

WHERE THERE IS NO LOVE PUT LOVE AND YOU WILL FIND LOVE.

St. John
of the
Cross

– art by Kristen Brunelli

DENVER CATHOLIC WORKER HOUSE

NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2022

WE WERE JUST SITTING THERE TALKING ...

Dorothy Day ends *The Long Loneliness* with an overview of the whole history of the Catholic Worker as looking to her like a series of things that “just happened” while “we were just sitting there talking.” I feel that way about everything important that God has done with my life. Sometimes, if I’m unusually centered, I actually feel like a mere observer of whatever I’m doing or saying because it’s God’s who’s acting, not me. My part is simply to show up and cooperate.

The history of Emmaus Housing has been like that. When the housing several of us were living in was slated to be sold out from under us, Anna and I and some other people got together for community and discernment. Taking one step after another as each became clear, we watched the whole thing fall neatly into place, evolving into something we hadn’t planned at all. We were looking for a place we could live in. I was clear, I thought, that I wasn’t willing either to own property or to manage rental housing. Oh, well. God had another plan.

Our current Catholic Worker house came about with a little more intention and some serious work, but it started with an inspiration triggered by an opportunity and here, too, things fell into place with an alacrity and neatness that felt little short of miraculous. Our heartfelt thanks continue to go out to every one of you who had a part in that unfolding miracle. And we’re very happy with the house. It has good people living in it, doing good work [see the house news, p.7]. We love every one of our Congolese residents, are delighted that they’re part of our lives, and are blessed to be able to offer them a safe home while they wait for judgments on their cases for asylum. When they move on, we expect to be here for others.

At the same time, we’re aware of how small the house is. It’s so self-sufficient that we don’t have anything for volunteers, who keep writing to ask if they can help, to do. It has an extremely limited core community, as many of those who were active before and during its beginnings have

moved on with other priorities in their lives. And some of us who've been around a long time are – dare we mention it? – getting older. If God wants the Catholic Worker in Denver to continue much farther into the future, it will need some younger folks in its core.

Well, we were just sitting there talking ... when a friend of Anna's wrote that she'd decided to disburse some of the income from stocks her husband left her, and would the CW be interested?

We were just sitting there talking ... when a young man connected with Call To Action who's interested in developing faith-based community in Denver reached out to Anna for a conversation about her community experience.

Wow! Anna and i are suddenly both thinking the same thing: What if God might have in mind another Catholic Worker house in Denver?

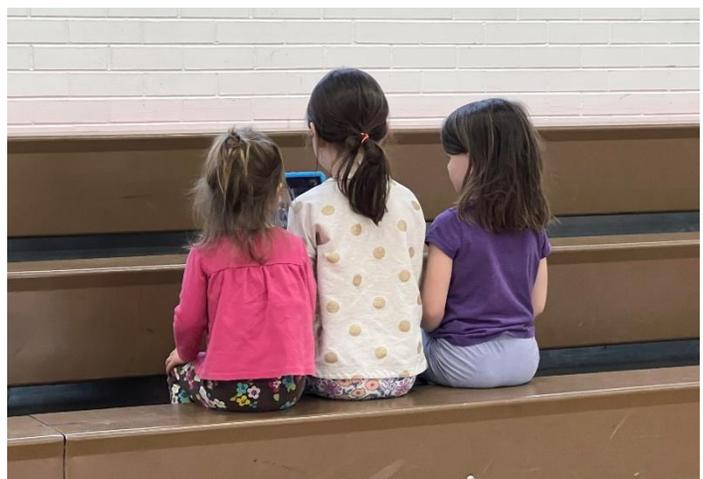
Anna, Benjamin and i planned a "crazy dream" visioning meeting to explore the possibility. We asked a few neighborhood churches about meeting space, and Annunciation Parish immediately



offered its school gym. We invited a bunch of people we thought might be interested, and about 20 came, both long-time CW supporters (including some who were around in 1978 to create the first house) and some younger folks. Small groups generated a wealth of good ideas, and then came together to share our enthusiasm and what turned out to be significant commonality of vision. We see

ourselves doing the same kind of hospitality that we did on Welton Street, serving Denver's currently houseless folks. We want to stay grounded in our shared spirituality and would like to be a space for gatherings of an extended community. Many of us would love to have a farm or garden. When we asked how many of those present wanted to go forward with the exploration, all but one wanted to keep on meeting and all will continue to be supportive. Two people are ready to consider living in a new house!

