



Slow Miracles

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

25 Years Since Father McKenna Went Home

On Saturday May 12, 2007, the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus marked the 25th anniversary of the death of Father Horace B. McKenna, S.J. with a mass and conference at Saint Aloysius Church. Father Jim Connor, S.J. coordinated a gathering of people who knew and worked with Father McKenna and those inspired by his spirit in their work for social justice. Father Tim Brown, S.J., Provincial of the Maryland Province, celebrated mass with Father Connor delivering the same homily that he offered 25 years ago at Father McKenna's funeral.

The anniversary observance began with a conference devoted to the question: "What would Father McKenna be calling us to today?" The institutions and individuals who shared their blessings from Father McKenna included Fr. John Adams of So Others Might Eat (SOME); Paul McElligott of the Perry School Community Services Center, Sister Seton Cunneen of Gonzaga High School along with pastors Fr. Jim Shea, S.J. of Holy Trinity and Fr. Tom Clifford of Saint Aloysius. Eulogists at the mass included Sister Marilyn Hopewell who worked with Father McKenna in Southern Maryland, Monsignor Ralph Kuehner and Father Carl Dianda.

The program concluded with a simple supper served the way PeaceMeal is served to the homeless in the McKenna Center in the basement of Saint Aloysius.



Inside this issue:

Homecoming	1
Year in Review	1
McKenna's Neighborhood	2
Lecture Series	3
Needs List	3
Director's Note	4

Church Bulletin Faux Pas

The sermon this morning:
"Jesus Walks on the Water"
The sermon tonight:
"Searching for Jesus"

The Rector will preach his
farewell message after
which the choir will sing: "
Break Forth Into Joy."

Fiscal Year 2007 in Review

On June 30, 2007, the Father McKenna Center closed its fiscal year 2007. Here are some of things we did during that year.

- Provided 1,871 bags of emergency food serving 3,429 household members;
- Provided 2,087 bus tokens and \$4,219.55 in other forms of transportation assistance;
- Served an average of 60 lunches per day;
- Assisted PeaceMeal in serving 12,197 Wednesday night dinners to the homeless;
- Welcomed 23,872 homeless men to our drop-in center, an average of 97 per day;
- Placed 22 men in drug and alcohol treatment;
- Helped 139 households with rent and utility assistance at a cost of \$33,793.11; and
- Provided another \$2,529 in emergency assistance.



Fr McKenna's Neighborhood

When Father McKenna was alive he did not just serve a parish or individuals in need of the sacraments. He served a neighborhood. It's said that he used to walk through the neighborhood north of K Street, past M Street and up to New York Avenue. He knew the people and they knew him. The kids used to call him "Father McKinley". He knew who was sick or who was having trouble meeting the rent or a doctor bill.

Some of Saint Aloysius' parishioners live in this area known as Northwest One. Many of the people who come to the McKenna Center for food or rent and utility assistance also live in this community. Northwest One was a product of urban renewal in the 1960's. Many black Americans refer to urban renewal as "Negro removal". What urban renewal produced in Northwest One became an area of chronic concentrated poverty.

Several years ago, a 14 year-old girl, Princess Hansen, was killed in the Sursum Corda housing

complex. She knew something about a drug-related murder and for that she was killed. Father McKenna knew Sursum Corda well for it was he who gave the housing complex its name. In the immediate aftermath of the death of Princess Hansen there were the usual marches and meetings with charges of neglect met by promises of all kinds. One promise sounded a little like a threat for some in the press and real estate industry suggested that Sursum Corda be torn down so that the community could start over again.

This was no idle threat because the area between New Jersey Avenue and North Capitol Street NW was next in line for redevelopment after Mount Vernon Square. The word on the street was that developers had their eyes on Northwest One and the area just beyond it called NOMA (North of Massachusetts Avenue).

The Northwest One Council is an organization composed of the churches, service agencies and tenants in this area that includes three housing complexes: Sursum Corda, Temple Court and Golden Rule. There are 520 units of subsidized housing among these three complexes in which households do not pay more than 30% of their income for rent. All over the nation and particularly in hot real estate markets like Boston, San Francisco and Seattle owners of subsidized Section 8 properties are opting out of their commitments to house the poor in order to take advantage of rising rents. The Northwest One Council, of which Saint Aloysius and the McKenna Center are a part, focused on the need to retain 520 units of subsidized housing so that the poor who call this area home would not be pushed out of their community in favor of more wealthy people.

