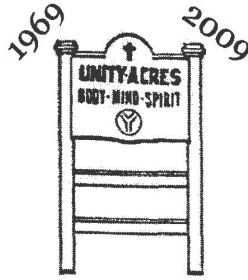


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40th Anniversary

Dear Friends of Unity Acres:

November 10, 2008

Monday, a chilly, raw and snowy evening: the sun is setting and it is rapidly getting dark. A thin coat of wet snow blankets the land and is caught in the branches of trees. Ah, November. As day fades into night, electric lights shine through the windows of the Star Building, our Dining Hall. It is a few moments before five o'clock, and groups of men, twos and threes, are now crossing the slushy driveway, making their way to the evening meal, a ham dinner. Over head, clouds hang low; snow continues to fall.

As temperatures drop, and the days grow shorter and darker, and traveling becomes more difficult with hazardous weather, icy roads and so on, (and nerves get frazzled, and patience grows shorter...), the exigencies and demands of providing hospitality, of welcoming the stranger, grow particularly acute with the onset of the long, cold winter months.

Today's snowfall is the second of the season so far. On October 28 a major storm swept through parts of Northern Oswego County leaving in its wake power outages and nearly impassable roads: a foretaste of the winter to come. Trees that hadn't already shed their leaves lost limbs or were uprooted; young birches and aspens bent over like upside down U's under the weight of ice and wet snow. Driving along Route 2 from Richland to the four corners in Orwell that evening, often a lonely stretch of road at night in any event, a traveler would have seen no vehicles moving and no lights in any of the houses along the road, until passing Unity Acres where the lights were illuminated and the power was on, and consequently furnaces were running and the men here were keeping warm. All thanks to the very large generator that was installed here about 15 years ago, and which is able to provide sufficient power to run the entire electrical service for Unity Acres as long as our supply of diesel fuel lasts.

NEEDS AT UNITY ACRES:

Canned Goods (#10)

Bake Beans

Instant Potatoes

Sugar

Cold Cereal

Coffee

Toiletry Articles

The work of installing new windows in 'A' Building began on Monday, October 27, and was completed on Thursday of the same week. Jim Brown, the contractor, was assisted by Joe, Gardner and Darren. Thirty-five new windows were installed in upper two stories of 'A' Building, including in all the residents' rooms, the bathrooms, and the hallways of those floors. These windows, replacing as they do 70-year-old windows from the original construction of the building should reduce drafts and make the building more comfortable for the men who reside therein, and easier to heat. So we are glad to have this project completed before the winter of 2008-09 sets in in earnest.

In the days following our first snowfall, other preparations have been made for the onslaught of winter: our 4-wheel drive Silverado pick-up, which we use for hauling trash to the transfer station just past Richland throughout the year, has been re-outfitted with its snowplow. A new snow-blower has been purchased; snow-shovels have been taken out of storage and placed strategically at the entrances of each building. The two sheds, next to the outdoor boiler, have been filled with firewood. The former hay barn has been filled with firewood as well. The lumber company that has been harvesting some trees from our forested land has suspended its activities until next year. On a weekly basis, our cargo van heads south toward Syracuse, empty, and with a small amount of cash and perhaps a check to pick up necessary supplies and to receive donated food items from a number of vendors that have been supporting the needs of the men for many years.

There is food in the pantry, there is plenty to eat. There is clothing for the winter months (Coats, boots and socks) to be shared out in the North Wing's clothing room, all carefully sorted by size. Coffee is brewing in the coffee room. The furnaces are up and running: we are keeping warm. All is well. We thank you, as always, for your constant generosity which provides so well for our material needs.

November 24, 2008

Sunday, November 23rd was the Feast of Christ the King, and the last Sunday before the beginning of Advent. Sister Monica Nortz, president of our board, and I were privileged to speak about Unity Acres during the weekend Masses, Sister Monica at Immaculate Conception in Fayetteville and I at Blessed Sacrament in Eastwood. The Gospel reading for the Feast of Christ the King was taken from Matthew 25:31-46, the culmination of Jesus' long discourse on the final age and judgment, and presented in Matthew's Gospel immediately preceding the account of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. It is a Gospel reading with strong resonance to those of us with any connection to the work of Unity Acres: We read and re-read this passage, and we struggle as we attempt to put it into practice, and we stumble and fall.

