



Rochester Catholic Worker

Our email address has changed to: st.joes@frontier.com

Rochester, New York — Spring 2015

The Church and the Homeless Crisis - Harry Murray, Tom Malthaner, and James Murphy

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ... “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in ... (Matthew 25)

And Christians will say:

“Lord, we saw you homeless, but we couldn’t invite you in because we were concerned about liability.”

“Lord, we saw you homeless, but we couldn’t invite you in because we were worried about bedbugs.”

“Lord, we saw you homeless, but we couldn’t invite you in because, frankly, some of the things you said and did sounded crazy.”

“Lord, we saw you homeless, but we couldn’t invite you in because we smelled the alcohol on your breath.”

“Lord, we saw you homeless, but we didn’t feel you were worthy to invite in because you didn’t have a job.”

Since the Monroe County Civic Center Garage evicted this past Fall, the homeless persons who had been using it as a shelter for over thirty

years, the Rochester Church has faced a crisis. We have seen more human beings, men and women, literally “sleeping rough,” as the English put it, than we have seen for decades, perhaps since the Great Depression.

Rochester citizens have responded, often generously. Hundreds of people, and many churches, brought donations of food, clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, even firewood, to the **Sanctuary Village** tent city set up on the banks of the Genesee shortly after the garage closed. Groups and individuals began to come by regularly and establish personal relations with the residents. After the City sent a crew with a front loader and roll-offs to tear down the village, even more donations and volunteers poured in. Now that the City has allowed **Sanctuary Village** to establish a temporary indoor shelter, through the generosity of a local real estate company.

And churches have been part of that effort, or have undertaken their own, independent efforts. St. Mary’s Church has been involved in outreach to homeless persons on the street (and in the garage when it was open) for several years. During two of the most bitterly frigid weeks before the indoor shelter could be opened,



St. Louis Homeless Shelter - NY Times

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Downtown United Presbyterian Church opened its doors to the residents of Sanctuary Village. Many churches brought donations. Others continued or expanded the soup kitchens, food pantries, and other services they have been providing for years.

And yet, this moral and spiritual crisis is not resolved. The Sanctuary Village shelter is scheduled to close its doors at the end of April. Progress on establishing a permanent shelter is slow. By May, dozens of people will likely be on the streets again, unless individuals, groups, and churches take action now.

How will the Church of Rochester respond when we are called before the King? If the author of Revelation were to write a letter to the Church of Rochester, what would it say? Pope Francis has said that he wants the church to be “a field hospital after battle.” Has the Church of Rochester been a field hospital – or has it sent a few care packages? Pope Francis said in *The Joy of the Gospel*: “Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others.”

We write this, not in a spirit of condemnation, but in a spirit of humility, in a spirit of challenge. We are painfully conscious of the many times we have refused to invite Jesus in, often for one of the reasons listed above. Being a Christian is a risky business – our founder ended His earthly life on a cross. Let us become a field hospital for all those who are marginalized.

New Year Resolutions:

Finish your meals. No leftovers, please. Named after a 12th century saint who lived in poverty, Francis slams a “culture of waste” that neglects the plight of the hungry. The Pope says: “We should all remember that throwing food away is like stealing from the tables of the poor, the hungry!”

I encourage everyone to reflect on the problem of thrown away and wasted food to identify ways and means that, by seriously addressing this issue, are a vehicle of solidarity and sharing with needy.”

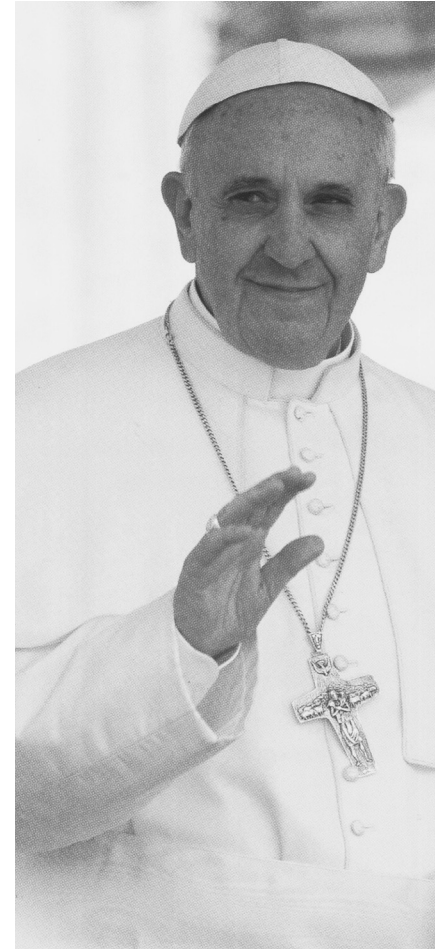
Pope Francis’ resolutions:

Don’t gossip. It is one of our hobbies – it’s one of the most evil activities. He feels so strongly that in less than a year as pontiff, Francis has preached against gossip in at least different instances. There is no such thing as innocent slander.

