

MANNA *in the wilderness*

June 2003

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

Volume 17, Number 3

Catholic Worker rides to "Brake the Cycle of Poverty"

Las Vegas Catholic Worker community member Ryan Hall is spending June and July bicycling across the country from San Francisco to Washington, D.C. with 24 other riders in the "Brake the Cycle of Poverty" bike ride, a project of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). CCHD is the domestic anti-poverty, social justice program of the U.S. Catholic bishops. CCHD addresses the root causes of poverty. In December 2002, the Las Vegas Catholic Worker received \$20,000 for our new hospitality house from CCHD funds provided by the Las Vegas Diocese. Brake the Cycle of Poverty riders are staying overnight and speaking about poverty to Catholic parishes along their journey. Following are two reflections sent from Ryan:

WEEK ONE:

Greetings to all! The grand adventure has begun. I flew in to San Francisco on Friday, did a little sightseeing and on Saturday met with our group of 24 riders bicycling across this beautiful country for two months. I couldn't ask to be riding with a better group of people. Their ages range from 19 up to 72 and they're all full of energy and enthusiasm to both ride their bikes and speak to people all over the country about our forgotten state, Poverty, USA, population 33 million. Saturday we got a send off and blessing by the people and the Bishop of San Francisco, from there we took a ferry across the bay to Vallejo, CA and rode 65 miles up to Davis. A parish in Davis took care of us for the evening by arranging for various families to house us in their own homes. I can't tell you what wonderful hospitality we have received from everyone so far.

The bike ride itself has certainly been inspiring to say the least. Huge eucalyptus trees lined the road for many miles which provided shade for the cows, llamas, and sheep throughout the California countryside not too mention giving us the very much needed shade along the

road in over 100 degree weather. Myself and another friend of mine couldn't pass up the opportunity to jump in a roadside lake to quickly cool us off from the long ride up and down the country roads. The sights and smells from the fields of jasmine took my mind away from the often arduous task of pedaling. The beauty constantly reminds me of how blessed we are to live in this world and how important it is for us to care for it. A quote in which I can't remember the origin goes, "The world will be saved by beauty." No words riding more true than those this day.

As we continue our journey people all over ask us what are we riding for, people in the churches ask us what motivates us. All I can say is two things at this point in my life. For selfish reasons I want to know this world and the people in it at a bicycles pace. Relationships are born and strangers quickly become friends. Perhaps the road to end poverty is really just about getting to know your neighbor. We would not have a place to sleep without the kindness of the new folks we meet. Second I do this because I want people to know what is happening

in this country. As the priest in charge of CCHD (Catholic Campaign for Human Development) Father Bob Vitillo said this evening, "There are 33 million people in this country living in poverty, children having to choose between buying a bus pass to get to school or buying their food to survive. This is a scandal and it must stop".

WEEK TWO:

I'm sitting in a hotel room in Eureka, Nevada. The hotel, a Best Western, is an odd site for this town of only a few hundred people secluded in the desert. It sits on Highway 50, dubbed the loneliest road in America, the road that has brought us this far through Nevada. Perhaps it's just the desert's vast open space that makes it lonely; but perhaps it's the feeling you get inside traveling down a seemingly deserted road at a pace reminiscent of the early pioneers.

I live in a desert, but the desert here is nothing like back home. In the city, where desert-like lots can still be found, poverty resides. It has occurred to me that in our more affluent areas of the city, areas where *(continued on back page)*

Greetings from Poverty, USA



ARTWORK BY CHRISTA OCCHIROSSO

Welcome to Poverty, USA. Population: 33,000,000.
It's the second largest state in America.
And every resident is struggling to get out.

