



# The Companion

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## 2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy



Sister Helen David Brancato, IHM

*In this Holy Year,  
we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts  
to those living on the outermost fringes of society.*

Pope Francis

## FOR THE RECORD: A Season of Mercy

During the Christmas season the works of mercy fill to the brim and overflow at Emmaus.

And so does our gratitude.

We want to thank all of you who made it possible for Emmaus to celebrate its Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, host the Christmas store at the Kids Cafe, help Sister Rosanne Lindal-Hynes give gifts to 2,000 children, provide warm clothing through coat drives and sponsor fundraisers and food drives on behalf of Emmaus.

In this season of mercy you have done the one thing God asks of us:  
"To do justice  
To love mercy  
To walk humbly with your God."  
(Micah 6:8)



## FROM SISTER MARY

Dear Friends of Emmaus,

**POPE FRANCIS has declared 2016  
a Jubilee Year of Mercy.**

**We are accepting his invitation and devoting  
this issue of *The Companion* to mercy.**

Three things I know for sure about mercy.

***It's hard for me to define mercy but I know it when***

***I see it.*** There was a very poor family, a father, mother and son, who came daily for dinner. They smelled so badly that when they went through the serving line people had to step back. No one would sit with them. They didn't bathe, their clothes were dirty and it's possible they didn't have toilet facilities where they lived. But when an older man from the kitchen fell and broke his hip, who went to visit him? Not me; that little family went. And who took him for a ride while he was convalescing? Not me; they did. That family is my definition of mercy.

***Mercy toward myself is the most dangerous and difficult act of mercy.*** I see the damaging effects of being unable to forgive yourself in so many people who come to the kitchen. Veterans who can't erase acts they performed in foreign lands. Victims of abuse who blame themselves. Alcoholics and drug addicts who bear the burdens of wrecking families and extinguishing promising futures. Prostitutes with no self-worth. All we do is try to love them into being. We know that if they take the dangerous step of forgiving themselves they can walk through a new door of freedom. The same holds true for each of us.

***More than anytime in human history, the earth needs our tender mercy.***

We usually think of mercy as how we treat another human being, but Pope Francis reminds us that mercy also extends to all creation.

*Sister Mary*



## FOOD FOR THE SOUL

*Let us become agents of God's mercy,  
channels through which  
God can water the earth,  
protect all creation and  
make justice and peace flourish.*

Pope Francis



## FACE TO FACE: *One thing I know for sure about mercy*



I point out to my students who are preparing for Confirmation that Moses presented us with 10 commandments to live by, but Jesus gave us just two—love God and love your neighbor. If I think about God’s awesome love for me and embrace that love, then I can’t help but return it and give it away. That’s why I volunteer at Emmaus and other places. I try to radiate God’s love to others. Sister Mary always tells us volunteers to “be the face of

Christ” in welcoming and serving guests. That to me is taking the commandments of Jesus to heart.

—**DARRELL MEYERS, soup kitchen volunteer**

Mercy is walking through life with welcoming hands outstretched. Mercy is becoming an open heart to all. Mercy is a graced gift, a turning point, a chance to begin again for both the giver and receiver. Mercy makes me think of the vow that we Benedictines take to “conversion of life.” It means that each day we begin fresh with new possibilities.

—**SISTER ROSANNE LONECK, food pantry volunteer**



When I think of mercy, I think of the God who loves me unconditionally and asks me to love others in the same manner. For example, there are times that I’m tempted to judge people who come to the soup kitchen. But then I watch how the other staff members and volunteers serve our guests with no strings attached. That to me is God-like mercy. I try to put myself on the other side of the food counter: If I were a guest at the soup kitchen, what would I want people to think about me and how would I

want them to care for me?

—**JEAN KLOECKER, soup kitchen volunteer**

Mercy is something that you give back. I’ve received kindness, compassion, consideration, forgiveness and acceptance (rather than judgment) from others, and I try to return it.

—**MIKE BAILEY, Emmaus Grove co-coordinator**



I think of mercy in relation to charity. One thing I know for sure about mercy is that it keeps me in check. It keeps me from becoming a bit high-handed and judgmental. Mercy means that I don’t put limits on my charity. It is easy to be judgmental. There is a person I know who asks me for help a lot. To some, it appears he is asking for “handouts” but it is not my place to judge. I assume that if it is in my power to help I will.

—**TOM CHANDLEY, soup kitchen volunteer**

### *In Memory*

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

George G. “Gil” Bush	Paul E. Miller
Margaret Dropsho Gross	Susan R. Mueller
Raymond Leo Heidt	Betty Kerr Murray
M. Roberta (Snyder) Heinrich	Lynda Lutton Netkowicz—
Nancy “Nan” Theuerkauf Held—	Soup Kitchen Volunteer
Soup Kitchen Volunteer	Patricia Lee O’Neill, “Pat”
Catherine Ann Kerstetter Hoehn	Marion Mary Kennedy Schneider
Mary Jane Miller Joslin	Frank E. Thayer
Victor C. King, Jr.	John “Jack” G. Weis
Richard “Dick” Mancuso	William H. Young
Roberta E. McCreary	Christine Marie (Somolani) Zalas—
	Soup Kitchen Volunteer

*We also remember Emmaus Volunteers:* Donna Faye Carr • Patrick L. Hart

# AN ACT OF MERCY: *To feed the hungry*

## Builders of Mercy

How does a leading Erie architectural firm perform a work of mercy? Let us tell you about Weber Murphy Fox and how it is feeding the hungry by donating its services in the design and construction of the new Emmaus Soup Kitchen and Pantry.

