Nourishing the Body and Spirit

by Julia Occhiogrosso

It is hard to turn away when you know them by name. We pass Eric each evening, retired to his solitary spot under the bridge. Thomas paces on a slab by the D Street off-ramp. Frank wears a face mask over his mouth as he-strolls a shopping cart down the middle of the street. Sandra barters cigarettes out the side door of a junky vehicle, piled high with the mess of her life. Gustavo awaits from a distance for the serving to begin. His hollow angry glance is intensified by his sporadic aggressive outbursts.

Most of the guests on our soup line present with a lesser degree of brokenness than those I describe. On any given morning, we the “servers” are recipients of gratitude, humor, patience and generosity from our “needy” guests. With such graciousness it is difficult to remember the daily reality of life on the streets. The struggle to stay safe, the effort to secure meals, the hassle of getting rest and meeting one’s personal needs of health and hygiene. Street life brings the emotional burdens of being estranged, isolated and demeaned.

At the Las Vegas Catholic Worker our intention and hope is that our approach to feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless will help alleviate and heal some part of this burden. Since 1986 we have been preparing morning meals for the hungry. With humble ingredients we strive to create a feast that nourishes both the body and Spirit. And at least for a time while we are together they are in a place where they are greeted with kindness and respect. A place where they are recognized and known by name.

Please help us continue our efforts to care for the poor in Las Vegas. We need your financial support to provide for our ministries.

“‘We cannot love God unless we love each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone anymore.’” - Dorothy Day, from The Long Loneliness
The Future is None of Our Business

by Susan Schaller

Life is strange and gloriously unpredictable. When I was a teenager, under the illusion that I had any control over the future, I thought I was on my way to studying for medical school and becoming a doctor. Life unfolded much differently. When I was seventeen, a catering truck hit me and my bicycle, putting me in the hospital with a bruised brain. For a while I couldn’t read and was excused from all my classes. Bored, I wandered to the nearby university and chose a classroom door at random. As I walked in, I saw the professor signing what looked like Van Gogh or Da Vinci paintings in the air. I fell in love with that visual language and its owners, deaf people. Entering that door changed my life.

Decades later another car accident left me bed-ridden or on crutches, for six months. All my work and ties with deaf people and their superior visual world were severed. I never have regained the access to the deaf community I once had, and my signing has suffered as a result. I’ve had many days of wondering if I should keep trying, after many failed attempts.

Life’s river laughs in gurgles and rushing breath as it takes me through new rapids, around bends, and into new territory. Perhaps a river is the wrong metaphor as I was brought to the drought-ridden Mojave Desert at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker where I now live and work, serving food to the homeless. In the first five minutes of my first day on “the line,” I saw two deaf men signing. Three days later, I met a third who taught me the sign for Guatemala. Now, I sign regularly and am teaching an American Sign Language class at the Catholic Worker where some of my students have served one deaf man for over a decade, and never knew his name. Instead of a doctor, I became a bridge over a grand canyon between two cultures.

The lesson is obvious and simple, but never easy to remember: the future is none of my business. Deciding who I am or what I should do is not my business. I need to let the river steer, trusting the current will carry me. Or, to mix metaphors, my job is to always remember who my employer is, and always be ready to serve where needed.

Susan is the author of the book A Man Without Words, available as a gift, on request. She has been living and working at the Catholic Worker since September.

Our 29th Annual Christmas Breakfast for the poor and homeless will take place on Thursday, Dec. 25, 2014 starting at 6:30 a.m.

This year, Knights of Columbus members will cook about 1,920 pancakes, 720 eggs and 480 sausages. We will also cook 120 pounds of potatoes with 18 pounds of gravy, 20 gallons of coffee, 20 gallons of hot cocoa with whipped cream, 5 gallons of tang, along with butter, salsa, syrup, creamer and sugar. Church groups will be giving out wrapped socks as gifts. To volunteer, please call (702) 647-0728 or e-mail: mail@lvcw.org


EMPTY BOWL BENEFIT: March 21, 2015

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.

Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.:
Hospitality Day, we invite 20 home- less 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.

Abundantly Increased

by Robert Majors

In a field of gravel, glass, and weeds Await the traveling kings and queens They are tall and they are lean Sometimes kind and sometimes mean With royal blood and great prestige The road they walk may be unseen With mercy brief and far between The King of Kings will give them peace And I a servant to their needs To fill their bowl and pour their drink And even if they do not speak I cannot help but stop to think That such a crown it is I feed To steam machines of noble deeds And who am I to do these things To serve their journey is a dream I’m careful where I lay my feet I pray the food is good to eat The more I give, I do receive And still it grows after I leave For mercy shown is mercy seen And seeing that it’s shown to me By people that I’ve come to meet I am treated as royalty Such glory could be God’s to keep But it is spread to us like seeds To be abundantly increased That everyone may know and see That what we do is what we’ll be The seed we sow, the same we reap

Robert Majors lives and works at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker.