By Fr. Michael Blackburn, OFM

In this life, some people clearly have the advantage over others. In many cases, this difference begins at the moment of birth. One baby is born in a clean hospital to a devoted mother, while a grateful father eagerly participates. The delivery is attended by a skilled doctor, and waiting at home is a well-equipped nursery, where the child will be given constant care. Another baby is born in a street shelter to a cocaine-addicted mother. No doctor is there to help. No anxious and eager father is present. In fact, his identity and whereabouts are both a matter of mystery. No nursery is waiting at home. Indeed, there is no home. Where the child will be reared and by whom are open questions. It is plain to see that the first baby has a clear advantage over the second.

The difference can be seen at every stage of life, and no one saw it more clearly than Jesus. In the Gospel (Luke 16:19) he told a story about a rich man and a beggar. They lived in the same time and place, but their styles of living were as different as night and day. One lived in a mansion, the other lay at his gate. One "feasted splendidly every day", the other "longed to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table". One was apparently in good health, the other "was covered in sores". Then death, the great equalizer, entered. And all of this was drastically changed. The poor man was carried by the angels to the bosom of Abraham. But the rich man suffered torment in the abode of the dead.

Jesus told this story 2,000 years ago but we still tell it today because the rich man and Lazarus are still with us. They have been a part of every society in every generation. We have almost gotten used to them and hardly notice the difference of their existence. But Jesus did not become adjusted to it. He never got used to the idea that some people eat well everyday, while others go hungry. In the telling of this story, Jesus reveals two things about himself. One was his deep compassion for the disadvantaged. He was always on the side of the downtrodden. Most of us understand that about him. Though we may not always share his compassion, at least we know how he felt about the poor. But how many of us have seen this other matter: his concern for the rich? Remember, he told this story to the Pharisees. They were the privileged people. And Jesus was appealing to them not to allow that fact to ruin their lives. He knew advantages are hard to handle. Advantages make it difficult for us to see ourselves as we really are.

Advantages also make it difficult for us to feel what is wrong with the world. Remember, Jesus told this story to the Pharisees, some of whom were wealthy. Most of them were prominent in the community, holding positions of power and influence. All of them were strong patriots, committed above all else to preserving the racial purity and religious traditions of their nation. Ask them what was wrong with the world and they would probably have pointed to the tax collectors and sinners. Tax collectors worked with foreigners. They worked for the Roman government. Sinners were not necessarily moral delinquents. Most of them were just ordinary people who did not observe every little detail of the law. To the Pharisees, these two groups represented what was wrong with the world. If Rome could be driven out, and if everyone scrupulously kept the law, then all would be well.

Ask Lazarus, the poor beggar, what was wrong with the world and I’m sure his answer would be a lot different. His concern was not the Roman rule or religious rituals. He did not care who ran the government or who kept the Sabbath and how. Those were probably the last things on his mind. He was sick, homeless and hungry. What he needed was someone to care. A few years ago the evening news showed a mother in Somalia squatting beside her little boy who had just died of starvation. Through (continued on back page)

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 "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 costs): $ 202
Room (our utility costs): $ 56
Stipend ($30 week): $ 330

Monthly "take-home": $ 388

Julia and I have part-time jobs:
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.

Thank You for your generosity in response to our Christmas Appeal!

Mark your calendars! Empty Bowls Benefit: Saturday, April 6

A lunch and auction will benefit the Las Vegas Catholic Worker. Each attendee receives a handmade ceramic bowl. Details in next newsletter and mailings.

Fr. Michael is the pastor of St. James Catholic Church, we have served our morning soupline meal on their parking lot thanks to their generosity. This was Fr. Mike's homily on Sept. 30, 2001.

Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2001

INCOME:
Christmas Appeal: $ 8,459
Large Donations ($500+): 16,673
Monthly Donations: 10,215
Donations: 8,305
Empty Bowls event: 8,771
From IHM for utilities: 2,867
Other Income: 318
TOTAL INCOME: 55,638

EXPENSES:
Soupline costs: $11,299*
Food box program: 608*
Help to others: 1,189
1988 dodge (gas, etc.): 2,014
Hospitality house costs-
Utilities: 3,095
Maintain & Repair: 2,733
New kitchen floor: 1,291
Paint for downstairs: 749
Fire/Liability Insurance: 2,342
Property tax: 712
Guest expenses/stipend: 1,970
Leo the "mouser" cat: 93
502 w. Van Buren lot: 114
670 w. Wilson St. lot: 57
CW family booklets: 370
15th anniversary event: 1,140
Newsletter mailing costs: 1,020
Retreat costs: 649
Postage & supplies: 1,457
Salary costs-
Julia & Gary's house: 4,852
Julia & Gary utilities: 1,334
$15 week stipend for 4: 3,120
TOTAL EXPENSES: 43,212

TOTAL INCOME-EXPENSES: $1,426

Ending cash on Dec. 31, 2001:
Cash and Checking: 766
New Building Fund: 13,771
Total Cash, Dec. 31: 14,537

Property (purchase cost):
Hospitality house: 24,355
502 W Van Buren lot: 12,000
710 W Wilson St. lot: gift

Empty Bowls Donations: 10,048
Empty Bowls Expenses: -1,277
Empty Bowls Income: 8,771

15th anniversary donations: 1,715
15th anniversary expenses: -2,855
15th anniversary costs: 1,140

*Most (Tons) of food is donated, we buy bowls, spoons, meat and other supplies.

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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