

# THE HOME COMING



SCULPTURE IN BRONZE  
BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE  
OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
EAST PORTICO

**The Bronze Sculpture** features a grouping of four figures: “John,” the American military veteran, “Colleen,” his daughter, “Joey,” her pet dog, and “Ms. Anateen” an elderly woman. Each figure represents a different dimension of the homeless in the United States.



**“John”** is one of the 510,000 homeless veterans or one-third of the total male population in the United States (164 million). He is a veteran of Vietnam (1955-75), the Persian Gulf War (1991), the Iraq War or “Operation Iraqi Freedom” (2003), and the War in Afghanistan (2001-21, part of the Global War on Terrorism). He wears a Vietnam-era Marine “jungle hat,” a backpack with a “U.S.” Army insignia and a military-style trench coat. He suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Having returned to civilian life, he lost his job and his home during an economic downturn

**“Colleen,”** the little girl in the group, represents all the homeless children, the average age of which is nine years old. Sheltered under the folds of her dad’s expansive coat, the little girl is the bearer of the invitation to an old homeless woman to come and share the safety provided by her father and the comfort and warmth of the barrel fire.



**“Joey,”** the pet dog, is a faithful and protective companion. Just by barking he warns his owners of danger or any threat to their safety. Pets also provide companionship and a means of socialization within the homeless community.

**“Ms. Anateen,”** a homeless old woman of color, is the embodiment of all who have raced towards the American Dream--“a fair wage for a fair day’s work”--only to come in last place. She represents the working poor, the victims of the failed minimum wage standard.



As Jesus said to his apostles after washing their feet: “I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another” (John 13: 34-35).

*The Home Coming*, conceived and designed by Richard R. Troxell, is the story of a chance encounter among the homeless; a sharing in the warmth of a fire and of fellowship; the sharing of Christian love for one another.

In the short story “The Home Coming,” by Richard R. Troxell (*Short Stories in a Long Journey: What It Takes to End and Prevent Homelessness*, 2022), the characters are developed in greater detail as is the full story behind the sculpture. (Available at [www.housethehomeless.org](http://www.housethehomeless.org) and other bookstores online.)

## The Concept and Design



In 2011, Richard Troxell published a book on homelessness, *Looking Up at The Bottom Line: The Struggle for the Living Wage*, in which he proposed a mathematical formula that would “fix the federal minimum wage once and for all.” In a world of five second sound bytes and 140 characters, “ink” did not carry the influence or recognition it once did. Perhaps a new approach was required; as the saying goes, “One picture is worth a thousand words.” Troxell remembered the Father’s Day gift his daughter Colleen had created for him several years before: “three unrecognizable piles of fired clay.” She had explained the three characters in her “sculpture” as “the Veteran daddy, his little girl, and Ms. Anateen ... all homeless. They are taking care of each other.”

Richard took the three lumps of fired clay and suggested to his daughter the idea of “molding a little girl in clay to tell her story.” Colleen suggested to have her posed “with her daddy so she could care for him after the war.” Richard then suggested that they name the little girl “Colleen.” His daughter beamed her approval.

Having “dabbled” in art--a pen-drawing of Lech Walesa that hung in the 1199c Health Care Workers union hall in Philadelphia, jewelry from coins, and peace pipes from pallets--Troxell set out to find a teacher and to learn the art of sculpting.

Steve Dubois, the founder of Atelier 3-D Sculpture Studio, Austin, Texas, a collection of workshops in a variety of sculptural materials and techniques, accepted students of all levels and ages. Under the tutelage of Dubois the three lumps of fired clay took on a human form.



As the efforts to fund the sculpture grew, noted sculptors in the art world became interested in taking on the project of transforming the nascent efforts of Troxell and his concept into a bronze sculpture. Timothy P. Schmalz (b. 1969) of Toronto, Canada was selected to sculpt the final piece.

In order to create new and meaningful sculpture, Tim often collaborates or interacts with religious, public and private individuals. In recent years, he has worked directly with the Vatican to create more sculptures that highlight spiritual concerns in our modern day. For further details: <https://timothypaulschmalz.com>.

The original sculpture, *The Home Coming*, was unveiled on Saturday, 18 May 2019, at Community First! Village, Austin Texas.

**The homeless feel invisible.**

**This project is an effort to put a humane face on the homeless and homelessness.**

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Sculpture in Bronze  
Southeast Corner of the East Portico  
of the National Shrine  
of the Immaculate Conception,  
Washington, D.C.

**Wilton Cardinal Gregory**  
Archbishop of Washington and  
Chairman of the National Shrine Board of Trustees  
blessed and dedicated the sculpture  
Saturday, 1 October 2022

This sculpture is made possible through the donations and efforts of  
House the Homeless Inc. (est. 1989)  
[www.housethehomeless.org](http://www.housethehomeless.org)  
and  
The National Coalition for the Homeless (est. 1984)  
[www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org)

**Richard R. Troxell**  
Founder, Past President, and National Director of Education  
House the Homeless, Inc.,  
Creator of the original concept and design.

**Colleen Regnier**  
An independent artist and daughter of Richard R. Troxell,  
Colleen assisted in creating the storyline of the sculpture.

**Timothy P. Schmalz**  
Sculptor

For almost five years, Mr. Troxell collaborated with Mr. Schmalz by telephone and the internet  
to bring this bronze sculpture to its completion.

**Monsignor Walter R. Rossi**  
Rector  
Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception,  
Washington, D.C.