

Unity Acres

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January 4, 2015
Feast of the Epiphany

And of his fullness
we all have a share,
and grace after grace.
— John 1, 16

Dear Friends of Unity Acres,

Sunday morning. Mass is about to begin: the ceramic Wisemen, their caravan of camels, their gifts to the Christ Child are at the threshold of the manger scene carefully and lovingly arranged in front of the altar. In the winter-time absence of Mary Agnes and Jan, Cian and Shane McCarthy have arrived and are ready to lead the gathered folks in a few familiar hymns selected to mark the end of the Christmas season: *'O Come All Ye Faithful' ... 'Joy to the World'*.

It's a warm day so far, the snow's almost gone, although the forecast promises an abrupt shift to colder, stormier weather with wind and lake-effect during the evening and night. A little later and after Mass, lunch in the Star Building. A visitor to the Acres this Epiphany Sunday, first Sunday of 2015, would have noticed, perhaps, the arrival during the morning hours of a team of window installers, who have come to install the last of the new windows in the Star Building, and would have noted new chairs, newly painted walls in the dining room and new flooring, too! In the center of the dining room the Christmas tree still stands decorated and lit up in blue and green lights; in a day or two, it will be time to take it down and pack it away, along with Carol Guthrie's manger scene, and the Advent wreath, until next December.

But as these Christmas-season trappings are put away, let's don't put away gratitude and wonder. Gratitude and wonder at the generosity and sharing of so many who have for so long and in many ways supported the humble efforts of the men and the staff and our board to create home and community here at the Acres, and especially during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons. Deliveries of Turkeys. The Annual party organized by the Altar and Rosary Society at Christ Our Light Parish. The wonderful Christmas stockings from Sue Heinley. Countless wrapped gifts. Visits from friends and the greeting cards and notes which assure us that our struggles remain close to your hearts.

May we have gratitude and wonder at the generosity of so many. May we have gratitude and wonder, too, as we contemplate the deep meaning of the season just passed.

Wishing you peace and happiness in this year of Grace 2015.

Stephen Dickhout,
For the UNITY ACRES Community

Please pray for the happy repose of three of our men who died since the last newsletter in August: RUSSELL 'POPEYE' BAUM, RANDY RAND, and DAN MEIER.

Popeye died in Oswego on September 25. He had been a resident at Morning Star Nursing Home since January 2013. Prior to being admitted to the Nursing Home, Popeye lived at the Acres pretty much continuously since January 1998. Although his eyesight was very poor, Popeye was for a long time one of the most dedicated of our night watchmen. We also remember his very keen sense of humor.

Randy Rand's tenure at the Acres went back to the early days in the 1970s. When he was a younger man Randy would help out especially in the Kitchen as a pot-washer back in the days when Helen Clark was the cook... In more recent years, Randy had settled in permanently, and in fact in a room just down the hall from Popeye's in the 'C' Building. During the last three or four years, Randy's health declined slowly; he was admitted to hospital at the end of the summer and died on October 27.

Both Randy and Popeye were buried at our St. Martin de Porres Cemetery.

Dan Meier died at the Acres on December 29. He had been living at Unity Acres since December 2008, but struggled increasingly for the last few years with an illness that proved to be terminal. Dan stayed in 'Sick Bay' after his illness progressed to a point where he required extra care. Dan's family in Fulton have arranged for his remains to be brought home to California for burial.

Come to me, *Jesus said*, all you who labor and are heavy burdened... *May Dan, Randy, Popeye, who have put down heavy burdens, find lasting rest.*

On a lighter note, Father Jones' celebrated his 80th birthday on October 23. The celebration began with Mass in our Sacred Heart Chapel, continued to include a meeting of the Acres' board of directors during the afternoon, and concluded with a dinner in his honor in the Star Building's dining room, which had been transformed for the evening with orange table cloths, flowers, balloons, and a birthday cake in the shape of a basketball. (Father is a big fan of SU basketball ...) We anticipate celebrating his 55th anniversary of ordination in a few more weeks, on February 2nd.

2015 – Prayer

Loving Father, we at Unity Acres thank You for the many graces and gifts You have given us. Forgive any misuse of them, or taking them for granted. We pray that, as we dedicate this year 2015, to You, we live it wisely and well, joyfully, and with humor.

We pray for all our Acres family and extended family, our men and their families, our benefactors and friends, our volunteers, board of directors and staff – all who have helped us to be a community of peace and encouragement. Bless each and every one of them, as we pray:

Lord, before You made the mountains and the earth and the world, You are God, from beginning to end. (Teach us to number our days aright that we may gain wisdom.) For You, Lord, a thousand days are as a passing day or a second is as a thousand years.

Replace the evil times with Your unfailing love. Let us, Your servants, see Your works again. Fill us each day with Your kindness that we may be glad and rejoice, all the days of our life. Amen.

— *Psalm 90*

Father Jones