

MODERN SOCIETY  
CALLS THE BEGGAR  
BUM AND  
PANHANDLER  
AND GIVES HIM  
THE BUM'S RUSH.

BUT THE GREEKS  
USED TO SAY  
THAT PEOPLE  
IN NEED  
ARE THE  
AMBASSADORS  
OF THE GODS.

Peter Maurin

## FROM SISTER MARY

Dear Friends of Emmaus,

### THE HOMELESS MAN TAKES OFF HIS SHOES BEFORE HIS CARDBOARD HOUSE

Penny Harter

This poem is about dignity. Human dignity. Here the homeless person keeps his sense of worth and honors the place where he lives, albeit a cardboard house.

At the soup kitchen, we try to replicate the spirit of this poem. We want our kitchen to be a sacred space where hungry, homeless, and hurting people find a home.

That's why we deliberated so long to rebuild the kitchen that was severely damaged by fire over a year ago. We had many options—build a new soup kitchen, relocate to a different neighborhood, or reimagine our present space. We chose to stay put and make our “cardboard house” more inviting, more functional, and more beautiful.

Why? Because this is who Emmaus is. We are small. We are intimate. We are

family. When she first saw the soup kitchen renovations, Debbie Shoup, a long-time volunteer, said to me, “I'm so grateful you didn't tear down this building. By keeping this place, you kept the heart and the soul of Emmaus.”



Sister Mary sits with a child at the Kids Cafe.

But the physical structure of

Emmaus is only a small part of our story. What takes place inside the walls of the building is what makes it a home. That's why we are running excerpts from “Soup's On: An Emmaus Journal” kept by our newest staff member, Breanna Mekuly. Her observations and insights are fresh so we'll let you

judge whether the soup kitchen you so generously support is a “cardboard house” for the poor and hungry of Erie. Do we treat people with enough dignity that it becomes a sacred space for them, a place where they might remove their shoes before entering?

P.S. Your extraordinary generosity during the Annual Emmaus Ministries Appeal will enable us to continue to provide bags of food, a delicious hot meal, comfort, and friendship to our special guests and their friends. Thank you.

*Sister Mary*

Sister Mary Miller, OSB,  
Director of Emmaus Ministries

## SOUP'S ON: An Emmaus Journal

**BREANNA MEKULY** is a new employee with Emmaus Ministries. Breanna grew up in Wisconsin, studied theology at Vanderbilt Divinity School, and relocated to Erie this summer to intern with Sister Joan Chittister. She began working with Emmaus Ministries mid-fall.



### FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Sister Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, women's advocate for Emmaus Ministries, takes a daily five-mile walk—she's done so for many years. Always she carries extra bills, "just in case I meet one or two of our soup kitchen guests on the street who need a coffee or bus money." She usually returns empty-handed.

On this walk, Sister Rosanne was approached by a woman who asked, "Do you remember me, Sister?" "I recognize your face," Sister Rosanne said, "but I don't remember your name." The woman re-introduced herself and said that a few years ago she had borrowed \$100 from Sister Rosanne's Emmaus Emergency Fund to help pay a month's rent. "I think about the money that I owe you everyday," the woman said. "You've probably written it off, but I haven't." The woman explained that after many attempts she was finally eligible for disability. "As soon as I get my check, I'm going to start paying you back," she said. "I never forgot your kindness to me."

### TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15

Thanksgiving dinner transformed two young girls at the Kids Cafe having dinner at a soup kitchen in the inner-city to two wealthy British women with high voices and loose wrists at a "fancy tea party." "Isn't this lovely, sister?" one would say, as she cut her turkey with a plastic fork and knife. "Oh yes," the other would respond, "please pass me the sugar, darling."

I sat with them, encouraging their acting and laughing as they taught me the joy of transformation, of putting oneself in another place and time to make the best of current situations.

### WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16

"It is our tradition to plant this special medal in places we wish Benedictine values to take root," says Sister Mary. "Plus," she laughs, "in this precious place, we always need as many blessings as we can get!"

During recent renovations, Sister Mary placed a quarter-sized colorful Benedictine medal on a new brick at the Emmaus Soup Kitchen. In so doing she was continuing a practice of placing medals wherever a new monastic center is being built, or expressing a hope that peace will prevail there and asking God's blessing on that project. In years previous, her sister Benedictines placed or buried similar medals in places ranging from their monastery to the Pentagon.



**Sister Mary plants the Benedictine Medal.**

### THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Sister Mary has been writing thank-you notes all morning. I ask if I can help but she prefers to do them on her own. She loves to write individualized messages to all the supporters of the ministry. I'm inspired by how many people she knows personally—supporters, guests, and volunteers at the kitchen—and also by how dearly she cares about each one.

