

Acton Homeless Concern



Advice • Support • Hope

1989 - 2019

Thoughts and poems throughout the thirty years

Traditional Celtic blessing:
*I saw a stranger yestreen,
I put food in the eating place,
Drink in the drinking place,
Music in the listening place
And in the sacred name of the Triune
He blessed myself and my house,
My cattle and my dear ones
And the lark said in her song;
Often, often, often
Goes the Christ in the stranger's guise*

1988 -89

"In Acton a group of volunteers work around the clock to run a soup kitchen for the homeless at Emmaus house. Johnny is an epileptic and an alcoholic. He has been living rough for over twenty years, spending most of his days roaming the streets and most of his nights sleeping rough. 'Coming to the centre has helped. I get clean clothes, a bath and a hot dinner.' He is just one of thousands of people who roam the streets." [The Guardian]

"It's like the Savoy here! You get a good hot meal, plenty of tea, then a bath, a free shave and trim and clean clothing." "Their life stories show how fast and easily events can progress – an accident at work or a nervous breakdown, leading to rejection by family and friends, leading to a night in the park or a squat, leading to tiredness, illness and confusion, leading to loss of social security benefits..."

1989 – 90

"Please pray for my family and friends in Ireland. Thank you for feeding me and keeping me alive from day to day."

"Recent months have seen the emergence of Somalian and Ugandan women refugees. Many cannot speak English. Their feeling of alienation is strong."

"You have given me all the clothes I stand up in, except for my tie."

1990-91

"No.1 Berrymead Gardens was built to house a big family, not an institution. It is an ordinary terraced house with net curtains changed every three months, paintwork kept touched up, carpets rather tatty because so many people come in each day and a kitchen so small that every meal is a proof that miracles can happen."

"An unemployed young couple in the Midlands drive down to London with a van load of clothes every few weeks."

"The Advice Centre continues to provide advice on Social Security Benefits, Housing Benefits, Crisis Loans, employment, emergency accommodation and, in particular, housing, helping and supporting travellers and Somalian and Eritrean refugees."

"The whole spectrum of human suffering is present in an acute form at Emmaus House – from mental illness to physical handicap; addictions, depression, post-traumatic stress and anxiety and the more obvious deprivation of basic needs like food and shelter. People using the Counselling facility include English, Irish, Welsh, Scottish, Spanish, Polish, African, Asian and West Indian."

"I am a young unemployed person. I feel very down and out. I have no money and have not yet got any DSS benefits. I have not even a bus pass to look for work. I am staying with a friend who should not even be keeping me. I have no accommodation. I have walked all over East and West London looking for work. Emmaus House helps me with advice and food."

“Two of us, girls, have suffered from domestic violence. I am 18, my friend is 19. Both of us are squatting. We feel very vulnerable. We have not enough money to live on, so the meals are a great help.”

“It is the best service in London. Whoever got this place going should get all the greatest medals ever invented. Only for this place, people like me would be dying of hunger on the streets.”

“I was an alcoholic. Emmaus House has helped me rehabilitate myself.”

“Emmaus House has helped my recovery from addiction.”

“Emmaus House has saved my life.” [Clients who became volunteers]

“My son is dead and buried in his grave. I couldn’t attend the funeral – I was too sick. My best friend fell seven floors from a Tower Block. I am an alcoholic looking at four walls in the dark. I am in pain with arthritis. To me, Emmaus House means friendship – it even helps me feed my cats with scraps. I can beg on the streets but my poor cats can’t.”

1991-92

“Before Emmaus House came, I used to steal to eat. I used to walk around like a tramp but now I am like a gentleman because of the clothing service.

”Women’s Day: “I hate it when I have to miss my counselling sessions. Today I rushed from hospital just to be here.”

“Emmaus House takes all the loneliness out of my life. It provides me with peace of mind and stillness.”

“I only come on Wednesday. It is very helpful. I don’t like coming during the week when all the men are there.”

“Emmaus House is home from home. There is fine hospitality, good food, someone to talk to. It is kept spotless and there’s time for the children.”

“I like coming here, I like the dinner and the toys and I got my bed a wardrobe and bike from Emmaus House”(child, 5 years old).

1992-93

“Sometimes I am starving and Emmaus House comes to my rescue.”

“I got training and became a barber, thanks to Emmaus House.”

