



Autumn 2011 Report

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Why Do We Travel So Far to Serve?

Aren't there poor people right here in Souderton? Why go all the way to Philadelphia? The short answer is that is where the 150 inmates in the Bible study I led at Graterford Prison, with one voice, told me to go in 1989 when I laid out the vision for *The King's Jubilee*. Of course, since then, we have started and spun off ministries in Upper Darby, Pottstown, Stowe, East Greenville & Bethlehem, PA, as well as in Columbia, SC. It is probably more instructive to know why and how we started those.

None of these other ministries looked exactly like what we do in center city Philadelphia. Upper Darby was the closest in similarity and Bethlehem was the least similar. In every case, it was not a matter of looking at a map and choosing a place that was close to the church where the volunteers attended. Many pastors think they should be serving the poor in the same neighborhood or town where their building is located. Many look on this not so much as unrequited service as they do outreach for growth of the church. There are at least three flaws in this thinking. First, none of us goes to a village church, especially in the Orthodox Church. Members are scattered far and wide and drive some distance from work and home to come to church. Thus, the "community" where the church is located is far more widespread than the town where the building is located. Second, ministry to the poor has to happen where poor people live and additional ministry needs to happen where it needs to happen, not where it is convenient to us. Third, we serve the poor not to evangelize them, but we do it in obedience to Christ to evangelize ourselves. The people we serve are not rats and the food we serve is not bait.

We had been serving dinner on the street in center city Philadelphia for a couple of years when Nanci started to come with us down to the city. She had had a pretty rough life and spent a good bit of time on the streets of Pottstown. She approached me to see if The King's Jubilee could start a work there. I told her to pray, while I spent two solid weeks at all times of day and night in and around Pottstown. I interviewed the director of the Salvation Army, and spoke with all of the churches

and social service agencies that were working with the poor in Pottstown. I met people on the street: hookers, drug dealers, mothers with children, young people, policemen and shop owners. I asked all of these people what was already happening for the poor in Pottstown and what was not happening that they would like to see happen. I found out that there was a rotation among the downtown churches that provided some kind of meal in a church hall on every day of the week except Wednesday. I also discovered that there was a small group of homeless teenagers who kept an extremely low profile. They did not want to be caught by the authorities and sent back to abusive homes, either their own or their foster homes. I found that there were two neighborhoods that had a lot of poor children who could use a hot, nutritious meal, as well as clothes and school supplies. Their parents could use some clothes and some foodstuffs from time to time, as well. The fact that it was needed on Wednesday presented a problem. So we prayed for the Lord to multiply our team and our food supplies and send someone with a van we could use.

Within a week, we had willing people to make sandwiches and soup and to drive their van. We made no commitments. We wanted to see how it would go and see if it was welcomed in the neighborhoods; to see if it was meeting a need. It was a smashing success! Soon we found a dry place to leave a box of food and toiletries for the teenagers. They picked it up, then returned the box with a thank you note in it! That ministry, in turn, multiplied into more.

A young, married couple who were involved in the Pottstown ministry moved to South Carolina. They missed the joy of serving on the streets like they had done in Philadelphia and Pottstown and Stowe. They got involved in a church. Then they scoped out the situation there much as I had done in Pottstown and Stowe. They asked me if The King's Jubilee would help them get something started down there. We replied, why not? So we helped them with some start up money to buy some equipment and supplies and helped them publish a flyer and cover letter to appeal to area churches and individuals to get involved and

support their work. Within a month they were serving hot meals and giving away clothes to over 150 homeless people once a week at two sites, one in Columbia and one just outside of Columbia.

I tell people that it is because of the homeless that I am Orthodox today. Read on to learn why.