We're excited. We think maybe we're on the Holy Spirit's wavelength. At least, we're on a roll. One rallying cry at the meeting was, "If we build it, they will come." We've already started talking with friends who can



help us look for houses, and have even taken a tour of one house which is currently for sale in our neighborhood. It seems inconceivable that it will still be on the market when our group process reaches a clear enough vision of what we're looking for that we can guess whether it might meet our needs, or whether the cost is worth it, but we want to stay open to whatever possibilities are out there.

We've decided to meet on the first Saturday of every month from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30. Anyone who wants to join us is welcome. The May 7 meeting will be in the back yard of CVV (Colorado Vincentian Volunteers), 1732 Pearl Street. (Enter their parking lot, just south of the building, through the alley between Pearl and Washington Streets, and come through the gate into the back yard.)

If you'd like to be kept in touch with our ongoing process, we'd be happy to add your email address to our "new CW visioning" group list. We'd love to hear any input or suggestions you might have or any possibly available houses you might know of. We'd especially love to hear from anyone who might consider making a commitment to live in a new house or to be part of its core community.

"It all happened while we sat there talking, and it is still going on."

– Jennifer

REMEMBERING RAY LYALL

We would like to express our great sorrow at the recent passing of Ray Lyall. Ray was an impassioned leader in the community. He was a driving force in the development of Tiny Home Villages. He did everything from architectural design, to lobbying City Council members, to inspiring and leading others to be part of the changes that needed to be made to make tiny homes possible here in Denver.

During all the time he spent organizing he was homeless and sleeping on the ground. Ray would say things like, "I am not going inside until everyone else is inside." He would say things like that. We first became aware of Ray through Denver Homeless Out Loud. There are Catholic Workers who helped found, and have volunteered over the years for, Denver Homeless Out Loud, and it was not long until he was much beloved among the Worker community.

Denver Homeless Out Loud first met him when he came across a copy of their first issue of *GET LOUD* and said, "I am doing that!" And do "that" he did. Before you knew it he was integral to the magazine, development of our city's first Tiny Home Village (something many in the CW community were a part of), the development of the mobile laundry truck and many other things.

Ray was a doer, always the first to stand up and defend the



homeless community's voice with statements like, "What about the people sleeping on the ground? What would they say? It's not about us ... it's about them." Ray was also quick to give you a hug and tell you how much he cared about you.

Ray's ability to develop interpersonal relationships with people in various positions of power in the city might be a key reason we now have had a change in our zoning codes to allow Tiny Home Villages to be legal. It is also why he will be missed by so many at his passing. His passing was a great loss to folks in the Worker community and beyond.

– Benjamin

CONSTRUCTION CITY

We have been living in a construction zone for some years now, beginning with when we lived on Welton Street. This situation has deprived us of clean air, easy access to where we are going and parking near where we live. The population boom in our neighborhood has produced little or no housing for low- and no-income friends and appears to be primarily meant to serve people intending to move to Denver. I understand the city's effort to make Denver one of the most desirable cities to live in, but I really don't believe that such a growth plan is sustainable. Will such a plan lead to a water crisis in the future? Will Denver become a city only for middle-income persons, making it impossible for other folks to live and thrive here? Will such a growth plan create more of a crisis in a time of climate crises?



What might happen if we decided to focus on what and who we have in our city right now? Clearly we have a substantial number of houseless persons. Throughout our neighborhood one can see a number of tents housing people. Of course this is not just the fault of city government, as the crisis has partially come about due to the withdrawal of Federal funds for housing years ago. What if the will of Denver citizens became a commitment to no more housing for new arrivals until we have solved our problems of accessible housing for all? There are many empty buildings in Denver right now. Some of these buildings could be creatively repurposed for housing and serve persons currently unhoused. Helping places of business to reopen would help the employment situation. There is so much to be done in order to turn Denver into a city which is sustainable for all persons currently living here.

Housing is not Denver's only problem. The CW Soup Kitchen folks are now delivering 1500 sack lunches a week, and they are not the only people helping people to meet their food needs in the Denver area. Thank God there are many programs which have emerged to help.

We commend the work of our Congresswoman Diana DeGette, who has managed to capture 13.3 million dollars for housing and health care needs in Denver. And of course there are many other persons doing important work, like Cole Chandler who is the director of the Colorado Village Collaborative, which is creatively building Tiny Home Villages; and the Housekeys project, which is surveying the needs of houseless persons, attempting to meet them through encouraging personal

contributions, and advocating for housing for everyone. There are many projects which have surfaced during this time of pandemic and increased needs. What we truly need is to find the systemic ways to bring about some equity for all who live here. Short-term answers will not take care of what needs to change in order to bring about the possibility of a decent life for all.

