eating his meal with the other men, nor was he standing near condiment tables socializing and drinking coffee. I asked my fellow Catholic Worker volunteers if they had seen him, but they had not. I offered my speculations about who he was and why he was there that morning, but the more experienced of my comrades shook their heads at my naivete. He was probably a gambler, they said, as gambling is known to result in such an abrupt change of fortune. Good luck turned bad and he came to the soup line for a hot meal.

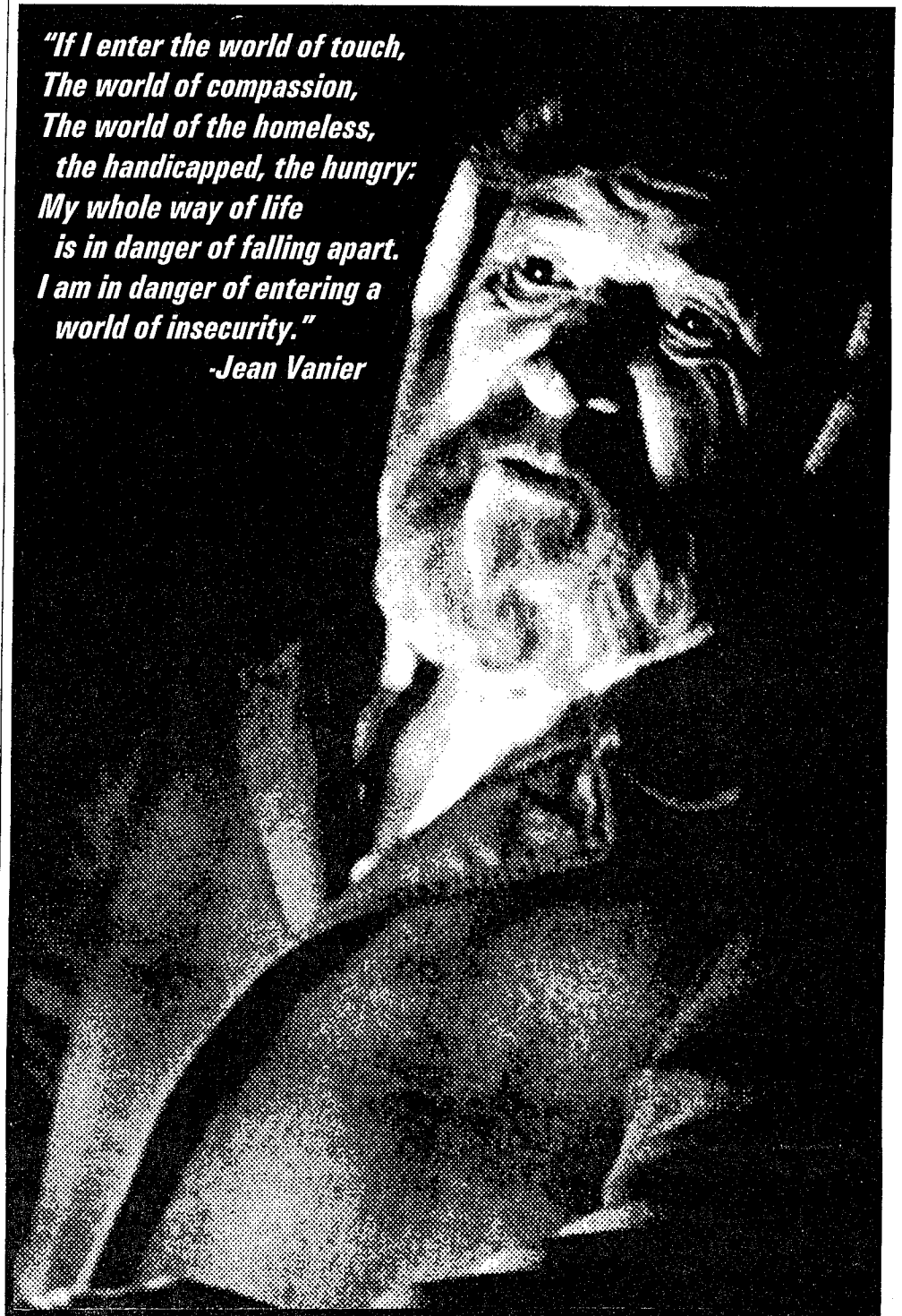
Time passed and although I looked for him, I did not see the Beautiful Young Man. I was relieved, believing that his absence meant he was okay. He did not *(continued on other side)*

***"If I enter the world of touch,
The world of compassion,
The world of the homeless,
the handicapped, the hungry:
My whole way of life
is in danger of falling apart.
I am in danger of entering a
world of insecurity."***

-Jean Vanier



Above: Donal Babbitt as a young soldier during the Korean War. Right: Donal in the 1980's, street person and poet. One poem appears on back. Donal has been a guest and is a friend of the Catholic Worker.



(continued from front page)

belong on the streets.

On another Saturday, most recently, as I served up bowls of soup and piety, I chanced a look at a man who offered me his dish to be filled. The man was grim and grey like those around him, dirty and shabby, but in the clouded eyes I caught a faint glint of that which I recognized. It was he, my Beautiful Young Man. "Thank you, lady," he said, in a voice thick and unhealthy, and he moved on.

