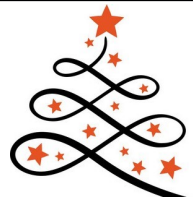
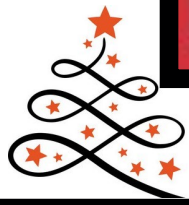


THE OPEN DOOR

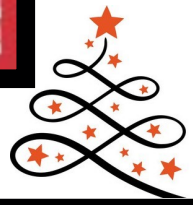


From the Core Community of André House

Holiday Issue 2020



Making God Known Loved and Served



MAY YOUR DAYS
BE MERRY
AND YOUR HEART
BE LIGHT
Holiday Blessings from
your
Andre House
Family



ASH @
Fr. Dan Robinson
John
Elizabeth
Melissa
Katie
Alexandra
Almora
Taylor
WPI Fredo
Andrew
F. Biss
DUSTY



André House began about eleven years ago with Father Mike Baxter and Father John Fitzgerald, also known as "Fitz," with a vision of bring people into their home and offering hospitality to those in need. Being priests of Holy Cross, they instilled the values of the Holy Cross community along with the values and ideas of the Catholic Worker movement, started by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin.

They began with the Polk street house and took in guests little by little in November of 1984. The Christmas of that same year, after partaking in a turkey dinner, Mike, Fitz and other volunteers made a soup with the leftovers and took it to the streets. From there, they decided to cook once a week for those that went hungry.

The one guest house and the one meal a week to the hungry is where it started. Now we are serving six nights a week and seven mornings a week. We serve indoors now which provides a healthier and more comfortable atmosphere. We have a female guest house, and many other services including showers, lockers and a clothing bank. We are also closely connected with St. Joseph the Worker, a job placement service for those in need of permanent work.

But André House is much more than meeting people's immediate needs. We are about meeting people's spiritual needs by listening and loving, by being compassionate and bringing the spirit of Christ into each other's lives.

THE FAMOUS...

Turkey Soup

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 4 - 6 Turkeys, (about 75 lb.) | 50 lb. onions |
| 25 lb. Carrots | 50 lb. potatoes |
| 1 case broccoli | 1/2 - 3/4 case of celery |
| 1/2 case cabbage | 1 case cauliflower |
| full container granulated garlic | 5 lg. Bags of egg noodles |
| 1/4 container rosemary | 1/2 container thyme |
| 1/8 container oregano | 1/2 container powdered onion |
| | 3 fistfuls basil |

Place two 80 qt. Pots and one 60 qt. Pot on the burners and fill them about 3/4 full of water. Unwrap and rinse the turkeys and divide them among the three pots. The water should be up to about the bottom of the bolts of the handles. Distribute the spices among three pots. Cover the pots with lids and turn the fire on high. This should be completed before 11:00 a.m.

At 3:00 p.m., or shortly thereafter, take the turkeys out of the pots and place them in three large pans to cool. Make sure they are cooked thoroughly. Place a second 60 qt. Pot on the stove. Take some broth from each for the pots so you have four pots of broth as the base for four pots of soup.

Wash and chop all vegetables. Carrots and onions first. Potatoes and celery second. And everything else third. Add them to the pots as they are chopped, stirring frequently and keeping the pots boiling. During the cooking process add about a **half container of salt per pot and lightly pepper to taste**. Turkeys need to be shredded in good size pieces and divided into the pots, discarding skin and bones. Noodles and pre-cooked rice can be added at the end to add bulk.

***This recipe has been adjusted in the last 10 years to accommodate numbers and cooks' opinions of taste.*

Andre House Beginnings

Michael Baxter Co-Founder of Andre House
Interview by Fr. Dan Ponisciak, CSC

What drove you and Fitz to feel like you had to do something to address the homelessness issue in Phoenix at the beginning?

