



FROM SISTER MARY:

Dear Friends of Emmaus,

Karen Oprenoch, who is exploring life with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, wrote the icon on this cover of our newsletter. Twice a week Karen serves at the Emmaus Food Pantry as part of her initiation into the Benedictine lifestyle.

I asked her if we could feature the icon, *Our Lady of the Sign*, because part of the newsletter deals with the issue of women and poverty. And if anyone identified with the poor it was Mary of Nazareth and her son, Jesus. Not only was Jesus born in poverty to a pregnant, homeless teenager in a temporary shelter used by cattle, wrapped in swaddling clothes (used castoffs) and attended to by the shepherds, the poorest of the poor, but Jesus gave his life to identifying with the poor—I was hungry and you fed Me, thirsty and you gave Me to drink.... As you know, Pope Francis has been extremely strong in calling us to enter into the lives of the poor and hungry. If we follow his invitation, that means becoming aware that 75 percent of the world's starving people and 89 percent of its homeless refugees are women and their dependent children. And then doing something about it.



Sr. Lucia Surmik, Karen and Sr. Claire Marie Surmik at the Food Pantry

I see in miniature the plight of women worldwide at all Emmaus Ministries. Seventy-five percent of the children who attend the Kids Cafe come from female headed households. Women who come weekly to our pantry for a food bag outnumber the men by more than a 100 a day. The overwhelming majority of the women are trying to raise single families or make meager Social Security checks stretch. Karen's biggest surprise at the pantry was the amount of food distributed each week, mainly to women. "Last week we gave away 1,300 dozen eggs in four hours," she told me. "That's 15,600 eggs!"

And during my 40 years at the Soup Kitchen, I've met hundreds of women behind the poverty statistics. Women like Roberta who is in her 60s and comes to eat at the kitchen every day and stays after to take out the garbage and clean tables. She lives alone and picks up a little money working at menial cleaning jobs that don't pay enough for her to find a decent apartment and pay for food. If we had space, I could introduce you to a gallery of women whose faces and stories of poverty, abuse, lack of education, and homelessness would break your heart.

When I asked Karen, as a new volunteer, what her greatest concern and hope were regarding Emmaus, she had a very insightful answer. "My hope is that as long as there is a need, Emmaus can feed the hungry of Erie," she said. "My concern is that there will always be a need."

My hope is the same as Karen's. My concern is that we will not seriously address the women's issue and so there will always be a need. Right now, in no country on earth are women and men yet equal. If we're serious about helping the poor, we have to change that.

Sister Mary



FACE TO FACE:

Joan Chittister on Women and Poverty

ERIE BENEDECTINE SISTER JOAN CHITTISTER, a board member of Emmaus Ministries, has traveled the globe, seeing first hand the plight of women in developing and war torn countries, and has written and spoken extensively on the topic.

Why is poverty a women's issue?

We cannot assume that women are equal in a society until their economic level is universally equal to a man's. Everywhere in the world, women are 2/3 of the illiterate; 2/3 of the hungry; and 2/3 of the poorest of the poor. We cannot say that we are concerned about poverty and do nothing to raise the economic, educational and social position of women.



Sister Joan with children on a visit to South Korea

Advocate for a higher minimum wage; participate in local food distribution projects; give generously to local soup kitchens and children's programs. Make the poverty of others as serious a question as your own. Realize that what is done for the poor—food, medicine, education, decent housing—affects all of us positively. It raises the quality of life for us all. It brings the reign of God on earth.

Why are women poor?

Poverty is a uniquely woman's problem because everywhere, in every society, women are denied the resources necessary to live a decent life. Their wages are routinely lower. Their high level educational opportunities are out of reach financially—and so limiting socially.

