



Rochester Catholic Worker

Rochester, New York — winter 2012/2013

Reflections - Jen Harford

There are a lot of extraordinary moments at St. Joe's - more than I can recognize. I am in the midst of reading an ancient Indian text that focuses, it seems to me, on the subject of non-duality. It's very mysterious to me. Reading a few sentences makes me feel dizzy. I try to harken back to things that I heard before that seem somewhat similar to it. I remember hearing about, for instance, Benedictine hospitality that involves the recognition of Christ in each visitor.

But the way the book has been working on me lately, at least in a way I am somewhat conscious of, is to try to see everything as God. There is no separateness. I admit I seem mostly to work on this when I am troubled - when I am annoyed by someone or a situation. I try to accept the person, the moment, as an expression of God. Well I am not very good at it - but I met someone who seems to be quite good at it.

Our soup kitchen was closed. I was trying to steal (it feels like stealing there) a quiet moment and was cooking something for myself. In the dining area was another Catholic Worker selling bread when a homeless person came to the door wanting help. He referred that person to me. I made some calls for the man, who I linked up to a shelter—he would have a bed for a night. (Our shelter does not open till October 15th.) But I confess I was annoyed.

Then another man was sent to me, and I was frustrated again. He was small and lean, and was talking to himself, and he seemed to have several things that he wanted. He was wearing a tattered pair of jeans that were too long and too big for him. He was holding up his trousers with one hand, and carrying a bag in another.

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The Foot & Hair Clinic - Debbie Sigrist

It's hard to believe this is the 21st year of the *Foot & Hair Clinic* at St. Joseph's House. In 1991 I read an article in my nursing journal titled, "*A Problem Homeless Patients May Not Mention.*" The photos alone made me know that we needed to do something to address the needs of our guests. Poor hygiene, disease, ill-fitting shoes, filthy socks all create foot problems.

We address blisters, corns, infected toenails and a host of other minor ailments. However, our main focus has always been *Comfort & Connection*.



We pulled together a host of volunteers who had one thing in common ~ a desire to comfort the feet of the homeless. We have a podiatrist, nurse practitioners, nurses, teenagers, teachers, counselors and an array of others who just want to provide simple comfort care. How do we go about this?

On three Sundays in the winter months, we set up 12 "stations" in the dining area. The guest sits on a chair, the volunteer on a stool and between them is a basin of warm sudsy water with softening oils. After soaking the feet, the guest receives a gentle foot massage, all the while talking with one another.

Some volunteers, including some high school students, prefer to do direct hands-on foot care. Other young volunteers are busy running clean and dirty water back

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Reflections *(continued from p.1)*

The jeans were so ripped that as he moved it seemed to me that his pants were more like torn sails on a boat than jeans on a person. The length of them made it seem like surely he would trip. He wanted a different pair of pants. I asked him if shorts would do (it was a hot day), and he said, “yes.” So I went upstairs to our clothing room, found a pair of shorts that I thought might fit him and a fresh t-shirt. But he didn’t like what I selected. So I brought him upstairs to our clothing room to select things for himself. He found shoes, a different t-shirt, a different pair of shorts and some jeans.



When he was back downstairs, he wanted bread with butter. I got him a loaf, but he didn’t like the loaf I had selected. I pointed out some bagels that had been donated, and he liked those. Then he wanted cream cheese—we rarely have cream cheese - but I had noticed

that morning that we had received a donation. So he got cream cheese too. He also wanted our bag lunch (this is all we Workers tend to give someone after hours).

He wanted a cup of coffee, and I went to make a pot. But what made the experience so startling to me was that in between asking for things he kept asking me, “What’s your name, God?” I would tell him, “Jen,” but a few seconds later he would ask, again, “What’s your name, God?” And when various things had been collected, he bent down, almost kneeling, put his arms out wide, and looking to some other God in the air, asked, “How do you, God, pull all these things like magic from the air for me?”