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Sometimes a soup kitchen guest puts me to shame, just like Lenny did today. He motioned for me to come over and whispered, "Don't let him see you looking, but the man in front of me...look at his socks... they're rotting." The guest's socks were disintegrating on his feet. "If I had the money," Lenny continued, "I'd buy him a new pair." I touched Lenny's arm and said, "Thank you so much for seeing that and letting me know, Lenny. Thank you for caring." Then I went and got the man a new pair of socks.

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**Children at the Kids Cafe using blue frosting as lipstick.**

"I've saved over fifty lives from suicide," Joe told me. He had stopped eating his dinner in order to talk. "I'm a peer counselor. I've been with people in the hardest moments of their lives. And look where it got me! A few mistakes and here I now sit in my wheelchair, homeless and at the soup kitchen."

### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6

"I signed up 45 new people at the pantry today; each person represents a different household," says Sister Karen who works at the pantry. "...and that's not even counting all the people coming in regularly. On just a typical Tuesday in December, this large number is disheartening."

### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9

"I wish she would have called before her power was turned off," says Sister Rosanne after a phone call with a grandmother in need. The grandmother said, "My power was turned off. I paid the bill but they are making me pay another \$75 before they come out and turn the meter back on. I have grandchildren here with me. I called 35 churches yesterday. No one could help me. Can you?"

### MONDAY, DECEMBER 12

"She was so young," said the little first grader to Stephanie Grear, coordinator of the Kids Cafe. "My grandma was only 83; she shouldn't have died yet. But she got caught in the middle of some gun violence on our street and was shot in the leg." The conversation started when Stephanie sat next to this little girl on a bench in the hallway of the Kids Cafe and told her about the upcoming Christmas gifts at the Kids Cafe store. "You can get something for someone you love," Stephanie told the little girl. "Can I get something for my dad?" she first asked. Then leaned into Stephanie and said, "I'd like to get something to put on my grandmother's grave, too." Stephanie gave her a



**Brothers at the Kids Cafe.**



In the new family section of the Soup Kitchen.

blunt statements about Christmas and family. For example, a 13-year-old girl's card said: "Merry Christmas. Dear Dad, I want your child support money."

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13**

Todd, a beloved regular guest at the soup kitchen is 69 years old. He comes in each night to socialize and share a meal with others. When he saw me last night he said, "Breanna! Where have you been? I've been worried about you because I haven't seen you lately." I replied, "Thank you, Todd. I've been out with a cold." "Oh," he said, "I hope you're feeling better. But I'm going to get in line now, I'm hungry." He noticed I was missing. And he cared. What a gift.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15**

This morning a young woman called asking if she can bring some baby food and formula for other mothers in need. "I have four children now and we are stable. But for my first child, Emmaus helped us get the food and supplies that we needed. I would like to share what we have with others who might need it."

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16**

Today at the annual Emmaus Christmas dinner, guests received hats made by the Benedictine Sisters. Sister Karen Oprechok, an Emmaus staff member, organized the project. Over a dozen sisters gathered weekly and knitted 691 hats and 25 scarves. I watched one guest come in wearing a raggedy baseball cap, hanging together only by the seams, pick out a new, warm hat and put it on. "I can't do everything but I must do something" is the quote from Mother Teresa that popped into my head as he left the kitchen, better prepared to navigate Erie winters. Indeed, we can all do something.



Sister Karen shares the knit hats with guests at the Soup Kitchen.

pink sparkly pin to put on the grave.

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The children at the Kids Cafe wrote Christmas cards for their parents. After, the staff at the Kids Cafe gathered the cards with plans to send them to the children's parents. What they found inside the cards, though, were

*In Memory of Sister Maureen Tobin, OSB*

MAY THE SUN SHINE WARM  
UPON YOUR FACE,  
AND RAINS FALL SOFT  
UPON YOUR FIELDS.  
AND UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN,  
MAY GOD HOLD YOU  
IN THE PALM  
OF GOD'S HAND.



