

# Thanksgiving, 2015

*Start seeing everything as God, but keep it a secret. Hafiz*

*Greetings! Charlene lived and worked with us for several months this year. When she left to return home we asked her if she would write something for us about her experiences at Martins. The following is an edited version of her reply.*

Dear Martins Family,

Hi! I am safe and well in the Philippines but truthfully, missing you all terribly. A day hasn't gone by when I haven't thought of you

It was Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker house in New York that led me to Martins. I came on a Tuesday, was offered some soup and salad and a yellow bussing towel and told that the idea was to keep moving.

I recall two things from those first few weeks. First of all, I observed how you loved one another, always greeting each other with hugs. Everyone got them -- in the kitchen, over the counter, to say hello, to bid goodbye. And though I didn't know people's names, I heard you all inquiring after each other, those absent, family members, guests. It seemed that I had stumbled into a bramble of love that spread way beyond the kitchen and each crew was its own knotty tangle, sharing roots and reaching out in all directions.

The second was just being astonished by kindness. While I smiled politely as I bussed, guests would say, "Thank you for doing that." They would greet me, "Hello! How are you?" and smile at me warmly. "Thank you for being here. You're doing a great job!" The guests were making ME feel welcome.

As I began to learn your names and the weeks went by, I saw what devotion people had to the work at Martins. This wasn't some kind of one-time feel-good activity, but church in the best sense of the word. I recall in the first few weeks of my stay in SF that I had felt so troubled by the meaninglessness of all that I had seen so far. I had felt somewhat homeless myself in the midst of the startups and "meetups" and craigslist of things. "What do people really care about here", I wondered. What joy then to have splashed into your waters! Martins taught me that the work of love is a daily affair. From the fury of dishwashing, the jovial chopping of potatoes, the steady solidarity of carrot-grating, the cleanup confusion of mat placement-- throughout it all I am most grateful for having shared your lives. It was of deep comfort and nourishment to me.

One volunteer put it to me this way, "We must keep this dream of love and sharing alive and so create a world where everyone matters." At Martins we do this one bowl of soup at a time.

In deep gratitude until we meet again.

Charlene