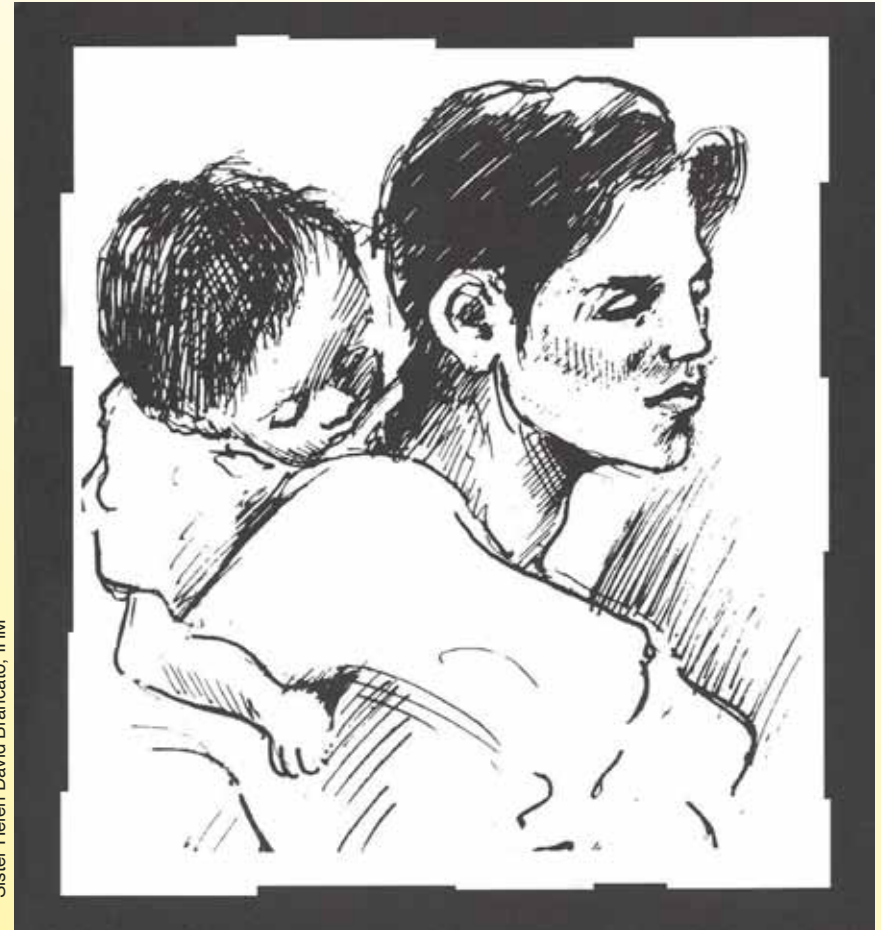
Is poverty a material or spiritual question?

For the poor, poverty and hunger are a material issue, a survival issue. For the rest of us poverty is a spiritual issue, a justice issue, a moral issue. The poor will be judged on their honesty but we will be judged on our generosity.

What can a person do to change the situation?

We must each do—something.

FOOD FOR THE SOUL:



Sister Helen David Brancato, IHM

**The question of bread for myself
is a material question,
but the question of bread for my neighbor
is a spiritual question.**

Nicolai Berdyaev

WOMEN RESPOND:

What can a person do to end poverty?

“Whenever you read a good book, somewhere in the world a door opens to allow in more light,” wrote Vera Nazarian.

The proof of that quote is Laura R. Schaaf and Heather May Caspar. After their book club read and discussed the mega-selling *Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg, the two women decided to “lean into” their own Erie community.

The book calls on women to “lean in,” to take a risk and drive change that makes a difference. “We know Erie has an unacceptable poverty rate and we decided to try to impact the problem of hungry children,” explained Schaaf.

Their idea—the door that the book opened to allow in more light—is called “Food for Kids: Cook for Friends, Feed Kids.”

Laura and Heather are initiating the fundraising idea in mid-May by inviting a dozen or so women friends to a dinner at Laura’s home. Guests who attend are asked to do two things: make a donation to the Kids Cafe and agree to host a similar gathering of women for a breakfast, lunch or dinner party.

“We are suggesting that guests donate the equivalent of what it costs to feed children at the Kids Cafe for a week or for a month,” said Caspar. In addition each person hosting a “Cook for Friends, Feed Kids” event will be given background information on the Kids Cafe, sample menus and invitations, and printed placemats with facts about the Kids Cafe. “The fundraising gatherings will be held from Memorial Day through Labor Day so that opens up lots of cook-out and grill possibilities,” said Caspar.

The co-chairs have created a Facebook where menus, pictures of dinner parties and donations can be posted. “We are modeling it on a national program FEED SUPER,” said Schaaf, “but think our tweaking of the idea is appropriate to meet a specific Erie need.”

Laura R. Schaaf is Director of Giving, Barber National Institute, and Heather May Caspar is Director of Strategic Communications & Marketing, Stairways Behavioral Health.



Laura R. Schaaf, left, and Heather May Caspar



OTHER EMMAUS FUNDRAISERS:

Two opportunities!...

to support Emmaus Ministries



Participate in
“Erie Gives”
TUESDAY,
AUGUST 11, 2015

Erie Gives is a one-day fundraiser hosted by The Erie Community Foundation. The local Foundation provides a pro-rated match to each gift made to a nonprofit. In 2014 over \$2.2 million dollars was raised for nonprofits with a total of \$200,000 in matching funds donated by The Erie Community Foundation, GE Transportation, Erie Insurance and Presque Isle Downs. The more donations made to Emmaus Ministries, the more of the matching grant Emmaus Ministries will receive.

**In 2014, Emmaus received over \$23,000
during Erie Gives.**

For more info: www.eriegives.org
Or call the Emmaus office—814-459-8349



Golf Tournament

Benefits
Sister Gus’ Kids Cafe

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, 2015
at Culbertson Hills Golf Club

Registration Forms—Call Emmaus Ministries—814-459-8349

FOR THE RECORD:

CO-FOUNDER HONORED: Ellen DiPlacido, co-founder of Emmaus Grove: The Erie Urban Farm School, was honored and named one of the “Women Making History 2015” by Mercy Center for Women. Ellen and her co-organizer, Mike Bailey, are not only preparing the 65 raised beds for the new season but both are on a speakers circuit that included talks at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center, Life Works, St. Boniface Parish and House of Mercy. “People are so interested in starting neighborhood and parish vegetable gardens,” said DiPlacido, “and we’re picking up lots of volunteers.” In 2014 Emmaus Grove grew and harvested over 2,300 lbs. of produce for the Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry.