I was teaching at Bourgade Catholic High School (1983-84) when I learned about the homeless in downtown Phoenix. Some nights I would drive around the homeless camps in Library Park thinking that we should start a house of hospitality. I knew about Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker from friends at Notre Dame, so that was the model in my head. At the same time, Fitz was taking a sabbatical after several years at Notre Dame working in Campus Ministry and on the staff of Moreau Seminary. He took the better part of that year traveling to different cities learning about various ways people around the country were working with the poor. By June of 1984, our Holy Cross Provincial, Dick Warner, urged us to team up and work with the homeless in Phoenix. The Province bought us a Volkswagen van. Fitz wrote hundreds of friends which brought in \$13,000. We looked at houses for a few weeks, then decided on the one at 1002 West Polk. We started renting it and moved in on November 1. People donated furniture, bedding, kitchen items. We took in our first guest on November 29, 1984. Three more came by Christmas. On Christmas night, we served our first soup line. We were off and running.

I suppose this could be described as “addressing homelessness.” But I tend to think of it in terms of the people we took in: Eric, Rick, Pitro, Michael: our first four guests. One-Legged Mike, Joya, Tiny, Paul Rinker: folks on the line. Scores of them, hundreds, thousands by now, right? As we started, we knew we wanted to be with the homeless, even though we didn’t know who “the homeless” would turn out to be. We just wanted to be closer to folks on the street, having it on good authority that in welcoming them, we welcome Christ.

What did your day-to-day life look like early on and how did you respond to the challenges that presented themselves?

Fitz slept in the front office. I slept in a little room off the kitchen, then later, in the cottage at 1002. We took in anywhere from six to thirteen



guests. We learned not to take in any more than the bathrooms could reasonably handle. Mornings, we and the guests were eating breakfast by 7:30, the guests left by 8:30, when the bakery across the street would fill the air with the smell of bread. Then Fitz and I would do office work: return phone calls, balance the check book, send out thank you notes, get the mail. Sooner or later we would go on food runs, furniture and clothing donation pickups. Guests would return at 4:30, dinner at 6:00. Once we added nights to our soup line (every night but Friday), volunteers would start coming around 3:00. Soup line was at 6:00; dinner back at the house at 7:30. As the numbers increased from 100 to 250 to 600-800, more of our time was devoted to picking up food from grocery markets and food brokers. Things would slow down around 9:00 in the evening. Some guests turned in early because they had to work early the next day. Others would hang out on the porch. The guests, volunteers, and Fitz and I would talk for hours on the front porch, watching the goings-on in the park across the street, gazing at the palm trees against the sky or at the red antennae lights on South Mountain in the distance. Those were the best of times.

As for challenges, we figured it out as we went. Volunteers? They started coming when they heard about it. Money? Well, the money came too.

Beginnings Continued...

We started by serving soup in Styrofoam cups, then we moved to paper bowls. We'd give people numbers by handing out poker chips, then realized it was so much easier to number the plates. We washed the pots and pans in the alley out back with a garden hose, then moved on up to a power washer donated by Pat Noonan, a Sunday night volunteer from the Franciscan Casa. It all evolved little by little, one day at a time, and it became a rather big operation. The loaves and fishes got multiplied. I suppose the greatest challenge to this work was the temptation to get bureaucratic. Fortunately, Fitz and I were constitutionally not bureaucratic types. We thrived in being not very organized.

How did you attract others to volunteer with this new ministry at the beginning?

We invited them down to the house. We asked them to help with the work. We had fun doing it. We became friends with folks. It didn't hurt that we were both saying Masses at parishes around the Valley every Sunday. Fitz is a brilliant preacher and that drew scores of people down to the house. I was working in the Teen Program at St. Louis the King and several co-workers came to Andre House to volunteer. Mary Ann Lester brought us our first volunteer-cooked dinner, Chicken Enchiladas, before we were even taking in guests. She still helps on Saturdays in the Clothes Closet, 36 years later. Marcia Cartwright started coming down on Saturdays; it was her idea to give out soap, shampoo, and laundry detergent to people on the soup line. Rich Schnackenberg heard about what we were doing during Mass at Casa Santa Cruz, the Holy Cross residence near Seventh Ave and Glendale. The next week, he had a truck bring down 500 blankets to give out to folks downtown. I could go on and on. So many good people came to volunteer: Kathleen Kersting, Jack and Joan Butler, the list goes on. At bottom, it was not we who attracted them. People are created by God such that they are drawn to goodness, to doing good. The incarnation has an inherent attractiveness to it.

Andre House was originally founded as a Catholic Worker House. What aspects of the Catholic worker movement were integral to what you were trying to do with Andre House?

In a word, personalism. The idea is that you work with, for, and alongside of others in a personal, face-to-face way because we all flourish when we live in, and for, personal relationships. So we always tried to welcome people as guests into our unconventional, unpredictable, rather unruly community. Guests did not have to "qualify" for our help. There were no criteria other than needing and wanting a place to stay. Unconditional welcome—

- if not entirely so, then close to it. Rules for guests were minimal: back by dinner, out by 8:30, no drinking, no drugs, no violence, no threats of violence, no weapons, help out around the house, and workdays on Saturdays until noon. That's it. No paperwork. No social security numbers. No applications. Not an organization, as Peter Mauri. Put it, "but an organism," that is to say, a body with members, all inherently interconnected one to the other. Another part of this idea is that we would rely on personal donations; no money from church or state, from foundations. No applying for government or corporate grants. No trying to prove that we fed this many, housed that many, got the guys off booze or drugs. We wanted to create a place for where people could belong. Including ourselves. As Dorothy Day put it at the end of her autobiography, "we have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."

Can you talk about the role of the Holy Spirit in getting Andre House off the ground?

Pretty important, especially when we were close to going broke. A letter went out one day saying that the cupboard would be bare by the end of the week. We got a check the next day, brought to us by hand. "Mike, why didn't you guys tell me you needed money?" "Pat, we did." Just goes to show you, as stated by Charlie Sheedy, a wonderful and witty CSC priest, "that Holy Spirit is one of the trickiest persons in the Trinity."

Do you have any stories that would be important to share in this conversation?

It was a Thursday night, my night on the house, and pouring rain outside, a rarity in that part of the world. I'm starting to relax, watching "The Hill Street Blues" with the guests. The only time I claimed TV rights. A knock at the door. A guy explains that his wife and three kids are in the car out front and have no money. The axle on the car broke in Flagstaff and they had to spend their last dollars to repair it. They were Oklahoma refugees from the oil bust that hit in the mid-eighties. He asked if we could put them up. I said we were full, but we could check on some of the hotels on Van Buren to see if they have rooms. The Apache Hotel had a vacancy. So we drove over, I checked them in, and told them to come back to the House in the morning and we'll see if we can help get them some food boxes dry clothes, and so on. The kids were sleepy. The couple was grateful. I went back to the house. "The Hill Street Blues" was over. The guys were turning in. I went to bed that night knowing why, that day, God had put me on this earth. On any given day, you can't ask for much more than that. It's what Aristotle and Aquinas meant by "happiness."

Mary Ann Lester An Andre House First Volunteer conversation documented by Fr. Dan Ponisciak, CSC

FD - Tell me from the beginning what was your motivation to volunteer? What drove you to want to do something? What role did your faith play in the thought that you were truly doing God's work?

