



St. Francis – St. Joseph Catholic Worker House

Christmas Newsletter, 2018

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

Upcoming Events

Memorial Mass for Father Mark Schmieder (Founder)

Saturday, December 15 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 15 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



2018 has been a busy year. On April 28th Shawna and I got married. The wedding was held at St. Boniface Church in Northside and presided over by Fr. Joe Robinson, who, as it turns out, also baptized me in 1980 and married my mother and father in 1978. And I'm happy to report that married life agrees with me. I've certainly been eating well.

Here at the house our mission continues without skipping a beat. We have achieved a success rate above 40%, the highest we've seen in a very long time. Our employment rate hovers at around 90% for the men who stay more than a few days. We are blessed to have so many available jobs for our men and at higher wages. \$15 dollars an hour is not uncommon. It's so much better than the old days when they could only make minimum wage and had half their day's pay wiped out by "transportation fees".

The Catholic Worker House has been such a blessing and I attribute much of my personal success to my involvement here. I cannot express the gratitude that I feel for being a part of this mission. I am grateful for all of you who make this possible and I look forward to continuing, as we say in AA, "to trudge the road of happy destiny".

Staff Spotlight – Andy Hoctor

Andy is one of only three full time Catholic Worker staff employees and he carries the ideal credentials for this demanding position. Andy is well covered with tattoos, an alcoholic with nine years of sobriety and trained in chemical dependency counseling. He worked at the Prospect House and Drop Inn Center. Furthermore, Andy was homeless ten years ago and recovered via the Prospect House. Because of his experiences, he relates well with the guests and understands what they need to return to mainstream society.



Andy is a talented artist and opened the region’s first piercing studio in the 90s. Housed in Northside, Andy thrived in the tattoo and piercing business for 15 years. However, his drinking was accelerating and, by 2010 he was addicted to heroin. “I was just hanging on when I entered Prospect House. I was spiritually bankrupt; a liar and thief. My family and friends were gone,” Andy laments. He did get sober and remains active in AA. After a couple of years of sobriety, Andy returned to the tattoo business. He made money but says “my privilege of recovery means I have more responsibility to give back.” He interviewed with CWH House Manager, John Clark, in 2015 and has been a fixture at the House ever since. Andy’s good work at the House keeps him sober and growing: “I can apply my spiritual principles every day; patience, love and tolerance.” Andy also possesses that special AA attribute of humility, “It’s a gift to come to work; the guests help me more than I help them.”

Having experienced other homeless and recovery shelters, Andy points out a distinction of the Catholic Worker House. “We are not bound by needless rules and restrictions. We are able to go above and beyond to help the guys.” This distinction is wrought by our independence. The House is fully funded by private donors and receives neither government nor diocesan money. The primary rule is to help the homeless man with immediacy and efficacy. Andy is one of the big reasons that it works.

Guest Story – Johnny

Johnny grew up in Birmingham, Alabama and has lived in Cincinnati for most of his adult life. “I had a good childhood, but started drinking when I was 18,” Johnny recalls. He quickly acquired his first DUI, but it took another 30 years for Johnny to begin recovery. “I was in denial and could not admit that I had a problem,” he says. That began to change last spring when Johnny became homeless and entered the Catholic Worker House. Johnny admits “I realized that I did have a drinking problem and that I have to ask for help.” He went to the right place and was admitted by CHW staff worker Andy Hoctor just in time for Memorial Day.

Johnny did all of the right things to promote his recovery. He found a good sponsor in Gary, also a CWH staff member. He attends AA with frequency, diligence and an open mind. Curiously, Johnny calls AA

meetings his “classes.” This special willingness to learn and change has been key to his recovery. Just this fall, however, Johnny had to invoke all his strength to resist a relapse. Johnny relates the story: “My sister died, and I was very upset and disturbed. I bought beer and opened a can. Just before that first sip, I realized and remembered that this will not solve anything.” He poured out the beer. That strength of spirit kept Johnny clean and he now claims nine months sobriety.

Johnny is very grateful for the gift of sobriety and the opportunity provided by the House. “I appreciate the staff showing me how to recover. The Catholic Worker House changed my life. I went from complete denial to accepting responsibility.” Presently, Johnny lives at Charlie’s ¾ House and works at a temp agency. His goal is “to regain the respect and trust of my family.” Johnny is well on his way. The relationship with his five adult children is already much improved. We wish Johnny continued happiness as moves to greater independence.

Guest Story – Bret

Ostensibly, Bret Barnard is a successful man. He possesses a Bachelor of Science degree from prestigious Fordham University and a Masters from Ohio State. He has been a Clinical Trials Monitor for major medical studies for 18 years. However, he only recently recovered from a nightmare that demonstrates the indiscriminate insidiousness of addiction and homelessness.

