

From the Director



FR ERIC SCHIMMEL, CSC
DIRECTOR

The longer I spent procrastinating about what I should write for this special 25th Anniversary Newsletter, the more Christmas music started playing in the stores and Christmas decorations started to be hung everywhere. Unfortunately, that only tells you that I wrote this article sometime after Halloween, probably after Thanksgiving.

My sense is that we live in a culture that tells us not to wait. We want everything now. That desire for instant gratification, in my humble opinion, is not healthy. I especially feel it is not healthy for our guests. Often it takes time to get life turned around, especially when you hit (or are hitting) a bottom. It is bad enough to feel down on your luck, but to live in an environment that bombards you with a message that you should pick yourself up by your bootstraps and that you should be over this hump

by now can become downright oppressive. Some things take time.

It has taken time for André House to become the place that it is now. Starting from just one simple house at 1002 W Polk St, we now own four buildings. As the number of services we offer has grown, and sometimes contracted, lots of time and energy went into discussing these decisions.

At the end of the day, I believe that the most important thing is that all of us who are a part of André House come to it with a vision of love. We truly try to set aside personal agendas to work towards the common good, striving to find what God wants us to do in this ministry. We trust in Divine Providence, and God always provides what we need through the hearts and hands of benefactors, staff, volunteers, and very often through our guests.

I believe in my heart that it is a blessing to have our 25th Anniversary celebration in the Christmas Season. Some may wonder at that statement, but in the Catholic Church the Christmas Season extends from Christmas Eve all the way until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord – January 10th this year. We chose the dates for our celebration to be close to Br André’s Feast (Jan 6th), but my heart tells me that God wanted us to also celebrate during Christmas.

As the Christmas Carol *O Holy Night* says, “Long lay the world in sin and error pining, till He appeared, and the soul felt its worth.” Our faith shows us that in a world of sin and error, God still loves us. God loves us so much that He sent His only Son. Light scatters the darkness. Our Lord Jesus who was born in Bethlehem taught us that the Kingdom of God *is* at hand. I hope and pray that everyone who is part of André House – guest, volunteer, staff, benefactor, ALL – feel that special message of Christmas; that they all feel their worth in God’s eyes.

My sense is that people do. The articles submitted for this newsletter are but a few of the many stories I have been privileged to hear and/or be a part of that reveal Jesus as Emmanuel – “God with us.” For me, this Silver Anniversary is a celebration of God with us, through the intercession of Blessed Br André Bessette, CSC. It is a celebration of us doing our best to answer God’s call to be Christ for our each other.

In closing, I want to thank all of you for the part that you play in this story of incarnation, manifesting God’s love to others. We thank God for all the people who have been part of André House and who have passed from this life - may they enjoy the fullness of God’s Kingdom in Heaven. And we thank God for the way that Emmanuel will continue to be with us.

Happy Anniversary!

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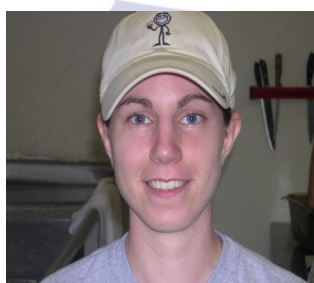




André House Confirmed My Desire to Serve

- Margaret Bouffard, Core Community 2007-08

When I was a member of the Core Community, I sent weekly e-mails to family and friends back on the east coast, keeping them updated on my life at André House. Usually these updates included funny stories about the guests or recounted activities I did on my day off, but a few of those e-mails were serious reflections on what



MARGARET BOUFFARD
CORE COMMUNITY 2007-08

I had learned during my twelve months at André House. I thought I'd take excerpts from those e-mails and share some thoughts with you.

The biggest thing I've come to realize is how fortunate I am to have been born into a loving family, raised well and received a good education. The friends and family that make up my support system really made me into who I am. The people that I meet here lack any form of a support system. I hear stories of childhoods filled with abuse and parents who were drug addicts and alcoholics. Many people here may have started out on the right track, but because they did not have the proper support or role models, fell on hard times and ended up homeless. I think working here is also the best D.A.R.E. program possible. It's amazing what drugs and alcohol can do to a person. One day someone is fine and the next day they're walking in circles and scratching their chests constantly because they're high. While some of the people we serve are addicts, I've also

encountered several people who have just been down on their luck. They may have lost their job, fell behind on their bills, and lost their housing. This has shown me that homelessness can literally happen to anyone. I think one of the greatest blessings someone can have is a good job. Overall, I learned many practical life skills at André House. I grew in maturity and faith, learned to be responsible and assertive, and learned how to cook! No doubt these skills will serve me in the future.

