

From Sister Mary

Dear Friends of Emmaus,

As a follower of Saint Benedict, I have always loved the opening lines in his Rule, "Listen with the ear of your heart." I guess it's because I spend so much of my day trying to learn to listen. I try to listen to the words of Scripture, to other people, to the world, and to myself... to what's inside of me.

I'd like to say a little about listening to scripture because that's my mainstay; it's what makes it possible for me to try and stay present and open to others, especially our guests at Emmaus. I've been at the soup kitchen for almost 40 years and I've heard a lot of tragedy, of joy, of beauty. I've laughed and cried with so many people.



And through it all, I've kept this one simple spiritual practice that Saint Benedict called *lectio*—sacred reading. Every morning I gather with two other sisters and, like Benedictines all over the world, we pray the psalms. It is a practice of mine to take one line or phrase from a psalm and carry it with me through the day. I place it in my heart and listen carefully. Yesterday, for example, the line I listened to was from Psalm 13, "How long must I bear grief in my soul/ sorrow in my heart day and night..."

I said that prayer at the soup kitchen while listening to Don who is so poor and whose face is badly disfigured. I listened when this man who is filled with grief and sorrow said, "I don't have all I want Sister Mary, but I do have what I need. Now I'm trying to help my friend."

I said that prayer when a woman called me in the office and was sobbing on the phone. She was in a motel with her three small children and had to be out in an hour. She had found an apartment but couldn't move in until next month—two weeks away. "We have nowhere to go," she cried. "What is going to happen to my children? Please, please help me."

I said that prayer when Angie walked into the soup kitchen high on something. My dear Angie...she came to the soup kitchen as a small child and once told me about her pets, two cockroaches that she had named. Angie is in her 30s now and three months ago I helped her escape an abusive relationship and flee to a safe house in Pittsburgh. I had heard she was doing well. But yesterday she stood before me babbling and incoherent...how long, O God, how long must she bear such grief?

I have come to accept, after these many years at Emmaus, that I am only here to listen. Not to change people, but to give them a bit of food and listen to them as they pour out their suffering. And most of all, to listen with love. To listen with the ear of my heart.

Sister Mary



Listen
with
the ear
of
your
heart.

Rule of Benedict

Listening to others

MARIE SPAEDER HAAS, artist, former Emmaus volunteer

Recently, Marie's artwork was featured at an Erie Gallery Night. After, she posted a painting she had done in the 1980s at Emmaus Soup Kitchen along with this message on Facebook: "Here's yet another wonderful surprise I had during my Erie visit last week. I was greeted at Friday's reception by several longtime workers of Emmaus with the news that my drawing of "Larry" now hung near the entrance to the kitchen! How this came to be is a very special chapter in my evolution as an artist. I had just returned from a three month solo tour of Europe, painting and drawing everything I could. When I got back to Erie I wanted to keep the momentum going so I started going to the kitchen weekly just to draw the patrons. At first I hid behind a counter so they wouldn't notice. But they did anyway and soon started getting in line to be drawn. As I drew, they would talk and I would listen to their stories. I was deeply moved. A small book of drawings was published a year or so later to benefit the kitchen. Somewhere along the line, I painted Larry's portrait and apparently I forgot about it. Seeing this image brought back all the wonderful experiences of truly SEEING these fellow travelers of life by drawing them. Nothing quite like it. I have been blessed to share the road with Larry and others who let me draw them."



BREANNA MEKULY, Emmaus staff

The other day, a friend told me about an encounter she witnessed that makes me think a lot about our guests at the soup kitchen. "A nine-year-old girl was crying but didn't know why she was so upset," she said, "so my brother asked her: 'have you eaten dinner?' The little girl replied that she had not. 'Well,' continued the young man, 'sometimes I get really upset and cry, too, when I'm hungry.'" I get this way too, "hangry" we call it, and when I'm hangry, I'm unable to focus on the things I need to do. Many of our guests at the soup kitchen walk around hungry all day, not having a full meal until they're at Emmaus for dinner. How is one supposed to find the energy and concentration to find housing or pay bills or hold down a job or watch their children or do whatever adult responsibilities they have when their hunger is overwhelming?



— Listening with love —

MARIE WOLF, Emmaus volunteer

Something I hear often is this: our guests need help with transportation. And I'm sometimes surprised—the guests aren't looking to get transportation to the mall or to do other fun things. They need bus passes to get to school or a job—basic, necessary transportation.



