

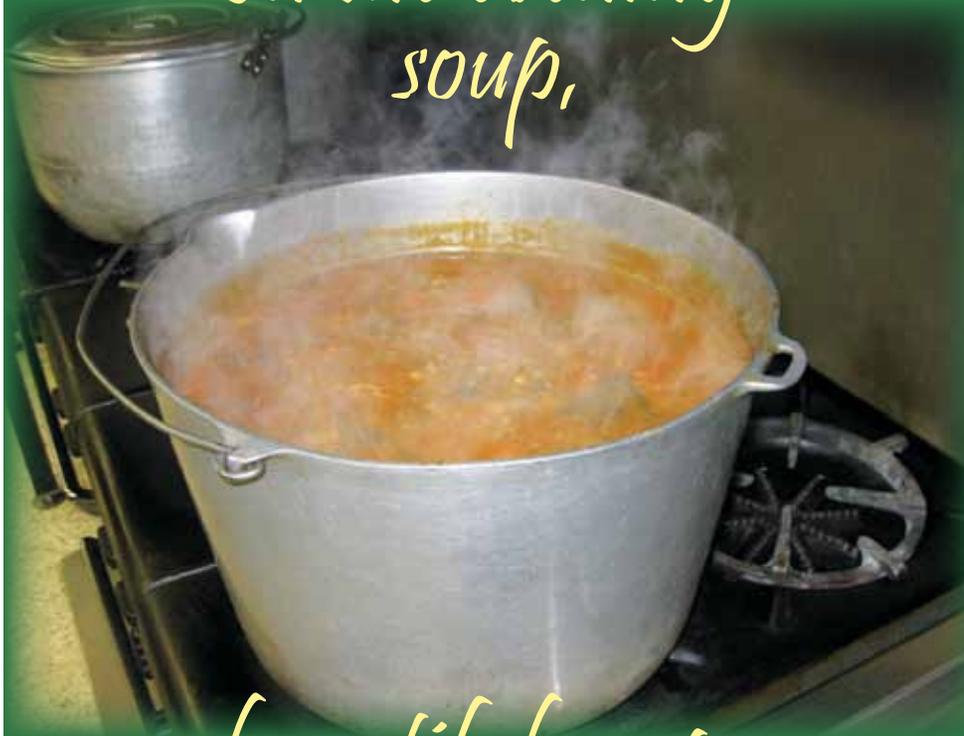


The Companion

February 2012
Vol. 22 No. 1

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

*In the evening
soup,*



beautiful soup.

Lewis Carroll

FROM SISTER MARY:

Dear Friends of Emmaus,

I'm not one for New Year's resolutions. I prefer, instead, a daily resolution to start anew. As the Desert Fathers taught, Abba Poemen said of Abba Pior, "Every day he made a fresh beginning."

I try to do it in my own life, of course. I don't want a bad day or angry words or a misguided action or a disappointment to linger beyond the setting sun. I hope to awaken each morning with a fresh heart.

But here's the best part. This mantra—*every day is a new beginning*—is what the Emmaus staff carries into the Soup Kitchen, Food Pantry and Kids Cafe.

Let's take the soup kitchen. Every day the lights go on in the morning and Sisters Lucia and Claire begin a new meal. Every day volunteers and staff arrive in midafternoon and prepare to feed the guests. Every day over a hundred, sometimes 200 guests are greeted by name at the door, served a meal and find a word of care and kindness. Some days there are tragic stories to listen to. Some days there are arguments and mean words exchanged. Most days there is laughter and shared friendship. Then at 5:30 the tables are cleaned, the coffee urn unplugged, the lights turned off, and the doors locked. The next day we begin again.

But we just don't repeat our actions like Bill Murray caught in the movie *Groundhog Day*. We begin new. We don't look at ourselves or our guests through the mirror of the past. We believe that each day, each guest is reborn and so are we. This poem says it best and is my New Year's gift to you:



I Am Completely Different

I am completely different.
Though I am wearing the same tie
as yesterday,
am as poor as yesterday,
as good for nothing as yesterday,
today I am completely different.
Though I am wearing
the same clothes,
am as drunk as yesterday,
living as clumsily as yesterday,
nevertheless today
I am completely different.

