

Mary's House in Manchester

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At Mary's House, we strive to live out our Catholic faith and love our neighbor through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. We embrace simple living, self-sustenance, relying on God's providence, and restoring the dignity of every human being. We look to our Blessed Mother as an example of love in action, and draw from the Catholic Worker movement started by Dorothy Day in the 1930's.



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FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES: LEANING ON THE SAINTS IN EVERYDAY MINISTRY

By Patrick Vallee



One of my favorite memories from my early years as a Catholic Worker at the Isaiah House in Orange County, CA was the annual St. Christina the Astonishing party. As an adult coming into Catholicism, I was amazed, shocked, and honestly, a bit confused about the lives of the saints. St. Christina the

Astonishing was astonishing because she refused to die, resurrecting during her funeral mass. And, as I learned after years of St. Christina the Astonishing parties, is that all the saints are equally astonishing.

First, I thought, Catholics are crazy. Then I realized, Catholics are as crazy as me. How did these people become saints? Why them? Why is it always the crazy people with Catholics? I was beginning to understand why I felt so at home with Catholics. The lives of the saints can keep a Catholic entertained for several lifetimes, and even better, the lives of the Saints offer Catholics real examples of the challenges of Catholic life, as well as inspiration from those whose deep love and unwavering faith serve as models of holiness for future generations.

Early on, I could only muster the nerve to pray through our Blessed Mother Mary, and only through the Rosary. Over time, my devotion to Mary grew. I began to understand her gentle guidance

and her loving acceptance. I started to understand that I needed her intercession. She helped me realize that I needed the intercession of all the saints. In fact, I needed any intercession I could get. She showed me that I needed to have the courage to intercede on behalf of others.

Now, 25 years after being baptized, my relationship with the saints continues to grow. Every season of my life seems to include a devotion to a different saint. For many years, the Guardian Angel prayer was all the growth I could muster. Then, for a period, St. Michael seemed like the only hope for our world.

These prayers sustained me for many years, until my mom died. Then, the full power of the saints was revealed to me. Not in some grand revelation, but in the quiet strength and unwavering resilience my mom has received for me through her intercession. For years after her passing, I spoke to my mom daily. I always asked her to intercede on my

“THE OLDER I GET, THE MORE I MEET PEOPLE, THE MORE CONVINCED I AM THAT WE MUST ONLY WORK ON OURSELVES, TO GROW IN GRACE. THE ONLY THING WE CAN DO ABOUT PEOPLE IS TO LOVE THEM.”

DOROTHY DAY



behalf. I imagined my mom and Mary having coffee and discussing my requests. I imagined her saying to Jesus, “Yeah, but he really is a

good boy.” I can hear her telling St. Joseph, “I know, right!”

Now, as an adult, 51 years into my journey, I am still just as confused as when I started, but my journey is sustained more and more through the intercession of the saints. These days, it is St. Joseph who inspires me. I feel his presence in my daily life. I am inspired by his quiet strength, and I am at home with him when I’m engaging in the holy work of building our ministry and the even holier work of building my family.

In this stage of my life, I need strength more than comfort, and the saints who inspire me reflect this. St. Sebastian is beginning his assent on my saint totem pole for the grit he possessed after

being shot several times with arrows and refusing to die. St. John, St. Faustina, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, and St. Bernadette are all on my radar, and I feel like I have an entire army of prayer warriors available to me any time I am in need, and I am in need all the time. In truth, there is so much need in our area, it is sometimes overwhelming. I wonder how we are going to make it. I wonder if I’ve done the right thing in moving my family out to a farm and relying on God’s providence. My doubt is crippling at times, and this leads me to the saints. The saints lead me back to Jesus. Jesus hears the cry of the poor. My prayers are somehow always answered.

FIVE LOAVES, TWO FISHES, AND A HOUSE FULL OF MOUTHS

By Henny Vallee

As soon as I wake up and just on my way to the bathroom, I need to feed our indoor cats, the outdoor cats, the emu and gosling... before my first cup of coffee. If I don’t, they make sure I am aware that I’m neglecting my duties of feeding them. Currently, I’m responsible for feeding not only my family of 7, our animals, which include 3 dogs, 8 cats, 7 goats, 7 ducks, 3 geese, 3 dozen or more chickens and guinea hens, a turkey and an emu, and about 10 to 15 more people on any given day through our ministry.

When Patrick and I first got married, I could barely boil water and make rice. I’ve always burnt the kielbasa sausages that we have with rice. What was God thinking when He decided I was fit for this role of feeding so many?



