



# Slow Miracles

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

## March For the Homeless

On Sunday July 27 we had our second march for the homeless. The first march was from Saint Aloysius to the District Building on June 5. The July 27 march was from the McKenna Center to the home of Ward 6 Councilmember Tommy Wells. 75 people participated in the first march and 86 joined in on July 27. In both cases, the homeless men who come to the McKenna Center were well-represented. Our goal is to have the homeless lead the marches in the future with those of us who are not homeless playing a supportive role.

The *Washington Post* covered both marches as did the homeless community publication *Street Sense*. On July 27, we marched because the concerns of those who come to the McKenna Center had been ignored. We had written to Mr. Wells, visited his office and observed what he did on the Council. He showed no knowledge or interest in the needs of the McKenna Center population. So, we knocked on his door on a Sunday morning and told him we were tired of being ignored.

Have the marches had an impact? I think so. Clearly it is good for the sense of self-worth of the men we serve to have them stand up for themselves. Also, the City had begun to depopulate the Franklin Shelter in anticipation of closing it in October. They stopped the depopulating in response to several actions and a lawsuit. I think the marches have had a beneficial impact on the homeless and city.

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## Initiatives

We will continue to do our job no matter how difficult it might be. We will continue to improve and develop our programs. We will add services such as the distribution of eggs and milk to those who come to us for emergency food. We will do as Father McKenna did and make the best of what resources we have. Also, we are increasing the amount of rent and utility assistance we give each month.

Providing milk and eggs to any family is an expensive proposition these days. It will cost us about \$22,000 per year in addition to our normal food purchases. With the economy the way it is these days, it is our job to redouble our efforts, meaningfully. Just think, a gallon of milk costs more than a gallon of gas, and that's renewable.

We've seen a marked increase in those coming for rent and utility assistance. That said, we're putting an additional \$10,000 in that program as well this year. The largess of our supporters has given us the freedom to do so and we do so gladly, if not saddened by the need to do it.

We are also continuing to act as an HIV testing and education site.



**Jim Larranaga  
Returns to the  
Center**

## New McKenna Center Vision

The McKenna Center has been in the basement of St. Al's for over 25 years. While our services and client populations have expanded, our physical space has not. The area all around us is gentrifying at an alarming rate and services for the homeless and poor in the downtown area are dwindling. While we applaud progress, how this affects the poor and homeless shunting them out to the nearly barren and desolate areas of the city, is simply wrong.

We envision a new building in the immediate area specific to our needs, that has a dedicated commercial kitchen, office space, meeting rooms, laundry and shower facilities as well as supportive single room occupancy housing for up to forty-eight men. Also, an expanded food pantry for those in need., allowing greater choice and the ability to shop with dignity.



**Student Group from Nebraska participates in activities at the Center**

The McKenna Center has a new sign, another example of ask and it shall be given. I met a man in a restaurant in nearby Maryland. He asked what I did and I told him I worked at the McKenna Center. He said he knew us well because he was here when Lisa Goode was director. He said he made signs and I indicated that we needed a new one. We now have a new sign free of charge. His name is Winford Ponder at 202-460-3589. He does good work and I believe in helping those who help us.

## Summer Immersion

### Retreat

On September 5<sup>th</sup> through the 7<sup>th</sup> we will have a retreat for about 10 homeless at the Loyola Retreat House in Faulkner, MD. We have been planning for this for a couple of years and it's finally coming to fruition. Part of this process is to focus on men who are about to transition out of homelessness and deal with some of their issues in a peaceful, spiritual contemplative setting.

We hope that this is a precursor of more regular retreats for the men. A part of our effort to help some end their cycle of homelessness.

One of the delightful aspects of summer at the McKenna Center is the arrival of high school groups who come to stay and work with us. Summer 2008 saw groups from Gonzaga High, Scranton Prep and a Young Neighbors in Action group from Nebraska.

