



CVX-CLC
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Harvest

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CARING FOR THE POOR



"In hearing the cry of the poor, we are asked to go into the heart of God who is always concerned for the needs of his children, especially those in greatest need." From Dilexi Te #8

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Cover Photo: Pope Leo visiting St. Paul Catholic Hospital in Douala, Cameroon, April 17, 2026, during the Pope’s Visit to Africa. Used with permission of Vatican Media.

Introducing our World CLC logo adapted to include CVX-CLC in USA. The world logo is meant to convey a warm, joyful community spirit that invites and attracts. It is a world wide visual for CLC.

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Recognizing the Poor Among Us

By Dorothy Zambito

Scripture reminds us that the poor are always with us. I reflected on this fact in my own life. How aware was I of the poor and how did I respond to them?

Growing up in the later years of the depression and the years of World War II (1930s and 40s) might have qualified me as part of the poor. I lived in a tenement building that offered few conveniences. Three rooms were the living quarters for six of us. There was neither central heating nor air conditioning. Bathroom facilities were shared and availability of hot water restricted. In the neighborhood, there were clinics that provided eye and dental care. In lieu of private medical care, the emergency room of the local hospital was the place to go. As children we grew up with few toys, but we were creative in the games we devised. The only electronics I was aware of were a radio or phonograph. I was aware of a few children who seemed to live in better apartments and who had more or newer clothing, but I never thought I was poor. Much of my 'good fortune' was due to living with my loving family and close to extended family.

My parents owned a small grocery store. I never went hungry, but we never splurged or ate to excess. I do have memories of my mother serving customers who needed help. There were families who needed food before the next paycheck arrived. My mother had a large pad where she wrote the name of the customer, the date and the amount owed for essential groceries that they took home 'on credit.' Most families paid off at least part of their debt, but many were never able to do so.

When I was a young teenager, one of the nuns in the parish organized a trip for teenagers. We were to bring some holiday cheer to indigent men in a hospital on Welfare Island (now named Roosevelt Island). We sang Christmas carols and brought little gifts for the men. We brought smiles and some laughter to them. They applauded our efforts and expressed gratitude. It was my first experience interacting with the marginalized.

When World War II came to an end, people began to get better paying jobs. Families moved into better neighborhoods and lived more comfortably. I didn't think about the poor except for making donations through the use of Lenten mite boxes (Mark 12:41-44). I don't ever recall a sermon or homily about recognizing and reaching out to those in poverty.

It was in the early years of membership in Sodality /CLC that my focus was directed to caring for the poor. Soon after we were married, my husband Ray told me he felt called to do some mission work. As a dentist/oral surgeon, he used his professional skills to help those in need. For over ten years he spent two weeks of vacation each summer doing service as part of a dental mission, ministering to the poor in the Dominican Republic. In the course of that time four of our six children had an opportunity to be part of that project. Each returned telling of the appreciation of those who were helped. Each recounted a memory of how happy the people were – people who had so little materially.

Who are the poor among you? Living in an upscale area of Long Island one would not expect to find the poor so readily. The community was shocked when two homeless men were found frozen to death at the railway station. This led to the establishment of a homeless shelter for men during the winter months. Several local CLCers were volunteers for years in this endeavor.



*Harvest Editor:
Dorothy Zambito*

Dorothy has been a member of Sodality/CLC since 1957. She and her deceased husband Ray founded the Locust Valley CLC (NY Region) in 1972. Dorothy continues to be a committed member in this community to the present day. She is a Past President.

For over thirty-five years, a soup kitchen has been operating in a neighboring town. This facility is open three afternoons a week providing hot meals, pantry items, assistance with medical prescriptions and even free summer camp for the children. It is a place where all are welcomed in a safe and social space. Once again local CLC members have supported the kitchen by volunteering their cooking skills and serving those who are needy with love, respect and good cheer.

When I first heard the phrase ‘preferential option for the poor,’ I was bewildered. Now I understand better that the poor are always with us, and they have many faces and a variety of needs. They need a voice in the community. For as long as I am able, I must be supportive of their plight by word and deed. I need to listen to them and not be judgmental. I need to be an example to others to raise awareness and encourage involvement. I need to be a woman for others spreading God’s love and compassion.

WITHIN THIS ISSUE

“How Does Christ Call Us” by **President Chris Cichello** uses a series of questions and the words of the Beatitudes to direct us as individuals and members of Christian Life Community to reflect on our response to the poor in today’s world.

Father Dave Godleski’s “When Compassion Becomes Attention” tells of his experience with the Father McKenna Center which offers social services for men. Father Dave reminds us to be attentive to the ongoing cries of the poor when our attention may be diverted elsewhere.

In her article, “In the Silence of the Poor, the Face of Christ Is Reflected,” **Lily DeLeon** writes of her personal experience of discovering Christ in the poor. She explains how papal writings on poverty and her Ignatian spirituality urge her to serve the poor.

Attention in simple gestures can be a source of hope to many. **Lorraine Damman** describes some of these in “Making America Kind Again.” Read about a lapel pin that brings across this point as well as other acts of kindness to friends and family who might otherwise be overlooked.

Paul Riek’s parish has been involved in caring for the poor for many years. In “St. Andrews Cares for Immigrant Members,” Paul describes the immigration issues in today’s world. He relates the dangers that exist, fears that must be dealt with and families that need protection. Read his article to get a look at the crisis immigrants face right now.

Pause for a few minutes and reflect on “Homeless,” a poem by **Sharon Sullivan**.

In retirement individuals and couples may be called to serve in new ways. In “Expanding the Family Circle,” **Evelyn and Paul Brookhyser** share such a happening. The Brookhysers responded to a call to be part of the Safe Families for Children project. Volunteers house a child and parent into their homes temporarily – while the desperate family works out their problems. As is often the case, Evelyn and Paul were rewarded beyond any expectation. New relationships exist even after the families are on their own.

Sharing Our Blessing with the Poor” is **Terri Mier-swa’s** recognition of her parish’s outreach to the less fortunate. Terri reminds us by scriptural and papal quotes to be people of justice actively engaged with the poor among us. She reminds us to attend to spiritual poverty as well as the material poverty. She asks, “Are we companions with the poor or solely providers or advocates?”

“The Joy of Love” by **Lina Jun** tells of KCLC-Chicago’s participation in the Women’s Hotline Association which supports survivors of domestic violence. The KCLC team also volunteers for Heather’s House devoted to the care of new single mothers. In addition to purchasing and delivering necessities, the CLCers interact with these vulnerable women. Their CLC group has used communal discernment and DSSE.

Linda Orber of Manresa CLC in Staten Island, NY writes about her community’s long involvement with the needy. In “Manresa – Helping the Poor,” she tells of ministries in the parish as well as beyond, e.g. The right to life movement.

Three CLC members share with us in, “How the War in Lebanon Affects the People.” One writes, “In Lebanon, we are tired of enduring, for decades, the wars of others on our land.” The CLC members share some of their ongoing fear, anger and frustration. They seek the Lord and yearn for peace.

In “Echoes of Suffering: A Sunday in Shanoukville,” **Thu Tam Hoang** describes her encounter with ten men, victims of human/labor trafficking, who were asking for help from her church. These men came to Cambodia from Indonesia with promises of jobs which did not come about. She helped them as best she could but still felt powerless to do more.

I thank our loving God for all the authors who shared in this issue and for the responses they have made to caring for the poor.

Dorothy M. Zambito

How Does Christ Call Us?

By Chris Cichello



Christine Kamp Cichello is the current president of CLC in USA and a member of the Living Waters CLC group. A former campus minister at Boston College, she is working to build bridges between CLC university and post-grad programming and the broader CLC community. Christine also serves as a Director of the Spiritual Exercises & Guest Director at Eastern Point Retreat Center. She and her husband Tony, their family, including a 4 month old grandson, live in Boston. She enjoys integrating art, music and spirituality.

What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What else can I do for Christ? What else are *we* as CLC in USA called to do for Christ in our world? Where do I see Christian Life Community members responding to the poor?

Throughout scripture we can see that we are called to pray, to be poor in Spirit, to be vulnerable and share everything that is on our hearts to Christ, to recognize our own fears and biases. When praying with scripture and sharing my experiences with Christ, I am the paralyzed man on the mat, the disciple who needs to let Jesus wash my feet, the child who is lost like one of the sons in the Prodigal Son story. I pray to be open to the experience of God's extravagant love, and to see how God might be calling me and us as CLC in USA.

What am I doing for Christ? What are we doing for Christ? This is a personal response to a personal question and a call to us as an apostolic community. As CLC in USA and as Church, does the world see us responding as Christ would to the anguish and cries of the poor? Whose stories do we need to raise up and respond to in order to understand the depths of Jesus' justice and mercy?

