

FROM SISTER MARY

Dear Friends of Emmaus,

After spending forty years in the soup kitchen, I'm beginning to understand the Leonard Cohen quote that appears on the cover of the newsletter:

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.*

Everywhere I look I see a fissure. In the system that keeps people in poverty and homelessness, in our efforts to help that often result in widening divisions, in lives broken by addictions, and certainly in all the "cracks" that I find in myself.

Some may look at Emmaus as a house of broken dreams, but everywhere I look I also see light breaking through. All you need to do is read the comments from staff, volunteers and guests that appear in this issue and you will see what I mean.

Lately, I've been thinking about the Cohen quote and the fire that devastated our soup kitchen two years ago. At first glance it seemed like a huge crack in the Emmaus story. How could we continue to serve our guests? Would we have to close for months to repair the kitchen or build a new one? Should we move the kitchen? Where would we get the money to do what needed to be done?

After much prayer and deliberation, we decided to stay put and reimagine the two buildings that stood next to each other serving as our soup kitchen and pantry. Your generosity enabled us to repair and update the damaged kitchen and connect it to the pantry. This substantially expanded our serving space and enabled us to open a much needed family room.

Now, when I mingle with the children and their parents or guardians in the new family area, I think to myself: Out of the ashes of the fire, out of the "crack" in the Emmaus story, came this lovely room. Here families can eat together, children are better protected, and family dignity is preserved.

Indeed, there is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.

Sister Mary

Sister Mary Miller, OSB
Director of Emmaus Ministries



Ring the bells
that still can ring
Forget your
perfect offering
There is a crack
in everything

that's how
the light
gets in.

- Leonard Cohen

FOR THE RECORD:

Festive Easter Dinner: Bright tablecloths and colorful flowers adorn the tables; the scent of ham and potatoes drifts through the air; and each guest is gifted a bag filled with candies. It's Easter at Emmaus Soup Kitchen.

Before the meal began, Sister Mary Miller, director of Emmaus Ministries, welcomed all the guests into the dining room, recounted the story of Jesus on the walk to Emmaus, and led a short prayer. Guests then shared a meal and received their Easter candy bags.

"Receiving Easter candy might seem like such a simple thing," Sister Mary said, "but for some of our guests, it can be a thoughtful gift. Where else would they be able to get something so lovely and delicious?"

The candy was donated in part by Romolo Chocolates, who provided more than \$700 worth of chocolates and jellybeans. Volunteers put together over 250 bags of Easter candy and treats for guests, each filled with Peeps, more chocolate: Dove and Snickers, and a plastic egg with a special gift tucked inside.

Sister Mary continued: "This Easter celebration exemplifies our desire for each guest to have ordinary things – like Easter candy – in beautiful ways."



Sisters Claire Marie and Lucia Surmik set tables for the Easter meal.



Volunteers serve the Easter meal.



Volunteers fill Easter bags with candy.

Preservation Erie: The Studio at Saint Mary's: Space to Create was named by Preservation Erie as one of three recipients of its 2017 Greater Erie Awards. The awards, given annually to individuals, businesses or organizations that are exceptional stewards of the physical and cultural landscape that is Greater Erie, were presented Thursday, April 27 at the Masonic Temple Ballroom.

The Studio at Saint Mary's: Space to Create, 310 East 10th, was opened by Emmaus Ministries, Inc., an outreach of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, in Fall 2015. The building provides studios for 13 artists and innovative programs that can impact center-city Erie. Our after-



school program, Sister Gus' Kids Cafe, has

been located on the ground floor of the building since 2000. Because Emmaus' mission is to "feed the body and care for the soul" the building was renovated with the intent of providing stability, spirituality, and beauty to the neighborhood.

Rapid Repairs: "Look at these chairs," said Sister Mary Miller, director of Emmaus Ministries, to Stephanie Gear, coordinator of the Kids Cafe. "The fabric is so used – maybe we should call someone and get these redone." The next day, Stephanie sent a picture of the children reupholstering the chairs with this caption: "We eat together, learn together, play together, and recover chairs together."



Sister Mary Miller receives a Preservation Erie Award created by driftwood artist Brian Pardini.



Children at the Kids Cafe repair the furniture.

Sisters Mary Miller and Rosanne Lindal-Hynes hold the new Emmaus sign at the Soup Kitchen. It replaces the sign that was damaged in last year's fire.

FACE TO FACE

We asked Emmaus volunteers and staff:

Do you see any connection between Emmaus and the Leonard Cohen quote: “There is a crack in everything/ that’s how the light gets in”?



