



# Poverello News

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## FATHERS, SONS AND DAUGHTERS

June 17th is Father's Day. Because his relationship with his own father was so painful, Mike McGarvin always wanted to be sure we did something special for homeless dads on Father's Day. This year, of course, the celebration will be somewhat muted because last year, we lost Papa Mike, our own founding father.

As with many men who have troubled or nonexistent relationships with their dads, Papa Mike sought out alternative father figures. In his case, he was fortunate to have found Father Simon Scanlon, who ran the Poverello Coffeehouse in San Francisco, and who came to be his mentor and greatest influence.



Perhaps because the concept of fatherhood was something Papa Mike struggled with, he was very aware of the consequences of absent, abusive or negligent fathers in the people he'd see on the streets. His articles often reflected this obsessive awareness.

Over the decades, Papa Mike's column in the *Poverello News* did what he did best: told stories of the homeless. Sometimes these were funny, often sad, and very often poignant. Many times, reflections about fathers would make their way into his pieces.

In honor of both Papa Mike and Father's Day, we would like to reprint his column from March 1993. We think you'll understand why we chose this one.

*Life at the Pov is a mixed bag of paradox and irony. Sometimes there are humorous scenes tinged with sadness, such as the drunken man singing "Hello Dolly" in the breakfast line. Often the most depressing situations on the streets are juxtaposed with the compassion of volunteers, as in the case of a former professional man being served by a volunteer who used to work with him. The joy of witnessing one of our residents get sober, get a job, and get back on his feet is always tempered by the downward spiral of another.*

*The dramas played out here are so jumbled that they often leave me feeling unbalanced. Just when I think I've seen it all, just when I think my heart couldn't possibly be broken again, some new twist on an old tragedy knocks the breath out of me.*

*Right before Thanksgiving, an elementary school class came to help serve lunch. As the men filed through the line, I noticed that a little girl handed out a food tray, then stepped back and hung her head. Thinking she might be ill, I went over and asked her if she was okay. As she lifted her head, tears were welling up in her eyes, and in a faltering voice, she said something that has haunted me ever since: "I just fed my Daddy."*

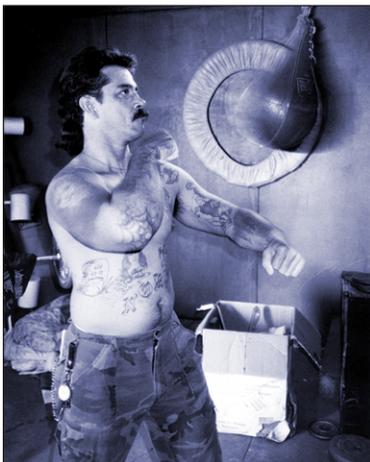
*Sometimes, it's all I can do to keep from crying.*



## **“VIEW TO THE SOUL” - A Tribute to Papa Mike**

“Papa Mike” McGarvin, founder of Poverello House, was known for capturing on film the compelling faces of the homeless, and doing so with dignity and compassion. When he began taking pictures, he did so only after he had built a foundation of trust with the homeless. That foundation was erected with his smiles, his jokes, and his offer of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches out on the streets. Some of the subjects of his photographs refused him for months and even years, but he eventually won them over.

***View to the Soul*** will be an Art Hop event that will pay tribute to the legacy and photos left by Papa Mike. The exhibit will also feature images from local photographers, including a “through the lens” section featuring photos taken by some of Poverello’s homeless guests. This exhibit will be on display throughout the month of July. The Art Hop event will be held from **5:00 to 9:00 p.m. on July 5, 2018 at Jeffrey Scott Agency, located at 1544 Fulton Street in downtown Fresno.** Please come and help pay tribute to Papa Mike, his work at Poverello House, his photographic achievements, and the photography of many others who have documented the crisis of local homelessness.



### **WAYS YOU CAN HELP THIS MONTH**

Men’s Underwear  
 Women’s Underwear  
 Pillows \* Toilet paper  
 Bath towels  
 Milk \* Eggs

Please join us at **Art Hop** on  
 July 5, 2018 from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m.

## FROM THE DESK OF CEO CRUZ AVILA

As Father's Day approaches this year, I have mixed emotions. Last year I lost my father and we lost Papa Mike. Both men were powerful influences in my life, and not a day goes by that I do not think about them. In contrast to the losses of last year, I became a father for the first time. I do not have adequate words to describe how I feel when I get to hold my daughter and make her smile. I am sure they are the same feelings my



father and Papa Mike had when they held their children. Every day I feel blessed that I have the ability to provide a home in which my family can thrive.

Even though my parents were not wealthy, I always felt secure, knowing that they would provide for me. As parents, we want to give our children a sense of well-being and security.

Since becoming CEO of Poverello House, I have seen fathers who are unable to provide for their children. They may have lost their job, their housing and are battling addictions and mental illness. They cannot provide food, shelter and security for their children. I cannot imagine how a father must feel if he cannot give his family the necessities for survival. Papa Mike established Poverello House to provide hope for these fathers and their families; hope that these fathers can lead productive lives once they have completed our drug rehab program; hope that these fathers can provide for their families once they have been linked to mental health services, job resources, social services and housing programs; and hope that these fathers can provide a hot meal for their kids, even when the refrigerator is empty at the end of the month.

My father and Papa Mike gave me the gift of hope; knowledge that despite our darkest hours, the will of God will never take you where the grace of God will not protect you. This Father's Day I want to thank Papa Mike, my father and all fathers who are the light of hope in their families' eyes.

Cruz Avila, CEO

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