

Unity Acres  
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April-May 2017

Dear Friends of Unity Acres,

We write this letter on April 23, two days after the 22<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Father McVey's passing. Along with our regular Sunday congregation, many of the men joined us at Mass in honor of our Founder, Father Ray McVey and to give thanks for him and for this place that has become a home for so many—hundreds over the years and I say the miracle is that they are not all knocking at the door at one time. The first reading this morning is from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, verses 42-47, which is a classic description of community living. One wonders if this reading helped influence Father McVey when he had the visions of turning the abandoned Oswego County TB Hospital into a Home for otherwise homeless men. One could also say that we don't all "gather for prayer and the breaking of bread and to the prayers," BUT we all do gather three times a day in the lovely refurbished dining room and we break bread together there always being aware that for some of the men, church hasn't always been a comfortable part of their past. Many drop into the Chapel at various times, even during the night but may not be comfortable being there for liturgies or Mass. One of the first places Mark (our "dungeon master"—the dungeon is "lovingly" called the dungeon and when men come for the first time or return, they must stay at least two weeks in the dungeon/dorm) – anyway, one of the first places Mark shows new men is our Sacred Heart Chapel, and telling them that it is always open for them at any time of the day or night. A highlight of the day of course is supper time at 5 pm where we all gather to break bread together. Lively chatter is heard throughout the room as we enjoy the meal and conversation with our table mates. There are four cooks who spend certain times each week planning and cooking meals. They have several men who help in the kitchen and those who keep the dining room clean and neat as well as the 3-4 men who wash the dishes and or the pots and pans.

The Reading tells us that "*Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.*" Awe is a word that could be used to describe communal life here at Unity Acres. We have to realize it is an awesome thing for 65 men to live together and yet most of the time they do so peacefully. The men who are able very often are helping those who have need of assistance of one kind or other. Holy Thursday brought us together for the Evening Eucharist which includes the Washing of the Feet as Jesus did to his disciples and which Steve and John did for us on that Holy Night and as Steve often explains the men "wash each other's feet" many times over each day helping their brothers with various tasks.

The Responsorial Psalm, No. 118 prompts us to "*Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His love is everlasting.*" It was most appropriate that this Psalm was the one

specified for our Mass in Honor of Father McVey and in Thanksgiving for him and for this Home of Unity Acres. *“I was hard pressed and falling, but the Lord helped me. Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for His love is everlasting.”* So perfect this Psalm as we give thanks for Father McVey and Unity Acres.

As Father Jones ended this liturgy with the Final Blessing, Mary Agnes leads us in Carey Landry’s lively *“Companions on the Journey”* ... *breaking bread and sharing life; and in the love we bear is the hope we share for we believe in the love of God... no longer strangers to each other...we are fed and we are nourished by the strength of those who care... we have been gifted with each other and we are called by the Word of the Lord: to act with justice, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with our God, to walk humbly with our God... we are made for the glory of our God, for service in the name of Jesus; to walk side by side with hope in our hearts, for we believe in the love of God.”*

And we believe in the love of a humble little priest who forty-eight years ago had the vision of a Unity Acres and passed on his heavenly reward twenty-two years ago on April 21, 1995. On this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday, we give thanks to the Lord for He is good and for His Divine Mercy, for His Love is Everlasting.

Peg McCarthy

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*Pray for the repose of the souls of BERNARD QUACKENBUSH and SOLOMON DINALLY:*

Bernie and Solomon were both ‘old-timers’, having been part of the Unity Acres Community for several years before any of the current staff. Bernie moved away from the Acres fifteen or more years ago, but remained close by – settling first at the Creekside Apartments in Sandy Creek, and later at Springbrook in Pulaski, where he resided until his death last December. He stayed in touch, and frequently reiterated – both verbally and in writing – his wish to be buried at the Acres. Pastor Scott Hardy, of the Great Victory Church in Orwell, was the officiant at Bernie’s burial on Tuesday, April 25<sup>th</sup> – a cold and rainy day. Despite the inclemency of the weather, a number of Bernie’s friends gathered at the graveside to share memories and prayers. Pastor Scott recounted how Bernie had continued to refer to Unity Acres as the ‘Old Homestead’. (In my conversations with him, Bernie never failed to express his gratitude to Father McVey and the Acres for helping him to get sober.)

Solomon died at Saint Joe's on February 22 – a few weeks past his 78<sup>th</sup> birthday. He had been a continuous presence at Unity Acres for at least the last 15 or more years, living for most of those years in the 'Annex'. In his younger days, Solomon made the Acres his winter quarters for at the least another 15 or more years. Solomon was a quiet and dignified man, well-liked by all, who for a long time assisted with the annual efforts at winterization of the buildings by stapling into place heavy sheets of plastic film onto window-frames. In more recent years, Solomon assisted as well in the laundry, assuring that other members of the community should be able to be properly dressed, and answering thereby Jesus' word at Matthew 26, 36, *I was shivering and you clothed me*. During the last months of his life, other members of the community (Mark and Dave, especially) watched out for Solomon and tended to his needs, enabling him to remain at the Acres, as was his wish, until circumstances necessitated a final phone call to 911, and transportation by ambulance to the hospital in Syracuse... Solomon's wonderful family (who know him by his birth-name, Sultan) joined us for dinner on the evening of Easter Sunday, and again the following morning for prayers, and tears, in the chapel, and at the graveside, and finally in breaking bread.

*May the souls of our friends, Solomon, and Bernie, rest in peace. And may their families and friends be consoled of their sorrows. Amen.*



Prayer: Easter (Spring) 2017  
COME HOLY SPIRIT

*For all of us who need you and pray for your gifts  
here at Unity Acres, and all of our extended family, we pray:*

- To be fully reconciled to the Father and each other*
- To see with the eyes of faith the tomb of Christ, now living the glory  
of His Resurrection—the stone rolled back*
- To listen (attentively) to the Good News — Jesus is Risen!  
Christ our hope is Risen, obtaining a new life for us.  
Risen Lord, have mercy, accept our grateful hearts.*

*--Father Jones*