A year ago, Bret was trapped in an abusive relationship that was becoming unbearable. Alcohol was his escape, but eventually deepened his already low self-esteem and reinforced the dead end of victimhood and self-pity. At the point of desperation last February, Bret was referred to the Catholic Worker House. Andy was working that day and the House was full. “I started crying. I wanted help. I think Andy actually listened to me. No one had listened before,” Bret recalls. Andy put Bret in #17, the emergency bed.

Bret had long struggled with drinking and was in and out of AA for almost two decades. But now, he was willing to accept the help and the responsibilities offered by the House. John Clark, House Manager, is Bret’s AA sponsor. “He was watching out for me even when I didn’t know it,” Bret confides. He credits other staff: “Andy and Gary really stepped up when I needed it most.” In addition, volunteer and Board Trustee Nancy Feldman provided Bret with “food and love.”



Bret, pictured left, with Ron, another CWH alumnus, regular volunteer and co-founder of The Next Chapter House where they both reside.

Bret is seeking employment in his medical field, meanwhile working at Home Depot. Home Depot operates the “Homer Fund” which provides food, housing and transportation for employees like Bret. He expresses gratitude to the company and especially HR rep Melissa. He now resides in an East Walnut Hills sober living house with just five other residents.

This interview occurred just before Thanksgiving. Bret is filled with optimism, hope and most of all, with gratitude. Please attend the Worker House Christmas party on December 15 and you will meet Bret working as a volunteer on the catering team. He promises great food and great service!

The 5 Advent Virtues of St. Joseph

By Fr. Ed Broom, OMV

(This column originally appeared at Catholic Exchange)

Saint Joseph can help us to live a most fruitful Advent, and for many reasons. Let us quietly meditate upon five extraordinary virtues of this greatest of all saints so that we can live a most fervent Advent season and allow Jesus to be born in the depths of our hearts this Christmas!

1. Silence. Not once in the Bible do we hear a word from the great Saint Joseph. This silence of Saint Joseph is very eloquent. It teaches us a fundamental attitude to enter into deep prayer: silence. If we are constantly bombarded by noises then it is impossible to hear the Word of God, the Holy Spirit that speaks to us in the gentle breeze of silence. Also the silence of Saint Joseph teaches us the importance of example. We must prove our authenticity by words, but also by our actions. Saint Joseph taught the world by the holy way that he lived. May he be an example for us.

2. Prayer. Saint Joseph was a man of prayer. What an extraordinary role he played in the history of salvation. He was both the spouse of Mary the Mother of God as well as the foster-father of Jesus the Son of the living God. Saint Joseph actually taught Jesus to speak and to address God as “Abba”—meaning “Daddy”. In a certain sense Saint Joseph taught Jesus to use the human words to talk to the Heavenly Father—this is prayer. Therefore, if Saint Joseph taught Jesus how to pray, how much could he teach me how to pray if I simply ask for his help. Start now: Saint Joseph, teach me how to pray!

3. Courage and Manliness. In a society where too many men shirk their obligations toward their wives, children and family and turn to vices and the easy life when confronted with difficulties, Saint Joseph shines as a model of courage and fortitude. He travelled the many miles in the cold and wind, only to meet rejection. He found refuge in an animal shelter for the birth of Jesus. He arose early to flee into Egypt saving the Child Jesus from the vicious and murderous threats of King Herod. Faced with so many difficulties, Saint Joseph stood tall and confronted the obstacles with manly courage. May the men of the present generation lift up their gaze to the gentle but courageous man of God—good Saint Joseph.

4. Provide and Protect. Saint Joseph both protected and provided for the Holy Family. He was a hard worker—exercising the trade of a Carpenter. He earned the bread that he made with the sweat of his brow. He thought not of himself but of how he could best provide for and protect the family that God had

entrusted to his care. As we draw close to Christmas let us beg good Saint Joseph to provide and protect our spiritual lives. Materialism, consumerism, hedonism are the gods of the present culture. These actually suffocate spirituality. Saint Joseph's prayers can help us to look beyond the buying, having, and possessing. He can help us to realize that true joy and happiness does not come from having things, but in possessing God. To hold the Child Jesus in our arms and in our hearts is worth more than all of the money and possessions of the entire world. Good Saint Joseph can teach us this simple but profound lesson!

