



St. Francis – St. Joseph Catholic Worker House Thanksgiving Newsletter, 2022



UPCOMING EVENTS:

Memorial Mass for Father Mark Schmieder

A Mass will be held to honor the memory of SFSJ's co-founder, Fr. Mark Schmieder, who passed away on Christmas Eve, 2009.

Saturday, December 17 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 SFSJ Christmas party located at 1437 Walnut Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202 on Saturday, December 17 at 6:00pm. All are welcome to attend.

We will have food, live music, and fun! We hope to see you there!

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas to all of you. I pray that your holiday season is a joyful one.

January will mark my tenth year as the manager of this house, which is also the ten-year anniversary of the passing of my predecessor Karl Fields. Those that knew him knew what a presence he was. He loomed large over this place and his sudden absence was devastating. I was looking over the newsletter we put out that following spring in which I wrote:

“Karl Fields will be missed. As I write this, I can’t help but to reflect on his absence. From the papers littered across my desk, written in his terrible handwriting, to the yellow stress ball that I can’t bring myself to get rid of, the reminders are everywhere. He was our leader, our mentor, and our friend; and now he is gone.”

I think back to that time and how crazy it was, but by God’s grace we persevered. We mourned the loss of Karl and took up his mantle. Now a decade has passed, the stress ball is long gone, and the core of our mission is the same: Provide a safe and dignified environment for our men to heal and get back into the mainstream of life.

Recent years have been especially challenging. But with the Thanksgiving season it is customary to consider what we are thankful for, such as volunteers who provide meals and much-needed house supplies, as well as sandwiches/ingredients for soup kitchen, our donors who keep our doors open and the lights on, staff members who treat this like a calling and not just a job, and the prayers of those who keep us close to their hearts.

And I’m grateful for men like Phil, Lonnie and Daniel. It’s good to know that our efforts aren’t for naught, and it’s good to see in a world seemingly full of tragedy and bad news that there are still good things happening. Thank you to everyone for making this possible.



A special thanks to Lee Everson and Patty Clark for giving poor St. Francis a much-needed touch-up!

PHIL admits that a decade passed before he sought recovery services for his alcoholism, and it wasn't from lack of insight into his condition.

"I've known for about 10 years I've had a problem with alcohol," said Phil, 30. "For the most part I was just unwilling to get help. I ruined all my relationships and was having a lot of trouble with employment, showing up to work. I'd get a job, get a paycheck and spend a lot of it on booze."

He credits the discipline of the Catholic Worker House with restoring his own.

"They really push you with the rules they have," he said. "Talking with all the workers there, they gave me a lot of advice, a lot of them have some good sober time. They know what I needed."

Since then, "I'm feeling really good. I'm going to meetings, I have a sponsor, I'm feeling confident." He said his gratitude extends not just to employees of the Catholic Worker House but to donors and volunteers.

"The people who bring in food and donate, I really appreciate them because you go into a place like that knowing you're going to have a decent meal and that's something real to look forward to, for people they're trying to get off the streets.

"I definitely couldn't have gone this far without the Catholic Worker House. At all."



LONNIE, beset by depression and drug dependence after the death of his wife, took the advice of one friend and found a community of new ones.

The friend, who had completed the program at the Catholic Worker House, urged Lonnie to seek help there.

"I needed a place to go where I could get back on my feet," Lonnie remembers. He says the staff successfully helped him in securing concrete needs, such as finding housing, but in immeasurable ways as well.

"They have good workers, real good," says Lonnie, 59. "They've very kind and concerned, and it's a very clean environment."



Today he's employed, has an apartment in Clifton, has been off drugs for over two years and lives what he calls a blessed life.

"Everything's going great," he said. "I take medicine, my job is good, work is good, God is good."

And like his friend who recommended the Catholic Worker House to him, he'd do the same for others in that situation.

"Tell whoever reads this that the Catholic Worker House is a great place, a wonderful place," Lonnie says.

DANIEL was in his early 30s when fate pulled the rug out from under his feet.

A literal rug.

During preparations a week before his wedding, Daniel stepped to hug a member of the bridal party. The rug buckled freakishly beneath his feet, shattering his ankle so severely that he'd require three surgeries and months of convalescence. "A specialist said, 'I'm not sure I can get you to walk again,'" recalls Daniel, now 41.



He did eventually walk, but his path would lead to a greater incapacity: severe addiction. It began with dependence on the prescribed painkillers, followed by accelerating alcohol abuse during the long absence from his job as a small-business manager.

From there the road got rockier, eventually bringing divorce, homelessness, legal problems, and relapses after repeat participation in addiction recovery programs. "I was in a dark hole," he says.

In August 2021, he sought help from the Catholic Worker House.

"The opportunity I was given and what it provided is more than I can even honestly really say," Daniel said. "One, it's a stable place. They have experience. They know what's going on, especially when you're fresh in recovery you don't know jack about anything. The rules are simple — you do the right thing and great things happen."