“I came to Emmaus House to see and talk to people. Since I lost my husband I am very lonely... Emmaus House is my family. I get comfort, love and meet people who understand me.”

“I came in to get food. I got clean clothes and washed up. I was going to steal for food and met this priest, I talked to him and he made a different man of me. I love Emmaus House.”

1993-94

“Without Emmaus House I would still be living rough. With their help I have my own place which I call home. The doctor, optician, chiropodist and community psychiatric nurse have all helped me. Thank you.”“ I come to Women’s Day to have a place where my children and I can feel safe.”

1994-95

“This has been a very successful year for the barber service... George, a refugee from Eastern Europe, received training from me. Thanks to AHC he has been housed and resettled in his own flat and has gained employment.”

“Through the Chiropodist, I feel I have a new pair of feet!”

“I don’t like using places like Emmaus House, but I do appreciate it.”

1995-96

“Without doubt Emmaus House is the work of the Holy Spirit. The words that Jesus read in the synagogue – ‘He has sent me to bring good news to the poor’ - are still being fulfilled. [Fr. Bradley, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes]

“Without Emmaus House my life would fall apart... I have made a lot of friends, I no longer feel suicidal as I have received so much help and advice on how to cope with my mental illness.”

1996-97

“The building is conducive to building friendships, extending onto the streets in people coming to know each other and on first name terms. No longer is the person on the corner seen as ‘the local bum’ or ‘wino’ but as ‘my friend’”.

“The only reason for the existence of Emmaus House is to break bread with our fellow travellers in the pilgrimage of life.” [Bishop Patrick O’Donoghue]

1997-98

“Women’s Day is a life-saver. Thank God for it.”

“Increases self-esteem and self-image when I can have a decent haircut.”

1998-99

“I haven’t been to a dentist since I went to school 30 years ago.”

“Now I’m able to read the paper again.”

“It’s a while since my feet had such luxury.”

“Thanks to the great efforts of many... two street collections, the annual dance sponsored by the Knights of St. Columba, generous Harvest Festival gifts from local churches, schools and the parish giving tree... As a result approximately seventy needy families received Christmas Hampers.”

1999-2000

“Both Emmaus House and the Damian Centre are hives of activity. Drop by for a visit and you are likely to find Lottie, Monika, Betty and Marie joking and chatting as they sort through bags of clothing. ‘We only give out what we would wear ourselves.’ John (a client) strikes up a song as he tries on his new clothes; Liz is busy listening and chatting to Andy as he waits for a haircut; Henry, the optician, is busy. When Joanna, our chiropodist, arrives the fun starts, from marriage proposals to telling her all their troubles. Doreen, our GP, tries to give some comfort to those whose health is severely damaged; Freda breezes in with a beaming smile to offer hope to anyone wanting to avail themselves of a Detox programme. Beatrice King, our cook, works non-stop. Sister Martin, our Project Worker, never has a moment to spare as she diligently sets about her many tasks.

Wednesdays you will find Mary Foster, Emily, Deirdre, Mimi and volunteers surrounded by toddlers and their mothers: their tasks include making phone calls to prevent evictions, writing letters on behalf of someone whose gas or electricity is going to be cut off, settling disputes, helping with reading and writing, arranging delivery of furniture.... And much more.”

“Volunteers of The Year include Joe ‘The Hat’ as ‘washer-up of the year’, Oliver as ‘talker and joke-teller of the year’, Pat as ‘singer of the year’, Tony as ‘tea-maker of the year’, Ambie as ‘fiddle-player, care-taker and longest-serving volunteer’.

“We must realise that homelessness isn’t always represented by just the ‘street sleeper’. Often a more insidious form of poverty exists and thrives in then squat, the hostel or the bed-sit. The human being emerging from such conditions is more often than not emotionally and psychologically damaged.” [Sr. Victoire Mulligan, Director of AHC]

2000-01

“Father Pat Bradley will be sorely missed. It was with his guidance and will that Damien Centre was purchased and his lobbying and energy saw us through planning permissions and building work. We will not forget his tireless advocacy for the poor and marginalised in our community.”

[Fr. Chris McAneny, new Parish Priest]

2001-02

“Without the wonderful work of the volunteers the Charity could not continue to function; they really are the oil in the lamp of the beacon which keeps it burning so brightly.”