In Ignatius' second week of the Spiritual Exercises, we are asked to pray with the beatitudes. We are called to humility and to openness to enter the third week of the exercises where we are accompanying Christ on the cross. Certainly, there are times in my life when I have come more in touch with my dependency on God. As I have gotten older, I am challenged to go where I do not want to go (Corinthians 13). I feel more and more what Pedro Arrupe, S.J. describes as 'in the hands of God' or what Mark Thibideaux, S.J. calls 'difficult consolation'. Living into our charism of the Spiritual Exercises recognizes a deeper fulfillment in following Christ no matter where that leads because I know in my heart the transformative power of the cross. CLC as an apostolic community may call us to places we do not want to go that call forth great sacrifice.

While meditating with the beatitudes and praying with the painting by Christopher Holt below, I thought of Ignatius' two standards, expecting to see on the one hand riches, glory in battle, honor, lust, pride, hatred, violence, self-destructive behavior, and on the other hand, poverty, humility, love, service and selflessness. We often feel stuck between these two standards and the polarization of our world. Ignatius and Christopher Holt invite us to focus our minds and hearts on Jesus with the poor and marginalized.

In my role as CLC in USA President I am more aware of the Beatitudes and the needs of CLC members and others throughout the world.

Matthew 5:3-12

Blessed are the poor in spirit.

For people who are suffering from chronic pain, cancer and illness.

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,

For those who suffer from violence, war, and famine.

For they will be comforted.



Christopher Holt (American, 1977–), Haywood Street Beatitudes, 2018–19. Fresco, 9 1/2 × 27 ft. Haywood Street Congregation, Asheville, North Carolina. Photo: John Warner.

Blessed are the meek,

For those who have scarce resources, who work,
care for children, strive to survive.

For they will inherit the earth.

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness,**

For people working with immigrants and refugees.

For they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,

For the homeless.

For they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,

For youth and young adults who show us the way.

For they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,

For all who work for an end to war and violence.

For they will be called children of God.

**Blessed are those who are persecuted because of
righteousness,**

For those in prison or detention centers.

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you
and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of
me.**

For those who love and persevere in the face of evil.

For they will be comforted.

**Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in
prophets who were before you.**

May we hear the cries of the poor and live as a
community of apostles.

May we be open to discover God's dreams for our
world.



IN MEMORIAM

Father Pedro Suarez, S.J., Pascua community, South Florida, 50 year
member of CLC 1/1/26

Evelyn Codd, Maresa CLC, Staten Island, NY 2/24/26

Martin O Malley, father of Ann Marie Brennon, St. Catharine's CLC,
New Jersey, 4/22/26

Bonnie Brunton, Anam Cara CLCNW, Seattle, WA 12/27/25



Father Pedro Suarez, S.J.



Fr. David Godleski, S.J., is currently the Treasurer for the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States (JCCU). Previously, Fr. Dave served as province vocation director, worked in Campus Ministry/ Mission and Identity at Loyola University Chicago, and held the position of Delegate for Formation and Jesuit Life at the JCCU.

When Compassion Becomes Attention

By Dave Godleski

The Jesuit community where I live is connected to a high school and a large parish, both situated just six blocks from the Capitol in Washington, DC. On this same campus stands the Father McKenna, SJ Center, which offers a range of social services to homeless men in the area. Many mornings as I leave for work, I see the men lined up, waiting for the doors to open and breakfast to be served. I admit with some guilt that, while I notice them and feel compassion for their situation, I rarely do anything more—and that troubles me.

My frequent indifference to the struggles of those who are poor, those who labor simply to secure life's basic necessities while I live in relative abundance, brings to mind the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19–31). In the parable, the rich man feasts lavishly each day while Lazarus, destitute and hungry, lies at his doorstep. (Notably, Lazarus is the only character in any of Jesus' parables to be given a name—one that means "God has helped.") After their deaths, their fortunes are reversed: Lazarus is comforted in the bosom of Abraham, and the rich man suffers torment. We can imagine that the rich man saw Lazarus, yet did nothing. He simply did not care. He was blind to the suffering right before him.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to allow the reality of those in need—especially those in material need—to touch our hearts and shape our actions. We often speak of "serving the poor" or having a "preferential option for the poor," and these are worthy principles. But "the poor" can easily become an abstract category, a label that obscures the faces and stories of the people we actually encounter.

Years ago, during my formation, I worked at this same Fr. McKenna Center. While much of my time was spent helping prepare meals, I also had moments to sit with some of the men and listen to their stories. They were not abstractions but individuals—each carrying a unique mix of circumstances, challenges, and choices that left them without adequate resources. Taking time simply to listen affirmed their dignity, and the experience was deeply meaningful. These days, despite the Center's nearness to my current residence, I have not maintained this connection.

I suspect I will continue to wrestle with how to remain attentive and responsive to the poor. I recall that Bishop Kenneth Untener of the Diocese of Saginaw once directed that every parish and diocesan meeting begin with a simple question: "How shall what we are doing affect or involve the poor?" Perhaps that is a question all of us might include periodically in our daily exams during this Lenten season.



Volunteers help serve guests at the McKenna Center.

In the Silence of the Poor, the Face of Christ Is Reflected

By Lily De León



Lily H. De León was born in Guatemala. She and her family arrived in the USA 35 years ago. They have been a part of the Ignatian Spirituality Center of Miami for 28 years, assisting families with adolescent children through Apostolic Movement Family Encounters. She produces and presents radio shows and virtual television programs for Radio Paz, the Archdiocese of Miami's radio station. She has been a member of the Pedro Arrupe Jesuit Institute. Since 2012, she has been a member of CVX of South Florida, a member of the Ignatian Ladies Community, coordinator, Regional chair, and NCC representative. Lily is a spiritual companion of the Exercises. She is the North American Region (NAR) representative on the global team working on policies which pertain to the protection of minors.

From a very young age, service to the poor has been part of my deepest identity. It did not come from a pastoral program or a document, but from the silent and constant example of my parents. They taught my siblings and me that accompanying those who suffer is not an occasional gesture but a way of life. When I hear Scripture say, "If there is a poor person among your brothers... do not harden your heart or close your hand" (Dt 15:7), I feel that these words describe exactly what my parents lived and passed on to me. And when the book of Proverbs exhorts, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves" (Prov 31:8), I recognize in those lines the mission God began awakening in me since childhood.

However, even though this calling has been present since my early years, I do not want anyone to think that I have always walked faithfully behind it. That would be untrue. I too have gotten lost, drifted away from God, allowed myself to be carried by my own poverty, my wounds, my fears, and my shadows. There have been seasons when I closed my eyes, hardened my heart, and forgot what truly matters. I am not a "good" or "exemplary" woman; I am a woman reached by mercy. And if today I can speak of service, of a preferential option for the poor, or of discernment, it is not because I have been constant, but because God has been patient. He has sought me even when I was not seeking Him, lifted me when I let go of His hand, and rekindled in me that first love I allowed to grow cold so many times. My story is not one of perfect fidelity, but of a God who never tires of waiting for me.

When I look back, I discover that the Lord has shaped me with the gentleness of that cool breeze that sometimes surprises us in Miami: unexpected, light, yet capable of touching the soul. That is how my spiritual journey has been, slow, tender, a loving process in which God led me toward a conviction that today I recognize as the center of my faith. Faith, if it is not embodied in love and service to the poor, remains incomplete. As St. Ignatius would say, "Love and serve for the greater glory of God."

My certainty was not born from theories but from concrete faces: from stories that confronted me, from silences that hurt me, from material, human, spiritual, emotional, and social poverty that revealed my own fragility. The poor have not been "others," they have been teachers. They have taught me to trust when everything feels uncertain, to give thanks even in scarcity, to hope when life becomes difficult. They evangelize me.

Over time, I understood that in the silence of the poor, the face of Christ is reflected - a face that does not impose, does not demand, but simply allows itself to be found. And then the words of Jesus come alive: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God" (Lk 6:20). It is not a poetic phrase; it is a revelation. In them, Christ speaks to me. In them, Christ waits for me.

In CVX, I learned to see these experiences as a theological place: where life hurts, Christ speaks. Where hope resists, Christ calls. Where dignity is wounded, Christ awaits our response. That is why, when I encountered Pope Francis' encyclical *Dilexit Nos* and Pope Leo XIV's apostolic exhortation *Dilexi Te*, I felt that both put into words what I already carried within. From different but deeply complementary angles, they reminded us that faith cannot be separated from love for the poor and that the heart of Christ leans tenderly toward those who occupy "the lowest ranks of society." It was like hearing the Church say to me: "Yes, this is the way. Keep walking."

