

# MANNNA *in the wilderness*

March 2004

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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## A BIT OF BEAUTY ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH

by D. Eugene Bahn

Immediately next door to the New Day Hospitality House, a man shivers in the cold morning air. I see him from the upstairs window in the meeting room where I have gone to check on the noise I hear every time the heater cycles on.

I hear a rattling noise, like the sound a dryer makes when a paperclip or a penny is loose inside. I hear a rattling in the heater, and I follow the noise to the vents in the meeting room. I look up at the ceiling vents. I listen. I bring my eyes down and, through the window, I am struck by the beauty of the mountains as the sun rises and shines on them. Daily I am awed by how beautiful the sunrise is here. Sunrise Mountain to the east, Sheep Range to the north and Red Rock Canyon and Spring Mountain to the west, all light up as the sun steps up over the tops of the ridges.

I bring my eyes down further and I see him. Bundled. Shivering. Tearing bits of cardboard box into pieces small enough to put into a rusted barbecue grill, the lid hanging from the side of the bottom part, forming a bit of a windbreak. There is not a lot of wind at this early hour, but I see some smoke rising in a stream and breaking off to the right, floating off in tandem with the vapor from the man's mouth. His

Looking again, I suppose that the chain link fence covered in tattered quilts and blankets and plastic sacks also serves as a windbreak. He sits now, next to the grill. I can't see him except for his hat and head. The quilted fence blocks the rest of his body. It must be warmer outside, in the early morning sun next to the grill, than it is inside the former "Arcade and Pub" (so says the blistered sign on the side of the building).

Now he rakes the dirt. It's like sweeping the floor. Bits of rock and clods of dirt. The desert. Scraping away the footprints. Making a smooth surface, a bit of beauty on the face of the earth. Housekeeping. He takes care of his little plot.

I learn later, from the other volunteers here, that he does not go into

the building because it is not his. He is squatting there, having built a small maze of "rooms" from tarps and plastic and cardboard.

There are certainly those here who could improve their situation. Laziness is something some suffer from. More, however, deal with dependencies, mental disturbances, deep depressions brought on by many causes, loneliness, fear, bad financial decisions, mistakes made by themselves and their families. Regardless, they are cold and hungry. They do whatever they can manage to relieve those needs: a bit of a fire, standing in the soup line.

*Eugene is a new member of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker community, he joined us in Dec. 2003.*

BELOW: OUR NEIGHBOR'S HOME (NEW DAY HOSPITALITY HOUSE IN BACKGROUND)



## Strangers & Guests Passing Through

As do most, if not all, Catholic Worker Hospitality Houses, the Las Vegas house offers hospitality to guests who are on the road for one reason or another, and who need a place to roll out a sleeping bag, take a hot shower and enjoy a meal with friends in the Spirit. Our "side room," as we call it, used to be the cozy room where homeless families could unwind apart from the larger main living room / dining room area. Now that we have the new building (New Day House), our side room has become the Catholic Worker house TV room and lounge.

It makes a great guest room for overnight guests. Add to that the new (truly multi-purpose) Prayer / Meeting / Retreat / Overnight room in the New Day House, and you have capacity for caring — making overnighting in the Vegas area a dream.

**New Year's Eve 2003:** Dominican Sisters Pauline and Mary were the first out-of-towners to sleep over in the New Day House. These guests came to LV for the Nevada Desert Experience's Peace March and Test Site Peace Action. Seeing as how we *(continued on back page)*

breath becomes visible. The rest of his body is shrouded in a red sweatshirt and brown vest, a black woolen (in this weather, I hope it's warm wool, and not cold cotton) stocking hat and gloves. As I watch him, I hear the noise the heater makes. I can't see his eyes. What's his name? Where did he grow up? How did his parents meet? What did he want to be when he grew up? Does he have enough dry cardboard (it rained here two days ago, flash floods and wind gusts up to 70 mph) to last until he gets warm? Will the city allow him his attempt to get warm? Does he come to our food line in the mornings? Does he have any kids?

(continued from front page)

didn't get back from the Test Site until very early on New Year's morning (2-ish), it's unclear if they really "spent the night." But they did take a long nap!

**January 11:** Our friends from our sister community, the Los Angeles Catholic Worker, arrived to help us celebrate the official opening of our New Day House. It was wonderful to have their support and to know they crammed into their van to cross the desert for us. We rewarded them with a night out on the Strip(mall), listening to a fun-if-not-excellent blues band and free Sunday night pool at a local establishment.

