

THE OPEN DOOR

FROM THE CORE COMMUNITY OF ANDRÉ HOUSE

HOLIDAY ISSUE 2021



ANDRÉ HOUSE 2021-22 CORE COMMUNITY

May
GOD'S
Blessings
Be YOURS this
CHRISTMAS
And Holiday Season

★

Love from
All of us
at
André House

LARRY GREG MOSS ANATASIA SUJATA KENNEDY STEPHANIE
JEN ANTHONY EDVARD MATTHEW DEMONTE
CHRIS CONSTANCE RETTA FLOYD PAULA JUAN
MIKIE BENJAMIN YVETTE
JANE ELVIS DALLAS MONTES
ALEX RICHARD LAY FELICIA SHAY
NICHOLAS CAM the poor..... ANDRE PO
LEE DANA MARTI MICHELLE
EULENE ALI
KENNY CAMERON JIMMY LAMAR DAVID
BOBBY MONICA MISTEEN KATHLEEN EBONY YESENIA JUSTINE

André House
Melina
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Ruby Brines
Francesca Patti
Mad Cohen
Karlée
JL

GOD'S LOVE *FR. DAN PONISCIAK, C.S.C DIRECTOR ANDRÉ HOUSE*

It is the mission of the Congregation of Holy Cross to make God known, loved and served. As a ministry of the Congregation of Holy Cross, we try to do this every day at André House. Some days are easier than others. But, it is a calling that dwells within our hearts that all of us - guests, staff and volunteers - are invited to share.

Our newsletter this month is themed to "You say you love the poor... Name them." At André House, we pride ourselves on getting to know our guests. We get to know people by name and learn their stories. As a result of being present with people, we are then able to really walk with people in whatever they are going through. It's the same way Jesus encountered people. He met people where they were at. He listened to them and then He helped them discern a way forward. We attempt to imitate the Lord Jesus in our work.

But before we can imitate the Lord Jesus, we need to truly know Him and how do we get to know Jesus? We get to know Him the same way we get to know anyone. We spend time with Him. We are called to spend time in intentional prayer with the Lord. We are called to find time to withdrawal from our work and listen to the movement of the Spirit. But, in order to listen, we must be able to be quiet. We must be able to quiet our minds and our hearts in the midst of our busy world full of distractions. It is only then that we can truly quiet and listen to the small promptings of the Holy Spirit.

My friends, the Spirit drives us to encounter each other through love. We are sent by the Spirit to love each other and the only way we can love each other, poor or rich alike, is to spend time with people and to truly get to know them. I am continually impressed by our core staff who share their stories throughout this newsletter of really getting to know our guests and I hope their stories inspire you to encounter someone through the love of God this Advent and Christmas season. God's love knows no bounds and all are invited to participate in His love. So let us love each other truly. Let God's love be born once again in your hearts as we welcome the Baby Jesus on Christmas Day and may it propel you forward with hope to bring to all you encounter during this season of joy and peace.



SEEK TO LOVE FIRST

ABBIE CAMPBELL ANDRÉ HOUSE CORE STAFF

January 6, 2019 is a day I will always hold close to my heart. This date marked when I began the journey of working with those experiencing homelessness. As I set out for Camden, New Jersey, I anxiously loaded into a van with 13 other people (some good friends others acquaintances), unsure of what the week ahead would hold. Upon arrival I entered into a softly lit room of the Romero Center and was immediately drawn to the words above me that read "You Say You Love the Poor.....Name Them." I carried this quote with me throughout the entirety of that week. Approaching the five month mark as a core staff member here at André House, I now read this quote with a completely different mindset than a few years ago.

As I reflect on my time in Phoenix thus far I remember my first day at André House. The vibrant and scorching July sun beat down on me as I eagerly walked toward my first shift in the Pascente office. A feeling of nervousness washed over me as I watched guests flood through the doors of André House rushing towards the office. However, one guest in particular eased my nerves as she entered and cheerfully introduced herself to me. "I'm Retta, but you can call me Rett" she said. When Retta approached me first, I realized how dignifying calling someone by their name is. Whether a guest is at André House just for the day or longer I make it a point when meeting them to ask what their name is. I recall a moment during a Thursday portering shift when I called for a guest across the parking lot, "Hey Alex" I said. Alex walked over and sat down with a big grin across his face saying, "You remember my name?" I notice frequently that guests are in disbelief being called them by their name, almost as if it is abnormal for this to occur to them. I find a person's name to be a vital part of their story and therefore make it a point to learn the names of those I have encountered and will continue to do so in the months to come. A person's name is just the beginning of their story. There is a quiet beauty about the unique stories and journey's each guest has been on and how André House fits into each one of their stories. Now, I could share stories of guests and how they have impacted my outlook on this year of service thus far, but I won't. The guests of André House have a voice and I believe their stories deserve to be told in the most true form, by the guests themselves. Listening to the life stories of these beautiful people has been as absolute privilege to say the least.