SISTER CLAIRE MARIE SURMIK,
Emmaus staff

Sister Claire remembered hearing a woman in the back room of the soup kitchen, sobbing. "A few years ago, there was a young woman serving at the soup kitchen who had to take a break from serving, went into the back room, and cried. I think there's something beautiful about that. Maybe that's what we should all remember to do sometimes—cry. Because when we cry, we feel something: the pain and

suffering and frustrations of those we encounter."



JIM VOGT, food pantry volunteer

There was a gentleman one time who came to the food pantry and refused to take any canned goods. "I don't have a can opener," he said. That was a wake-up call for me.

Sunday, September 30th • 1-4 pm • 214 East 11th Street

bring your family &
please join us to celebrate
the 6th annual



at
Emmaus Grove
The Erie Urban Farm School

- Bring a lawn chair & sit back to enjoy the music of Tennessee Back Porch
- Enjoy light refreshments
- Take a tour of the garden
- Make your own s'mores
- Check out the raffle baskets
- And more...!

at Emmaus

WHAT SUMMER INTERN LIZ NIES HEARD AT THE KIDS CAFE

Liz Nies is currently a senior at John Carroll University where she is majoring in Sociology with a double minor in Political Science along with Peace, Justice & Human Rights. Emmaus staff member Breanna Mekuly interviewed Liz on her last day at the Kids Cafe.

BREANNA: Tell me about some of the different programs or projects you did with the children.

LIZ: Learning to plant vegetables was a big project. We washed out the small milk cartons they drink from at lunch time and cut the containers in half. Each child decorated the outside and these became their planters. The children picked the seeds they wanted to grow and we placed the plants outside the Kids Cafe. When the summer session ended the children took them home and replanted their carrots, lettuce and cucumbers.

BREANNA: That sounds fun! Is there anything in particular that you heard that stuck out to you while working on these creative projects with the children?

LIZ: Yes. For Father's Day, we made gift bags that had neckties on them. Some of the children got creative and started drawing faces above the neckties and adding arms and legs. I noticed one little girl making a pig face on her bag. When asked why, I heard her say she never sees her father and he's like a pig because he never pays child support. These children are too young to have to worry about things like this. And another time, on one Monday morning, I asked a little boy about his weekend. He responded that it was a "bad weekend." When asked why he told me: "I don't care about him but... my dad got sent to prison this weekend. I don't care about him because he used to hurt my mom. It's better he's gone." What an intense thing for a seven-year-old to say.

BREANNA: How did that leave an impression on you?

LIZ: Well, in spite of growing up with hard lives, these kids have so much resiliency and energy. I'm surprised by how positive they are even after going through everything they have.

BREANNA: As of now, what are your life dreams, your possible career goals?

LIZ: Eventually, I hope to teach and do research at a university, focusing on family experiences from a sociological perspective that helps nonprofits or governmental organizations to make policy changes. This coming semester I am taking a course on family violence; I have a feeling some of what I heard this summer will come up in the course.



Liz with a child at the Kids Cafe

Food for the Soul

Listen to yourself.



"Regular periods of solitude and silence comfort, heal and restore us to ourselves, fresh and new and quieted."

JOAN CHITTISTER

For the Record

CITY OFFICIALS ARE LISTENING

"I like this," said Kathy Wyrosdick, Planning Director for the City of Erie, while she looked around Emmaus Soup Kitchen. "I like how it feels like a house."

Kathy asked to visit Emmaus Ministries to better learn about community efforts in the "East Bayfront neighborhood." Kathy is helping to implement the Erie Refocus Plan, the goal of which is to strengthen neighborhoods by first understanding the needs and how

needs are being addressed in each neighborhood and then working to further develop effective responses.

"We know that community meetings aren't always the best way to garner information," said Kathy, "so we're going to different organizations and nonprofits around Erie to talk with people and gather information that way."

Kathy, along with Mayor Joe Schember and both their staffs, toured all of Emmaus Ministries: the soup kitchen, food pantry, Kids Cafe, Emmaus Grove: the Erie Urban Farm School, and The Studio at St. Mary's: A Space to Create.

When the mayor walked into the poetry studio he told Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, Emmaus board member, "I was an English major in college," he said. "Maybe I could teach a class in the poetry studio!"



Holly Nowak, coordinator of *The Studio at St. Mary's: A Space to Create*, shows Mayor Joe Schember weaving techniques.

LISTENING TO CHILDREN AT THE KIDS CAFE

The Kids Cafe offered a noon meal and learning activities during summer, with 25 children from the Neighborhood Art House joining regular participants for lunch.

• **THE KIDS CAFE STAFF HONORED TYRESE**, one of the children, for his perfect attendance during the month of June. His prize included snacks, a teddy bear, and a certificate of merit. "Tyrese is a great presence at the Kids Cafe," said staff mem-

ber Sheila Murray. "He comes every day with his creative spirit and likes to dance with the Wii game. And Tyrese absolutely loves our food."

