



**THE**  
*Daughters*  
**OF CHARITY**  
EMMITSBURG PROVINCE

### **Small Comforts One Touch At A Time** **A ministry reflection written by Sister Salvatrice Murphy, D.C.**

"I know why it hurts so much," the old man told me, "it's from sleeping on the concrete." He rolled his shoulder as if trying to shake off the pain and I thought, perhaps he wasn't all that old really, but the worn and weary look of life on the streets had aged him.

He came in to the United Caring Shelter to warm up and to get something to eat. It happened to be the day that Sister Mary Ann Woodward and I were there, both of us trained in massage therapy. We transformed a little lunch table & two chairs into a makeshift massage station right in the middle of the noisy, busy dining hall-turned-waiting room and got to work. Two by two we encountered men and women who spend their days trying to survive, and we, in turn, tried to make their journey a little more comfortable.

As a seminary sister, I am sent into the community just one day each week to practice ministry. Those mornings are spent in an office building sorting material assistance for people transitioning out of homelessness; we wade through mountains of donated sheets, towels, blankets, and toiletries trying to make up "starter" kits out of these items that are in good condition and (if we're lucky) even match. The afternoons bring me face-to-face with the people for whom those fresh clean kits are waiting: the homeless.

Can a fifteen minute massage change their lives and bring them out of homelessness? No, it cannot. At least, not any more than a hot meal or clean clothes will. But I think we all can understand how much easier it is to concentrate on the bigger picture and work toward a goal when you are warm, well-fed, and comfortable.



Salvatrice Murphy, D.C. (far right) is shown in the Mater Dei praying the rosary with Sister Mary Ellen Lacy, D.C., East Province (far left), and Sister Liz Sjoberg, D.C. (center).

I am privileged each week to have the opportunity to offer some comfort to people who are suffering, to encourage them on their path, and I hope to remind them that they are loved beyond all telling by the same God who calls me to be here now.

Sister Salvatrice Murphy joined the Daughters of Charity through the Emmitsburg province in January 2009. She is currently attending the inter-provincial seminary in Evansville, IN where she encounters the homeless during her apostolic ministry days.

The United Caring Shelter is located in Evansville, Indiana. The staff and volunteers of **United Caring Shelters, Inc.** accept God's invitation to respond to the needs of the homeless and near-homeless population with gracious hospitality, respect, patience, and support. <http://www.unitedcaringshelters.com>