2002-03

“It was my first Autumn and Christmas at Acton and although I had been told what to expect by way of donations and food from the many harvest festivals etc., to see it first-hand was a truly astonishing experience. The European Union had its butter mountain, but we had our own mountain of tinned soups, beans, vegetables, clothes, and all kinds of useful commodities. The number of people who use our centres has increased over the past year and we have seen many new faces. However, in the work we do I believe the measure of success is not found solely in statistics or measurable achievements but in the way we touch and make a difference to the lives of those we serve. Putting food on the tables fills the hunger, giving care and dignity fills the heart.”

[Sr. Aileen, new Director of AHC]

2003-04

“We are required to match any funding we receive from major organisations, we are allowed to calculate the monetary value of time given by volunteers and use the value for matched funding purposes. A recent exercise put the value in excess of £150,000 a year.”

2004-05

“The number of clients who are refugees has grown. Refugees form about 5% of the London Borough of Ealing and there are some 60,000 plus in West London... In many neighbourhoods they are viewed with suspicion, hostility and prejudice, and all this against a background where most of them have lost everything – their families, their homes, their dreams for the future.”

2005-06

“Raising funds and financial control continues to be the number one priority for The Trustees. Our major funding this year was provided, yet again, by the London Borough of Ealing and The Dion Committee at the Irish Embassy.... I would particularly like to thank those who have danced, golfed and rattled buckets throughout the year, who have collected, sewed and baked for another very successful bazaar.”

“We have witnessed nearly every human emotion in the men and women who come through our doors daily: the degradation of homelessness, the ravages of addiction, the isolation of psychiatric illness, the disillusionment of broken relationships, the despair of hopelessness. On the other side we have been privileged to see hopes rekindled, dignity restored, dreams fulfilled, new opportunities grasped, new life and new places to call ‘home’.” [Sr. Aileen, Director]

“Clive, aged 43, moved to Germany 14 years ago. To work as a building labourer and found accommodation linked to his work. Arthritis made him incapable of work six years ago and he found himself homeless. He was forced to work illegally on jobs where no questions were asked, such as fairgrounds and labouring on boats. He could not find a proper job without an address or rent a flat without a work permit. He relocated to England and discovered Acton Homeless Concern. Clive said: ‘It’s my home. Without it I’d be sitting on a park bench somewhere freezing.’”[Article in the Ealing Gazette]

2006-07

“Over the years there have been changes in the ethnicity of our clients but their problems remain the same. Successive Governments promise solutions to homelessness and its causes but deadlines come and go and the problems remain. We will therefore continue to provide whatever services are needed by our clients, in accordance with the mission and ethos envisioned by our founders. We will maintain an open door, unconditional policy and will continue to provide, free of charge services to anyone who needs our help.”

2007-08

“I walked through the door of my office on my first day, sat down and the phone calls began. A woman was desperate for a pram and wondered where she might get one, a client popped his head round the corner and asked for a pair of socks as his feet were wet, a phone call from a teenager who had been kicked out of his parental home and was now sleeping on the streets. Coming from a background of supporting the elderly and those with learning difficulties, this was my first experience with the homeless. Whilst I was aware of the problem of homelessness I had no idea of the enormity of it or of the diversity of clients and their needs.” [Ian, new Centre Manager]

“I was in prison for most of the eighties and early part of the nineties. I came out and started drinking. Over the next eighteen years I got myself into debt and lost my flat. By 2008 I was sleeping rough. When you’re on the streets the consensus is that you’re scum and you’re dirty. Somebody said I could get free grub in Acton and that’s when I discovered Emmaus House and The Damien Centre.... In June this year Ian asked if I’d be interested in a flat which had been offered by Dominion Housing. I couldn’t believe it. I thought I’d blown my chances. I moved in. Emmaus House helped me get furniture and bedding. My life changed completely. I feel self-worth, I have a girlfriend and don’t drink so much.”

“I have been volunteering in both centres for some years. The work can be tiring and stressful at times, especially when we see so many of our clients with troubled lives and in need of help. I have made many new friends with other volunteers and members of staff.”

[Pam Amphlett]

“It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to Sr. Aileen, Sr. Helen and Christine. Who else but Sr. Aileen would happily peel potatoes on the day she was to meet Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall? When will we ever have someone who can make us behave, and still dance a reel, like Sr. Helen? Who will brighten our days as Christine did?”

2008-09

“As the country teeters on the edge of a recession it is no surprise to find the number of clients increasing, and the poorest and most vulnerable members of our community hit hardest of all. Mother of God, Mother of the Streets, Our Lady of the Poor, pray for us.”