—Irish Blessing

Emmaus Ministries Board Member — 1990-2017

*In Memory*

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

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Ann (Chilelli) Bandecca                                   | Harry W. Honard, Jr.              |
| Debra Ann Baumann   | Jacqueline A. (Miller) Iavarone   |
| Carolee "Carol" A. Bretz                                  | Patricia (Hughes) Kelleher        |
| Alan D. "Big Al" Cagara                                   | Edward Joseph August Kennerknecht |
| Diana J. Swain Chandley                                   | Helen R. Huegel Kowalski          |
| Sara May Burrows Coleman                                  | Marilyn E. Sliker Martin          |
| Barbara Coughlin—<br>Kids Cafe and Soup Kitchen Volunteer | Brenda Kuntz Nikolishen           |
| Maria A. DeRooy   | Mary Beth Regan                   |
| Howard G. Earll   | Michael Henry Schloss             |
| Mary D. (Riazzi) Filippo                                  | Linda Sobczak                     |
| Joyce Nelson Greene                                       | Francine Wasiloff Stromenger      |
| Dolores "Dolly" A. Harrington                             | Ann DeSantis Swabb                |
|   | Edwin C. Weckerly                 |

*We also remember Emmaus Volunteer: Judy T. Cipriani*

***Soup's On: An Emmaus Journal is a new feature on the Emmaus website. To read about the daily happenings of Emmaus, check out [www.emmauserie.org](http://www.emmauserie.org).***

## FOR THE RECORD:

**HOMEMADE COOKIES:** There's nothing like a few dozen homemade cookies arriving at the front door of Emmaus Soup Kitchen. But 125 dozen cookies! "Believe me, our guests were elated," said Sister Mary.

Ken Bish and his Cursillo group from St. Marys, PA baked the cookies especially for the guests of Emmaus. Ken's wife, Terri, made a day out of the delivery; after bringing the cookies, she volunteered in the kitchen and pantry. The Cursillo group plans to donate this many cookies each month for a year.



**Margaret Kloecker, Emmaus Administrative Assistant, receives homemade cookies from Terri Bish.**



**Candace Kownacki**

For over forty years Candace and Ed Kownacki have sent a monthly donation of \$100 to \$150 to the soup kitchen making them a one-of-a-kind donor—no one else has contributed this many years in such a regular manner. So when Candace died in the fall of 2016, it was only natural that her husband set up a generous fund in his wife's honor to assist soup kitchen and pantry guests with emergency needs. "I've been blessed all my life with a roof over my head, heat in my house, and food on the table," said Ed, "and I think everyone should have the same. This is something Candy would have liked." Sister Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, who handles emergency requests for Emmaus, added, "We have so many people asking for help with heat and rent and diapers and electricity. And to have extra funds is God sent."

**HEALTHCARE FOR THE HOMELESS:** The Benedictine Sisters of Erie only take up two collections a year at the monastery's liturgies—one at Easter and one at Christmas—and give them to an organization or cause that share the commitments of the community.

The Faith Community Nurses of Northwest Pennsylvania, part of the Erie United Methodist Alliance, were the recipients at Christmas 2016 because they offer free healthcare services to the poor, including the guests at Emmaus Soup Kitchen. The volunteer nurses come to the kitchen once a week to provide blood pressure checks, foot care, medications, walkers, eyeglasses, and hospital transportation. In addition, they keep medical records of each person they serve at Emmaus and Erie's emergency shelters.

"There are many barriers to health care, one being access. At our ministry, we like to go to where the homeless people are to break down this barrier. This is why Emmaus is so important," said Barbara Lewis, coordinator. "With this generous gift from the sisters we can continue to provide healthcare to Erie's homeless."



**(top left) Jeanne Tropper, RN; Kaitlin Walsh, AmeriCorp VISTA-Lake Effect Leaders Colleague; Saunders McLaurin, Community Health Net Healthcare for the Homeless Program Coordinator; (bottom left) Mary Louise Imbruglio, RN; Barbara Lewis, RN EUMA/Faith Community Nurse Healthcare for the Homeless Partnerships Coordinator**

**DOMINICK'S EATERY:** When Bill Rieger, owner of Dominick's Eatery, sold his business and retired, Emmaus Soup Kitchen lost a faithful donor, friend, and neighbor.

For 16 years, he provided free meals at Dominick's for our guests on Thanksgiving. This tradition began to give the volunteers of the soup kitchen a day off from serving.

Leading up to Thanksgiving each year, he would also ask for donations to Emmaus from his patrons. With the money they raised, Dominick's bought Thanksgiving meal items, including turkeys, which they then cooked and served on Thanksgiving day. What remained from the donations, Bill gave to Emmaus.

This past Thanksgiving alone they served 31 turkeys, 246 free meals, donated the left overs to a local church who then served 80 more dinners, and contributed over \$2000 to Emmaus.

Bill also introduced others to Emmaus, including the Erie Sisters and Brothers, a support group for transgender people and their families. The Erie Sisters visited Dominick's where they learned of Emmaus and soon after invited Sister Mary to their conference and presented her with their own offering.