– Anna



SURE, DAD, I BELIEVE YOU, DAD ... WE WILL GO FISHING ... SOMEDAY ...

Like a dad making empty promises, it is difficult to believe that the City of Denver's new 5-year housing plan will do much other than lead us on with a sense of false hope. The new 5-year housing plan replaces the old 5-year plan before the old 5-year plan was done. The old 5-year plan was a replacement of the previous 10-year plan to end homelessness before that plan was done. Good luck getting clear data on just how much housing any of these plans actually produced. In any case, it was always far below what was promised (i.e., 350 units of a promised 2000 in one plan).

Typically each plan has goals that are 10% of the actual need. So even if these plans met their proposed goals, 90% of Denver's housing need would remain. To date every published plan has fallen far short of its stated goals. Why would it be any different this time? *Dad has been promising us that fishing trip every year at Christmas time, and we still have never fished.*

Denver's public officials are trying to sound convincing (again) about their new 5-year plan, promising that this time we will make progress instead of falling even further behind the current need (55,000). That is more than twice what the need was 10 years ago (19,000). In that time the number of people who are forced to endure homelessness has more than doubled. And the city's history of living up to its modest plans is not good.

So the next time you hear city officials talking about how excited they are about their new housing plan, try to remember the last time they actually took you fishing.

– Benjamin

IN THE TIME OF 404 BC WINE



We are the peoples who live on the lands – like the whales do in water (not known to them as ocean or sea, rivers or lakes or ponds, only as water where big things live). The peoples are being told, “Do not enter this water place.” Those things that live there turn the water red, and the person is never to be seen again.

This they don’t figure out; they just see it. They pull up their sitting stones. At this, the peoples’ table, known as the edge of the land, the peoples must divide up as they choose:

1. Who is going to walk on the waters.
2. Who is going to live at the edge of the land (dirt and sand).
3. Who is going to live further away on the land.

This is what they did in 404 BC with the bottle of wine. They took the bottles of wine of 404 BC, the baskets of fish, the loaves of bread, and divided it all up among themselves. Following the choices they made making this decision, they grouped themselves.

They all understood, whatever choice they made, there would be dangers to face. Their eyelids all opened wide understanding this: Whatever comes, we may not see each other ever again. They all shouted and cried together before they started on their ways.

1. Walk on water.
2. Live on the edge of land.
3. Live on land only.

These peoples of the first doing of this kept working and moving like that for many years BC, carrying the bottle of wine.

This is what became of the same story in some new time and place called AC. People carrying bottles discovered one another. They all forgot about the teaching of the past voices, but they knew the work. With the others, they found delight.

They pull up their sitting stones again and discover:

1. They all sleep in bedding.
2. They all wash and clean and bathe themselves.
3. They all wear cloths or clothing now.
4. They all still eat bread and fish.
5. They all drink the wine of the 404 BC bottles of wine.
6. They all ride horses now instead of walking with the snorting camels.
7. They all put the sleeping dead into wooden boxes and bury them.
8. Out of the tales and stories, all this becomes a new beginning with new decisions, new works.

How do we not drink the wine after all these years? Some of them chose to keep doing the same and others different things. They all treasured the wine bottle of 404 BC.

Now they have cheese and crackers to go with the bread, fish, and many more wines, beers and extravagances. Ho for the makings of dreams to find yet what is Ice Cream!

– Michelle

HOUSE NEWS



HOUSE NEWS (continued)

One of the wonderful things about life at the Catholic Worker house is that it's pretty ordinary. Michelle takes care of the house's ongoing physical needs and pursues her art. This is the season when she (at the CW) and Anna and Jennifer (at 1023 and the rest of Emmaus) get excited about gardening, cleaning out the beds, exclaiming over perennials and planning for vegetables. Benjamin still pours his heart out for unhoused folks through his work at DHOL (Denver Homeless Out Loud). He's planning to go to DC this June for the Poor People's rally, along with Anna and a group of Loretos.

Fally is working very hard, saving up for the future, while Juliano still has to wait for his work authorization. Ana cooks for both families, and everyone is studying English. The kids are learning fast at school, where William is doing very well, looking forward to high school next year. Asenate loves all-day preschool and has loads of energy left over for playing with anyone who has time. Most of the pictures are from birthday celebrations at the house (Michelle is present, but prefers not to be photographed):

top row: William, Fally, Jennifer, Benjamin;

bottom row: Juliano, Ana, Anna, Asenate.

If you'd like to receive this newsletter by email, please let us know at

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