As I delved deeper into these papal documents, I discovered that they form a single movement of the Spirit: a path that goes from the heart of Christ to the heart of the world. Francis, in *Dilexit Nos*, invites us to contemplate the heart of Jesus as the source of a love poured out especially upon the small, the wounded, and the discarded. Leo XIV, in *Dilexi Te*, takes that same truth and turns it into concrete mission: the love contemplated must become service, justice, closeness, defense, and tenderness toward the poor. Francis shows us the source; Leo XIV shows us the channel. Francis reveals the fire; Leo XIV sends us to ignite it in the world. Both documents reminded me that we are loved to love, and that such love, when it is true, always moves toward the peripheries where Christ continues to wait.

Ignatian spirituality taught me something essential: we cannot serve from our own strength. Activism exhausts. Hurry empties. Mission without prayer becomes noise. True service is born from love received, not from accumulated fatigue. When that love touches the heart, something becomes ordered, something ignites, something becomes freer. Then mission stops being effort and becomes response. In CVX, I discovered that the option for the poor does not arise from impulse but from sustained discernment. It is a choice renewed each day in community, in prayer, in freedom. God does not ask for great feats, but for fidelity: fidelity to His love, to His people.

With time, I understood that perhaps the question is not “What do we do for the poor?” but “What do we allow the poor to do in us?” Working with the poor is not sustained by speeches but by a conversion that touches the whole of life. The texts of the Popes are not merely documents to study; they are invitations for us to reflect on the wounded face of Christ in places we sometimes prefer not to look.

I have learned throughout my life that prayer is a tool capable of opening paths of light. Scripture reminds us: “Pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective” (Jas 5:16). It is standing in the gap for those who cannot, do not know how, or do not want to pray. It is uniting ourselves to Christ Himself, who intercedes for us before the Father and whose Spirit prays within us. How many times have we seen prayer bring someone, or even ourselves, out of the darkness of sin, fear, or despair. Prayer opens paths where there seemed to be none.

Today, as I look at my own journey, I feel the Lord inviting me back to the place where everything began, that inner space where His love reaches me even when I am lost, that place where my own poverty has become a bridge to understand others. There, in what is small, fragile, and painful, Christ waits for me with the poor in His hands, not so that I may “save” them, but so that together we may learn to love. The option for the poor is, in the end, an act of humility: recognizing that they also sustain me, teach me, and lead me back to God. When I allow that truth to dwell in me, mission becomes a simple, almost natural gesture like lighting a candle in the night, a light that is not mine, but one entrusted to me to share. There, in that silent and daily “yes,” I discover that the poor are not recipients of our generosity but a living sacrament of the One who loved us first.

May this testimony, offered with affection and humility, serve to inspire others, especially my brothers and sisters in the Christian Life Community, to keep moving forward, to make use of the tools Ignatius left us: prayer, discernment, indifference, and freedom, so that our CVX vocation may leave a mark on those who come after us, hoping to find a path of faith, empathy, and fortitude that leads us toward an encounter with the Love of Loves.

World Hunger Facts:

As of 2024-25, an estimated 8.2% of the global population or approximately 673 million people face chronic hunger. Additionally, nearly 2.3 billion people, or about 28% of the world are moderately or severely food insecure, lacking access to nutritious food.

En el Silencio de los Pobres, se Refleja el Rostro de Cristo

Por Lily De León



Lily H. De León was born in Guatemala. She and her family arrived in the USA 35 years ago. They have been a part of the Ignatian Spirituality Center of Miami for 28 years, assisting families with adolescent children through Apostolic Movement Family Encounters. She produces and presents radio shows and virtual television programs for Radio Paz, the Archdiocese of Miami's radio station. She has been a member of the Pedro Arrupe Jesuit Institute. Since 2012, she has been a member of CVX of South Florida, a member of the Ignatian Ladies Community, coordinator, Regional chair, and NCC representative. Lily is a spiritual companion of the Exercises. She is the North American Region (NAR) representative on the global team working on policies which pertain to the protection of minors.

Desde pequeña, el servicio a los pobres ha sido parte de mi identidad más profunda. No nació de un programa pastoral ni de un documento, sino del ejemplo silencioso y constante de mis padres. Ellos nos enseñaron a mis hermanos y a mí que acompañar a quienes sufren no es un gesto ocasional, sino un estilo de vida. Cuando escucho la Escritura decir: “Si hay algún pobre entre tus hermanos... no endurezcas tu corazón ni cierres tu mano” (Dt 15,7), siento que esas palabras describen exactamente lo que mis padres vivieron y me transmitieron. Y cuando el libro de los Proverbios exhorta: “Levanta la voz por los que no tienen voz” (Prov 31,8), reconozco en esas líneas la misión que Dios comenzó a despertar en mí desde la infancia.

Sin embargo, aunque esta llamada ha estado presente desde mis primeros años, no quiero que nadie piense que siempre he caminado fielmente tras ella. Eso no sería verdad. También me he perdido, me he alejado de Dios, me he dejado llevar por mi propia pobreza, mis heridas, mis miedos y mis sombras. Ha habido temporadas en que cerré los ojos, endurecí el corazón y olvidé lo que realmente importa. No soy una mujer “buena” o “ejemplar”; soy una mujer alcanzada por la misericordia. Y si hoy puedo hablar de servicio, de opción preferencial por los pobres o de discernimiento, no es porque haya sido constante, sino porque Dios ha sido paciente. Él me buscó incluso cuando yo no lo buscaba, me levantó cuando solté su mano y reavivó en mí ese primer amor que tantas veces dejé enfriar. Mi historia no es de fidelidad perfecta, sino de un Dios que nunca se cansa de esperarme.

Al mirar atrás, descubro que el Señor me ha moldeado con la suavidad de esa brisa fresca que a veces sorprende en Miami: inesperada, ligera, pero capaz de tocar el alma. Así ha sido mi camino espiritual: lento, tierno, un proceso amoroso en el que Dios me condujo hacia una convicción que hoy reconozco como el centro de mi fe. La fe, si no se encarna en el amor y el servicio a los pobres, queda incompleta. Como diría San Ignacio: “Amar y servir para mayor gloria de Dios”.

Mi certeza no nació de teorías, sino de rostros concretos: de historias que me confrontaron, de silencios que me dolieron, de pobreza materiales, humanas, espirituales, emocionales y sociales que revelaron mi propia fragilidad. Los pobres no han sido “otros”; han sido maestros. Ellos me han enseñado a confiar cuando todo parece incierto, a dar gracias incluso en la escasez, a esperar cuando la vida se vuelve difícil. Ellos me evangelizan.

Con el tiempo comprendí que en el silencio de los pobres se refleja el rostro de Cristo: un rostro que no impone, no exige, sino que simplemente se deja encontrar. Entonces las palabras de Jesús cobran vida: “Bienaventurados ustedes los pobres, porque suyo es el Reino de Dios” (Lc 6,20). No es una frase poética; es una revelación. En ellos, Cristo me habla. En ellos, Cristo me espera.

En la CVX aprendí a ver estas experiencias como un lugar teológico: donde la vida duele, Cristo habla. Donde la esperanza resiste, Cristo llama. Donde la dignidad es herida, Cristo espera nuestra respuesta. Por eso, cuando me encontré con la encíclica Dilexit Nos del Papa Francisco y la exhortación apostólica Dilexi Te del Papa León XIV, sentí que ambas ponían en palabras lo que ya llevaba dentro. Desde ángulos distintos, pero profundamente complementarios, me recordaron que la fe no puede separarse del amor a los pobres y que el corazón de Cristo se inclina tiernamente hacia quienes ocupan “los últimos lugares de la sociedad”. Fue como escuchar a la Iglesia decirme: “Sí, este es el camino. Sigue caminando”.

La espiritualidad ignaciana me enseñó algo esencial: no podemos servir desde nuestras propias fuerzas. El activismo agota. La prisa vacía. La misión sin oración se convierte en ruido. El verdadero servicio nace del amor recibido, no del cansancio acumulado. Cuando ese amor toca el corazón, algo se ordena, algo se enciende, algo se libera. Entonces la misión deja de ser esfuerzo y se convierte en respuesta. En la CVX descubrí que la opción por los pobres no surge del impulso, sino del discernimiento sostenido. Es una elección que se renueva cada día en comunidad, en oración, en libertad. Dios no pide grandes hazañas, sino fidelidad: fidelidad a su amor, a su pueblo.

Con el tiempo entendí que quizá la pregunta no es “¿Qué hacemos por los pobres?”, sino “¿Qué dejamos que los pobres hagan en nosotros?”. El trabajo con los pobres no se sostiene con discursos, sino con una conversión que toca toda la vida. Los textos de los Papas no son solo documentos para estudiar; son invitaciones a contemplar el rostro herido de Cristo en lugares que a veces preferimos no mirar.