Ellen Di Placido with Sister Mary Miller

CAN'T GET ENOUGH CEREAL: Cereal is a popular item at the Kids Cafe Store. So when Gannon University Support Staff Association (GUSSA) delivered 410 boxes of cereal to the Kids Cafe, it was a happy day. Because Gannon students volunteer at the Kids Cafe, they knew of the need and GUSSA took it as a project, sponsoring a two-week cereal drive to collect 300 boxes of cereal that all the children could take home free to their families and on the weekends. According to Melissa Lesniewski, GUSSA president, and Cindy Toland, treasurer, word about the cereal collection spread to the Erie County Court House and Crime Victim Center and even more was donated during the two week event.



“Thanks to the generosity of the Gannon community our shelves will be stocked for a long time,” said Stephanie Gear, Kids Cafe coordinator.

A SPRING THING: At the Kids Cafe, Spring means many things. It means painting ceramic eggs under the direction of volunteer Kay Hosterman. It means the annual “Guess the Number of Jelly Beans in the Jar Contest” with the winner taking home all the candy. It means the annual cleanup, where children, along with staff member Irv Salter go through the Kids Cafe East 10th Street neighborhood, garbage bags in hand, to pick up trash that was buried by winter’s snow. And it also means that the cleanup crew gets treated to the first ice cream cone of the season at Denny’s on 10th and Parade.



Dina Lauricella, seated, and volunteer Kay Hosterman help children with their egg painting project.

FIRST IMPRESSION: Sometimes a first impression is the one that sticks. That is the case for Dina Lauricella who volunteers two days at week at the Kids Cafe, mainly assisting in sports activities. Dina, who is exploring life with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, observed: “I’m surprised by the sense of community that exists among the children. Because they come from such varied and difficult backgrounds, I expected to find them acting out in a selfish survival mode—every person for themselves kind of thing. But they stick up for one another and show genuine concern for others.”

Let us give thanks to:

PEEBLES (Erie Store) and its bi-annual **Community Counts** program for \$1,230.00 collected from customers during “30 Days of Giving” in March. The proceeds benefit the Emmaus Christmas program for children . . .

FATHER MIKE DeMARTINIS who continued his “**stone soup**” project with two Catholic Schools during Lent involving all students in preparing a meal for 200 soup kitchen guests . . .

CROP HUNGER WALK OF ERIE for presenting a check to Emmaus for the 16th consecutive year as a portion of the local share from the \$66,000 raised last fall during the Annual Erie County Crop Walk.

ERIE DAY SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL for selecting the Emmaus Soup Kitchen as their **community project** for the coming year . . .



Devin, Jamie and Sam, Erie Day School students

SUE WEBER who celebrated her birthday by preparing and serving a **March picnic** at the Soup Kitchen with food items donated by friends and family in lieu of personal gifts . . .



Weber family—Richie, Sue and Rich

SUE KALISZEWSKI of **HUNGRY HOWIE'S PIZZA** for donating a **stack of coupons**, good for a free large, one item pizza, to be raffled off to Soup Kitchen guests . . .

CATHY DUDENHOEFER for creating and donating **floral centerpieces** to decorate the Soup Kitchen throughout the year . . .

The **SOPHOMORE CLASS OF COLLEGIATE ACADEMY** whose “**lock down**” event included a \$200 donation (\$1.00 from each student) and a food drive for Emmaus . . .



Cathy Dudenhoefer



Collegiate Academy students, Nico and Grant

In Memory

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

Mae E. Abram	Dennis Eugene Drake
Richard J. “Dick” Adamaszek	Daniel Driscoll
Grace M. Eck Aymong	Nona Pikiewicz Horton
Dorothy H. Bielak	Kathleen “KK” L. Kern
Marie Daniels Biletnikoff	John Joseph “Jack” Kohler
Norma Lucarotti Krahe	

STAFF: Mary Miller, OSB; Margaret Kloecker; Claire Marie Surmik, OSB; Lucia Surmik, OSB
Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, OSB; Rita Scrimment; Shirley Whaley, Pat Witulski, OSB and Stephanie Grear
Companion Editor, Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB; Layout, Judy Allison



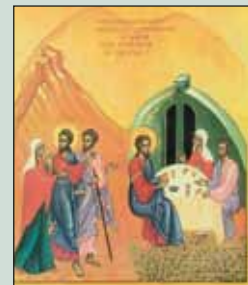
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EMMAUS ICON

Icon *Road to Emmaus*
Iconographer: Sister Marie-Paul, OSB
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Image provided by The Printery House of Conception Abbey



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

Luke 24:35

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Emmaus Ministries
thanks you