The administration of Mayor Anthony Williams under the leadership of City Administrator Robert Bobb and Deputy Mayor Stan Jackson worked with the community to fashion a redevelopment plan. Change was coming. Prosperity in the form of a mixed-income community was about to arrive in Northwest One and the Council was determined that this time the prosperity would be shared with the poor.

There were basic features to the plan developed by the city in partnership with Northwest One. Two were considered "crucial". The great fear was that people would be displaced from the community and then would not return. The goal of Northwest One was to prevent people from being pushed out of their community if their basic problem was that they were unable to pay rising rents. So, the concept of Build First was adopted and described in the plan as "crucial". Before anyone would be forced to relocate, new housing would be built. They would indeed move but the move would be a short distance within the community. Then, the housing they vacated would be torn down to provide more opportunities in the "new community".

The other crucial feature was the comprehensive nature of the plan itself. The plan was a public sector driven plan designed to preserve 520 units of housing for extremely low-income people in a new mixed-income community. In the new community, high-rise buildings would be constructed along the main streets of North Capitol and K Streets. A goal was to prevent putting families with children in high-rise buildings. So, in the interior of the new community, low-rise and townhouses were to be constructed. For example, on the land that is now occupied by Sursum Corda, there are 199 units of housing with 149 of them Section 8 subsidized meaning those who live there do not pay more than 30% of their income for rent. In the new com-

munity, that footprint would hold 140 units of low-rise, townhouse housing.

The current cooperative ownership at Sursum Corda has never embraced the plan adopted by the City Council. They do not want a public redevelopment; instead they want a private redevelopment. Those who own Sursum Corda cannot spread out to areas along North Capitol Street and K Street because they do not own the land, but the City does. In order to make money and provide space for 149 subsidized units, the owners at Sursum Corda have to build up rather than out, meaning they need high rises along M Street. Their alternative plan cannot be accomplished without zoning changes and subsidies. Those who have supported the plan are asked in the position of being asked to make room for and subsidize a redevelopment at basic odds with the plan adopted by the City Council.

Since the adoption of the plan last November, we have a new Mayor and City Council. Granted it is one thing to develop a plan but another to implement that plan. The changes proposed by the new Mayor and Council are however quite worrisome.

In March, a meeting was held at 33 K Street and a decision was made that all residents of that building would be moved out in 18 months. This decision was at odds of course with the Build First concept. The Mayor and Councilmember, Tommy Wells, said the people demanded to leave but no mention was made in advance of the meeting that a decision critical to the future of the building was to be made. There are 211 units of housing at 33 K Street but only 65 people attended the meeting not all of who lived at 33 K Street and not all of who favored being relocated.

Sursum Corda is not included in the City's Phase One of the Northwest One new community

Did you know?

Yes, you can find the Father McKenna Center on the Worldwide Web. Just google "stalschurhdc.org" and that will take you to Saint Aloysius Parish. You'll see "Father McKenna Center" in the middle of that page. One click and you have our site. We are working on making our website more easily accessible and interactive.



NEWS

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, former Lt. Governor of Maryland and the daughter of the late Senator Robert F. Kennedy, will speak at Saint Aloysius on September 18 at 7 PM. She is the author of a recent book that examines the interplay between faith and politics.

McKenna Center director, Tom Howarth, attended the Ministry of Management seminar sponsored by the New Orleans Province of the Jesuits. Jesuits with various management responsibilities for schools, parishes and Jesuit works around the country attended. During the conference, the participants took a tour of post-Katrina New Orleans. As press reports indicate, many remain displaced and suffering.

The McKenna Center was one of several Jesuit social justice initiatives highlighted at the Ignatian Solidarity Network's regional gathering at Saint Joseph's University July 13-15 in Philadelphia.

Neighborhood from pg 2

redevelopment because the city does not own and therefore control the site.

Under the new Mayor and Council, the Build First concept has been ignored and the comprehensive nature of the redevelopment weakened by the setting aside of Sursum Corda. At this writing, there appears no way to reverse the course of action taken by the Mayor short of legal action. There have been indications that Sursum Corda will be allowed to redevelop privately with or without city and federal subsidies for rents and zoning changes.

During his tenure as City Administrator, Robert Bobb often said the he "was going to stick with the process". Despite the many long and difficult encounters often fueled by the irrational emotions of fear and distrust, Robert Bobb had the confidence to support a community group that often differed with him. The Fenty Administration has indicated that it will no longer support the activities of the Northwest One Council forcing the community group to seek alternative means of support.