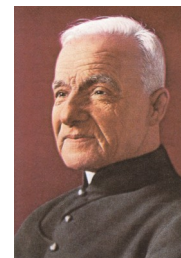
When I entered my year at André House, I was excited to live out the works of mercy and incorporate Matthew 25's call to serve Christ in my everyday life. I planned to pursue a Masters of Divinity Degree after completing a year at André House. Now, I reflect on my year and see how formative André House really was for my career goals. As I continue to prepare for a career in ministry, it's amazing how often my André House experiences are applicable to my classes and in my field placement ministry internships. André House instilled in me a strong sense of hospitality and the recognition of the dignity of all people, and I strive to incorporate these in my life today. The strong volunteer community and close relationships that I formed with both volunteers and guests has led me to cultivate the same closeness in my own community here at school and in my field placements. André House confirmed my desire to serve the people of God in a close, meaningful way, and I pray that these values are instilled in all who walk through André House's Open Door.

"I GREW IN
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COOK!"

Did you know...

- André House was named for Br André Bessette, CSC, a Holy Cross Brother who had a ministry of hospitality and healing in Montreal, Canada.
- With both his parents deceased by the time he was 12 years old, Br André spent the next thirteen years poor, wandering from job to job, and having little hope.

"Did you know..." information provided by the St Joseph's Oratory website at: www.saint-joseph.org



BR ANDRÉ BESSETTE, CSC
ANDRÉ HOUSE NAMESAKE



A Forgotten Ministry

- Elizabeth Diedrich, Core Community 2008-09

As I pause for fighter jets to pass over, I look around. I am standing in what could be described as a fenced in gravel field. Desolate, dry, muted, and dusty, it is not much to look at. I read the line, "May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace." I sprinkle holy water on a plain gray coffin, and a chain gang of women lower the coffin into a grave. We have just buried "Unknown Man, approximate age of 45." The only sign that will mark this grave is a round brass disc saying "John Doe" and a date of death.

Welcome to White Tanks Cemetery. Near Good-year, AZ, it sits in the valley of the White Tank Mountains. It is the cemetery run by Maricopa County. Any person who dies and is not claimed, is unknown, or the family cannot afford a funeral, is buried here. Each year approximately 300 men, women, children, and infants are buried here.

Every Thursday morning a chain gang and a chaplain come to White Tanks to say a brief service and bury the dead. André House participates in this ministry in two ways. First, in a rotating cycle with other chaplains, it sends one staff member to lead the prayer service. Second, every year, in November, the Catholic Church's month of remembrance, on Thanksgiving Eve, André House staff leads a prayer service to remember all who have been buried at the White Tanks Cemetery in the previous year.

I have had the unique privilege to lead the prayer services twice. When I arrive at White Tanks, first I slowly walk through the cemetery. I look at the names of the infants; I look to see how many people are only remembered with a label reading "John Doe" or "Jane Doe;" and, I wonder how many families do not know their loved ones have died. As the chain gang practices marching, I silently pray for all those who are in mourning and have lost loved ones. As we assemble to begin the prayer service, I remind myself that it is I and the chain gang who are stand in for the family. We represent the mother, father, sisters, brothers, and friends who do not have the privilege of witnessing this moment. As I begin the service, the chain gang joins me in each action. Together we make the sign of the cross, are

moved to tears, and say the Our Father.

Although a funeral, this is not only a solemn occasion. Laughter occurs. Anytime one *al-most* falls into a grave, after the shock, slow laughter starts to move through us. Also, one of my most humbling experiences was when the chain gang laughed



ELIZABETH DIEDRICH
CORE COMMUNITY 2008-09

at me for making a mistake. I attempted to sing Amazing Grace at the end of the last burial. I was told that if I sung, the chain gang would join in, just as they had joined me at each other part. My singing was awful; I forgot the words; and, the prayer service ended with a pitiful song and a group of chain gang women laughing at my attempt.

At André House we give witness to the lives of our guests. We practice the Corporal Works of Mercy through feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless, and our personal favorite, a corporal work peculiar to André House, showering the stinky. Yet, one of the Corporal Works of Mercy that is often forgotten is burying the dead.

Through these Corporal Works of Mercy practiced at André House, we give witness to the lives of our guests. We recognize them as important and valuable. Yet, also in death are we called to show respect for life. No person should die alone, and no person should be forgotten. Through the prayer services at White Tanks, we remember the lives of those who have died, but most important, we give witness to our belief in their everlasting life.

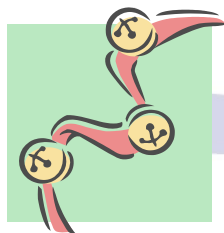
"I SPRINKLE HOLY
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WOMEN LOWER
THE COFFIN INTO A
GRAVE."