First there is Herm Weber, founder of the firm, who is semi-retired. “I only take projects that are dear to my heart,” he said when we called him about the possibility of taking Emmaus as a client following the fire that severely damaged our kitchen. Thank God that feeding the hungry had a special place in his lavish heart.

What we never expected was the loving attention that followed. Each week for three months Herm and Rich Speicher, principal and treasurer, met with representatives from the staff and board to listen to our vision of Emmaus, our needs at the present time, and how both could be translated into a new



*As a Principal, Treasurer and shareholder of Weber Murphy Fox, Rich Speicher's responsibilities include design, project production and management.*



**Q. Why did you offer to be the architects for this project?**

**A.** It is important for professionals to be involved in improving our community's life. Emmaus deals with an unfortunate, but very real necessity of life for some. Offering our services as architects is a way of using our unique skills to help both the community and Emmaus.

**Q. What architectural images come to mind when you hear the words "soup kitchen"?**

**A.** Forgotten, left-over, mean, dilapidated, forgotten, discarded. Serving the hungry requires nothing more than addressing the need, but everyone, including the hungry, deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Providing an attractive, appropriate and efficient facility for feeding the hungry is the proper response for a community facing its responsibilities.

facility. We wanted a modest structure. We wanted a building that could seat our growing numbers, allot a separate section for mothers and children,

provide enough elbow room for guests and volunteers in order to defuse potentially violent situations and make it possible that no one had to stand in line in inclement weather.

We also wanted to operate the food pantry and soup kitchen in a single building rather than from the two old homes that were never really adequate for our needs. But most of all, though we wanted the soup kitchen functional, we also wanted it beautiful. We are members of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, after all, and the mission of a monastery is to feed both body and soul.

They listened. And they brought two other architects from the firm to listen some more. The drawing is the first rendering of our shared vision. We all know that the first work of mercy is to feed the hungry. But it took the good people at Weber Murphy Fox to put new meaning into those holy words.

# CIRCLE OF MERCY

*FOLLOWING the fire at the soup kitchen, Emmaus was surrounded by a circle of mercy that kept extending. Gifts came from school children, Girl Scouts, a Saint Benedict Alumnae class, philanthropists, labor unions, the bishop, garden clubs, church groups... you get the idea. Our local paper, the Erie Times-News was outstanding in its coverage. Here's an excerpt from an editorial that appeared in the paper following our announcement to build a new kitchen:*

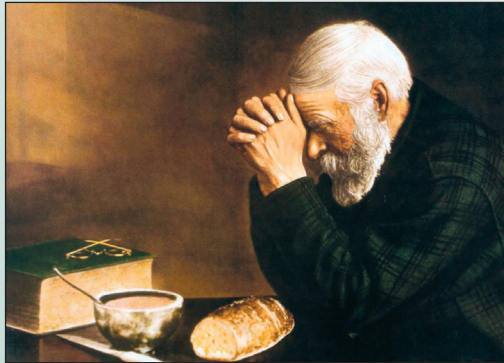
So much dim, flinty rhetoric today begrudges both charity and compassion to the marginalized. The food and companionship given freely at Erie's Emmaus Soup Kitchen come with neither strings nor judgment attached. That humility brings healing in a community where not a few families are buckling under economic forces sweeping away family-sustaining jobs, confronting some personal misfortune, or wrestling with any or all of a trinity of intertwined evils—poverty, addiction and violence.

Among those Miller (Sister Mary) credits for the kitchen's miracle—the 1.5 million meals it has served since it began 41 years ago—are its donors. Instead of conducting a formal capital campaign this year, the good people at Emmaus just want those who are able, to contribute to the new kitchen.

They will be, she said, “grateful for any gift, no matter how small.”

In these trying times, help make sure the Emmaus miracle shines on. No matter how secure, capable, responsible and independent we believe we are, the gospel truth is that on any given day illness, disaster, loss could place us, despairing and in need of help, on that road to Emmaus.

Grace by Eric Enstrom



COVER ART: –from a series with the theme “Inside/Outside” by Sister Helen David Brancato, IHM, an associate professor of art at Villanova University in Pennsylvania whose extensive work centers on contemporary spirituality and justice.

FOOD FOR THE SOUL ART: –by Sister Ansgar Holmberg, a Sister of Saint Joseph of Carondelet, whose vibrant art has appeared in numerous books, periodicals and other publications.

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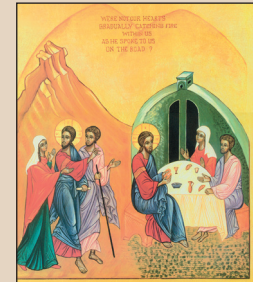
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## EMMAUS ICON

Icon *Road to Emmaus*  
Iconographer: Sister Marie-Paul, OSB  
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They came to know Him in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24:35