

The Open Door

FALL 2011

From the Director



Fr. Eric Schimmel, C.S.C.

"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times."

This line from the beginning of *A Tale of Two Cities* came to me as I reflected on the many blessings at André House, while remaining very conscious of the ways people struggle today. Although one evening recently we served over 780 plates on our soupline, I refuse to only focus on the darkness of these difficult economic times. In no specific order, I want to share a few of the things that bring joy to my heart, things that remind me of God's constant grace.

First, we have another great Core Staff this year. Br. Richard and I were excited when Alicia, Elizabeth, and Lauren, Core Staff from last year, all decided to stay for another year at André House. We are also happy to welcome Annie and Joe. Annie hails from St. Louis, and Joe originally comes from Portland, Maine. Although they have only been here a little more than two

months, they are already having a very positive impact on our ministry.

As this newsletter reaches your home, we mark the one year anniversary of the canonization of our patron, Saint Br. André Bessette, CSC. It is hard for me to believe that a year ago Br. Richard and I had the privilege of being in Rome for that wonderful celebration. I have definitely felt the intercession of our saint helping us through the past year.

Another great blessing is a newly updated website. Many hours went into revamping our website, with contributions from both staff and volunteers. I encourage you to visit our website, www.andrehouse.org. Hopefully by Thanksgiving the link for online giving will be up and running. We also hope to add new videos on a regular basis.

The last several years we have had students visit us in January, over Spring Break, and over the Summer. This October we are blessed to have a group of students from the University of Notre Dame spend a week with us. We hope that students coming during Fall Break will become another André House tradition.

Even with these many blessings, each day I am conscious of the way that our guests are struggling. One evening as I was doing the overnight shift at the transitional houses on Polk St., some of the guests were on the front porch reminiscing about the time when there were jobs. Sometimes it is difficult to keep the light of faith and hope.

Often feeling the pinch themselves, people often ask me whether we have seen an increase in demand for our services. A guest recently told me that some places that used to hand out clothes have cut back on their services. This explains why the number of people using our clothing closet increase from ~130 per week to ~150 week. We are going through A LOT of white socks, underwear, and pants. As we are about to head into the winter months, we have already distributed over 2,500 blankets. That used to be the total we gave out in a year. A more complete "needs list" is also in this newsletter.

Even with these challenges, neither I nor any of the staff at André House look at our current situation as desperate nor hopeless. We know that prayer and trust in Divine Providence will lead those who can help us to do so. God always seems to move in our hearts and lives in ways to make sure that we have what we need to keep an Open Door.

We thank God for the ways that God helps us to keep an open door to those in need. We also thank you for being a part of the André House family. Your prayers and support make a difference!

God bless,
Fr. Eric

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Prayer

- by Elizabeth Diedrich

Praying is hard. It is hard to find time to pray. It is hard to stay focused. It is hard to quiet one's mind and heart to listen for the subtle movements of God. It is hard when we feel far from God, and it is hard when God asks things of us that we do not want to hear.

"I wish a prayer upon my little sister Molly. She has become an alcoholic. I love her. Amen"

At André House one the most important things we do is pray for our guests. In the main dining room of the Hospitality Center we have a prayer table. Here we have paper, pens, and a prayer box where guests (and volunteers and staff) can write their prayer intentions. When the André House staff gathers for our noontime prayer, we pray the intercessions from the prayer table.

"I pray Lord, please help me know where to live, where to start the journey, where to end the journey. Thanks. Amen."

It is very intimate to share the prayer intentions. A person's prayers come from the silent longing of their hearts and are raw expressions of their deepest desires. We see prayers of hope, despair, joy, and thanksgiving.

"I'm such a sucker. I get paid and throw it away on others. I am so tired. Death would be a welcome relief. Lord, help me learn to help myself. Amen. Nick"

Sometimes, I find the hardest part of prayer is honesty with God. In prayer we are called to let go of the walls we put around ourselves and let go of our worldly self-consciousness. We are called to authentically and completely open ourselves to the grace of God.