He aprendido que la oración es una herramienta capaz de abrir caminos de luz. La Escritura nos recuerda: “Oren unos por otros para que sean sanados. La oración del justo es poderosa y eficaz” (Sant 5,16). Es ponerse en la brecha por quienes no pueden, no saben o no quieren orar. Es unirse a Cristo mismo, que intercede por nosotros ante el Padre y cuyo Espíritu ora en nosotros. Cuántas veces hemos visto que la oración saca a alguien —o incluso a nosotros mismos— de la oscuridad del pecado, del miedo o de la desesperación. La oración abre caminos donde parecía no haberlos.

Hoy, al mirar mi propio recorrido, siento que el Señor me invita a volver al lugar donde todo comenzó: ese espacio interior donde su amor me alcanza incluso cuando estoy perdida, ese lugar donde mi propia pobreza se ha convertido en puente para comprender a otros. Allí, en lo pequeño, frágil y doloroso, Cristo me espera con los pobres en sus manos, no para que yo los “salve”, sino para que juntos aprendamos a amar. La opción por los pobres es, en el fondo, un acto de humildad: reconocer que ellos también me sostienen, me enseñan y me conducen de nuevo a Dios. Cuando dejo que esa verdad habite en mí, la misión se convierte en un gesto sencillo, casi natural, como encender una vela en la noche: una luz que no es mía, sino confiada para compartir. Allí, en ese silencioso y cotidiano “sí”, descubro que los pobres no son destinatarios de nuestra generosidad, sino un sacramento vivo de Aquel que nos amó primero.

Que este testimonio, ofrecido con afecto y humildad, sirva para inspirar a otros, especialmente a mis hermanos y hermanas de la Comunidad de Vida Cristiana, a seguir adelante, a hacer uso de las herramientas que Ignacio nos dejó: la oración, el discernimiento, la indiferencia y la libertad, para que nuestra vocación en la CVX deje huella en quienes vengan después, con la esperanza de encontrar un camino de fe, empatía y fortaleza que nos conduzca al encuentro con el Amor de los Amores.

If you are interested in making a donation to one of the groups/organizations mentioned in this issue of Harvest, here is information on how to donate:

Father McKenna Center
19 - 1 St. NW, Washington DC 20001
<https://fathermckennacenter.org>
Accepts monetary donations as well as many groups volunteer with their ministries. Helps with homeless services and food insecurity

Jesuit Refugee Service USA.

<https://www.jrsusa.org>
Accompanies refugees long term to provide sustainable support to people. Serves refugees in over 50 countries. Donations can be directed to a specific location if desired, or to the agency as a whole.

La Cuisine de Marian

Founded in 2020 by Father Hani to provide food for people in Beirut, Lebanon. Follow on Facebook or Instagram.

Food Insecurity in USA-
Your local regional food distribution center provides meals/food to many local meal/distribution centers. Monies donated are used to purchase large quantities of food at lower costs. Your monetary donations can purchase larger amounts of food than any actual donated food item.

Making America Kind Again

By Lorraine Damman



Lorraine Damman is a member of CLCNW group Spirit Walkers and was Secretary on the CLCNW Regional Council for over 10 years and is now an editor for Harvest Magazine. She was a social worker and then owned her own business of Computer Training until her retirement. Today she does watercolor painting. She has been married to her husband, Larry for 53 years and has one daughter - Aimee

One Christmas, I was given a button saying, “Make America Kind Again.” I wear it on my coat, and I am amazed at how many people come up to me and ask where they can get a button just like mine. I began to carry a few in my jacket pocket and when I’m asked, I tell the story of how much it meant when my brother-in-law gave me this gift. I hand the person two buttons, one for them to wear and one to pass on. It’s a simple thing to do, but it can make a huge difference to someone who may be feeling overwhelmed with the anger and hurt that is a large part of our world.

Over the years I’ve found many different ways to make a difference. Fifty- three years ago I married a military man. We lived in different states for 23 years. For the first 15 years I stayed home with our daughter and did volunteer work. For each job, I found that the true task was to see what was needed and find ways to ease pain and help a person out of the hurt and need they were in, bringing compassion and joy and in the process often bringing back a feeling of confidence.

In my 40’s my life changed dramatically. I had been taking night classes as often as I could throughout my 20’s and 30’s, never quite getting that degree I so much wanted. Each time I got close to fulfilling the dream of a degree, the Air Force moved us to another state, and I had to start over in my studies. Then the Air Force moved us to Virginia. It was a longer tour of duty, so I was able to finally get my degree. I found a full-time job in order to pay for college at George Mason University (GMU). I worked during the day as a temporary secretary and at night volunteer teaching parenting and communication classes. I also took a full load of social work classes and worked at quite a few internships. After two years I graduated with a BS degree in Social Work.

My first job was at a large Catholic church in Fairfax, VA. I was head of Social Action groups at the church, and the overseer of the Social Needs programs. I was also in charge of the food bank, the clothing closet, and outreach for monetary and other donations. As I helped the people who came to me, I saw the poor in a new way. One very tall, older man came because he needed a coat. I found the coat for him and offered shoes, and a sweater. He turned down the offer of other clothing. Save them for someone more in need he said, and he walked away in very old shoes but with a new coat. That day I learned that it’s not always what we think someone needs. It’s important to listen to what the person says their needs are.

Through an introduction by my predecessor, I met an older man who lived on the streets, sleeping outside wherever he could. Once a week I met with him and took him to McDonalds for lunch and a visit. I had it in my mind that he was older and arthritic and therefore needed a place where he could stay inside safe and warm and cared for. I spent days making calls and found the perfect place for him. I was so excited. When I told him, he was furious. He wasn’t going to go to a place where people told him what to do, what not to drink, where to live. I never saw him again. I had violated his trust because I hadn’t asked him what he wanted or needed in his life.

We also have to be aware of how we judge others. A well-dressed woman come to me for help. My first thought was “how could she need help?” But as she told me her story, I listened with empathy and compassion and awe of her courageousness. Her husband left her and her five children, secretly draining all of their bank accounts first. She had no money for food or electricity. She just needed help until she could

find a job. I have so many stories like these and each changed me and the way I look at people and at life.

My second job was at the Fairfax County Housing Authority, where I made sure that people in housing provided for them were given information about programs that would make their life easier, whether that was helping them find a doctor they could afford, finding night school classes so they could learn a trade and find a job, or help them get the social programs that would provide enough food and other care for their families.

Sometimes, when we reach out to help others, we find a need that is not being addressed in the community. I've learned about how CLCNW groups have begun programs to meet unmet needs. A church near Seattle worked with a charity to open a new center called Kent Hope, where the parishioners could help homeless individuals in their community. Another group in a downtown Seattle church worked with the city to open the church parking lot at night to homeless people living in their cars, so they would have a safe place to spend nights. A woman in my CLC group brought communion to homebound individuals for quite a few years before her death. In her quiet way she also brought companionship to people who felt isolated. She and they looked forward to their weekly visits, which included talking and listening to each other.

There are many stories of large groups doing charitable work. But there are also stories of individuals that make a difference and often those stories don't get told. I was a passenger in my daughter's car a while ago. We drove by a woman who was begging at the side of the road. My daughter reached down into a sack, pulled out a sandwich and handed it to the woman. Another time I walked by a homeless man sitting in front of a café. I went in to buy a sandwich for myself and bought one for him too, following in my daughter's footsteps. Sometimes it's just about small things that mean so much. My neighbor heard from a pet shelter of a family who lost their home and had to give their dog up. The children were devastated as were the parents. My neighbor took the dog in and sends updates and photos to the family. They are also welcome to visit whenever they want. The family has the peace of mind that their loved pet is being cared for, and the dog has a new home where he is safe.

Sometimes we get so caught up in what we are doing to help others that we miss the need in our own families, friends or acquaintances. Do you know someone who has been ill for a while, or who has lost someone important to them? Do you know someone who is newly alone? There are times when we need to reassess how to help people, we are close to that may have new ongoing needs and may be overwhelmed with life. A weekly visit, a card or phone call, or a small gift left for them, or just kind words check-

ing in to see how they are and what they need may move a person forward towards strength. When my neighbor's husband was diagnosed with cancer, I brought dinner over, so that after long hours at the hospital she didn't have to worry about cooking. Another person in my CLC group goes weekly to visit a friend who is very ill. She stays to clean his house and talk and just be a comfort. Those small comforts can make a difference when someone is overwhelmed by loss and illness, when their world is turned upside down or they are limited and can no longer do what they have always been able to do. At those times we can make a difference. We can't forget that while we look out to see what strangers we can help, we also look to those we know that are having a hard time.

There are so many people in need and so many ways to help, large or small. Part of the solution is to choose what feels possible and take small steps to make your help a reality, whether it is wearing a "Make America Kind Again" button, helping a friend in need or helping on a large scale. Each kind act makes a difference, whether that act is volunteering, donating, listening or advocating. Each time I reach out, I find that not only have I changed a life in some small way, but I am changed. I am more understanding, compassionate and open. As Desmond Tutu has said: "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."



St. Andrews Cares for Immigrant Members

By Paul Riek



A convert to Catholicism, Paul made the 30-day Spiritual Exercises in Puente Grande, Jalisco, Mexico, in 1995. For the next 14 years he worked as a lay missionary in Oaxaca, Mexico, in human rights and prison ministry. In 1998 Paul married Aurelia Sanchez, a Zapotec Indian woman from Oaxaca. He made his temporary commitment to CLC-CVX in Oaxaca in 2009. That same year Paul and Aurelia moved to Oregon, where Paul made his permanent commitment in 2012. He currently lives in Portland, where he works as a Spanish interpreter and translator. Paul is a member of the Pastoral Council of St. Andrew Catholic Church in Portland and a member of NW Pilgrims CLC, an online group.

Over the past year, the members of St. Andrew Catholic Church in Portland, Oregon (standrewchurch.com) have worked hard to form a community where immigrant members feel safe and supported.

For over 30 years, St. Andrew has held masses in both Spanish and English. For the past decade, there is also a monthly mass in Kanhobal, a Mayan language from Guatemala. There are several bilingual and trilingual masses every year. St. Andrew is now half English-speaking and half Spanish- and Kanhobal-speaking. Over the years, trust has been built between the different communities through joint actions such as declaring sanctuary for Central American refugees in the 1980's and organizing to obtain drivers' licenses for undocumented drivers more recently. The Puentes/Bridges group was also formed to provide language and cultural exchange opportunities and build personal relationships between the communities.

Donald Trump's election to a second term as president provoked renewed fear in immigrant communities. Parish leaders organized a listening session in late January 2025 to ask: What is causing the most fear? What are the needs? The sanctuary was packed with members from the three communities for the session. As a professional interpreter, I was asked to provide interpretation from Spanish to English. Members cried as they shared their fears, their needs, and their testimonies. English-speaking members were moved as they listened. They were also surprised by some of the responses: Yes, we are afraid of being detained, taken to a detention center, and deported. But we are also afraid of what will happen to family members who are left behind. How will they make ends meet? Who will take care of our children? Will children be taken away from their parents? We need access to immigration attorneys, and family members left behind will also need financial support.

In response to these concerns and needs, an Immigration Action Team was formed in February 2025, with representatives from the three communities. I am a member of this team. In May the Pope Francis Immigrant Support Fund was created to raise funds to support families affected by immigration detentions pay rent and utilities.

In August a Know Your Rights training was held with the participation of the three communities. During the first part of the training, English-speakers and Spanish-speakers met separately. During the second part, everyone came together to act out scenarios of immigration enforcement activity and practice how to support each other in those situations.

In November a Family and Asset Protection Workshop was held to help families create documents to be used in the event of an action by federal immigration agents. I was one of over a hundred volunteers who helped 25 families decide what to do if the unthinkable happened: To whom would they delegate their parental authority? To whom would they give keys to their homes and vehicles? To whom would they give access to their bank accounts? They filled out the documents, and volunteer notaries notarized them. Other volunteers provided food and drink, photocopies, a shoulder to cry on, and security outside the parish hall. Signs were posted at the entrance: Private Event. Only those who had registered were allowed in.

This heightened security became even more important because, beginning in October, a large number of federal agents descended on the Portland area, detaining many more people than before. One of those detained was a member of our parish,

the father of a youth group member. The agents pulled him over as he was driving across one of Portland's bridges. They broke the window of his vehicle, reached in and cut his seatbelt, then dragged him out of the vehicle and took him away, leaving the vehicle on the bridge. His son, a U.S. citizen, was detained the following week in the same way as his father: he was pulled over as he was driving, his window was broken, and his seatbelt was cut. After several hours in detention, he was released, while his father was held at a detention center.

The Immigration Action Team met to discuss possible responses to these incidents. A press conference was proposed, to denounce the violence perpetrated by federal agents against the community. A member of the affected family would have to participate, telling the press what happened. Unfortunately, the family's immigration attorney warned against this, as it might make his work more difficult. So, the response was limited to direct support and accompaniment of the family.

Finally, in February 2026, a "Catholics Standing with Immigrants" march was organized by the Immigration Action Team. Led by a large "Pope Leo" puppet, 500 people, mostly Catholics from several parishes in the Portland area, walked through city streets with signs such as "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were refugees;" "Do not mistreat the foreigner among you;" "Human dignity has no citizenship status;" "Love is more powerful than hate;" and "Protecting immigrants: our Catholic, American, and human duty."

At Spanish Mass the following Sunday, members shared their experiences at the march. One person was moved to tears as she said that when her family arrived at the starting point, an English-speaking person said: "Come stand in the middle of the group. We will protect you."

Looking back over the past year, I can see the progress that St. Andrew is making in becoming a community where immigrant members feel safe and supported. At many Catholic parishes around the country, attendance at Spanish masses has dropped significantly because people are afraid to attend any event where many immigrants gather. This has not happened at St. Andrew. A few families are staying home, but most say that they feel safe knowing that if something happens, other members will be there for them.

As a CLC member, I see my participation in this process as an apostolic work. The CLC Charism calls us to bear witness to the dignity of the person; to work for justice through a preferential option for the poor; to identify with Christ's mission of "bringing the good news to the poor, proclaiming liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, setting the downtrodden free..." God has given me unique gifts: I am bilingual and bicultural, I have close relationships to members of the Spanish- and Kanjobal-speaking communities, and I have experience in community organizing. And God has placed me in St. Andrew parish, where I can share these gifts. I have discovered that a small effort on my part can facilitate communication and coordination between the communities, leading to a better outcome and a stronger parish community. AMDG!



Catholics Standing with Immigrants march February 2026.

Homeless

By Sharon Sullivan



Sharon Sullivan grew up in Memphis, Tennessee. She is a part of the Spirit Walkers group in CLCNW. She left Memphis for the Pacific Northwest at the age of 17 where she attended the College of Idaho, graduating in 1964. Also in 1964, she converted to the Catholic Church and married. She began writing poetry as a teenager, but as a young adult, she put all her creative energy into her marriage and her three children. At the age of 43, she began writing poetry again. Sharon received a Master of Arts in Transforming Spirituality from Seattle University in 2000, and began publishing her poetry. She published *Moments* in 1995 and *Ever Being Born* in 2000. *Testament* was published in 2012. She resides in the Seattle area with her husband. They have been married 62 years.

Abraham, that patriarch,
lived in the desert in a tent.
Years later,
Moses and the people Israel
Wandered with their city of tents;
For forty years they traveled
seeking home.

Still later,
Ruth, that homeless,
undocumented alien,
tricked Boaz into marriage,
lucky man, for with Ruth
he became great-grandfather of
David, that king
of Bethlehem fame.

And, speaking of Bethlehem,,
Since Mary and Joseph
Found only a waiting list for
"temporary housing" at the inn,
the Savior of the world,
an infant small and weak,
was born in a stable,
smelly, but warm.
'safe parking'
for the donkey - so to speak.

Hmmm...
Do these sound like people
we want in our neighborhood?

Giving Hope to Others by "Expanding the Family Circle"

By Evelyn and Paul Brookhyser



Evelyn and Paul Brookhyser joined CLC in 2005. Paul has been in 4 groups with 2 remaining and Evelyn in two groups. Evelyn is currently the chair of the NW CLC Council. They moved to Newport in 1971 and became members of Sacred Heart Catholic Church. They started their family of 3 children in 1976 and now have 5 grandchildren. Both enjoy singing and sing in the church choir plus community groups. They are known as the family with an open door.

The second great commandment of Jesus, "Love your neighbor," has been faith in action for us. Before the Covid epidemic, we learned about a program that is faith based called, Safe Families for Children. Volunteers are willing to take a child into their home temporarily, while the desperate family works things out in order to avoid getting into the state protective system. The program tries to make the support circle larger for the prevention of child abuse.

In our case, we were asked to provide a home for a father and his three-year-old son who were made homeless by the Otis fire in our county (Otis is a small, rural community on the coast in Oregon where fire destroyed 29 of 31 mobile homes). The family lived with us for 3 weeks and then moved into an apartment.

The second family we took in was a pregnant mom and her 14-month-old son who were homeless and coming out of an abusive situation. They stayed with us for four months, during which time the mother gave birth to a little girl. They moved into a shelter apartment when the baby was six weeks old.

We admired the mom for her tenacity to do whatever was required to keep her children. Evelyn helped the mom develop cooking skills that she took with her to the new apartment. We sat together for our meals, which was a new experience for the mom. Paul enjoyed being able to hold a baby in his arms. For the mom, he modeled play with the 14-month-old son. We took on the role of advocate and supported the mom to trust in her abilities as a mom and as a person.

In our application, we said we preferred children over eight years of age. Then we found that God had other plans for us. With both families, we fell in love with the kids and their age was not a problem. Our experience opened our hearts to understanding that good people get into situations where help is needed. Until we had this experience with the second family, we had no idea of how the courts and child custody worked.

Although we volunteered sharing of our home without compensation, we were rewarded more than we gave. During Covid, we were a family pod (an isolated family unit), so hugging was not off limits. The positive energy of growing children helped us to marvel at God's miracles. We felt blessed to have this experience during the pandemic when we could not even meet with our own grandchildren.

A later family (mom and 18-month-old daughter) came to us and the mom got off of drugs cold turkey upon entering our house. We had no idea that she had been using drugs until weeks later. After she was drug free, she was able to move into a non-profit shelter that included case management to help her be a good parent, cook nutritious meals, budget money, and get counseling. The mom is now taking classes at the local community college to become a drug and alcohol counselor herself.

Our house is quiet and calm now without them living here. However, our relationship with this mom and her daughter continues as we help them with transportation and childcare. We still get together at least once a week. We are deeply and lovingly committed to the family's success in the future.

We volunteer for Safe Families because we have space, love, and good health and besides, we love to have extra people around. We feel blessed in doing God's will and seeing these folks grow in a positive way. We feel good about taking someone off of the street, (all have been homeless), and giving them a safe shelter. Our joy comes with their successes.

Sharing Our Blessings with the Poor

By Terri Mierswa



Terri Mierswa is a guide and member of the St. Francis-Metuchen CLC and the Treasurer of the Metro New York Region.

“Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them....” Isaiah 58:7-8).

From early ages the prophets spoke of our loving responsibility to support those who are vulnerable – the poor. The Old Testament attributes miracles that sustained the poor to Elisha; Nehemiah was known for helping to return land to the poor; and Micah defended the poor against oppression. One also can find verses in Proverbs and the Psalms advising that those who care for the poor honor God and will be rewarded.

In Matthew 25:35-36 Jesus shares that we will be blessed by God, “...whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters you did for me.” The passage continues. “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Following this guidance, our parish in Upper Saddle River, New Jersey has an extensive ministry of outreach to support those in need, with a staff member dedicated to coordinating the various efforts:

- The *Soup Kitchen Ministry* offers our parish community the opportunity to live out the call of the Gospel by feeding the poor and seeing the face of Jesus in those who are hungry not only for food, but also for love and compassion. The ministry team prepares weekly meals for soup kitchens in Harlem, NY and Newark, NJ.
- The *Parish Garden Ministry* has a twofold mission: the provision of fresh vegetables and fruits to the soup kitchens in Harlem and Newark and an opportunity for parishioners to compost their food scraps in an environmental context.
- The *Presentation Sharing Basket* maintains a food pantry of dry goods to help meet the needs of individuals and families in our area who are going through a financial crisis.
- The *Homeless Ministry* works with a local nonprofit, Family Promise, that assists working families overcome the crisis of temporary homelessness and return to self-sufficiency. Ministry members volunteer to spend evenings supporting families who are temporarily sheltered and awaiting housing by serving meals or as overnight staff.

To be a people of justice and righteousness means to be actively engaged in social and economic reform that diminishes the inequities which require outreach efforts. The *Justice and Peace Ministry* complements the charitable deeds of our parish by illuminating the underlying causes that make such charity necessary and by offering opportunities to create change. Its efforts to build a more just and peaceful world are enhanced through its collaboration with other ministries and organizations.

One of the yearly activities of this ministry is the Parish invitation to send letters to our federal representatives and senators with Bread for the World. Last year the parish mailed 800 letters to our legislators in NY and NJ seeking their votes for the continuation of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP) and funding for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program.

The ministry recently initiated a program called Two Feet of Love in Action which aims to share the ongoing USCCB and Maryknoll Global Concerns alerts with parishioners. Many of these alerts encourage communication with decision makers about injustices that affect the most vulnerable throughout the world. Parishioners are asked to communicate the values of our Christian faith and call for corrective action to be taken.

Over the past year numerous families have been fractured and destabilized by indiscriminate customs enforcement. The Justice and Peace Ministry has been teaming with Pax Christi and First Friends of NJ to provide consolation and comfort to those whose loved ones are in detention. Volunteers serve hot drinks and snacks to visitors and bring grocery gift cards, diapers and other necessities for the families now trying to survive without their incarcerated primary earner. Their presence provides an outlet for families to express grief and fear in a safe environment of support.

Pope Leo XIV in his first apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi Te*, tells us, “No Christian can regard the poor simply as a societal problem; they are part of our ‘family.’ They are ‘one of us’... The worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care.” Jesus preached this message in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God.”

We can feed, house, clothe and advocate for the poor but if we are not attending to their spiritual well being we are remiss. Do we have an attitude of true empathy? Are we acting as companions with the poor or solely providers or advocates? There are many examples of saints and holy people who were able to address both the spiritual and physical needs of the poor: St. Francis of Assisi, St. Martin DePorres, Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day to name a few. They are our models. We must reflect and pray with them about our call to be one with the poor.

In a society characterized by deepening divisions between rich and poor, we are instructed by Jesus’ teaching in the gospels to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. This preferential option for the poor is one of the core principles of Catholic social teaching. It is a way of life to be embraced. It calls us to see Christ in those who suffer, and to work together to build a world where every person can thrive and find comfort in the knowledge that they, too, are loved children of God.



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4511 West Pine Blvd.
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The Joy of Love

By Lina Jun.



Lina lives in the suburbs of Chicago with her 3 children and loving husband Luke. She joined the KCLC-Chicago in 2024. She is learning about prayer, sharing, yearning for God, and experiencing His presence. Lina has taught at the Sunday school and Korean school at St. Andrew Kim Parish, Itasca for over four years. She loves children and listening to them, and her goal is to lead them closer to God.

Youlim Daniela Choi, Kisook Lina Jun, Yeonhee Anna Shin, Heather Agnes Kim, Jinmi Teresa Kim.

Last year our team attended the KCLC-Chicago General Assembly. There, we heard a representative from the Women's Hotline (an organization that supports survivors of domestic violence) explaining how the project began and developed and eventually partnering with KCLC-Chicago. At the end of this meeting, our small group, Consolata, decided to join the rest of KCLC-Chicago to participate in the project by purchasing and delivering necessities to survivors. Learning about the unfortunate situation of those in need deepened our sense of responsibility, especially when we thought about the children. Since it was during Valentine's Day week, we decided to add Valentine's goodie bags.

On February 11th, the wind was very chilly that morning when the items were to be picked up from the Women's Hotline Association. Even though the day was cold, our hearts were warmed by imagining the happy faces when they would receive the Valentine's Day goodie bags in addition to the essential items. After the volunteer service, our team went through an evaluation process, praying that our humble hearts and small acts of kindness would comfort the hearts of those who would receive them. Working together as a group was a valuable experience, requiring us to coordinate every detail, from discussion to sharing, organizing each process together as a team instead of planning alone. We realized that our Consolata teamwork improved during this process, making it a meaningful experience. Decisions within the CLC community must be discerned for the purpose for the common good, and that the final step of the DSSE (Discern, Send, Support, Evaluate) by activity evaluation is essential. We learned that giving is more rewarding than receiving. This activity reminded us of Jesus' words, "Whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me."

For our second apostolic activity on February 19th, we visited Heather's House (an institution where single mothers receive care for their babies from birth until about six months of age). We delivered mobiles and blankets handmade by our members as well as diapers and a small gift for the mom. The blanket is a compilation of small bear patterns knitted prayerfully by our CLC members. I was surprised to find single mothers living in a place so close to my house that I'd passed by countless times. I was nervous about how I would feel and what I would say to them when we met in person. However, when I actually met them, I was overcome with emotion as soon as I saw the beautiful baby and mother I visited. Although we were of different race and language, they seemed so loved and precious. I silently stroked the mother's back and whispered in my heart, "You are a precious child of God. You are a beautiful child of God." hoping that my prayer would be felt by the baby and mother. I



watched the warm affection from the senior members of KCLC-Chicago who called themselves “Grandma,” and “Auntie,” speaking to the baby. Their warmth resonated not only with the mother but also with me.

Over the past few weeks, Consolata has been reflecting on Pope Francis’s exhortation on the importance of the family as we’ve shared Horizon186 Newsletter. During my two apostolic outreaches, I’ve met neighbors who have been ostracized and left in pain by their families—the very places where they should be most safe, loved, and filled with happiness. As a mother of three children, I can’t imagine their pain and struggles. Even with the support of a strong husband and family, I often find myself struggling to raise my own children. Rather than giving in to despair, they chose courage to protect their children alone against the prejudices and challenges of this world. I believe it was God who has guided them.