What seems dark also brings forth light. I hear the things our guests are suffering, and yet I find a great resiliency in them, because they still hold on to hope. Based on their troubled journeys, this is inspiring – it brings light. At the soup kitchen are gathered a group of people whose diverse experiences could overwhelm us all with grief, but who, overall, contain such resiliency, such hope.

– *Rita Scrimenti, Emmaus Social Worker*



We all have light and darkness within ourselves. Hopefully the light shines brightest. I’ve heard of a Native American tradition in which each piece of pottery is purposefully made with a crack in it. That crack is a reminder that nothing is perfect except the Divine. The crack is the holy space.

– *Ann Daugherty, Emmaus Soup Kitchen volunteer*



We all have our cracks, failings, weaknesses... We are here to reinforce each other. I get so much from the people here – many times I leave with something meaningful to think about because of what someone said. And at the soup kitchen I receive more “God bless you” greetings than I get anywhere else.

– *Mary Nelson, Emmaus Soup Kitchen volunteer*

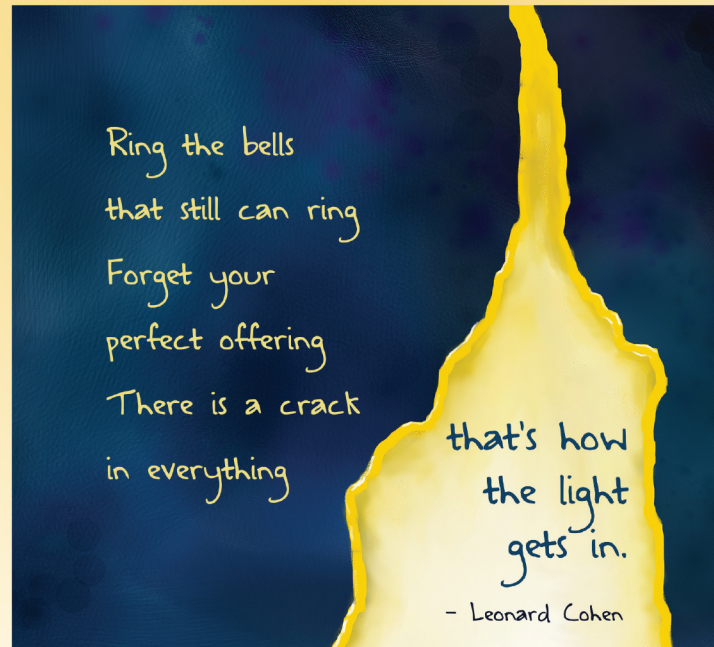
It’s easy to get depressed with the things that are happening in the world and the circumstances of the guests who are coming to the soup kitchen. People don’t realize how easily they can break other people! But coming here to Emmaus helps. Here, no one is trying to one-up the next person. Here, you can wear whatever you want and be yourself. That’s where the light comes in.

– *Kathe Wilson, Emmaus Soup Kitchen volunteer*



The poor too often live with hand-me-downs and broken items for years because they can’t afford to fix things. The renovations of the Emmaus Soup Kitchen brought newness and beauty into this world of poverty and cast-offs. I’m struck by how often our guests recognize these changes. I thought the kitchen was welcoming before – but it’s obviously much more appealing now.

– *Margaret Kloecker, Emmaus Administrative Assistant*



I come to know the families, stories, and especially the heartaches of the people who come to the food pantry. And they come to know the same about me. Sometimes they don’t want to know my heartache, but it happens, it’s mutual.

– *Pam Eckberg, Emmaus Food Pantry volunteer*



SOUP'S ON: An Emmaus Journal

Soup's On: An Emmaus Journal is a new feature on the Emmaus website written by staff member Breanna Mekuly. To read about the daily happenings of Emmaus, check out www.emmauserie.org.

People show up at the soup kitchen for lots of reasons—to get a meal, make a donation, help serve, take a tour, find friendship. But today was an Emmaus first. A family arrived at the door carrying a small stone with these words printed on it: “Eat an evening meal at the Emmaus Soup Kitchen.” Seems Holy Cross parish in Fairview distributed stones to its parishioners with suggested Lenten activities that could “turn your hearts of stone into hearts of flesh” (Ezek 36:26). “Normally we could go to a restaurant and pay for a family meal,” the father explained, “but we’re at the soup kitchen today because we received this stone. In that case, I’d like to make a donation.” He pulled out some cash from his pocket and handed it to Sister Karen Oprencok. The family sat down and ate their evening meal at Emmaus.

The streets are rough. Home life can be difficult. Masculinity codes demand that boys are always emotionally strong. When you’re a black teenage boy living in the inner city of Erie, where do you go to cry? “Some of our boys here have to be father-figures at home and feel the need to be tough for their mothers,” said Stephanie Gear, the coordinator of the Kids Cafe. More than a few times her office has become a safe space for the teenaged boys to let out frustration, anger, hurt, and tears.

