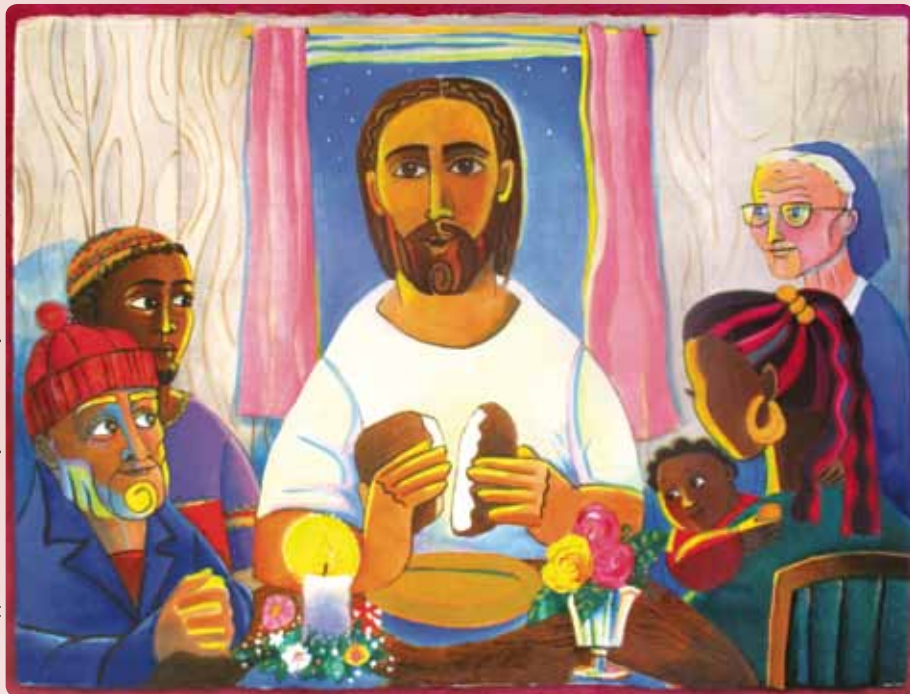




# The Companion

February 2015  
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www.emmauserie.org



There are people in the world so hungry,  
that God cannot appear to them  
except in the form of bread.

Mahatma Gandhi

## FROM SISTER MARY:



Dear Friends of Emmaus,

Somewhere in your life you probably read or heard the classic story, “Stone Soup.” You remember:

Once upon a time two visitors arrive in a village with an empty cooking pot and find the townsfolk unwilling to share any of their food with the hungry travellers. So the visitors fill the kettle with water and a few stones and tell the curious villagers that they are making “stone soup.” Soon the intrigued onlookers begin to share a “garnish” or a “seasoning” that results in a delicious and nourishing soup that is shared by all.

Fr. Mike DeMartinis read the folktale to the entire student body at Saint Luke Elementary School to kick off a day of service to benefit Emmaus Soup Kitchen during Catholic Schools Week in January. Fr. Mike told the 400 students gathered “if everyone does a little, it can make a huge difference...like feeding over 200 people at the Soup Kitchen.”

It’s a charming story that got me thinking...really aren’t you always in the process of making the “stone soup” that enables Emmaus to continue, aren’t all of you constantly adding ingredients that make the “soup” kitchen possible? Some of you donate financially, others volunteer, many provide meals or host fundraisers for Emmaus. Because of you over 50,000 meals a year are served at the kitchen, dozens of children enjoy a meal every afternoon at the Kids Cafe and 700 households receive weekly groceries from the Emmaus food pantry. Indeed, you make it possible that “a delicious and nourishing pot of soup is enjoyed by all.”



*Sister Mary*

## FACE TO FACE

**SISTER PAT WITULSKI** is a new staff member at Emmaus. An elementary school teacher in Buffalo for 29 years, she joined the Benedictine Sisters of Erie in 2012.

### I came to the soup kitchen because....

I am passionate about working with the poor and homeless. I really believe it's my call from God.