5. St. Joseph, Our Lady, and Jesus. To arrive at a true and authentic devotion to Mary, good Saint Joseph can serve as a powerful bridge. Aside from Jesus Himself, nobody on earth knew, understood, cherished and loved the Blessed Virgin Mary more than good Saint Joseph. Turn to Good Saint Joseph and beg him for the grace of greater knowledge and love for Mary, his beloved spouse. Your devotion to Mary will make a huge jump! Then turn to Saint Joseph and beg him for the grace of intimate knowledge of Jesus that you will love Jesus more ardently and follow Jesus more closely. Aside from Mary nobody knew Jesus better on earth than good Saint Joseph. The Holy Family is complete only when the three members are recognized, honored and loved. May the prayers of good Saint Joseph open your hearts to the immense treasures that God has in store for you this Advent Season. Then may Jesus be born in the depths of your heart this Christmas day!

Wolves and Wisdom

An enduring legend describes how St. Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscan Order, confronted a wolf who'd been terrorizing the town of Gubbio. St. Francis, the story goes, miraculously tamed the beast and ended its bloodthirsty splurges.

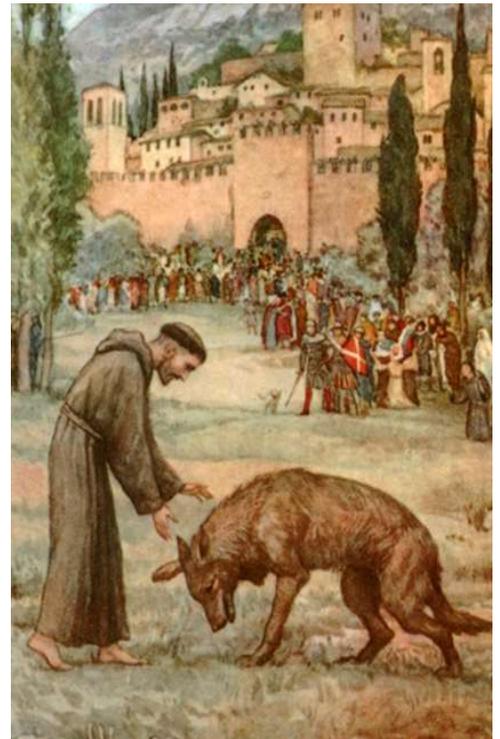
American author Flannery O'Connor, in a 1964 essay, touched upon the meeting between future saint and former predator.

"This legend has it that St. Francis converted a wolf," she wrote. "I don't know whether he actually converted this wolf or whether the wolf's character didn't just greatly improve after he met St. Francis. Anyway, he calmed down a good deal."

She went on to note how the wolf, regardless of its change in habits, remained a wolf. Although the once-fierce animal no longer stalked Gubbio, neither did it start walking on its hind legs.

St. Francis had himself undergone a remarkable conversion. Born in 1182, he grew up as the pampered son of a wealthy cloth merchant. Francis partied excessively during his youth, but his vanity drove dreams of personal glory as a soldier at war.

War finally arrived, but not the battlefield grandeur Francis craved. He was captured and held for a year in a filthy dungeon until his father paid ransom. When the young man returned home, he also returned to his wanton ways.



Unlike the wolf, Francis wasn't transformed abruptly. Convinced of a need to reform, he struggled prayerfully amid setbacks and relapses. An immense grace arrived one day as he rode his horse outside Assisi and encountered a leper. Francis, suppressing his revulsion at the poor man's horrifying disfigurement, dismounted and kissed the man's hand after handing him a coin.

Following that moment of charity and humility, Francis sought in earnest to rip out the roots of his wasteful life. He secluded himself in a cave and wept over his sins. He embraced prayer and poverty over a life of wine and wealth. In supernatural terms, his road was the reverse: from spiritual poverty to incalculable riches. "Pure holy simplicity," he wrote, "confounds all the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of the flesh."

And just as the wolf of Gubbio remained a wolf, neither did Francis turn into an angel. His struggles for sanctity remained all too human, but in his humility and perseverance he became a saint.

He tamed the wolf within him, and still confounds the wisdom of this world.

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!

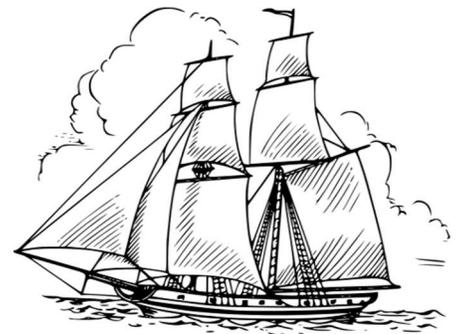
\$5 = feeds 300 people in our Soup Kitchen

\$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



Note from the Board of Trustees

Through 2018, with the help of all of you, we have maintained the high standards set by our beloved founder, Fr. Mark Schmieder. Through October, 233 homeless men found hospitality at the House. Of the 174 that stayed, 75 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. SFSJCWH's success rate has exceeded 40%! Great work everybody! We do request your utmost generosity for the coming year as our expenses currently exceed income.

- Mary Repaske, 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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