[Fr. John Leahy, Parish Priest]

“I have had cancer six times in the last fifteen years. Ian (the Centre Manager) said there was an Irish service every month at the Centre.... I was given a free holiday to Cork, where I grew up. A passport was given to me, free of charge. I now use the Centre on a regular basis, not for the food, more for the company of people in similar situations.”

[Michael O’Shea]

“Emmaus House was the saving of me. I went to help those poor people and it ended with them helping me. I got out of it more than I gave. I was able to witness the many miracles that happened there, the many people who got cured of their addictions. One, Ollie, a dear friend, always said, “Pat, I’ll tell the jokes and you do the singing”, and I did sing... Ollie came to the Centre as client and then for more than fifteen years as volunteer. It all helped Ollie to come off the drink, and me to get through the grief of losing my husband.”

[Patricia Conlan, volunteer. Ollie and Pat died in the same year.]

2009-10

“JY came from a broken home and had been drinking since his teens. He had lost his wife, his house and his job. He was helped to a Detox clinic in Ealing, spent three weeks there and has not taken alcohol since. We supported his efforts to find accommodation and he is currently employed in South London, working with homeless people.”

2010-11

“It has been a very busy year; we have seen more and more homeless people appearing from nowhere. When people are living rough there are many potential dangers. ‘Where will I sleep tonight? When will I eat again? Who will help me if I get attacked tonight? How will I keep warm?’ Homeless people have such thoughts running through their minds all the time. The world becomes a frightening place.

2011-12

“A number of schools raise money for the Charity. Some build a “cardboard city”: they choose a day and spend it in the playground, even if rains; they have cardboard boxes to shelter in; they don’t have sandwiches so they experience hunger; adults come and move them along as would happen on the streets, even if they are resting or playing games.”

“We don’t turn anyone away. We have OAPs who are struggling moneywise, illiterate people who come to get their letters read, people with mental health problems who struggle to get help anywhere else... There’s no typical person. We’ve had doctors, engineers, people who’ve held down really responsible jobs.”

“The women have a safe place here in The Damien Centre. A lot of them have been abused. Girls have come to us and disclosed physical, emotional and sexual abuse. It’s not unusual for a client’s partner to come here and order them out. Our clients are often very frightened and isolated. Some are on the streets, but many are in temporary housing or hotels or hostels.”

“My name is Eva. I came to this country in 1993. When my father died in 2001, I went back to Uganda but when I saw the circumstances there I brought my daughters back to Britain.

They were eight, ten and twelve. My landlord didn't want my children there so after two weeks he wouldn't let me stay. I had nowhere to put my belongings, so I left bags with various friends. I had a car so sometimes we would in that and other times my brother would let the girls sleep on the floor of his one bedroom flat. Because I had no address it was impossible to keep my job. I made an application for housing benefit but it was rejected because they said I had made myself intentionally homeless.... A friend in Acton told me there was a place up the road where you could get advice and help. They gave us food and clothes. The girls used to be frightened of all the men in Emmaus House and were scared to sit down and eat in the dining room, so they would give us food and let us eat it standing or take it next door where only women and children were allowed.... We needed a lot of help. I always came here. In 2006 I got a full-time job. My eldest daughter went to University and studied Advertising and Marketing, the next is studying childcare and the youngest is doing International Tourism."

"Even on the streets you find your niche. You get very good at avoiding people who are dangerous. You can't take your guard down at all. It's exhausting. I've been assaulted four or five times. That's not bad.... You can make friends here. Before I came to Acton Homeless Concern I wouldn't have dreamed of speaking to half the people that I do. I like helping them, I fill in forms for them and stuff..." [Jim, a client]
"It doesn't always work out though. I've got a guy coming in to see me shortly. When we met him he was on the streets. We initially found a bed for three months in the Night Churches. When we got him a hostel place it was looking good – they try to teach a trade and pay a wage – but unfortunately he has a harelip and got bullied really badly and couldn't cope with the abuse, so he's come back to us."

"One guy we supported very recently was living on the Green, but one night he was attacked very badly and raped. We supported him through making a complaint to the police, gave him a mobile. Some emergency accommodation, clothes and a sleeping bag. The police found the guy who attacked him and arrested him but our guy was so traumatised and terrified he couldn't go through with taking the case to Court. If he had we would have supported him through it to the best of our ability. He couldn't though..."

