

MANNA *in the wilderness*

December 2021

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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A Persevering, Hopeful Presence



Christ of the Breadlines (1953) by Fritz Eichenberg. This engraving was made for *The Catholic Worker* newspaper in New York.

by Julia Occhiogrosso

Clutching meal bags we just gave out, she spins around in her wheelchair, pushing her feet against the asphalt. I call to her and quickly realize she cannot hear my words nor speak. Even though I want to inquire about her circumstances, I am uncertain how to begin the conversation with our deaf guest. My attention shifts to Howard, who paces back and forth by the trailer. His nonstop banter about the bible, the sabbath and his appreciation for the sweet tea refills is a familiar backdrop to the scene. Andy strolls past with his scooter hanging off his shoulder, “Hey Jules,” he offers as he passes along the sidewalk. Mark is drawing a group to his sock handout across the way. Gary opens the side door of our vehicle, to distribute mail to folks who have used the Catholic Worker address. A volunteer makes his way down the street to offer a bag to an elderly man who is laying down on a couch cushion on the sidewalk, too weak to walk through the line.

I take in the scene as I gaze at the people sitting along the curb eating, conversing, and pleased by today’s meal.

The adjustment to serving meals with both pandemic safety protocol and the fencing off of the field has pushed us onto sections of the sidewalk. Still, volunteers

from all parts of Las Vegas arrive at the Catholic Worker three mornings a week. Together, we spend forty-five minutes assembling meal bags. Then vehicles filled with bins of bagged meals head to G and McWilliams streets to setup in three areas across from each other, to serve the people awaiting us.

Over the last thirty-five years, faced with different obstacles and pressures, we have had to adapt and amend where and how we provide meals for the poor. We started in a vacant lot at D St. and Bonanza, and then moved to an area behind the old Salvation Army, then to Ethel Pearson Park and now to the present arrangement at G St. and McWilliams.

Though there have been changes over the years, what has remained constant is our conviction that it is right and essential to embody a compassionate presence to the most neglected and dehumanized sector of our society. Poverty and houselessness are as devastating and dehumanizing today as it was in the time of Christ—when a homeless woman with child searched with her husband for someone to give them shelter.

We recognize our limitations in addressing the magnitude of sufferings around us, yet we find hope in acting. Together, with our extended family of

volunteers and longtime supporters we provide hot meals made with consideration of those served; men find a stable home in our hospitality houses; families find relief from economic pressures when we arrive with food boxes.

The serving crews finish handing out meals and begin to take down serving tables. As I turn to leave, I recollect the many faces of those I encountered on the streets this morning. The deaf, the infirmed, the neglected. Their fragility is apparent. The disparity and injustice of the circumstance is heartbreaking, compelling us to persist in faithfulness to the Gospel of Love. Your financial support sustains our projects.

Donations

Checks: Please make checks payable to:

“Las Vegas Catholic Worker”
and send to:

Las Vegas Catholic Worker
500 W. Van Buren Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89106-3039

PayPal Giving Fund:

<http://lvcw.org/giving>

Credit or Debit Card:

<http://lvcw.org/donate>

A Chance to Help Fellow Nevadans



Left: Robin Collins speaks at a Nevadans for the Common Good gathering in front of the Nevada Supreme Court in Sept. 2020 seeking a decision granting access to mediation for Nevada tenants. Above: Gary Cavalier holds sign.

by Julia Occhiogrosso

Do you ever get overwhelmed by all the problems we hear about every day?

Skyrocketing rents, evictions, problems at our schools, increases in substance abuse and suicides, inadequate affordable housing and so-on. These are issues that directly impact our lives and the lives of people in our community. Our friends, our neighbors and our family members are suffering.

What if you could offer yourself to work with others to help in even small ways to ease some of this suffering?

Through the Catholic Worker's participation with Nevadans for the Common Good (NCG), ordinary citizens from across the valley, representing many faith communities and non-profits, can join to listen, research and come up with solutions to problems like these.

I became involved in NCG a number of years ago when I felt called to do more for the homeless people I was seeing at the Catholic Worker soup line. I wanted to work on housing and mental health issues. NCG was working on these issues.

Since my time with NCG I have seen successes gained through legislative initiatives like tax incentives to create more affordable housing. NCG pushed for and achieved regulations on payday lending, whose high interest rates take advantage of the poor, NCG advocated to get more

funding for Meals on Wheels so that everyone who needed this service could have access to it. These are just a few examples.

Often change is incremental and can become wearisome, but I have found that working together in NGC we each can participate and do our

part without feeling overburdened. In fact, I have felt energized by this ministry. I have gained fuller understanding of complicated issues; I have made new friends and cultivated a sense of community; and I have found hope in acting together for the Common Good. Please consider joining us in this work, contact Julia at (702) 647-0728 or julia@lvcw.org.

PLEASE JOIN US

COVID-19 Procedures:

Call or e-mail to schedule your volunteer morning. Please do not just show up. Do wear a mask. Gloves and aprons are provided.

To Schedule: (702) 647-0728 or mail@lvcw.org

Thurs.-Sat., 6:00 a.m.
Morning prayer at Catholic Worker

Thurs.-Sat., 6:15 a.m.
Over 300 "To-go" Meals served to poor & homeless people (6:15 a.m.: meal assembly, 7:00 - 7:30 a.m.: distribution of the meals)

Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.:
50 lunches taken to the homeless

Second Sat. of the month:
Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast (please call to volunteer)

Third Sat. of the month:
Deliver food boxes to homes in need

We are a Participating Member of: Nevadans for the Common Good



Our historic main house was featured on the cover of the Spring 2021 *Preservation* magazine, a publication of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Gift Idea: Homeboy Foods

"Now the largest gang rehab and reentry program in the world, the essence of Homeboy Industries is to dispel the myth that some lives matter less than other lives. We stand firmly with those on the margins so the margins will be erased."

-Jesuit Fr. Greg Boyle

HomeboyFoods.com or (888) 341-1422

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**We will be Closed
Dec. 30, 2021
to Jan. 1, 2022**

On August 4th we celebrated
35 years in Las Vegas

500 W. Van Buren Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89106-3039