

# MANN A *in the wilderness*

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The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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## **Sorrow, Like A Lantern, Lights the Way**

*A Prose Poem by Julia Occhiogrosso*

Scattered, broken toys underfoot. We carried grocery bags through the gaze of toddlers. Barefoot children, following Mom to the car outside. Anne, a familiar face. La Señora who brings each month, for years, the eggs, milk, food, connection. Gives more than food, sees more than the poverty. More than the neglected neighborhoods, the broken glass, vacant lots, boarded-up windows, more than the barely enough.

Into the stories of their lives, where the heart dwells, she sees, she listens, she feels the suffering. The sorrow, like a lantern, lights the way, the path towards compassion, the Works of Mercy. Today, another story is told. Lupe's nine-year-old daughter worries. Her mom is home from the hospital. Surgery removed cell masses, left a bruised burden on her back. Ragged stitches stretch and pull the skin below the neck. She walks stiff, eyes focused straight-ahead, finding balance from her child's hold. "My mom needs to lie flat, needs a bed. We have no bed." She begs. *Can you help?* Anne conveyed the need. With no hesitation a decision was made.

The salesman helped load the box spring and mattress into the truck. When we arrived, three children came to the door. With a flurry of excitement they ran to get mom. A sturdy stout woman with a soft smile slowly appears from the dark hallway. One hand holds the wall, as she carefully raises the other to point the way. The children help carry. In the corner on a blanket a toddler sleeps. There is just enough room. Lupe directs the children not to take the plastic off, then she sees that we have bedding. She relents. The children hurriedly help. They are happy preparing a place for Mom to lay her head. Bottom, top sheets, pillow, pillow case, all made. Lupe beckons. The children tenderly ease Lupe down on the soft firm comfort. Resting on the pillow, looking up. She reaches for my hand and speaks, "Gracias y God bless you."

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*Anne Welsh has been volunteering with the Las Vegas Catholic Worker since the beginning in 1986. This prose poem is about an August 2013 event. Lupe is not the actual name of the recipient of the bed.*



ARTWORK  
BY CHRISTA  
OCCHIOGROSSO

## “NOT TO SHARE ONE’S GOODS WITH THE POOR IS TO ROB THEM”

by Pope Francis

(an excerpt from the May 16, 2013 address while receiving new ambassadors to the Vatican)

[T]he majority of the men and women of our time continue to live daily in situations of insecurity, with dire consequences. Certain pathologies are increasing, with their psychological consequences; fear and desperation grip the hearts of many people, even in the so-called rich countries; the joy of life is diminishing; indecency and violence are on the rise; poverty is becoming more and more evident. People have to struggle to live and, frequently, to live in an undignified way. One cause of this situation, in my opinion, is in our relationship with money, and our acceptance of its power over ourselves and our society. Consequently the financial crisis which we are experiencing makes us forget that its ultimate origin is to be found in a profound human crisis. In the denial of the primacy of human beings! We have created new idols. The worship of the golden calf of old (cf. Ex 32:15-34) has found a new and heartless image in the cult of money and the dictatorship of an economy which is faceless and lacking any truly humane goal.

The worldwide financial and economic crisis seems to highlight their distortions and above all the gravely deficient human perspective, which reduces man to one of his needs alone, namely, consumption. Worse yet, human beings themselves are nowadays considered as consumer goods which can be used and thrown away. We have started a throw-away culture. This tendency is seen on the level of individuals and whole societies; and it is being promoted! In circumstances like these, solidarity, which is the treasure of the poor, is often considered counterproductive, opposed to the logic of finance and the economy. While the income of a minority is increasing exponentially, that of the majority is crumbling. This imbalance results from ideologies which uphold the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation, and thus deny the right of control to States, which are themselves charged with providing for the common good. A new, invisible and at times virtual, tyranny is established, one which unilaterally and irremediably imposes its own laws and rules. Moreover, indebtedness and credit distance countries from their real economy and citizens from their real buying power. Added to this, as if it were needed, is widespread corruption and selfish fiscal evasion which have taken on worldwide dimensions. The will to power and of possession has become limitless.

