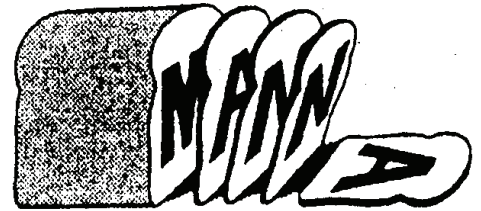


The Manna Society Newsletter



Easter 2007

Working with those in need

Manna Update

By Paddy Boyle



Manna Centre Director

Our Christmas Dinner on the Friday 22nd December went very well indeed. We had anticipated 75 people for each of our two sittings but we ended up with 80 for each sitting. Everyone had a full Christmas dinner, followed by a choice of desserts, mince pies and coffee. Thanks to Fareshare who provided us with our twenty turkeys, Better Bankside who provided the Christmas presents, all of the volunteers and especially Irena our cook, a good day was had by all.

The ROBES Project (a Churches' run Winter night shelter operating locally) opened on Sunday 4th February. It will offer accommodation to 10 rough sleepers every night until the end of March. All of those referred to the night shelters will come via the Manna Centre. We are also funding the Co-ordinator's salary for the ROBES Project, Nikki Jones.

As you will see from the adjacent survey about 20% of our clients are European. The vast majority of these are Polish. Thanks to funding from Southwark Council we are going to employ a Polish speaking worker, two days a week, to work specifically with the Poles and other Eastern European Nationals. We will advise recent arrivals on the steps they need to take in order to find employment here in the UK.

Those of you who have visited the centre will have seen that we have very little space to store furniture. As a result we have decided to build a furniture store. It will be a one storey building located in the yard at the back of the centre. We hope to start building as soon as planning permission is granted.

It goes without saying that we are only able to provide the services we do thanks to the generosity of our supporters. On behalf of all who have benefited from a hot meal, a warm shower or any of

our services please accept our heartfelt thanks.

Who uses the Manna Centre?

On Wednesday 13th December 157 people used the Manna Centre. 44% were sleeping rough (up from 35% a year ago), with another 10% in squats – so effectively over half without any accommodation.

In the last 12-18 months we have seen an increase in the number of people from the countries which joined the EU in 2004. Of the 30 Europeans using the centre 24 were A8 Nationals. The majority of these are homeless - sleeping rough or in squats.

	Numbers	%
Male	145	92.4
Female	12	7.6

Accommodation

	Numbers	%
Sleeping Rough	69	44
Council/HA flat	54	34
Squat	16	10
Hostel	8	5
Friends	9	6
Family	1	1

Ethnic Origin

	Numbers	%
English	68	43
European	32	20
Black British	13	8
Irish	13	8
Scottish	12	8
Black African	7	5
Other	6	4
Asian	3	2
Welsh	2	1
Black Caribbean	1	1

Wounded World

By Nannette Ffrench

Committee Member



A wounded world because justice is in short supply.

We each have only one story to tell, that story is our own story – the story of our life! I always regard it a privilege and a humbling experience when someone else shares a little of their life journey with me. I find it also a learning experience when I hear about the good and the not so good things that have happened and brought some to where they find themselves now. However the stories that stand out are the stories shared by people that somehow have ended up (or have been pushed) on to the ‘hard shoulder’ and are subsequently going through very rough times.

There are so many today that have left everything - family, home, country - in order to work here and earn money to support their families back home. Sadly when some newspapers in this country shout their venom about asylum seekers and migrant workers the Government jumps. Laws are once again changed and remade in order to keep people out or to send them back to where they came from. So for many, the hopes and dreams of a better life are shattered!

War, poverty and the displacement of individuals and families remain the greatest social scourge of our age. We are on the right path when we begin to accept the fact that poverty and inequality has human causes, that it is not just a natural state. The late Pope made it clear to us that challenging the causes of social injustice was part of the mission of the Church and asked “all people of goodwill” to take the issue of global poverty seriously. The Make Poverty History campaign set out to change minds at the highest levels of global governments, it was however never meant to let us as individuals off the hook. “*Be the change you want to see in the world*” Gandhi.

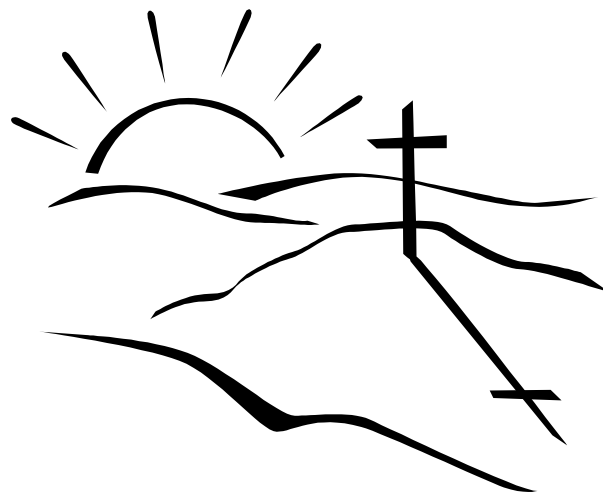
So we begin to ask ourselves some uncomfortable questions. Are we part of the rich world lifestyle where the choices we make are at the expense of the poor? The words of RH Tawney are now even more pertinent than when he wrote them almost a century ago, “What thoughtful rich people call the problem of poverty, thoughtful

poor people call, with equal justice, the problem of riches.” The disparity between the very rich and the very poor is overwhelming, obscene and sinful. With such injustice and inequality and with the systems that are in place in favour of the rich, surely we have the answer as to why there is such unrest in the world.