Those great things have included sobriety, a steady job, and a deep sense of gratitude. The Catholic Worker House, he said, "opened my eyes that there are still people who honestly care and who know what needs to be done."

"I wish I would have known about it sooner."



“JOYSEY” JOYCE, BEARER OF JOY

by Mike Harmon

Years ago, when I joined our sharing Catholic Worker community, I met Joyce Kiernan. Shortly thereafter, I dubbed her “Joysey,” because of her accent and her attitude.

Her accent actually came from growing up in the New York borough of Queens. To my somewhat unsophisticated ear, she sounded very much like a denizen of nearby New Jersey, or “Joysey,” as it was pronounced.

Her outlook was upbeat and contagious. She projected joy, an antidote to “The Long Loneliness” described by our inspiration and mentor, Dorothy Day.

As Joyce’s husband Steve said at her funeral, the best gift her parents gave her was her name, an evocation of joy.

Joyce was the oldest of eight children. At 18, still in high school, she moved out, got a job, her own place to live, yet always remaining caring, helpful big sister to her younger siblings. Eventually, she was working in accounting for Mercantile Stores in Manhattan. There she met Steve, from the IT department. They were soulmates, and both lapsed Catholics. The centrality of the Eucharist eventually drew them back to the Catholic faith.

A lot could be said in detail about Joyce's background and career. During the years I knew her through our Dorothy Day House, she worked in accounting for the Cincinnati Art Museum, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, and the Diocese in Charleston, S.C. She kept us in good stead with the IRS by doing our house's non-profit tax returns, filing our 990s, did our budgets, helped us get necessary supplies of food and clothing, recruited volunteers. She remained on our board even after her move to South Carolina, participating by phone, computer, and zoom, returning when needed, maintaining our financials.

Joyce and Steve volunteered at St. Vincent DePaul in both Cincinnati and Charleston. They played major roles together in the foster parent community. Her devotion to the well-being of the guests and staff of our Catholic Worker House was a part of the pattern of who she was. She helped countless guests of our house.

Joyce was a generous, accepting, loving, natural foster parent. She sensed what feeling an absence of love and acceptance could do to a person. She was one of the most empathetic persons I have ever encountered. I find a bit of miracle and mystery in this. There had to have been some person or persons who showed her the love of God when she was young, who showed her the way early. I know Steve was a conduit of such love, but even before they met, there was someone, parent, family member, counselor, teacher, nun, role model, who helped Joyce avoid "The Long Loneliness" that inflicts so many. Our faith is not passed on to us by doctrine; it comes from others loving us.

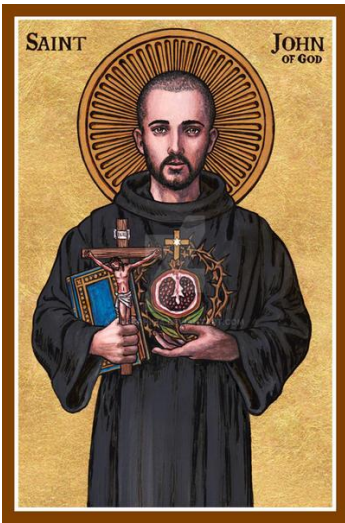


Despite her own, progressively debilitating, and painful life with cancer, she always showed concern for others more than for herself. I know this personally, because when I myself began dealing with cancer several years ago, Joyce was there for me, providing emotional support, never mentioning, or even hinting that she was herself living with an aggressive cancer which eventually took her from us.

In addition to her joy and empathy, Joyce is characterized by humility. Like Dorothy Day, like our house founder, Fr. Mark, and other saints, like Francis of Assisi, she asked that no big fuss be made about her at her passing. She joked that she would ask St. Peter to reserve Steve a place at her side in heaven, but only if he did not permit a big deal to be made about her at her death.

The last time I heard Joyce speak was on a call to her home in South Carolina. When she died two days later, a piece of me died with her. As when other cherished members of our Dorothy Day community have passed in my time: Mark, Karl, Brennan, Carolyn.

I hope what I have said here does not jeopardize Steve's place.



ST. JOHN OF GOD

Born at Montemoro Novo, Portugal, 8 March, 1495, of devout Christian parents; died at Granada, 8 March, 1550. The wonders attending the saint's birth heralded a life many-sided in its interests, but dominated throughout by implicit fidelity to the grace of God. A Spanish priest whom he followed to Oropesa, Spain, in his ninth year left him in charge of the chief shepherd of the place, to whom he gradually endeared himself through his punctuality and fidelity to duty, as well as his earnest piety. When he had reached manhood, to escape his master's well-meant, but persistent, offer of his daughter's hand in marriage, John took service for a time in the army of Charles V, and on the renewal of the proposal he enlisted in a regiment on its way to Austria to do battle with the Turks. Succeeding years found him first at his birthplace, saddened by the news of his mother's premature death, which had followed close upon his mysterious disappearance; then a shepherd at Seville and still later at Gibraltar, on the way to Africa, to ransom with his liberty Christians held captive by the Moors. He accompanied to Africa a Portuguese family just expelled from the country, to whom charity impelled him to offer his services. On the advice of his confessor he soon returned to Gibraltar, where, brief as had been the time since the invention of the printing-press, he inaugurated the Apostolate of the printed page, by making the circuit of the towns and villages about Gibraltar, selling religious books and pictures, with practically no margin of profit, in order to place them within the reach of all.

