



# The Companion

Emmaus Ministries • 345 East Ninth Street • Erie, PA 16503-1107 • (814) 459-8349  
www.emmauserie.org



Our hearts  
of stone  
become  
hearts  
of flesh  
when  
we learn  
where  
the outcast  
weeps.

Brennan Manning

## *FROM SISTER MARY:*

Dear Friends of Emmaus,

I have always been drawn to the Lenten scripture, “Turn our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh” and look upon it as a lifetime quest. So when we chose “a heart moment” for the theme of this newsletter and asked friends of Emmaus to tell us about an experience that caused their hearts to become softer and more compassionate, I did the same. Many Emmaus memories flooded my mind but these two arrived first.

My first heart-moment memory took place during a summer give-away at the soup kitchen. We had tables and tables of donated items and each guest received three tickets to select whatever they wanted. The first guest—a woman I knew to be extremely poor—raced right by the coats and sweaters and blouses and purses and kitchen utensils and pots and pans. She stopped in front of a framed painting of a water scene and exclaimed, “This is what I want. It’s so beautiful.”

My heart broke open because the woman reminded me that beauty for the soul is as important to the poor as food for the body. And I promised myself that there would always be fresh flowers on the tables and fine art on the walls of the soup kitchen. It’s for this reason, too, that I helped make possible a stunning “Poetry Park” in the heart of Erie’s inner-city.



The second heart memory took place one Christmas when I asked eight-year-old Angel, a regular at the soup kitchen with her younger sister, Michelle, what their favorite Christmas toys were and Angel said, “roaches.” She explained, “There are so many at my grandma’s house. We don’t catch mama and papa roaches ’cause they bite, but we catch the little babies and let them run up and down our hands and we name them. I call mine Angel 1 and Angel 2 and....”

The saintly Pope John XXIII wrote, “I have looked into your eyes with my eyes. I have put my heart near your heart.” Angel and Michelle invited me to do that and, because of them, my heart grew softer...at least for a moment.

*Sister Mary*

The *Erie Times-News* named Sister Mary Miller one of the Most Inspirational People for 2012 for her work at Emmaus and for inspiring beauty in the inner city with the creation of the Poetry Park in the neighborhood where she lives. Photo reprinted with permission from Times Publishing Co., Erie, PA. Copyright 2013. Greg Wohlford / Staff Photographer

## FACE TO FACE: MY HEART MOMENT

**THIRTY-ONE-YEARS AGO I WAS PREGNANT WITH MY THIRD CHILD** and because of an RH factor my daughter needed blood transfusions. While in a Pittsburgh hospital for the third round of transfusions, I lay hope-



Kitty Welton  
Soup Kitchen Volunteer

lessly in bed as the attempts that day had been unsuccessful. My roommate was a nineteen-year-old who told me that she had undergone a liver transplant and was never supposed to have children, but that she and her husband decided to take the risk. Now she was pregnant with twins, both of who had spinal bifida. She was from a depressed area in West Virginia and her husband had to remain there to keep his job. It was obvious that she did not have much financial or family support.

My roommate asked me how things had gone with the transfusion that day and I pretended to be asleep because, at that moment, I was depressed and wanted to wallow in my sorrow. I heard her quietly pick up the telephone and call a friend in West Virginia. She apologized to her friend for not calling sooner but said she had a favor to ask. She said that

she needed prayers for someone at the hospital whose baby needed a blood transfusion. She asked for prayers, not for herself, but for me! We had only met a few days before, but that did not matter. She did not have money for a long distance call, but that was not her concern. This young mother was facing not only a first high-risk pregnancy, but also a life-time of care for special needs children, and she reached out to me. At that moment, I remember I began to cry. This young woman had touched my heart. She taught me what Jesus meant when he said "love thy neighbor as thyself."

**IN 2006 I FOUND MYSELF AS PART OF A WOMEN'S PEACE** delegation in Syria meeting with religious leaders. One of our visits was to a convent in Damascus that was housing women Iraqi refugees who had fled the war. "Four thousand refugees a day come to Syria to escape U.S. bombing" the sister in charge told us. She wanted me to meet with the women but, being American I was a bit reluctant, concerned that it would be too painful for them. But the sister insisted and pushed me into

the midst of them in the inner courtyard.

I looked into their faces while the translator pointed each of them out: this one's son had been killed, these lost their homes, this one saw her family shot...the list was endless. "I am so sorry," I said to them. "I am so sorry this happen to you. All I can do is apologize to you from the center of my heart for the millions of Americans who are concerned for you."

Suddenly a woman pushed forward from the back of the jostling crowd, big black eyes fixed on me intently. She turned to the translator for help. "I accept your apology," she said quietly. "I accept your love." Then she put her arms around me, kissed me firmly on the cheek, put her head on my shoulder and began to cry. And so did I. The rest of the group pressed tightly against us, all of them with tears on their faces.

I had never seen the faces of my victims before and they had not seen the face of the enemy who was not an enemy. It was a profound heart moment for me, one that I will never forget.



Joan Chittister, OSB  
Emmaus Board Member



Ron Wasielewski  
Soup Kitchen Volunteer

**WHEN YOU SEE AN OLD NEIGHBORHOOD** acquaintance waiting in line for a meal at the Emmaus Soup Kitchen, the standard greeting of "How ya' doin'?" seems inappropriate.

So I pretended not to notice him among those waiting for the doors to open. But he called my name and extended his hand, asking if I remembered him.

How could I forget? We grew up together and had common friends. We attended the same neighborhood school. We were raised by like-minded parents who stressed the work ethic and who never dreamed that their children would

need to visit a soup kitchen for a meal.