"Help, God, I am begging, I need to stay clean. Amen."

In prayer we are called to continually deepen our relationship with God and to become self-aware of our shortcomings and our needs. We are called to honestly look at ourselves and humbly ask God for the grace to lead us according to God's plan for our lives.

"Dear most gracious father God I ask in your son Jesus name that my children come home to me and papa. Amen."

As we discover the areas of our lives where we fall short, prayer is an occasion to bring these things before God and ask for help.

"I ask the Lord for a special anointing – the kind of anointing that whatsoever I touch or whomsoever I walk by, they would be blessed. Please also pray that God humbles me and makes me like Christ through and through. Amen."

Often when I am having a hard time with prayer, when I cannot stay focused or I am frustrated by my day, I turn my prayer into a prayer of thanksgiving. At the end of the day I work to quiet my mind by recalling the moments throughout the day that I am thankful for, the moments where God was tangibly present in my day.

"Thank you God for everything, even the things I don't see and help the little girl I saw on the bus today. Amen."

It is a blessing and privilege to share these prayers of our guests in our community. This last prayer was a prayer left on the prayer table in thanksgiving for André House for all of those who help with our ministries.

"A prayer for André House - may God find you in his mercy and his grace for all you have done for everyone. Amen."

“Where You From?” and “Where You Goin’?”

- by Lauren Rogers

Here at André House I have met many people from many different places. This will be my second year on the Core Community...that means new community members, new volunteers, new guests, and many new stories. One of my favorite things to do at André House is listen to people share their stories. Every one of the hundreds of people we encounter each day, both guests and volunteers, has a story of how they landed at André House.



I once had a nun ask me (while standing in front of a giant map by the back door of a convent in Boston), “Where ya from?” followed by, “Where ya going?” I showed her where Beaumont, TX was on the map, but then asked her what she meant by where I was going. I told her I was getting into the minivan and going to the art museum with her. After she finished laughing, she explained that in order to know where we were going in life, we needed to know where we came from. We don’t need to dwell on the past but acknowledge it and learn from it in order to move forward in God’s plan for us.

Most of our guests are used to seeing Core Staff come and go. We sign up for one year of service beginning August 1st, so faces change every year at that time. Many of the guests are just as curious about us as we are about them. Many will come into the office, or sit with us while we porter, and ask us questions about where we are from, what school did we go to, and why we came to André House. This also allows us to start asking the same questions of them. Our guests have really great stories to tell us. They have come from every walk of life. Some were in our nation’s military and served in one or more wars. We have welders, mechanics, nurses, and yes, we even have a college professor who taught at NYU. Some lost their jobs and, unfortunately, lost their homes and cars. Some became drug addicts and/or alcoholics and lost everything to their addictions. Many have families (parents, husbands or wives, and children), and they come into André House’s office to call their families and let them know they are ok. Many have a mental illness but can’t afford their medi-

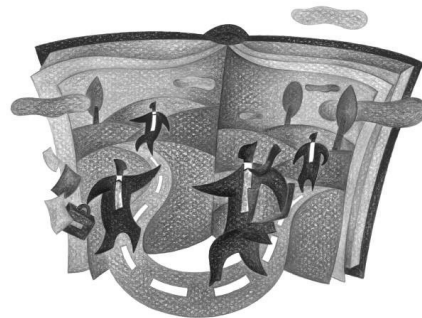
cations, preventing them from being able to function in the “real world”. Many stories are similar, but they are all unique to each individual.

While talking to guests about their past, some will share their plans for the future. Many volunteers and guests have asked me what is next after André House. My hopes are to go back to school and earn a Bachelor’s Degree in Accounting, as well as my MBA, obtain a CPA license, and work for a place like André House. Talking to many of our guests about their future, I have heard different stories. Most of them want to get a job and get back on their feet. Some of them

would like to go back to school so they can get their GED, a special certificate, or a different degree so they can find a better job and provide for their families. Many of them want to return to André House, once they are on their feet, and give back what has been given to them.

