

THE Round Table

Spring
1988

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



AND JESUS SAID, "I AM THE RESURRECTION. ALL
WHO BELIEVE IN ME, THOUGH THEY DIE, WILL LIVE."

Why This Issue?



Why this issue indeed! Is not resurrection the linchpin of Christian faith — the validating sign that God's love redeems a sinful humanity and transcends even death? Sin and death are inextricable. Death is the consequence of sin, of a willful humanity that turned away from life to chose death in all its alluring disguises. We expend so much energy in attempts to recover what was lost in this transaction, but are usually unwillingly to pay the price, to surrender our willfulness and follow Jesus. Our culture offers us countless avenues to escape death by denying its reality, through power and revenge, avarice and wealth, self-indulgence and sensuality. Yet our every effort to escape death removes us further from true life and makes death all the more certain.

There was one who, although not spared death, was raised to new life — Jesus the Christ. He was resurrected because during his life on earth he unwaveringly chose to live compassionately and to deny death in all its manifestations, thereby becoming the source of life for us all. The death and resurrection of Jesus and the hope of rising in union with him are the Christian answers to the irrational inevitability of death. "Anyone who wants to save their life will lose it; but anyone who loses their life for my sake, will save it." We are invited to unite ourselves with Jesus in his life and death, and thus to give our own life and death a redeeming value.

In this issue Virginia Druhe argues that resurrection cannot be separated from its communal context. Dennis Kennedy reflects on how resurrection has been interpreted in the church over the centuries. Jim Krings recounts how his battle with a life-threatening disease has enlightened his way of life. Dorothy Armbruster admirably performs the mandatory task of drawing the experiential analogy between resurrection and the onset of spring. After our house articles Sr. Carol Donahue explains her commitment to the neighborhood land trust.

We hope and pray that this issue sheds light on the dormant buds ready to sprout within your soul. +

by Mark Scheu

Cover drawing by
LARRY NOLTE for
The Round Table

WE ARE NOT TAX EXEMPT

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Gifts to our work are not tax-deductible. As a community, we have never sought tax-exempt status since we are convinced that justice and the works of mercy should be acts of conscience which come at a personal sacrifice, without governmental approval, regulation or reward. We believe it would be a misuse of our limited resources of time and personnel (as well as a violation of our understanding of the meaning of community) to create the organizational structure required, and to maintain the paper-work necessary for obtaining tax-deductible status. Also, since much of what we do might be considered "political," in the sense that we strive to question, challenge and confront our present society and many of its structures and values, some would deem us technically ineligible for tax-deductible, charitable status.

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A THEOLOGY OF RESURRECTION

by Virginia Druhe

The resurrection of the crucified Jesus is the central tenet of our Christian faith. Yet Jesus did not come proclaiming resurrection. He preached the establishment of the Reign of God on earth, a time of liberation and resurrection of humanity in God, a radically new time in history. The resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate sign of this definitive triumph over death and evil.

The paradox to our post-industrial ears is that while the salvation offered to us in the death and resurrection of Jesus is intensely personal, it is not individual. In the Old and New testaments the call to individual salvation is nonexistent. The call is to individual faithfulness for the sake of salvation of the whole people of God.

I believe we miss the deepest meaning of the resurrection when we separate it from this communal context. The resurrection is not for us as individuals, but for the sake of the building up of a people of God, of establishing the Reign of God on earth. The call to participate in that great mission is intensely personal — the people of God is formed and led in deeply personal ways — but the call is not "individual."

There is a stunning consistency in this theme throughout the Old and New Testaments. Even in the formation of a people separated from God, in the story of Eve and Adam, we see this dynamic. Two people, in their faithlessness, are not punished as individuals, but become parents of a

whole people who suffer the consequences of their choice. There is a cosmic rupturing: humanity is separated from God while man is set against woman and nature against humanity, and death enters the world (Gen 3:16-19).

From the very beginning of the covenant with Sara and Abraham the call is not to individual salvation. The call they receive is to journey far from all they know so that a new and holy people may be formed by God (Gen 12:1-3). Likewise, Moses, Aaron and Miriam are called to a new and profoundly personal relationship with God, but not so that they themselves, or they alone, would reach the promised land. Their personal relationship with God was for the sake of creating a free people so that God could draw near to them by establishing justice (Ex 3:7-10).

The experiences of the chosen people during the time of the Judges, the kingship of David, and the fall and exile of the kingdoms led them to expect that their restoration as a holy people, their liberation into holiness, would be expressed to them through the faithfulness of one person among them. Through times of sorrow and failure some precious lessons were learned. The prophets taught that this saving person, this messiah, brings joy (Is 9:1-3) to the people by ending sinful oppression (Is 9:7); that the chosen of God comes from the least of this world (Mic 5:2); that indeed, this restoration of full relationship to God on earth was not only for Israel, but through

Virginia Druhe, Karen House member, has settled into a pattern of alternating her stays here with visits to Central America. She leaves for Nicaragua again in August.