I am so blessed to have the opportunity to share my story, unlike many. Often I am presented with questions like, "Abbie why have you chosen to do a year of service at André House?" Or "Why do you think you are here at André House" And my answer was the typical short response someone would hear, "I want to give back and help those in need." I had a mindset of fixation. And while wanting to help the guests remains true, the past months have conveyed that I am here at André house to listen intentionally, grow in relationship, and ultimately love the guests of André House. Overall, I have noticed that the guests are, like most people, in search of one thing.....love. Love is the one thing I have a dedication to this year. More specifically, seeking to love first. We are all on this journey together, walking alongside each other, and calling each other by name. As stockings are hung, trees are decorated, carols and sung, and families gather I keep in mind those that are without during this season of joy. I pray and will continue to pray for love, respect, and dignity for all the guests and hope for countless opportunities to love first.





INTO THE STABLE

RUBY BRIONES ANDRÉ HOUSE CORE STAFF

"Our imagination is a beautiful faculty and gift of our minds and my imagination has taken me to special places at André House" I feel like I often capture real glimpses of moments in scripture or of moments in Jesus' life that weren't necessarily recorded. It is difficult to explain what this is like but somehow it's as if I'm transported to Jesus' time while fully remaining in the present moment. In fact, the present is made all the more real when this happens. It's been beautiful to receive these glimpses into Jesus' life because I feel the Gospel has been opened wide and made flesh in this place.

In the business of daily life, those of us on core have found ourselves standing back in awe of what our lives consist of. We are filled with wonder and gratitude that our lives are made up of being friends with those we would maybe otherwise never be friends with and sharing our lives with them. It's often in the messiness of helping someone with a funny request or even the messiness of a sad or painful situation that we find ourselves stepping back and thinking "What is this place? I can't believe this is my life." Not from a place of regret but out of a place of complete wonder and gratitude. It is in the messiness that we find ourselves stretched but also most alive.

I often find myself looking around at André House and thinking how the messiness and beauty of this place must be the same messiness and beauty that was present in the stable. Jesus chose to plunge himself into and be born among the mess and make it beautiful. He makes it beautiful because he transforms it into a place of intimacy, a place of peace, of place of simplicity, a place of deep love. And Jesus has once again made the decision to make his dwelling place at the stable of André House. And it is the Child Jesus that I see and experience here. When Gutierrez says to "name them" he is inviting us to no longer stand afar off but to come and see and enter into the intimate space of the stable. To hold him, to dress him, to feed and kiss him. But another beautiful movement happens when we enter into this place. This invitation is not just to come and see, because even in the stable we can still remain in the background only looking at the Child Jesus. This invitation is also to come and be seen. To look down at Jesus' little eyes and to be unafraid for his eyes to meet ours. The poverty of the stable allows us to discover our own poverty as well. To no longer stand afar consists in entering into communion: in knowing and entering into the lives of our guests, but also in being known, loved and held by our guests and community members. This environment strips us down to the core of who we are and shatters any illusions of ourselves we try to create. Christ invites us to this place of intimacy found in poverty, not to shame us but to love us. Jesus always chooses intimacy. He always chooses humility. Always chooses simplicity. It is how he loves. It is how he invites us to love but it is also how he loves us.

HOME *KARLEE BRADLEY ANDRÉ HOUSE CORE STAFF*



"Where is home to you?" Oftentimes, I interpret that question as "Where are you from?" or "Where is your family located?" Well, all my family lives in Texas, which is also where I am from. My mom, my brothers, my uncle—the family members most present in my life—are all in Houston, along with a bunch of cousins, with my grandparents and aunt a drivable distance away, still in Texas. And though I'm not super close with many of my family members, it has always been nice to be in close proximity to them, especially when it comes to spending the holidays together.

This is my second holiday season spent at André House, and while I'm not spending it with my biological family, I am so blessed to be able to spend it with my André House family. And when I say family—I mean it. I have a family within the staff members at André House. I have a family within our amazing volunteers. And I'm especially grateful for the family I have within our guests. After being here for a year and a half already, I've been able to spend so much time getting to know and love our guests like family, and there are so many of them who I'm dreading having to leave once my last six months in this community comes to an end.

There are so many people here I have so much love for. And I don't think I've ever loved or have felt love from anybody else more than I have with those on the streets in the Zone. My Zone family is filled with many of our guests and former guests. Walter is like my uncle who I could tell anything to and who would always be on my side. Darlene is like my mom who

doubles as my big sister, especially when we laugh together and gossip. Felicia is like my great aunt who loves to take me out and who remembers anything I tell her. Dallas is like my dad who I can goof around with and play pranks on and who will always have my back. Jimmy is like my dad who always makes me feel like he's proud of me and always knows when something is wrong. Lay is like my sister who screams and gives me the biggest hug whenever she sees me and who would do anything for me. Retta is like my silly aunt who is so easygoing and never leaves without a kiss. Johnny is like my goofy brother who always has a story to tell. A is like my uncle who lovingly bullies me. Jaime is like my sweet grandpa who is always happy to see me. Diane is like my boisterous aunt who always speaks her mind and always calls me "baby." BB is like my great uncle with the kindest eyes and sweetest smile...

Although I may not have settled on a family label for each of our guests, I would consider all of them loved ones. I share memories with so many people here. And with only 6 months left with them all, I want to do nothing except cherish the time I have left with some of my favorite people ever and make them feel as loved and supported as anybody would want to feel. I have made so many friends and best friends on the street that I really could not imagine my life without. They are my family.

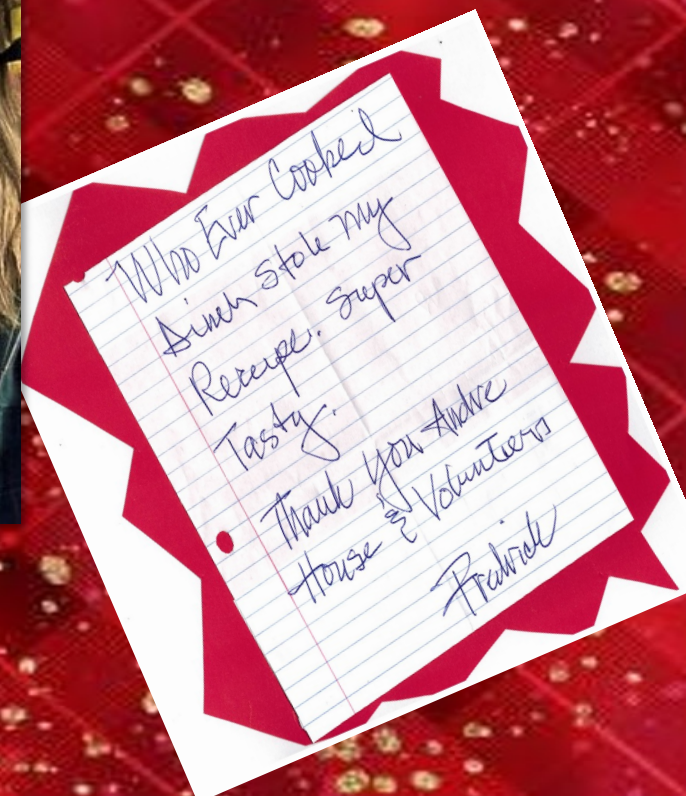
While living simply and not expecting many gifts for Christmas, I am always overjoyed being able to go to work and see so many of my friends every day, not just during the holidays. That alone is enough. Their smiles are my gifts. Their hugs are my gifts. Their laughs are my gifts. Their stories are my gifts. Their lives are my gifts. Their love is my gift. Though I am away from my family in Texas, I am so blessed to have my family here in the Zone that makes André House feel like home.



TRADITIONS

JEN DENNINGTON ANDRÉ HOUSE CORE STAFF

My favorite family tradition during the Holiday season is the food we make. My family is split - Argentinian on my Mom's side and Italian on my Dad's side. Ever since I was a little girl, I have grown up making beef empanadas with flan for Christmas Eve (Argentinian side) and beef-spinach ravioli with pizzelles for Christmas Day (the Italian side). Because of my year on Core, I will not be cooking these meals with my family at home, but I hope to carry this tradition on at André House. Making special meals for our guests is a challenge I face every week on Wednesday, my meal service day. On Wednesday Mornings, my fantastic Cook, Mary, and I scavenge the food bank for our menu. Mary has an incredible rolodex of tasty recipes for us to pull from and she always finds the most wonderful items for us to use. We have gotten to make our guests Tri-Tip Steak (like WHAT?), British-style bangers and mash, and much more. With Mary's imagination and delicious recipes, there is almost nothing we cannot do. It brings me great joy to walk around the dining room on my meal service day and hear how much our guests enjoy the food. Once, a guest wrote a letter to our Wednesday crew that said, "Dear André House, what have I done so right. You stole my recipe and made it your own. I feel like I have a family when I show up to my André House Angels." My eyes filled with tears when I read this, what we had done so right was make a meal that special to this guest. I strive to make every Wednesday like that for our André House Community and keep the Holiday tradition of cooking exceptional food all year long.





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