Everyone has a unique story. God made all of us in His image and likeness, but He also made us all very different. If we all had the same story, life would be pretty boring. By stopping, listening, and sharing, our stories become intertwined, and we all become part of a larger story.

Where you from?



Where you goin’?

Whose Presence is Balm

-by Joseph Canarie



Here at André House, we talk a lot about trusting in Divine Providence. Br. Richard's stories of God coming to our financial assistance throughout our history, for example, are truly miraculous. Lately, I have also begun to appreciate how God's providence comes to our spiritual assistance.

At some point during each day at André House, even if only momentarily, we deal with spiritual turmoil: aggravation with alcoholism and frustration with our inability to fix it; anxiety that a fight might break out and fear when it does; sadness about a guest's predicament and anger at the system that put them in it. The following story typifies the highs and lows of our lives at André House and how God always provides our souls the grace we need to continue in our work:

Before I could say anything, Anne began to tell me her story. She told me of her formerly middle-class life, of her struggles to leave her violent partner, and of her hopes to find work. She had found emergency protection at an over-crowded shelter but was looking for somewhere more stable.

"That sounds very difficult, Anne," I said into the phone, trying to find the right words. "I'm so glad you found the courage to leave that relationship."

"Mmm," she confirmed, pausing. "So, could I interview to stay at your transitional living house?"

My heart sank. I still had not told her our interview slots were full for the day. "I'm so sorry Anne, we're booked for today. Can you try back?"

Anne did try back, but always just after we had scheduled the day's interview. Each time she would share a little more, and each time I would encourage her to try back again. Finally we had an opening, and I eagerly invited her to interview. When she arrived, Br. Richard and I introduced ourselves as the interviewers and welcomed her inside.

I entered the interview viewing it as a mere formality. I knew Anne so well now, I thought, surely she would be a great fit for our program. As Br. Richard began his questions, however, it became obvious she was not. She suffered from chronic illness, leaving her unable to work more than twenty hours a week. Since our program is specifically for those working towards full-time employment, the decision was clear. Still, as with all interviews, we asked her to step outside while we discussed.

We spent several minutes in discussion filled with empathy but more and more certain of our decision. As I went to call her back in Br. Richard said, "Why don't you let her know?"

"Me?" I freaked, jolted from my passive role as note-taker. "But I've never done this before and..."

"You'll be fine, Joe," he interrupted. "You'll be fine."

Inviting Anne back inside, I looked to Br. Richard who calmly nodded his encouragement and then slowly began, "I'm very sorry, Anne, but it doesn't look like our program would be a good fit for you."

It was one of the hardest things I have ever had to say to anyone.

My feelings of sadness and regret lingered for the rest of the afternoon. Still upset, I went to my Front Gate post and began to pass out water to those waiting in line for supper. I glumly handed bottles to the first three guests but perked up when I came to the fourth. It was my friend, "Tiny Dancer."

"Hey, Tiny Dancer," I said.

"What's wrong with you, child?" she asked. "Come here and show me some love." And with that she gave me one of the best hugs I have ever received. Instantly all the upset of the afternoon melted away in this profound meeting of souls. TD had known exactly what I needed in that moment; this was God's providence,

(Continued on page 5)





Whose Presence...cont'd

(Continued from page 4)

providing my soul with the love it so desperately needed.

That evening a few of us Core Staffers sat down together at “Mom’s” (the name fondly given to the staff house) to say night prayer. We began with that old Irish hymn, “Lord of All Hopefulness.” I had sung this hymn many times before, but that night the last verse struck me in a deep way. The words say simply:

*Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.*


As I reflected back on the day, I recalled all the simple ways God had made His presence balm to me that day: through Br. Richard’s nod of encouragement, Tiny Dancer’s incredible hug, and our community’s gathering to pray together before bed.

I pray in thanksgiving for the many times God’s soul-healing providence shines on me through the wonderful people that surround me every day. They provide me the love I need at exactly the right moment. Their presence is truly balm.