Listen to the Bells

- Patrick Suth, Core Community 2001-02

It was a hot and sunny day in downtown Phoenix—very uncharacteristic weather for a location in the middle of the desert. I was working in the Pascente Office, combing through the 2700 page Special Edition Webster's Dictionary,



THREE JINGLE BELLS

“HIS HANDS WILDLY MOVING IN VARIOUS DIRECTIONS AS IF THEY WERE ATTACHED TO AN OVERHEAD STRING THAT SOMEONE WAS MANIPULATING.”

when a disheveled middle-aged man shuffled in. Anyone who has worked at André House over the past 25 years would admit that it can be a very difficult task to see Christ in every person. However, I did not have any

problems picturing Christ when this man rather abruptly sat down for he actually looked like the Jesus that most of us are familiar with in his own way; although, I have never seen artistic renditions of the Son of God wearing sunglasses.

Dennis began talking and quite frankly did not stop for about 45 minutes. Maybe rambling is a better word. I was only able to understand about half of what he said. Somewhere in the mix were the words “Millionaire”, “Speed Boat”, “Landscaping Business”, “California”, “Shaman”, “Bus ticket”, “California”, “Coffee”, “King James Version of the Bible” and “California.”

“Uh, wait. Back up. Did you say that you were a millionaire,” I skeptically asked. “Ha! Yeah. Ha! I was a millionaire.” I learned early on as a member of the André House Core Community that some of those who use the services offered at André House may have a hard time separating fantasy from reality. For instance, one day I met Alice Cooper’s drummer or so I was informed. (Later, upon further investigation, I discovered that this fellow was in fact NOT Alice Cooper’s drummer - much to my dismay). But, the man before me claimed emphatically to be a millionaire with a landscaping business that thrived in Southern California, eventually spreading into parts of Arizona. “Ha! I have pictures. I can show you, ha!” His hands wildly moving in various directions as if they were attached to an overhead string that someone was manipulating. He got up from his chair,

not without some degree of trouble, and took what seemed to be like one robotic step after another. A trail of paper with seemingly every telephone number under the sun fell from his pink fanny pack. I thought that would be the last time I saw him. I was wrong. Ten minutes later—okay 30 minutes later-- he returned with a brown box. “Here we go,” I thought to myself. “This charade won’t last very long now”.

I was stunned as one-by-one, Dennis pulled photographs from the dingy brown box. From the looks of the pictures, he was in fact a very wealthy man. He did have a landscaping business. He did have a speed boat. He was married and had two children. Before me was a man who at one point in time did seem to have everything he ever wanted. But like so many, his world abruptly came crumbling down around him. Now, all he had were a few memories, a dirty box full of pictures, and a beat up pick-up truck with a camper that looked like its best days were behind her.

Whatever happened to Dennis to bring him to this point in his life I am not entirely sure. I know that he had marital problems. That day in Pascente he told me that at one point he begged God to take all his problems away. “Then, I had a nervous breakdown! Ha! God does answer prayers.”

Over the next several months, Dennis and I developed quite a relationship—a relationship that lasted long after my departure. Before leaving André House, I gave Dennis my phone number. Sporadically, I would receive phone calls from him. As I would listen to the 20 minute messages on my voicemail I realized something else about Dennis. He had no idea whether he was talking to me or not. Quite frankly, he did not care either. He talked and talked and talked. Upon returning to Phoenix a year after my departure, I gave him a little change to get that bus ticket back to California that he so often spoke about. To everyone’s amusement, but not the Phoenix Police Department’s, Dennis bought more than just a bus ticket. He bought his own bus. That’s right, Dennis bought a run-down yellow school bus. It was later impounded.

(continued on next page)



A Graced Moment

- John "Fitz" Fitzgerald, Co-Founder 1984

At the very end of the musical version of *Les Misérables* there is a marvelous moment that I treasure. The ghosts of Fantine and Eponime have come to escort Jean Valjean to Heaven. They sing, "Remember the truth that once was spoken – to love another person is to see the face of God!" As their voices hold on to "God" for what seems an eternity, other voices enter - the ghosts of slaughtered students - asking, "Will you join in our crusade?" It is one of those rare, wonderful "goose flesh moments" that can happen in musical theater.

When I look back on my experiences at André House, the moments I most treasure are the ones that gave me some of those sacramental glimpses of the face of God. There were a bunch of them. But the one that still, years later, never fails to give me one of those grace-full thrills, happened on a damp, chilly winter night. We were still doing the soupline on the sidewalk, alongside the tent city, at the railroad yards. We had already served hundreds of our poor and homeless dinner guests that night and, sadly, ran out of food.

A volunteer furiously scraped the bottom of the pot and managed to come up with one, final bowl of food. The next person in line was a pale, painfully thin young man whom none of us recognized. He looked like he desperately needed something to eat. We handed him the bowl and

apologized to the twenty or so people still waiting in line. The very next person in line was an old, familiar friend of ours, who suffered from a medical condition that gave him his nickname:

"Shaky". When he heard the bad news he began to loudly whimper in dismay. The sickly young man who had got the last bowl turned around, noticed his distress, and gently, without a word spoken, placed the bowl in his trembling hands, and clasped them for a long moment, as though to comfort him. And then he disappeared into the darkness. We had never seen him before, and we never saw him again. Even now, remembering that graced moment grabs my heart and squeezes, bringing tears to my eyes. It was, for me and the rest who were privileged to witness it, as much a sacrament (not just a glimpse of God's face, but a divine hug, too) as anything I have experienced in church.



**JOHN "FITZ" FITZGERALD
ANDRÉ HOUSE CO-FOUNDER**

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Listen to the Bells (concluded from previous page) - Patrick Suth

I am not exactly sure where Dennis is these days, but I think of him and pray for him often. I did hear some time ago that he was in a convalescent home in Riverside, California. (He finally made it back.) I have made several attempts to find out more information—emailing friends, calling Riverside convalescent homes—but have not had any luck. Recently, I came across a letter from Dennis dictated by fellow Core Member, Gabe Halko. Oh, the memories.

In closing, I would like to thank all those who have been associated with André House over the last 25 years, especially the Core Members with whom I lived and worked. It was an experience that I will never forget, and like the bottle of fine wine, I have discovered that the memories sweeten with each passing year.

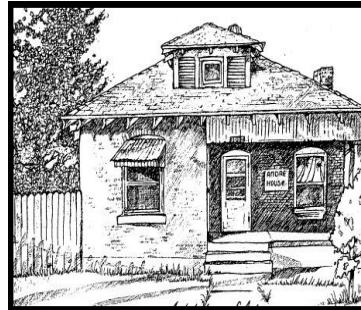
Oh, and I almost forgot. You are probably wondering what the title of this piece has to do with Dennis. Elvis Presley sang a few verses of a gospel song while recording in the studio in 1971. The opening line goes like this: "Listen to the bells / Hear them ringing / Every Sunday Morn." Earlier I mentioned the only possessions that Dennis had when he came to André House. I forgot to mention one—one that anyone who knew Dennis would recognize and one that meant the most to him. Around his neck, Dennis wore a gift that his youngest son made especially for him, three jingle bells on a string. "Listen to the bells. Hear them ringing." Here comes Dennis!



What God Called Me For

- Irma Leyendecker, Director of Volunteer Services - St Mary's Food Bank

It seems like volunteering has been a part of my life since I can remember. My grandparents served meals every Sunday and holiday with the



ORIGINAL POLK HOUSE

St. Vincent de Paul kitchens at church; it was just part of our normal Sunday/holiday routine. I did not know others had quiet family meals at

home. I thought everyone had dinner with hundreds of people after a day of cooking and serving others.

Service to others has been ingrained in my soul, and my service at André House only solidified what I was put here to do. I discovered my passion, my mission. André House made it clear.

I was 13 years old and in 7th grade in 1984 (now you know how old I am) when we started working out of the little red house on Polk Street with my church youth group. We would serve on Sundays and Wednesdays with about a group of 10 of us from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church Glendale youth group. I remember seeing huge pots of tasty concoctions cooking on the little four burner stove while we would butter as much bread as we could find on big long picnic tables in the backyard. Some of the group would go ahead to start handing out paper plates which were numbered, that was their place in line. I remember writing numbers into the 600s. Even then there were so many hungry. Now the face of hunger looks a little different, a bit younger or a bit older, but still way too many. Serving food on the street to total strangers seems like it would be shocking to a child, but to me it did not seem strange. It just felt like it was the right thing to do - felt like it was our duty, "Who would feed these people if we didn't?" The people we served from folding

tables on the street did not seem like strangers. We knew they were our brothers and sisters; we were serving family. I still cannot believe that my friends and I would then wander through the crowd refilling cups of water or passing out hygiene bags. Nothing ever happened to us; no one ever said more than a "thank you" and gave us a grateful smile. I cannot imagine letting my 14 year daughter do that today without being with her. I am sure we had a few guardian angels with us helping us do God's work.

My work at André House continued through high school, and I still volunteer with my family when I can, although I wish it was more often than I find the time for. I hope to instill the honor of service in my children and teach them, that in order to be Christ-like, we must give of ourselves as Christ made the ultimate sacrifice by giving his life for us. I learned through my work at André House that volunteering can be truly selfish and addicting as I continued to go back not just to serve but to feel the joy and love I felt each time I gave of myself for the sake of others. As a parent, I know that my job is to leave this world with children that are happy, caring, loving people that contribute to our world to make it a better place. I hope that with my example of service and caring for others they too will find the compassion to help those in need.

I have been fortunate enough to able to continue my mission of service to others by now working at St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance as Director of Volunteer Services. For the past six years I have been helping connect the people who want to serve with those who are in need. I have seen the spirit of service bring joy to others and have warned them of the "selfish addiction" volunteering can bring to you. I have warned them that they might find themselves working harder than they ever thought they could all for the sake of a hungry child or homeless family.

I thought God only called those to a religious life of sacrifice and order. My work with André House made me realize what God had called me for, and I am so very fortunate that I get to live it out everyday!

"WE KNEW THEY
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SISTERS; WE WERE
SERVING FAMILY."

Notes From the Maternity Wing

- Mike Griffin, Core 2001-02 & Catherine (Gebred) Griffin, Core 1999-00

As our beloved André House family gathers to celebrate 25 years, we are poised to celebrate another epic moment: the birth of our first child. Sure, we could have just had the baby *at* André House—perhaps Bro. Richard could have played the role of midwife, one of only a few things he has not done at André House. But we decided to go the safer route and have this newbie in a hospital. But have no fear, our little one will learn about André House soon enough. The theme of our nursery is Catholic Worker. Not really, but sort of.

Still, we do want to share some thoughts on this momentous occasion. What stays most with us are the ways that André House rooted us the Works of Mercy: Christianity 101. Concrete acts done with love and done in community. Feeding the hungry with Oscar and Mary on the Saturday soup line. Giving drink to the thirsty at 118 degrees. Clothing the naked while learning Spanish: *calcetenes* (socks) are not *calzones* (you know, the Italian food), and offering *la playara* (shirt) is not like offering *la playa* (the beach). Sheltering the homeless at 1002 W Polk where none of us felt homeless. Caring for the sick meant others dealing with us during the after-effects of malaria (Catherine) and salmonella (Mike...uh yea, that plus some OCD plus André House did not equal fun). Visiting those in the prisons of addiction or mental illness and being witness to their moments of freedom, too. And burying the dead at Potter's Field, still one of the most powerful rituals we have experienced.

So André House was for us a kind of school in basic Christian life. But these Works of Mercy remind us not just of a set of practices, but of a cloud of witnesses, the amazing people we came to know learning how mercy is done. And we would like to call to mind just a few of them with a word of gratitude.

Did you know...

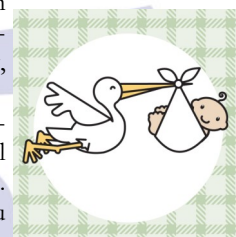
Br André had a true understanding of the meaning and value of suffering, and had wise words to say on the topic: "People who suffer have something to offer God. It is a daily miracle when they succeed in enduring their suffering!"

"Did you know..." information provided by the St Joseph's Oratory website at: www.saint-joseph.org

Mark Lind, you did more than answer phones, but showed fidelity, humor, gentleness and constancy. Cricket, though silver and gold you have had not, what you have—your beautiful art—you have shared generously. Marcia Cartright, pray for us, that we may learn to be the hands of Christ. Joannie Waters, you did it all, even spending an evening sewing together my raggedy, ancient-but-favorite t-shirt. Keep sending your maternal spirit from above. Walter Brown, you taught us not to draw too sharply the line between guest and friend. Mike and Molly McQuaid, even in the heat of debate over the Campus, you put the friendship of André House first.

We could fill countless newsletters with stories of the great cast of characters that make up this place. And we could recount memorable moments, too, like outdoor Stations of the Cross, like Friday community days, like the semi-annual big building bashes, like outings with the Niños, like free sports tickets from Pat Noonan et al, like Polk dinners under the ever-present Christmas lights, like... learning that life is best lived in service, best lived in community.

We can better welcome a newbie into this tough world after being part of a world at André House where it was, as Peter Maurin envisioned, "easier to be good." So, who knows, save a spot in the Core Community of 2032!



2032 CORE COMMUNITY
MEMBER HEADED THIS WAY!

"SO, WHO KNOWS,
SAVE A SPOT IN THE
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BR ANDRÉ
PERPETUAL VOWS



Diet 7Up

- Will McGrath, Core Community 2002-03

Clouds streak the desert sky and the setting sun illuminates them. I watch as they gradually ease from a cottony gray-white into a bruised orange-purple. I am sitting in the parking lot, waiting for the night's soupline to begin. Inside the building, final preparations are being made—someone assigning positions and giving last frantic orders—as the meal for six hundred is brought to a simmer.



CHRIST OF THE BREADLINES

Dusk is creeping now, but the 107° evening is overpowering. Hundreds of people are milling in

the parking lot and out in the street, waiting for the doors to open, waiting for their evening meal. Men and women sit on the benches under the shade tent: drug dealers, prostitutes, addicts, laid-off factory workers, runaways, legal and illegal immigrants, veterans of Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, the mentally and physically handicapped, the various lost and adrift souls of the American Southwest. They all are here in our parking lot, waiting for dinner.

