



Winter 2012 Report

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Urgent

The City of Philadelphia is trying to shut down open air feeding programs for the homeless before the new Barnes Museum opens up in an effort to “clean up” the area. You know rich, white, suburban people’s sweat is so much sweeter than poor, black, urban people’s sweat. Here is my response:

No one was afraid of the homeless until Mayor Rendell started to scapegoat the homeless for the failure of the Convention Center. He got the Phila. Inquirer to start this meme that people were afraid to come to Center City because of the homeless. Then the attacks on those who helped the homeless started. As if these people were dogs: if we only stop feeding them, they will go to some other city, or be forced into the shelters. Every year, about the time the shelters run out of money to provide meals, the papers run articles at the behest of city hall attacking charitable groups that feed people on the street. I told Mayor Rendell and I am telling you, “No one is on the street because the food is so good.”

We go to where the people are. We do it out of obedience to Christ. This is part and parcel of the Gospel. We are trying to help the city. We always leave the park cleaner than what we found it, even picking up the litter that the businessmen and tourists who ate their lunch there that day left behind. What you are proposing is open class warfare. It is oppression of the “least of these.” It will bring judgment down upon this city.

The 2nd Annual Hummus Open

by Jerry Burke

The Second Annual Hummus Open was held at Mainland Golf Course, Mainland, PA, on October 15, for the benefit of the The King’s Jubilee. Eight golfers participated raising one hundred eighty dollars for the cause. The event was won by Michael Diker (Karen Burke’s brother) of Danbury, Connecticut who shot a scorching 41 on the front nine of the course. Pat Burke (Event organizer Jerry Burke’s brother) from Hartsdale, New York was a close second hitting a 42 (notwithstanding using clubs purchased in 1978 and wearing Converse sneakers as golf shoes). Said Diker, after

the match, “I didn’t realize that Pat was breathing down my neck like that until the 9th hole,” while proudly accepting the Hummus Open trophy. Peter Psomiadis, the winner of the inaugural event in 2010, was the top local golfer finishing a strong third.

Tournament honors for closest to the pin on the 8th hole went to Diker; winning a bottle of Ouzo for his efforts. Victor Cifree “the gluten free kid” of Staten Island, New York, won the award for the longest drive as he hit it pretty well, and was the only golfer to keep his ball in the fairway on the 13th hole. He won a tub of Hummus donated by Costco, but no bread to go with it.

Tournament committee members Burke, Psomiadis, Mike Cook and Dave Kelly are planning to make the event bigger and better in 2012. They are hoping that some of our best local golfers like Phil and Jack Morrash, Raj Kyriakos, and lefty Steve Gozur will be part of the field next year. In addition, Psomiadis will be attempting to make contact with Tiger Wood’s agent and Burke will try to recruit fellow Hibernians Padraig Harrington and Rory McElroy to help promote the event.

Are We Ready to Turn America Upside Down?

In the early years of the church, when Christianity was illegal and most Christians were slaves or peasants, they performed a service for the pagans that was so convicting, such a testament to Christ’s love for all mankind, such a recognition of the image of God in every human being, an affirmation of the value of life and the resurrection and an affront to the coldheartedness by which the pagans only valued people by their riches and station, that it was the crack in the structure that eventually led to Rome being turned on its head and Christianity becoming the dominant religion. What was that service? The Christians would go out to the city dumps and retrieve the bodies of the pagans who were too poor to afford a funeral and bury them properly with prayers. Bishop THOMAS told me that the Orthodox Church still has a service for burial of non-Christians in use.

Lately there have been a lot of deaths among friends and family of those we serve. One man has lost eight family members in the last couple of months, half to violence; the latest was his 19 year old grandson, caught in the crossfire of a drive-by shooting. So many of these end up cremated and disposed of by the city, because their families are too poor to afford a place to bury them. The average burial plot in Philadelphia costs \$6,000. For years, I have been grieved whenever I have thought of indignity piled upon indignity for the homeless whom I have known, and for those grieving their passing; to have their bodies incinerated by the city and disposed of like so much refuse. I am sure the city tries to deal with this with as much respect and dignity as they can muster. There is probably a plot somewhere where the “cremains” are somberly placed. They do what they can afford to do. I am not faulting them.