P.S. Tyrese isn't the only one that loves the food. "We have an awesome chef! Her name is Miss Wany," said Kids Cafe participant, Azzaryia. "My favorite food she makes is grilled cheese with tomato soup."



Tyrese with his award

• **LOCATION. LOCATION. LOCATION.**

The children at the Kids Cafe will tell you that one of the best things about the program during the summer is that Denny's Ice Cream is only one block away. To earn money for cones and flurries, for a few days the children opened a lemonade stand and sold it to passersby for 50 cents a cup.



Selling lemonade at the Kids Cafe

On one of the hottest days, they made "Kool-Aid popsicles" and added it to the menu. More money was added to the ice cream fund through an accidental car wash. One sweltering afternoon the children were on the playground getting sprinkled with the water hose and a man in a Hummer pulled up thinking it was a car wash. The children liked the idea and washed the car, gratefully accepting a donation for ice cream as payment.



Eating ice cream at Denny's

• **SPLASH AND SHOES.** In the end of July, the children celebrated another summer by getting a new pair of shoes at Payless ShoeSource and swimming at the Splash Lagoon Waterpark.



With their new shoes at Payless

Let Us Give Thanks

ERIE GIVES DAY

So many of you listened attentively to the needs of Erie's poor and donated over \$65,000 to Emmaus Ministries during Erie Gives Day, August 14, 2018. Of the 381 nonprofits who participated in the 24-hour fundraiser sponsored by Erie Community Foundation, Emmaus was in the top five for number of donors who contributed and ranked 15th in the total dollar amount.



ECGRA GRANT The Erie County Gaming and Revenue Authority (ECGRA) granted \$100,000 for Emmaus Ministries to purchase all new windows and install a new bathroom in The Studio at St. Mary's: A Space to Create, the building that houses Sister Gus' Kids Cafe—an after-school feeding program for children—and a number of innovative programs. Emmaus was one of seven East Bayfront neighborhood nonprofits to receive ECGRA grant money—a total of \$300,000—to support the revitalization of buildings in the specified area.

- **PAYLESS SHOE SOURCE** at the Liberty Plaza, **SCOTT ENTERPRISES AND SPLASH LAGOON WATERPARK**, and **PARISHIONERS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY** for creating another successful and fun end of the summer celebration for the children of the Kids Cafe
- **LAUREN CASEY AND HER COLLEAGUES AT THE ERIE INSURANCE WEST BRANCH CLAIMS DEPARTMENT** for donating school supplies and snacks to the children at Emmaus
- **BONNIE LEAMER AT THE B&R GREENHOUSE IN NORTH EAST, PA** for donating dozens of flats of organic tomato plants to the guests of Emmaus Food Pantry
- **ROB CELESKI AND OTHER UNION EMPLOYEES OF THE EMPLOYEES COMMUNITY SERVICE FUND OF GE** for donating a percentage of their paychecks to the fund, and for choosing to grant Emmaus with \$15,000 of that fund
- **STUDENTS AND STAFF MEMBERS AT THE FULL-STEAM AHEAD PROGRAM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) **IN MILLCREEK** for creatively designing projects that recycled soup cans to create bird houses while also sharing the soup contents with Emmaus for a soup dinner
- **STUDENTS AT VILLA MARIA ACADEMY AND CATHEDRAL PREPARATORY SCHOOL** for baking and donating food to the soup kitchen during their #OutreachDay2018
- **ERIE COUNTY CROP HUNGER WALK** for sharing \$850 of their proceeds in donation with Emmaus from their September 2017 walk.



In Memory

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

Scott Joseph Buterbaugh
Della Josephine (Rizzo) Delio
Michael J. "Mick" Dragoone
John Joseph "Skip" Gasper
Edward J. Kaliszewski
Charles "Chuck" G. Lindemberger

Ruth Carter Meyer
Cathleen "Cathy" T. Quirk
Genevieve "Gene" (Sienkiewicz)
Skrzypczak
Gertrude Ann (Belczyk)
Zawistowski

We also remember Emmaus Volunteer, Ann M. Skapura DiMarco

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



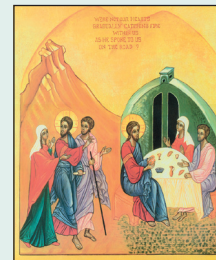
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They came
to know Christ
in the breaking
of the bread.

Luke 24:35



EMMAUS ICON

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

Cover and *Food for the Soul* text and artwork from:
A Little Rule for Beginners: Insights into Benedictine Spirituality
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