



St. Francis – St. Joseph Catholic Worker House

Christmas Newsletter, 2017

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A VERY MERRY
CHRISTMAS
and Happy New Year!

Upcoming Events

Memorial Mass for Father Mark

This holiday season we will once again be celebrating the life and legacy of Father Mark Schmieder. Father Mark is the co-founder of the St. Francis – St. Joseph Catholic Worker House who worked tirelessly to help those in need. He passed away on Christmas Eve, 2009. Thanks to his efforts, more than 1,000 homeless men were able to find work and permanent housing.

Saturday, December 16 at 5:00 pm

St. Francis Seraph Church

1615 Vine Street

Cincinnati, OH 45202

(On the corner of Liberty & Vine in Over-the-Rhine)

SFSJ Annual Christmas Party

Immediately following the memorial Mass, we will hold our annual Christmas party at SFSJCWH located at 1437 Walnut Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202 on Saturday, December 16 at 6:00pm. All are welcome to attend. We will have food, live music and fun! We hope to see you there!



Here's a great way you can contribute to St. Francis – St. Joseph Catholic Worker House (SFSJCWH) while you're shopping. The Kroger Company has a program that will donate to the House based on your purchases at Kroger stores. All you need to do is register your Kroger Plus Card on-line and link it to SFSJCWH through the Community Rewards link on their web site. This WILL NOT affect your other rewards earned with the Kroger Plus Card.

Simply go to www.krogercommunityrewards.com, create an account if you have not already done so, link your card with the card number or alternate ID, and enroll the card with the Community Rewards and our agency by name (St. Francis-St. Joseph Catholic Worker House) or by number (39873).

And that's it! Kroger will contribute a small amount of what you spend to our mission, and those pennies can add up to real help. So sign up now and sign up a friend or two. Every little bit counts!

Manager's Message

Another year, another one in the win column. The faces change; different guests come through our doors and there are some new faces on staff to help them, but in the end, what is accomplished here still amazes me. Two of those stories are in these pages, and there are many others, and it has been a blessing to be a part of it.

The men that arrive at our door are not in the best shape. Many of them are at the lowest point in their lives. Sometimes the transformation comes quickly. You would be amazed what something as simple as a shower, a haircut, clean clothes and hot food can do to change a man's outlook. Then comes employment; a sense of purpose and fulfillment along with some much needed income. For many of our guests sobriety has been, well, elusive. But now he has 30 days clean and a sponsor. The family has invited him back home for Thanksgiving supper. Things are looking up.

Of course there will be obstacles. Some will stumble and fall but others persevere. There's nothing better than watching a man go from day one at the Catholic Worker House to going to college or getting married and starting a family. It is a beautiful counterpoint to the heartache that can also come with what we do. Guys like Mike and Cliff are a much needed reminder that what we do matters. And we can't do it alone. Thanks to the staff, the board and our volunteers we are truly making a difference.

Guest Story – Mike Hoskins

Michael possesses an eager handshake, bright eyes and a glowing optimism. This is a 31 year old man with 13 felony convictions who was homeless and hopeless just two years ago.

Michael reflects: “I was born in the hill country of Harlan, Kentucky. My mom was only 14 so I was raised by my grandma. I started drinking at age 13. Prescription painkillers were readily available in the area and my long battle with addiction started as a teenager.” He was sent to Cincinnati to escape the painkillers, but heroin was an easy substitute. “It was a 12 year addiction; multiple overdoses, living under bridges and at least three trips to jail,” Michael laments.



In early 2016, Michael was again released from jail. In this instance, however, an angel intervened: “Jack Kennevan is the Hamilton County Justice Center Chaplain and visited me every time I was jailed. I was desperate enough to listen this time,” says Michael. The good Chaplain referred Michael to the Catholic Worker House, beginning a remarkable recovery.

Michael needed the structure and security offered by the House and he felt understood by the staff: “All of them, John, Andy, Richard and Bobby helped me. And don’t forget Ms. Nancy” (Nancy Feldman is a volunteer and board trustee). I gradually learned how to trust people.” But, a detour on the recovery road loomed. Michael briefly relapsed and was filled with guilt and shame. “This time I knew what to do,” asserts Michael. He called House Manager, John Clark and, after a long discussion, John permitted Michael a reprieve and his bed at the House. “I knew this was my last chance so I really surrendered and committed to AA and my recovery program,” Michael states. He resided at the Catholic Worker House from September to November 2016. Michael will be one year sober on November 1.

Now, he lives at Charlie’s $\frac{3}{4}$ House and works full time at Longano Construction. Michael is very grateful for the people and opportunity represented by the Catholic Worker House: “This place is amazing. I wish there were more like it.” He also works at Charlie’s and gives back to the Catholic Worker House by attending the Tuesday and Thursday AA meetings and performing volunteer work. Hopeless and homeless two years, Michael is a living testimonial that change is possible and we should never give up hope for our fellows. Best wishes to Michael from all of us at the House!