When we started The King’s Jubilee, the intention was not that it was just going to be about feeding homeless people on one or two nights a week. We had a vision to make a much larger impact. We wanted to protect or introduce greenspace in the city. One of the fundamental causes for homelessness and disintegration of society is our disconnection from the natural cycle of things; sowing and reaping; composted leaves feeding flowers and vegetables; life from death; hard work produces beauty and bounty. I have fallen in love with idea of restoring native habitats. I think if we involve some of these broken, beat up people in an enterprise of restoring acreage to native plants and tend it to keep it in a good balance to propagate itself and attract natural pollinators, birds, insect, butterflies, it has the potential for great healing. If we do this in a context of worship and prayer to God and a community of love and respect for one another, it has the potential to be revolutionary.

In early October, Bishop THOMAS told me to dream big for The King’s Jubilee. What would we do, if we could buy a facility and staff it, even if it cost a million or a million and a half dollars? That question has had me pretty tense and basically stumped until this last Thursday. It was Thursday that the ideas of the last three paragraphs finally collided in my careenium. (Most people spell this “cranium.”) I called Nick Papas to share my idea with him. I envision a cemetery where we can bury all of the abandoned poor in Philadelphia, in traditional fashion. Modern embalming is contrary to the canons of the church and dishonoring to the body and polluting to the earth, so we would not

use that. We would use traditional myrrh. We would use colorful, handcrafted, grave markers. The property would be entirely planted in native plants and would help support itself by also serving as a nursery and educational resource for native plants. We would hire homeless people to tend the grounds. If possible, a shop would be added adjacent or on premises to build simple coffins and fabricate vaults, if they are required. The homeless would be trained in work skills and life skills working alongside staff and volunteers in landscaping, gravemarker fabricating, coffin building, tree pruning, grave digging, snow removal in the winter, etc. Friendships would be forged. Connections would be made. When the time is right, they could transition to employment in the wider community making room for someone else.

Thursday evening I shared my idea with Deacon Herman Acker, on the road to and from Phila. He said, “How could anyone be against such a thing?” We were excited, but at the same time I thought, what is the likelihood that there is any ground where we could do such a thing in or near Philadelphia? We think it would be a high impact ministry for the Orthodox Church. Who are these strange people who would take such care to bury people whose own families abandoned while they were alive? Who are these strange Christians who even bury the poor, Muslim dead? What kind of ministry turns around to bring such beauty to a city that has tried to chase it out for a quarter of a century? It could be the start of something big.

When I got home, I did a simple computer search. On the second page of results was an amazing thing. It is a derelict cemetery partly in Philadelphia that needs a non-profit org. to take over its operation. It is the largest cemetery in Pennsylvania with 380 acres. We are going down to see it on Monday. Pray! I spoke with Bishop THOMAS about it this afternoon. He likes the concept. He said he didn’t think the million dollars in start up money was the biggest hurdle. It sounds crazy, but I agree. Pray! We need to have our ducks in a row as to how to properly manage this. Please pray for wisdom. Several of us are going to visit it on Monday. We plan on meeting some of the concerned neighbors next Saturday. Pray!

Until the Bishop comes through with the big donor, we still need money to keep laying the groundwork for the dream. Please use the Donate button on the website or mail a check.

May God bless you!

Concerning the City of Philadelphia's proposed crackdown on public feeding of people by Sally O'Brien

I mentioned there were plans in the works for a community meeting/strategizing session around the health department stuff. Well, it will be happening next Tuesday Feb. 21st at 6 pm at Friends Center, 15th and Cherry. From what I can tell, it's an open meeting hosted by the Occupy Philly food crew and will specifically focus on this issue. Spread the word! It would be great if you or any other interested people from your groups could come. The more different voices in this process the better as far as I'm concerned.

Feeding the Poor is Sacramental

This is my second "comment" given to Sally O'Brien to pass on to the Health Dept. of Philadelphia regarding their proposed regulation that would require us to submit a menu and schedule one year in advance, prepare food in a commercial kitchen that they inspect, get a permit, etc., etc. There have been no problems with our food in 23 years of serving on the street. They are not concerned about health. IT IS ALL ABOUT APPEARANCES.

I have always considered what we do Sacramental. We will not ask permission. One does not ask permission to exercise a basic human right. As soon as one asks permission, one has given up one's rights and acknowledged the government has the authority to treat it as a privilege, not a right.

It is a basic human right to act compassionately toward ones' brothers and sisters. We have a basic human right of freedom of religion. This is not just freedom of worship that the Soviet Union guaranteed, but freedom to practice our religion. We have a religion of feeding the homeless and hungry, wherever we find them.

It is sacramental to share food with the least of these for in so doing we have shared it with Christ. This is true even for atheists. In Jesus' account of the Judgment, everyone was surprised.