For years, I was looking for the body of Christ, the Church that Jesus said he would build that the gates of hell would not prevail against. We tried various places. Everywhere we went someone would ask us, "How many of the homeless become Christians and join the church?" (Or something to that effect.) I would always reply, "The food is not bait and these people are not rats. I am there to save me, not to save them. They save me." Evangelicals generally don't take so well to such answers. Even among the Mennonites, who used to have a theology about serving the poor, I was asked this question. Why this is so important is that if I am there to garner professions of faith and make converts, then the service I offer has turned into a con. It has become quid pro quo. I learned this the first month I was in prison ministry. The inmates could smell it a mile away and were more than willing to play that game, but no lives were changed. What God offers us is unconditional love. His mercy is offered again and again whether or not we recognized it as such and gave thanks the last time or not. It is the tender mercies of God that lead men to repentance. So we enter the paradox by serving in such a way that it is evident we expect nothing. This so affects men's hearts that some do find their way to repentance.

Church people would also call us radical for helping the poor in the way that we did. As soon as you label someone radical, you have excused yourself from joining in a similar work. I found none of that in Orthodoxy. It is expected that we should serve the poor, expecting absolutely nothing in return. As far as "radical" goes; the saints whose icons are on our walls are normal. We haven't even approached being normal, much less radical. Another paradox is that what we do an hour away from St. Philip's way down in center city has actually helped St. Philip's gain converts. In the last several years, more than half a dozen people have told us that they took a closer look at our church because of this ministry. They were hungering for something real and figured a church that has people who are going that far out of their way to serve the poor must have a handle on something real.

I didn't even mention how our name comes into this: *The King's Jubilee*. The suburbs have

become prosperous in the main due to white flight and job flight from the city. Hundreds of city churches have closed. Many that are still open are just barely scraping by and cannot deal with the overwhelming poverty that surrounds them. Most suburban churches who are there, because of this flight, are also filled with relatively prosperous people with few needy people in their towns. Almost all of these churches want to do something in their own neighborhood for the poor, oblivious to the facts that zoning and vagrancy laws and highways (the very things that attracted them to the suburbs to get away from the rabble in the city) mean that there are very few poor who need serving. There may be a few gaps in service here and there that need filling, but nothing like what we generally do. For example, there are meal ministries in Lansdale and North Wales that have waiting lists of people who want to serve. The jubilee of the Old Testament, of which Christ and his Church are to be the fulfillment of, was when all the slaves were freed and each could return to his own land again. It was a second chance that involved great inconvenience and expense to those who had accumulated wealth. It let the resources flow from where they had accrued back to where they had come from, giving everyone a fresh start. Isaiah foretold that the Messiah was to be the fulfillment of this and that there was to be a continual jubilee: "the acceptable year of the Lord!" It is up to Christians to get out of our comfort zone, be inconvenienced, to work this out. It is not just a relic of the Law. It was given for our admonition. We are called to be "coworkers with God" to be *The King's Jubilee!*

A Prayer of a Sick Person

O Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, Physician of souls and bodies, who didst become man and suffer death on the Cross for our salvation, and through thy tender love and compassion didst heal all manner of sickness and affliction; do thou O Lord, visit me in my suffering, and grant me grace and strength to bear this sickness with which I am afflicted, with Christian patience and submission to thy will, trusting in thy loving kindness and tender mercy. Bless, I pray thee, the means used for my recovery, and those who administer them. I know O Lord, that I justly deserve any punishment inflicted upon me for I have so often offended thee and sinned against thee, in thought, word, and deed. Therefore, I humbly pray thee, look upon my weakness, and deal not with me after my sins, but according to the multitude of thy mercies. Have

compassion on me, and let mercy and justice meet; and deliver me from this sickness and suffering I am undergoing. Grant that my sickness may be the means of my true repentance and amendment of my life according to thy will, that I may spend the rest of my days in thy love and fear; that my soul, being helped by thy grace and sanctified by thy Holy Mysteries, may be prepared for its passage to the Eternal Life, and there, in the company of thy blessed Saints, may praise and glorify thee with thy Eternal Father and Life-giving Spirit. Amen.

“... and let mercy and justice meet ...”

I have been praying the Prayer of a Sick Person quite a bit over the last year, especially this summer. Since June 8th, I have had more days with debilitating migraines than without. I have experienced at least three incidences of strokes, the second two with multiple infarcts. I have been unable to do the work for “Come and See” Icons, since my eyesight and depth perception is unreliable. Even the computer work is painful. The business is about to go under, if it hasn’t already. The last Tuesday of August and the first Thursday of September, I coordinated The King’s Jubilee from a hospital bed using my cellphone. I was so grateful I could do that.