But one doesn't need to go far to look for the answer to that question. After all, He chose Saul, a feared Christian persecutor, to be one of the most profound Christian apostles known for spreading the teachings of Jesus. He also chose Moses, who was "slow of speech and slow of tongue" to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and to reveal the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai to a large crowd. Moreover, He chose Mary, a young peasant girl, to be the mother of His beloved Son, Jesus. Who am I to question God's intentions and plans?

Most mornings, I wake up ready to have a fairly easy work day, according to our last Sunday's community meeting discussion, only to be told that the families are coming that day. Panic rises in my mind, body and soul, knowing I haven't prepared a meal fit to be served to a big group. I haven't pulled any meat out or even thought about what we're having for breakfast. But somehow, we're able to feed everyone a decent meal, even if it's just a big pot of ramen noodles or a quick mac and cheese. God's not asking for a lot. Just a yes. And He takes care of the rest.

I never thought my life would be so much about food and the act of sharing a meal with others. Through the grace of God, I've gotten better at cooking and baking, and learning how to use the food that was donated to us. I don't know what it is about seeing kids eat, or animals eat, or just people in general enjoying a meal together, but it brings me such joy. Patrick always tells me that the Catholic Worker movement centers around feeding and sharing a meal together. Now I get to see how that aspect of the works of mercy is such a beautiful expression of God's love. It is more than just eating—it's also a place where strangers become family, through stories told and experiences shared. Nothing makes me happier than seeing boxes of donated food come through our door because that means I get to do more of what brings me joy—feeding His people.

**"WHEN ONE LOVES,
ONE DOES NOT CALCULATE."**

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

A YOUNG CATHOLIC'S JOURNEY TO SEE JESUS IN EVERYONE



As a youth growing in the Catholic faith, I'm always trying to find ways to get closer to God. The Lenten season has given me time to reflect on my relationship with God and I am

beginning to see Easter and Lent as so much more than I ever did before. Something that I have been doing to get closer to God is lectoring for Mass. I think I'm more of a hands-on and visual learner, so reading during Mass helps me understand and listen to the readings more attentively. I find that saying the readings and practicing them on my own time helps me grasp the concept of the bible readings. Along with lectoring, I also help my mom with the music for Mass which I really enjoy doing. I love practicing at home with my mom and hearing the songs she picks. The more I understand the Word and way of the Lord, the better Catholic Worker I can be. I've met so many people throughout this journey and each of them have taught me and helped me understand that Jesus is in everyone I meet—the families we've been serving, the church family who've supported us and prayed for us, and our friends and family who've been there for us. I'm thankful for how far we've gotten and for how blessed we are to have everything we need, through the grace of God. - Hannah V., 16

LIVING THE WORKS OF MERCY: A TEEN'S PERSPECTIVE



Helping and cooking for people is my favorite thing and now I get to do it all the time as part of a Catholic Worker. In Colorado, we used to bring hot dogs or stew to a busy area to hand out to anyone who came by—a lot of homeless people and some who just came around for free food. Now we often have families visit to hang out, do laundry, get cleaned up, and stock up on supplies donated by so many wonderful people we've met here in Manchester, Kentucky (not sponsored). It's great meeting people, hearing their stories and hanging out with them. I've even made friends with some of the kids we've had over. It's hard to find people my age when I live out in the woods and don't go to public school. Anyways, it's awesome to see our ministry start to come together and really be a Catholic Worker. - Gabe V., 15

“IF YOU WANT PEACE, WORK FOR JUSTICE.”

POPE PAUL VI



The weather in Kentucky is like no weather I've ever seen before. When we moved here, I thought it would be the same as Colorado, but it turned out to be way different. In the winter, we still get a lot of snow, it's super cold, and our pipes freeze all the time. On the good side, we can go sledding and there won't be any bugs. While the summer is hot and humid, we have a creek and get to go swimming whenever we want. When it's hot, all the bugs come out, and there are so many of them. Not all of them are bad, though. Some bugs actually help by eating the invasive plants. There's also been a ton of rain, which fills the creek up fast, and sometimes we can't even get out. The rain isn't all bad, though, because it makes the grass really lush and the sound of it helps me sleep. Overall, living in Kentucky has taught me to adapt to the crazy weather. - Caleb V., 12



FUN FACT: Emus can live up to 40 years.

That means I'll have Sunny until I'm 50 years old! I wasn't sure how to entertain an emu for 40 years, but God took care of that and gave her Hope (our new gosling). On a cold day in mid-February, we found 3 baby goslings in the barn, and Hope was the only one barely surviving. We brought her down and put her near the heat lamp in Sunny's cage. She turned out happy and healthy, thanks to Sunny's companionship. - Sara V., 10