Now the church bus men come down the street, calling for people to join them, to get on the bus. Now the bus comes lumbering down the block, slowly trailing its ambassadors. The church bus men, who are all wearing the same red shirts, are calling into our parking lot—*Who wants to be saved? Who wants to have dinner with Jesus tonight?* Someone in the parking lot has a transistor radio turned up high, and a hip-hop score plays behind the sinking sun. *Come on now, it's time to talk with the Savior! It's time to say hi to Jesus!* A few people get on, and the bus rolls down the block.

A man walks into the parking lot and approaches me with a warm two-liter bottle of Diet 7UP. I recognize him—one of the hundreds of faces that passes through the soupline each night—but I can't remember his name. It's on the tip of my tongue.

He does not speak English, but through his gestures, through the word *vaso*, I understand that he wants me to bring him a cup. I turn to head inside, and he stops me.

"Dos," he says and holds up two fingers.

After a moment of rummaging, I return with two small paper cups. He sets them on the ground ceremoniously and smiles at the hiss of carbonation as he undoes the cap.

He pours his small and mine large. We raise our cups.

"Salud," he says, and we drink.

We sip in silence, and I am careful not to gulp mine. We drink this warm Diet 7UP like it is eighteen-year-old Scotch, contemplatively, respectfully. When I finish, he moves to pour me more, and I protest.

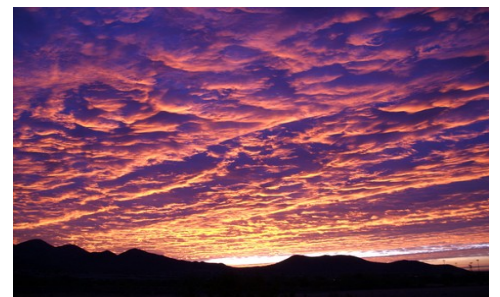
His eyes say, "*Let me share this with you.*"

My eyes say, "*No, save it for later.*"

His eyes say, "*Who knows if there is a later?*"

So he pours again, and we drink in sacramental stillness. After the second cup, he screws on the cap with finality. I thank him, and he smiles. He heads toward the soupline and waits for his meal.

Overhead, the clouds are exploding now, filling the sky with unearthly color, hues and shades that have no names yet.



"I AM SITTING IN THE PARKING LOT, WAITING FOR THE NIGHT'S SOUPLINE TO BEGIN."

Enabling Human Dignity

- Megan McDonald, Core Community 2004-05

A confession: sometimes when someone talks about a movie I have seen and explains in detail this “one scene” with enthusiasm, all too often, even if I have seen the movie, I don’t remember that specific scene. But I will generally nod, smile, maybe give a courtesy chuckle and all but verbally indicate that I know what they are talking about. It has nothing to do with the person telling the story – I have simply embraced this as one of the flaws of my memory.

I know there are so many details and wonderful minutia about daily life at André House that I probably don’t remember or would only recall when present there again. I have a few archived “great stories”, as does anyone who spends any amount of time there. Even more so I probably remember the “great stories” of those who came before me almost better than my own.

But when I do think of André House a flood of emotions and feelings come to me. I almost remember André House more as a force or a presence than anything else. It is someplace I think many would describe as just plain “feeling” different, and I have often tried to articulate or put words to this feeling.

One thing I do remember was the constant debate or concern posed by observers, police and even volunteers that André House is a place of enabling. It simply enables the addicted, the derelicts, the gang members, etc. I think this is a necessary point of struggle for anyone who loves AH and the work done there. And in all my thought about this I can really only affirm this sentiment. Yes, André House does enable people. Maybe there are some who are enabled to lead broken lives by being fed and clothed – but more so, this is a place where I believe what is ultimately enabled to thrive is dignity.

André House is a place where anyone and everyone can “come as you are.” This of course applies to the homeless and struggling of Phoenix, but also it applies to the volunteers, the Core and the students who pass through the doors. For me, this sometimes, smelly, dirty place showed me that raw humanity has a place to eat, to sit, to be.

Rules, routine and prayer, are essential to the work of André House. Not unlike how I understand a monastery. I have often heard the purpose of a monastery also questioned. Isn’t it a place that is unrealistic and out of touch with the world? Can’t it simply be used as a place to hide from reality? What is really being done there to further Christian work? Is it simply a place of the like-minded? But the way I remember a monastery being explained by Thomas Merton was that they are pockets of refuge that propel the world through prayer, discipline and love. They are an unseen and often unrecognized force that highlights God by standing in contradiction to the ‘rest’ of the world. This is how I think of André House. It is a corner of the world that, to the best of its ability, dignifies every person who enters, no matter whether they are the giver or receiver – and often achieves this through blurring these roles. I think the energy of love and acceptance created here ripples out and affects the world in ways that are known only by God.