Thanksgiving Eve Memorial Service

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November is a month of remembrance in the Catholic Church. Because of this, on Wednesday, November 23rd, 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 a chain gang from a local prison, 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.

The service will begin at the White Tanks Cemetery no later than 8:00pm. See our website, www.andrehouse.org, for more details.



Front Gate

- by Elizabeth Diedrich



Handing out dinner tickets, I had already invited the first 120 people into the parking lot, filling the shaded benches. Another 100 people stood along the sidewalk, waiting for the dinner service to begin.

Waiting outside with our guests for the doors to open, a man walks up and asks for water. No dinner, just water. I direct him to the drinking fountain.

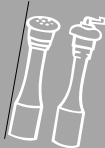
I do not know him, but he looks like so many I have seen before. Obviously homeless, his pants and shirt are stained and torn. His beard is unkempt, his hair matted; clearly he has not showered in days. He has no shoes, just an old pair of once white tube socks that are now stiff, gray, and worn through. He looks dazed.

Honestly I don't think I would remember this man if it was not for what happened next.

As I impatiently look to the doors waiting for them to open, a man on the benches grabs something from his bag and runs out the gate. I worry that he grabbed a weapon. Anxiously stepping into the street, I see the gentleman talking to the poor man with no shoes. He hands him something and walks away.

As the gentleman walks back to take his seat on the bench, back to waiting in line for dinner, he passes me and says, "I guess I don't really need two pairs of shoes."

"Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise."
- Luke 3:11



ANDRÉ HOUSE

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DAY!

Date: Sunday, November 6th

Time: 9:30am Mass, Potluck Brunch to follow

Please join us as a "thank you" for all you do in support of our guests and our ministry. We are grateful for your continued help in feeding, clothing & serving poor and homeless people in the Phoenix area.

Frozen turkeys welcome, but not required.

Thank you for your time, contributions & prayers.

Location:

Hospitality Center
213 S 11th Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85007
(Northeast corner of 11th Ave & Jackson)

Mailing List



Do you want to be removed from the mailing list? (STOP!)



Does your name or address need to be corrected?



Are you reading a friend's copy of *The Open Door* & want to be added to our mailing list?



If any of these are true, then please use the enclosed envelope and **send the mailing label on this newsletter** with either the changes that need to be made or the word "REMOVE" on it. The list will be updated before our next mailing.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact Teresa Hipp:

Email: coordinator@andrehouse.org

Phone: 602-255-0580 x302.

If you leave the information in a voicemail, please leave a phone number in case there are questions. Thank you!

****André House's mailing list is not sold or given to any other organization****

Arizona Working Poor Tax Credit

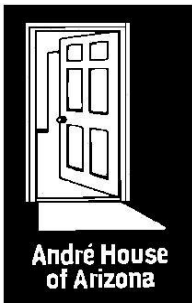
It's easy to take advantage!

This dollar-for-dollar credit from the State for charities helping the working poor no longer requires a baseline year of giving. Donors need only itemize their taxes to benefit from this credit. When you donate to André House, you can receive the tax credit by completing Form 321 when you file your tax return. Single individuals can earn up to a \$200 dollar-for-dollar tax credit (married, filing jointly, can earn up to \$400.) For complete details:

- Call the AZ Dept of Revenue:
602-255-3381
- Check out the AZ Dept of Revenue website:
www.azdor.gov/taxcredits.aspx
- Contact your accountant



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



André House


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www.andrehouse.org

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The Open Door



Join us every First Friday for Mass and a Potluck Supper at 1203 W Polk at 6:30 pm



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

- Ground Coffee
- Frozen Whole Turkeys
- White tube socks
- Blankets
- Shampoo (large bottles & travel sizes)
- Jackets & Sweatshirts
- Men's Jeans (sizes 28-38)
- Men's Underwear (sizes 28-38)
- Men's Tennis Shoes (sizes 8-12)
- Sleeping Bags

Thank you & God bless!