The first hospital roommate I had, thought he was being held against his will while people were ransacking his house. He broke free from his restraints and cornered a couple of nurses. They would get him calmed down and restrain and sedate him again. He would sleep for ten minutes, then he would go off again. This went on for seven hours, before they moved me out his room to a room at the extreme other end of the hall, at 4 am. I could still hear him screaming his wife’s name. He was in psychic hell. It is only by the grace of God that I am not in a similar condition. Lord have mercy.

Later that morning, I prayed the prayer above. When I got to the phrase: “let mercy and justice meet”, I thought not only of how I deserve hell and long for heaven (for that is truly what the prayer is asking), but that I also long for it for my tormented former roommate and for my current roommate who suffered a couple of seizures and doesn’t have health insurance, so isn’t going to get the follow up care he needs. He will probably be bankrupted for the rest of his life by the hospital bill on his credit report.

I began to seriously meditate on that phrase of the prayer. It seems, as a society, we crave

justice. We want to see wrongdoers punished, the slothful poor, the immoral exposed. That is all just. And it’s all fine when it’s somebody else or somebody else’s child, or somebody else’s best friend. When it strikes closer to home, we seriously plead for mercy. Mercy is where just punishment is withheld. “Lord have mercy!” is the most oft repeated prayer in all our services and private devotions. We know that the Lord is just, but we aren’t asking for justice just yet.

The beauty of this prayer is that it is from the perspective of facing one’s mortality and final judgment and it *is* calling for God’s justice only to be met by his mercy. This is similar to what I pray for when I pray “for a good defense at the judgment seat of Christ.” Christ stands in my place and satisfies the demands for justice. I am clothed in my white baptismal garment, hidden in Christ. Mercy is granted. Justice is satisfied.

The icon of the Falling Asleep of the Theotokos is the most apt visual representation of this concept. Mary died because of the fall of Adam. That’s justice. Jesus Christ is there immediately to carry her in his arms like a swaddled babe to life eternal in Glory! That’s justice and mercy having met. It is the hope of every believer hidden in Christ.

This prayer is not just about the sweet by and by though. We pray for the peace of the whole world; Lord have mercy! and the unity of all mankind; Lord have mercy!

As I continued my meditation, I realized that what I have been seeking for, longing for, and working for my whole adult life is to see mercy and justice meet. I want a second chance when I do wrong. I want to help the ex-offender safely get a second shot at life after he is released. I want to be delivered from my illness. I want to help addicts and alcoholics be delivered from their illnesses. I want my family healed. We expand our family to include others who hope for the same. I want to survive a bad decision or two or three or 146. I want us to find a way to let people find their way forward even though they may have bet on the wrong horse in uncertain economic times.

The Lord told us that if we do not show mercy, we will not be shown mercy. So pray the Jesus Prayer with as long a rope as you want to, if you don’t give alms and still want to let children die because their parents can’t afford healthcare, well, Lord have mercy.

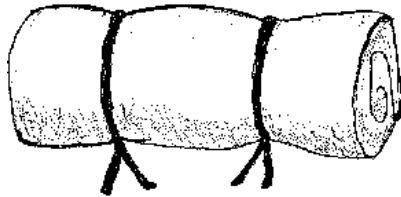
The King’s Jubilee is trying in small, tangible ways to share the mercy of God that we all truly crave with the poor and needy in center city and

the prosperous and needy in the suburbs. It is truly "more blessed to give than to receive." There is no point to prosperity, if you can't use it to help someone else.

Be someone's answer to prayer today. It is the tender mercies of God that lead men to repentance.

