



# Covenant House: A First-Hand Report

By Lawrence Kurmis

## The Power Of Prayer Is Not Neglected

Lawrence Kurmis is a Rochesterian who has worked at Covenant House in New York City for more than a year. He attended St. John Fisher College and Becket Hall for two years. He will be moving to Toronto to help open a crisis center there, as part of Covenant House. His twin, James, also works at the New York City center.

Last of a three-part series

Between 6:30 and 6:45 every morning about 50 people rustle themselves out of bed, dress, and head to chapel for prayer.

No, this is not happening in a monastery set apart from the world. Rather, it describes how the Covenant community starts its day. One hour of prayer followed by breakfast, then out to serve the runaway and homeless youths who come to Covenant House help.

The community is the result of the efforts of Father Bruce Ritter who firmly believes the community provides the spiritual support which maintains the quality of care which the children receive.

People attracted to the community do not come for a good salary, high status or easy working conditions. They come because there is time for prayer. They come seeking a simple lifestyle: one uncluttered by material goods. They come willing to share whatever talents they possess, with each other and the kids. More than 25 people have joined since last June. Six more are expected to come in January. Something must be working (probably the Holy Spirit), for these people to give up at least one year of their life to serve God.

The first priority is prayer. Three hours a day is divided between community prayer and private meditation. The community prays the daily office of the Catholic Church — morning, evening, and night prayer. The beauty of chanting the psalms and listening to Scripture coupled with silent meditation insures a strong spiritual foundation. Liturgy is at the core of the day. It provides the strength and joy to work with our runaways. In addition to communal prayer, each community member tries to spend 30 minutes to an hour in quiet time with the Lord. When Mother Teresa visited Covenant House last June she told the community how important it is to be silent before Jesus.

"Only when we are not talking but listening, can we hear the will of God for us," Mother Teresa said.

My main reason for joining the community stemmed from my interest to allow my prayer life to flow into my actions. Each day brings new opportunities to serve the suffering Christ in the form of hurting children. After 15 months in community, I still rejoice at my decision to join. (Although I admit it is hard to rejoice when the alarm goes off at 6:30.)



Thus our second priority, service to the children, is achieved when we meet the first one.

The power of prayer never ceases to amaze me. For example, one night a man came into our drop-in counseling center on Eighth Avenue seeking help. Two community members were on duty and while they listened to him, he became potentially violent. For no apparent reason he threatened Dorn and Gerry.

Dorn lowered his head and said an earnest prayer asking for a peaceful solution. Not more than 60 seconds passed when a police car pulled alongside the curb outside the front door. The officer looked in but did not leave his car. Immediately the man calmed down and soon left. Coincidence? Maybe. Police cars are quite visible in Times Square. To have one come at that particular moment... well, Dorn's prayer was answered.

Another community member's prayers were answered in a different way. Judy prayed for Coco (not her real name) to realize that she was something better than a prostitute. Coco had come in for

counseling but left after a couple of times. One day at Mass Judy had reason to thank the Lord because Coco had returned to seek some help.

The pull the streets have on kids makes us believe that only prayer is strong enough to release them from its destructive grip.

Living a community lifestyle is the third priority. Everyone is called to sacrifice for the good of the community. Whether it involves cooking, cleaning or just being present to someone who had a rough day at work, we are challenged daily to live out the Gospel — a struggle everyone wrestles with.

We have a saying in the community, "Life on the streets is a dead end." We pray and work so our kids can leave the streets for a better life.

Please pray with us for our kids.

**DISABLED!**  
FOR A RECORDED MESSAGE ON YOUR  
RIGHT TO SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY  
BENEFITS, CALL ANYTIME  
**546-7314**  
KENNETH B. MASON ATTORNEY AT LAW

**Selected Fuels / Jay I. Walsh**  
"Serving the Rochester area for 50 years"  
**HEATING FUELS**  
(Kerosene - Diesel)  
INSTALLATION  
OIL and GAS HEATING  
24 HOUR SERVICE  
**454-6256**

**Parochial School  
Shirts**  
Boy's Lt. Blue S.S. Knits  
\$8.00 Value **\$6.50**  
**SALE 2 for \$12.00**  
The Children's Store  
Clothes for Kids  
Fairport Village Landing  
425-2580

COURIER-JOURNAL  
A  
Ca  
Jol  
pasto  
the E  
prese  
p.m.,  
Sacre  
Herr  
inclu  
Bach.  
By:  
T  
M  
R  
A  
of t  
inv  
stud  
eval  
the  
Pro  
Pra  
of  
eval  
det  
whe  
of t  
and  
asse  
secc  
oug  
cha  
reio  
Thi  
full  
res  
son  
hav  
firs  
1  
rais  
par  
a n  
wh  
cal  
Per  
serv  
suff  
Th  
bro  
reg  
sile  
viti  
als  
sile  
inc  
firs  
shc  
per  
Th  
psa  
rea  
ref  
ess  
cel  
it  
co  
rej  
En  
th  
G  
D  
B  
Ch  
cek  
Al  
wh  
14  
rite  
Wo  
Bro  
the  
188  
Pa  
So