We have finally learned how to do an immersion group. The students have plenty of access to those we serve and the men and students seem to thrive on that contact. We incorporate some educational opportunities with talks by the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless and the DC Fiscal Policy Institute. Finally, we ask the students to become advocates for the poor and homeless. The Gonzaga group prepared signs and participated in the march to the District Building on June 5. The Scranton Prep group arranged a one hour meeting with their Senator Robert Casey of Pennsylvania.

All the groups brought enthusiasm and good cheer to the McKenna Center and they learned some things in the process.



## 1986 Remembered

On **September 25 at 7 PM** at Saint Aloysius Church, the Father McKenna Center will examine what was lost to our nation with the deaths of Dr. Martin Luther King and Senator Robert Kennedy. Our guest speakers will include Peter Edelman who was a young staff person with Robert Kennedy and the Senator's press secretary, Frank Mankiewicz. Please come!

**Did you know** that you can help support the McKenna Center and its programs even after death? 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.

There are a number of ways to help and your estate attorney will be able to help you determine which is best for you. If you would like some examples, please contact Tom Howarth on 202-842-1112 or by e-mail at [tomhowarth@fathermckennacenter.org](mailto:tomhowarth@fathermckennacenter.org).

## Baseball

Thanks to the generosity of many of you, we have been able to take homeless men, some of whom have never seen a major league ballgame, to see the Washington Nationals. While we have been spending donated funds to support these outings, we have been asking the Nationals for free tickets for the "least of these". To date, the Nationals have declined all our requests.

If you have been to a Nationals game, you know there are an ample amount of empty seats. The new stadium was built with public funds, but the Nationals cannot provide free seats for the homeless? Perhaps they don't want the homeless anywhere near their new digs?

On August 10, we will have our last baseball outing of the season. We will be taking a group of homeless men to Baltimore to see the Orioles. We will continue to see games next year, God willing, in Baltimore.



Gonzaga Freshman helping to Beautify the place.

### STAFF

- *Tom Howarth*  
Director
- *Gary Hines*  
Associate Director
- *Ron Rogers*  
Facilities Manager
- *Virginia Jenkins*  
Reception
- *Tim Davis*  
Staff
- *John Mead*  
Dep. Facilities Manager
- *Gary Smith*  
Staff
- *Cathie Conway*  
Controller
- *Mary Ann Wilding, RN*  
In Memoriam
- *William Molloy*  
Ignation Volunteer
- *Ed Mullan*  
Ignation Volunteer
- *Tyler Przybylek*  
Ignation Volunteer

## The McKenna Center Needs & Wish List

### Men's Clothing

Jeans  
Sleeping Bags  
New Underwear & Socks  
Plastic Rain Gear  
Sneakers & Boots, sizes 10 thru 12  
Caps

### Personal Care Items

Deodorant, Razors, Soap & Shampoo  
Toothpaste & Toothbrushes  
Hair care products  
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  
Large Water Dispensing Coolers  
Large Commercial Pots & Pans  
Commercial Ice Machine



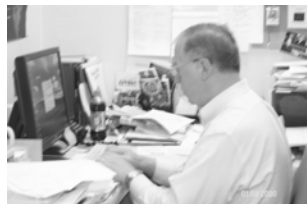
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## Slow Miracles



From the Desk of the  
Director

Forty years ago, Robert Kennedy died a day or so before I graduated from high school. I recently completed a book by Thurston Clarke, *The Last Campaign* about RFK's 82-day race for the 1968 Democratic Presidential nomination. Robert Kennedy was a man of passion. People either loved him or hated him. Some say Robert Kennedy changed after the murder of President Kennedy and hurt so much that he came to identify with all the hurting people of the world, hungry children in Mississippi, Indians on reservations in South Dakota and blacks in our nation's cities. Others say he was a demagogue bent only on attaining power. I prefer the description that the columnist Anna Quinlan gave of RFK as "more like a priest than most of the priests we knew."