### If I sent a friend a postcard from the soup kitchen it would say...

Since we both grew up in the same neighborhood, Barbara, I thought you'd enjoy this. Today one of our guests was using foul language and being disruptive so I asked him to leave. He started to give me a hard time and

another guest said to me, "Sister I have your back." "I immediately shot back, "Listen, I grew up on the east side of Buffalo. I don't need help. I can take care of myself." Everybody chuckled but they did back off. Seriously, if you're ever in the area, Barbara, come and see the place. Your life will change.

### A person at the soup kitchen that I'd like you to meet is...

David, a young man who is now in a wheelchair because of an accident he had while driving under the influence. David and I have a pact. He prays for me daily and I help him with his meals, cutting his food in small pieces so he can eat more easily. David has an incredible spirit and a perpetual smile. Every day he tells me how blessed he is even though he can do very few personal things for himself. He's taught me a lot about the simple grace of gratefulness. So let me answer that first question again. Why did I come to Emmaus? I came to Emmaus because I needed to meet people like David. I came to Emmaus to meet God in the most unexpected places.

**STEPHANIE GREAR**, coordinator of the Sister Gus' Kids Cafe for the past two years, is preparing events to celebrate the 15th anniversary of this Emmaus after-school program.

### I came to the Kids Cafe because...

I wanted to make a difference in the lives of children. I wanted the Kids Cafe to be a safe place where children had positive experiences. I needed to "come and try."

### If I sent a friend a postcard from Kids Cafe it would say...

I'd like to tell you about all our creative and generous volunteers who make every day at the Kids Cafe an adventure in opportunity. But since a postcard limits words, let me just mention ServeMore and what they did for the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday celebrations. This sophomore service group from Gannon University did a "Cloud Dreams" project with the children based on King's "I Have A Dream" speech. Each child drew a large cloud and inserted a personal dream into the cloud. For example, one child wrote, "I hope that I can learn to dance well enough to teach hip-hop to children." The next week they melted multi-colored crayons with the children and mixed them together into a single large painting as a lesson in diversity. Because of volunteers like ServeMore, no two days here are the same. What stays the same is how eager the children are to show you what they've accomplished and to open up and share something new about themselves.



### A person at the Kids Cafe that I'd like you to meet is...

Well, I invite you to meet all of our Kids Cafe children, each of whom has talents and gifts if we just take the time to discover them. Like, "T," for example, a teenager who comes across with a pretty tough exterior. Over time I have built a relationship with her and have peeled away some of those layers to find a very caring girl. During the holidays a benefactor gave us free tickets to the Nutcracker Ballet and she and a friend went. This was the first time she experienced a ballet. Afterwards she was so excited about it and told the staff, "It was elegant. And there were no words."

## FOCUS FEATURE: *Heart for the Poor*

As chair of the Employees Community Service Fund of General Electric (GE), ROB CELESKI has coordinated contributions to many social service agencies in Erie, including Emmaus. Last winter Rob extended his outreach to the poor by volunteering at almost all of Erie's mobile overflow shelters—overnight sites for the homeless that moved from church to church from November to March. The following is an excerpt from a longer interview with Rob that appears on the Emmaus website [www.emmauserie.org](http://www.emmauserie.org)

### *Who did you find at the shelters?*

I found people who had day jobs. I found veterans. I met a pregnant woman. I met a man trying to go to school. I saw people who had been drinking. I met one man who told me he usually sleeps in a parking ramp. He said he was glad to have a place because it gets really cold in there with all the concrete.

I posted to my Facebook page to let others know about the shelter. I posted a picture of the “cots” and asked, “Can you imagine sleeping on a cot and you are pregnant?” One night it was 7 degrees. I asked people to think about being outside all night. Some guys had to get up and leave early and walk to work, a few were working down at the shipyard. I saw people who had stayed in shelters before and those who had never done so. There were people who took care of their bed space and those that did not. Some were clean and some were not so clean. But all were grateful to be inside. I tried to personally help one individual and learned that some people are not ready, for whatever reasons, to change their lives.