Concealed behind this attitude is a rejection of ethics, a rejection of God. Ethics, like solidarity, is a nuisance! It is regarded as counterproductive: as something

too human, because it relativizes money and power; as a threat, because it rejects manipulation and subjection of people: because ethics leads to God, who is situated outside the categories of the market. God is thought to be unmanageable by these financiers, economists and politicians, God is unmanageable, even dangerous, because he calls man to his full realization and to independence from any kind of slavery. Ethics – naturally, not the ethics of ideology – makes it possible, in my view, to create a balanced social order that is more humane. In this sense, I encourage

the financial experts and the political leaders of your countries to consider the words of Saint John Chrysostom: "Not to share one's goods with the poor is to rob them and to deprive them of life. It is not our goods that we possess, but theirs."...

Money has to serve, not to rule! The Pope loves everyone, rich and poor alike, but the Pope has the duty, in Christ's name, to remind the rich to help the poor, to respect them, to promote them. The Pope appeals for disinterested solidarity and for a return to person-centered ethics in the world of finance and economics.

## THE CHURCH AND CLIMATE CHANGE

by Megan Fincher (an excerpt from *The Catholic Worker*, Jan.-Feb. 2013 issue.)

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) wrote a statement in 2001 entitled **Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good**, and it begins, "Our Creator has given us the gift of creation: the air we breathe, the water that sustains life, the fruits of the land that nourish us, and the entire web of life without which human life cannot flourish.... We believe our response to global climate change should be a sign of our respect for God's creation." Most importantly, the Bishops teach us that we must look beyond our "belief" in climate change and recognize that "...global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family."

It was fascinating to discover that the Church has been writing and thinking about global warming for decades now, but also disheartening that we almost never hear

the words "global warming" preached from the pulpit. As well, Catholics have taken up right-to-life issues as their most public cause, and it only seems logical that environmental justice would be included. Indeed, both Blessed John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have made connections between respecting the earth and respecting life. Why is it then that Catholic environmentalism rarely makes it into the public debate, and it is almost never connected to right-to-life issues? I fear it may be easier to offer lifestyle suggestions than to change our own lives.

In 1990, Blessed John Paul II warned, "Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its lifestyle. In many parts of the world society is given to instant gratification and consumerism while remaining indifferent to the damage which these cause.... Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the few."

## Sr. Megan in Prison

Our long-time Las Vegas soup line volunteer Sr. Megan Rice, shcj, 82, is in prison awaiting sentencing on Sept. 30, 2013. She was found guilty under the sabotage act for a nonviolent civil disobedience action. Sr. Megan and two others illegally entered the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee in July 2012. The American Province Leader of The Society of the Holy Child Jesus said: "While we do not condone criminal activity, we would like to point out that Sr. Megan has dedicated her life to ending nuclear proliferation. With the Catholic Church, she believes nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace so desperately needed throughout the world. We intend to stand by Sr. Megan and our Church's clear teaching against nuclear proliferation." Her address: Sr. Megan Rice, shcj #22100 Irwin County Detention Center 132 Cotton Drive, Ocilla, GA 31774 More info at: [orepa.org/support-transform-now-plowshares-write-now](http://orepa.org/support-transform-now-plowshares-write-now)

### SOUP LINE CLOSED:

NOV. 28, 29 & 30.

### CHRISTMAS BREAKFAST:

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 25, 6:30 A.M.

### EMPTY BOWL BENEFIT:

SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2014

## PLEASE JOIN US:

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

Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.

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

Breakfast served to 150-200 poor & homeless people.

**Friday, 8:00 a.m.:** Rosary for Peace

**Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.:**

Hospitality Day, we invite 20 homeless men home for showers, to wash clothes, and for a great lunch.

**Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.:**

Vigil for Peace in front of Federal Courthouse, 333 Las Vegas Blvd. S.

**Thursday, 10:30 a.m.:**

50 lunches taken to the homeless.

**Third Saturday of the month:**

Deliver food boxes to homes in need.