The city has no right to inspect the home kitchens of people preparing food for a church potluck dinner. They have no right to enter the sacristies of our churches where

the elements are prepared for the Eucharistic Feast. They have no right to inspect our homes where we lovingly prepare food to share with our sisters and brothers.

Grace, peace and love,
Cranford Joseph Coulter
for The King's Jubilee

Please support us in this fight. Send comments to the Health Dept. at: sandra.greene@phila.gov

Running On Empty

We are now serving two or three Tuesday evenings each month, in addition to every Thursday evening. This means we need to buy more cups, more iced tea, more fuel for the TKJ-mobile, more hot sauce, etc. We are also helping several guys who have moved off of the street gather things that they need with some furniture, dishes, etc., and *Operation: Clean Start*. We are supported only through designated offerings or direct donations. Normally it is subsidized by "Come and See" *Icons, Books & Art*. Since I was sick much of last year, the business has suffered, and is operating at a loss. Even so, we expanded the ministry. Why?

- It is needed now more than ever.
- Volunteers came forward to make soup every other Tuesday.
- This ministry is the one thing in my life that I am sure I am supposed to be doing.

Lately, with health issues and various conflicts, and having just enough money to get home on fumes only because I haven't paid the mortgage yet, some days I have been so discouraged that I felt like quitting even this. Then I had a night like I did on Thursday, Feb. 9. The volunteers worked well together. The line went smoothly, with enough food for everyone. We had enough blankets and Ugly Quilts for everyone who wanted them. Morris discussed Isaiah 5:8 with me. Tom was sober. Anthony had a good report from his computer class at Phila. Community College. There were a lot of "thank you"s and "praise God"s.

Those of you who support this ministry with your prayers, your sandwiches and your money should have a tear of joy in your eye about now. Thank you! Praise God for you. We need more like you.

Righteous Tobit

OK. How often do we think of Tobit? The two ministries that Tobit is known for are burial of the dead and almsgiving. He would sneak out at night and bury the fallen soldiers, even though they weren't Jewish and it was likely to get him into trouble. Here is what he had to say to his son about almsgiving:

Give alms of thy substance; and when thou givest alms, let not thine eye be envious, neither turn thy face from any poor, and the face of God shall not be turned away from thee.

If thou hast abundance give alms accordingly: if thou have but a little, be not afraid to give according to that little:

For thou layest up a good treasure for thyself against the day of necessity.

Because that alms do deliver from death, and suffereth not to come into darkness.

For alms is a good gift unto all that give it in the sight of the most High.

- Tobit 4:7-11

Prayer is good with fasting and alms and righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than much with unrighteousness. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold:

For alms doth deliver from death, and shall purge away all sin. Those that exercise alms and righteousness shall be filled with life: But they that sin are enemies to their own life.

- Tobit 12:8-10

The Holy Archangel Raphael appeared to Tobit and aided him and his family in various ways. This icon has symbols in the corners which recall Tobit's story.



Tobias was Tobit's son. Tobias' dog that accompanied him on the journey is on the upper left, The fish that nearly ate Tobias, but instead was eaten by him, and whose organs were used to deliver Sarah from the demon and Tobit from blindness is on the upper right. An eye representing Tobit's sight that was restored is on the lower left. A bag of coins representing the treasure that was recovered is on the lower right. Tobit is a wonderful tale of stewardship, faith and doubt, romance and an ecology that encompasses the seen and unseen worlds in time and eternity. It is in Tobit that we learn that Raphael is one of the seven Angels who bear the prayers of the saints to the throne of God.

This icon is by the hand of Nick Papas of Houston, TX, and is available from www.comeandseeicons.com

Tuesdays in Philadelphia

We are now serving every other Tuesday and the last Tuesday of the month at 7pm at 1801 Vine St., thanks to volunteers from St. Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church, Emmaus and St. Isidore RCC, Quakertown. We leave my house at 6pm. So we will be serving the 21st and 28th of February and March 6, 20 and 27th. We can use sandwiches, hard boiled eggs and fruit for those Tuesdays.

Dare to Dream

Please dare to dream big with us. Pray for us and for the City of Philadelphia. Give to the poor and homeless in Jesus' Name. You will be blessed.

Mail donations to:

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

Donate online at:

www.shoutforjoy.net

Call to volunteer:

267-497-0267

Thank you. May God richly bless you.
Because of Christ,

Cranford Joseph Coulter
for The King's Jubilee