The other thing I know about monasteries, based on my limited reading of the rule of St. Benedict, is that the real practice of charity happens in community – those you live and work with everyday. This, too, is true of André House. Some of my most formative moments are from living in community on the Core Staff. It is sometimes easier to love the guest who endears themselves to you or who you only see occasionally. But it is the rigors of scheduling, life at Moms, Friday community days and even guests who have been there for years with no sign of progress, that are moments where true love is exercised. I believe the struggles undertaken to live in this community generate something...something that isn’t easily documented in any sociological report or analysis.

(continued on page Back Page)



MEGAN McDONALD
CORE COMMUNITY 2004-05

“ANDRÉ HOUSE IS
A PLACE WHERE
ANYONE AND
EVERYONE CAN
‘COME AS YOU
ARE’.”



The Pigeon

- Steven Cottam, Core Community 2008-09



Once during a bright midday's heat,
while I portered in a red seat,
Pondering the quaint and curious events
of my year on Core,
While I sat there, greatly sweating,
suddenly there came a fretting,
As of one loudly upsetting,
upsetting our green double door.
"Tis but some loud guest," I muttered, "
upsetting our green double door
It's only this, and nothing more."

Turning to this loud disorder, as my duty, as the porter,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, to stop that crashing
now I must implore."
I rose to face this offender, I, the parking lot defender,
"boisterous", I said "rowdy slamming
is not healthy for our door.
In fact I am quite certain you are doing damage
to our door."
An empty hallway, nothing more.

"Curious," I softly muttered,
the air unit above me sputtered,
I really thought I heard a banging,
banging on our double door.
But the hallway was deserted,
no sign of who had exerted
The power and the force needed to crash
and slam our double door.
No sign or token, no evidence,
that any were even near our door.
Was it the wind, nothing more?

Thinking I was now done checking,
suddenly I heard a pecking,
A faint and gentle drumming,
a sound much softer than 'twas before.
Was this a dream? Was I napping?
Did I truly hear a tapping?
A tapping and a rapping coming somewhere
from quite near the floor.
Like some telltale heart's dull pulsing,
I heard a thumping from the floor.
I investigated more.

I listened closely to the sound,
coming from the chapel 'twas found,
The small but holy place where in silent prayer

our God we do adore.
"Vacate at once!" I loudly cried,
and flung the chapel open wide
And out flew, much to my surprise,
a pigeon from our chapel door.
And perched upon the statue
of Blessed Brother André by the door,
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

I breathed an ample sigh of relief,
'twas no intruder, 'twas no thief
But a crusty, dusty pigeon who'd been trapped
while trying to explore.
"Hello there," I laughed, "friendly pigeon,
have you come to talk religion,
Sitting on the head of our beatified namesake
by the door,
A pigeon pilgrim on André's likeness by the door.
He gazed at me, nothing more.

My first instinct was to expel,
and from our hall this bird repel,
But I found my tiny guest amusing,
felt with him a warm rapport.
Butter sandwich I was munching,
a leftover from my lunching,
I gave Pigeon a small smidgen of bread,
to break this dull shift's bore
And to ease the pang of hunger
which this poor bird awfully bore.
Quoth the pigeon, 'I want more.'"

I was startled beyond my wit.
"A talking bird? Now I've lost it"
My sanity, for months slowly slipping,
was clearly now no more.
Richard came in, "Hello birdy,"
spoke he to this fowl most wordy
As if a talking bird on André
was a sight he'd seen before,
As if this strangeness was no stranger
than what he'd seen here before.
He passed through, said nothing more.

Richard saw the bird, and didn't budge,
didn't flinch, so who was I to judge?
I had to admit I'd seen odder guests
come through our Open Door.
Helping a bird made me nervous,

still, I offered him my service,
I said, "To help you is an easy yoke,
light burden, simple chore.
To offer you service, succor, and support
is our solemn chore."
Quoth the pigeon, "I want more."

"Your human speech, quite prolific,
still is rather nonspecific
What exactly do you require,
to make you shine and help you soar?
Are you hot? Do you need some ice?
Are you cold? Will a blanket suffice?
If you speak, do you read?
Fancy a copy of 'The Open Door.'
Michelle has a grand article in this copy
of 'The Open Door.'"
Quoth the pigeon, "I want more."

"Want a phone call, in Pascente,"
I offered to him "we make plenty
For long distance I have to
dial you out on Vonage, on line four.
For local, nine, then the number,
dial yourself, I won't encumber
But your call must be kept down to,
in minutes, only half a score.
Whether to Mesa or Mexico
you must keep to half a score."
Quoth the pigeon, "I want more."

