



from SISTER MARY

Dear Friends of Emmaus,

The Year of Mercy designated by Pope Francis is at the half-way mark. I hope the short meditations on six of the seven Corporal Works of Mercy by Joan Chittister that we've included in the newsletter enrich your understanding of the works of mercy and encourage you to continue practicing them.

This column is about the seventh work of mercy—to bury the dead. You might think it's a strange mercy practice for a soup kitchen, but it's actually one we practice with great reverence over and over and over again. Over the years, we get to know many of our guests intimately and are often involved in caring for them in death.

When our friend Walter died he had only one thing in his possession—a folded paper in his shirt pocket with my name and phone number. We saw to it that Walter received a decent burial and the Emmaus sisters were the only ones present at his graveside at Winter Green Gorge Cemetery.



The woman in the photo with me is Margaret. Erie City Mission and Emmaus saw to it that Margaret had a proper funeral and, as she had requested, Sisters Lucia and Claire Marie Surmik brought a polka CD to the cemetery and danced a polka for her there.

When 13-year-old Michelle died it was like losing a relative—her entire family came to the kitchen daily and we had cared for Michele since she was a small child. Of course we took care of the funeral, organized the service, and when her parents asked if Michelle's ashes could be buried in the backyard of the soup kitchen we were privileged to oblige.

The staff has attended and prepared numerous funerals and given final commendations as well as eulogies. The most difficult eulogy I ever delivered was for my dear friend, twenty-three-year-old Sabrina who was brutally murdered.

The heroin plague in Erie has taken a handful of Emmaus guests, most recently a beautiful young woman. The day after she died I held up her picture at the soup kitchen and asked all the guests to remember her and begged them to get help with addictions. Then I put her picture on our "memorial" soup kitchen refrigerator where she joined a dozen or so guests and volunteers whom we consider members of the Emmaus family. As the Jewish prayer reminds, "So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us...."

Sister Mary

Emmaus Director Honored

“We rise by lifting others,” Robert Ingersoll wrote. Three Erie groups gave credence to this quote by recently recognizing Emmaus Director Sister Mary Miller for her 35-year commitment to the poor and hungry of Erie. In early April, Mercyhurst University presented her with its *Archbishop Oscar Romero Award, given annually to a leader of peace and justice. The Notre Dame Erie Alumni also honored Sister Mary with its annual Humanitarian of the Year Award named after the late Father Richard McBrien, one of the University’s most prestigious theologians. And during Women’s History Month in March, Sister Mary was one of nine women named by *Her Times* magazine, a supplement of the Erie newspaper, as “Erie Women We Admire.”



“I accept these recognitions for two reasons,” Sister Mary explained. “First I want to call attention to the great needs of the poor and marginalized in our area. Second, I receive them on behalf of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie who have been present to the poor in this city for over 150 years.”

***WHO IS ARCHBISHOP ROMERO?** While celebrating Mass on March 24, 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador was martyred by a right wing death squad because he sided with the poor during the country’s civil war and spoke out against injustice, violence, assassination and torture. Bishop Romero was beatified in 2015, the first step in the process of being declared a saint by the Roman Catholic Church. “When we speak for the poor, please note that we do not take sides with one social class. What we do is invite all social classes, rich and poor, without distinction, saying to everyone, let us take seriously the cause of the poor as though it were our own,” wrote Archbishop Romero.

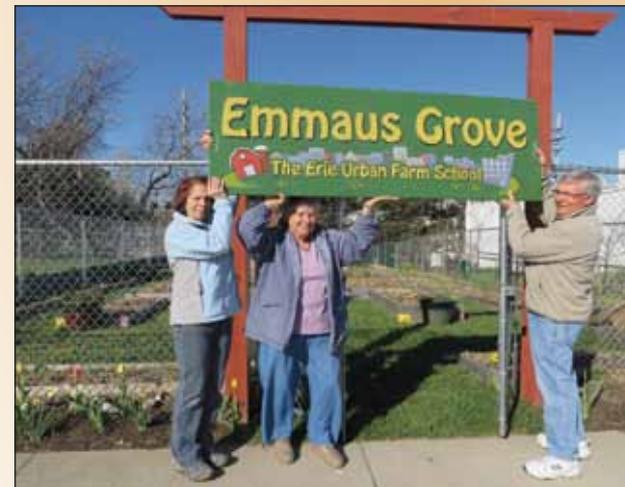
What former Pfeiffer Burleigh teacher is now a volunteer cook at the Emmaus Kids Cafe? What volunteers have baked 3,700 dozen cookies for the soup kitchen in the past ten years? To find the answers go to the Emmaus website where each month free-lance writer Liz Allen features two new faces of Emmaus.

www.emmauserie.org

GET READY...GET SET...