Again, I was dumbstruck. He was there. Had he been there all the time, and I never noticed, as he quickly changed from bright color to faded grey?

For days later, the contradictory images of the Beautiful Young Man haunted me. His tragedy, unlike those of the other men I encountered on the line, week after week, was real to me. I had seen him as he was on his first day in the soup line, and I saw what he became. After much prayer and reflection, I felt chastened. I realized that each of the men I served may have started as a Beautiful Young Man. The circumstances of the streets and the consequences of their own actions have made them grey and ugly. In my ignorance, I saw them as the same; I knew only their sameness. I did not see them as individuals, the unique creations of a God who loves them unconditionally, each living his own tragic story.

Every day, my experiences with the Catholic Worker lead me to a greater understanding of what it means to practice my Christian faith. I am learning to look beyond the grim and grey, to make my contact with others more human, my attempts at kindness more genuine and personal. I grieve for the Handsome Young Man, all of them out there who live in anonymity, and pray that their reconciliation with society comes soon. The Catholic Worker experience isn't about what I can do for others, it's about what I can learn from them.

Lot Next to Hospitality House Bought
We plan to build a small homeless ministry/retreat center in a year or two.

Annual Financial Report for 2000

by Gary Cavalier

We base our salary on Acts (4:34), taking according to our need as the early Christian communities did. We realize that every dollar donated to the Catholic Worker is to help the poor; hence, every dollar we take for our personal "salary" above what we need is a theft from the poor. Our "salary" is based on room (our home utilities, property tax & fire insurance), board (use of donated food), a small weekly stipend of \$30 each (\$15/week each for our family of four) and the use of the Catholic Worker car.

Monthly "salary" for Julia & Gary:

Each receives:

Room (our home utilities, etc.): \$ 121
Stipend (\$30 week): \$ 130
Monthly "take-home": \$ 251

Other monthly benefits (each):

Major Med. Health Insurance: \$ 81
Social Security payment: \$ 39

Julia and I also have part-time jobs: I do book-keeping for Nevada Desert Experience and Julia works for the *From Violence to Wholeness* program of Pace e Bene. This extra income pays for our second car, milk and vegetables, extra home costs, other needs for our boys, etc. We also receive the Earned Income Credit for families that are working but don't earn enough to pay Federal Income Tax.

Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2000

INCOME:

Christmas Appeal- 15,223
Monthly Donations- 10,345
Donations- 6,005
Large Donations(\$500+)- 11,500
T-Shirts,Merchandise- 20
from IHN for utilities- 4,162
TOTAL INCOME: 47,255

EXPENSES:

Soupline supply costs*- 10,451
Food Basket program cost*- 987
Hospitality House:
Utilities- 4,006
Maintain & Repair- 2,137
Property Tax- 536
Fire/Liability insur.- 2,079
Chickens, Cat- 268
Purchase lot next to C.W.- 12,224
Guest Hospitality- 1,825
Other Help to Poor- 2,383
1988 Dodge (gas,etc.)- 2,584
Newsletter mailing- 833
Supplies/Postage- 1,047
Staff expenses:
\$15 week x 4 Stipend- 3,120
Julia & Gary's house- 2,911
Health Insurance- 1,949
Social Security- 930
Volunteer costs- 96
Retreat & other costs- 53
Tuesday Night Liturgy- 151
TOTAL EXPENSES: 50,570

*Tons of food is also donated

FIFTEENTH YEAR CELEBRATION!

Mark your calendars! Saturday August 4: Mass, Dinner and Party! Sunday, August 5, morning service at the Nevada Test Site. More info in next newsletter.

Thank you
for your
support &
generosity!

(FOR
TAB)

EMPTY BOWLS BENEFIT

A lunch and auction on Sat. April 28 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. will benefit the L.V. Catholic Worker. Each attendee receives a hand-made ceramic bowl. We will send more info to our local readers, mark your calendars!

THE ROSE

by Donal Babbitt

It is only a tiny rosebud,
a flower of God's design,
but I cannot unfold the petals
with these clumsy hands of mine.
The secret of unfolding flowers
is not known to such as I,
the flower God opens so sweetly,
in my hands would fade and die.
If I cannot unfold a rosebud,

the flower of God's design,
then how can I think I have wisdom,
to unfold this life of mine.
So I'll trust in Him for his leading,
every moment of this day,
and I'll look to him for his guidance,
each step of this Pilgrim's way.
For the pathway that lies before me,
my heavenly Father knows,
I'll trust Him to unfold the moment,
just as He unfolds the Rose.

PLEASE JOIN US:

Wednesday-Saturday, 6:00 a.m.:

Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.

Wednesday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m.:

Breakfast meal served at St. James Church parking lot (G & McWilliams St.) to the poor and homeless.

Tuesday, 5:30 p.m.:

Mass or Liturgy, potluck following. Call for location.

Seven Days a Week:

Hospitality (IHN) to 3 to 5 homeless families, call 638-8806 to volunteer.

Last Saturday each month; 8:30 a.m.:

Deliver food to homes in need, gather for reflection & prayer, call for info.

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