

POVERELLO NEWS



MARCH 2016 (559) 498-6988
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There is nothing new under the sun, says the Preacher in Ecclesiastes, and I think I agree with him, but I might add that while there is nothing new, there are unique twists to old stories. I see a lot of those around here.

Here's an example. A couple that I hadn't seen in about five years showed up in our dining room recently. They used to eat here with their kids. Their kids are grown and

gone now, so it is just them. They hadn't been here because the husband had gotten a job, and they were able to move up and out of the dire poverty that previously had characterized their lives.

Then, he got laid off from work, and couldn't find another job. Keep in mind that most of the people we see have low educational levels, limited job skills, and sometimes a less-than-pristine past, all of which conspire to make them poor prospects for potential employers. Anyway, because he couldn't find work, they gradually became homeless again.

In one of Fresno's first freezes of the year, they spent the night in their car, trying in vain to stay warm. They tried to get into our Village of Hope, but there were no vacancies. They were going to tough it out in their car for as long as they needed to, when a cousin of the wife offered his place for them to stay. Once they settled into the cousin's house, they applied for emergency public housing.

So far, the story is one that I've seen repeated hundreds of times, and what happened at the cousin's is nothing new, either. The

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husband and the cousin didn't see eye-to-eye on some matter, got into an argument, and the cousin booted them out. Now, they were back on the streets.

The wife could have slept at Naomi's House, but they didn't want to be separated, so they were going to stay in the car again. About that time, I ran into them, and offered to put them up at a motel, as well as give them gas money to get to L. A., where the husband said he might have better job prospects.

Again, all this is the same story with different players. I couldn't begin to count the number of people who have come for help because they had been living with friends or relatives and were kicked to the curb over some disagreement. And how many have come to me needing help to get to some other city because they think the grass will be greener there? This was a script I'd seen before.

So here comes the twist. They were so grateful to me that the wife said she'd bake me a strawberry pie. I thought that was a nice gesture, but at the same time, I said to myself, "Yeah, right. Where are you going to cook it, on your engine block?" In other words, I wasn't holding my breath until the pie came.

The next day, they asked to see me. When I went out to the dayroom, she presented me with a big, beautiful strawberry pie. I was slightly stunned. "Where in the world did you bake this?" I asked.

Turns out that they broke back into the cousin's house when he wasn't there, baked two pies, left one for the cousin and brought the other one to me. I really appreciated the display of gratitude, even though I was ambivalent about the breaking and entering part.

As it turns out, their public housing application came through, so they didn't have to leave town. The wife still works part-time, and now that they have a home base, the husband can keep looking for work locally. This was an unusually happy ending, for them, and for me, because it was a really great pie.



Mike

Two Commemorations of Hope

We are deeply into what some call “the silly season,” the succession of state primaries that ultimately decide who will run for President of the United States next fall. Many observers of current events have commented that they have never personally known a time when the nation was so divided, when there seemed to be such an unbridgeable chasm between those on the left and those on the right. The daily political recriminations and rancor lobbed back and forth add to apprehension and depression as the world seems to be slipping toward economic crisis and geopolitical conflict.

So maybe it’s providential that smack dab in the middle of silly season, St. Patrick’s Day and Easter occur in the same month this year. If we choose to look beyond green beer and Easter eggs, the significance of these days can have a profound and bracing effect on our battered souls.

In Easter, we see the fulfillment of the promise in the book of Isaiah: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” The Resurrection has remained the great light of the Christian church throughout the centuries, and has given purpose, meaning and fortitude to countless millions, enabling them to not only endure horrific persecution, but also to practice the very difficult works of faith and mercy throughout the ages.



The story of St. Patrick is, in many ways, a reflection of the light of Easter. Born in Roman Britain in 387 A. D., at the age of fourteen Patrick was captured by pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland. As with many of the great Christian stories, his tribulation

led to a deeper faith in God. In his twenties and still a slave, he had a dream that directed him to travel to the coast. He did so at the first opportunity, and discovered a boat bound for Britain that allowed him passage. He returned home, and was reunited with his



family. After a few years, he had a vision in which the people of Ireland, pagans and Druids, appealed to him to return.