With the hanging of the Emmaus Grove sign, the planting season is on “GO.” Under the leadership of master gardeners Ellen DiPlacido and Michael Bailey, the Erie



Ellen DiPlacido, Sr. Lucia Surmik and Michael Bailey

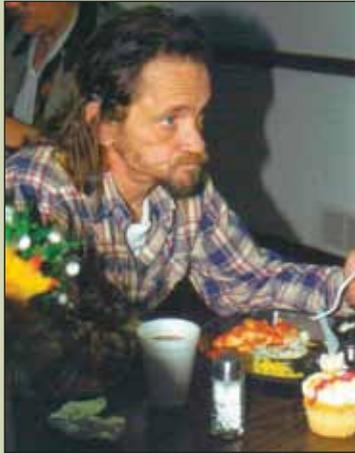
Urban Farm School has developed into a dynamic center for garden education and experimentation. Not only did the the Grove produce almost 2,000 pounds of food last season for Emmaus Soup Kitchen and Pantry, but its classes were well attended and speaking requests continue to increase. The Grove presented a workshop at the Erie Home & Garden Expo; Ellen was featured on a public service series

on combatting obesity produced by Erie’s PBS station, WQLN; and Mike is the newly elected president of the Penn State Master Gardeners.

MEDITATION on The WORKS of MERCY

by Joan Chittister

FEED THE HUNGRY, GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY



None of us can sustain ourselves. The gospel imperative to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty is not about giving things away. It's about all of us—those who need and those who give—finally getting to be more human together because we have all learned to feed one another.

SHELTER THE HOMELESS

To be homeless is to be without security, without dignity, without love. Home is where we build the human race. It is where we bring people together in order to warm their souls at the hearts of those who love them. It is a place to weep and hurt, to laugh and sing, to be heard and held.



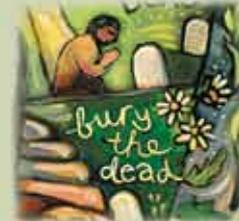
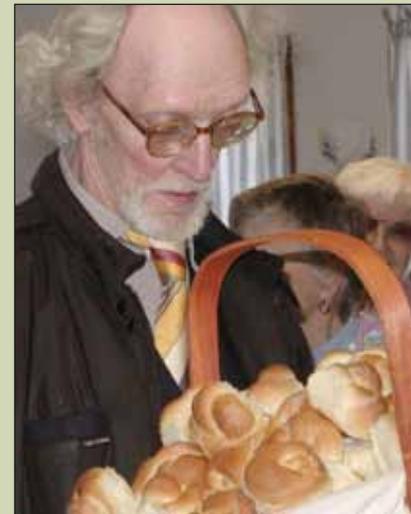
VISIT THE SICK

Compassionate people see pain and take it on as their own. They suffer with the suffering. The compassionate person does not try to talk other people out of pain. They stand with them in that pain so that they are not destroyed by the loneliness that comes with it. That's what the Work of Mercy that tells us "to visit the sick" is all about. That's "preaching the Gospel without words."



CLOTHE THE NAKED

The kind of "clothing the naked" that is relatively easy is taking extra clothes to the soup kitchen. What is not easy is clothing the people who must wear it with the kind of dignity such clothes are meant to display. To give dignity to those society deprives of it covers our nakedness as well as theirs. In clothing the nakedness of others, we array ourselves in qualities too profound to mention, but too powerful to be missed by the rest of the world.



FEEDING the SOUL at The Kids Cafe

At Sister Gus' Kids Cafe, the corporal works of mercy are practiced every time a hungry child is fed. But the body of merciful works also feeds souls. Consider:

FIVE LITTLE KIDS RECOGNIZED

POETRY. "Roses are red, violets are blue," they said. But did they know there are poems about lonesome skyscrapers and curious seagulls, about bouncing see-saws and playground swings? They found that out on April 21, *Poem in Your Pocket Day*, when Sister Mary Lou Kownacki showed the children how to act out poems. The children shyly repeated the rhymes and did the motions, then picked a poem to decorate and give away. Most poems went to moms. But Jayden, 9, had someone else in mind. "My Grandma," he said.