"The resurrection is not for us as individuals but for the sake of the building up of a people of God."

Israel for all peoples, to the ends of the earth. The one who goes before us to establish this worldwide peace and economic security (Mic 4:1-4) will do so by passing through a time of great suffering and rejection (Is 50:4-9), but whose victory will be so thorough as to restore justice among peoples and even harmony between humanity and nature (Is 65:17-25).

Gradually, wondrously, the recognition grows that this restoration comes at the price of the death of the individual chosen (Is 53:1-12). Yet for the righteous person death does not mean separation from God, but new life, resurrection in a restored community (Is 35:9-10; 26:14-19).

This intensely communal and deeply personal, yet entirely "non-individual" experience of God's saving work was given to Jesus through his Jewish heritage, thanks be to God, and is given to us in the life of the church, the people created by the death and resurrection of Jesus, if we will receive it.

Time and again Jesus promises us the good news that fullness of life in God, forgiveness of sin — the Reign of God — is "at hand." Jesus performs this saving

work by living with the least (Mt 9:35-37), by re-establishing a community of justice among the oppressed (the sick, the alien, women, sinners), and by suffering persecution and finally death for the sake of righteousness. He is "raised up" to a new and radically transformed life, first born among us into the life to which we are all called (Jn 2; Cor 5:17; Jn 5:24).

The early church clearly saw itself as a people of God formed by this saving act of Jesus (Eph 4:7-12; Jn 10:14-18). It is a community in which we participate through forgiveness (Col 2:13) and which is for all peoples (1 Cor 15:20-23). A salvation which frees not only us, but all creation from its bondage (Rom 8:8-15; Rev 21:1-5). The church is understood as the people which participates in Christ's suffering through concrete works of service to the oppressed (1 Jn 4:20; Mt 25:31-46), which through suffering reaches its glory.

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received of adoption...the Spirit of God testifies in our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we

are children we are heirs -- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.
(Rom 8:15-17)

I have seen the living out of this passing through suffering to glory most powerfully in the lives of those who have confronted the sin of deliberate evil in torture and martyrdom, yet have remained people of love, of faith, of unshakable hope; and always people who from then on live for the whole body of humanity.

As Christians I believe we have much to learn, for example, from the words of Tomas Borge, a Nicaraguan agnostic:

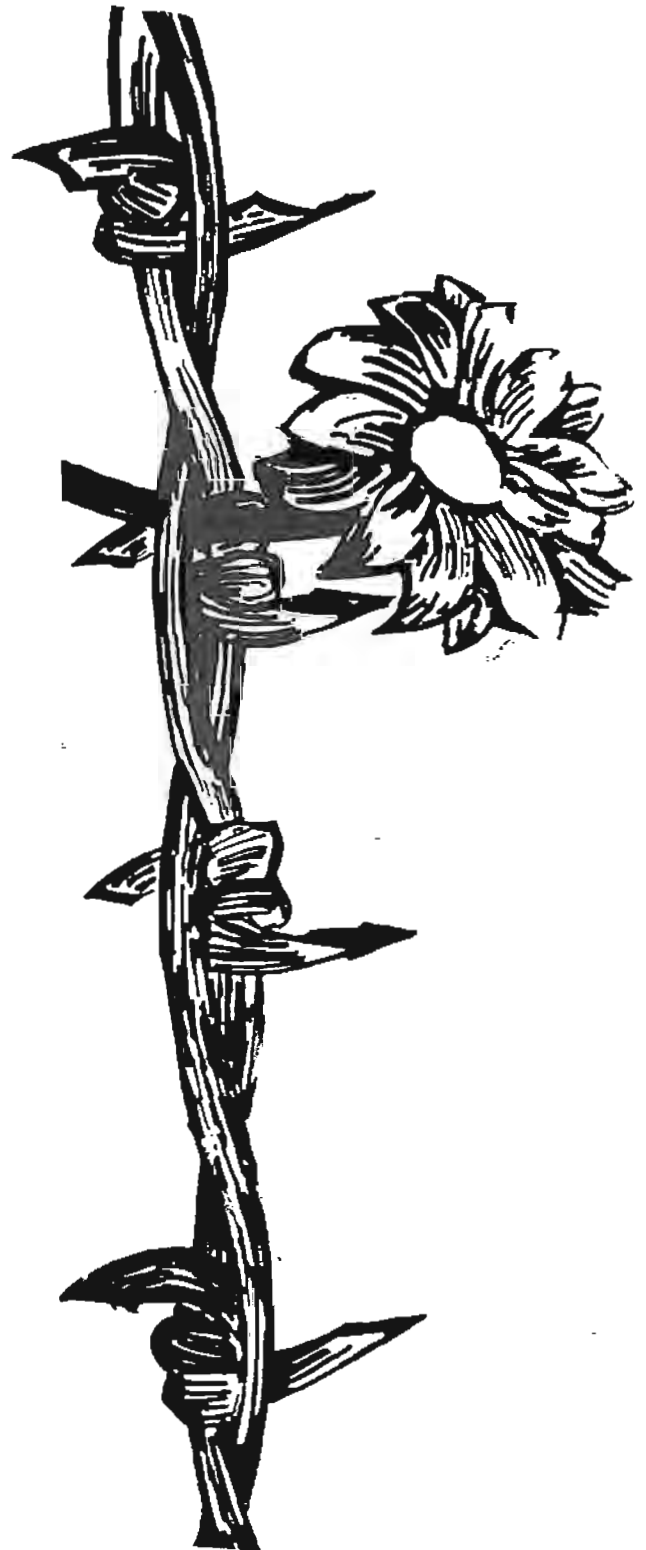
It would seem there would be a strong contradiction between poverty and happiness,...but we Nicaraguans today have the honor of paying the price of tomorrow's happiness, this happiness that costs blood. Solidarity should bear in mind this happiness and this poverty.

And so it is that some people of faith in the U.S. see Ben Linder's death at the hands of the Contra as a sign to us, a death that gives life by assuring us that a deep and true communion of peoples has been formed between North and Central America. We have, in Ben Linder, been found worthy to share in their suffering to the point of death.

Sheila Cassidy, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Carrietea Boom and many others have shared with us their experience of passing through torture to a profoundly new life. Yet the words of a Salvadoran peasant woman at Panchimilama say it as well as anyone can:

They killed my husband, then my sister and only brother. I don't like to remember because it is so painful. It feels like a hole inside that can never be filled.

When you suffer you become strong. But coming together with others is the only way to overcome suffering. I seek community. I always wanted to live in a community with guitars. Even though I am an old woman, I still need to sing. I'm not willing to let sadness consume me. I won't become crazy to my children. I'll sing. ✱



Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

-- Isaiah 26:19

FROM AN EMPTY TOMB TO THE END OF TIME: RESURRECTION IN THE CHURCH TRADITION

by Dennis Kennedy, CM

The great stone was rolled back, the soldiers were fleeing in stunned disarray, the winding cloth was flung off, and the funeral spices the women had brought were, it appeared, preempted. When they looked inside, they saw nobody they had expected. The young man in white was the wrong young man, giving them confusing messages to take back to their (and his) friends: "He is not here...he is raised up...why search for the living among the dead...he is going ahead of you to Galilee." So begins in excitement and fearful confusion the church's communal experience of the resurrection of Jesus.

People who read carefully the end of each of the four Gospels eventually come to realize there is something missing — we have no account of the resurrection! Just its aftermath, or consequence remains: a rather cryptic crypt with no one home. The ending in Mark, usually considered the Gospel written earliest, is especially daring and wondrous. Scholars believe the original ending to Mark is at 16:8, which means that after the "young man" instructs the women to go tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus has gone ahead of them, "they made their way out and fled from the tomb bewildered and trembling; and because of their great fear, they said nothing to anyone." Boom! The End. Could this have been Mark warning his fledgling community that fear of persecution and notoriety must not deter them from speaking gospel truth? Makes sense, but still — what an ending!

But to say there is no scriptural

account of resurrection does not deny the truth of the appearances, which are numerous and touchingly human. Jesus assures his own that he is no ghost: he prepares them a seaside breakfast; he confronts a properly bashful Peter; always he is wishing Peace. Luke gives us the profound "Road to Emmaus" account, which still entices us to play a role, to walk along, to invite him to tarry for dinner, to have our eyes pop open when he prays his distinctive prayer over the bread, to stare in astonishment after he vanishes, to repeat the breathless dash back to the upper room, to burst in panting only to be greeted with "The Lord is raised! It's true! He has appeared to Simon." Then we get to tell our story.

Someone who encountered the Risen One under quite different circumstances was Saul of Tarsus. Converted to Christianity and the name Paul after his dramatic encounter on the road to Damascus, his accounts and reflections even pre-date the authorship of the Gospels, his letters being composed less than twenty years after the resurrection. The guts of Paul's preaching will flow from his own conversion encounter, a meeting with the Risen Christ he recounts four times in his various letters.

Paul's vision was no mere psychedelic slide show — he equates his apparition with that of the other disciples in Jerusalem. Paul admits he can't figure how it happened, or even explain exactly what did happen; all he knows is that his encounter with Jesus-after-death is the

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reason he can claim to be an apostle. Much of our Biblical reflection on the resurrection is done by Paul, and he is a master at it.

Paul understands that it is the Father who has snatched Jesus up from death, and this resurrection has given Jesus a new life coming from the source of all life. Especially significant and equally lovely is the hymn in Philippians 2 which Paul borrows from the liturgy of the day: "Though Jesus was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be clung to. Rather, he took upon himself the form of a slave, and it is for this reason that every knee must bend and every tongue proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The paean has much theological significance, as it reveals the redemption of humankind as the work of the God (the Father), offered to us through our participation in the resurrection of Jesus.

So redemption is given to us by both death and resurrection together; a total emphasis on one without acknowledging the weight of the other throws our theological balance out of whack. This will happen

often enough throughout the church's history. The Middle Ages with the heavy emphasis on death and suffering, especially after the terrible Black Death, will skew our piety and perception toward a depressing darkness. A case can also be made that the bright light of the Second Vatican Council magnified our pre-conciliar triumphalism into a denial of any darkness, so that sin and suffering were lost from our theological vocabulary.

Before leaving Paul for other early writers, we best see the connection he makes between the resurrection of Jesus and our own. We do have some stake in this story, after all. Paul uses Christ's resurrection as the basis for belief in our own resurrection. Our own lives and our own deaths would be meaningless without the life and death of Jesus. All is lost without it. Indeed, our baptism and communion is the entrance into the very life and death of Jesus.

*"Redemption is
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together."*

This concept of the Paschal Mystery, that our own life and death have immense meaning because by our baptism we have entered into the story of Jesus continuing to live on earth, is the central theme of the first five or so centuries of the church in its liturgical theology. It is the liturgical meaning the Second Vatican Council restored to us and which unfortunately neither the Protestant reformers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries nor the Catholic counter-reformers of the seventeenth century had any access to. It makes all the difference, because it

provides a way for us to be in continuity with the Jesus story and the scriptures that is vital and exciting.

Theology in the time of the early church was not something studied in books, it was a Way of life. Conversion to Christianity meant a change in behavior, in patterns and systems of living, quite possibly in one's work. At such times a Christian could not be a teacher in the school system or a soldier in an armed force — both required an oath to the emperor, which acknowledged him as god. No way a Christian could do that. After baptism and a splendid Easter Vigil the Christian grew into a community of believers in the resurrection by rubbing up



BEHOLD THY KING COMES TO THEE
— MEEK AND SITTING UPON AN ASS —

against their lives, finding what makes them tick, and walking down the road with them. A change of mind and of heart was required while one slowly and inexorably became part of the Body of Christ alive on earth. One's flesh became Saving Flesh for the life of the world. The Christian is absorbed cell-like into the church, the Body of Christ dead and risen to life again.

This concept is central to the Paschal Mystery and therefore to an understanding of the meaning of the resurrection throughout the life of the church. In baptism and by our recurring eucharistic participation we have said Amen to being part of the Body of Christ. Jesus is absent. The human with his name lived his life fully, suffered, and was crushed by the state to death. But God did not let the Jesus story end there. Jesus passed through death to some sort of new life, appeared to his disciples, eventually went home to God at what we call the Ascension, and sent the Spirit among us. So Jesus Christ is now alive in his church, and we are as real as Jesus Christ is going to get on this earth

until he comes again. If Jesus existed now as he did 2000 years ago, walking the dusty streets of Palestine — then what are you doing reading this magazine, you should get out there and find him! But he doesn't exist that way today, he has risen among his people, and we therefore have the capacity to see the world as Jesus saw it, to live as Jesus lived, to love as Jesus loved. This is why we celebrate and what we proclaim every Sunday morning. His story has become our story.

St. Thomas Aquinas in the High Middle Ages will interpret this with equal vigor. Because of the resurrection those of us who are believers have a new ethical situation. We have been freed from earthly law, whether it be the explicit demands of the Jewish legal religion or any unjust demands of a repressive state. We are now subject to the source of all law, the Spirit of the risen Christ. Our moral behavior extends through the earthly members so as to transform the earth, even nature itself, wonderously and mysteriously into the realm of God. This prepares the world for the final resurrection, when full charity, communion and total death to selfishness are attained. The law of Christ is not externally imposed like the Mosaic law, but is written on our hearts. Since the resurrection has unleashed in us the Holy Spirit, we can act with the love and power of God. Thomas believes this will go on forever, and that therefore the soul is immortal. All of this is pure gift. Salvation has come to us by grace alone, no merit or work of ours has earned it. Our entrance into the resurrection of Jesus through the sacraments is our liberation from death itself. Thus as I once heard a preacher say: "On the day of your baptism you were as dead as you're gonna get!" Thomas taught that after death the human person would be immortal and incorruptible, yet still animal — in other words, still ourselves. All we are left to do with this amazing grace is to respond to God's generosity and start living like we are capable of living. As the CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA states: "(Our) work is to consent, with Christ in His death, to the saving gift of God."

The Reformation, Trent, and all the battles in between and since have not really diminished or obscured the beauty and excellence of the teaching of the Paschal Mystery. In the twentieth century further insights on the stages and process

of dying have opened new areas for pastoral reflection and application of the church's understanding.

Finally, there is a strain of beliefs that only rarely arises in Christian experience and that touches on the resurrection. As a matter of fact, the issue arises literally every thousand years: "Millennialism."

Millennia are a thousand years. We have a millennium fast approaching, and if it's anything like the last one, watch out! Already some of the more extreme TV preachers are sounding the chords: beware, watch out, the end is near. In Revelations 20:1-10 the devil is restrained for a thousand year period. Released, the devil will gather followers and destroy by fire the holy city. All the dead are raised and there is a general judgement. Some claim that the "just" will be spared death and simply "pass over" into heaven. People at the end of the first millennium went absolutely bonkers over this passage and created all manner of havoc. I'll bet you a pair of Cardinal tickets it will happen again. Fundamentalists and right-wing preachers will wring every drop of interpretation out of these passages, and justify anything with them, because they are the "just," and all's fair.

Clearly the excited imagination of the author of Revelations is not in harmony with the rest of the New Testament about resurrection, and caution must be exercised in the interpretation of the book's symbolic content. Counsel the ones running up to you to take a few hours before the millennium to read the whole New Testament and then return to talk about what else is found there. Are other signs of God's reign being met besides the one found on a calendar, such as: are the poor's needs being met, the hungry fed, the peace of God promoted? If not, get started; if so, give thanks to God for the small part we take.

I suspect the Second Coming will come as a thief in the night, and it may very well come in a way totally unexpected or prepared for. Catherine de Vinck expressed her feelings about resurrection in this poem:

Something free is being born;
if you look
through the dull shine of time,
through the glass misted over
by centuries of rain,
you will know: this man is gone



Illustration by Elihu Carranza

who was carried deep in to the rock.
He is walking in the blue morning,
cracking death, that word of stone,
between the wheels of his hands.
He walks masterless in a world
where people move by bullwhip
—the fine tip barely touching the skin,
but the threat real and pressing.

Take the bread, he says,
eat yourself full of life...
And drink deep, beloved,
drink to sleep and to waking
in the blue morning
where I walk
masterless, free.
Come with me. +

THREATENED WITH RESURRECTION

What won't let us sleep
What won't let us rest
What won't stop pulsing away
here within—
is the silent warm weeping
of the Indian women without
their husbands,
the tragic gaze of the children
engraved deep down in our
memory,
in the very child that our eyes,
though closed in sleep, keep
watching
in every contraction of the heart,
in every expansion of the heart,
at every dawn...

What won't let us sleep
is that we've been threatened
with Resurrection!

We've been threatened with
Resurrection
because we've touched their
lifeless bodies and their souls
have penetrated our own,
now doubly strengthened...

Be with us in this vigil
and you'll learn what it means to
dream
you'll know then
how wonderful it is
to live threatened with
Resurrection!

To dream, awake
to watch, asleep
to live, dying
and to know yourself already
Risen!

— Julia Esquivel



I AM ALIVE FOR

To be alive is to be vulnerable. To be born is to start the journey towards death....I am mortal, flawed, trapped in my own skin, my own barely-used brain. I do not understand this death, but I am learning to trust it. Only through this death can come the glory of resurrection; only through death can come birth.

And I cannot do it myself. It is not easy to think of any kind of death as a gift, but it is prefigured for us in the mighty acts of Creation and Incarnation; in Crucifixion and Resurrection.

— Madeleine L'Engle



Never did Paul or Peter or Stephen point to an empty tomb as evidence of the resurrection. The evidence was the spirit-filled fellowship.

— Clarence Jordan

If we die we will also rise. Death on the cross brings resurrection! Do we see the cross as a source of life or as a source of pain? Do we seek to embrace it out of love, or do we run from it out of fear? Are we willing to embrace it willingly so that others might be raised to new life? If we do not see the miraculous healings of the Spirit active in and through our life, perhaps it is because we do not actively embrace the cross. If we are not at rest and peace, perhaps it is because we have not died.

— John Michael Talbot

EVERMORE

Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose you life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.

— C.S. Lewis

Christ rose from the dead and showed himself to his mother and disciples and to all to show that we too shall come alive in the Spirit and that is where we truly dwell. In our soul and spirit the spark of God Himself lives. This is where we truly live and have our personality, our memory, and most importantly our love.

— Shannon Olson (Karen House guest)

Spring to me is watching the flowers bloom and the baby birds grow up to be adults. Just watching nature take it course with everything and everyone.

