

The Open Door

From the Director



Fr. Bill Wack, C.S.C.

Hello and happy spring! There have been a lot of developments here at André House since our last newsletter, and I am happy to share some of these with you. First and foremost: after planning, praying, and preparing for more than 6 years we have finally moved into our two brand-new transitional houses on Polk Street! After all of that hard work - both on paper and in actual construction - we now have two beautiful, spacious, and dignified houses for people who are trying to escape poverty and life on the streets or in the shelters.

Our joy is summed up best in the words of one of our guests who walked into his new place of residence and said, "Wow! This place is amazing!" We continue to thank God for this incredible gift.

Another major development is the opening of the Human Services Campus across the street from our building on Jackson. A new county shelter, St. Vincent de Paul lunch facility, medical and dental clinic, and Day Resource Center occupy land in our neighborhood that had been fallow for years. Though we are not physically part of the Campus we are committed to assisting the hundreds and hundreds of guests who come to our neighborhood for help daily. The existence of these services has brought an increase in the number of people who come through our doors every day but so far we have been able to remain as effective as ever, thanks to the incredible generosity of volunteers, donors and benefactors.

Even while we celebrate these accomplishments and blessings, we realize that there are some tremendous difficulties that still need to be addressed. Homelessness seems to be increasing (especially among women and children), the drug trade is out of control in our neighborhood and in our world, more and more people are streaming into our country from other countries, and the poor seem to be getting poorer every day. Would that we would have as much success in tackling these issues as we have in constructing new buildings!

Thank you for your continued support through your prayers, volunteer hours, and financial assistance. We have made a huge difference to tens of thousands of people in the last 22 years, and I am quite certain that we can help many more in the years to come. May God bless you and your family abundantly.

Peace,
Fr. Bill

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Peace

A Tribute to Volunteers

-by Maria Candelaria

At the end of the night, when our guests are full from another night's meal, they will often approach me to utter a few words of thanks. Things like, "Maria, you are SUCH a good cook," and "Thank you so much for the meal," are things that are often heard night after night. And every time I say a "You're welcome," I feel a little guilty. Because even though I may be in the kitchen most of the day on Tuesdays and Saturdays, the nights I coordinate soup line, I never actually do a lot of cooking. The people that our guests should REALLY be thanking are the volunteers.



my life here at Andre House, it would take up the entire newsletter, but this is my way of saying thank you. Sometimes, friends will tell me that I'm doing a "great thing" working full-time at Andre House, but I always say that what I do is nothing--I'm more impressed by those people who go to work everyday, then come cook and clean and serve after

In my first few months at Andre House, I have been amazed at the energy, dedication, and compassion among our countless volunteers. Whether it's helping out in the kitchen once a month, or helping out in the office every week, our volunteers touch the Andre House community in such deep and profound ways. I constantly have guests asking me when Stephanie, or Suzie, or Emily, or Victoria will be around so they can say hi. And God knows there's no way I could get through a Tuesday soup line without Joan Butler and the other regulars or a Saturday soup line without the wonderful crew from Holy Spirit. If I named all the volunteers that have touched

their regular work hours...now *that* is dedication! And when I'm having a tough day, feeling hopeless by the constant suffering surrounding me, the volunteers bring me back to faith by their smiles, their hugs, and their love. I strive to be like Oscar and Mary Bennett who have been with Andre House since the beginning, giving time and love and prayers every day. I see Christ every single day in the volunteers and friends that I am privileged to know and love. Whether you come once a year, once a month, or once a week, know that Andre House would not be able to exist without you are our arms and legs, and I cannot thank you enough for that!



In Loving Memory of Kelly Risley

Kelly Risley (featured in our Winter 2005 newsletter) died February 17. She was 44 years old. A prayer service was offered for Kelly here at Andre House. Reflections, memories, and stories were shared to celebrate her passage from life into death.