Peace,

Cranford Joseph Coulter
director, The King's Jubilee

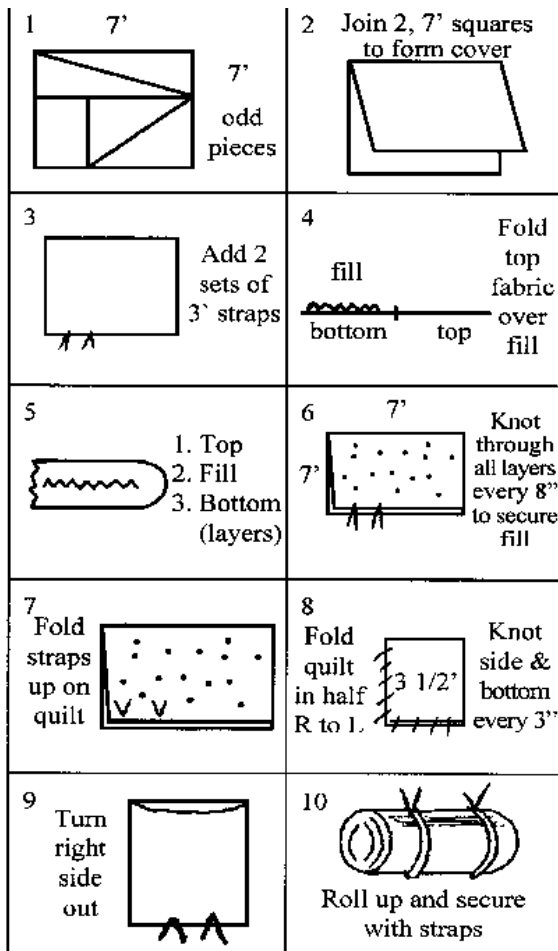


Funding

The King's Jubilee receives no budgeted money from St. Philip's or any other church. We survive on almsgiving. Last month only \$30 was designated for The King's Jubilee at St. Philip's, which begs the question: When do we stop doing this ministry? We are here to distribute the alms of God's people to those in need in a society divided by highways and zoning laws. If we are given nothing, we have nothing to give. If you want me to stop doing this ministry, it will be very painful for me. Please let me continue to help you bless the poor in Jesus' Name.

Mail donations to:

The King's Jubilee
27 N. Front St.
Souderton, PA 18964



The King's Jubilee has been ministering in Jesus' Name among poor and homeless people in Philadelphia since February of 1989. We also seek to equip and encourage any who wish to join us in similar service, wherever they are located.

We invite you to make an Ugly Quilt to save a life.

WHY THE NAME 'UGLY QUILT'

- The Sleeping Bag is a utility quilt made from clean used or no-cost fabrics.
- This simple sleeping bag should not have a market value to assure the homeless are beneficiaries.
- The name indicates the skill level needed for this tied quilt.
- The Ugly Quilt can be made in less than a day.
- A group can make one in an hour.

THE OUTER SHELL OF THE SLEEPING BAG IS MADE BY CUTTING SCRAP MATERIAL, BEDSPREADS, DRAPES OR RUMMAGE INTO THE LARGEST SQUARE OR RECTANGLE THE PIECE WILL ALLOW.

- Sew enough pieces together to form a seven foot by seven foot (7' x 7') square.
- Sew two, 7' by 7' squares together to form the sleeping bag cover. 7' by 14' finished length.
- Stitch two sets of three foot straps to a 7' edge, approximately 15 and 30 inches in. Straps are made of neckties, dress belts, etc.
- On three eight foot (8') church tables, fill one half of the 14' x 7' piece with clean old blankets, mattress pads, fiberfill or light-weight rummage. Leave a threeinch (3?) seam allowance on the three open edges.
- Cover with remaining 7' length. 6. Tie knots through all three layers with a double crochet cotton every eight inches (8?), to secure the covers to the fill layer.
- Lay the 3' straps up onto the tied quilt.
- Fold the tied 7' x 7' in half, R to L forming a 7' x 3 1/2' sleeping bag shape. * Triple knot with crochet cotton the remaining side and bottom edges every three inches catching only the four cover layers. Raw edges will insulate the seams when turned * The top edge and folded side are finished.

9. Turn right side out.

10. Roll up and tie straps tightly to secure. Feel free to implement your ideas but keep it simple, quick and cost free.

You are personally saving lives!