ML – Back in the beginning, people would knock on the door at the Polk House and we would sit down on the couch or on the porch with them and if we got a good vibe from them, then we welcomed them into the house. *(In the beginning Andre House was founded as a Catholic Worker house in which volunteers would stay in the same house as guests. This is the current model used by most Catholic Worker houses to this day following the inspiration of Dorothy Day, by living in intentional solidarity within poverty.)*

ML – At the time Andre House was founded by Fitz and Baxter, I was teaching full-time. Baxter came to our parish and presented a talk on what Andre House was and the rest is history. They started initially taking guys in during a very cold winter and would have 13-17 people sleeping in sleeping bags on the floor in the living room. If there was room for a body, there was room for someone to sleep. Guests would then leave for the day and come back in the afternoon. The general idea was to offer hospitality for our guests. We would listen to their stories and simply welcome them in off the streets.

(Mary Ann mentioned that for Christmas, guests were offered a free phone call home because at the time long distance cost a fair bit of money. What they realized early on was that people wouldn't have anyone to call and that reality broke the volunteers' hearts.)

ML – Initially, we started by serving a big pot of soup. We started serving along Madison Ave down by the cemetery. We'd set up tables and people would come and eat. There used to be a big homeless camp in the field along Madison so we would cook at the Polk house and then drive down to where the people were. Gradually, parishes started getting involved and each had a night that they would come and staff the soup line with volunteers.

ML – As the ministry continued, we realized the need for a women's house. The original house was only meant for male guests. So we rented a house on Fillmore and I lived there. Women started coming to that house needing a place to stay. There was no heat in the house at the time and so everyone who stayed there while the house was being renovated had to sleep in winter clothes. The women would eat dinner at the men's house and then walk back over to their house. Hospitality was the root of everything we did.

(Hospitality was so important for Mary Ann that one of the challenges she quickly realized in working with the women in the neighborhood was the language barrier between English and Spanish. As a result, Mary Ann went to Guatemala to study Spanish so she could communicate with many of the women to whom she was working. She even started a co-op that helped the women in the neighborhood make ends meet)

ML – Andre House was (and continues to be) the work of the Holy Spirit. Everything would always come together in a perfect storm. Vehicles were mostly donated and other people would drive up to the house and contribute money to support the mission. There was one day when all the pots and pans were stolen from behind the house on Polk Street. A call was placed to the volunteers, and people donated pots and pans to make sure the meal happened that evening. We never worried about money. Sometimes there was no money to pay the rent and so a letter was sent to the volunteers who then would send money to pay the rent or utilities. If someone had an idea, you would get a lot of encouragement to follow that idea through to completion. It was the most amazing time in my life. At the end of the day, we'd sit and pray the Liturgy of the Hours with our guests. There was a fervor amidst everyone and people were engaged in helping others get to know who God is. There were certainly challenges along the way, but there was also so much joy amidst the volunteers who were serving.

FD - The people who started Andre House remain good friends until this day. A final note regarding our guests experiencing homelessness to this day; In many respects, most of us don't know what it means to be desperate and out of options. We can leave the life of poverty behind after we volunteer at Andre House. Our guests have no choice. It's a different experience for those who live poverty everyday versus those of us who step into and out of poverty for shorter periods of time.



The spirit of compassion and dedication to the service of others, that filled the hearts of our founders and first volunteers, is alive and present today.

In this pandemic, so many who are able, have stepped up to keep our Andre House services available to all those in need.

Undaunted by current circumstances, regular volunteers from the past and present, as well as a new generation of social justice warriors, join together in intentional solidarity with those experiencing homelessness. Andre House continues to be home to all, as the original spirit that created it still moves through those who come through our doors.

A place is always being held for those who will return, and a welcome to all those who are just discovering this spirit within themselves.

Making God Known Loved and Served





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If you file taxes in the state of Arizona, your donations to Andre House may qualify for a tax credit under the AZ Charitable Tax Credit. This dollar for dollar credit allows single filers to get up to \$400 and joint/married filers up to \$800 in credit on Arizona state taxes. Consult your tax advisor for advice specific to your tax situation. When claiming the credit, make sure you fill out form 321 and reference Andre House QCO number 20467.

For more information or to make a donation to Andre House visit www.andrehouse.org

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