2012-13

"Michael O'Shea is a fifty-nine-year-old man from County Cork. He has been unable to work for many years, having been diagnosed with cancer and suffering from depression. He is unable to read or write and he came to the centre looking for benefits advice... We immediately contacted a doctor who provided written confirmation of Michael's ill-health, helped Michael prepare a written appeal and accompanied him to his appeal hearing. All benefits were reinstated. He is now working two hours a week as a volunteer."

2013-14

"The seeds of Emmaus House were sown and inspired by a man called Philip who slept on the doorstep of the Presbytery in Berrymead Gardens for many years. Morning after morning and night after night we had to step over Philip's bare bum as his oversized trousers exposed him to the elements. We found out later that Philip had suffered a bad fall, injuring his head in an accident some years before – his mind, physical ability and coordination were affected and he was forced to stop working on building sites and took to the streets. I was told that he had been known as 'the best dressed man in the area' and he was always quiet, shy and well-mannered. It reached a point where giving Philip – and others who came knocking on the church door – sandwiches, clothes and a few bob simply wasn't enough...."

Padraig Lyons

2014-15

“His marriage had failed because he lost his job and sank into depression. He came to the Charity for help and is now reunited with his wife and has started a family.”

“She hadn’t eaten for days, had been homeless for two years and couldn’t believe that we could help her. Three years later she’s got her own flat and works in admin in the city.”

“He sadly passed away, having no family. The Charity helped to arrange the funeral and sent his ashes back to Ireland, as was his last wish.”

2015-2016

“Were Acton Homeless Concern a business, with more than 1300 clients in any week it would be seen as a thriving concern; as it is, that’s a bitter indictment of the remorseless rise of homelessness across our Borough. I shall do whatever I can to work with the centre.” [Cr. Dr. Patricia Walker, Mayor of the London Borough of Ealing, 2016-17.]

“Today at the Damien Centre the doors open and the first people start to arrive. First in is Annie, a lady almost 90 years old. She has to take two buses to get here – it’s the highlight of her week. Five of the women have mental health issues. There’s a mum who has been beaten up at a children’s party in front of her own children: she hasn’t been back to her own home for two months. Then we help a young pregnant woman who needs support and clothing: she’s also an addict. A young mum with five children has come looking for spare food; two of her children have special needs... Before we close up for the day a mum arrives looking for a shirt and shoes for her son, who has a job interview...”

2016-2017

“I was born in Dublin in 1989 and grew up alongside three sisters and five brothers. My da left home when I was eleven. My eldest sister brought me up as by then mammy was unable to cope anymore. I was introduced to heroin at the age of fifteen and started selling for a dealer who gave me a small percentage.... I started burgling houses to feed my craving. By this time I was living on the streets. Begging and stealing became second nature. I met a girl who was also an addict. One day we had done well stealing and we sold a lot of stuff we thieved to a local restaurant. We bought some heroin and bottles of beer and sat near the river drinking and injecting. The next thing I remember was waking up in hospital with a Garda looking over me wanting to ask questions. I was told my girlfriend was dead. That was a big turning point in my life. I went into rehabilitation. I met people like myself, many had exactly or almost the same life stories.... I decided to move to London, started sleeping in a local park and met a Polish guy who said he got free food from a charity called Acton Homeless Concern. Next day I got a shower, some clean clothes and a meal... I found a job on a construction site in Ealing but couldn’t start because I hadn’t got a National Insurance number. The charity helped me get one; then phoned and said there may be a chance of obtaining a bedsit in Ealing if I could get there in an hour. Finally I got my place, a roof over my head and a key to a door. It was, for me, pure bliss. It’s been seven years now and I have a partner and a three year old son.”

“To everyone who has helped Acton Homeless Concern in any way, thank you for all that you do., often quietly, without fuss and unknown to most. Speaking of quietly and without fuss, we remember Fr. John Leahy sac, who quietly and without any fuss contributed so much to the charity over his 11 years as parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes. The amount of work he did is incalculable.”

[Fr. Ultan Naughton]

2017-18

“Sometimes I don’t know why I go. I am too tired or lonely or cold to go anywhere and I am too cross with everyone and I don’t want to talk. And then I make myself go and it’s warm and full of smells of cooking and the people are happy and glad to see me and they’re glad that I am alright and I’m glad I went”.