It was during this period of his life that he is said to have been granted the vision of the Infant Jesus, Who bestowed on him the name by which he was later known, John of God, also bidding him to go to Granada. There he was so deeply impressed by the preaching of Blessed John of Avila that he distributed his worldly goods and went through the streets of the city, beating his breast and calling on God for mercy. For some time his sanity was doubted by the people and he was dealt with as a madman, until the zealous preacher obliged him to desist from his lamentations and take some other method of atoning for his past life. He then made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Guadeloupe, where the nature of his vocation was revealed to him by the Blessed Virgin. Returning to Granada, he gave himself up to the service of the sick and poor, renting a house in which to care for them and after furnishing it with what was necessary, he searched the city for those afflicted with all manner of disease, bearing on his shoulders any who were unable to walk.

For some time he was alone in his charitable work soliciting by night the needful supplies, and by day attending scrupulously to the needs of his patients and the rare of the hospital; but he soon received the co-operation of charitable priests and physicians. Many beautiful stories are related of the heavenly guests who visited him during the early days of herculean tasks, which were lightened at times by St. Raphael in person. To put a stop to the saint's habit of exchanging his cloak with any beggar he chanced to meet, Don Sebastian Ramirez, Bishop of Tuy, had made for him a habit, which was later adopted in all its essentials as the religious garb of his followers, and he imposed on him for all time the name given him by the Infant Jesus, John of God. The saint's first two companions, Antonio Martin and Pedro Velasco, once bitter enemies who had scandalised all Granada with their quarrels and dissipations, were converted through his prayers and formed the nucleus of a flourishing congregation. The former advanced so far on the way of perfection that the saint

on his death-bed commended him to his followers as his successor in the government of the order. The latter, Peter the Sinner, as he called himself, became a model of humility and charity.

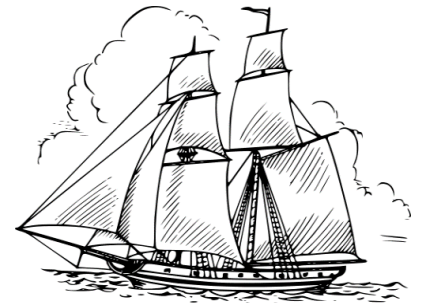
Among the many miracles which are related of the saint the most famous is the one commemorated in the Office of his feast, his rescue of all the inmates during a fire in the Grand Hospital at Granada, he himself passing through the flames unscathed. His boundless charity extended to widows and orphans, those out of employment, poor students, and fallen women. After thirteen years of severe mortification, unceasing prayer, and devotion to his patients, he died amid the lamentations of all the inhabitants of Granada. His last illness had resulted from a heroic but futile effort to save a young man from drowning. The magistrates and nobility of the city crowded about his death-bed to express their gratitude for his services to the poor, and he was buried with the pomp usually reserved for princes. He was beatified by Urban VIII, 21 September, 1638, and canonized by Alexander VIII, 16 October, 1690. Pope Leo XIII made St. John of God patron of hospitals and the dying.

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



ANNUAL FUNDRAISING APPEAL

Through 2022, with the help of all of you, we continue to operate at the highest level. Through October, 127 homeless men found hospitality at the House. Of the 92 that stayed, 39 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. SFSJ's success rate has once again exceeded 40%! Great work everybody!

For those of you who have already contributed, thank you for your support. We couldn't do this without you. As everyone is aware, expenses are rising and every dollar counts. Some of our expenses were offset by fewer guests in the first half of the year. But we are back in full swing. So, we are asking those of you who are able to dig deep and help us continue the good work started by Jim Mullen and Fr. Mark Schmieder all those years ago.

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 the 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
Catholic Worker House
P.O. Box 14274
Cincinnati, OH 45250

St. Francis – St. Joseph Staff

John Clark (House Manager)
Andy Hocter – Tyrone Brooks
Robert Taylor – Linn Schneider
Bob Shearman – Bob Hack
John Stofa

St. Francis – St. Joseph Board

Bob Bertsch – Mike Harmon
Michael Dufek – Dr. John Zerbe
Mary Repaske – Nancy Finke
Nancy Feldman – Dan Schmits
Teresa Stephens

Honorary Members:
Carl Schmieder

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