Ah ...
I patiently close my eyes
on all the grins and smirks
on all the twisted smiles
and horse laughs—
and glimpse then, inside me
one beautiful white butterfly
fluttering towards tomorrow.

~ Kuroda Saburo ~

Sister Mary

FOCUS FEATURE: “THE MORE YOU READ . . .THE MORE PLACES YOU’LL GO.”

Ann Vinca, director of the Kids Cafe, remembers when Karen Dunn approached her with the idea. She asked me about starting a reading program, I looked at this good-hearted and genteel woman and thought, “she won’t last a week. The kids will eat her alive.” That was three years ago.

Since then, Dunn, a retired Reading and English teacher of 22 years at General McLane, arrives twice a week at the after-school dinner and activities program loaded with books and stickers and a passion for making Dr. Suess’ words a reality—“The more that you read, the more things you know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”



L to R: Karen Dunn, Pat Davis, Ann Vinca and Kay Lascek

“It’s not that she proved me wrong,” explained Vinca, “rather that she reinforced something I truly believe, but often second guess—that children can spot the genuine, real gold from fools. Karen truly loves the children, wants them to learn, trusts that good literature is its own sale—and the children respond.”

Two of her friends, Pat Davis and Kay Lascek, both former teachers, join her each week. Dunn said they come to teach reading and expose the children to good books, but all of them agree that the relationships that develop with the children is an added bonus. “None of us have grandchildren,” Dunn said, “so

it’s a joy having all these children involved in our lives.”

How about motivation? What does it take to motivate at-risk children to read—candy? Field trips? Movies? In this case, old-fashioned stickers are doing the trick. Dunn has a large loose-leaf binder with a page for each child who reads. When the child finishes a book, she or he gets to choose a sticker and puts it on their page along with the title and author of the book. “How they love to look at the three-ring binder,” said Dunn.

The growing number of stickers certainly pleases Dunn. So does running into one of the Kids Cafe children at the public library. “Quantasia brought her father so she could get a library card,” said Dunn. So does discovering that one of the students, Shy, now makes it a practice to read aloud to her younger brothers and sisters.

Study after study has concluded that reading aloud to children is the best way to activate a life-long love of reading. Thanks to these three women the children at the Kids Cafe have a chance at a richer life. Thanks to them children can experience beauty in “Snowy Day,” find meaning in “Winnie the Pooh,” and develop self-worth in “Charlotte’s Web.” Thanks to them, the children now know there are unlimited places they can go.



Shy, front, and older siblings (l. to r.) Trevor, Diamonte and Jamera

Shy is the star reader at the Kids Cafe. She is reading *The Foot Book: Dr. Suess’ Wacky Book of Opposites* to her 3-year-old brother and 4-year-old sister so they learn about body parts. At school she is reading *The Friendship Experiment* by Brandi Dougherty. With Miss Dunn at the Kids Cafe she is reading the 26 books in the *A to Z Mystery Series* by Ron Roy. At home she is reading a biography of Harriet Tubman. Her favorite book is the classic tale *Stone Soup*.

FOR the RECORD

Flower Giveaway

If you walked into Carl Larese's flower shop on Sept. 17, you received a dozen roses free. Yes, free. All you had to do is agree to do is give 11 away to 11 different people and...keep one for yourself. You were also invited to donate a nonperishable food item or paper product for Emmaus Soup Kitchen. Over 5,000 roses were given away while 20 boxes of food, along with a monetary donation, were delivered to Emmaus. This was the 17th FTD Good Neighbor Day hosted by Larese Floral Designs, 3857 Peach Street.



Sister Claire Marie Surmik receives donations from Carl Larese.