I’m not sure I want to go to the kitchen today. I love working with the kids in the family room. I like to greet them and serve them and engage in conversation with them. But sometimes, when I’m feeling frustrated with the systems in society that make it necessary for children to come to a soup kitchen just to be fed for the night, I find it difficult to smile and be cheery. Rather, I’d like to stand up and shout, “THIS ISN’T FAIR. I’M SO SICK OF THIS INJUSTICE!” But I’m here to be present to the children’s immediate needs and so I put a smile on my face when I serve them.

“I’m surprised by how much a cremation costs!” Sister Rosanne Lindal-Hynes said. How are the poor supposed to honor and bury their dead when they can’t even afford food to survive?

What a treat for our food pantry guests—a Second Harvest Food Bank truck filled with fresh produce is arriving at the pantry twice a month until Fall. There was an extra bounce in the steps of our pantry guests as they carried home bags filled with bananas, apples, mushrooms, lettuce, mangoes, potatoes, oranges, and peppers.



FOOD FOR THE SOUL



Guests pray before the Easter meal at Emmaus.

Paschal Time is a season for celebrating the Christ who lives in us still.

Over and over, those who discovered the living Christ in their lives were changed forever by it.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus recognize Christ “in the breaking of the bread.”

At Emmaus Soup Kitchen, we recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread as well.

There the poor for whom Christ gave his life now wait for us to raise them to new life.

The resurrection will never be complete until we do.

—from Joan Chittister in *A Monastery Almanac*

LET US GIVE THANKS TO:

DOM AND MARCIA FRISINA for donating homemade peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for guests to take home... **SISTER MIRIAM MASHANK** and the **GETTING AHEAD PROGRAM** for working with our pantry guests to train for and hopefully find jobs... **106.3 WCTL RADIO STATION** for donating over 400 handmade Valentine's Day cards for our soup kitchen guests... a group of sixth grade girls from **OUR LADY'S CHRISTIAN SCHOOL** for baking and donating cookies... members of the **WESTPORT BRANCH OF ERIE INSURANCE** for sharing a financial donation collected by having a "wear jeans" day... employees at **SELECT SPECIALITY HOSPITAL OF ERIE** for contributing funds gathered during a "Soup-er Bowl" cook-off... sophomores at **COLLEGIATE ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL** for collecting canned goods for the soup kitchen during their Sophomore Lockdown event... **LA NUOVA AURORA** for sharing \$1000 of their small games of chance revenue... volunteers at **SERVERIE** for giving the Kids Cafe a thorough spring cleaning... the parishioners and Knights of Columbus at **ST. GEORGE PARISH** for donating over 1000 pounds of canned goods during their "40 Cans for Lent" food drive... **BARB RUF, JUDI LAMB, AND THE BETA SIGMA PHI ALPHA ETA MASTER GROUP** for making 16 Easter baskets for the children at the soup kitchen... the **GANNON UNIVERSITY HONOR SOCIETIES** for donating canned goods from their Golden Harvest collection... **JOHN LIPCHIK** for donating hundreds of reusable grocery bags... and **BYHAM'S INSURANCE SERVICES** for donating canned food items.

In Memory

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

Richard Dawson Bliley	James Terrence "Terry" Lynch
Mary Ellen Bujnoski	Katherine M. Imig Middendorf
Richard H. Kuhn, M.D.	Laura M. Nunes
M. Louise Cooper Luddy	Arthur E. Pinczewski
Frank J. Vietmeier	

We also remember Emmaus Volunteers:

Donald F. Robinson, Jr.
Amelia Martinez Thayer

STAFF: Mary Miller, OSB; Margaret Kloecker; Claire Marie Surmik, OSB; Lucia Surmik, OSB; Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, OSB; Rita Scrimenti; Shirley Whaley; Stephanie Grear; Breanna Mekuly; and Karen Oprechok, OSB; Companion Editor, Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB; Layout, Judy Allison

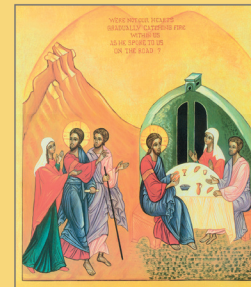


345 East Ninth Street • Erie, PA 16503-1107
www.emmauserie.org

www.emmauserie.org

Emmaus Office: 345 E. 9th St., Erie, PA 16503-1107
814-459-8349

EMMAUS ICON
Icon *Road to Emmaus*
Iconographer: Sister Marie-Paul, OSB
© Monastère des Bénédictines du Mont des Oliviers, Jerusalem
Image provided by The Printery House of Conception Abbey



They came to know Christ in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24:35