I was going to help them, but they helped me. It was healing and gratifying and gave me a different way of seeing the homeless. I now look at people on the streets with “new eyes”—we are all the same.



## FOR the RECORD:

### *“Soup”er Idea* ALL IT TOOK WAS AN IDEA.

And sharing that idea with a friend to make a unique happening take place at St. Luke's Elementary School. Gretchen Petrarca, art teacher at St. Luke's, had the idea—let's get the entire school involved in a soup kitchen project. The friend she went to was Father Mike DeMartinis, a pastor, teacher, and actor, who volunteers at the soup kitchen and has worked with Gretchen

on many theatre productions. Together they devised a plan that added special meaning to the children's observance of Catholic Schools Week in January. Every grade was asked to contribute specific items for their part of the meal-- sandwich baggies and aluminum foil, celery, carrots, bread, cold cuts, broth, pasta and cookies. Fr. Mike

worked with 1st and 2nd graders to prepare 2 large pots of minestrone soup. Three hundred veggie snack bags were assigned to Grades 3 and 4. The 5th and 6th graders packed 300 cookie snack bags and the 7th and 8th graders prepared and wrapped 200 ham and cheese sandwiches. Additionally, they made a donation from monies collected from their “dress down” day. Fr. Mike has been treating soup kitchen guests to his tasty soups two days a week throughout these winter days.



### *PJ Chic* PAJAMAS, PJ'S, JAMMIES...

However you refer to them, they are not just for nightwear anymore. Pajama bottoms are combined with all types of tops for daytime outfits for children and adults. When Becky Kathman, Kids Cafe cook, noticed many of the children wearing pajama bottoms she went beyond her job description and suggested a pajama sewing class. With the assistance of Kids Cafe volunteers, Jan Gehrlin and Kay Hosterman and three sewing machines, the trio began teaching classes. “The classes started with 12 children and grew to over 30, including a few boys,” said Jan. The highlight was a Pajama Fashion Show that was covered by the *Erie Times-News*.



## HOLIDAY GRATITUDE

Christmas dinner was barely over before Sister Rosanne Lindal-Hynes began preparing for her 2015 Emmaus Christmas Gift Program for Children. As the Woman's Advocate for Emmaus, Sister Rosanne coordinates the purchase and distribution of Christmas gifts for over 2,000 Emmaus children—putting 400 children on her personal shopping list. So on the day after Christmas, armed with discount coupons, she headed out to purchase on-sale winter coats for next year. Sister Rosanne's extraordinary self-giving seems to bring out a similar response in others. In one store she met a woman who asked, "What are you doing with all those winter coats in your cart?" When Sister Rosanne explained, the woman gave her a 50% off coupon and then bought four coats with her own money. In a checkout line of another store, a gentleman approached Sister Rosanne and asked about her overflowing cart. When she told him about the program he reached into his wallet and donated toward the bill. "I am always touched by these random acts of kindness," Sister Rosanne explained, "but it's the hundreds of people who make this program possible year after year that touch my heart the most." Sister Rosanne is talking about all the churches, book clubs, volunteers, families, civic groups, high school and college students, who purchase gifts each year for a family or two and her dedicated band of "elves" who from October to December register the children and then wrap and distribute the gifts.



Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, OSB, (green jacket) with some of her Emmaus "elves."

### Let us *ALSO* give thanks to:

**ERIE'S PEEBLES STORE** for again designating funds to the Emmaus Christmas gift program from its fall "30 Days of Giving" campaign where customers received a 40% savings coupon when they donated to Emmaus . . .

**EDNA SIEGEL, OWNER OF PANACHE SALON AND SPA,** whose 10th Annual Customer Appreciation Day offered patrons discount incentives when they contributed food items and cash donations for Emmaus . . .



**OWNER BILL RIEGER AND THE STAFF AT DOMINICK'S 24 HOUR EATERY** for serving a free Thanksgiving meal to Erie's poor and also for collecting donations from regular patrons for Emmaus Soup Kitchen . . .



