

Martin de Porres House of Hospitality
225 Potrero Ave
San Francisco, CA 94103

"One eats in Holiness and the table becomes an Altar"... Martin Buber

Summer 1997

Dear Friends,

We enter into summer with a glorious awareness of sharing. It comes from a source that is timeless, a feeling of familiar, an intimacy that contains healing. Outside Martins there are more cars, more shopping, and more shopping centers, but inside our wooden gates we remain steadfast in the rituals we have practiced for the last 26 years.

On the mornings we serve breakfast, the cooks come in before 4 AM. Rubbing the sleep from their eyes, they open the gate for our guests, turn on the lights, make the tea, and put water on for the oatmeal. Some of our family continues to sleep, but this time at a table inside the dining room, or outside on a bench. Together we have watched the comet from our courtyard, and breathed the blooming flower's fragrance in the dawn's light.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays we reopen the gates at 9 AM. As we are cooking lunch in the kitchen we begin showers in the courtyard. Thirty people will shower in the next two hours before lunch is served. It is full daylight now and the family has spread out. Someone is brushing out his hair, another washing her clothes in a bucket. People are relaxed in ways they are unable to anywhere else in their lives.

Cooking, eating, sleeping, bathing, in these very familiar routines of life, we tell each other our stories. Crying the same tears, chopping hundreds of pounds of onions around our large kitchen table, we learn how much we share. In the slicing of dozens of loaves of bread, and throughout the day many wounds are exposed.

In the daily sharing we become as intimate as children. When a child hurts himself and cries out in pain, we offer a bandaid. More importantly with each bandaid that is given out is the desire to want to "kiss the hurt away". We all long for someone to take the hurt away. Whether we suffer from physical, mental, or spiritual pain we all share the experience of suffering. The bandaid helps the physical pain, but the love in the kiss heals the soul.

I can tell you the facts and figures of Martins; how many services we provide, how many people we feed, how many people volunteer, how much money it takes to keep Martins going, but what we do more and more of each season is share our lives with each other.

In the communion of sharing we are all each others healers. In sharing our tears, joys, laughter, faith and love we heal. No matter how great the anguish, or our limited energy to deal with it, we are always able to grow in our ability to share. In sharing ourselves, the light of love heals us all. In the holy rituals of our daily existence, each bowl of oatmeal, each shower, each bandaid becomes sacred.

We feel extremely blessed to share our lives day after day, year after year, with this precious family. Thank you all for the faith in believing that sharing is not a season of the year, it is a way of life, the reason we are born.

In God's Light,



Barbara Collier, for the Martin De Porres Community