Beyond prayer, God leads us to stand with our impoverished neighbors as sisters, aunts, and grandmothers. Even families find it difficult to solve all their individual challenges. The same is true for our neighbors in need, but through family, we feel secure and find the courage to move forward even when we fail. We experience the “joy of love.” God tells us to be a loving family to them. Though



we hadn’t met in person, as we prepared each gift bag we yearned to offer consolation to those survivors. Our sincerity and love are embedded in every stitch of knitting. With much discernment, God led us to name our team Consolata (those consoled by God). As Consolata to our neighbors, who are all united in the love of God the Father, we pray that they too may become Consolatas.



Consolata CLC brought a homemade teddy bear quilt and other donations to Heather’s House.



Manresa - Helping the Poor

By Linda Orber



Linda Orber is a retired psychoanalyst. She has practiced for over 40 years in New York City, having attended the New Jersey Institute for Training in Psychoanalysis. She is now a full-time care giver to her husband who is a Veteran and has Parkinson's, and her adult son with special needs. She is also the author of "In Stillness Jesus Whispers". Linda is a co-author of "Dear Jesus, Dear Child: Guided Meditations for Young Children" and the book "Love God". She currently has a Facebook page for "In Stillness Jesus Whispers".

Manresa CLC in Staten Island New York began in the early 1980's with the help of the wonderful Father Dan Fitzpatrick, S.J.. He traveled a great distance from Fordham University to Staten Island to keep it going. Mount Manresa Retreat House was the oldest retreat house in the country. Our members met there for many years until it was sold in February 2014. We were then forced to find another meeting place. We were given a home at a meeting room in a local welcoming parish, St. Sylvesters. Our members have traveled from Brooklyn and New Jersey to meet with us. We have had husbands who were deeply involved and encouraged their wives to join our group as well.

Many of our members are deeply involved in the prolife movement. This includes helping young mothers and families in need. One important foundation helps new mothers and their babies and continues to provide resources for two years after the birth of their babies. They also can direct them to sources that will help them with medical issues, places to access food for those who are needy, and sometimes continue on as family friends.

Our members have understood that poverty exists in many forms. One particular form is isolation and feeling alone and abandoned. Some members make home visits to those who are homebound, those lacking family and friends and often feel disconnected. We have reached out to those who have serious health issues and visit those in nursing homes, assisted living as well as hospice. This is a way we help those who feel isolated to feel connected, remembered and loved.

Our members have also reached out to those who feel empty, suffering a loss while trying to emotionally (and perhaps spiritually) heal. One member authored a book on dealing with loss after her own stepson died. This book became a success on Amazon, as it helped others to deal with their own grief and see a light of hope. Another member writes reflections for her parish bulletin weekly and on the internet. These reflections on God's love have been viewed by many who feel empty and lost. These reflections bring hope and connectedness. We also have a member who wrote a beautifully illustrated, award winning book for children on the rosary. It teaches young children the beauty of the rosary and helps them connect to a loving mother in Mary. It opens a door for them to help them know they are not alone.

Another member has spent years bringing information to parishioners through the bulletin. Without her hard work her parish would not have the details needed for people to come together. This has brought an awareness of love and community.

Recognizing poverty in its many forms, Manresa has been very faithful about reaching out to others. We try to visit those who feel abandoned, give financially and emotionally to those in need, and fill the hearts of the hungry so they feel accepted, loved and supported.

How the War in Lebanon Affects the People

“We are obliged to stay despite the danger when we defend our land, and we do so peacefully. None of us carry weapons. We all bring peace, kindness, and love. All the churches are gathered, all the religions together . . . it can only be for peace.”

Fr. Pierre Al-Rahi

The Catholic Academic Exchange Service/ Katholischer Akademischer Austauschdienst (KAAD), is a Germany based Catholic organization that supports young professionals from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Eastern Europe. KAAD helps to sponsor postgraduate studies, and research that enable students to take on leadership roles in the social, technical and cultural development of their countries.

Nils Fischer is the head of the KAAD Middle East Department and works closely with many people in Lebanon. Through his work and contacts, he is aware of how the wars have taken a toll on the people of Lebanon. The wars in Lebanon began in 1975 and have involved many factions, creating tensions and conflicts.

In a recent talk, Nils spoke of the toll on the people and country of Lebanon: “Once more we witness war in the Middle East, between Israel and Hezbollah on Lebanon’s territory. The effect for the whole country is immense: Public schools are closed and, in their buildings, shelter is provided for the many in-country refugees from the South of Lebanon. The universities are closed and they have shifted to online or hybrid teaching which might sound more comfortable from secure Germany but one has to keep in mind what war

does to a person. It affects them physically, mentally, the whole person. Above all, Lebanon is struck by many shortages especially of energy. However, in this situation our Lebanese friends and partners organize help and support, for example the distinguished member of our Lebanese Partner Committee, Professor Dr. Zian Fahed, cooperates with La Cuisine de Mariam and they cook and distribute food for the many persons in need. La Cuisine de Mariam is a social-caritative institution funded by Father Hami Tawk after the so-called Beirut Blast on 4/8/2020. But in the five

years since then he and his team haven’t stopped helping as the need of the people didn’t come to an end but got more.

As you may know there are also many Christian villages in the extreme south of Lebanon, I.e. in the zone of war. In this are also KAAD scholars, alumnae and alumni and partners live. [KAAD (Catholic Academic Exchange Service) scholars, alumni, and partners in South Lebanon include local academics and professionals involved in peace, reconciliation, and community support, particularly within Christian villages in the conflict zone. The network is part of a larger Lebanese committee focusing on educational support and regional crisis management] They are active in peace activities and in reconciliation. The war threatens them, their families, communities and destroys their homes, churches and livelihoods.



A photo of the bombing in Lebanon.

Writings from three CLC members in Lebanon

Sharing from the first CLC member

What can be said about the situation in Lebanon? Everything is linked to political issues but let us not discuss them here; the media already says enough.

Lebanon, like the whole world, is thirsty for peace.

In Lebanon, we are tired of enduring, for decades, the wars of others on our land. But this time, the situation is very critical. After more than a year of a certain return to normal life, the war resumed on March 2, 2026: a war that the Lebanese people did not choose and never wanted.

The population is overwhelmed by a deep sense of anger and frustration. What is happening is very sad. In some regions of the country, evacuation orders are being issued, immediate alerts are announced, and families flee their homes at night without taking anything with them, not knowing where to go. Many are sleeping in their cars or in the streets. NGOs are mobilizing, public schools are opening their doors for displaced people, and solidarity can be seen everywhere. CLC in Lebanon, within the limits of its means, helps several families, striving to meet their needs as much as possible while providing accompaniment and spiritual support.

The inhabitants of a Christian village on the country's southern border, peaceful and deeply attached to their land, refuse to leave their homes. Their parish priest who encouraged them, Fr. Pierre Al-Rahi (whose name means "shepherd" in Arabic), was killed by a shell while he ran to help some parishioners wounded by the bombardments. His martyrdom only strengthened the villagers' determination to follow his example. The Pope himself paid tribute to this "true shepherd who always remained beside his people with the love and sacrifice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. May the Lord grant that the blood he shed may be a seed of peace for beloved Lebanon."

Despite everything, life goes on. "Do not be afraid, little flock," the Lord tells us. We cannot allow ourselves to sink into despair, we who are children of hope. After sleepless nights because of the air strikes, the normal course of life resumes with every sunrise. People go to work, private schools welcome students. This resilience runs in our veins.

It is true that we are living a kind of Way of the Cross; we are passing through a dark tunnel. Yet we remain confident that Jesus carries the burden of the cross with us, helping us to rise again and again. At the end of the tunnel shines the light of the Resurrection. We hope for it.

On March 9th, 2026, hours before he died Father Pierre Al-Rahi addressed his community again that with words that today resonate with many as a spiritual testament: "You know that we are walking the path of the Passion; there is death and after it resurrection with our Lord Jesus Christ . . . I am ready to die in my house because this is my house."

Sharing from the second CLC member

I don't know how I feel. Contradictory, intense, extreme feelings and thoughts rush through my head and heart every second. I feel a weight on my chest and my throat is constantly tight, but I hold back my tears and only cry when I'm alone, far from my son. My friends are going through the same anxieties. They're all exhausted. We try to support each other by sharing our fears, our prayers, and words of wisdom that help us get through the next few hours, but their effect doesn't last much longer because the events are so overwhelming.

I feel a deep sadness. I can say, like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." Sad because the wars I have known since I was born, like all wars throughout the world, are absurd. They cause nothing but pain. They serve only evil. Their ugliness remains etched in our hearts and bodies even in times of peace. I am sad to see and feel all the suffering around me. I feel guilty for having left my home and for living with my son at my mother's house, not because my home is in an area at risk of being bombed, but because my son is frightened by the sounds of bombs at night. I feel guilty because children are living on the streets or in houses at risk of being bombed, or because they cannot sleep at night due to the sounds that shake their very being.