Stop judging others. In the same way he denounces gossip, Francis condemns prejudice. He reminds “intolerant” Catholics, for one, to respect atheists.

Make time for others. Tending to 1.2 billion members, Francis seems too busy for anything else. That is, until he calls up strangers. Or entertains a random biker. Or sends a handwritten letter to a Jesuit he has never met.

Choose the ‘more humble’ purchase. The Pope preaches against materialism. Certainly, possessions, money, power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and make us wanting more.



Pope Francis

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Dorothy Day House Update - James Murphy

“What we would like to do is change the world--make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do”

Love is the Measure by Dorothy Day, The Catholic Worker, June 1946.

The Dorothy Day House located across from St Joe’s is a **Housing First** initiative founded and run by St. Joseph’s House, the House of Mercy and St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church. **Housing First** is an approach that centers on providing homeless people with housing first and then with services as needed.



In the past four months, the Dorothy Day House has welcomed six ‘hard-to-place’ homeless persons. Two of our newest residents have a combined thirty years of homelessness. Another was one of the last people to leave the

tents at **Sanctuary Village**. He repeatedly and politely refused shelter, preferring to stay outdoors even as temperatures hovered barely above zero. Before moving into their apartments, all six had spent the previous night outdoors. They are all now safe and living in warm apartments in our facility.

Every month, Monroe County and City Of Rochester officials meet with homeless advocates to discuss the ‘hard-to-place’ homeless persons in the city. Of the thirty-six people recently discussed, only nine had found housing. Seven of those nine resided at the Dorothy Day House. That leaves twenty-seven people and an untold number of others who fill Rochester’s emergency shelters and hospital emergency rooms - still in need of affordable and permanent housing. I hope the government officials in attendance took note that it was our **Housing First** initiative that took the most people off Rochester streets.

The reason the Dorothy Day House is the most common solution to the area’s ‘hard-to-place’ homeless is simple. We take people other landlords wouldn’t. How many landlords would take someone with no income? How many will take those with mental health and addiction issues, or criminal records? We are able to because of our generous supporters and donors. On average, it takes us three months to get DSS or Social Security in place to begin receiving rent. In the past, we have absorbed this cost, but the financial burden has become too much. Four of our last six new resident’s rent were sponsored for three months by donations from **Blessed Sacrament/St. Boniface** parishioners. The Dorothy Day House also received a large donation from **Saint John of Rochester** parish to help convert the basement into a much needed community area. **Thank you!**

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House Update - Mike Hazel

Winter in Rochester always seems something of a difficult time, and yet, spring is coming once and always again. Soon there will no longer be mountains of snow occupying the edges of our parking lots. However, the occupations of those we serve is still the same, despite the changing weather: searching out shelter, finding a place to eat, working toward something better.

This winter has been a hard one for many of Rochester's homeless. The closing of the civic center garage that we have detailed in the last several issues has had real impact on our community's most tenuously-housed. In personal response to the changing landscape, we have again opened our **Winter Shelter** to women, hosting 4-5 each night along with 10-12 men. In addition, several of the men who had stayed in the **Sanctuary Village** encampment have been placed in Dorothy Day House apartments.

We have also supported the opening of a 50-bed temporary shelter off West Main on Canal St, to replace the tent camp. Continuing to call itself **Sanctuary Village** and administered by the folks from House of Mercy, this shelter has been a godsend as we've experienced such chilly weather in late January and February's record lows.

Our community of workers has undergone its usual and occasional changes in personal composition. **Bob** left us in late December; his abundant energy has been hard to replace. **Jasmin** has been a huge help, stepping into the role of Shelter Coordinator in addition to operating the **Free Store**. Our many fine volunteers continue to assist us in creating and maintaining a warm and welcoming space where our guests can feel comfortable. **Tom M** recently underwent a knee replacement and will be out for a handful of weeks; filling his shoes temporarily will be more than a handful for those of us here!

Jason, a student from New Jersey, will be joining the worker community in early summer, with plans to stay longer if it works well. **James** will be joining the in-house community after having lived in Dorothy Day House as resident coordinator for 6+ months. **Fig and Marty** have recently overhauled the website, and it now features a more streamlined navigation and donation process; take a look, the address is the same: saintjoeshouse.org. As the snow melts and mud season begins, we look forward to a kinder sort of weather for our guests (and ourselves!), but we ask that you, our humbly wonderful supporters, do not let up on the many gifts you continue to share. We strive to walk with each guest who comes into our house as they go out again to face the world, and we thank you each and all for the support that enables us to do so.