The Intersection of Nature & Resistance

- by RJ Sak



My dear companion: greetings and hello. I write today from the intersection of Roosevelt and 1st Avenue. In front of me is metal sculpture entitled "Release the Fear". Its figure is a human body with arms outstretched. Included in its 8.5 tons of metal are four tons of weapons used in violent crimes across Arizona. Dozens of guns are clearly visible in the base. Sitting next to me is a homeless man. His shopping cart is filled with belongings. I am pleased to be in the midst of these two beautiful and abrasive images.

Contemplating this intersection reminds me of the love we attempt at Andre House. Now and then I must refuse dinner to a person who ignores our rules. Occasionally I call the police when I am unable to pacify a conflict situation. These are things I absolutely hate doing because I end up with disappointment and frustration. I am discovering that the weight of life does not always reveal the beauty of living. This is a poverty.

One of my friends is a nurse who has an interest in holistic health. While visiting a soup kitchen she once noted that, "there is a physical poverty with symptoms like depression, weakness, and pain. There are also intangible poverties: frustrated yearnings for God, acceptance, knowledge, friendship, and peace." As human beings poverty is a reality imbued in every single one of us. Appreciating our essential nature seems to both release the fear of suffering while also revealing divine mysteries.

My narrative of faith is that Divinity voluntarily assumed poverty and this identification was made human. The Christ went on to beatifically speak about the poor and proclaimed an eternal Kingdom being built within the company of poverty. It's a paradox. Let's switch gears from theology to math. In 1904 mathematician Helge von Koch asserted the fractal curve. From the fractal curve came the fractal triangle. The geometric wonder of the triangle is that an infinite perimeter is contained within a finite area. Henceforth if poverty is finite and divinity is infinite, then we have found a beautiful expression of Eucharist here: divinity in the marrow of humanity.

The day will come when I am no longer actively involved with Andre House. I'll be off somewhere in the Midwest working a job and doing the best I can to make a domestic living for myself. At once I'll remember this place and cherish the lessons life taught me.



And I know it's not much to celebrate but I'll certainly remember this here intersection:

Release the fear. Although there is no mistaken we are poor, love awaits us who seek beauty in all we think, say and do. Yes we are improving.

So until next time, be well.

Don't Judge Me

by Joe Parreira

When you see me
in the streets,
Don't judge me.

When I ask you
for some money or
change,
Don't judge me.

When you see me
talking with friends on the
corner,
Don't judge me.

When I come
to get basic services,
Don't judge me.

When I ask you
for some water,
Don't judge me.

When you see me
in dirty clothes,
Don't judge me.

When I am running late
and all I need is some
food,
Don't judge me.

When you see me
walking right by you,
Don't judge me.

When I put my hand
out to you,
Don't judge me.

When you do not know
where I have been
nor where I am from,
Don't judge me.

When I look
confused and out of it,
Don't judge me.

When you see me
walking right by you,
Don't judge me.

When I put my hand
out to you,
Don't judge me.

When you do not know
where I have been
nor where I am from,
Don't judge me.

When I look
confused and out of it,
Don't judge me.

When I pass you by
and I do not say "hi,"
Don't judge me.

When I ask you
for a backpack
for my personal use,
Don't judge me.

When you talk to me
and I do not wanna listen,
Don't judge me.

When I talk to you
in a slurry, low, or loud
voice,
Don't judge me.

When you see me
upset at something,
Don't judge me.

When I appear
to be under the influence
or who knows what,
Don't judge me.

When you do not
understand my story,
Don't judge me.

When I get
or feel emotional,
Don't judge me.

When you make
An exception for me,
Don't judge me.

When I get very impatient
and begin to curse at you
or those around,
Don't judge me.

When you see, hear,
touch,
but do not yet understand,
Don't judge me.

When I do not feel
like sharing my own feel-
ings,
Don't judge me.

When you've seen me
here for the 100th time
this week,
Don't judge me.

When you see and hear
that I
cannot get a job for
whatever reason,
Don't judge me.