We must listen and really hear what is going on all around us. Then with God’s help each one of us will in our own way do something about it.

*There is room in the world for loving;
there is no room for hate.
There is room in the world for sharing;
there is no room for greed.
There is room for justice;
no room for privilege.
There is room for compassion;
no room for pride.*

John Harriott.



***“A Light shines out in the
darkness, a light the
darkness cannot overcome.”***

Lenten Meditation

By

Bandi Mbuli

Campaigns Worker



I can still vividly remember the very first time I watched a film on the Crucifixion. I must have been about 4 years old. In those days it was customary in the Congo to show religious movies in church after mass, especially during Christian festivals. On that Good Friday evening, my aunt, who had been babysitting me, took me to our local church, St Gabriel. There we watched the crucifixion of Jesus on a big screen. It was my first ‘horror’ movie. I came out of the church crying and feeling bewildered. My aunt was at great pains to console me. I wondered how it was possible for such a good man to be killed in that manner, being nailed to the cross.

What a gruesome death! How could it happen to Jesus? It did not make sense. It really frightened me. Still today, after these many years of pondering on the mystery of the Crucifixion, it does not always make sense. Yet I believe that it was necessary. Easter of course brings to humankind the hope of salvation, Jesus triumphing over sin and death and therefore making it possible for us to live eternally. As I write, Ash Wednesday is just 3 days away, which is going to mark the beginning of Lent, this long and sombre period during which we prepare

ourselves for Good Friday and Easter. This is a great occasion to develop new habits and rid ourselves of bad ones. It is almost like New Year’s resolutions, only that we have over 40 days during which to discipline and retrain ourselves.

Three years ago, friends suggested that I give up sugar in my tea and coffee for Lent. I did, and though I continue to take sugar in my tea from time to time, it is not as bad as before. A friend of mine, Fabrice, who takes Lent more seriously than I goes on retreats during which he does all sorts of things, including fasting. This little discomfort or discipline helps us somehow gain some insight into Jesus’ suffering. We most often meet God in discomfort than in comfort. Whatever we do, our ultimate purpose must surely be that we draw closer to God during Lent.

At the Manna we need not look further. We meet Jesus everyday. He comes to us in many forms and guises. He is sometimes white and sometimes black; sometimes male and sometimes female. It is a Suffering Jesus who comes to us for food, for a shower, for clothes, for welfare and housing advice. Jesus said that it is in these moments that we can show him love. During this Lent, let’s pay even more attention to Him when He comes to us for help. I can hear Him say “when I was hungry you fed Me. When I was cold you clothed Me”. When I was homeless you sheltered Me. Our service users are Jesus to us and we, the staff and all our supporters, are Jesus to them!



First Night Out

By Anthony Howard

Manna Centre Service User



The rat had been watching him for some time, how long God knows. Oh yes, here he was, under the stars for the first time in his life. I wonder if this steely eyed rodent knew this, I wonder if dear Ratty had been taking stock of the comings and goings of rough sleepers, who was more likely to drop or discard tip bits? I wonder how he viewed me, new kid on the block?

Could he sense my nervousness? Had he taken careful note of how I had deliberately avoided the main contingent of rough sleepers? Why was this rat just staring at me, why did he not flee like all rodents normally do, had he got used to the rough sleepers' ways, did not people throw things at pests, or was it a case that rough sleepers were somewhat immune to rodents' nocturnal activities?

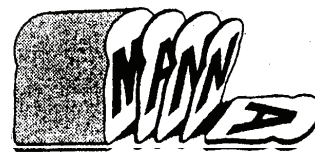
How I'd stumbled upon rough sleepers alley I'll never know, one must remember that to initiate oneself into the rough sleepers' labyrinth is no easy task, one does not just barge up into a group of rough sleepers and announce one's arrival, as if just off the flight from Gatwick. Wariness shows in the eyes of rough sleepers, especially when new kids on the block show up.

I still wondered about the non retreating rodent, but I was assured by the rough sleepers that the rodents never came close that they only observed from afar, this led me to think that maybe people in general, when coming upon rough sleepers were a bit like rats. Maybe rough sleepers were viewed as the most on show part of society, even rats retreat to their lair, and even people who ogle day after day at the homeless plight retreat to their dens.

I lay in the middle of the rough sleepers, I did not trust dear old Ratty, I'd heard one bite could be lethal. The rat had retreated by now but my imagination was still doing overtime, do so called vermin become more alert when handout vans are due? Could a lone rat creep right up to my face while I slept, my first night out I'd like to tell all and sundry was not a happy one.



Happy Easter



Manna Society, Central Office,

6 Melior Street, London SE1 3QP.

Tel/Fax: 020-7357 9363.

Website: www.mannasociety.org.uk

E-mail: mail@mannasociety.org.uk

Manna Day Centre,

6 Melior Street, London SE1 3QP.

Tel: 020-7403 1931.

E-mail: daycentre@mannasociety.org.uk

Campaign Desk,

6 Melior Street, London SE1 3QP

Tel: 020-7403 0441

E-mail: campaigns@mannasociety.org.uk

Editors: Paddy Boyle & Nannette Ffrench