Sock It to 'Em

When Erie Benedictine Sister Mary Therese Eichenlaub was visiting someone in the hospital she spotted a box full of hospital sock-slippers, the kind everyone admitted to a hospital receives. She was told that the slippers, which stay on a person's feet for about 2 hours, are thrown away. After a brief discussion, the hospital agreed to let her take them. Each week Sister Mary Therese goes to the hospital, picks up a few dozen socks, takes them to the monastery, washes and bags them and gives them to groups like Emmaus. "I couldn't stand to see those beautiful sock-slippers thrown away when so many poor and homeless don't have anything to warm their feet," explained Sister Mary Therese.



Sisters Clarie Marie and Mary Therese

GE Steps Up



Sister Lucia Marie Surmik and GE volunteers.

Employees of General Electric came to the rescue of Emmaus one more time, replacing the back steps to the soup kitchen and putting the finishing touches on the building's newly renovated exterior. Last year this same group built and installed a new ramp at the kitchen.

Trees of Life

Trees number 49 and 50 were planted in front of Emmaus Soup Kitchen. These beautiful dogwoods were part of a "Greening the Neighborhood" project undertaken by 3rd and 4th grade students from Pfeiffer-Burleigh school under the direction of Erie Benedictine Sister Pat Lupo of Earth Action Erie.

The goal of the project



Sister Pat Lupo, right, with Damash'anna, Steven, Damian and Khina

was to plant 50 trees in and around the neighborhood as part of a state-wide program (TreeVitalize) to plant 1 million trees across the Commonwealth's urban areas. The local project would not have been possible without the contributions of Brooks Landscaping and Austin Concrete.

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 Volunteers:
Mildred L. Carlson
Madelyn Bruder Chaffee

Attorney William H. Burke
Michael J. Crynock
Dorothy A. (Mokszanowski) Fedak
Velma Ruth "Bunnie" Rabbitt Graham
Paul E. Horton
Esther A. White (Bianco) Larese
Lena M. Chetoni McKay
Anthony Jon Miles
Genevieve (Jean Fafinski) Mleczeko
Edward A. Pastewka
John E. Rinderle
Norberta E. Schneider
Martha M. Lorei Tatar
Bertha A. (Hellmann) Theodore
Joann Pauline Prososki Tech
Botsford VanCise
Irene R. Zelazny

MAGIC MONASTERY STORY . . .

I thought it good fortune to go to the Magic Monastery for Christmas. But at the foot of the hill sat a blind beggar. When I drew near to give some money, I heard him ask, "Who will lead me into the heart of God?" I couldn't go on. Who would lead him into the heart of God? I sat down in front of him. I took his hands. "Together," I said. "Together we'll go into the heart of God."

—Tales from the Magic Monastery by Theophane

2,000 CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Though Sister Santa (Rosanne Lindal-Hynes) sustained a nasty fall in November and was unable to be physically involved in the interviewing, shopping, and distribution of gifts for her annual gift program, her trusty elves led by staff

member Rita Scrimenti made sure Christmas happened for 600 families and 2,000 children. All this was made possible by loving donations from churches, schools, organizations and individuals. Here's a letter from one family.

*Dear Sister,
Thank you so much for the Christmas gift for Anthony. Bill is putting this tag on it:*

To: Anthony From: God

*You might not know this, but that tool chest was exactly what Anthony has been asking for all year! No joke!! Last year, Bill tried to find him a tool set, but all he found was too expensive so Anthony didn't get it. This year, Bill had been looking for something reasonably priced and had no luck again. And, here you come with exactly the gift he wanted. That's God in action!!!
Love, Alisa*



Tish Singer, leader of the Blessed Sacrament School Brownie Troop, and her children deliver gifts donated by the Troop.

CHRISTMAS BANQUET

Chief chef Sister Lucia Surmik prepared a chicken cordon bleu dinner with all the trimmings for the 250 guests at the annual Emmaus Soup Kitchen Christmas party. Guests sang



carols along with guitarist Sister Anne McCarthy and each received a new plush blanket from Emmaus along with a dozen homemade cookies baked and boxed by Evy and Dave Seyboldt, friends, and parishoners from Saint Mark's Church in Lawrence Park.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

Children who attend the Kids Cafe shop at the Christmas store, selecting gifts for family members as well as a special gift for themselves thank to generous donors who brought in boxes of presents. When the children finished their Christmas shopping, volunteers helped them wrap each gift. In addition to cocoa and cookies, a picture was taken of each child and will be given as a present for parents on Valentine's Day.