“At Christmas we have a great dinner and then we all get a present (or two if we’re good) from Mother Christmas”

2018-19

“I was sleeping rough for 5 years My bag had been stolen with everything I owned inside, I had no money and nowhere to go, I felt sick and I knew I was losing my sight. And then one day a stranger said I should go to Emmaus House. I talked to the manager and told him about my problems, how I had hit hard times with my business and was too embarrassed to get in touch with my family. My eyesight was very bad and he arranged for me to see a doctor and then a specialist. I had glaucoma and I had lost 95% of my sight. Over the next months I was supported through finding my documentation, sourcing benefits I was entitled to and finding temporary accommodation. They even bought me a white stick. When it was discovered that I had one of the more serious cancers everyone at the charity supported me through every stage of the investigations and treatments. Ian came with me on hospital visits and to see social services and Macmillan nurses. Carole prepared takeaway meals for me every day. When I ended up in hospital one of the amazing volunteers who worked with me persuaded me to contact my family. Within hours they were at my bedside, so happy to be reunited and I will not let them go from my life again. I am now living in a hospice and still receiving love and attention from everyone in the charity. My former career was in the music industry and I have worked with many of the most famous rock, pop and reggae musicians from the last 30 years, many of them are now in touch with me again and It is my hope, when I am a better physically, to organise a music event to raise money for the charity”

Poems by clients and volunteers.

“If you have nought to eat,
This is the place where you can meet....
Come ye one, come ye all,
They’ll make ye feel six feet tall...
If you’re feeling full of fear
You’re welcome here.
Emmaus House is a place
Where people of any race
Can come and get some grub,
After they have left the pub.
Some are nasty, some are nice,
Some just want some advice.
Since I’ve been going I get no thinner,
That’s because I get a dinner.
Thank you, God, that’s what I say,
I wish it were open every day.”

” [Sheila – a client]

“The lonely man wants no company,
He prefers to be on his own.
He will lie awake, thinking of things he has to say
But says nothing.
He will write long letters, to people he thinks
Will take notice of things he has to say,
But never sends them.
He will wonder, hour upon hour along lanes, streams,
Up mountains,
Still searching, for answers.
He will run away from himself,
Scared, that one day, he will find the answers, to questions
He is unable to understand.”

“Unloved and unfed
He roams around the street
Searching around
For something to eat.
His sad, old eyes
Filled with pain and sorry
Look up and say
Will I be here tomorrow?
His weak, thin body, his dirty
Straggled hair.
While we’re here in the warmth
He’s freezing out there.
The streets are his home,
The benches his bed,
The bins are the places
He goes to be fed.
In the month of December,
On a very cold day,
He curls up to sleep
and passes away.
His life has now finished,
It just isn’t fair.
He died unknown
And no-one was there.”

[Laura, aged 14]

“Anger in my soul took me singing.
I will sing and play my sax again,
Through gutters of rage and pain.
But for Emmaus House
I would have no soul,
No second prize in a raffle.
Woke up in the morning,
World was stuck from bottom to top.
Woke and chased some robbers from my doss bag,
Walked for miles...
Looked through sleepless people
Singing songs
Homelessness
I’ve lived in through the darkness,

In a garden of wilderness
Saw the spiders
Saw the flies,
Saw a place that I could live
And give me peace....
Long live Emmaus House.”

[j. jones]

The bleeding hearts shake their tins

On the corners of city streets
Never lowering their eyes for fear
Of what they will see down at their feet.
They'll read about and talk about
The homeless and their plight.
No one hears a single word that
The poet from the gutter writes....
“No fixed abode” is his address,
So, he has no right to vote.
He has very much to say
The words are choking in his throat....
Did anyone ask how he got there?
Does anybody care?
Did he fight for Queen and country?
Or did the Town halls put him there?
Questions to be answered
Before we sleep at night.
Still no one hears a single word So the poet from the gutter writes.

[Keith Ashwood, Client and volunteer]

Living on the streets is like climbing a mountain

With an everlasting peak.

Our pride and joy have been shattered,
It would take more than a strong pot of tea to survive.

We gather whatever belongings we can find;
It's a bit like birds preparing their nests.
We also have become scavengers.

We were promised a pocket of good will
From the Head of State
But they had no formula in store
To reassure the homeless of a better future.

So, in the meantime
Try and keep your head away from the sky
And never lose your will to live.
One day you might find your bed of roses.

[Ben Cochrane, client]