And we can only recognize him and serve him in the midst of a community of hospitality with eyes and ears trained by scripture and ready to confess the blindness and deafness that often plagues our very offer of hospitality to the poor and sometimes the rich.

Ed Loring, *Hospitality*,
October 2005

Jesus foretells the Last Judgment and describes his own kingship: the Son of Man will come in glory, and like a shepherd, he will separate sheep from goats. The king, the Son of Man, will reward those who greeted him, and served and loved him, even unknowingly.

*“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or imprisoned and visit you?” And the king will say to them in reply, “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for these least brothers of mine, **you did for me.**”* (Matthew 25:37-40)

The Catechism instructs that “the corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all of these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.”

The work and the spirit of hospitality and welcome that is so much part of the daily life of Unity Acres is animated and made possible by the generosity of our benefactors and donors, by the guidance and support offered by our members and our board of directors. The day-to-day efforts of the staff and volunteers in handling the various administrative chores advances the work of hospitality and welcome. But in reflecting on the words of Christ in the Gospel cited above, and applying those words to our experiences here at the Acres, it is clear that it is the men themselves who embody most fully the actions of the righteous in Christ's teaching about the Last Judgment. The men greet and serve and meet one another's needs, in living out the day-to-day routine of the Acres, and in a spirit of mutual assistance.

Giving food to the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger. These are the activities around which daily life at the Acres plays out, hour by hour, minute by minute. In the kitchen and dining hall, the hungry are fed, in the canteen where the hospitality of a warm cup of coffee is on offer. In the clothing room and in the laundry, all necessary clothing items are available, and clothing is made clean and fit for continued use. In the dormitory, new and returning residents are received, and in the community at large, the stranger is welcomed and made to feel he is at home. All of these activities, illustrating as they do the words of Jesus (the Christ, the King!) in Matthew 25, and many others so necessary and so vital to the accomplishment of the work of hospitality which lays at the heart of mission of Unity Acres, are fulfilled by the men. In so doing, they serve one another, and they serve, perhaps unknowingly, the Christ who is hidden within.

The bus from Syracuse stops at Pulaski around 6pm. At this time of the year, it will already be dark by that hour. It will undoubtedly be cold outside as well. When a man is returning to the Acres after an absence, or perhaps is preparing to settle here for the first time, he will be met at the bus-stop in Pulaski by one of our drivers. A meal has been prepared and put aside for him. Clothing items are made available to him, as are toiletry items. A bed in the basement dormitory is prepared, and the men in the dorm will help the newcomer or to get settled in. He will be welcomed by our staff and volunteers, but more importantly, by the existing members of the community.

We thank you again, our benefactors, for helping us to put into place all the necessary material supports that will allow all of us at the Acres, to greet this, our homeless and hungry brother, this hidden Christ, with warmth and love.

Stephen Dickhout

(November is dedicated to our departed loved ones.)

NOVEMBER PRAYER:
GOD'S PRESENCE:
IN OUR ST. MARTIN DE
PORRES CEMETERY

“Lord Jesus, by Your own three days in the tomb, You hallowed the graves of all who believe in You. Grant that our brothers and sisters may sleep here in peace until You awaken them to glory.” – Rite of Committal

O God, Your consoling presence blesses this final resting place for 203 of our brothers and sisters. This sacred place looks out over our home, where we the living are offered peace and security. You are present

- in the serene simplicity of this holy ground;
- in the circle of tall, stately trees, an honor guard, ever present to our loved ones;
- in the brook that sings a constant song of life. Its ever-flowing waters give us a hint of eternity, of the waters of everlasting life;
- You are present to our departed ones resting here in the hope of resurrection to new life.

Thank You, God, for Your presence in our cemetery.

“Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine on them. May the souls of all the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.” – Rite of Committal

“But as for me, I know that my Vindicator lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust; Whom I myself shall see: my own eyes, not another's shall behold him.” – Job 19: 25, 27.

Father Robert Jones