James

Community Bikes

We are anticipating another season of bike repairs for our guests and neighbors starting in April. This popular service started at St Joe's in 2001 by a group of volunteers that morphed into R Community Bikes in 2008 and has been expanding each year. It is a much appreciated service. They average over 3200 repairs over the city. If you have a bike that you want to donate, don't bring it to St Joe's. Call R Community Bikes (234-2008) at 22 Hudson Ave. 14605 and discuss details of its drop-off.



St Joseph's House, House of Mercy and Rochester Pax Christi will enact, once again, a public **Stations of the Cross** in downtown Rochester on Good Friday, April 3 beginning at 11am in front of the Kodak Office on State Street.

Our purpose is to publicly repent for the many ways in which Jesus is crucified today – in the cruel treatment of the poor, in America's commitment to the growing inequality in the name of "free enterprise", in our country's continued killing of innocent and "enemy" while the Church, whose founder commanded us to love our enemies and do good to those that persecute us, stand silently, in complicity.

Please join us. The walk around downtown Rochester, stopping at various locations that symbolize the contemporary Crucifixion, takes about two hours. A sample follows.



TENTH STATION – JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

CIVIC CENTER GARAGE

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You,

People: Because by your Death and Resurrection You have saved us.

Leader: We stand before one of the largest and longest-running "homeless shelters" in the city of Rochester. For decades, dozens of Rochester's poorest have spent the night here, despite frequent rousting out and even arrests by the police.

Many homeless persons have died tragically on the streets of Rochester. Johnny Nale burned to death inside a van. His corpse was left in the van, on the street, for two weeks because our firemen thought he was a mannequin. **THEY COULD NOT SEE THAT HE WAS HUMAN.** Homeless persons become objectified – become like mannequins in our commercialized vision. If we could truly see the humanity in others, we would not allow homelessness, we could not allow hunger, we could not deny medical care; we could not deny the time to listen to someone's story.

LET US PRAY.

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War Is Evil. Even When the Enemy is ISIS - Harry Murray

Dorothy Day wrote when the US declared war on Germany and Japan: “We are still pacifists. Our manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount, which means that we will try to be peacemakers. Speaking for many of our conscientious objectors, we will not participate in armed warfare or in making munitions, or by buying government bonds to prosecute the war, or in urging others to these efforts. But neither will we be carping in our criticisms. . . . We recognize that while in the order of intention we have tried to stand for peace, for love of our brother, in the order of execution we have failed as Americans in living up to our principles.”

Once again, a vicious, ultraviolent group has seized power, orchestrating a literal reign of terror. Once again, the cries go out that “we can’t sit by and do nothing” and “these monsters only understand force.” Once again, we are told that the only moral choice is for the US military to wage war. Once again, President Obama has put into practice the theory of war which he elucidated so jarringly in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech.

Once again, **St. Joseph’s House** affirms Jesus’ call to nonviolence. Once again, we declare that all wars are unjust, that war is a defeat for humanity. For Christians, the words of Jesus should be sufficient response – love our enemies, turn the other cheek, do not resist evil. These are hard sayings if we take them seriously. They are particularly hard after hearing of massacres or watching videos of beheadings. But if we believe that Jesus is our Savior, then we must take His sayings seriously, no matter the situation.

The great pacifist, and friend of Dorothy Day, A.J. Muste, famously noted that military policies create horrendous, violent situations. Then, when these military policies have borne their deadly fruit and we have created a vicious new enemy, the militarists turn to the pacifists and ask “What would propose? Force is the only thing they will understand.” And the militarists have created such a mess that it’s difficult for the pacifists to come up with an easy solution. And so military force is used again, and the cycle of violence continues.

There is no doubt that ISIS arose in response to the violence and chaos of the US intervention in Iraq, just as al Qaeda arose in response to prior US action in the Middle East and the presence of US military bases in Saudi Arabia. World War I created the resentments and injustices that fueled World War II. With rare exceptions, war sows the seeds of the next war. Only nonviolent responses can break the cycle of violence.

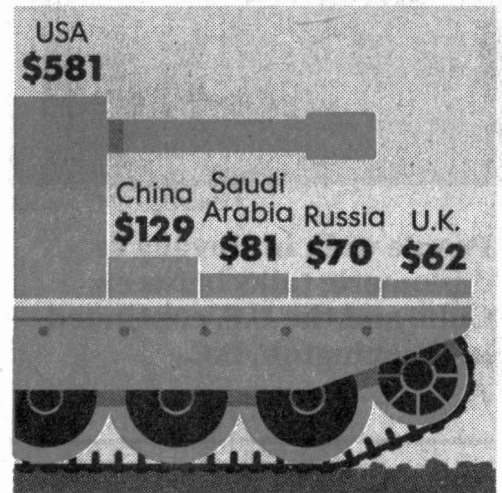
Although ISIS is unquestionably brutal, I worry that EVERY enemy the United States plans to attack is portrayed as the embodiment of Satan. Witness Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, the Taliban, even the Sandinistas. Moreover, has ISIS been any more brutal than the Contra terrorists funded by the Reagan Administration, who were reported to have cut open the belly of a pregnant woman, removed the fetus, and replaced it with her husband’s severed head? All funded by our tax dollars.