Thank you to:

- Kelley Glass and her friend, Andrea Hallman, who organized a coat drive at St. Jude Parish and Eileen Lydon who organized a winter clothing drive through LCBA (Loyal Christian Benefit Association)
- India Association served their 16th annual Christmas dinner at the soup kitchen
- East Side Florists—Foster's Rose of Sharon, Potratz Floral Shop, Rosebud Flower Shop, Bridal Floral Shop—turned

the soup kitchen into winter wonderland

- Members of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity, who for the 25th consecutive year, prepared and served Christmas dinner at the soup kitchen so regular staff could enjoy the holy day
- Parishoners at Mount Calvary who wrapped special Christmas gifts for the soup kitchen guests

**YOU JOINED HANDS WITH THE POOR AT CHRISTMAS
AND WALKED INTO THE HEART OF GOD.**

FACE to FACE: EMMAUS VOLUNTEERS

We couldn't resist asking our Emmaus volunteers and friends—
Do you make New Year resolutions? What is your New Year resolution?



"I don't make New Year's Resolutions; it seems frivolous to do something just because it's January," said **Carrie Parsons, a Kids Cafe volunteer** who is spending the year with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in a temporary membership program. The recent Canisius College graduate explained, "I set goals instead. When I moved into the monastery in August, I set my goals and I'm using the start of a new year to evaluate my goals and maybe re-focus them for the next part of this great adventure that I'm on." (Follow Carrie's adventure on her blog carriann2589.blogspot.com)



"I do make resolutions, but I don't follow them," said **Jim Vogt, Emmaus Pantry volunteer**. This year, though, Jim hopes it's different. "I want to keep in closer contact with the people who are important in my life, and so far, so good. I'm e-mailing my grandchild and calling my son and daughter more." Jim is also committed to reading from a daily devotional that Santa brought him for Christmas.



"NO!" said **Kathe Wilson**, "I don't make resolutions." The long-time **Soup Kitchen volunteer** explained, "I say that I am going to stop swearing and in 15 minutes, something sets me off or someone says something and I blow it. And, of course, each year I say I'm going to lose weight and then I eat the first piece of cake that I see and then I swear again!" Ed. Note. We have seen Kathe eat a cookie but never have heard her curse.



Kathe Wilson and Sue DiCara

Although she doesn't have the best track record for keeping New Year's Resolutions, fitness and healthy eating top **Sue DiCara's** goal for 2012. Sue intends to frequent the gym and choose a healthy diet with the benefits of more energy and a positive outlook on life. A regular **Soup Kitchen volunteer**, Sue said, "I want to take better care of myself and in doing so be able to better care for my family."

STAFF: Mary Miller, OSB; Margaret Kloecker; Claire Marie Surmik, OSB; Lucia Surmik, OSB
Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, OSB; Ann Dwyer Vinca; Colleen Burbules; Rita Scrimenti.
Companion Editor, Mary Lou Kowmacki, OSB; Layout, Judy Allison

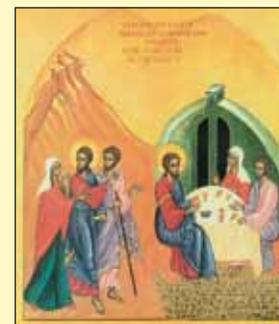


345 East Ninth Street • Erie, PA 16503-1107



www.emmauserie.org

EMMAUS ICON
Icon *Road to Emmaus*
Iconographer: Sister Marie-Paul, OSB
© Monastère des Bénédictines du Mont des Oliviers, Jerusalem
Image provided by The Printery House of Conception Abbey



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

Luke 24:35