Change is coming to Northwest One. That is clear. Will the change be as fair to the poor as it might have been? This observer and participant thinks not.

"Nobody is better than you..."



STAFF

- Tom Howarth
Director
- Ron Rogers
Facilities Manager
- Gary Hines
Assoc. Director
- Gary Smith
Drop-In Coordinator
- Virginia Jenkins
Reception
- Henry Anderson
Hypothermia
- John Mead
Dep. Facilities Manager
- Cathie Conway-Del Polito
Controllor
- Mary Ann Wilding, RN
Ignation Lay Volunteer
- Joan Kelly, RN
Ignation Lay Volunteer

The McKenna Center Needs & Wish List

Men's Clothing

Jeans
Sweaters
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
Cereal & Instant Oatmeal
Cooking Oil
Oven Mitts, Steel Wool & Cleaning Supplies
Measuring Spoons

Urgent Kitchen Needs

16 Qt Pots
12 to 16 in. Frying Pans
Large Water Dispensing Coolers
Commercial Slicer
Large Commercial Pots & Pans
Commercial Ice Machine



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Slow Miracles



From the Desk of the Director

It's hot. We've just passed the 4th of July and it is hot. They are predicting that it will be 97 degrees tomorrow. That of course is not good news and it is particularly bad news for the homeless. Exposure to extreme heat and bad air can be as dangerous for homeless folks as extreme cold. When Thomas Jefferson was president, he used to flee Washington in the summer for the Virginia Mountains because he said Washington was "a city built on a swamp". Escaping the heat and humidity of DC is not so easy for the homeless.

Since last December, we have been seeing about 100 homeless men per day signing in at our drop-in center and we have been serving lunch to about 60 per day. We provided rent and utility assistance at a rate of \$2,816 per month. You might expect that these numbers would go down in the summertime but they don't. The worst the weather is; the bigger the crowd. While having your heat turned off in winter is bad; having

your air conditioning turned off in the summer can be equally dangerous to a person's health.

Like many groups who serve the poor, the McKenna Center sees a real dip in its fundraising during the warm months of the year. When you are headed to the beach, the image of people huddled together on steam grates does not come easily to mind. During the heat of summer is a good time to make a contribution to the work of the McKenna Center.

One of the joys of summer is a visit by high schools students and parish service groups. In June 13 Gonzaga High School students spent a week with us getting to know those we serve and learning about the impact of poverty and homelessness on the lives of human beings. Our guests at the McKenna Center always enjoy these immersion experiences because, let's face it, being homeless can be boring. The men we serve seem to brighten up when generous young people are around. One of the things I find amazing is how protective of the young people the homeless men are. Invariably at the end of a week, the students will comment on how

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 70 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.

Director's Note

talented and interesting are the men they met here. Stereotypes of the homeless melt away quickly.

We have yet to perfect our immersion program and we are still trying out a few things on the students. Because we have a high regard for the education the boys receive at Gonzaga, we combined direct contact with the poor with manual labor and leadership training. The leadership training included exposing the boys to various perspectives on why people are poor exploring both societal defects and the consequences of personal decisions. It was a good week and not all work. We made time for a Washington Nationals game and some ice cream.

Young Neighbors in Action is a favorite group of ours and they seem to always send us a delegation from Massachusetts. This year's group was from St. Patrick's Parish in Whitinsville, Massachusetts. The kids finished up the paint job on the night shelter and on our new bathroom and had a good time with the men.

The director of the McKenna Center spent a week in June in New Orleans at a Ministry of Manage-

ment seminar sponsored by the Jesuits of the New Orleans Province. The training was quite valuable and seeing New Orleans for the first time post-Katrina was indeed eye opening. Perhaps the thing I enjoyed most about the week were the daily liturgies. Stopping to pray gives the day a good pace and reminds me why I do this work.

We started each day of the Gonzaga immersion week with a mass as well said by Fr. Bob Rokusek, the Gonzaga chaplain. Father McKenna and those like him must have had a deep spiritual reservoir to draw from. It is just impossible to do this work, I think, without a prayer life.

Pray that by the time fall arrives that our renovations will be completed. We have a new bathroom operational and we have a new washer and dryer in our new laundry location but our showers are yet to be completed. This poses some significant challenges in 90-degree weather.

Keep us in your prayers.