Were the beheadings any more brutal than the killing of sixteen year old Abdulrahman al Awlaki (a US citizen) by a US drone? Have they been more brutal than the Pinochet dictatorship put into power in Chile after the CIA orchestrated the overthrow and death of Chile’s democratically elected President Salvador Allende? Or any more brutal than the My Lai massacre in Vietnam? Or than behavior of US marines in putting down the Filipino resistance to US occupation in the wake of the American War?

The most effective response the US can offer is to stop using our military to attack people in other countries, to stop sending military aid to oppressive dictatorships, to uncompromisingly halt our role in spreading death and destruction across the globe. We must couple this with nonviolent and diplomatic efforts to bring a halt to the bloodshed, to foster local solutions, to encourage negotiations. But we must start by ending our contributions to the cycle of violence.

Top defense budgets

The world’s biggest military spenders in 2014 (in billions):



Source International Institute for Strategic Studies

ANNE R. CAREY AND KARL GELLES, USA TODAY

TENTH STATION – JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS - (cont.)

People: Jesus, you are stripped of Your garments. Those who are homeless in this, one of the world's richest societies, are stripped of so many things – in Rochester, they will be stripped of a warm shelter, and, ultimately some will be stripped of their lives. We pray for all who have died and for all who will die in this coming year.

Pope Francis says: “we are scandalized because we know that there is enough food for everyone and that hunger is the result of a poor distribution of goods and income.” Let us also be scandalized because there is enough shelter for everyone but not everyone is granted shelter.

Leader: Jesus, Who Had Nowhere to Lay Your Head

People: Hear Our Prayer.

Dorothy Day House Update (cont.)

Without this support, we are strained to continue housing and help these most vulnerable and marginalized Rochesterians. With your support, we are all making it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended.

New Year Resolutions (cont):

Befriend those that disagree. “When leaders in various fields ask me for advice, my response is always the same: dialogue, dialogue, dialogue. Others always have something to give, if we know how to approach them in a spirit of openness.

Make commitments, such as marriage. Rebel against the culture that sees everything as temporary and that ultimately believes you are incapable of true love.

Be happy. The true Christian exudes great joy. Keeping this joy to ourselves “will make us sick in the end. Sometimes these melancholy Christians’ have more in common with pickle peppers than the joy of having a beautiful life”.

Meet the poor ‘in the flesh’. It is not enough to meditate this commitment through institutions which obviously help because they have a multiplying effect, but that is not enough. They do not excuse us from establishing personal contact with needy: the sick, those in prison. Charity does not change the situation of the poor.

Make it a habit to ‘ask the Lord.’ Some of you may not know what you will do with your life. Ask the Lord and he will show you the way. What do you want me to do? What path am I to follow?

The Pope's Resolutions were put together by Paterno Esmaquel II, a former sacristan and catechist and recently printed in the Syracuse Jail Ministry newsletter.

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:

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Mens Underwear
(32-44) | Jelly/Jam | Hoodies | Pillows |
| Prayers | BLEACH | 39-gal. Trash Bags | Large Jackets |
| Butter | Toilet Paper | Razors | Gloves/Hats |
| Laundry Soap Powder | Coffee/Mugs | BATH TOWELS | Toothbrushes/Paste |
| Sugar | Single Sheets | Athletic Socks | Sleeping Bags |
| Boots/Sneakers | | | |
| Jeans/Cords | | | |

C A L E N D A R

March 29, Sunday, Foot & Hair Clinic

April 3, Good Friday, Urban Way of the Cross

April 5, Easter

April 12, Winter shelter closes

April 13-17, Closed for Cleaning/Maintenance

April 22, Bike Repair Clinic opens

CELEBRANTS

- | | |
|-------|-----------------------|
| 3-3. | Rev Matthew Nivkoloff |
| 3-10. | Stergios Skatharoudis |
| 3-17. | Deacon Tom Cleary |
| 3-24. | Rev Lawrence Hargrave |
| 3-31. | Charlotte Barnard |
| 4-7. | Fr Jim Callan |
| 4-14. | Katherine Mryzka |
| 4-21. | Rev Chava Redonnet |
| 4-28. | Rev Matthew Nivkoloff |
| 5-5. | Tim McGowan |
| 5-12. | Rev Debs Dugiid-May |
| 5-19. | Bill Coffee. |
| 5-26. | Fr Patrick Cowles |
| 6-2. | Donna Eckert |
| 6-9. | Fr Larry Tracy |