Risking life and limb, out of a love for the Irish people and a love of God, he returned to the place of his former captivity. There, he went about preaching, founding churches and doing good works. His words and deeds touched the hearts of

the wild pagan Irish, and thus was one of the strongholds of Christendom born. Patrick died in 461 A. D. in Saul, Ireland, where he had built the first Irish church.

In times of turmoil and despair, remembering the dual themes of Easter and St. Patrick's Day should be a source of comfort. For many of us at Poverello House, that ancient faith keeps us going, because we certainly are surrounded by great sadness and even greater darkness. The faith established by the Resurrection, which motivated St. Patrick, also burned inside of an obscure Franciscan priest working in San Francisco's Tenderloin District in the 1960s. Father Simon, an Irish-American descendent of St. Patrick's converts, reflected the light of that faith to a hopeless case named Mike McGarvin, and the rest is Poverello history.

If we have learned anything in our forty-three years of serving the poor, it's that darkness and depravity are not the last word. Homelessness, through human eyes, may seem desperately hopeless, but Easter and saints like Patrick show us that the light has indeed dawned, that it is real, and that it illuminates even the shadow-lands of homeless desperation.

5K Run for Meals: Get Ready, Set...

Strap on your running shoes and start training, because our 5K run has been changed from autumn to spring this year. Last October, we had our most successful run yet, bringing in over \$44,000 for our mission. We hope this May to replicate, or even exceed, that feat!

Please join us Saturday, May 14, 2016 at Woodward Park for the fourth annual 5K Run for Meals. Registration will begin at 7 a.m. the day of the event, or you can preregister online right now at www.poverellohouse.org/5krun. Each participant will receive an event T-shirt and refreshments following the run/walk. The 5K run will begin at 7:45 a.m., and the two-mile walk begins at 8 a.m.

What could be a better way to spend a Saturday morning than indulging in a good cardiovascular activity like running and walking, while simultaneously helping Poverello's mission to the homeless and poor? Don't miss out! Register now or later, but please come by and enjoy the fun!



Gifted Students Donate Their Skills

Students from CART (The Center for Advanced Research and Technology), a joint educational project of Fresno and Clovis Unified School Districts, recently lent some of their specialized talents to help Poverello House. It wasn't the first time—CART students have done projects for us on previous occasions.

This time, students in the Marketing Program had a contest to create a billboard representing a local non-profit organization. Poverello House was fortunate enough to be selected. The students involved include Brian Deiner, 18, Buchanan High School, Lydia Ibarra, 17, Bullard High School, and Araceli Alvarez, 16, Roosevelt High School. The billboard they created, shown below, was displayed on Clovis Avenue from December 28th to January 31st.

We would like to offer our special thanks to these wonderful young people for the beautiful billboard they produced. We think it captures the spirit of our mission, and it seems obvious that these talented students have a bright future. We wish them the best as they pursue their education, and we're grateful to CART for the unique opportunities it gives to students and our community.



March Wish List

Men's underwear * Coffee * Toilet paper * Disposable razors

To donate online, visit our website at www.poverellohouse.org

Remember, we now take credit card donations. Please see the enclosed envelope for instructions.

Poverello House

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Who Are We? A nonprofit, nondenominational organization.

Our Mission: Believing in the dignity of every person, at Poverello House we work to enrich the lives and spirits of all who pass our way by stewarding the resources made available to us through Providential and community support.

Governance: We have been operating since 1973 and are governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of local volunteer men and women.

Future Goals? To provide additional facilities for increased services.

How Are We Funded? Primarily through private donations from individuals, churches, businesses, and community organizations. Rules for acceptance and participation in the programs of Poverello House are the same for everyone, without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability.