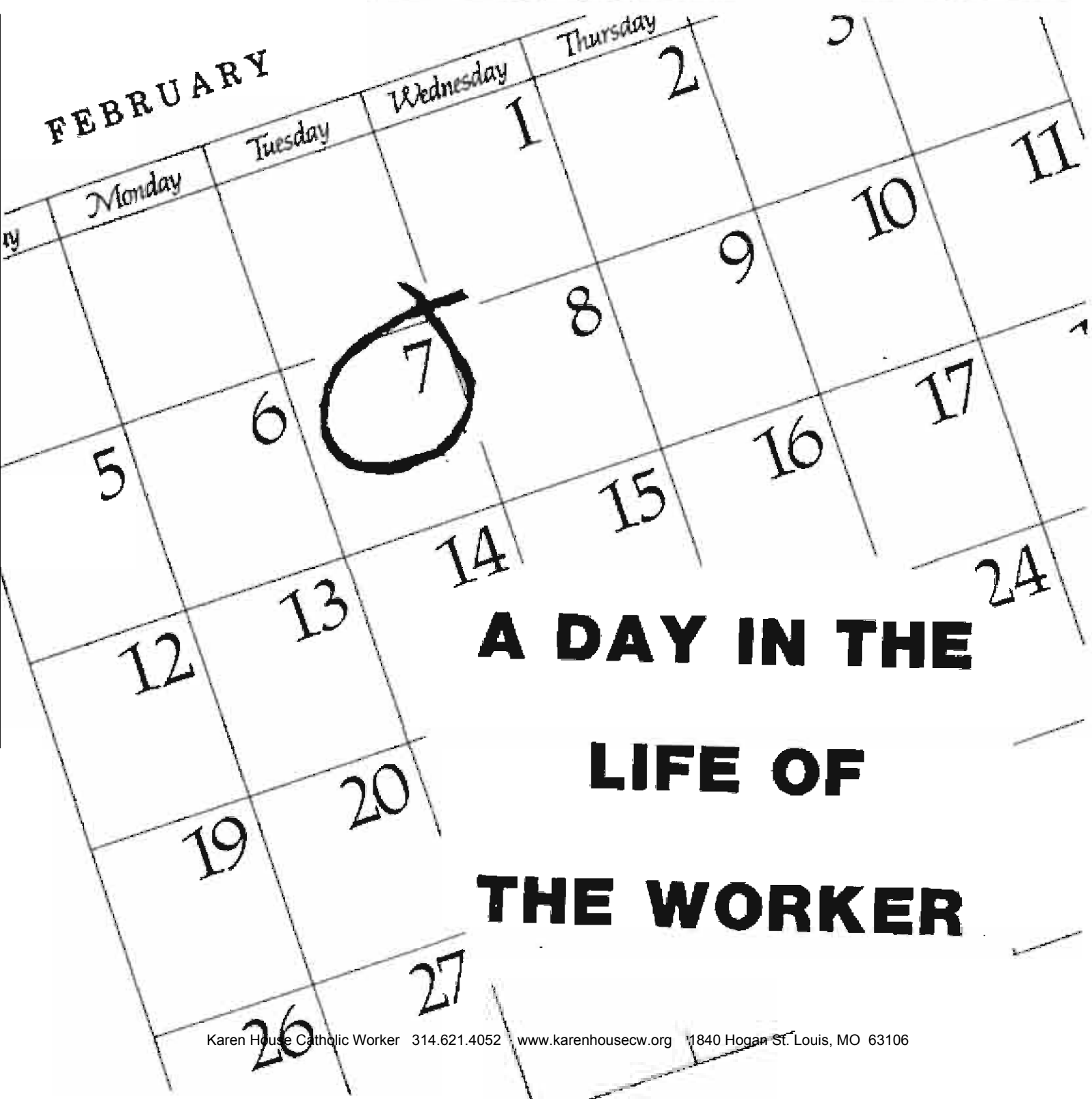


THE Round Table

SPRING
1984

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --- Peter Maurin



WHY THIS ISSUE ?

REVISIONIST HISTORIES

& DIVINE REVELATION



If any of our readership were not already convinced of the validity and need for revisionist histories, a day spent at the Catholic Worker listening and responding to the life stories of our guests might very well serve to convince them. Just as much of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures is revelation history written from "the underside" of history, so, too, do we find modern theophanies liberally sprinkled throughout the stories of our guests' daily lives.

Beyond the Bible, revisionist writers like Dee Brown for the Native Americans, Vincent Harding for Black Americans, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza for women, and Howard Zinn for political and social activists in general, have consistently shown us how history has been written by those in the status quo seeking to justify and preserve the status quo. Consequently, the significant contributions of women, of people of color, and other marginalized groups have been systematically ignored--even edited out--in the incomplete mosaic that is presented to us as the making of history (herstory). This white male monopoly on the writing and telling of history is an integral piece in the larger puzzle of oppression facing women, minorities and others suffering the ill effects of economic injustice.

The radical methodology of the Catholic Worker has always had at its center the belief that we must live amongst the poor and marginalized in order to gain a complete perspective on reality--both human and divine. At the core of this belief lies the truly revolutionary insight that the marginalized offer a wholly new perspective on reality. For as our co-founder Peter Maurin was wont to say, "The poor are the ambassadors of God."

The same February snowstorm in St. Louis is perceived quite differently by the urban homeless than it is by the suburban family comfortably tucked away with central heat, an auxiliary wood stove, and electric blankets. Attempts to cut down on welfare and food stamp "fraud"--serving only the "truly needy" as it were--is experienced differently by single mothers who now have to stand in application lines for whole days at a time, and who though only semi-literate, have to fill out exhaustive information sheets, than it is experienced by those legislators whose mistaken notions of distributive justice caused them to enact the legislation in the first place. And again, the dismantling of long-overdue affirmative action legislation and programs is likely to be perceived one way by a young unemployed black woman, and in quite another manner by a young white male professional. Similarly, the God-experience of these two people will be different.

Recognizing this reality, and believing deeply that God manifests herself to us not so much in the extraordinary as in the ordinary, we present this issue of The Round Table. It tells the story of "One Day in the Life of the St. Louis Catholic Worker," a revisionist history of February 7, 1984. A new perspective on reality; a different experience of the divine in the world than may be your custom.

We believe we are presenting you with nothing short of a treasure--the story of God in our lives--both workers and guests. It is our hope that you be as graced in this reading of the divine story as Hyam the Water Carrier (a character found in Belden Lane's rich lead article) was in his telling of the divine story.

Patrick G. Coy

Special thanks go to Virginia Druhe and Teka Childress for conducting these interviews for The Round Table.
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REDISCOVERING THE HOLY

by
Belden C. Lane

I sat on the rabbi's living room floor, listening to--no, entranced by--this intensely passionate story teller. His beard untrimmed, earlocks askew, head thrown back in loud laughter, I never will forget the fierce, tear-filled eyes which searched the air for figments of story. These he wove into a myth-world of texture and shadowed edges that I was as eager to enter as he was to make. There was a detail of characterization about the man himself that seemed cut from another world. Like his stories, he was a series of commonplaces, faithful to their own context, but strangely and wonderfully anomalous there in the rabbi's living room. We all could as easily have been sitting in the house of study in some Ukranian village before the French Revolution, alongside Yeshivah students fixed on the words of their rebbe. The hard-wood benches, the smell of stale tobacco, the falling snow outside--it was all there in the spell he cast. The effect was almost like that described by Martin Buber when he spoke of another Hasidic storyteller, the great Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg. It was said that "whenever he recited verses about the Red Sea, his listeners gathered up the hems of their kaftans for fear the waves towering to the left and right might wet them with salty foam." Such is the imaginative power of evocative detail. At times it is as if we were carried into worlds of the holy by bits and pieces of trivial attention. The stories (and people) who most take us into themselves are not those richly spiritual, fanciful, and unreal, but the ones that stubbornly breathe their own ordinariness.

I find much that is healing and serene in that quiet truth. From Reuven Gold, the Hasidic storyteller who so impressed me that afternoon in the house of a rabbi friend, I've learned again that the sacred is always found most beautifully in the ordinary. This is, after all, the most profound meaning of the incarnation, as well as the very scandal of the Gospel, as Paul describes it in I Corinthians 1. In a culture (both then and now) that looks for the divine in the most triumphant hierophanies--as a mirror of its own exalted notions of class and status, God insists

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on humility and incognito as the marks of his way in the world. This is the essence of the early church's celebrated hymn to the self-emptied Christ in Philippians 2. It is the happy paradox that the Spirit of God chooses to *lisp* through the subtle works of her hand, rather than shout out of the distant glory of her majesty. God is *deus absconditus*, hidden amidst the very simplicity and quiet wonder of all that is to us so prosaic and workaday.

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Yet, unfortunately, this is a lesson continually to be learned not only by those outside of the church, but by those within it as well. William Temple, the late archbishop of Canterbury, once suggested that "it is a great mistake to think that God is chiefly interested in religion." Thank goodness, he said, that's not the case. A thorough-going theology of creation will never have it so. Neither will a faith authentically spiritual ever rest content until it's fulfilled in the concrete and tangible. Our glib distinctions between sacred and profane utterly fail to comprehend the wideness of God's mercy. We all know this, and yet it too often remains abstract until we see it alive in the flesh of story.



This issue of The Round Table is concerned to do precisely that. It takes a single day in the life of workers and guests at the Catholic Worker houses in St. Louis, trying to rediscover the power of the incarnation amidst its commonplaces. Dorothy Day once said of property that the more common it becomes, the more holy it becomes. This is a truth well-explored at the houses of the Catholic Worker; and it carries over from material into spiritual spheres as well. The church's greatest mystics have always been the first to affirm that spirituality increases in proportion to its concrete earthiness. Matthew Fox shows this to be eminently the case with Meister Eckhart. Francis of Assisi's sheer ability to enjoy life was echoed keenly in Karen House Catholic Worker 1840 Hogan St. Louis, MO 63106.

Spirituality increases in proportion to its concrete earthiness.

The maid to a wealthy family once was appalled that Teresa of Avila, their guest, could enjoy partridge as she did. The best of saints all knew that the spiritual didn't escape the ordinary; it was the ordinary, made holy by love.

Nothing will do, then, but to return to the storyteller and enter one of the tales he told that afternoon from out of the Hasidic past. The cluster of commonplaces evoked by his story took one beyond the eastern borders of Poland, on the way to Kiev, some 200 years ago. There on the fertile steppes above the Black Sea, scattered with Russian wheatfields and onion-domed churches, small villages of Jews speckled the landscape. In one such village dwelled a renowned rabbi who felt so very blessed one year because he had been able to observe faultlessly every rubric of the seder observance. Not a single mistake had he made through the whole of the Passover season. As he was giving thanks to the Master of the Universe for this awesome ability to be so perfect, he overheard two people talking outside his open window. "Ah," said the one, "if you want to see how Pesach is truly to be observed, then you have to see Hyam the Water Carrier!"

Now the celebrated rabbi had never even heard of Hyam the Water Carrier. He gathered his disciples around him to ask if anyone knew of a famous rebbe by that name, but none of them had heard of him either. "Search everywhere," he said, "he might be a devout soul living in some remote hollow in the Carpathian Mountains. He might even be a lamed vovnik, one of the thirty-six righteous people who uphold the world at any given time." But everywhere they asked, no one knew of Hyam the Water Carrier. No distinguished rabbi by that name -- not even a prominent citizen. The only person called Hyam the Water Carrier that anyone had heard of was some ne'er-do-well living in a back village who did nothing but sleep and drink all day.

Nevertheless, the rabbi told his disciples to bring the man to him. At length they arrived at his hovel, where the wife told them he was sleeping--as usual. "God knows he should," she added, "with what he drank last night!" They explained the rabbi's request, and with her permission they picked up Hyam the Water Carrier in his bed (so as not to wake him) and carried him back to their rebbe. There the rabbi bent over him as he awoke, and inquired with keen anticipation, "Tell me, my friend, how did you celebrate Pesach?" Hyam slowly looked around, rubbed his eyes, and--out of his alcoholic stupor--asked plaintively, "Pesach?" "Tell me," said the rabbi, "what meditation did you use when you burned the crumbs before the holiday?" Jews always rid their homes of leavened bread before the sacred festival. "Meditation?" answered Hyam. "I gathered the crumbs in a paper and...(heavens!) left them on a shelf. They're still there now!" He had left the forbidden yeast in the house all during the holy season. Yet the rabbi persisted, asking in dismay, "Well, what did you do as Passover began?"

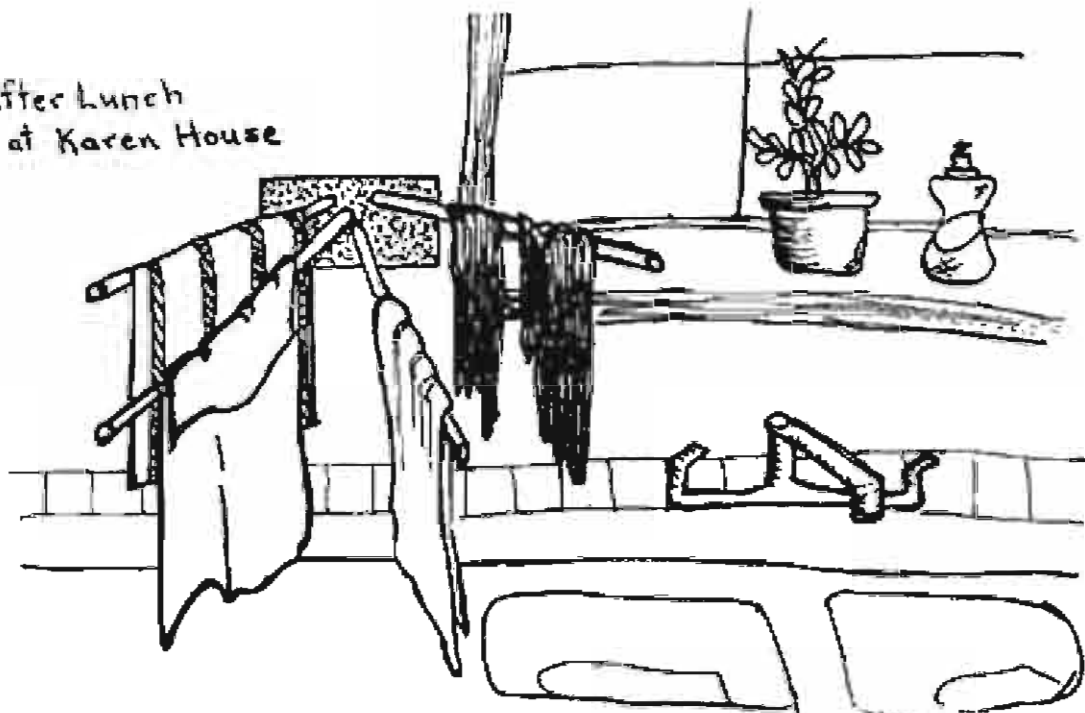
"I knew you weren't supposed to drink cognac over Passover," the poor man answered, "and yet I usually drink a glass every night. So I thought to myself--eight

nights is a long time! And finally I drank all eight glasses in advance, that last night before the holiday. When I woke up the next day, it was time for the seder, but I had no preparations. So my wife and I sat down. I took the only piece of matzoth we had and told what little I knew of the story...how our grandfathers had been held in the land of the Gypsies and yet the Holy One, blessed be his name, delivered them. I wept as I told it. Then suddenly a table came down before us, out of nowhere, set with silver candlesticks and wine and all that we needed for Pesach. We ate; we cried. And I shouted 'God delivered our grandfathers out of the land of the Gypsies, and he delivers us as well!'" With tears running, the ruddy and weathered face of Hyam the Water Carrier shone with light. The distinguished rabbi was still; he said nothing. But he reflected later, that it was in that year he truly had learned how Passover was perfectly to be observed.

The story (and its teller) bear the truth so well. The holy is often found, not where it has been carefully structured and set apart, but where it grows out of the common and simple experience of the hidden people of God. Here it is that one learns to value the stories of guests who pass in a given day through the houses of the Catholic Worker.



After Lunch
at Karen House



Julius Birth (60?) was invited to tell us about his day. He wanted us to talk to his friend Eddie Henderson, as well. Both are guests on the men's side at Cass House.

JB: You want me to go first?

I get up in the morning and make my bed and wash up. Then after breakfast come we start cleaning up. We clean the dormitory, clean the dining room, clean the restroom and the showers. Then either we'll sit and watch television, take care of the kids, take the trash and garbage out, break the boxes down, bring stuff into the storage room--the canned goods, the milk and the bread donated to us by people so we can help the needy and the poor. That's my day's work: trying to keep the place neat and orderly. Then we decided we'd go out and get some fresh air. We went out around 9 or 10 this morning and came back at 5:30. The doors don't open for soupline 'til 5:30 pm. See the house got rules that got to be abided by by each and every one of us.

RT: What do you do when you leave the house?

JB: If you'll record it, I'll tell you the truth. We go out and we smile and we have fun and we generally try to get a few cans, some copper or something so I can save a nickel or a dime and get some cigarettes and wine with it.

Today I went to Hillsdale to a friend. And I watched television out there and he cooked us some franks, drink a beer. I came back home 'cause this is home to me these last five years.



EH: My name is Eddy Henderson. Just like my friend Julius Birth said we went out this morning, but before we went out we stayed around in the place, helped clean up. Course nobody else offered their services, so we stayed around. The only reason I left out this morning was because I had to go out and check on my mail which was important.

Now what I can't figure is this: 15 of us staying over there on the men's side. Twelve men seeing three men doing all the work and won't offer to help do nothing. That's not right.

JB: We don't complain about it 'cause I'm not going to leave this place... I don't like to live around filth.

EH: So I mean, we didn't argue with them or nothin'. We just went on and did what we had to do, just cleaned up and kept the arguments down. And so, I left out about quarter to nine.

RT: So did you spend the rest of the day with Julius?

EH: We was together, yeah.

RT: And what will you do this evening?

JB: Watch television with the other guys, play cards. After soupline I cleaned up the dishes and he cleaned up the tables. Clean the floors. Charles Francis helps us and George Brown do as much as he can.

Delecia Howard, guest at Karen House.

I was out all day. I went over to the Health Center at Malcolm Bliss to see about medication and so forth. I had to wait until about four o'clock to get waited on and I was supposed to have an appointment at two o'clock. I'm used to having to take my time to do things now, so it wasn't frustrating to me at all. But it was to some of the people. Other people were walking the floor. You have to pretty much put your mind to it and sit there and wait until they can wait on you. Especially if they start late in taking people in. That's what happened in this case. Today I saw the doctor and told her whatever is happening that she wants to know about my stay here. I'm doing so well with my appointments that I only see her once a month. I'm doing better, but I have little shaky periods --a side effect of one of my medicines that was being given to me--and I had to have medication to support it. So I went over there to try to get my shot today and see the practitioner that I generally see.

CHRIST the Workman



Ado Methner

Mostly that's all I did. I had lunch before I left. I left here about 1:00 to get the bus. And I got home at 5:30. I heard I had company while I was gone. My brother was coming by looking for his books for school and I couldn't give them to him 'cause I wasn't here. I didn't know he was going to come today. I expected him Saturday or Sunday. And then I wasn't here Saturday or Sunday because I had a weekend visit away from here.

That was something I could talk about 'cause I was in an altogether different environment. I went over and visited my son Kevin at his one room apartment. He shares another room with a friend who has a little baby, so they doubled up and I had my own special place to sleep.

My biggest objective is to get my kids back into my household

RT: What was the first thing you thought of when you got up this morning?

DH: Well, I wasn't rested enough and I wanted to sleep some more. I was up a lot through the night going to the rest room.

RT: Is that a side-effect of the medicine?

DH: I don't know, it might be. As far as I know it doesn't have any side effects that are addicting. That's what I like because when I get ready to come off of it I don't want to be put in a position where I have to be dependent on it, you know, forever, 'cause I'm just taking it temporarily. As a matter of fact, I might be withdrawing from it before I move from here.

RT: Looking over your day, how would you say it was?

DH: I would say it was a nice day, It was nice to be able to get away from here and have something to do for the day. It gets boring just sitting around here. It cuts your day in half and helps you to not be bored. It takes your mind off some of your problems, too. My biggest objective is to get my children back into my household. If I can do that then I'll feel like I've done something worthwhile. The practitioner is trying to get me into vocational rehabilitation so I can get back to work. I need an income to support myself for an apartment. I'm looking for employment now, but I feel that it would be more lucrative for me if I went on and went to voc rehab. Then people would be more lenient with me in regard to me working, maybe part-time.



RT: Did you have any profound thoughts today?

DH: No, I didn't. At the clinic I just sat and watched the people go by. Watching people is a good thing to do because it lets you see how some people's reactions are in comparison to your own. It lets you know that everybody's got their own little personality change that they're in and they differ in the kind of life they live.



Marilyn Jones, 18. Marilyn and her daughter are guests at Cass House.

Tonight's
Vegetable



MJ: First thing is get out of bed. It took me long enough, but I got out of it. I was planning on going down to St. Patrick's Center to see a boyfriend. But I didn't. I watched Little Sam for Sharon all day, which was hard. And while my own daughter slept, I called about the jobs I found in yesterday's paper. Babysitting, cooking, waitress, housekeeping, but most of them already had people and one lived so far away that there was no way I was going to get out there. And one was a go-go dancer! So after I finished that I sat around for a little while and just talked to Winnie and finally Penny. I went out to the welfare office out in the County and we went to Kroger and cashed her food stamps in. Then we came back here with all the junk. The rest of the day was just chasing the kids. I talked to my husband about my other little girl and I was kind of upset about the news that if I want to see her for visits I would have to go out there during the weekend. I can't do that, plus I don't want to be around him because he's an abuser. That's why I'm here in the first place. I have to spend the weekend with him to see her.

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Therapy Day



Israel Neal, 11. Israel and his mother and brother are guests at Cass House.

IN: My day was just an ordinary day. Go to school, learn and when you get through give the teacher your paper. I had fun. I did this. It's a picture of He-man. I did this in art class. I go to Burr Hill School. That's on Grand and W. Florissant. I catch a Florissant bus. I go alone. Is this tape recorder takin' everything I say?

RT: Yeah. You wanna hear it?

IN: Yeah!

RT: What time did you get home from school?

IN: Almost time for supper. I have a long walk, from Blair to St. Louis Ave. and back here.

RT: What time do you get out of class?

IN: Five-thirty.

RT: No!

IN: Six-thirty.

RT: No! What time do you get out of class?

IN: I leave around seven-thirty.

RT: In the morning?

IN: Yeah. I eat breakfast at school. I had a cinnamon roll and some orange juice and some white milk. I get up about six o'clock.

RT: What are you going to do this evening?

IN: I might play in the playroom, or go watch TV. I'm keeping an eye on my little brother, Little Sam. He's four. My dad comes to visit me and Little Sam all the time.

RT: What are you going to do with your picture of He-man?

IN: I don't know. Just show it around. Show everyone what I did. I'm a good artist. You know what I want to be? A artist. I'm gonna paint and draw things. I'm gonna do just like George Washington Carver did. He discovered peanuts, and all kinds of good stuff.

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You know Martin Luther King? He was a great civil rights leader. He had a play about him last week. I was Martin Luther King. He won the Nobel Peace Prize, but he got shot in the neck and died. I saw it, too. They didn't find a bullet in him. I often wonder if Martin Luther King come back. I often say to myself, "Israeli, I wish that Martin was still here and make a good speech." Like "Free at last, free at last."

I often wonder if Martin Luther King come back...

RT: What do you think would be different if Martin were still here?

IN: He would change the buses and make the blacks sit up in front of the bus.

RT: Can't you sit up in front of the bus?

IN: Yeah. Your kinfolks made my kinfolks slaves and that's where George Washington Carver came in. He freed the slaves. His mother got kidnapped by night riders when he was born. He had a film about him. He painted plants and all kinds of stuff.

RT: What would you like to paint and draw?

IN: People. All kinds of people.



"When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the great triplets of racism, materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered."

Martin Luther King Jr.
Apr. 4, 1967

Sharon Butler, 28. Sharon is Israel's mother.

SB: I got up early. I always get up early 'cause I have to send him to school. At six. Sometimes 6:30 if I oversleep. I got up and got him off to school. By that time it's breakfast-time for little Sam. Then that starts my day. Then it's chore time. But I went out for a little while this afternoon. My chore is to clean the Snoopy bathroom, which is a mess here the last two weeks it seems like. It used to be clean. Somebody's sons are using the bathroom on the floor and all over the seat. It's just terrible. The first time I had that bathroom I was really proud of the kids and I said, "Boy, this is really good." But not this time. When we had our meeting last week I was saying,



"The kids' bathroom are cleaner than the adults. It's just a shame." But Sunday I said, "Oh, oh. I spoke too quick."

But after that I went out 'cause I did babysitting for Wendy. She gave me a little extra change for babysitting as both of my boys needed socks. So I went and got them some socks and then hair grease. And that's about it. When I came in it was just about dinner time so we ate dinner. Now I'm finished and that's about it. Little Sam needed an outing, too, to get a little sunshine and fresh air.

RT: This evening what will you do?

SB: Probably watch TV or maybe play cards with somebody. Same old thing. I like to read, though. I enjoy reading. Usually I go up and read. My favorite author is Stephen King. Me and Kathy got the same favorite author. She likes Stephen King, too. Matter of fact, I got a couple of her books that she's given me to read. I love Stephen King. I love that horror. For me to be such a scary person--I can't understand why I like horror books. I love horror movies. And then I can't sleep for two weeks! It's weird. I love it!

I like to read, period, though. I love to read. The only thing I don't like too much are war books. But just about anything else. Newspapers, everything. My oldest son is the same way. 'Cause a lot of the books I buy he'll read. I don't buy anything I don't want him to read 'cause he reads them.

But that's about all. Same old boring day.

What did Israel say?

Tommy Askew, 41, came to Cass House as a guest in September, and is now a full-time volunteer. He receives radiation treatments for bone cancer, contracted as a result of exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

TA: Today I had to make one of my weekly appointments at the hospital--which is Tuesday and Friday. That takes close to about two hours. I'm back here between 12:30 and 1:00 pm. Then I helped out around here--helped get supper on, answered the phone, answered the door.

RT: How long is your radiation treatment?

TA: Forty-five minutes. It'll run about twenty minutes, give me a break and start again. I have bone cancer. I am exposed to radiation 16-17 minutes. When they caught it, the idea was to try to contain it to that area and dry it out. So they told me the effects it would have, but I wanted that instead of trying to cut it out. It's in my shoulder bone.

RT: Is it contained?

TA: Um hmm, yeah. Only last two weeks, though, my weight has been dropping down from 206, now I'm down to 194. That's not

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a good sign. The only time I swell is like early this morning. I woke up, I swell like a person that has arthritis: my ankles had swole, my knee and my hands. I was just laying there. And I got up and took my pain pill, then about 7:30 I could move. You see, some mornings I wake up and I can't even move. I lay there awhile and gradually get up and just start real slowly, like a locomotive.

I felt real good last week. I have a little pain, but I can deal with that now.

We always have a conference on Fridays. I don't take treatments on Fridays. We have a psychiatrist there and everybody talks about what it does to them, so that is really good as far as keeping the mind together. When they first told me this psy-

chiatrist has been on me from day one 'til yesterday. She's there when I'm taking the treatments and we're talking about something other than what I'm doing.

This evening I didn't do too much, more than making sure it wasn't anything going on with the men here at Cass House.

RT: You went out, didn't you?

TA: Oh, yeah, I went out with a couple of them 'cause I could see they was angry, but I didn't know what was happening, so I just took both of them out, talked with both of them and come back and it was all settled. We was out there in the cold and they was arguing and cussing. They wanted to get it all out, without fighting, you know, and they did all that. I said, "What was it about?" and it wasn't about anything. So we came back in and they started playing checkers together. Those two! That made my night, really. Yeah, I like that part. It ain't a sense of likin' that part, but I'm glad I was there, to stop it before it got any worse. One guy's in school and one guy's waiting on a grant, so they both trying to do something to better themselves. And like I told them, if you get fighting, then you get put out, then you got two problems. You got a problem of where you gonna stay, how you gonna study, plus getting back and forth to school. So they realized they'd only be hurting themselves if they do anything in here and break that rule of fighting. Then they're out and they got to put up with New Life or wherever they go. And they definitely can't study down there.

Howard got a thing, he don't like to take nothing from you. I offered him money to go back and forth (to school), but he said, "I'm a man." I told him this is what it's about. If we don't help each other, where you gonna get it from? He still got a thing about he don't want to take anything.

RT: I understand that. It's not hard for me to ask for the house, but if I need it for myself...

TA: Right! 'Cause I know I can be out of cigarettes and I guess they can tell it and say, "Hey, you got a cigarette?" I say, "Naw." "Here's three of four cigarettes. Man, you ain't asking me for it. I be glad to give you a cigarette."

I tell them I wasn't really thinking about smoking, but I was doing 'Havin' a fit!' (lots of laughter)





IMAGES OF JUSTICE

By Patrick G. Coy

The prophet Amos says it hurtles down mountainsides
catching up everything in its path,
Something like what a mighty stream might do,
If it caught you standing
on the wrong side
of the fence.
Or sitting on the fence,
for that matter
or for any matter.

This is no blindfolded woman,
Impartially holding up balancing scales
And taking no cues from the gallery.

She knows who has the vested interests.
She has been tipped off,
to tip the scales.
For as she removes the blindfold
to tip the scales
against the rich,
The Beatitudes ring in her ears.

This is the voice of the God
of the poor,
Echoing down from the gallery,
Where, with her followers,
She holds court.

(Originally appeared in January 1984 issue
of Theology Today).

LONG WAY FROM HOME

by Marilyn Thomas

I don't have a place
I am all alone
I am so far from home
I am just by myself

I can't feel any hope
where do I go
am a long way from home

QUOTABLE QUOTES



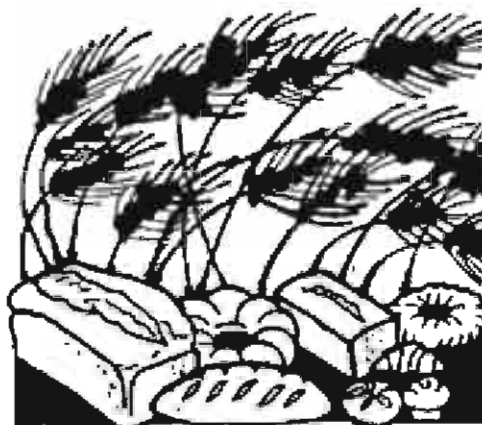
RT: Linda, what was your first thought today?

LC: Oh, I got to go out and look for a job.



Most of the day I was at the house. A friend of mine came by and picked me up and we left for awhile. We just picked somebody else up and drove around. I had the baby with me all day. The rest of the kids were in school. Since then, I've just been keepin' after the kids. They wear me out if I let 'em.

Today I went to work at Goodwill Industries. It makes you learn how to communicate with each other. We sit in a group of eight in a circle and then each of us sits in the middle of the circle and then we learn a different sentence or different paragraphs. The instructor gives us a sentence and we have to complete it out. Like pretend you're the manager and I'm looking for work. And you say, "Hello, my name is Margaret Boyer. I'm looking for a job." And you're two months pregnant. And he said, "I'm sorry, we can't hire you right now because you're two months pregnant. But when you have the baby we can hire you." Then she said he can hire her right now 'til she has the baby. So we were practicing communication with each other. Thursday will be the last day. The instructor gives us words to learn. Tomorrow is my turn to be in the middle. Me and Brian and another boy.



I just get on the bus and hope no one bothers me. I look forward to school. I like the teachers. And all of a sudden I'm understanding geometry better. So I'm real eager to go to that class now.



It was a blah day. I don't know why, really. Down in the dumps. I guess it was just because Don and I had that little argument. Oh, well. And I'm a little worried about a place to live. 'Cause, you know, rents are outrageous.



I like something for people to do together. That's why I made popcorn tonight. Something different. And it was really neat 'cause the popcorn was psychedelic but it turned out white!



The thing I try most to keep in mind when the house gets demanding is that it really is only a few people who are difficult. I guess God asks us to love both the meek and the trying. Those are my thoughts before I turn out the lights.



Beans

February 7, 1984:

YOU WERE THERE

by Ellen Rehg

My day had been carefully planned the night before. I was to drive Ann to work at 7:15, then go to City Hall early enough to avoid standing in line all morning to buy city stickers for our two cars, meet an errant friend at 9:30, go to St. Louis University and study Whitehead, attend a meeting for Teaching Assistants at 2:10, come home and visit with our guests, go to Mass at 9:00 and return to bed. But upon awakening, I became immediately aware that I was sick and wouldn't be going anywhere.

To top off the dangerous gurgling in my intestines, my room was freezing! I shrank from the thought of leaving my warm bed to put on my refrigerated clothes. Having a room in an unheated attic has taught me a lot about human nature. Fighting the cold saps one's energy and motivation. Many in our city live without heat in the winter; under these circumstances, survival takes all of one's strength. It also explains why my room is so messy.

Every morning I review my dreams. This morning I had dreamt of a woman's prison, (except there were men in it, too). It was a three-storied building, made of stone, and the women were classified according to how liberated they were. The first story had a sign saying "Men Only", the second level's sign read, "Men and 'Their' Women", and the sign at the top said "Liberated Men and Women." I was on the third level, bringing food up to the women.

My clock stopped at 11:20, so I remained ignorantly in bed until 1:00. I walked around in a daze for awhile, until I heard my little 11½ month-old goddaughter, Myrrah, crying one floor below me. This motivated me to get dressed and go downstairs, by which time she had been rescued from her crib and was crawling around in a bright yellow sleeper.

Harriette had the clothing room open for the guests, and people were milling around in the hall among scattered boxes of clothing and shoes. Judy, whom I hadn't seen in a year since her move to the Detroit area, approached me. She greeted me with a hug and the words, "You haven't got married yet; that's good."

"What did you do to your hair?" I asked her, prying off her stocking cap. It had been cut in a mohawk. My goodness.



Clare was on house, sitting in the office, and she began to snap green beans. Judy came in to help.

"I thought you and Clare would have been hooked by now," she said.

Clare looked at me flirtatiously and batted her eyelashes. "Well, we've been thinking about it," she replied.

Another woman whom I had not seen for awhile came by. This woman puts me in touch with my sinfulness. I always feel that she wants so much from me; she wants me to listen to her and empathize with her. The problem is that I don't like her. She is continually reaching out, 'to capture a moment' as the song says, but I always duck the moment, deny her need, avert my eyes. I know how it is to want someone to care about your problems. But I don't like her! Anyway, to become involved with her is to share the frustration of her impossible situation. She only

Ellen Rehg, Karen House community member and graduate student in philosophy, successfully defended herself against the charge of trespassing at General Dynamics. The jury saw things differently however.

gets \$70 General Relief each month, and her rent alone is more than that. I don't know how she survives. I struggle with my desire to treat her with love and my conflicting desire to not become engaged, to rest in my own peace.

By now the children had come home from school, and clamored to help snap the beans. I tried not to become too aware of how well or badly they were doing. Myrrah also wanted to help, but at first she kept biting the beans. Then she began picking up beans and handing them to Judy faster than Judy could snap them. In the middle of this chaos, one of the kids plunked his grammar and arithmetic homework down on the desk on top of the volunteer schedule which I was trying to fill out. He was so hyper that we barely got the grammar and three arithmetic problems done. At his school, I suspect that a good portion of the teacher's time is taken up with discipline. It depresses me to think of how the cards are stacked against these children--poor education, poor diet, poor housing. All I have to offer them is meager--just my attention to them at this moment.



Eventually Teka called asking for a ride home from the Freeze office. I felt well enough to pick her up, so I did. On our way home we noticed a man with his arms around a woman. The woman was repeating to him, "Leave me alone, Robert." She had blood running down her face in a thin stream. We stopped to ask if she wanted our help. She said no, he eventually let go of her and she walked off while he trailed behind her. We watched them for awhile, debating about calling the police. I sympathized with her vulnerability--yes, the streets are a woman's prison, with men in it, too.

***"I prayed to be
more conscious
in these moments
which mediate
God to me."***

At home again, I took the opportunity to listen to a guest whom I had wanted to get to know. She seemed quiet and insecure (qualities with which I can identify), but alone in her room she would shout and rant that she wouldn't take any more shit, etc. I started asking her about her day and she ended up talking about her years of persecution at the hands of an unidentified group of malevolent people. Mixed in with this was a more concrete story of abuse at the hands of a man friend. I wondered what she had been like when she was small and what had happened to her along the way. I wish I knew a way to free her from the thoughts that have trapped and victimized her. I feel so inept at helping people make concrete changes in their lives, i.e., by winding their way with them through the mental health/social service bureaucracy. It is an on-going inner struggle to figure out how to best help someone, to get myself to do it. My gift is being able to listen well to people, but I know that's not enough.

At Mass tonight, I prayed to be more conscious in these moments, which mediate God to me.



SOLITUDE IN THE LORD

by
Sr. Monica Schieber

Besides living and working part-time at Cass Catholic Worker House, I am religious education co-ordinator at St. Nicholas School. At school, students and teachers gathered in the gym to open our day with prayer--remembering especially that God is always faithful. He will keep His promise to us. This fidelity and love God has for us elicits a faith response to God as well as to each other.

On this particular Tuesday, I joined in prayer with two smaller groups of students for reconciliation and para-liturgies. As we realized we were unfaithful to God and each other, we prayed that God might forgive us and give us new hearts. We asked God to heal our hurts and give us hearts of friendship. Later in the day I realized how precious God's mercy is to me. I was preparing with a teacher for a group to receive the Sacrament of Penance for the first time. When I said to the teacher, "We must have refreshments after the service," she was a bit surprised. But it seems so important for the families to know they are forgiven and appreciate the mercy of God. To pause for refreshments is one way to emphasize this and share the joy. None of us could possibly be united to God without His loving mercy.

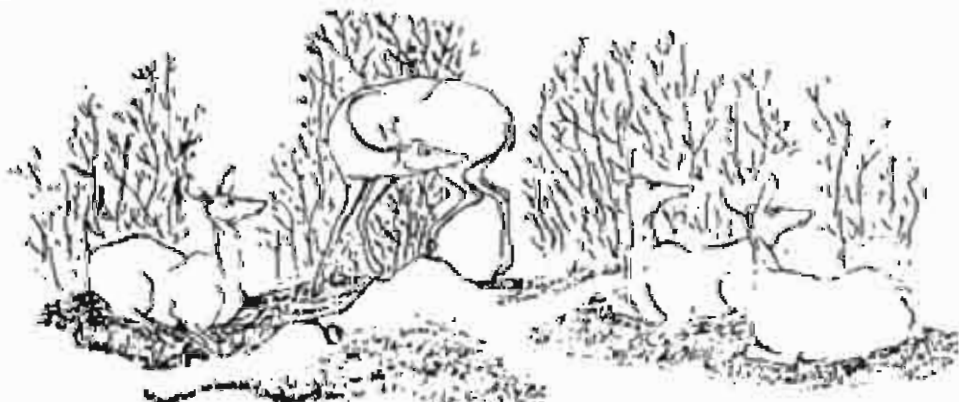
The evening meal found me in the midst of co-ordinating soupline. We often speak of coming together for Eucharist, and this evening was certainly an experience of different persons of society being reconciled through the sharing of an evening meal. Students from three Catholic high schools, teachers, seminarians, guests living in the house, and guests coming for soupline gathered around an evening meal. The food was provided by other persons who sent their donations in order to share their gifts. Strangers to each other gathered and provided so that food and fellowship could be shared. Yes, this was an experience of Eucharist.

When the kitchen was cleaned and the servers departed, I closed my door for some time of solitude with the Lord. He, in the gift of His love, nourishes me in the quiet of my heart. The events of the day become part of the gift of Jesus' own death and resurrection. The day becomes meaningful in the love Jesus has for me.

The day ended with Mass at Karen House. As we prayed together, I experienced a sense of emptiness. This emptiness reminded me how dependent I am upon Jesus. He is the person who stood in the midst of my day even when I was not aware of it. He is the one who reconciles and feeds His people. All I can do is to ask Him in some simple way to use my hands and feet to bring His love to others. Yet this is a precious gift.

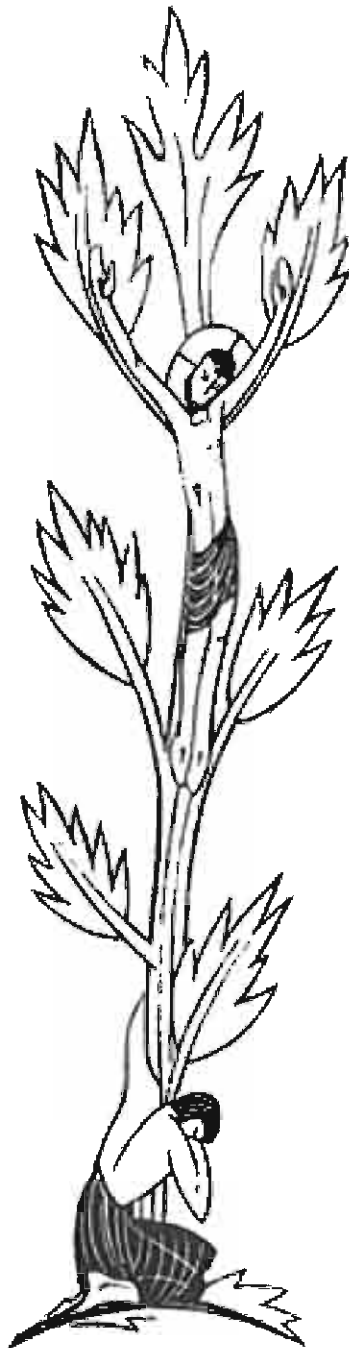


Monica Schieber joined the Cass community this fall. She brings a quiet gentle spirit to the Cass ambience.



EVERY DAY IS DIFFERENT

by Lee Carter



Tuesday may be just another day to most people, but to a Catholic Worker every day is different.

I got up at seven, had my usual coffee, and awakened the guests at eight-thirty. They all got up right away, except one. I always get the impression that she expects to be served coffee in bed!

A short time later a lady called needing clothes. I asked her size. She didn't know --just kind of wide and pretty tall.

We had several calls from persons needing shelter, which we couldn't offer as we have a full house.

Sometimes you get calls that can make you very angry. Like the young mother with three small children. She called seeking shelter. You could hear the despair in her voice. The United States can spend millions and millions of dollars for bombs and war machinery, but there's never enough money for housing to let the poor live with dignity. Do you realize how many houses could be bought for the poor--so they wouldn't have to beg for a bed--for what is spent on one bomb?

We can get very attached to some of our guests. And it's like losing your own child when they leave. Most of the time it's for the best. But at other times you feel they are making a mistake. The only thing you can do is pray for them--and hope.

Seems like when you need a car, that's the time they refuse to start. Oh, well, the footpaths aren't crowded. Maybe the good Lord will answer our prayers and send us one that works all the time--even in cold weather. Anyhow, Clare enjoyed her walk to the grocery store in zero weather.

And there's Kane, our sixty-five pound mascot. He loves everybody. You may be a total wreck when Kane shows you his love, but you know it's genuine puppy love. Lots of people could take a few lessons from our Kane.

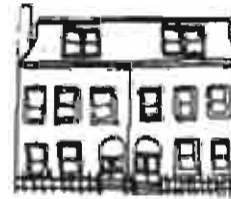


Lee Carter, restaurateur for 39 years, is a Karen House community member. She's always present to fill the gaps in our work.

Karen House Catholic Worker 314.621.4052 www.karenhousecw.org 1840 Hogan St. Louis, MO 63106

From Little House

By Mary Ann McGivern, S.L.



February 7 happened to be the day of the Emerson Electric annual meeting. The Sisters of Loretto and the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky had filed a shareholder resolution offering ten ethical criteria for deciding whether to accept military contracts. Here's the speech I gave that morning:

“ I am disappointed that management recommends a vote against this resolution. It is a call for earnest self-regulation and would require serious study of Emerson Electric's own behavior by people like us who have a stake in the company--and in the arms race.

The alternatives to self-regulation are government regulation and no regulation. Government regs carry the image of waste and foolish bureaucracy. Further, government ordinarily depends on the citizenry to monitor it and the weapons manufacturers like Emerson Electric are certainly knowledgeable citizens, though to my knowledge nobody monitors the Pentagon very well. The other alternative, no regulation, is what we have now. Human nature being what it is, I think our present situation is dangerous to the extreme.

I'd like to comment very briefly on just four of the proposed criteria.

Number 4, a commitment not to use jobs as hostage for weapons contracts, would protect us from the distortion of our foreign military policy that we have now, where every arms debate is reported at least as much in terms of jobs created as military strategy and need.

Number 6, you may have noticed from the contracts for fighter engines awarded to Pratt and Whitney and General Electric, is coming anyway. Corporate endorsement of competitive bidding would help keep us all honest.

Number 7 deals with human rights. The President pocket-vetoed the requirement that progress in human rights in El Salvador be certified before we lend or grant any money to that nation. Ought Emerson Electric be holier than the President? Yes. He's the one man who stands alone. He needs grass roots support in the political arena to do what is right. And he has a great deal more to lose by signing or refusing to sign a certification than does this company stand to lose in financial circles. Emerson Electric makes more than profits: it makes products, 12% of which are weapons. What they are and where they are sold must be an element of company policy if we have any hope of peace in the future.

Point 9 suggests a corporate strategy to promote peace. After all, weapons get developed by researching them. We won't develop peace without putting as much money and human effort into that research effort as well.

Jesus advised his disciples to be as wise as serpents and as guileless as doves. That's a difficult task, a narrow line to walk. My religious order, the Sisters of Loretto, needs investment income because the median age of our members is 69. But we also believe Pope Paul VI's statement that the arms race is a crime against humanity because even if the weapons are never used they are a theft from the poor, causing them to starve. These criteria have, I hope, a guileless or naive quality about them. They are also, I believe, wise. Please adopt them. ”

Cont

Mary Ann, one of the founding members of the Saint Louis Catholic Worker, is a local Karen House Catholic Worker. 314.621.4052 | www.karenhousecw.org 1840 Hogan St. St. Louis, MO 63106

Following this speech and that of Sr. Barbara Joseph Lammert, SCN, which expressed sorrow that Emerson management was unwilling even to talk about these ethical issues with us, there was a brief, shining moment. Board Chair Charles Knight asked if there were any questions. A woman's voice came from the back, sounding scared to death, and asked, "What weapons does Emerson make?" Knight stammered a bit, saying "the company makes parts, lots of electronic parts like radar which are defensive, not weapons, and cooling systems for fighter planes, and electronic parts, lots of parts, and anti-tank, yes, that's a weapon, anti-tank weapons, and gun mounts, and ammunition systems." We received less than 2% of the vote, but that means a thousand or more individuals voted with us--and five to ten thousand abstained.



I drove a man back downtown who arrived on the bus just when I arrived. He's a soybean farmer from St. Joe, Missouri, single, and lives with his parents. He vacations by attending the annual meetings of corporations where he has stock. He was very kind, very gentle, but is rooting for Jesse Helms for President and said he's a Catholic and he doesn't understand why the bishops don't endorse Reagan for a second term, since he's given them everything they want: opposing abortion, endorsing prayer in public schools, and tax credit for private tuition. He said the minimum wage was too high and should be abolished, and when I said it is Karen House Catholic Worker 014.621.4052

the rest of my point of view, he listened politely and interestedly--I think he'd never heard such talk.

Dean was here doing the dishes, bless his heart, when Sr. Barbara Joseph and I got home for lunch, but he left right away. Then Judy Berger came in, visiting from Michigan, and asked if she could stay the week 'til Sr. Caran Hart finished her retreat. BJ and I said yes. We talked about the meeting and BJ said ammo systems are guns. Then I dropped BJ at her new telephone job downtown, computer attendant on the swing shift, and headed to a peace coalition meeting at Eden Seminary. On the highway my car threw a rod and it remains three weeks later in critical condition at Bob Probst's car repair. I took a bus home.

It was a typical day in that it was confusing. I was hospitable to a soybean farmer who vacations by going to corporate meetings, another nun who seeks out opportunities to confront the corporations, and Judy who is struggling not to destroy herself. I received hospitality from Dean who is utterly kind but unable to provide or plan ahead for himself, and clarification of thought from BJ, who doesn't usually get involved in political talk. Ammunition systems, indeed. BJ must be right. What else could they be but guns? 

Community Prayer:

AT CASS HOUSE

*MASS every Wednesday at 7:15 p.m.

AT KAREN HOUSE

*MASS every Tuesday at 9:00 p.m.

Come pray with us.

Karen House Catholic Worker 014.621.4052 | www.karenhousecw.org 1840 Hogan St. Louis, MO 63106

From Cass House

by Zack Davisson

Like most good Catholic Worker staffers, I suffer from the maladies of procrastination, tardiness, and overall extreme busyness. Who in their right mind would travel 600 miles for a Spring break and a vacation from all their duties at work and at home, and then spend their time writing papers and studying for exams that were supposed to be completed four months ago? Obviously, it's not a normal person like yourself. It's a person, though, who's got too much going on...has too many irons in the fire.

And this Lenten season has caused me to take a closer look at life, especially my own.

In the past I have viewed Lent as a time of self-denial, fasting, penance, enduring hardships, and plenty of sacrifice. However, this Lenten season has taken on new meaning due to events that have occurred in my life. After reflecting on my harrowing and seemingly life-threatening episode in the hospital, I have decided to take much better care of my body. Lent calls me not only to sacrifice and self-denial, but to wholeness, healthiness and forgiveness. All too often I have had a distorted view of Lent that was much too one-sided and unhealthy. Lent calls me to be conscious of things I take so much for granted, such as my health, quiet time, recreation time, and my work with people at Cass House. Lent again calls me to become more aware of inner stirrings and the life of Christ within me. Lent calls me to be evermore thankful for my family, friends, the good people of Cass House, you, our benefactors, volunteers, staff and guests. I don't know how I would have ever made it through my hospital stay without your prayers, support, cards, flowers, concern, love and visits. Your visits when I was in intensive care for chest pains, for high blood pressure, and for an increased heart rate caused by a virus (pericarditis), helped to greatly ease my fear, apprehension and loneliness.



You can't imagine how much I missed the people of Cass House. I think my abrupt removal from the House caused me to recover all the more quickly--to come back. Overall, my stay in the hospital made me realize how much I am loved and that the little things I do in our peaceless, violent, and uncaring world make a difference. I really saw the difference when a young poor black couple from our neighborhood came to visit me at the hospital. Roy and Liz's presence made all the difference in the world to me. In spite of their struggle to make it in this harsh world which hasn't given them much of a chance, they still have the courage to reach out and think of others. Thank you for your love and concern.

When I first thought about St. Patrick's Day falling in Lent, it seemed ironic that at such a time of self-denial there could be such an exuberant celebration. Yet it makes more sense to me. Lent is not only a time for soul searching, penance, and self-denial, but it's a time for enjoying and becoming aware of the simple pleasures of life. Lent indeed calls us to moderation, healthiness, and wholeness.

**REMEMBRANCE
IS THAT WHICH MAKES
THE UNFINISHED
FINISHED
AND THE FINISHED
UNFINISHED**
DOROTHY SOELLE

Zack, a long-standing member of Cass House, is irritated by the occasionally-applied appellation of "the mayor of Cass House."

Karen House Catholic Worker 314.621.4052 www.karenhousecw.org 1840 Hogan St. Louis, MO 63106

Speaking of celebration, I couldn't fail to mention our joy and happiness for Mike McIntyre and Janet Gray McKennis, staff members of Karen House and Cass House respectively, who were married on March 4. On behalf of Mike and Janet, I would like to thank all of you who made this special day such a celebration of joy, friendship and love. Who would have imagined that a pot-luck wedding reception would have been so exquisite? May God bless you, Mike and Janet, as you start your new life together living at Cass House. And may God bless your work with our guests, who are the reason we struggle to live the Gospel when it causes us so much pain and hardship.

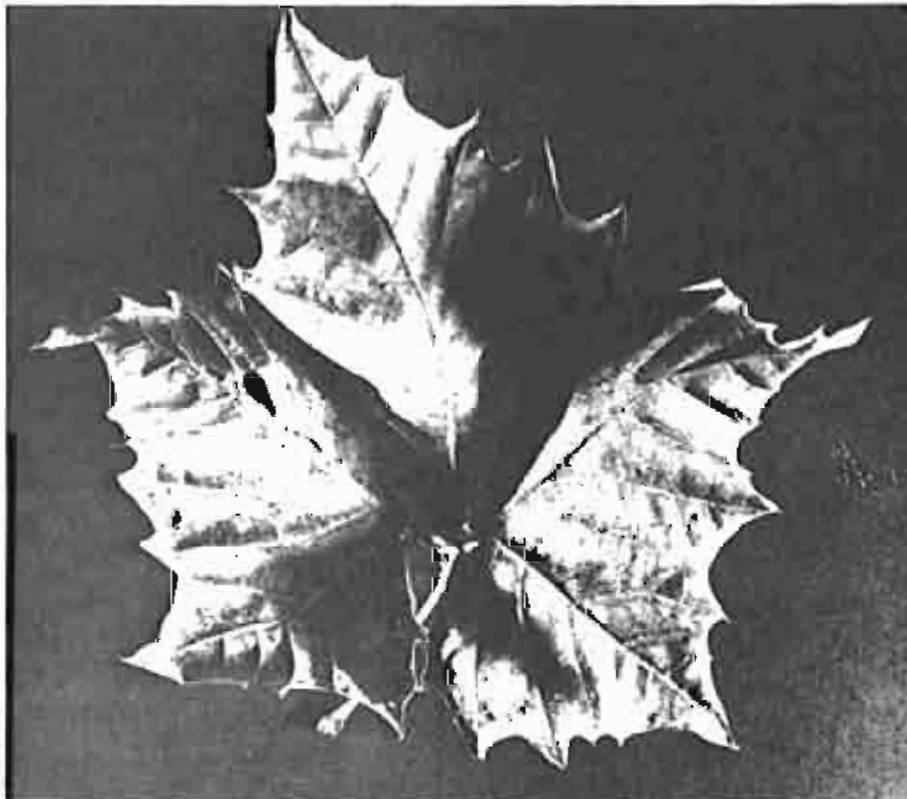
Now that I have rambled on about Lent and celebrations, I have a few thank-yous still to make. As you might know or you might have seen, our staff has become very much tired and worn-out. Still we struggle to meet the needs of our guests. However, our efforts have been made much easier by the help of our two newest live-in volunteers, Bob Rohr and Tommy Askew. What I most appreciate about Bob is his hard work around the house doing maintenance chores. Without his efforts, I would

be more harried and the house wouldn't be as bright, functional and clean. His constant yes to doing the "dirty work" around has made a world of difference. And then there is our gentle giant, Tommy. What I most appreciate about him is his gentle care and concern for our guests. His patience and understanding is overwhelming. Thanks for calling me to do the same.

Finally, I would like to welcome Joy Cunningham to our community. She will be helping us to continue the work of Dorothy Day. Thanks to all the students of St. Norbert's College and St. Benedict's College who continue to support our efforts in helping around the house at Christmas and Easter time.

May God bless all of you during this Holy Season of Lent...and may you be sensitive to the goodness of life around you through self-denial and through celebration.

P.S.--Cass House is in desperate need of a truck for picking up large donations. We have about \$2500 to spend from a house car that was totaled in an accident. If you have a lead please let me know. 



John Glaser

From Karen House

by Ann Manganaro, S.L.



Right now I am sitting in front of a delightful fire at "the Ambrusters," listening to the late-March wind as it rumbles across the tin roof and squeaks through the porch swing. "Ambrusters" referring both to the place - a wonderful house in the country built on a hill - and to the family who so generously make that place available to so many. Even before our official beginnings the Catholic Workers in Saint Louis enjoyed that gracious hospitality at one of our planning meetings. And over the years many of us have spent time here for retreats, meetings, vacations. Only a few weeks ago Michael and Janet came here for their honeymoon, after a wonderful wedding on March 4 with most of the Cass and Karen and Ella Dixon Houses' communities, and many of our guests as well, in attendance.

It is hard to believe, sitting before this fire and hearing the wind roar all around me, that I am writing this article for the spring issue of The Round Table. We at Karen House have been struggling with the dregs-of-winter doldrums, made all the more bitter by the memory of a few bright, and all too brief, warm days in February. Surely it will be warm again soon, we hope, and we will be able to take down the plastic from our windows and put away our blankets and mittens and long underwear. Surely soon, but, alas, not yet.

While we wait for warm weather and the spring sunlight, our days are brightened by our home's smallest inhabitants. We have been blessed to have three charming toddlers sharing our home recently. David is the eldest of the three at 22 months, here with his mother through the end of her pregnancy (he now has a new baby sister). He is a congenial child, cheerful and outspoken in a language all his own and nonetheless very communicative. Cassie, 14 months, is here with her mother and four other siblings. Her great joy in movement itself

propels her down our halls at break-neck speed. With rings in her ears, if not on her fingers, and bells on her toes, tied to her shoelaces, she is an endlessly heart-lifting sight and sound of hope and joy. And Myrrah, 13 months, just recently joined the ranks here of the true toddlers, having started to walk independently only a week or so ago. Myrrah and her mother Alycia have lived with us since shortly after Myrrah's birth, so her every new sound and step and gesture are true milestones celebrated by our whole community.

So if we have survived another winter together at least part of the credit goes to those little ones, whose laughter and unabashed liveliness warm our days as surely as this fire is now warming my toes. Their presence is part of the hundredfold of life at Karen House, that hundredfold which manages to shine through despite all our frailties and failures.

Now winter's rains and ruins are over
And all the seasons of snows and sins,
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins.
And time remembered is grief forgotten.
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten.
And in green under wood and cover,
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

(C. A. Swinburne)



A LETTER...



Mary McElroy

Dear editors,

Thank you for the stimulating and challenging issue on tax resistance.

I have been puzzling over the parable that opens the issue, a reflection by John Schuchardt about who is "neighbor" to the villagers suffering and dying from U.S. bombs purchased by U.S. taxpayers. I agree with Schuchardt's analysis that the atheist who refused to pay taxes, and continues to do so for conscience's sake, is the true "neighbor". Somehow, though, I feel like my own (Catholic) faith has been let off the hook, shortchanged, and cheapened. I would prefer another ending to the parable: "Now a woman in her thirties, a convert to Catholicism, her heart open to Christ's poor and her mind set on the Sermon on the Mount, refused to pay war taxes and spent her life challenging the Church to live out its faith in daily life. She continually reminded bishops and lay people alike that love of God meant love of the poor and even love of one's enemies."

Occasionally I worry that we neglect the value of the Church's teachings, the sacraments, and the witness of the saints to focus on "right action, right now" without the underlying foundation to carry us through.

This is not to say that the Church is a shining example of nonpayment of war taxes, for it clearly is not. But the Church needs to be converted here by people who see the richness and authenticity of the Gospels and the desire to challenge the Church to be true to itself.

When we drop "Catholic"
from the "Catholic Left"
We're left with something
that won't last.

I am beginning to see that the Church has much to offer in helping us lead lives of holiness, justice and mercy, even though there are huge areas within the Church that need conversion. I hope that we can use the richness of the Church for our own lives and challenge it to be truer to its own vocation, so that someday we Catholics can say that our faith and our Church led us to be "neighbor" to the villagers threatened, suffering, and dying from U.S. bombs bought by U.S. taxpayers.

Sincerely,
Bill Miller

(Bill Miller is a frequent contributor to
The Round Table - ed.)

March 20, 1984

Dear friends,

We at the Catholic Worker are eager to share our experiences, our witness, and our tradition with others. If you are part of or know of a group which would or should be interested in finding out about our work and our life, get in touch with us (621-4052: Karen House, 621-3085: Cass House) and work with us on setting up a speaking engagement.

SPRING FUND APPEAL

As I write the balance in our bank account stands at about \$5500. Expenses for April will easily exceed \$7000. In practical terms, this means that we will be able to meet expenses for April, but that donations must increase substantially for us to make it through May. By the time you receive this issue of The Round Table, our need will be pressing. As always, we count on God's grace working through your generosity to keep our work going.

KAREN HOUSE NEEDS CAR

It seems that our needs sometimes come in droves. Karen House's two cars are both on their last legs; after months of usually having one or the other of them in the shop, it is now not unusual to find that both are in need of immediate repair. Our meager funds do not permit us to purchase even a sound used car. If you have or know of a car that can be donated or sold at a sacrificial price, please contact us at 621-4052.

Pax,



Michael McIntyre
for the St. Louis Catholic
Worker Community

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to: Virginia Druhe, 1849 Cass Ave., 63106. People working on this issue include: Harriette Lane Baggett, Clare Bussjaeger, Teka Childress, Patrick Coy, Virginia Druhe, Chuck Keene, Mike McIntyre, Ellen Rehg, and Mark Scheu. Letters to the editors are welcomed.

St. Louis Catholic Worker News

the ROUND TABLE

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