Striving for the Simple Life
Making Room for the Lord

Dear Friends,

We tend to give a lot of time and attention to things, possessions – longing for them, acquiring them, storing them, rearranging them, being preoccupied with them. On occasion we may see a statue of St. Francis in someone's yard. We probably picture him as possessing only what was on his back. And yet he possessed all. God was so present to him that he saw the all loving Lord in all things – nature, animals, but especially people, and especially the poor. It was by way of a very poor man, a leper, that Francis first perceived and embraced the Lord. Over these 800 years, millions, probably billions, of people have admired and are attracted by St. Francis. He touches a cord in our hearts, that a birdbath in the back yard doesn't really satisfy. We too want to see God in our family, our neighbor, our co-worker, the person who is homeless, creation. I (Tom) and my wife, Lyn (+2018) became Secular Franciscans because St. Francis touched a cord in our lives. We try to nurture that spirit of simplicity in LAMP. St. Francis let go of everything so that Jesus could be all, and be seen in all.

People apply to become LAMP Missionaries because they experience a call to witness to God's love among the materially poor. And yet in a very short time, they become aware that it is the poor who evangelize us -- that in the midst of their being confined by poverty, some seem to be free, unattached and grateful, which is inspiring and convicting for us. Lord, help us make more room in our lives for You.

One with you in His service,

Tom Scheuring, Ph.D.
Director

Marybeth & Ed Greene
Pastoral Directors
Recently at our outreach to our brothers and sisters who are homeless on the streets around Holy Cross Parish on 42nd Street in Manhattan, there was one moment that stood out.

Kate, Elisabetta and I had already visited and prayed with a number of homeless persons and were making our way back to the Rectory when we came upon a woman curled up in a sleeping bag (on several of them which made a makeshift bed). She was reading a book. Her material poverty was strikingly profound in that everything she had was laid out around her creating this nook in the middle of the sidewalk under some scaffolding. You could see the repulsion people had when they were forced to come close to her because of how much room or lack thereof was on the sidewalk.

We felt we should approach her and when we said “hello” it was like she was snapped out of a trance. Her face lit up with the sweetest smile. We’ll call her Vera. I don’t think many people talk to her. We squatted down to be closer to her. As Kate began talking about Jesus with her it became very clear to me all of a sudden how each of us was tied together in the Body of Christ. In that moment, my role was listener, Kate, leader. Even Vera had her role as she taught us how to love without seeing all the disorder around her. Then another thing happened that was amazing.

As our visit was coming to an end, Elisabetta asked the woman if she would like to pray with us. She enthusiastically agreed.

At that very moment there was a man passing behind us on the sidewalk. He must have overheard that we were going to pray with her. He hurried back towards us and asked as we began to bow our heads if he could pray with us. It was amazing! This nameless man had a part in our unity as well. There we were, all of us, united in Christ, huddled together in that cramped space calling on our Lord Jesus for our sister in need. Can there be a more beautiful moment than this?! I feel blessed to participate in these great movements of God’s love in the Body of Christ.

- Sydney Thomas, LAMP Missionary

Kate Schieferecke listens and affirms the dignity of a person who came to the LAMPcafe one day. Some come regularly, others only once.

The account of LAMP’s Co-Founder Lyn Scheuring, passing into eternal life, as experienced by her young grandsons Sebastian and Lukas Leipold, with their Mom, Malissa, When My Grandma Went to Heaven, is available on Amazon.com.
A New Beginning

It has been over 2 years since LAMP Missionaries have had the privilege of visiting families who are homeless in city shelters. Covid slammed that door shut, and while we have still been able to minister to God's beloved poor at outdoor sites, the shelters were closed until the Program Director at a local shelter (with 90 families) recently agreed to a meeting with us (on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi). Although we are no longer allowed to go door to door, she suggested to us that we offer a women's encouragement group, and perhaps have a children's group. We agreed to do both.

We were quite surprised by the 10 mothers, their children in tow, who came to the first faith sharing group. One spoke English, the others all spoke Spanish, and were from Venezuela, Mexico, Haiti, and other countries. Four of us LAMP Missionaries went to serve that day, and it was a blessing that 2 of us, Elisabetta and Kate, speak Spanish pretty well! Sydney gave a reassuring presence, joyfully helping where it was needed. Elisabetta saw the need to occupy the children while the mothers shared, and there she was, on the floor absorbing the children's attention with quiet conversation and activities.

It was a deep joy to read the Annunciation from St. Luke's Gospel in English and Spanish, and listen to the reflections of these mothers. We were all required to wear masks during this time, but it didn't matter because their eyes were so glowing, so serious and sincere, that it gave me "a thrill of hope" and built up my faith. Some asked where our parish was, because they want to go to Mass on Sundays. We will be helping them connect to the local parish.

The children's group also had about 10 children. One little boy said he never heard the story of Jesus being born, and he and the others listened intently as the story was read, translated, and they looked at the pictures. We sang "Alabare" with them as they shook the little maracas we had just helped them make. We also played a game together, and ended the time with prayer. The boy who spoke English left us with these words, "Aw. You mean it's over already?"

Although LAMP has been visiting and praying with families living in homeless shelters since 1986, a new beginning with homeless families is so welcome and soothes our soul. This particular shelter has become filled more with immigrant families. Jesus identifies with them, and leads us to love them: "I was a stranger, and you took me in" (Matt. 25). The world is changing fast, but the love of Jesus' beating Heart is constant for all those who need to find a refuge. That includes us, too.

- Marybeth Greene, LAMP Missionary
Pastoral Co-Director
(Left) Matthew Fulton shares faith with gentlemen who came to the LAMP cafe on a cold day. (Above) Elisabetta Anelli, Sydney Thomas, and Kate Schieferecke pray with jobless men sitting on a stoop in mid-town Manhattan.

LAMP Catholic Ministries is possible only by the grace of God and your prayers and financial assistance. Please help us, by making a donation in the enclosed envelope, through PayPal, using Amazon Smile for shopping and/or including LAMP Ministries in your Will. LAMP Ministries is a 501(c)3 tax exempt, not for profit organization. Thank you!

Blessed Christmas and a Holy New Year!  
May the unconditional love of Jesus celebrated this Christmas season fill you with great joy!  

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED