



Slow Miracles

*"We must speak to them with our hands, before we try to speak to them with our lips."
Saint Peter Claver, SJ*

Vice President Biden visits the Center

On Friday November 13, 2009 Vice President Joe Biden made an impromptu visit to the McKenna Center. With as little fanfare as is possible, the vice president served fish cakes to our guests and gave words of encouragement to them as well. He was also very encouraging, warm and thanking to our staff members to continue what we do. Thank you Mr. Vice President.



VP Biden spends a little time with our guests



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Merry Christmas

The Father McKenna Center is again thankful for our many blessings we have received and have been privileged to give throughout the year. With the faithful support of our donors, even in these challenging financial times, we are again blessed as Fr. McKenna was, in seeing Christ in all we serve.

The Washington DC Jewish Community Center's December 25th Community Service Project will send volunteers to our center once again. Allowing us to remain open to the homeless and giving opportunity for our staff to spend the day with their loved ones.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas.

Once again the Gonzaga Mothers are helping to make a Merry Christmas for fifteen needy families. Kudos to Sr. Seton Cunneen and Stephanie Durbin for coordinating this with us. As in years past the gifts are very welcomed by the receiving families, especially those with small children.



Thanksgiving Classic 2009

For the fourth consecutive year, Gonzaga students have organized a 10K run, 5K walk for the benefit of the Father McKenna Center. This year, Tim Dwyer, Sean Sullivan, Joey Connor, Jacques Dubois and Andrew Donilon were on point along with over 300 registrants helped raise over \$10,000 on a very foggy Thanksgiving morning. These young men have to be commended for their efforts and are truly becoming "Men for Others". This Thanksgiving day event has become a much appreciated tradition.

Our Thanksgiving to the needy of our neighborhood was accomplished in partnership with Holy Trinity School and Church, Bread for the City and the Connelly School of the Holy Child. This year we served more than 300 families with all the necessary ingredients for a complete turkey dinner with all the fixings.



Dave

By Gary Hines

As we look to the holiday season, my thoughts do not go to turkey dinners and pumpkin pie but to the heat of summer and a high school intern who could teach us all a thing or two about the true season of giving. A student approached us back in late February, and for the sake of argument, let us call him Dave. His mom wanted him out of the house in the coming summer doing something productive, and Dave was thinking ahead.

At the time we met, Dave was a sophomore at Gonzaga, and over the course of the spring we began to define what was to be an unpaid summer internship. What we sketched out in the beginning had absolutely no relation to what he ended up doing. Our thoughts were for him to assist me with office work, filing, data-entry, research and assisting with the coming summer immersion programs we had planned. The McKenna Center opens at eight a.m. sharp, five days a week, 52 weeks a year. Prior to opening our doors, a number of things have to be accomplished so that we are both prepared for and ready to accept our guests. Most days that preparedness sets the tone for the day. Once chaos begins, there is no opportunity to catch up, let alone breathe.

Without fail, Dave arrived at seven each day, ready to work. Our kitchen is the heart of the Center and a lot of what has to be done is messy and unsung. The least seemingly heroic things anyone can do, dishes to wash, floors to be scrubbed, gunk to be discarded. Our original thought was to let him have a turn there for a little seasoning. But life happens. Dave threw himself into the task of keeping things running smoothly, filling in wherever needed.

The most touching thing that occurred, however, was when someone contributed eight cases of zucchini squash. As is the case most times, they have to be culled, discarding the

unusable ones. Dave was assigned this task. And what a horrible job it turned out to be, not only nasty but demoralizing. After going through the entire eight cases of slimy, overripe vegetables, he discovered not one usable zucchini.

He came to me afterwards, thoroughly disheartened. His question of why someone would knowingly donate unusable product was certainly a legitimate one. My explanation did little to appease him, explaining that it was strictly a numbers game for the contributor. The donation was not meant to be altruistic but a write off. It happens all too often. Youth, of course, has the luxury of outrage over such practices while I'm an old hand at the game, having seen far worse.

The wrongness of it all was a personal affront to him. It took him a good week to put the incident behind him. But he did, of course, and continued to do his work.

