

There's No Place Like Home . . .

This line from the Wizard of OZ reminds me of how important the word HOME is to everyone.

In Luke's gospel we read the account of the holy family's return to Bethlehem, "And there was no room for them." On the first Christmas, Mary and Joseph met with rejection as they were nearing the time when their child was to be born. They were in a foreign place and they had no space to call home.

Home is a word that conjures up warm feelings for most people. Safety and hospitality are taken for granted at home. Although many of our guests are without a home they still have a deep appreciation for it.

Just last week Martha, one of our guests, stopped me and asked if I knew her friend from the street, Jeanette. Martha said, "I want to tell you her good news." She reminded me that Jeanette was from California. Martha said, "A group of us were encouraging her to go home for many reasons." She said that Jeanette had gotten some help from an agency and needed only \$.35 more for bus fare to California. Martha continued, "We went around among our friends and got the \$.35 from the change we had in our pockets."

Martha finished the story by telling me that she was going to meet Jeanette when she left our Center. She said, "My friend is fragile so I'm going to make sure she gets on the bus this afternoon".

For many of our guests, Lantern Light is their home away from home. It is a place where they are respected as people. For many of our guests it is a spot where they experience peace and a feeling of belonging.

Our new Bishop, Gregory Aymond, came to visit our guests a month ago. He arrived at lunchtime. On that day we had 200+ guests. As the Bishop toured the Center our guests were lined up all around. As he passed and greeted them one of the guests, Leo, stepped forward and said, "Bishop, I would like to tell you something. I am 58 years old and I have never been treated as well as I have been here." Leo's sincere words helped us to understand how at home our guests are.

Enid Storey, pbvm

Feeling at Home

We would like to introduce to you two of our **longtime** volunteers.

1. Madeleine has been serving the homeless and poor people in our neighborhood for more than seven years. Madeleine came every day and cut desserts for 200 lunches. Each piece of cake/pastry was dished up or cut up and wrapped with great love and precision. Nothing was too much for this octogenarian. No matter what shape the cake was originally they all looked like desserts ready for royalty when she was finished. Madeleine felt at home at Lantern Light. She has recently moved. We will miss Madeleine.

2. "Betty Banana", as we fondly call her, has been at home with the poor here in New Orleans for years. She started out a decade ago picking up, cleaning and preparing fresh fruit for our guests at the Feed Jesus Program which evolved into Lantern Light when Katrina hit. Every week we would look forward to **Betty Banana's** visits. She was always carrying bananas and crackers for a morning snack for our guests. We will miss Betty.

Vera Butler, pbvm

During the month of September we were fortunate to have Sister Laurene Pittman, pbvm from Newfoundland, Canada to work with us. She was like the Energizer Bunny. We are most grateful for her generous spirit and wonderful sense of humor. Thank you Sr. Laurane. The next article is her poetic reflection of her time at Lantern Light.

COME...SEE...HELP

The guests line up outside the gate,
Where each is greeted for the day.
They state their names and "why" they come –
A shower, a shave, a snack.

There is a lot to do each day –
For when the mail arrives for those who wait
An office transforms into a real post office.
There all runs on schedule.

There is time to do –
With volunteers to help
Many great services are done
For many, many guests.

The team, the Sisters, collaborate
So warm-hearted kindness happens
For all who come through the door
Seeking only the bare necessities.

I know that Nano smiles down on all
Echoing encouragement for the work
I too join with Nano Nagle*
I came. . . I saw. . . I helped

As Nano's lantern sheds beams of hope
I know her spirit is within the space
I leave refreshed and feeling blessed
For my time at Lantern Light.

Laurane Pittman, pbvm

**Nano Nagle, Foundress of Presentation Sisters*

Awards:

Recently the Rebuild Center, of which Lantern Light is a part was given the following two awards:

1. **United States Catholic Mission Association Award** for Promoting Creative Partnership in Responding to Mission.
2. **St. Vincent de Paul Award – Congregation of the Mission Southern Province** was given to all the Volunteers for their service over the years.

Home For the Holidays . . .

There is a saying "Home is where you hang your hat." The guests who come to the Lantern Light each day are "**home less.**" Many of them have hats but no place to hang them.

Instead of a home, our guests try to find a "stay place." Let me share some "stay place" stories. One guest said, "I live in a vacant building with no electricity or running water, but I'm grateful for a roof over my head and being out of the elements. I have to be careful when I go in at night and get out early in the morning for fear the police will find me and charge me with trespassing."

One day a guest said that his upper torso was covered with red marks. His "stay place" the night before had been in the woods. While he slept he was attacked by fire ants. He was so grateful when we were able to give some help to alleviate the pain.

There are some shelters in the area where a person can stay free for a few nights but then must pay--\$5-8 a night. Often the shelters are crowded and some guests do not feel safe.

Our guests often express their gratitude for the safe haven and many services they receive each day between 8:00 and 2:30 at Lantern Light. As they settle into their "stay place" at night, home is only a dream. The phrase **home for the holidays** must have a very different meaning for them.

What a grace and blessing to know, that whatever our circumstances now, each of us has a home in the heart of our good and gracious God.

Mary Dennis Lentsch, pbvm

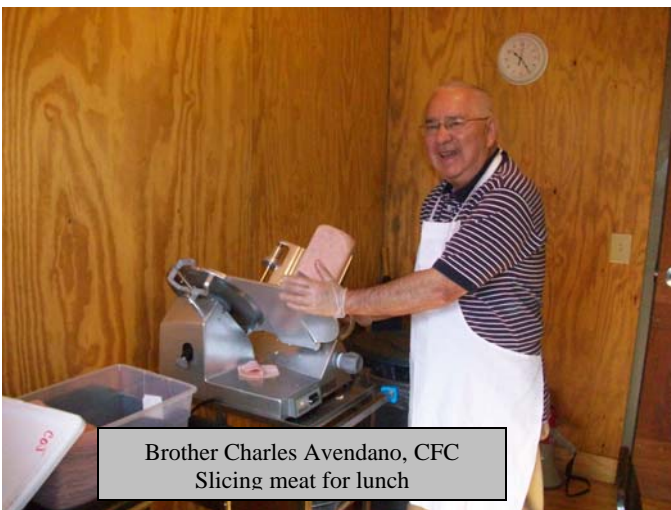




Sister Laurane Pittman cutting desserts



Barry
A friend and great helper



Brother Charles Avendano, CFC
Slicing meat for lunch



Our guests' *safe place* during the day



Sister Enid renews her vows at
her fiftieth Jubilee at the Center



Guests in the court yard