While the coffee was brewing he went outside to have a cigarette. I told him to come back in for the coffee. When the coffee was ready and he hadn’t returned, I poured a cup and I went outside to look for him, but he had disappeared. ☪

St Joe's own Eli woodbeck (SJ'2011) was married to Alison Beranek in Grand Rapids, Michigan, last month. Tom and Chava represented the community. Eli keeps that Catholic Worker spirit with most of the decorations being made by the bride and groom.

The Foot & Hair Clinic *(continued from p.1)*

and forth, replacing towels or distributing a new pair of socks and a bag of toiletries to the guest. Our podiatrist and nurses are busy trimming toenails, scaling calluses, or bandaging small wounds.

We care for an average of 40-50 guests in our two-hour timeframe. Mostly we hear laughter and good conversation in our busy setting. Meanwhile in the hospitality area, there are 4-5 hair cutters giving excellent haircuts to more than 50 guests! Our volunteers extend from age 12-82!

This year we dedicate our Foot Clinics to the memory of long-time volunteer, Joe Brown. He never missed a foot clinic in 15 years and crafted our stools and supplied us with all sorts of items. Joe captured the essence of our Foot & Hair Clinic ~ kindness, a love of “hands-on-care, and mutual respect between guest and volunteer”. He died in February.

We are very grateful to all our volunteers. If you are interested, contact me at (235-6162). We can discuss how you might be a part of our work. ☪

Below are the 2012-2013 dates; running from 1pm-3pm at St. Joe’s.

December 9 ♥ February 13 ♥ March 17

ROC the Day:

Communitywide Day of Giving

The 2nd annual Communitywide Day of Giving is **December 12th**. If you choose to participate this year, please consider St. Joseph’s House of Hospitality. To participate, go online to: roctheday.org We will be listed under Human Services/ Shelters & homeless service.

Small Miracles in Borgne - Sarah Brownell

“God knows how to catch a fish and put it in the blind man’s sack.” How does God do this? He uses OUR eyes, hands, heads, and hearts. October marks the 4th year that we have been putting a “fish in the sack” of some of the most vulnerable people in the world, the elderly and disabled in Borgne, Haiti.

This year, everyone around the world is likely to see food bills rise. Unusual weather, most notably, the disastrous drought in the Midwest U.S., has led to crop losses and grain prices are at an all time high. At the same time, there is growing competition between corn needed to make ethanol for fuel and corn needed for animal feed. ***In the US, 2012 marked the first time that more corn went to ethanol than to food.***

Luckily, for the poor who eat very little meat, the upcoming food crisis will likely be less severe than in 2008. The corn and soybean crops most affected are mostly used for animal feed. While meat and dairy prices will go up significantly, wheat and rice—the staples of the poor—will increase more slowly.

In August I visited the group of elderly and disabled who benefit from our food program. They were cooking and eating in shifts under a tarp in Somane Augustama’s back yard as they have been for the last two years. Thanks to a generous donation, we recently rented a new building and replaced their “stove”. They should move to the building by the end of October and be more protected from both heat and rain.



The group is doing well and send their love and thanks back to St. Joe’s for the help. They are still looking for a suitable name for the project...one idea is “Pen ak Pwason” or “Bread and Fish”, recalling that shared community dinner 2000 years ago where a few loaves of bread and some fish fed thousands. Did the loaves and fishes physically multiply or was everyone in the crowd so inspired by Jesus’ message that they added part of the food they were carrying for themselves personally to the basket? We don’t know for sure, but we do know that the small amount of money we send to buy healthy local food each month seems like a miracle to the elderly of Borgne. They tell us so.

Miracles ARE possible, if we let God use our eyes, hands, heads and hearts to make them happen! ☞

Nuns on the Bus – Rochester Style - Vanessa Trotter

After seeing the tremendous successful national “Nuns on the Bus” tour organized by NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, local Sisters, Brothers, and supporters organized a Rochester style bus tour. The tour’s focus was on proposed Federal Budget cuts that would disproportionately affect the poor across the country and in our community.

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Moira Curran Capista and Julia Walsh-Little at a vigil at the Basilica in Baltimore to support the Sisters Leadership Conference May, 2012

What's happening at St Romero's

- Rev. Chava Redonnet

As our second season in the migrant ministry draws to a close, I'd like to reflect on some of the things I've learned since June of 2011 when we began this ministry.