Guest Story – Cliff Hodes

Cliff is a professional cook who had always held a job and paid his bills. He certainly did not appear to be a candidate for homelessness. However, a soured relationship and drugs led to him landing in the street with nowhere to live. Referred to the Catholic Worker House by a Shelterhouse manager, Cliff was a guest from June to August 2016. He was immediately impressed by the demeanor of the House staff: “They never looked down on us; we were treated with respect and dignity.”



Cliff understood that he could not recover on his own, “I finally listened.” The Catholic Worker House served as the foundation, instilling discipline and personal responsibility. After his 60 days at the House, he went to Charlie’s ¾ House in Clifton for transitional sober living. He is currently using the CityLink Center for help in securing permanent housing and obtaining a car. He loves his job at Nehemiah, a local manufacturer that purposely employs people like Cliff who need a second chance. Cliff calls Nehemiah, quite simply, “a beautiful company.” Cliff is a great example of someone using all of the available local resources to facilitate his recovery. But, he emphasizes the personal responsibility and honesty required for recovery: “I had to knock down some pride and listen. Now, it’s up to me.”

Of the Catholic Worker House, Cliff states, “I recommend the House for anyone who wants to start over.” He commends the entire staff for their professionalism and imparts a special thank you to “my friend, Ms. Nancy,” board trustee and volunteer. Cliff continues to return to the House for AA meetings and volunteer work. Cliff exemplifies one of our favored AA clichés: “It works if you work it!”

Changing Gears

As part of Cliff’s ongoing participation with CityLink, he has been involved in their “Changing Gears” program. This program takes donated cars and restores them. Once completing the program, clients can purchase the car at half the price.

According to CityLink: “Opportunity doesn’t count unless you’re able to show up for it; which is why car ownership is exceptionally empowering. By making private transportation affordable, we are catalysts in making sure that the road to a thriving future is open to as many people as possible.”



Staff Spotlight – Danny Jackson

Congratulations to Danny for achieving his ten year anniversary on staff for the Catholic Worker House! The Manager and Board heartily thank Danny for his dedication and unique contribution to the House and community over that decade.

Most of our staff has experienced homelessness and/or substance abuse. Their experience and recovery render them specially qualified to mentor our outcast guests. Conversely, Danny has neither been homeless nor experienced addiction issues. He works full time for the City of Cincinnati and presents a professional and cheerful demeanor. So, why is Danny Jackson the “go to” guy every weekend at the House and in OTR?

Over a decade ago, Danny fell behind on child support payments and was ordered to perform 300 hours of community service. He toiled at the Catholic Worker House for eight months to fulfill that obligation. During that tenure, his views on addiction and homelessness were challenged: “I had to assess my own assumptions and prejudices. I could not ignore what I saw right in front of me.” His compassion and empathy now stirred, Danny kept showing up to volunteer well after he served his 300 hours. Inevitably, then Manager, Karl Fields, hired Danny to work the weekend shift. We are blessed that Danny has remained for the last decade.

Everyone in the neighborhood knows Danny. The House bustles on Saturdays with guests transiting and soup kitchen in full operation. But, Danny reaches well beyond the hours of soup kitchen: “I never close the door on anyone. Everyone is my friend.” It might be handing out a sandwich or offering a last minute emergency bed, but Danny will help you. Danny truly embodies the history and position of the House. He was close to House Founder, the late Father Mark Schmieder, as well as beloved House Manager, Karl Fields. Both died during Danny’s House employment and he was much moved and affected by these excellent lives. Like the House, Danny not only mentors each guest, he offers hope and love to the entire OTR community.

But, what does Danny take from his experience? “I love what I do here. I am able to immediately and truly help people. This job has taught me so much about life and people. I did not understand addiction and homelessness. Why do people do these things over and over again? I now have much more understanding and compassion.” We hope Danny stays for another decade. OTR would not be the same without that Danny Jackson smile.



Danny's Legendary Sunday Cheesy Eggs Recipe

INGREDIENTS

2 doz. eggs-cracked and whipped for scrambling
1 lb. shredded cheddar cheese
2 yellow onions-diced
3 bell peppers-finely chopped

DIRECTIONS

Sautee the onion and peppers with olive oil or butter. When glistening and beginning to brown, turn down heat. Add eggs and cheese. Cook on low heat until fluffy. Serve to happy guests!

Anniversaries and Connections



We celebrate two significant anniversaries this year: the birth and the conversion of Dorothy Day, who founded our network of hospitality.

120 years ago, Dorothy Day was birthed, November, 1897.

90 years ago, in 1927, having lived a vagabond, bohemian life, Dorothy, age 30, embraced Catholicism, which she called the church of the poor, the homeless.

This year also marks the 100th year since 20-year old Dorothy was arrested outside the White House, as one of the “Silent Sentinels” of the Women’s Suffrage Movement, demonstrating for the right to vote. She was sentenced to 30 days in jail, and served 15, before early release after she had been on a 10-day hunger strike.

