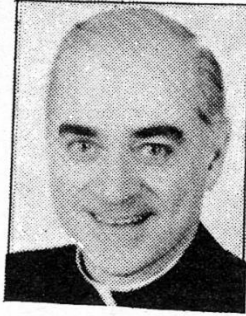


Father John Catoir

The Homeless Need You

Don't be afraid of the homeless. They may look strange to you, and you may be threatened by them, but follow your heart and not your head.

Once a month for three years, I have been a volunteer staying overnight at St. John's shelter for the homeless in New York City. I felt I had to do something because homelessness is such a pervasive problem.



When I first got involved with them I was a little afraid, feeling that some deranged person might hate priests enough to do me harm, but none of my worst fears have come to pass. Instead I've met hundreds of human beings who were in desperate need of kindness and material help. Most are people who simply want to be left alone. Some are alcoholics and one must be on guard with them, but many are just down on their luck, hoping against hope to make a comeback.

At first I thought it was a New York City problem, but in my travels around the country, I see the homeless everywhere. I know it must tug at your heartstrings to feel so helpless in the face of this growing tragedy. But take courage. You can make a difference. Find some way to volunteer your help. If you need moral support, find someone of a similar mind and go out two by two.

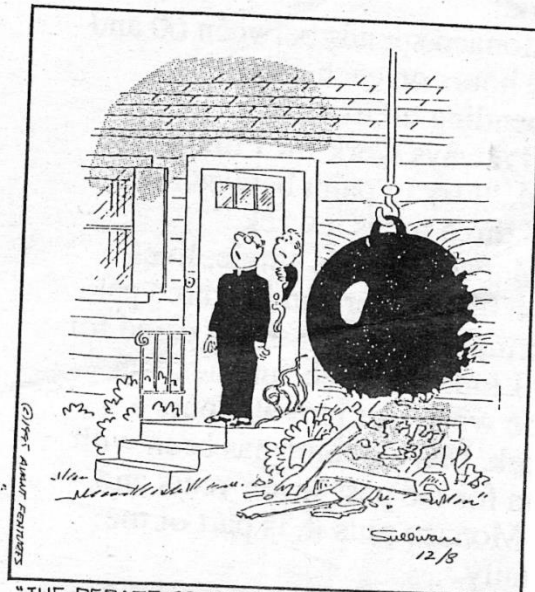
Approach a few homeless persons with a simple question: "Excuse me, is there anything I can do to help? Many will reject you, but don't be fazed, just move on. Many will ask for money. What you do in response is up to you. If you suspect a drinking problem do not offer

money but use your imagination. There are many other ways you can help them. Keep in mind the old song: "Little Things Mean a Lot." Offering clean socks, underwear, gloves, or spare change can bring smiles to the most unfriendly faces.

The main thing is to get started. Put aside your fears. You'll be glad you did, and you may literally save lives in the process.

I make my morning offering and ask for the grace to treat anyone who crosses my path that day as one sent to me directly by God. When they come I look them straight in the eye and ask how I can help.

You can do it too. Don't be afraid. If you find it difficult to see Christ in the homeless person, try to imagine Jesus lying in the tomb waiting to rise from the dead. Reverence that Christ in the person before you, and do what you can. May the Lord reward you for your kindness.



"THE DEBATE CONCERNING THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN IS CLOSED, MS. COSGROVE."