Robert Kennedy was angry about injustice in the United States. In Clarke's book, Sander Vanocur was quoted as saying that RFK "lived in a constant state of outrage." Of late, I can only say that I know the feeling.

On July 8, a number of homeless advocates including some of us from the McKenna Cen-

ter visited the City Council. We met for one hour with Adam Maier, the staff director of the Committee on Human Services that is chaired by Councilmember Tommy Wells of Ward 6, the ward in which the McKenna Center resides. Mr. Wells' committee is responsible for the District's response to homelessness.

On July 8, we had three things on our minds. In April, the Mayor announced that the Central Union Mission could not move from 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW to a site on Georgia Avenue NW because of community opposition. The Mayor also announced that Central Union Mission would swap land with the District. The city would get the Georgia Avenue site while the Central Union Mission would take over the Gales School building at 65 Massachusetts Avenue NW, two blocks from the McKenna Center. Also, the Mayor announced that the Franklin School Shelter at 13 & K Streets NW would be closed in October.

The fundamental problem of the men who visit our drop-in center is that they have a sense of self-worth that is below rock bottom. When they hear that Georgia

Avenue is too good a location for a homeless facility, it does additional harm to their sense of self-worth. When they hear that 13<sup>th</sup> & K Street NW is "too good a location for a shelter", they hear that this location is too good for people like them. When a facility like the Central Union Mission is forced to relocate two blocks away from them, the men wonder what impact that facility might have on the already stretched services of the Father McKenna Center. Will we have to put more water in the soup? We've put more water in the soup before and will again but did Mayor Fenty or our Councilmember ask if the men who come here minded having more water in their soup? When this problem raises its head, it will be because the Mayor and City Council caused the problem and ignored the impact on the McKenna Center. So this is really about being ignored, another thing that does nothing for your sense of self-worth.

The City says it will acquire 400 or more permanent supportive housing opportunities by October. The City also says that "once" they deal with the most extreme cases of chronic home-

lessness, they will get to the rest of the homeless population that apparently are less needy than the most chronic cases. So where will the men who currently sleep at the Franklin Shelter go between October and "once" the city is ready to serve them? The answer is that they will be pushed to the far fringes of the District at places like the Adams Place, New York Avenue and 801 East Shelters. This migration out of the downtown area will confirm in the minds of the homeless that they are people living on the edge and literally sleeping on the edge of the District.

Does the Fenty Administration and the City Council know the harm they are doing to the homeless by telling them to go down in back of the broken glass and boarded up windows at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital to spend their nights out of sight and out of mind? Or, do they know and not care?

Robert Kennedy was outraged at extreme hunger in the Mississippi Delta and he told the Cleveland City Club that we all had a responsibility for the racial tension in our cities. I know the feeling and we all are going to be judged by how we treated the homeless in our midst.

## About the Father McKenna Center:

The Father McKenna Center was established in 1983 to carry on the legacy of Fr. Horace McKenna, the saintly Jesuit priest who served at St. Aloysius parish from 1962 until his death in 1982 and maintained a heroic apostolate to the poor of inner city Washington. The Center today continues to meet his concern for the homeless and poor of our part of this city, the North Capitol street area of downtown Washington, by some accounts the poorest area of town.

The Center serves the area by operating a daytime drop-in Center for homeless men, one of two such facilities in downtown Washington. We offer our guests assistance with showers, laundry, telephone and local transportation, as well as referrals for a wide array of basic services to meet medical, employment and other personal needs. We assist over 100 men a day with these programs. Our Transitional Shelter program will assist a dozen men each year in learning to regain life and work skills. In addition, we respond to hypothermia alerts each winter by offering overnight relief from the cold to up to 25 men, who are otherwise extremely vulnerable to winter weather. Our outreach to households in our community includes provision of rent and utility assistance to scores of households each year, as well as the emergency food program, which assists two hundred fifty families annually, by providing a food bag each month.