**February 10 - 11:** We had the pleasure of hosting four folks from the "Wheels of Justice" Bus Tour. If you are new to the work of the WOJ, please see their website, [Justicewheels.org](http://Justicewheels.org). Bill, Doug, Dave and Garrick got a bit of sleep and a bit of grub and a lot of questions from our community. We attended their presentation at UNLV and were very much inspired by what they do.

**March 23 - 24:** We are preparing to enjoy the company of "The Journey of Hope — from Violence to Healing" and "Citizens United for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (CUADP)." Juan, Bill and Abe (and what is described to us as a "medium to large dog" — sorry we don't currently have the dog's name) will stay with us as a base camp for their presentation in conjunction with the Nevada Coalition Against the Death Penalty at UNLV. See [www.cuadp.org](http://www.cuadp.org) and [www.NoDeathPenaltyNV.org](http://www.NoDeathPenaltyNV.org).  
-written by D. Eugene Bahn

### Nineteenth Annual Nuclear Stations of the Cross

at the gates of the Nevada Test Site, April 9, call 647-0728 for info.

**Fourth Annual Empty Bowl Benefit & Auction**  
Proceeds benefit the Las Vegas Catholic Worker  
April 17, 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
(see poster included)

### 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.

### Contemplative Prayer:

Tues., Thurs., Sat., 8:30 - 9 a.m.  
Last Sat. of month; 8:30 a.m.:  
Deliver food to homes in need, please call 647-0728 for info.

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# Annual Financial Report for 2003

by Gary Cavalier

Following is our financial report for 2003. We had many accomplishments this year. We finished constructing our new hospitality house in Dec. 2003 for a total cost of \$100,429 (\$12,000 for the lot plus \$88,429 for construction). The Gallucio family gave us \$10,000 to put solar panels on our hospitality house which we plan to do in the next few months. The Franciscan Friars gave the Catholic Worker their 3 buildings on Bartlett Ave. on Feb. 15, 2004. Each building will be used by an organization the Friars helped start: Pace e Bene, Nevada Desert Experience and Poverello House.

Balance Sheet (Dec. 31, 2003)

Solar Panel Gift:	10,000
Checking Account:	28,528
Cash:	195
<b>TOTAL CASH ASSETS:</b>	<b>38,723</b>
Total liabilities:	6,222
Equity:	32,501
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY:</b>	<b>38,723</b>

Property owned (purchase cost)

Hospitality House:	\$25,355
New Day House:	100,429
710 W Wilson St, lot:	-gift-

Empty Bowl Event:	11,269
-Empty Bowl expenses:	-1,591
=Empty Bowl Income:	9,678

INCOME (Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2003)

Empty Bowl event	9,678
from IHN for utilities	4,950
Large Donations, \$500+	7,728
Catholic parishes	14,675
Other Income	355
Monthly Donations	3,345
Christmas Appeal	14,385
Other Donations	6,334
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>61,450</b>

EXPENSES (Jan. 1-Dec 31, 2003)

Food Box deliveries**	2,018
Help To Others	6,268
Maintain & Repair	5,505
New Roof, 500 Van Buren	3,192
1988 Dodge expenses	3,277
Newsletter	927
Other costs	835
Insurance, fire/liab.	8,137
Soupline**	15,258
Supplies & Postage	1,649
Utilities, 3 homes	7,699
Hospitality Guest	2,210
Salaries	0
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>56,975</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME-EXPENSES</b>	<b>4,475</b>

OTHER INCOME, 2003:

Station Casinos (IHN), for new building:	50,000
For Solar Panels:	10,000

\*\* tons of food is also donated, this only shows cash transactions, we receive food, etc. from churches and individuals

## Governor Mike, Soupline Volunteer



Soupline Volunteers: Left to Right: Mike, Don, Emily and Bob

So long Mike, and thank you. I was so moved to see the pages and pages of tributes in the newspaper in response to former Nevada Governor Mike O'Callaghan's death. Consistently the remembrances resonated deeply with our experience of Mike as a man of courage, integrity and commitment. He was our protector and guardian as much as he was the protector and guardian of the poor. He is proof that when politicians have the courage to speak for the marginalized and voiceless, their message will penetrate, transform and live on in the social con-

sciousness of the community. Mike volunteered with us on the soupline. He took pride in making and serving the "best coffee in town" for the poorest of the poor. He often brought family and colleagues down to share in the personal experience of the homeless he found in serving. I often wondered how a man of such world prominence could make the time for our simple soupline, but I have come to believe that for Mike the soupline was one of many ways he found to express the deepest promptings of his compassionate soul. -Julia Occhiogrosso