Most perplexed, I thought, "I suppose,
is it that he might want some clothes?"
For 'twas a dingy, tattered,
battered coat of feathers that he wore.
"Is it that you need new raiment?
You can have some free, no payment
I can get for you new apparel,
outfits from our closet store,
Four shirts, some pants, some shoes, four socks,
one jacket from our closet store."
Quoth the pigeon, "I want more."

I wondered what this bird was wanting,
why my office still was haunting,
When he eyed, then motioned, toward first
the cupboard, and then the drawer.
"Art thou mad," I said, "Or craven?
You don't bathe, you are not shaven.
What would you use soap, shampoo,
conditioner, or a razor for?
Toothpaste, toothbrush, on beaks are useless,
what is it you need them for?"
Quoth the pigeon, "I want more."

This pigeon was most hard to please

and my poor mind was not at ease.
He had no distinct need, needed nothing,
yet always asked for more.
"I think you're advantage taking?
I suspect your need you're faking.
For asking aid, your birdy,
bestial excess is a motive poor.
If you have no need, leave my time,
our services for the truly poor."
Quoth the pigeon, "I want more."

"Then get in line, get a ticket", I said
"surely thou art wicked.
Your clasping, grasping ingratitude
is a mood I most abhor.
Those in line for food are needy,
thou, small fowl, are simply greedy.
You'll receive no more or better
than those who've been here since before.
I will not let you cut the line,
and cheat those who were here before."
Quoth the pigeon, "I want more."

In the dining room, on a tray,
I found him next. I yelled to say,
"Thou art never filled,
and soon will eat us out of stock and store.
Our services cannot sate thee,
endlessly you aggravate me,
Bread and butter, cake, and candy,
yogurt, rice and goulash galore,
Potatoes, beans and bacon, turkey,
salad and goulash galore."
Quoth the pigeon, "I want more."

"Get thee gone, demon unbidden,"
I screamed, my anger unhidden,
And from the back gate donations table
a hefty book I tore.
"Thou gutter bird, thou flying rat!"
I flung the book at where he sat.
Take thy depraved ungrateful soul
from off that tray and out my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart,
and take thy form straight out my door!
Quoth the pigeon, "I want more."

And the pigeon, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,
On the statue of Blessed Brother André
near the double door.
I know not how to make him leave,
and so I sit, and so I grieve.
Can't set the alarm, lock the door,
thus can't join all my friends on Core,
Laughing, joking, eating, at Polk.
Alas! My cherished friends on Core
I might join you, nevermore.



**PIGEON PERCHED
PEACEFULLY IN OUR
PARKING LOT ON
CSC CROSS &
ANCHORS SYMBOL.**



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Life After André House

- Fr Bill Wack, CSC, Director 2002-08

It has been a year since I left André House and Phoenix. I treasured my time there, and I continue to thank God for giving me the opportunity to learn and share so much over the 6 ½ years I ministered there. When I was at André House, I could not imagine NOT thinking about the plight of the homeless every minute or NOT being concerned about who was going to do the showers or the soupline or the clothes closet on any given day. Truthfully, it did take several weeks for me to stop asking myself, "I wonder what is going on at André House right now?" several times a day. But the sad truth is that I no longer think about it all the time.



**FR BILL HORSEBACK RIDING
HIS WAY TO A NEW PARISH IN
AUSTIN, TEXAS**

Now this is not to say that I do not think about the people there – I do, constantly. I think of and pray for the Core Members, the guests, the volunteers and all the parishioners I met when I was there. But then came the big move to Austin, Texas. Now that I am ensconced in my new ministry as pastor of St. Ignatius Martyr Parish here, direct service to the poor is a distant memory. My days now are filled with Masses, meetings, homily prep and email. Occasionally I get to be involved in social justice issues here in our community, but for the most part my life is really different now. And while I dearly miss that kind of personal connection that I had with so many at André House, I again give thanks for this opportunity to serve in a new way. More than ever I am grateful for you who are carrying on this vital ministry to the poor and homeless populations. Our time there is so brief – enjoy it while you can!

Peace!

Enabling Human Dignity (concluded from page 9) - Megan McDonald

Sometimes it can be easy to look back with nostalgia and over-romanticize some of my memories. At the same time some of the specific memories I do retain are the smell of urine in the sun, missing my family terribly at Christmas time, some moments of violence and the difficulty of dealing with people who have given over their whole consciousness to crack. But more than these trials or even the funny stories, I will always remember André House as a place that stands in contrast to most of the world. It is a place where competition and worldly productivity are not used as measures of worth; a place where people struggle daily to serve Christ in each person whether they are homeless, on staff or a generous volunteer. This is what I think is felt there and this is how I can best articulate this feeling: an intangible energy that is created through the rigors of love in all its messy and complicated forms. For me, this experience, this feeling, is held deeper inside me than any memory or story could ever be.