— Stephanie (guest at Karen House)

JUGGLING WITH GOD

by Jim Krings

For many years I have been giving myself a Christmas present, some special treat just for my own delight. My gift to myself this Christmas was a juggling kit complete with three bright balls and an instruction book. When I described my treasure to a friend, she said, "How fitting." Indeed, how fitting that I give myself a juggling kit at the end of a year in which I have tried to learn to juggle so many things. I have experienced cancer, treatment, healing, relapse, and further healing. I have known optimism and confidence as well as fear and discouragement. I have had to juggle my commitments: to my St. Louis roots and to the life I had begun to make in Washington; to God and the Church as a priest, and to personal needs and interests. Indeed, it occurs to me that juggling is a most apt image for describing all human living and our intersection with the mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Juggling involves many things. Each ball has its own weight, shape, and size; each then needs to be brought into a rhythmic interaction with the others. Juggling consists of the continual movement and ever changing flow of these components even as there is an underlying constancy holding the whole process together. Learning to juggle requires patience and time as well as accurate instructions from those who preserve the juggling tradition. Finally, each step, however well mastered, continues to require the same careful attentiveness as when it was first learned, no step ever becoming automatic.

Living with a life-threatening illness has provided several realities for juggling.

First of all, I try to make sense of my being alive in the face of the deaths of other good friends. Like me, each followed the appropriate medical procedures, each exhibited a positive and prayerful outlook, and each had the help of loving support systems. So, why am I alive and they are not? Further, I recall the many times when, despite my hope and the prayerful care of others, I could only wait day after day for the medications to be able to do — or prevent — the things my healing required.

There was a Sunday morning in October when my chemotherapy had lowered my blood counts so dangerously that I had spent much of the previous day in a hospital emergency room. My doctors believed that my counts were beginning to rise. However, because the process could not be hastened and a life-threatening infection was possible, I would have to live in virtual isolation for several days, all my plans subservient to my illness. As I knelt on



Jim Krings was weekly cook and celebrant at Cass House for years. He is now using all he learned as a patient to serve as a hospital chaplain, which unfortunately leaves little time for cooking.

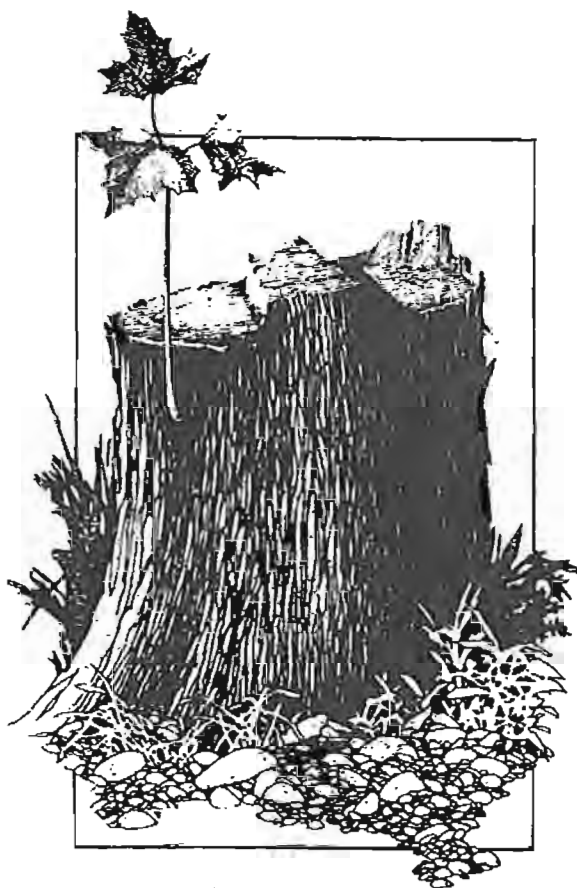
my prayer stool that Sunday morning, I was aware of doing everything possible in the way of prayer, medication, hope, and others' care. However, I also realized that there were aspects of my healing that were more under the influence of my bone marrow than my own conscious control. In that moment, something new happened: in doing the things that I could, I found myself confident and free about living with the things that I couldn't change. Indeed, my counts did return to safer levels. Beyond my conscious control they were being restored in those very moments when I wanted them to be but couldn't consciously make them so.

Juggling then is accepting responsibility for cooperating in my healing and relinquishing those factors which remain beyond my conscious control. I am accountable for doing everything I can to enable my healing process to occur. I must consult about and understand my diagnosis and treatment. I am responsible for taking my medications and for the diet and exercise to maximize their intended effects and minimize their side effects. I am to choose the prayer, community, and relationships that convey healing energy to me. At the same time, I have been learning to juggle in and include those elements of healing over which I do not exercise authority. I discover new life in learning to live positively with all those components that are out of my control, things like the nature of a tumor or a medication's organic side effects. In fact, I have come to believe that the juggling of responsibility and "uncontrol" is at the heart of all human living, all relationships, all good religion. We must be trying to choose appropriately in all areas of life over which we exercise control at the same time that we are learning to live receptively with those life components over which we do not have the conscious control or influence we'd like to imagine.

Jesus' death and resurrection are composed of similar dimensions although the element of uncontrol is seldom noted, despite credal statements that conspicuously include it. The Passion narratives describe Jesus' death in terms of his choices to be faithful to God's reign even amid the dynamics of political and religious violence that arose in response to his life and teaching. Nevertheless, there is also a component in this death that was beyond his conscious control, namely, his

need to be buried.

Jesus' burial is part of his saving work according to credal statements extending as far back as the Scriptures, e.g., 1 Cor. 15:3-4; yet, it is an action beyond his conscious control. Furthermore, the Gospel texts that typically describe Jesus' departure from the tomb and new life speak of him as "being raised" rather than as raising himself (Mark 16:6 and parallels). I wonder if our neglect of these burial and resurrection texts is not somehow rooted in our reluctance to admit life's basic uncontrollability and our



preference for reducing life's mystery to something manageable.

Finally, there is the question of how our cooperation, that of praying people, operates. Are people's prayers effective and healing? Is prayer simply an encouragement to like-minded people? Are there energies into which people can tap and connect through prayer? Are those tapped energies then able to alter our destinies, our capacities to choose about our destinies? What then of Jesus? Is Jesus an exemplar or does he actually save? Has he altered human history? Has Jesus altered

my history?

I return to my juggling, for although my "answer" feels fairly unsatisfactory it is the only one to express what truth I have found. In my healing-support system there have been pockets of praying people sharing and cooperating in my healing. They operate from different theologies, all of which converge in grace. However, while various faith traditions have empowered my healing, I have also had the experience of being touched and led by Jesus. Not altering me or my body apart from the usual ways people heal, Jesus has shaped and healed me personally nonetheless. Jesus is that "out of control" component operative within me, guiding me into the reality of belonging to God.

The juggling continues when I notice how unchanged and sinfully flawed I remain despite this healing. It becomes even more problematic as I notice how little the world resembles what I think it should were Jesus to have had the impact that I believe he should have had. It reminds me of the original juggling act — we must do what is possible to bring about the compassion, truth, justice, and love that Jesus came for even as we try to live positively with those components of God's reign that are now personally and corporately beyond conscious control.

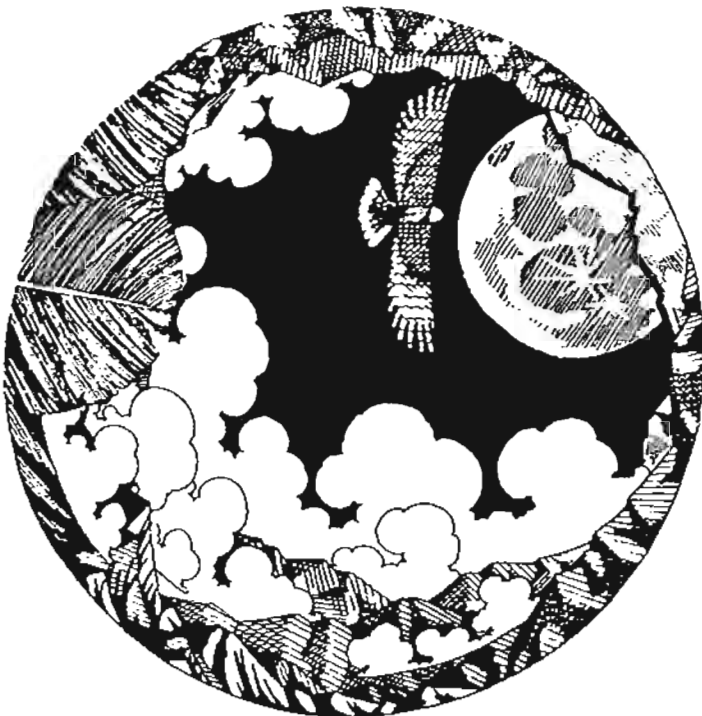
Believers in Jesus are meant to act accountably, to choose responsibly, to think, to pray, to share their vision personally and politically. However, there

is also a point at which a believer must choose to embrace the reality that the response of others to this activity is meant to remain beyond the control of the believer. Therefore, any action that tries to control another person is violence. Such coercion violates both the other's responsibility for her or his life choices and it violates that dimension of my own life wherein I am meant to be "out of control." I have always tried to believe in the dignity of human choice and the right that others have not to be coerced. Now, stretched by a life-threatening illness and by the discovery of the components of "uncontrol" in Jesus' burial and resurrection, I find an additional grace in learning to live positively with what and whom I cannot control.

