

# MANNA *in the wilderness*

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## The Call to Re-create Ourselves and the World

*“Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is as it were, a caress of God.”*

—Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*

by Julia Occhiogrosso

I am deep in the fragrance of lettuce scraps, onion skins and straw from the chicken coop’s bedding. Piled to one side are the tea and coffee grounds left from the pots served on this week’s soup line. I pierce the pitch fork underneath the mixture, lifting up and over, again and again, much like the familiar rhythm of stirring the ingredients in the giant pots of soup in preparation for the sacrament of feeding the hungry.

The crawling insects scurry as they perform without question their important task. They evoke a prayerful refrain buried in a childhood Catholic school memory, “Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful, kindle in them the fire of your Love. Send forth your Spirit, so they shall be *re-created* and You shall *renew* the face of the earth.”

Divine Love, like the millions of invisible microorganisms mysteriously at work in this bin of refuse is an agent of transformation that is capable of *renewing* the face of the earth.

But am I willing to be *re-created*? Am I willing to be changed, to be converted? Am I willing to look differently at all I accept as true? Am I willing to question the assumptions and practices that frame my daily life? How difficult would it be to adapt my activities to the changing understandings and insights that come to my attention?

There seems to be a perpetual chasm between what I learn about our world: the brokenness, the needs, the suffering, and my capacity to integrate and respond to this new knowledge. What a luxury to even have the time to contemplate this subject! To move toward and integrate every new nuance of consciousness seems a task both humanly impossible and not necessarily helpful or healing for

this suffering world. Like playing a never ending game of “Whack-a-Mole,” we become entranced by those ever-moving



JULIA GARDENING

and ever-changing targets, losing sight of the millions of microscopic miracles that are at work in the dark silence.

Being re-created requires a surrender and submission to our limitations while still striving to achieve what is possible. Re-creation offers new chances to do better, to grow, to heal, to accept where we are while taking steps to move to a new place of conscious action. When the desire to be re-created emerges from a place of compassion, love for the suffering, marginalized and vulnerable penetrates and moves us. We become ready participants in the ever re-creating gift of the life-death-new life reality.

There is a connection between the way we treat the poor and the way we treat the natural world. In both cases we are ready to embrace the values set in place by a market culture: willing to discard and destroy that which has no apparent worth.

With some time and attention I return to my bin of discarded kitchen scraps, to breathe in the rich, dark texture of earth. Shovel-by-shovel it is mixed into the garden beds where in spring new seeds will find the nourishment to germinate from the re-created organic scraps, and a small patch on the face of the earth will be renewed.

## Superadobe Home in Las Vegas

In July 2015, the City of Las Vegas became the first large city to issue a building permit for a superadobe home. The home will be built near Valley View and Charleston Blvd. We hope to build a superadobe “Hospitality House” for the homeless on the vacant lot behind the Catholic Worker home. We are working



Laborers sit on top of a coil of superadobe tubes formed into a dome. Barbed wire holds each layer in place.

with Erik Ven who is building the first Las Vegas home. We hope to be the next. Erik has worked very hard with the city for over a year to get the building permit. Superadobe uses a lot of volunteer labor and the earth from the building site. Tubes of earth are coiled on barbed wire to form domes or vaults. We are at least six-months from construction.



A finished superadobe home. An insulation of straw and then plaster are applied to the dome.

# Homelessness is a Symptom, Not a Problem

Homelessness is a symptom of:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Fallout from addiction
- High unemployment
- Lack of low-wage jobs for low-skilled workers
- Access to health care

- Limitations of services for the mentally ill, veterans, immigrants and other sub-populations
- Family dysfunction / domestic violence

*An excerpt from an article by Lance Cheslock in the La Puente newsletter*

## Cornerstone

by Robert Majors

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. . . .”

The eyes are the light to the body as beauty in the eyes of beholders as God in the eyes of the pure in heart and love in the eyes of a brother

see good in all you have found turn waste into better ground all that you thought of messy and rot is gold when your sight is sound

Such is the thought of compost to take what is not and compose turning your ways in knowledge of waste to know how to save the disposed

The stone that the builders rejected is now how the wall is connected and through love and grace we have seen the way to no longer lose our direction

I compost my fear into faith otherwise I’m wasted away and through fear I walk like a sheep in the dark to the shepherd that whispers my name

and do to your judgment the same or the measurement will never change turn all your judgment of hate into love then the hatred you see is erased

the measure is never too great the largest and smallest are saved the greatest of sinners are greatest of seekers and ended up farther away

When waste is replaced by a useful embrace you’re at peace and no longer afraid

when changes are made to steps that you take so is the direction you face

## Laudato Si’

*Editor’s Note: The following are excerpts from Pope Francis’ encyclical on the care of our common home. The complete text can be found via <http://papalencyclicals.net>.*

1. “LAUDATO SI, mi Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord.” In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. . . . 2. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also

**Empty Bowl Benefit:  
Saturday, March 12, 2016**

**SOUP LINE CLOSED:  
Saturday, Sept. 19, 2015  
Nov. 26, 27 and 28, 2015  
Dec. 30, 2015 - Jan. 2, 2016**

**Thirtieth Annual Christmas  
Breakfast for the Homeless:  
Friday, Dec. 25, 2015  
(Hosted by Knights of  
Columbus members)**

**WE NEED VOLUNTEERS  
Thursdays: Oct. 8 & Nov. 5 for Christ  
the King Hot Dog Party at Soup Line**

### 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 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.

reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air, and in all forms of life. . . . 21. . . . The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish. Industrial waste and chemical products utilized in cities and agricultural areas can lead to bio-accumulation in the organisms of the local population, even when levels of toxins in those places are low. Frequently no measures are taken until after people’s health has been irreversibly affected. 22. These problems are closely linked to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish. To cite one example, most of the paper we produce is thrown away and not recycled. It is hard for us to accept that the way natural ecosystems work is exemplary: plants synthesize nutrients which feed herbivores; these in turn become food for carnivores, which produce significant quantities of organic waste which give rise to new generations of plants. But our industrial system, at the end of its cycle of production and consumption, has not developed the capacity to absorb and reuse waste and by-products. We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations, while limiting as much as possible the use of non-renewable resources, moderating their consumption, maximizing their efficient use, reusing and recycling them. . . . 25. Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political, and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades. Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing, and forestry. . . . 203. Since the market tends to promote extreme consumerism in an effort to sell its products, people can easily get caught up in a whirlwind of needless buying and spending. . . . This paradigm leads people to believe that they are free as long as they have the supposed freedom to consume. . . . 204. . . . When people become self-centered and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. It becomes almost impossible to accept the limits imposed by reality. . . .