News



With the help of Our Father's Table ministry to the chronically homeless in Orange County, California, Marsha and her 7-year-old son have their own apartment, and the young mother has a good job and her own car. (Courtesy of Our Father's Table)



by Dan Morris-Young

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A second annual memorial ceremony for homeless persons who died in Orange County, California, during 2017 took place Dec. 21 at Christ Cathedral in Garden Grove. The names of 210 were read, 20 more than last year.

A memorial Mass for the homeless was also celebrated at Old St. Patrick's Parish in Chicago on Dec. 19.

On the positive side in Orange County, Marsha has a good job and her own car today, and she and her 7-year-old son have their own apartment. The young mother is one of the more than 100 homeless people whom Our Father's Table has helped to beat back addiction, medical challenges, and other factors that had led them to the streets. Founded in 2014 by Gina Seriel, a member of Mission Basilica Parish in San Juan Capistrano, the ministry to chronically homeless in Orange County has received significant help from Catholic entities, including the Orange Diocese, Serra's Pantry and Outreach at Mission Basilica, Knights of Columbus Council 12834, and the Sisters of St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation.

The ladder out of homelessness has many rungs. One of them is furnishing one's living space, once one has living space. A ministry spawned at Our Lady of the Holy Souls Parish in Little Rock, Arkansas, does that. Parishioners Steve Hoffmann and Shannon Callahan spearheaded formation of Settled Souls, a ministry "that provides donated furniture, donated goods and welcome packages to homeless clients who have been put into housing by Jericho Way," reports the Arkansas Catholic newspaper. Jericho Way is a homeless resource center in Little Rock operated by the Catholic nonprofit Depaul USA.

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Outreach to the homeless is also a staple of Dolores Mission Parish in East Los Angeles, the birthplace of well-known Homeboy Industries, founded by Dolores Mission's former pastor, Jesuit Fr. Gregory Boyle. Boyle and Dolores Mission parishioner Yolanda Gallo (also key to Homeboy Industries' establishment) will be honored at the parish's 20th annual La Fiesta de Comunidad to be held at Skirball

Cultural Center on Feb. 10 at 5 p.m. A new book on Boyle's experiences in outreach ministry to gang members, *Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship*, was released late last year.

NCR Young Voices essayist Mark Piper recently advocated incorporating the homeless into parish life more actively, via efforts such as a dedicating a Mass to and for them. The suggestion was one of eight Piper proposed for parishes to better embrace Pope Francis' exhortation to exhibit "missionary creativity."

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