

A Longing for Connection Fulfilled

by Julia Occhiogrosso

It is a ritual that has become part of my husband's Sunday morning routine. After the Eucharistic sharing at St. James the Apostle Church, we return to our home for Gary to prepare for his weekly visit to Von. Von has been part of our lives since the early nineties, when he showed up at the soup line. He now resides at a local care facility.

First the coffee is poured into a thermos, then the pastry is carefully wrapped. A couple of paper plates, napkins and paper cups are gathered and placed carefully in a cloth bag. With preparations completed, Gary heads out to see his friend Von and partake in another kind of sacramental sharing.

My earliest recollections of Von see him timidly approaching, making little eye contact, and speaking in mumbled verbiage that conveyed a fearful mistrust of people and desire to stay at a safe distance. Even with this he continued, cautiously, courageously, to come around. Slowly over many years he began to share pieces of his story.

He grew up as a foster child in Baltimore, worked for a while in a bread bakery, spent a good part of his adulthood in prison, and came by bus to Vegas. Von used his disability check to rent storage units to store his salvaged items. While homeless, his feet were often swollen with "mission legs" he developed from sleeping sitting up on long evening bus rides.

For a long time he would come by the Catholic Worker house and sit in the empty lot across the way. He refused our offerings of hospitality. He did finally accept a cup of coffee, sitting outside at the table in our backyard.

Over the years, Von has disappeared and reappeared like a phantom or an angel. We would not see him for a few years and we would think that he died and then he would show up again at our back gate, offering a found treasure.

Even during this latest period where Gary has maintained consistent contact with weekly visits, there was a period about a year ago where Von was moved into hospitalization and we had trouble locating him. Then, we received a call from the care facility staff informing Gary that Von was back and asking about him.

So once again, the weekly visits resumed and I happened to be with Gary upon the



Eichenberg © 1984

Homage to Dorothy Day by Fritz Eichenberg
(Dorothy Day co-founded the Catholic Worker movement in 1933)

first of them. Von was bedridden now, so instead of meeting out in the lobby we entered his room unannounced. At the sight of Gary, Von was animated with child-like glee. Filled with grateful exclamations; "I thought you left town, I can't believe you are here. I feel like the luckiest man alive!"

So many of the people we meet from the streets have suffered terribly in their lives. Trauma has detrimentally impacted their capacity to trust and cultivate meaningful relationships. They are lonely and alone in the world.

At the Catholic Worker we open our homes to the homeless in the form of hospitality, but more so, we want to offer a safe, merciful and accepting heart that leaves room for wounded ones to recover

the buried longing we each have for human connection and companionship.

Like Dorothy Day wrote and Von and Gary have come to know, "Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet too, even with a crust, where there is companionship."

Thank you for your financial support, it sustains our work.



Gary (left) and Von

PayPal Giving Fund will add 1% to donations made in December (no fees):
<https://www.paypal.com/fundraiser/charity/2010831>

The shelter (a commentary)

by Robert Majors

Don't say it's okay
 Without leaving your shoes
 You're on holy ground
 In all that you do...
 We wait until night
 The air becomes cool
 long line short beds
 The shelter is full
 Join the program
 The night guard said
 They'll put you to work
 Too busy to live
 No time to get out
 From the time you begin
 Back at the start
 When the program ends
 Shelter the poor
 Safe, dry and well fed
 If that's not an option
 To jail instead
 Or a fine to insist
 They not fall in debt
 Or not pay the rent
 Or not get ahead
 Jail, the place
 Where we raise our kids
 Correction tactics
 Our taxes can give
 Affordable housing
 Cardboard in an alley
 The lines are growing
 Stomachs are groaning
 Businesses moaning
 There is no controlling
 No law to create
 Or funding provided
 No size of donation
 Or new way of life
 Just you in your day
 To look eye to eye
 To step in that place
 And ask how would I?

The Pope: not using or possessing nuclear arms will be added to the Catechism

By Vatican News, Nov. 26, 2019

During the in-flight press conference aboard the plane bringing him back to Rome from Japan, Pope Francis answered journalists' questions on a variety of issues. (Below are excerpts from the interview)

"Hiroshima was a real human catechesis on cruelty. I could not visit the Hiroshima museum because time did not permit, because it was a difficult day. But they say it's terrible. There are letters from Heads of State, Generals explaining how a greater disaster could be produced. The experience was much more touching for me. And there I reiterated that the use of nuclear weapons is immoral, that is why it must be added to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Not only their use, but also possessing them: because an accident or the madness of some government leader, one person's madness can destroy humanity. The words of Einstein come to mind: 'The Fourth World War will be fought with sticks and stones.'"

"The ugly hypocrisy of the 'arms trade',

Christian countries, European countries that talk about peace and live off weapons. This is hypocrisy, a word from the Gospels: Jesus said it in Matthew, Chapter 23.



We have to stop this hypocrisy. It takes courage to say: 'I can't talk about peace, because my economy earns so much through arms sales.' These are all things we need to say, without insulting and vilifying any country, but speaking as brothers and sisters, for the sake of human fraternity: we must stop because this is a terrible thing. A ship arrived in port from a country, that was supposed to hand over weapons to another ship that was going to Yemen, and the port workers said 'no'. They did a good thing and the ship returned home. That's one case, but it shows us in which direction we need to go."

On July 7, 2017, the U.N. adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Please go to the website of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (winner of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize) at icanw.org to see how you can take action.

Campaign Nonviolence National Conference

Aug. 6-9, 2020 | Albuquerque, NM
 Dolores Huerta, Richard Rohr,
 Martin Sheen, Frida Berrigan & more
 Peace Vigils at Los Alamos, NM
paceebene.org/events

Fr. Greg Boyle

author of 'Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion' will speak at the UNLV Judy Bayley Theater on Sat., Feb. 8, 2020 at 10 a.m., Tickets: \$35
 presented by Stillpoint Center for Spiritual Direction
 (702) 243-4040 or stillpointcsd.org

Knights of Columbus Christmas Breakfast for the Homeless

Wed., Dec. 25, 6:30 a.m.

Soup Line Closed

Dec. 26, 2019

to Jan. 4, 2020

Empty Bowl Benefit

March 14, 2020

Sacred Peace Walk

Walk from Las Vegas, NV to the NNSS (Nevada Nuclear Test Site)
 April 4 - 10, 2020 (702) 646-4814
NevadaDesertExperience.org



View resources and take action at:
JusticeforImmigrants.org

PLEASE JOIN US:

Wed.-Sat., 6:00 a.m.:

Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.

Wed.-Sat., 6:30 a.m.:

Breakfast served to 175-250 poor & homeless people.

Wed., 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.:

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

Thurs., 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.:

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

Thursday, 10:30 a.m.:

50 lunches taken to the homeless.

Second Sat. of the month:

Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast for the homeless.

Third Sat. of the month:

Deliver food boxes to homes in need.

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