I've learned that if you are out in the fields and a storm comes up, you can take shelter by standing on the side of a telephone pole that's away from the wind, and making yourself as thin as possible.

I've learned that people who have nearly nothing can be some of the most generous people around. In recent weeks, St Joe's has received donations of onions, potatoes and winter squash, all from folks in the migrant community. I also think of the man who, on learning that one of his companions had arrived from Florida without a blanket this past spring, gave him – not just any old one of his blankets, but the best one he had, the big thick white one that you could fold over to make two blankets. Gave it without a second thought.



I've learned that language doesn't have to be a barrier. Just jump in and use what Spanish you have, and communication will usually happen. There is almost always someone who can speak at least some English. And, even after a year and a half of knowing someone, they might turn out to speak way better English than you ever knew! It also helps if you are not afraid of looking stupid.

And finally, I've learned that as a nation we are relying on a cruel, hypocritical and unjust system for our food production. Folks in our community work as much as 95 hours a week

doing work that folks who are born here simply will not do. The farmers say that when they find someone who is born here to do this work, they typically last three hours. Personally, I don't think I could do what they do for more than about ten minutes. They are in shape like athletes, but without anything of the prestige or compensation we give our athletes.

They come here out of desperation, because they cannot find work in Mexico. They cross the desert at great peril. They live their lives in fear of la migra, the border patrol and other immigration authorities. They work desperately hard and get little rest. They are abused by bosses, reviled by citizens, separated from their families. They live on the margins of our society, surviving outside of the structures the rest of us live by, without bank accounts or drivers licenses or insurance or credit cards. We need the work they do, and they do not deserve to live this way.

I've learned that we can make a difference simply by showing up each week, by learning names, hearing stories, sharing cookies, celebrating Mass. The difference we make may be more in ourselves than in their daily lives, but that's a difference worth having. One by one, we learn to see, not "illegals," but friends. Brothers. Sisters. People whose lives matter every bit as much as our own. And maybe the difference in ourselves, in our point of view, will set us on fire to change the world. Oh, may it be so. Amen. ✠

- C A L E N D A R -

November 16,	last day to order pumpkin pie
November 22,	Thanksgiving Meal at St Joe's
November 23,	Closed, no meal served
November 26,	begin 2nd 10-week bread subscription
December 9,	Foot & Hair Clinic
December 12,	ROC the Day – Day of Giving
December 25,	Christmas Meal & gifts No 5pm service
December 26,	closed, no meal served
February 13,	Foot & Hair Clinic

Thanks at Thanksgiving

We want to take this opportunity to thank all the people who contributed (physically, monetarily and spiritually) this year to our mission of service. All of you make possible our daily operations. We want to assure you that your dollars, clothing, personal products and food are making a difference in the lives of our guests.

Every day upwards of 100 men, women and sometimes children come through our doors. They are greeted with warmth, interest and caring by our staff, volunteers and community members. They are fed a warm, filling and healthy meal by our wonderful volunteers. They are provided with whatever clean and protective clothing we have been given by you. They are given access to our laundry, shower and restroom facilities. Many of our guests stop by the house to get a bag lunch to take to work. Every guest is offered participation in our clinics, programs and services.

We have recently reopened our emergency winter overnight shelter. In this program we provide a warm, protected bed to eight or more men each night from October 15th to April 15th. We work in close communication with the other shelters in the community to try to make sure no one is left out on the street in dangerous conditions.

In every case we attempt to make the lives of our guests a little less difficult, a little less anxious, a little more positive, dignified and friendly. All this happens because you provide a way for it to happen.

Thank you and Happy Holidays

Hope House - Tom Malthaner

For more than six months, St Joe's, House of Mercy and St Mary's (Downtown) have been looking for adequate housing for Rochester's homeless men and women since AmTrak evicted the squatters that were living near their tracks at the Rochester station.

What we found was the acute need for safe, supervised housing where the chronically homeless who overly



frequent emergency rooms and require/tieup police services can live a more normal life with a support network. This concept is not new and has been working in numerous cities across the country for many years and with the support of the federal government.