When I rather choose
to sleep on the street
than in a shelter,
Don't judge me.

When all areas of my life
have completely crashed,
and I am here,
Don't judge me.

When I may choose
to skip understanding and
go right to judgment of
you,
Don't judge me.



Welcome Home, Levi!

- by Levi Caddell (André House Guest)

"Welcome home Levi!" Those are the words I heard as the old fashioned screen door swung open while I climbed the concrete porch steps to flavorful older red brick home with my 65 pound backpack. There stood Matt, with Father Bill and RJ in the background smiling. I tried to hide the tear that rolled down my face as they helped me get inside and gave me hugs of welcome.

Even though God had provided for my basic needs it had been rough and lonely being on the road. Rough I did not mind, but the "lonely" had been tearing me up inside. Loneliness being a knife that cuts through the flesh and bone all the way to the spiritual part of the heart. With all of those questions inside: "What is wrong with me?" "Why did no one want me?" "Why was my family unable or unwilling to help me after I had loved and given them so much?" I did not expect those words -- Words that flowed like a healing balm to my soul.

The three months I spent at the André' House was a time of healing. The core staff and other workers may not know that, but that is why God brought us together. A community where guest are welcomed and God's love is shared in a practical way is rare. There was no preaching. They did not need to preach because you could see God's love in their lives and in their service to the less fortunate around them.

There were chores to do and meetings, but community is much more than these simple things. Community is an attitude - One of acceptance where you can share your story with all of it successes as well as the hurts and pains without fear of judgment. Community is serving and being vulnerable. Community means thinking of the needs of those around you - a matter of being outward focused rather than just focusing on yourself. You can't learn community from a book. You can only learn community by having it lived before you and letting your self become a

part of it.

While sharing my life with my friends at André' House I saw successes and failures. I saw people make mistakes - fall flat of their faces. I saw people come from places of devastation and re-entered society as productive individuals. All of these things in their moments of joy and sadness are part of life. There are what melded us together into a community of love and place of healing.

In January we moved into a two brand new buildings, and I moved out to start my new job as a Case Manager at the local Emergency Shelter. The two new houses do not yet have the personality of that friendly old brick home, but someday they will. I am looking forward to hearing the stories of others and how those words, "Welcome Home," changed their lives.

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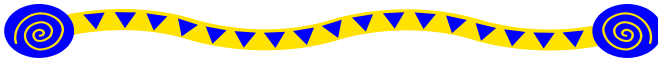
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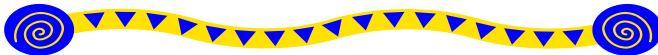


ANDRE HOUSE NEEDS:

We are looking to hire companies for all trades! Air Conditioning — Heating— Carpentry — Electrical — Plumbing — Painting — Roofing — Tile — Masonry — Steel Doors.

Please call Ted Dunne at one of following numbers: 602-376-0591 or 602-944-7504

THANKS!



Encounter on Jackson Street

A woman stands by the fence
Staring ahead at nothing,
Lost in overwhelming pain.
She answers not, she answers not,
Then answers, "Don't touch me."

God is with us! God is with us!
Give ear, all you nations:
Be humbled, be humbled,
For God is with us!

A woman sits on the curb
Staring ahead at nothing,
Her body hidden under layers of
clothes,
Layers and layers of clothes,
All she owns.

God is with us! God is with us!
Give ear, all you nations:
Be humbled, be humbled,
For God is with us!

-- Anonymous

Homes, Sweet Homes!
Homes, Sweet Homes!



The Core Community in front of our new men's transitional home located on Polk Street.



The new women's transitional home located beside the men's home.