I feel anger because we have many enemies in this war. Our enemy within, who shares our nationality but is loyal to a power that seeks the destruction of our country. An enemy that has managed to take the entire country hostage by spreading like a malignant cancer in the minds of its followers and throughout all state institutions, subsequently depriving us of all our rights (health, justice, education, security...) to the point of killing us (political assassinations, the Beirut port explosion...).

I feel fear because this enemy is unaffected by the death and suffering of the Lebanese, even those who belong to the same religious community it claims to protect. And this enemy continues to lead us toward death. I feel fear because even if the war ends, the sick mindsets that this enemy has created will continue to threaten other communities, just as they do now despite all the good these communities do to alleviate the suffering of the displaced.

I feel anger because Christians in the South—who did not choose war, who did not resort to weapons or violence—are dying simply because they chose to love. Father Pierre, who died protecting his village; Youssef, the young Red Cross medic and father, who died saving the wounded; the three young men, Elie, Georges, and Chadi, who died trying to restore the internet connection to the village so their friends and families could stay in touch with the world...

I feel callous if I work as if nothing were wrong. I feel like a coward if I don't work.

I try to spend time in nature to find a moment of peace, but then I feel that the sun and the blue sky are brazen because on the ground there is destruction and black smoke, and I then want to hide so I don't have to see the sun. I am afraid of the aftermath of this war. We are still suffering from the aftermath of all past wars. The country that will never be able to recover: The state institutions that will

be unable to provide services. The dead. The wounded. The destroyed homes. The destroyed villages. The scorched and polluted lands that will no longer be able to sustain life. Our broken hearts. Our exhausted bodies.

Sharing from the third CLC member

Are we Pilgrims of Hope?

Are we witnessing the love and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ amidst this chaos of bombing and violence, death and destruction, poverty and displacement, and other consequences of war?

Shall we still be weeping in the mouth of the lion instead of fighting under the Standard of Christ?

In a world of inversion, where good is seen as bad and bad as good, where the angel of light is no more recognized, where men consider war and assassination as service to humanity, where elimination and eradication become a way to peace, where humans are targets to power demonstration, where truth become a joke, where international law is violated and justice is out of consideration, where power and domination prevail over liberty and dignity ... and so on ...

Where are you Lord in these times of turbulence? In our hearts and prayers for peace in Lebanon and in the whole world. In every displaced or injured person believing or not in You. In the Christians living in the frontiers, refusing to leave their homes, lands, schools and churches, singing peace and praising Your Holy Name. In the poorest amongst us, starving to survive. In the farmer striving to safeguard his orchards. In the workers, builders, teachers ... in Your people and all who believe in You!

As You went up into the mountains to pray, we will keep praying, as You are the only One who will calm the storm and who can deliver us and the world from the armies of demons and from the fear of freedom, from the inordinate attachments and disordered affection.

Lebanon is Your Land! You gave it to us, and here we are returning it to you. Do with it upon Your Will!

May our indifference be holy and may Your Will be done!



Echoes of Suffering: A Sunday in Sihanoukville

By Thu Tam (TT) Hoang



Thu Tam (TT) Hoang is presently living in Cambodia and is a lay missionary for Maryknoll Lay Missioners, a Catholic mission-sending community committed to nonviolence through prevention, intervention, reconciliation and restoration of all creation. She is working for St Michael's Church and helps with church related matters such as organizing the choir, lectors etc. Additionally, she accompanies the sisters outreaching to local villages. Presently, TT is in her third year of volunteer ministry. She is a member of the Dong Hanh CLC community and previously lived in Texas. She served as a member of CLC in USA EXCO as the treasurer about 10 years ago.

It was one of the usual hot Sunday afternoons in Sihanoukville, Cambodia but the heat that day seemed especially harsh, as if echoing the suffering I was about to witness. As I was preparing for choir practice and the 5pm mass, I received a text from a Dominican Sister with whom I work at St. Michael's Catholic Church, the only Catholic church in Sihanoukville. She told me that there were a lot of people sleeping inside the church. Sister was there to set up the church, getting it ready for adoration, Mass, and choir practice. I was surprised. Just fifteen minutes earlier, I had passed through the church and seen nothing out of the ordinary.

When I rushed back, I found many young men lying on the cold floor, seeking refuge. My heart ached at the sight. I had to ask them to step outside so that choir practice could begin, but I felt a deep sadness as I watched them quietly gather their belongings and wait outside, tired and uncertain.

After Mass, I learned more about them. They were ten young men, aged between 19 and 31, all from Indonesia. Over a simple meal of fried rice and eggs at a small Indonesian restaurant outside the church gate, they shared their stories. Each one was a tale of betrayal and hardship. Recruited with promises of good jobs in Cambodia, they instead found themselves forced into scam operations. Their documents were confiscated, and they became trapped, enduring both physical and emotional abuse. One young man showed me an open gash on his head, crusted with dried blood. Most looked malnourished and weary. Only one had a small amount of money; the rest had none and were not paid for their labor. They were all hungry and exhausted, and I felt a wave of helplessness and sorrow as I paid for their dinner, wishing I could do more.

They told me that a ride to the Indonesian embassy in Phnom Penh had been arranged for them, but as the night wore on and rain poured down, their hope faded. At 11:30pm, one of the young men texted me to say their ride had not arrived. My heart broke as I read his message, knowing I had no good answer. They were not allowed inside the church buildings due to government warnings about housing undocumented foreigners—the risk of expulsion loomed over anyone who tried to help. So, as the rain hammered the city, these young men huddled under several gazebos in the church yard, exposed to the elements and uncertainty.

By morning, they were even more drained. Wanting to keep them safe, I discreetly brought them to a coffee shop to wait. Taking the bus was impossible, as they had no documents, but with the help of a friend, I arranged a small van to take us all to Phnom Penh. We waited more than five hours in that coffee shop, tense every time someone in uniform appeared. My nerves were raw, haunted by the thought that if the authori-



On the ride to Phnom Penh.

ties noticed, these men could be detained or worse. But by God's grace, we made it out.

Our final challenge was the slow traffic in Phnom Penh. I prayed silently, feeling the weight of their suffering and my own powerlessness, surrendering the outcome to God. Miraculously, we arrived at the embassy with just ten minutes to spare. Someone from the embassy came out and ushered all ten young men inside. As the doors closed behind them, I finally let out the breath I had been holding and whispered a prayer of gratitude, yet I carried the sorrow of their ordeal with me.

This experience was just one among many in recent months. As Cambodia has begun raiding scamming facilities in so-called "hot areas" following mounting international pressure, thousands of people—many of whom are actually victims of trafficking—have been left wandering the streets with no passport, no money, and no shelter. The term "forced scammer victims" is one I learned only recently, but the faces behind the label are now unforgettable to me. Most of these individuals were lured into online scam centers across Southeast Asia by promises of better-paying jobs, only to find themselves trapped in exploitation and misery.

It is heartbreaking to see the human toll of this crisis up close. In the past few months, I have tried to help a young man from Uganda, another from Sierra Leone, and now ten Indonesians. Just this week, ten more people from Ecuador appeared at the church, desperate and afraid. The challenge is relentless—every day brings new faces, new stories of pain and loss. There are thousands sleeping in the streets outside their embassies, clinging to hope that they might find a way home. The only shelter in Cambodia that helps trafficked victims is overwhelmed and no longer able to take anyone in. Other shelters are paralyzed by fear of government raids and expulsions. The authorities have announced their intent to eliminate all scam operations by the end of April, but this push is forcing a mass exodus, turning a crackdown into a humanitarian crisis. These traumatized survivors are left to fend for themselves, abandoned by both the Cambodian government and, in some cases, their own governments.



Arriving at the embassy.

As I witness their suffering, I am overwhelmed by grief and helplessness. Each encounter leaves a scar on my heart, reminding me that behind the headlines are real people—frightened, traumatized, hungry, and longing for dignity and mercy. Their pain lingers with me, fueling a sorrow I cannot fully express. All I can do is offer what little comfort I have, pray, and remember the call to serve the most vulnerable—to be a source of hope and refuge when it is needed most.

‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’ (Matthew 25:40)

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Next Issue

To Be Announced

Calendar

19th Annotation Retreat, Spiritual Exercises
of St. Ignatius of Loyola-Aug 26 thru May 27.
Applications due 6/30/26. Come and See
Sessions offered Thursday May 7 and Saturday
May 9. See CLC in USA monthly newsletter for
further details.

DSSE (Discern, Send, Support, Evaluate)
workshop sponsored by the CLC Global
Formation Team-Offered May 26. See CLC in USA
monthly newsletter for further details.

**National Coordinating Council Annual In-
Person Meeting**, Miami, Florida. November 5-8,
2026.