We looked at numerous housing possibilities in the northeast neighborhoods and along the East Main Street corridor. What we found were: houses too small, too close to a school, neighbors objecting, needing expensive repairs. Still the committee continued on site inspections until somebody asked "what about the apartment house across from St. Joseph's?"

What we found was a 12-unit facility, (8 studios, 4 one-bedroom apartments), a building in excellent condition, a owner that wanted to sell, willing to hold the mortgage and work with the committee to see the deal completed - and right across the street from St Joe's.

You are one of the first to know that St Joe's is buying the 12-unit apartment across the street. We will be assisted in the management by the House of Mercy and St. Mary's Church. We have named the new residential apartments - HOPE HOUSE. Stay tuned for details. ☘

Rachel Weeping - Harry Murray

Often Biblical stories come alive at St. Joe's, in both their tragedy and their grandeur. Since this past summer, the image of Rachel weeping for her children has become embodied for us in a tragic, powerful way. Today's Rachel is Gail O'Dell, whose son Edward died this past June under mysterious circumstances. Gail has been weeping ever since – for Eddie and for the way his death has been handled by the Rochester Police Department.

Eddie O'Dell was a regular at St. Joe's for years. He was a pleasant, good humored man, often intoxicated, but respectful of others even then. Although he often spent his nights on the streets or in parking garages, he spoke fondly of the Catholic Worker shelter at Unity Acres in Pulaski, New York. Here he had found a place of refuge several times over the past few years. He always, however, returned to the streets.

Eddie's body was found one morning in the parking lot between Wendy's and the Delta Sonic carwash on East Main Street. He was lying on his back, with four gashes to the back of the head, and his shirt pulled up to his chest. There was an unopened can of beer under his armpit and a plastic bag of tobacco near his hand. According to the account that emerged at a meeting between his family, RPD, and the Medical Examiner, which I attended, police were called.

One officer identified him as a homeless man – in fact, he misidentified him, thinking he was someone else. The police called the Medical Examiner's office and left once the ME had taken the body away. They returned to the scene some hours later, after the ME had called them to say that the death looked suspicious. By that time the Delta Sonic crew had hosed down the scene, erasing any DNA evidence.

Gail is convinced that this is a case of homeless profiling, in which the case was not taken seriously because Eddie

was identified as homeless. If the person had been dressed in a suit, she believes (as do I), a criminal investigation would have begun at once. "It all boils down to profiling. So it has to stop." Discouraged by the slow pace of the police investigation, Gail, with the help of her daughter and granddaughter, have investigated on their own.

When we met with the medical examiner, he told us that he was going to conclude that Eddie's death was an accident – largely because he had to specify a cause of death, even though the evidence was inconclusive. His theory of death as an accident asserted that Eddie fell three times because he was drunk, that each time he fell backward after walking a few feet, and that (since he was found with his baseball cap, beer can, and tobacco



nearby) that he had picked up all three each time he had fallen. He concluded that he was not searched by someone after death because, although his shirt was pulled up, his pants pockets were not pulled out. I left the meeting unconvinced.

Eddie's family has worked tirelessly to find out what happened that night – talking to business owners and employees in the neighborhood, finding and talking to Eddie's homeless friends, pressuring the police to work on the investigation. They have uncovered evidence that Eddie was in the possession of a ring which he was apparently trying to sell.

We may never know how Eddie died. We will try to stand by his family in their grief, and will continue to push for further investigation. And we will continue to speak out against the violence experienced by homeless persons (and against all violence) and against the assumption that those who are homeless are less worthy of our concern. ☞

Reminder: The 2nd annual Communitywide Day of Giving is **December 12th.**

BREAD FOR ALL – YEAR 3! - Paul Frazier*WHITE BREAD ADDED TO OUR OPTIONS**PUMPKIN PIES – WE'RE GETTING READY FOR YOUR ORDER**DESSERTS--AND FRESH BREAD--FOR ST. JOE'S*

A major disconnect hits between the backdrop of continuing unemployment in the nation and the extra-ordinary busy-ness of work celebrated at BREAD FOR ALL, St. Joe's small-scale bakery. Trainees and volunteers enjoyed a hectic summer at two Farmers Markets and then overlapped those two markets with the start-up of our fall subscriptions. Unemployed? Not on your life!

We are busy. The bread is terrific. Your support for BREAD FOR ALL continues to grow. There's no unemployment at BREAD FOR ALL, where "no one gets rich and no one goes hungry." (Our trainees receive a modest \$9/hr stipend, thanks to St. Joe's; the rest of us are volunteers; and we share our loaves with those who cannot afford a loaf, and your subscriptions keep us in the black.)



This year we again are offering to you, our support community, delicious PUMPKIN PIES! Get ready to experience a fresh, all-natural, made from scratch, 100% pumpkin pie. Hand-rolled all-butter crusts made with our organic flour. Seasoned to perfection with nutmeg, cinnamon, and cloves (and we do not easily let go of the exact proportions). We will take orders - \$10 for a 9" pie – up until Friday, November 16. Your boxed pie will be ready for pick-up at St. Joe's on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. We are a phone call away: **775-9135**.

On the Monday following Thanksgiving we begin our second 10-week subscription to our delicious whole wheat loaves. This year we have added an organic White loaf to our choices. And you can select the "variety" package of a raisin-cinnamon, focaccia, and a potato loaf each third week. Give us a call and sign on. ☞

Nuns on the Bus – Rochester Style*(continued from p.3)*

The National "Nuns on the Bus" tour set out on June 18th 2012 with a bus load of Sisters to begin their journey across the country, starting in Des Moines, Iowa. They wanted to draw attention to economic inequality and Representative Paul Ryan's proposal to gut many programs designed to alleviate suffering among the marginalized and impoverished. The nine-state trip ended July 2nd and received much needed press and support from legislators and advocacy groups in every state the Sisters visited.

The local "Nuns on the Bus" tour took place on October

16th and made stops at St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, Bethany House and Charles Settlement where representatives from each establishment spoke briefly about what their organization offered, the people they aid, and what their needs were. Other issues discussed were poverty, healthcare, and at risk children and women.

Our own Tom Malthaner, spoke briefly on his observations of the homeless situation in Rochester. He said: "I have seen that, unfortunately, the homeless population is getting steadily larger and more desperate as government programs are being reduced or eliminated to balance budgets" ☞

St. Joseph's House of Hospitality
Rochester Catholic Worker Community

Some of us live in houses; some of us live on the street; some of us have a room of our own, or a bed and a place to keep; some of us have a cot or piece of a couch or patch of floor to return to each night; some hold special positions of power and roles with specific responsibilities, some do whatever they can. Our aim is to try each day to "build a new society in the shell of the old" as we practice the various works of mercy and labor with whatever resources, physical as well as spiritual, that we have been given at the time.

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House Needs:

Prayers	Sugar	BLEACH	Hoodies	Athletic Socks
Butter	Boots/Sneakers	Toilet Paper	39-gal. Trash Bags	Pillows
Laundry Soap Powder	Jeans/Cords	Coffee	Razors	Toothbrushes/Paste
Men's Underwear (32-44)	Jelly/Jam	Single Sheets	BATH TOWELS	Deodorants

Volunteer Opportunity

Help Staff the Night Shelter.

*Will Train.
Can Sleep on the Job!
Plenty of choice hours.
Good supervision.*

Call Vanessa at 789-7647.

**Celebrants for
5:00 p.m. Tuesday Ecumenical Service**

We suggest that you call the House in case the service time or celebrant has been changed.

11-13	Fr. Richard Brickler	1-22	Pastor T. Felton
11-20	Minister Joann Kaiser	1-29	Fr. Larry Tracy
11-27	Sr. Grace Miller	2-5	Fr. Bob Worth
12-04	Deacon Bill Coffey	2-12	Mike Boucher
12-11	Cathy Mryzka	2-19	Fr. Richard Brickler
12-18	Deacon Tom Cleary	2-26	Minister J. Kaiser
12-25	TBA	3-5	Rev. L. Hargrave
1-1	Mae Lee	3-12	Sr. Grace Miller
1-8	Donna Eckert		
1-15	Elder Charles Morgan		