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Starting Point

[This week's stories](#) | [Home Page](#)

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Starting Point

By Adele Azar-Rucquoi

Twelve years ago I married a homeless man. Jim had lived a productive life, but following a breakdown, he took up life on the streets of Orlando, Fla., for a year. After our vows, friends gave us thunderous applause, even rising to dance in the church aisles. We're still happily married.

Marrying Jim was God's best gift. Jim never ceases to remind me that all it takes is one person to risk making a difference. He credits me with taking that risk to make a difference in his life. I credit God.

We discovered together the blessing of a weekly ecumenical group, Grace & Grits. Saturdays the group serves breakfast to about 80 homeless men, women and children. Soon we were on the team, extending warm welcomes and plates heaped with scrambled eggs, pancakes, grits, sausages and hash browns. So much food. It's like a cruise ship! Donated sweet rolls and apples fill the take-home bags.

"Thank you, ma'am." "God bless you." "Can I have more pancakes?" Oh, the smiles. I feel the blessings.

"Let's beware of efficiency," Jim counsels, as if feeding the homeless could ever be a well-ordered business. "When these bent, unkempt folk pour in here," Jim says, "let's make contact with each one. In my months on the street, that's what I wanted most. Good God, even a 'Good morning' would do!"

The homeless at our breakfast tables are mainly decent folk who happen to be traveling off the beaten path. If we offer them breakfast, perhaps we can smooth the road.

Like other American cities, my community walks a tightrope: practicing compassion and keeping itself "presentable." Too often, faceless ones are advised to vacate park benches open to everyone else.

Yet, there is always hope. Recently, the founder of Grace & Grits got a \$700 check from a formerly homeless man who wrote. "You fed me every Saturday! Take this and feed others."

[Adele Azar-Rucquoi, author of *Money As Sacrament*, lectures at universities and conducts interfaith groups and workshops.](#)

National Catholic Reporter, June 30, 2006

[This Week's Stories](#) | [Home Page](#) | [Top of Page](#)

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