There are now approximately 250 Catholic Worker houses, including ours, across the world. (Two such houses, for women, exist in Cincinnati: Grace Place in College Hill and Lydia’s House in Norwood. To learn more, check out www.catholicworker.org)

An Episcopal church I visited on the north side of Chicago a few weeks ago, The Church of Our Savior, known for its soup kitchen and community pantry in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, is also celebrating a connection to Dorothy.

Dorothy was raised in a nominally Christian family, but an agnostic, free-thinking environment. When the 1906 San Francisco earthquake wiped out the family’s livelihood, they re-located to Chicago, befriended by persons at The Church of Our Savior. This led to her Christian baptism there in 1911, at age 14. The weekend of November 11-12 this year, as part of its 150th birthday celebration, the church is commemorating her baptism and dedicating a shrine to her.

Dorothy made it known that she did not see herself a saint; she was suspicious of any official appropriation, not wanting to be co-opted and used by a bureaucratic institution. One of her models, Francis of Assisi, also eschewed such status, but like him, she cannot escape formal recognition. The Vatican has named her a “Servant of God,” the first step in the canonization process. At their 2012 annual meeting, the U.S. Catholic Bishops, conservatives as well as liberals, unanimously supported this. Pope Benedict, in his Ash Wednesday, 2013, address from St. Peter’s called her a model of conversion. Pope Francis, in his 2015 address to Congress, said: “In these times when social concerns are so important, I cannot fail to mention the Servant of God Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker Movement. Her social activism, her passion for justice and for the cause of the oppressed, were inspired by the Gospel, her faith, and the example of the saints.”

We at St. Francis - St. Joseph Catholic Worker House consider her a saint, just as our founder, Fr. Mark Schmeider, considered each of us and each person we serve to be a “saint,” a sacred, shining human person created in the image of God.

Marco Polo Circle

If they have the will, ***we are the way!*** Join the Marco Polo Circle to help us assist these wonderful men in becoming independent. Your monthly pledges will provide us with the means to carry on this important work. Simply go to our website at www.catholicworkercincinnati.org and click on the 'Donate' button. A recurring monthly contribution of any amount will make you a member!

Your ***monthly*** pledge IMPACTS LIVES daily!

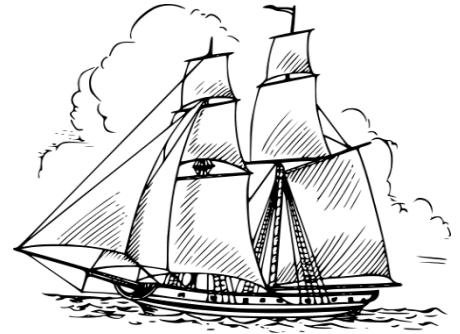
\$5 = feeds 300 people in our Soup Kitchen

\$10 = assists with providing job search tools

\$20 = provides 2 weeks of home cooked dinners for our guests

\$50 = gives 20 men work boots, a prerequisite for hiring at many jobs

\$100 = sponsors the cost of a guest's complete 60- day stay at the House



Installing Solar Panels to Help Reduce Our Energy Costs!

The House depends on the generosity of many donors to help us support and serve our guests on a day-to-day basis. We also occasionally receive a donation that helps us upgrade the physical building itself. A recent gift showcases the love of one couple for each other and for our House and the men living within. These long-time supporters, who wish to remain anonymous, were approaching their 40th anniversary and wanted to celebrate their years together in a meaningful way. Instead of spending money on themselves, they made a generous donation to the House to be used to install solar panels that will provide pollution-free energy and help reduce our monthly energy costs. The installation of these panels and subsequent upgrade of our facilities also reflect the on-going, long-term commitment of the House and its supporters to remain within the Over-the-Rhine community for many years to come. The panels will be installed within the next few months, and this husband and wife's gift to the House and the men it serves will provide a continual reminder of their caring spirit and generosity. We sincerely thank them for their kindness.

Note from the Board of Trustees

Due to the combined efforts of our board of directors, experienced staff and generous volunteers we have once again finished the year with outstanding results. The House continues to operate at the highest level. Through October, 226 homeless men found hospitality at the House. Of the 174 that stayed, 64 were able to find work, save money and move on to independent housing. The others were given food, shelter, clothing and opportunity. No effort is wasted. Our success rate for 2017 is nearly 37%. Great work everybody! We do request your utmost generosity for the coming year as our expenses currently exceed income.

- Bob Bertsch, Chairman

The St. Francis – St. Joseph Catholic Worker House vigilantly protects its independence and freedom from politics or distracting influences in order to focus on the mission of helping the homeless and poor.

The House receives no government or diocesan funding and operates with simplicity and frugality.

If you wish to help us continue the good work, please send your tax deductible donation to:

St. Francis – St. Joseph
P.O. Box 14274
Cincinnati, OH 45250



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