**Sister Mary accepts a donation from Bill Rieger.**

## A Christmas Thank You



What do games of bowling have to do with Emmaus? Thanks to local Polish Falcons of America Nest 610, quite a bit. After hosting a National Bowling Tournament, Polish Falcons of Erie Nest 610, chose Emmaus as the tournament's charity. Lisa Smith, vice-president of the organization, presented a check to Emmaus of \$3300. The competing bowlers contributed \$1800; Nest 148 from New Castle gave an additional \$1000; and the National Office located in Pittsburgh sent \$500.

## LET US GIVE THANKS TO:

**POLISH FALCONS NEST 123** for donating \$1000 from the club's small game income to the soup kitchen • **SAINT JOSEPH BREAD OF LIFE CHURCH** for donating ten percent of the proceeds from its annual Oktoberfest weekend • **KELLEY GLASS AND ANDREA HALLMAN** for organizing the annual coat drive at **ST. JUDE THE APOSTLE CHURCH** and filling the Emmaus truck with winter clothing • **CARL LARESE OF LARESE FLORAL DESIGN** for collecting canned goods from customers in exchange for a free bouquet of flowers that he distributed on Good Neighbor Day • **TENNESSEE BACK PORCH** for providing music during the Annual Emmaus Grove Harvest Fest • **HEIDI FRANTZ** for organizing "You CAN Make a Difference," a canned food drive that resulted in over 300 donations to the kitchen • **SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK** for donating 126 Thanksgiving meals in a box, including turkeys and pies, for pantry guests • **KIWANIS CLUB OF ERIE** for giving Emmaus part of the proceeds from its annual Diner's Card fundraiser • **OUR LADY OF PEACE CHURCH**

**ROSARY SOCIETY** for collecting peanut butter, jelly, and winter accessories for the food pantry • **GANNON UNIVERSITY SUPPORT STAFF ASSOCIATION** for hosting its third annual cereal drive and collecting 284 boxes of cereal for children at the Kids Cafe to take home to their families...and **SERVEMORE SOPHOMORES AT GANNON UNIVERSITY** for organizing a Christmas dinner and decorating party with the children • the **CONFIRMATION CLASS AT HOLY GREEN CHURCH, FAIRVIEW** for organizing a drive for men's clothing and collecting 274 pairs of under garments, 383 pairs of socks, 226 t-shirts, 6 handkerchiefs, and \$63 cash • **EDNA LINGENFELTER, MERCYHURST UNIVERSITY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, AND SAINT JOSEPH BREAD OF LIFE CHURCH** for organizing collections of gifts for the Kids Cafe Christmas Store, for those who assisted the children in "buying" gifts at the store for their loved ones, and the volunteers who helped each child wrap their presents • **EVELYN SEYBOLDT AND FRIENDS** for preparing boxes of homemade Christmas cookies that guests could take home • **TIM HOLLAND** for donating Christmas trees that pantry guests could take home • **ERIC WEBBER** for organizing thirty-five cyclists to bike around Presque Isle on New Year's Day and asking them to bring winter clothing items for guests at the soup kitchen • **ERIE DAY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND TEACHERS** for creating blessing bags for Emmaus



Christmas at the Kids Cafe.

guests filled with toiletries, snacks and a \$5 McDonalds gift card • **DARLENE FEENEY** for organizing 250 blessing bags for soup kitchen guests containing snacks, socks, gloves, washcloths, pens and more • **JERRY GORNIK** for his "lunch bag" filled with \$300 from donations he collected while selling trees from his Christmas tree lot • **ROBIN SCHEPPNER, CEO, AND EMPLOYEES OF AMERICAN TINNING & GALVANIZING** for the hundreds of "Happy Feet" coupons that enable Emmaus to buy shoes for its children • **THE INDIA ASSOCIATION** for making and serving their annual meal on a Saturday in December • **EDNA SIEGEL, OWNER OF PANACHE SALON AND SPA,**



Gannon University's cereal drive collections.

for holding a customer appreciation day, which brought 500 patrons to the salon who donated canned goods and made monetary donations to Emmaus.



Blessing bags.



Sister Mary with the India Association.

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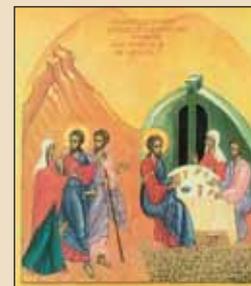


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**EMMAUS ICON**  
Icon *Road to Emmaus*  
Iconographer: Sister Marie-Paul, OSB  
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They came to know Him in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24:35