(continued from front page)

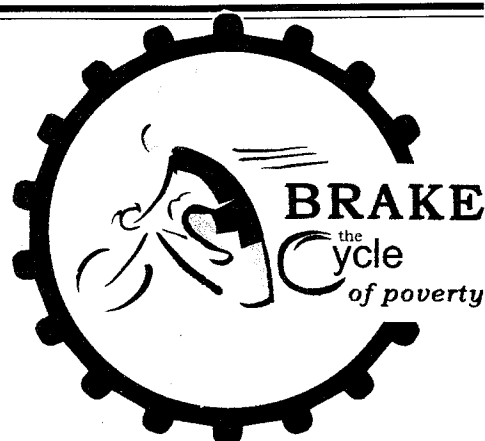
homes and businesses are surrounded by scenic landscaping, the natural beauty of the desert is often hidden. Beneath the landscaping lies the truth of the desert; it is where we find out why the desert exists. In the poorer areas of Las Vegas, people can't afford to landscape their yards, so land is left to fend for itself. Sometimes in an empty desert lot, a bush will pop up in a sea of dirt; a lone weed will creep its way out of a crack in the sidewalk. Life struggles to survive in the desert of the city, not just plants, but people as well. It is the people that we must focus on.

Around our home at the Catholic Worker are people living day to day on the scraps of our city's luxury. Why? What more can I do? The beauty I find in the desert is not just what the eye sees, but in the struggle of life to survive. In the open desert along this lonely highway I am surprised by how green it is. Sagebrush dots the landscape and for miles it blends together making the land look lush. Life struggles out here too. All along the road the plants are greener than those further out. Just a matter of where the water flows, I guess. Everything out here seems concerned only with its own survival. Not far from what I experience. Pedaling down the road all I want to do is get to the next rest stop where the water and food is, where I won't be in so much pain. I'm realizing there are muscles in my body which I never knew existed. The desert challenges you mentally, physically and spiritually; maybe that's why Christ went into the desert for 40 days. The desert gives time for self-reflection, perhaps too much. It reveals the real you and that can be very scary at times. The long

roads go on for miles and only seem to get longer while my patience seems to get shorter. I want to be at the next stop, I want to go faster; I want the wind to stop and the sun to go behind a cloud. I want the pain to end! My mind is no help either. On the road alone my insecurities come out. I didn't train enough, is this really going to help end poverty, am I just doing this to make myself feel or look better? It's all I can do to tell myself to go on.

I stayed with a wonderful couple in Sacramento named Mike and Sissy. Mike rides his bike fairly often and mentioned that there are times in his life when he needs to ride this road through the desert. He claims it clears his mind. It has certainly cleared my mind, but brought a lot more to the table as well. My understanding of myself, as well as my understanding of the poor, is constantly changing as we go on and as we speak with people all across this country. I look forward to continued growth.

For more info visit:
www.povertyusa.org
www.brakethecycle.org



The U.S. Catholic Bishop's Catholic Campaign for Human Development's anti-poverty work is the work of all Catholics because we believe that:

- Each person possesses a **basic dignity** that comes from God—not from any human quality or accomplishment.
- We are a **community**. When one suffers, we all suffer.
- People have a fundamental **right** to life, food, shelter, health care, education and employment.
- We are called to put the needs of the **poor and vulnerable** first; people are more important than things.
- Work is more than a way to make a living; whenever a person works, that **work** is a sharing of God's activity.
- We are called to walk in **solidarity** with our brothers and sisters through their struggles and to prevent injustices.
- We are called to protect and respect **all of God's creation**.

PRAY FOR PEACE IN OUR WORLD!
(FOR TAB)

Thanks to all our Donors who make this ministry possible!

We need volunteers for our morning soupline
Call 647-0728
We are short on volunteers this summer and have had to stop serving our popular iced tea and other extras due to lack of help.

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PLEASE JOIN US:
Wed., Fri., Sat., 6:00 a.m.:
Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.
Wednesday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m.:
Breakfast served in Masjid-As-Sabur mosque parking lot (G & McWilliams St.) to the poor and homeless.
Vigil for Peace, Thursdays, 11-12 p.m.:
In front of downtown Federal Building, Las Vegas Blvd. & Bridger St.
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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