





## Just a Minute, Please

*-by Fr Eric Schimmel, CSC*

After serving for the past seven years in parish ministry in Colorado Springs, CO, South Bend, IN, and in Goodyear, AZ, I feel like I am settling in nicely here at André House. In my heart I know that my transition has been made easier by the parishes in which I served. Each, in its own way, has a charisma of reaching out to those who are poor. This care and concern for the least of our brothers and sisters stands at the center of the Gospel, and it has formed me and my priesthood as well.

Even with this background, I still regularly run into people with their own stereotypes about our neighbors in need. More often than I care to admit I have heard comments questioning the worthiness of the people we serve.

"How did they get themselves in this situation?"

"Why can't they just get a job?"

Usually I hear these types of comments less when the economy is struggling, but they never seem to go away completely. This is true not just in general conversations, but also among religious communities. I remember in one of my assignments I was working with an ecumenical group that serves those in need. We were discussing how we could attract more churches/congregations to join us in our outreach to our neighbors. As we tried to organize our recruiting efforts, we eliminated some church communities right away. In our discussions, it became clear to us that these communities, if they offered assistance to those in need (some do not), restricted assistance solely to members of their own congregation.

So, the question still gets asked, "Why don't these people just get jobs?"

The easy answer would be to hide behind the usual judgments about mental illness and/or addictions. Those definitely can be factors. But I feel the story is much more complex.

Sometimes I wonder whether another factor could be tied to something I know we all love to do: wait.

I may be wrong, but my guess is that very few people like having to wait in traffic. For those of us with our own cars, when we get stuck in traffic, we can try to choose alternate routes. We can make a mental note and plan to leave 5 minutes

earlier next time. But for those who are dependent on the Mass Transit System, those are not options. Leaving five minutes earlier just translates into five more minutes waiting for the bus to come.

Waiting is something we all have to do – whether it is waiting at the doctor's office, in the check-out line, or for the light to turn green.

Have you noticed that you had to wait seven paragraphs in this article before getting to the subject of waiting?

If we feel like we have a lot of waiting in our lives, I think our brothers and sisters who are poor have us beat. We know that if you want a job that pays a living wage, you should look presentable. But if you want to get clothes from a clothing closet or to do laundry, you have to wait your turn in line. If you do not show up a half hour early before the doors open, you may be out of luck – and that half hour wait is just to get in the building. You have to wait longer to actually get the clothes. You have to wait for the laundry. If you want to take a shower. . . get in line. If you want to get into a shelter, call or show up at the right time . . . and wait to see if you get in. If you want to do job searches or to post your resume on the internet for free at the library, you may have to wait to get a computer. Then there is a time limit on the computer. When that time is up . . . you have to wait until tomorrow.

I have wondered whether it would be possible to cut out the waiting. Is it possible to create services that do not tie people down? Unfortunately, I have not yet figured out how to do it. André House and the other agencies serving people who are poor have our policies in place for good reasons. They help us serve as many people as possible – while trying to be fair, and providing good service. It would not benefit anyone to have chaos – which would create its own waiting: waiting to see whether anything could get done in the confusion.

But the fact remains, we live in a culture of waiting. Waiting that can slow a person down, possibly drain their energy, and definitely prevent them from being somewhere else trying to get something else that they need. But then again, perhaps that is not all that bad. After all, when they get there, they may very well just be told to wait.

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## An Unexpected Love

-by Michelle Carr




Each year during commencement weekend, my alma mater hosts a ceremony recognizing its students who will be participating in full-time service upon graduation. While attending this gathering last May, I heard an alumna of a volunteer teaching program recount her experiences serving in a poor urban school and explain how they reshaped her anticipated life trajectory. She described how she was initially frustrated by her rambunctious students and the challenges of running a classroom. However, as time progressed she became so enamored with her students and the teaching profession itself that she abandoned her plans of attending law school in favor of remaining in education. Based on her journey, she offered us graduates a simple piece of advice: *fall in love with your ministry and those it aids, stay in love, and let that love guide you long after your year of service is complete.*

I arrived at André House in August with these ideas at the forefront of my mind. However, love quickly took a back seat to logistics. During my first weeks on staff, I struggled to keep the countless details of my new responsibilities straight. How does a guest qualify to receive a boot voucher? What is expected of residents of our transitional houses? And, how exactly *does* one go about cooking enough spaghetti to feed six hundred people? I became frustrated by the fact that I was channeling so much more of my energy into the simple execution of my daily schedule than I was into getting to know those I was serving.

One Monday evening in mid-September, I sat slumped on the couch in the staff office. The hands of my watch were racing toward 5:30pm at a disconcerting pace. Far more things had gone wrong than right that day, and I prayed that this unfavorable trend would not continue into the rapidly approaching dinner service. It was with a hint of reluctance that I rose to my feet and headed out to my post in the dining room.

The doors opened, and the first guests began to file past the serving line. One of these guests was a man named Steven. He settled with his tray at the table closest to me and asked me how my day was going. My spirits instantly rose. We chatted as he ate and by the time he was finished, the challenges of my tumultuous day were the last thing on my mind.

Throughout the next hour, I repeatedly scanned the sea of now-familiar faces seated before me. I was surprised by how often the mere sight of a given guest brought a smile to my face. There was Charles, who always had a new piece of trivia to share with me. There was Cheryl, who frequently asked for my opinion about shades of nail polish and shoe styles, leading to a fun bit of girl talk each day. There was José, who never failed to say thank you for a single service he received, and there were the countless others who entertained me in the office, made me laugh in the parking lot, and served as a constant reminder of why I was drawn to working at André House in the first place. I suddenly realized that somehow in the midst of the chaos of those early weeks, I had begun to fall in love.

*Fall in love. Stay in love. Let that love guide you.* As each day at André House passes, I am increasingly grateful for the organization's devotion to hospitality and the wide range of people its open-door policy has enabled me to meet. I look forward to growing in the new love I have discovered throughout this year, and I hope that as the months progress I will come to fuller understanding of how I can nurture this love throughout my life. 





## Blessings & Challenges

*-by Matt Linderman*

The first few months of being on staff at André House have been a mix of blessings and challenges. The work can be physically demanding with long days, but it can also be mentally and emotionally demanding. One of the hardest things to deal with is seeing and talking to those who have been trying to work themselves out of their current situation. It is very hard for many to do. The families they come from and their past mistakes or misfortunes put them at a great disadvantage. For many of them, there is nothing they want more than to break free of the cycle they find themselves in, but they cannot find a way out. I meet many who are trying so hard to overcome the numerous obstacles of poverty and homelessness, but they just keep getting knocked down and kicked in the side. As I talk to them, I try to offer good solutions or alternatives, but I quickly realize that often times there are none. Sadly, many when they find themselves at this point simply lose hope. Their dreams of living a "normal" life have been crushed too many times to really believe any longer that things could ever change, and so they just stop trying. This is one of the hardest and saddest things for me to see, and honestly, if I was in their position, I could probably do no better – in fact, I likely would have given into despair long before they did.

However, there are many blessings that come with the job, too. The first thing that comes to mind is the times that we can offer some encouragement to those who might be right on the edge of losing hope and are given that extra positive word of support that keeps them going. That is one of the most rewarding experiences: to see God actually use me in some small way to make a difference in the life of someone who is really in need – in need of food and clothing, but also (and perhaps more importantly) in need of a friend to encourage and support them. Of all the things I do here at André House, I get the most joy out of those relationships that are formed and being a part of these people's lives. I really don't have much to offer them that they couldn't find somewhere else, and I am just the same as they are. We are all broken and in need, and being with the people here helps me recognize my own weaknesses and the necessity of relying on God for strength. Sometimes in our lives of privilege and comfort, we start to forget that we need God at all. This experience has brought me to a place where I have been humbled and reminded again of my dependence on God. And I feel so honored that, despite the fact that I am not worthy or qualified to do so, the Lord has allowed me to play some small role in bringing about His Kingdom – that as I learn from my brothers and sisters, God also chooses to use me to bring a little hope to them. ☩



### Thanksgiving Eve Memorial Service

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On Wednesday, November 26th, Thanksgiving Eve, the André House community of staff, volunteers, and benefactors gather at White Tanks Cemetery in Litchfield Park to remember all of the homeless men and women who have died.

This powerful memorial service is a reminder to all of us of the brevity of our life on earth and prepares us to truly give thanks on Thanksgiving Day for the many blessings in our lives.

Every Thursday, deceased homeless and indigent persons for whom no relatives can be found to assume burial responsibilities are laid to rest in the bleak White Tanks Cemetery. Present to honor them are only the members of the chain gang, who provide the labor, and a rotating minister or priest to offer burial prayers. The André House staff presides over these services several times a year. More info: call Fr Bill at 602-255-0580



## Questions

-by *Steven Cottam*

My transition to André House has been fraught with questions. A lifelong student with a penchant for over-philosophizing, I have analyzed my transition to André House with a myriad of questions, every step of the way.

The questions I asked began even before I walked through Bro. André's Open Door. In March I was grappling with the questions of discernment. Should I spend a year at André House? Am I being called to a year of service? Am I being called to spend that year here in Phoenix? It looks like hard work—am I up to it? I not so much answered the questions as felt them be answered within me. I threw in an application, and after a short interview process, was accepted. What a relief! That first set of questions had been answered. I was given a few months respite from my doubt.

But then I met our Core Community here. Meeting all of them threw a whole new series of questions at me. If you have not met our staff down here, I recommend you do. The commitment and responsibility and effort they place into their work here is amazing. I quickly wondered if André House was where I was supposed to be after all. "Do I belong here? Am I going to measure up? How can one stand alongside a helping-the-least-of-these superstar like Fr. Bill? My efforts seemed small and stumbling next to the work being performed by some of our more capable staff; how can my muffled grumbings truly measure up to the quiet humility Matt brings to his work, or the glowing joy that Lacy bring to hers? Emptying the garbage made Fr. Eric look like St. Francis—I think it made me look like Oscar the Grouch.

Such doubts, I am sure now, are normal when one is alongside such extraordinary people as we are blessed to have on staff this year. Luckily, I did not have time to dwell too long on those questions, because a rush of much more practical questions came racing to my mind's forefront. There is so much going on around

André House, and a new staff member is hard pressed to keep track of it all. I was asking practical questions a million times a day—Where are the blankets? Where are the guest boot vouchers? How long is the waiting period on the clothes closet? How do I light the stove? Is the stove supposed to light the beans on fire? Where's the fire extinguisher? Could somebody call the fire department?

After two months here, most of these questions have subsided. I know that my discernment was correct—I am loving every minute of my time here. I know that I am part of the community here—and I have come not only to accept, but to relish the fact that some of my community mates are a bit closer to heaven than myself and looking to learn all I can from them in our time together. I know where the boot vouchers are kept, and I know quite a bit more about fire control.

I have even begun to answer other people's questions about what I am doing here, and they are usually very serious queries. Not many days go by without my being asked why I'm here. Do you really think you're making a difference? Do these people deserve the help they're being given? And I think I can answer these questions, too. I know that André House is not going to single-handedly take care of all the homeless in downtown Phoenix. I know that many of the people we serve got here, and are kept here, by their own bad decisions. But even if we cannot help everyone, we can help some. And if some don't deserve our services—well, some people stuck in homelessness and poverty here deserve much better than our services, and it is not our job to sort them out. All I can say is that I know I do not deserve to live and work alongside such amazing people in such an amazing place. We are all sinners—may God grant us His mercy and spare us all from what we truly deserve.

*Cont'd on page 7*





## Arizona Tax Credit for Contributions to a Qualifying Charity

### A WIN/WIN DEAL!

The benefit of our Arizona Credit for Charities that Help the Working Poor is that the charity gets the money and the donor gets a dollar for dollar reduction of Arizona State tax. How can you lose?

The maximum amount is \$200 for a single taxpayer or \$400 for married filing joint.

You must itemize in order to use this credit. **And** you must have itemized at least once in the past to establish a baseline year and amount. The credit is then figured on the amount over and above the baseline amount.

If you itemized in 1996 **and** deducted charitable contributions, that is the baseline year by law. The baseline amount is the total dollar amount of charitable contributions deducted on Schedule A. If a taxpayer did not itemize deductions and deduct charitable contributions in 1996, then the baseline year by law is the first taxable year after 1996 that the taxpayer itemizes deductions **and** deducts charitable contributions.

After determining your baseline year and amount, the credit is figured on the amounts above the baseline dollar amount. For instance, if a taxpayer has a baseline amount of \$500, the taxpayer must give \$700 in total contributions that includes \$200 to a qualifying charity to receive a \$200 credit. Likewise, a taxpayer could give \$600 in total contributions, including \$200 to a qualifying charity, and get a \$100 tax credit.

For the purpose of this credit, André House is a qualifying charity. For a list of all qualifying charities go to the Arizona Department of Revenue website [www.azdor.gov](http://www.azdor.gov)



# Volunteer Appreciation Party!

## Location:

André House Hospitality Center  
213 S 11th Av

Phoenix AZ 85007

- NE corner of 11th Av & Jackson
- Please contact:

Teresa Hipp, Volunteer Coordinator  
@ 602-255-0580 with questions.

Please join us for a Mass and Brunch on Sunday, December 7th. This will be an opportunity to say "goodbye" to Fr. Bill and "welcome" to Fr. Eric, as well as the other Core Community members. It will also be a good time for us to get together to thank God and one another for all that is being done here at André House. We will begin with Mass at 10am, to be followed by brunch. André House will provide eggs, bacon & coffee. Feel free to bring a dish to share!

Details below: *See you there!*

Date: Sunday, Dec 7th

Mass: 10:00am

Brunch: Immediately following

Mass...please bring something to share.



## Questions *Cont'd from page 5*

All these questions remind me of another set of questions, asked to another would-be helper of the poor. "Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' He then said to him a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, 'Do you love me?' and he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'"

Do I love Christ? Then I must tend to his flock without question.

I still grapple with some of these questions, questions of insecurity and doubt. However, I have

come to overlook these questions more, and instead focus my mind and my energies on the only question that matters here, the only question I can do something about, a question that we all, as Christians, could spend more time asking of one another.

How can I help you today?

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PO Box 2014  
Phoenix, AZ 85001  
Phone: 602-252-9023 or 602-255-0580  
www.andrehouse.org

## The Open Door



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



### **André House Needs List: Fall Focus Items....**



- Coffee
- Frozen Whole Turkeys
- White tube socks
- Sleeping Bags
- Blankets
- Jackets
- Men's Jeans (sizes 28-38)
- Men's Underwear (sizes 28-38)
- Men's Tennis Shoes (Sizes 8-12)



*Thank you & God bless!*