**KELLEY GLASS AND ANDREA HALLMAN** for coordinating the 20th annual winter coat drive for Emmaus, along with the **PARISH-ONERS OF ST. JUDE PARISH . . .**



**VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE KIDS CAFE CHRISTMAS STORE** where 60 children enjoyed a Christmas shopping experience choosing gifts for each family member and themselves that were wrapped, tagged and ready for them to put under their own trees . . .



**AUTO RACERS FOR KIDS** who awarded \$9,000 to Sister Gus' Kids Cafe, one of four charities who benefited from its year-long fundraising events . . .



**ST. PETER SCHOOL STUDENTS AND ERIE DAY SCHOOL STUDENTS** (above) for their holiday food drives that helped stock the Emmaus Emergency Food Pantry shelves . . .

**CARL LARESE, OWNER OF LARESE FLORAL DESIGN,** for giving free bouquets of a dozen flowers to anyone who donated nonperishable items or cash gifts to Emmaus as part of FTD's National Good Neighbor Day . . .

**RETIRED GE EMPLOYEE JOE CERMAK AND HIS WIFE SHERRIE** for donating 20 new oak veneer dining tables to the soup kitchen through the GE Matching Gifts Program . . .

**CONNECTING HANDS,** a volunteer group that raises funds for non-profits, for choosing Emmaus Ministries to receive proceeds from its Holiday garage sale that totaled \$5,000 . . .



**EVELYN SEYBOLDT** for mailing out 134 post cards to invite friends to bake holiday cookies for Emmaus guests and then hosting a party to box the treats that were distributed as gifts at the annual Emmaus Christmas dinner . . .



**THE INDIA ASSOCIATION** for hosting its annual Christmas Lunch and **MOUNT CALVARY PARISH** for donating gifts that are given to guests at the Christmas Day dinner that is prepared and served by members of **THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY** . . .

**THE HAPPY HATTERS KNITTING GROUP AT NIAGARA VILLAGE RETIREMENT CENTER** who contributed 200 brightly colored handmade winter hats for distribution during the Holidays . . .

**85 STUDENTS FROM CATHEDRAL PRE-PRATORY SCHOOL** for erecting a “box village” to raise awareness about hunger and homelessness in Erie and collecting donations for Emmaus Soup Kitchen . . .



## In Memory

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

Charles F. “Buster” Ankiel

Richard Buser

Paul F. Causgrove

Americo Anthony “Tony” Cipolla

Donald A. DeSimone

Carolyn Ann Gustafson

Patricia Ann (Orzechowski) Konopka

Shirley Robertson Laufenberg

Norb Madura

Francis Vital Marchal

Clifford A. “Mike” Michaels

Helen J. Piker

James A. Rieger

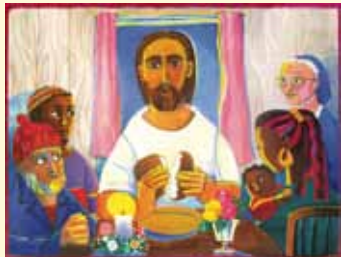
Joseph T. Rys

Georgia Vogel Schwenk

Louise Kruszewski Stein

We also remember Emmaus Volunteers:

David T. Blinzler • Barbara L. Lee • Joan M. Carney McCallion



Brother Mickey O’Neill McGrath, OSFS, painted *The Supper at Emmaus Erie* as part of the soup kitchen’s 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration that took place in 2014.

The painting hangs in the kitchen’s main dining room.

STAFF: Mary Miller, OSB; Margaret Kloecker; Claire Marie Surmik, OSB; Lucia Surmik, OSB  
Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, OSB; Rita Scrimanti; Shirley Whaley, Pat Whtulski, OSB and Stephanie Grear  
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### EMMAUS ICON

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Marie-Paul, OSB  
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des Oliviers, Jerusalem  
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They came  
to know Him  
in the breaking  
of the bread.

Luke 24:35