

Martin De Porres House of Hospitality
225 Potrero Avenue San Francisco, CA 94103

Valentines Day, 1995

Dear Friends,

We at Martins have had a full year. We completed additional bathrooms, allowing us to have 3 more toilet facilities and 3 more sinks, something very needed. We have an original fresco of Martin De Porres on the outside wall of the new bathroom, his arms outstretched welcoming our guests. We also have a mural of a tree, our memorial tree, with the names of guests and friends of Martins, who have died. We had wonderful holiday meals, and managed to continue this blessed work another year.

The most amazing thing though about the last year, was our participation in 12 peoples' deaths. There was what we would call one natural death, 2 suicides; one being a long time worker and advocate of "homeless" people; the other being an artist who killed himself shortly before his 40th birthday. There were drug overdoses, illness that went untended to, and AIDS.

Of these 12 deaths we were involved with, 10 of the memorials were held at Martins. Some had over 100 people in attendance, with family members coming from all over the country to be with us, some were held alone with just one other person present. All these deaths were sad, painful, tragic situations in one way or another.

Yet all these deaths brought even closer to all of us, the truth of the miracle of Love. Many of these people could not receive our love in this life, or love themselves, yet at the glorious moment of death, the love we all need and find hard to believe in, becomes real. In the moment of death, the dimension of Love is no longer abstract or artificial, but is our new life's breath.

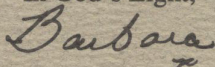
Each thing we are given in this life is lent to us by God. Starting with the gift of the stars, down to our own personal lives and problems, in this short term we call life, we must always remind ourselves it is just being lent to us, and we must return it someday. As many gifts we might borrow, we get attached to them, think we own them, believe they are our own, but alas the giver is the most generous donor in the world, yet at some point we must give it all back.

We must give back ourselves and our loved ones. In the letting go, there is always something that remains; what always remains is LOVE. In both birth and death, running through it like a melody in a great symphony is Love.

I cannot reassure you enough, the love I speak of is real, as tangible as the sun. The moments of death and birth, only reminders of the gifts we have been leant. We are as connected to people in their death as we are when they are alive; for the love we have felt for them in life is as strongly being received in death, perhaps even more for some people, than in life itself.

I came to Martins 20 years ago, thinking I wanted to feed people, to be of some service. Where I have been led to is to not only continue this, but more, to learn how to embrace suffering, embrace miracles, embrace birth, embrace death, recognizing the thread that runs through it all is God's Love.

In God's Light,



Barbara Collier

For the Martin de Porres Community