All One Needs

by Matt Lashlee

You may for a time have to suffer the distress of many trials; but this is so that your faith, which is more precious than the passing splendor of fire-tried gold, may by its genuineness, lead to praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ appears – 1 Peter 1, 3-9



So much since last August has changed in front of my eyes. New lessons I have learned, old lessons have sometimes painfully reminded me of things I had forgotten. I came to Andre House with a very brief year long experience as a case worker with the shelter program now across the street, housed with new walls and filled with many new and returning residents. Having ducked out of the opportunity to contribute to the last Open Door newsletter, I approach the coming newsletter trying to sort through so many stories and situations from the last seven months that more than a few thick books could be authored with this place's day to day goings on.

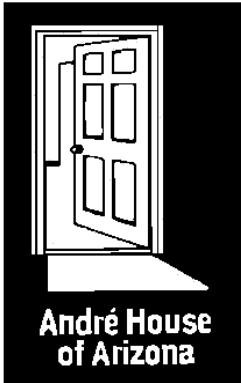
I've settled in to the schedule: a mix of running showers, Pascente Office coverage, several hours a week in the clothing closet, cleaning up the weekly trash discarded in the parking lot, sidewalks, and streets, and all of the little tasks in between that keep the lights working, the toilets flushing, and the doors open. This has been no easy task for someone who tends to be more of a destination type than a journey seeker. I am slowly learning to enjoy the process rather than simply seeking completion. There is no "To Do List" for a person at Andre House that could ever be completely checked off much less filled with tasks or projects to the point that one would ever have "everything covered." The minute one thing is done, several other projects are born. That's the nature of this place—the work is both important and unceasing.

In a given week, I find myself always looking forward to the day I can take over the kitchen—Thursdays—the night of the infamous "Mighty Bean Burritos." After a week of so much interaction with guests ranging from extreme joy to extreme depression or anger, a Thursday in the kitchen with my thoughts and music (often too loud for those around me) is just what the doctor ordered. It was on one of my first Thursdays when I learned one of the most important lessons from one of my regular volunteers.

Anyone who has ever lent a helping hand during dinner time at André House knows what its like to be in the kitchen as a new Core Community member fumbles their way through dinner prep the first few months. I was running in circles -- doing things that I now finish in fractions of the time it used to take. I was working on loosing my keys for the fifth time that day. They would later be found in a bin of single serve yogurts (one of the hardest places to find keys in this building). I wasn't necessarily having a bad day; it was one of those days where I was moving too fast, and my rushed pace wasn't translating into work being done any quicker. John, one of our regular volunteers, pulled me aside in a moment of exasperation. We were looking through the pantry for some last minute taste makers to throw into the side dish. I don't remember what I said exactly but I will never forget what John shared with me on that trying day. John said that over the last couple of years, when he prayed, he decided to stop asking for things. He only now prayed in gratitude for all that he had been given. John's prayer was one of acceptance and thanksgiving.

Since that Thursday, I wake in the morning no matter what the day holds and try to pray in thanksgiving for all that I am given and will be presented with in the hours to come. It is difficult at times to truly believe that God's presence is everlasting and that God has already given us so many blessings that we are called to share. God has brought together so many blessings at Andre House and all we are called to do is share these blessings, the greatest of which is love. Our guests, volunteers, benefactors, donations, and most importantly the time and prayers that continue to flood our building everyday are gifts from God. Our faith in God which is renewed with every sunrise and as we begin mass and are immediately dismissed to serve the poor is also a gift from God. Our faith is to be grown and spread with all whom we encounter. There are indeed trials and challenges that can leave us spent, emotionally and physically as the First Letter of Peter mentions. However, even in these times, we have already been given all that we need. We need not ask for more; we can only share and be grateful. This is what I learned so many Thursdays ago—thanks John.

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The Open Door

**Join us every First
Friday for Mass and
a Potluck Supper at
Polk at 6:30 pm**



André House Needs:

Spring Focus Items!

Sunscreen (especially travel sizes)

Phone cards (for long distance phone calls)

Men's Jeans (especially sizes 30-38)

Men's & Women's Underwear (esp. larger sizes)

Deodorant

Cough drops, ibuprofen, vitamins, etc.