Despite his young age as well as the harsher side of the job, Dave fit in like a veteran and by summer's end he was a de facto employee. I watched this boy literally become a man before my eyes, even growing a beard. I was personally very proud of him.

At the conclusion of his unpaid internship, in good conscience, we couldn't let him leave without a token of appreciation, a letter of recommendation and a small check for back to school. We chose to ignore his tears of gratitude, because it was us that were grateful for having met Dave.

Service



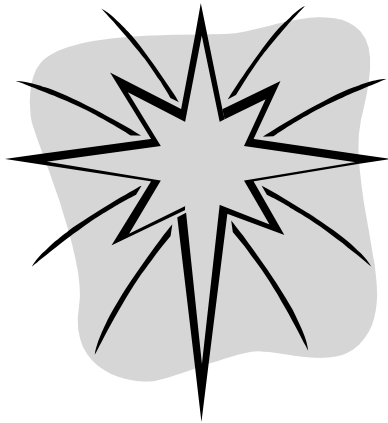
The **Gonzaga Father's Club's** Father/ Son service project truly brightened the Center with fresh coats of paint and a lot of father/ son camaraderie.

The **Holy Trinity Men's Group** led by **Ted Tschudy** has installed chair rails and is also working to improve our space, including the ceiling in our entry way and stairway.

2010 Census

The U. S Census Bureau will be partnering with us to get out the word of the upcoming census.

We will be informing those in our population to be counted because for the next ten years those numbers matter.



Director's Note

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ber 6-8, 2009 and the river rose to historic flood levels. 189 were dead and 80 missing. The UCA marked 20 years since grains of wheat fell to the ground and died and brought forth a harvest of peace, what the UN called a negotiated revolution. The government of El Salvador was now in the hands of those who 20 years ago could not get a US visa. Much had changed but for the poorest, not much had changed at all. They said, "We are poor and no one cares about us." He understood those words better after 20 years because now he heard them every day from the poor and homeless in the capitol of his yet rich nation.

Jesus told us to serve the least of these whether we find them in El Salvador or Washington, DC. The world or the city looks much different from the bottom up. Jesus knew this and urged that we see the world from this perspective. Do we?



Guests coming for assistance

Did you know: By naming the McKenna Center as a beneficiary in your will, you can leave behind a lasting legacy of helping the poor by providing financial and/or material needs that will support our programs well into the future.

If you would like some examples, please contact Tom Howarth on 202-842-1112 or by e-mail at tomhowarth@fathermckennacenter.org.

STAFF

- Tom Howarth
Director
- Gary Hines
Associate Director
- Ron Rogers
Facilities Manager
- Virginia Jenkins
Reception
- Reginald Green
Staff
- Gary Smith
Staff
- Cathie Conway-
Controller
- Mary Ann Wilding, RN
In Memoriam
- Antoinette Betschart
Ignation Volunteer
- Sara Joseph
Social Work
- Anthony Robinson
Staff/resident
- Tim Nugent
Staff/resident

The McKenna Center Needs & Wish List

Men's Clothing

- Jeans
- Sleeping Bags
- New Underwear & Socks
- Thermal Underwear
- Winter Coats
- Sneakers & Boots, sizes 10 thru 13
- Caps

Personal Care Items

- Deodorant, Razors, Soap & Shampoo
- Toothpaste & Toothbrushes
- Over the counter day-time cold medications
- New Wash Cloths
- New Towels & Sheets
- 1 gallon size Zip Lock Bags
- Baby Powder
- Lotion/ Vaseline
- Laundry Detergent

Kitchen Needs

- Pasta & Spaghetti Sauce
- Canned Meats
- Box Cereals & Instant Oatmeal
- Ensure/ Boost for HIV+ clients
- Oven Mitts, Steel Wool & Cleaning Supplies
- Measuring Spoons

Urgent Kitchen Needs

- 16 Qt Pots
- 12 to 16 in. Frying Pans
- 10 Gallon Dispensing Coolers
- Large Commercial Pots & Pans



Our Staff

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Our Mission Statement

The Father McKenna Center addresses the needs of the poor and homeless in Washington, DC primarily in Ward 6. The McKenna Center assists those suffering from poverty, mental illness, homelessness, hunger and addiction to enhance their sense of self-worth and reclaim control over their lives. In fulfilling its mission, the McKenna Center provides witness to the Gospel imperative (Matthew 25) to “feed the hungry, clothe the naked and shelter the homeless”.