What happened to him? He lost the factory job he had held for more than 20 years and then supported himself by holding various odd jobs before a medical problem took him out of the job market for a couple of months. He was at the awkward age—a little too young to retire, but far too old to start over. It's getting tougher to make ends meet so "Sometimes I come over here for a meal," he told me "but I'll be OK when I get Social Security."

Given our similar backgrounds, I asked myself what's the difference between my old acquaintance and me? The answer is not that much. He experienced a couple of bad breaks. With a few such breaks of my own, I could be right behind him in line at the soup kitchen.

It was a heart moment for me. I realized that I, the Emmaus volunteer, and "them," the Emmaus guests were no different. I knew this "old friend's" story. But what of the others on the line? If I knew their stories wouldn't I find more common ground than differences? My heart was softened that day.

**I VOLUNTEER** at the Kids Cafe store where children come to redeem "Kids Cafe Bucks" that they've earned for helping out. One January afternoon I waited on Tonya and helped her shop for soap and school supplies and then sent her on her way. Tonya is one of our younger children and though small in size, she can be a handful. So when she reappeared in the store, I was a little impatient because other children needed my attention. "I have to whisper something in your ear," she said. And when I bent down she told me that she had brought a friend with her today and her friend was homeless. "If you look at her feet," she whispered, "you can see that she doesn't have any socks. Can we give her a pair?"



Gretchen Mikelonis, Kids Cafe Volunteer

Tonya is just as needy as her friend and yet her heart had room for someone else. She cared for her friend, even to the point of whispering her request out of respect for the other little girl. Tonya's caring heart touched mine that day and changed me.

Dear Santa,

It's me, Sister Mary Miller. I am writing a short note of thanks for all of the "elves" you sent to Emmaus Ministries this Holiday Season. The "elves" responded generously to our Annual Appeal, baked lots of goodies, knitted hats and scarves, collected



warm clothing, shopped for and purchased presents. They also wrapped and distributed gifts, sponsored "angel trees", decorated the Soup Kitchen, prepared and served holiday dinners, provided music and song and even asked for donations on our behalf. Santa, these elves truly displayed the spirit of this happy and holy Season to all served



by Emmaus Ministries. My heartfelt thanks to each and every one of them. Oh, and Santa, one more thing—I have been very good this year... so far.

Sister Mary



PS If you want to see your elves in action go to [www.emmauserie.org](http://www.emmauserie.org).

VISIT the **NEW** EMMAUS WEBSITE  
[www.emmauserie.org](http://www.emmauserie.org)

- Read Emmaus news stories as they happen.
- Visit the Soup Kitchen, Kids Cafe, Food Pantry
- Meet Emmaus volunteers
- Pray with Emmaus
- Find ways to help the hungry of Erie

The well-fed person and the hungry one do not see the same thing when they look upon a loaf of bread.  
—Rumi—



### FOR the RECORD: EMMAUS IS IN SAFE HANDS

“You’re in good hands,” one of the nation’s premier insurance companies touts. Emmaus can say the same to its donors because of so many young people dedicated to the poor. Let’s meet a few:



**THE SENIOR HIGH YOUTH GROUP AT OUR LADY OF PEACE** erected and lived in a box city for 24 hours to immerse themselves in a homeless experience and also raise funds for relief agencies, including Emmaus.

**GLEN LOUIS:** Guess how Glen celebrated his 9th birthday party. Instead of asking for presents, he asked family members and friends to give food items to Emmaus. The ten friends who attended his party brought enough “presents” to fill two big bags with food for the soup kitchen. Young philanthropist Glen Louis and his dad, Mark, delivered the gifts.



**LOGAN SIPE:** High-school student and Emmaus Food Pantry volunteer, Logan, was selected by WJET-TV for its Good Kid Award, a program that highlights young people who are making a difference in the community. In addition to helping at the pantry, Logan assisted with painting projects at the pantry and soup kitchen.

**KATHERINE COONEY:** This enterprising Villa Maria Academy senior enlisted 15 teenagers from seven neighborhoods to go out on Halloween for “trick or eat”—collecting non-perishable items for Emmaus Soup Kitchen instead of candy treats. Young entrepreneur Katherine Cooney delivered an entire trailer filled with boxes of food—800 pounds of it—to the kitchen with her parents, Dorothy and Kevin Cooney.



## In Memory

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

EMMAUS VOLUNTEER  
Robert T. "Bob" Hughes

Dorothy (Fitzpatrick) Ankiel  
Cora M. Baumgardner  
Faith A. (Heller) Bianco  
Rita H. Tofel Bobrowicz  
Paul R. DiGello  
Mary Margaret Klemm Donikowski  
Emily Donohue  
Barbara W. Doverspike  
Timothy (Tim) A. Gagnon

Richard F. Gardner  
Elizabeth B. "Betty" Jones  
Thomas J. Kaliszewski  
Marie Kowalczyk  
Helen A. Harnak Kowalski  
William F. Kuhrman  
Jerry E. Lawrence, Sr.  
Diane E. Hanson Rahn  
Anna Marie Rohan Shufran  
John Tautin Sr.  
Edward Zelazny



**BLEEDING HEART (Dicentra Formosa)**  
is a native wildflower growing  
in the shady forests of western North America.  
The flower essence is a balm for the heart,  
and is used extensively by practitioners  
for relationship and grief issues.

STAFF: Mary Miller, OSB; Margaret Kloecker; Claire Marie Surmik, OSB; Lucia Surmik, OSB  
Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, OSB; Ann Dwyer Vinca; Rita Scrimanti; Shirley Whaley  
Companion Editor, Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB; layout, Judy Allison



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

Luke 24:35