FREE THE CAPTIVE

Have you never been in prison? Never been imprisoned by your fears, your embarrassments, your humiliations, your inadequacies? Because if you have you know that then, only those who "visit" you can make a difference.

(Erie Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister is a member of the Emmaus Board of Directors.)



"I'M NOT DOING YOGA!" the children protested, when Stephanie Gear, program director, reminded them to bring permission slips for a yoga project organized by Gannon University volunteers. Twelve-year-old friends Omorione and Riley assumed yoga was hard; it did prove difficult to perform some moves, such as putting one foot on top of their heads. But yoga's benefits surprised them. Omorione said he would use yoga techniques "when people are bothering me." Riley added: "It helped me because my brain wasn't worked up."



AN AWESOME EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE.

When Maleeya, 8, and Azzaryia, 9, were introduced to Billee Joe, five weeks, and Sadie, two months, they quickly became friends. The older girls had just met a Jersey cow and a pygmy goat in a parking lot in Erie's inner city, courtesy of Kids Cafe volunteer Megan Alexander, her sister, Nikki Hanna, and their mom, Debbie Alexander. The three women transported the animals from their Conneaut Lake farm because Megan thought it would be "an awesome educational experience for the kids."

Megan, 20, a Kids Cafe volunteer from Gannon's ServeMore Sophomores program, is studying to be a nurse like Nikki, 27, an RN. "Once you grow up on a farm, you can't let the animals go," says Nikki. "You have to make sure they're taken care of." —Liz Allen



LET US GIVE THANKS

Our Thanks to...Mercy in Action

LECOM (Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine) Class of 2019 resurrected a former annual event, the “MedBall” to bring 1st and 2nd year students together prior to board exams, and used the event to raise funds for Emmaus...The law offices of **MCDONALD ILLIG JONES AND BRITTON, LLP** contributed clothing and non-perishable goods and raised \$1,934 from its annual gift basket raffle...**JERRY GORNIAK** has collected donations for Emmaus from customers for 20 years at his holiday/Christmas tree stand and this year brought a paper bag containing \$329.74 in donations from customers...**100 CATHEDRAL PREPARATORY STUDENTS** camped out overnight in cardboard boxes on school grounds to raise awareness of hunger and homelessness and solicited almost \$6000 in donations for Emmaus...**STAFF AT BREVILLIER VILLAGE**, a non-profit housing and healthcare community, sponsored a Jeans Week and donated \$450 to benefit the Soup Kitchen Fire Restoration fund...**MILLCREEK TOWNSHIP** annual “treecycling” event at the Millfair Compost and Recycling Center raised over \$1,000 for Emmaus from recycled Christmas trees...The **LA NUOVA AURORA SOCIETY** designated Emmaus Ministries to receive \$2,000 from their small game revenue proceeds...**SOPHOMORE CLASS AT COLLEGIATE ACADEMY** collected non-perishable items and a donation of \$250 for Emmaus as part of a 24 hour sophomore class Lock Down event that brings students together for board games, sports activities, movies, conversation, etc...**DEAN ORNISH REVERSAL PROGRAM FOR HEART DISEASE** chose Emmaus Ministries as recipient of heart healthy food items and cash donations collected at their annual alumni dinner...**WESTMINSTER FIGURE SKATING CLUB OF ERIE** donated a portion of proceeds from their skating exhibition, “An Evergreen Holiday” to the Emmaus Soup Kitchen

In Memory

We are grateful to family members who asked that memorials be made to Emmaus in the names of their deceased loved ones.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Almarie Lillian (Baldini) Arneman | Harvey “Butch” W. Miller |
| Donald “Herbie” Beer | Sue Ann Rinke |
| Anthony James Denny | August Joseph (A. J.) Scolio, Jr. |
| Kenneth W. Gordon | Janice K. Sedler |
| Shirley Bastow Kenehan | Clifford A. Smith, Sr. |
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| Helen Joan Wilkosz Sargent Manning | |

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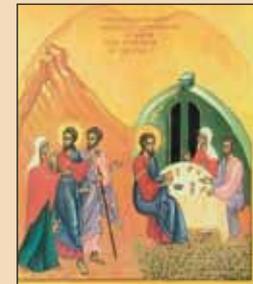
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Ministries
thanks
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They came
to know Him
in the breaking
of the bread.

Luke 24:35