Slow Miracles



From the Desk of the
Director

You probably know the story of the man who met Jesus along the road and asked what he needed to do to get into heaven. Jesus reminded him that he needed to play by the rules, in other words, to keep the law. The man said he had always played by the rules. Then Jesus told him, with love, that only one more thing was required. He said, “Take all that you have, give it to the poor and then come and follow me.” The man who had many possessions could not do it. He went away sad.

One morning in the fall of 1989, a 42 year old man woke up in Arlington, Virginia and heard on the radio that Jesuit priests had been killed in a small Central America country of El Salvador. The man attended a Jesuit parish in Washington, DC, Holy Trinity and while he cared about social concerns, he did not know too much about El Salvador. For whatever reason, he accepted the news from El

Salvador as if it was a death in his family and he thought he should do something.

A friend, Dr. Peter Gyves MD, now Fr. Peter Gyves, SJ, suggested that he go to El Salvador because Holy Trinity had established a sister parish relationship with the barrio parish of Maria, Madre de los Pobres in La Chacra, one of the poorest and most dangerous communities in war torn El Salvador. In January 1991, he made his first trip.

When that first trip was over, he went away sad but he didn't realize how sad he was. He felt he was sad because he got to go home to a warm bath and a salad he could safely eat while the children he saw living in squalor stayed in squalor. But, the sadness was deeper than that.

In November 1991, the man returned to El Salvador for a conference of sister parishes and the 2nd anniversary of the martyrs of the UCA. He came to understand that the deaths of the Jesuits involved his country. Some of those who killed the priests were graduates of the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia. He came to believe that the US under the first President Bush aided and participated in the cover-up of this horrible crime.

He continued to work as the vice president of a Washington lobbying firm. Was he

free to give all he had to the poor and then follow Jesus? He certainly was not. He had a mortgage to pay, car payments, bills and prospective college tuition to consider. A friend counseled him that saving the world was something you needed to do when you were young because as you grew and assumed responsibilities your options decreased.

The more he continued to go to El Salvador, the more restive he became. He kept praying. He heard the words of Saint Augustine, “God has grace for all of us, but we have to have our hands free to receive it.” His hands were full of mortgages and cars, houses and prospective college tuition. The more he paid attention to the Gospel, the sadder he became; the more he heard the people at the Church of the Saviour talk about call, the more he felt called but unable to answer. Why could not a man be called to serve God, even become a priest, at age 47 instead of 17? Could the Church or world control who God calls, when and how? Having done the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius Loyola, he asked himself how he could become indifferent to wealth as opposed to poverty, to health as opposed to sickness.

No doubt he heard God calling. He heard God calling in the voice of Manuel and his son up in the Salvadoran

mountains who said, “You will be our voice.” He heard God calling through the eyes of children at Maria, Madre de los Pobres and in the voice of the pastor, Padre Daniel Sanchez who told him to have the courage to tell the truth of what he saw and heard in El Salvador.

And then he got very sick and for the first time in his life he thought about the prospect that he might die. His mind was ill from the realization that he heard God's call but was afraid to answer lest he not be able to care for his family. Now, he had cancer. The world seemed to be spinning toward change perhaps even death, but what would he do if he survived?

It was time to give an answer to the people of El Salvador who had been calling him into a new life. His answer was to find the place where the poor worshipped in Washington and go and pray there. He sought out the people who were crucified on the streets of Washington as were the poor in El Salvador and around the world and decided to serve them after so long a time, his heart, his head and his soul were aligned. Who was Christ for him who looked upon him with love and issued the challenge to follow? They were the poorest of the poor in a suffering land that spoke a language he has yet to master.

The rains came fierce and fast over the weekend of Novem-