So every morning I come to my prayer stool and spend a few minutes with my red, green, and blue friends, juggling and dropping them, as I prepare to seek my morning ration of God's presence. Like manna in the desert I must gather daily my opportunities both to live responsibly and to receive trustfully the components of life that are beyond my conscious control. I learn to live with all the dropped balls and I become patient, as well, with not being yet a world-class God juggler. However, if you've ever noticed, nearly all jugglers smile with pure pleasure at their craft. There is a purity of pleasure just to be juggling with God at all. +

FROM OUR MAILBAG

This issue does not have a "From Our Mailbag" page as we received little written response to our last issue on U.S.-Soviet Friendship. Let us know what you think of what you read in THE ROUND TABLE. Whether you agree or think we're crazy, find hope or lose all hope, we are interested in your responses. This is the "clarification of thought" Peter Maurin counseled us to pursue. We'll try and print as many letters as space allows.



PORTENTS OF GOD'S PRESENCE

by Dorothy Armbruster

There's a time for everything...and what a perfect time for Easter...SPRING! The dawn of each new day is a time to recall the glory of the Resurrection, but especially when it's spring.

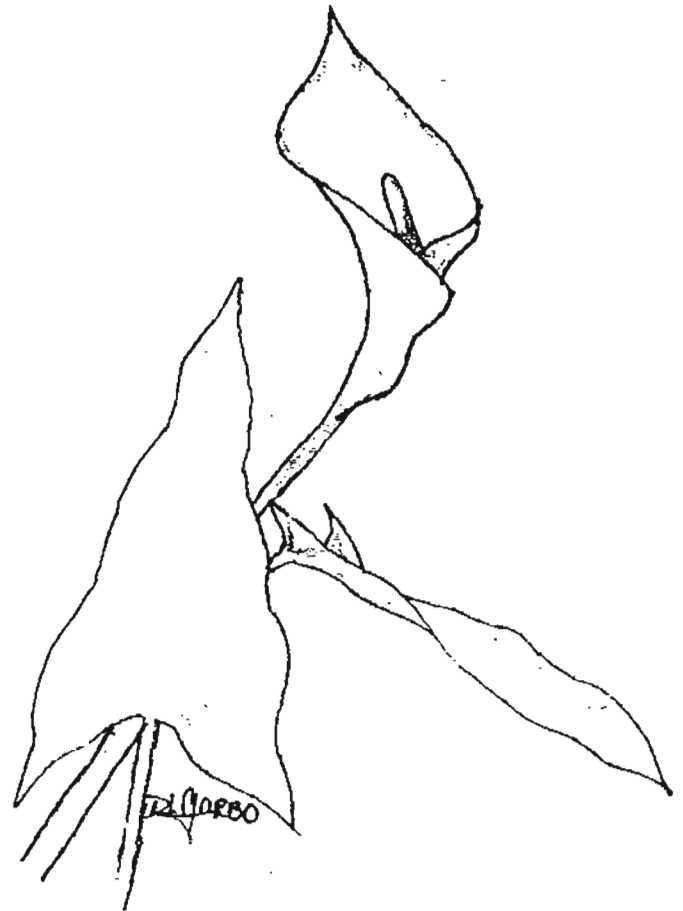
What a joyful noise, what a prayerful beginning, the sounds of the birds on an early spring morning! As I listen, I give thanks for the world of nature that God has given us. Allelulia! I want to shout, "Wake up, world...listen to the sound of music." But then, alas, I remember the many people who are not able to have this carolling to awaken them. Where do they find their hope, their spirit? I have to forcefully brush the tears from my mind. I can't solve that problem. But perhaps a worse problem is there are so many who could notice and enjoy this merriment, but who do not see and do not hear — just as those who had been close to Jesus did not at first see and know the resurrected Savior. We must be alert, must be attuned to the glories that surround us.

Sunsets are spectacular and breathtaking in their constantly changing splendor, but daybreak is more gentle. It seems to whisper us to prayer. How appropriate that the good news of Easter was disclosed when the women visited the tomb at dawn — a new day, a new life, a new understanding.

Our family is fortunate in having a place in the country. It's situated on a high spot and provides us with wonderful views. As the dawn approaches, the sky lightens and then streaks of color appear, calling us to be aware — aware of the sights, sounds, the possibilities of this new day. Cat Stevens' "Morning Is Broken" is especially appropriate to recall at this time.

This piece of property has been a special place for many people. God's presence is felt so strongly. In the winter it is often rather bleak, but never without beauty. Shades of tan, gray and brown predominate, in contrast to meadows full of daisies in June, or fields of goldenrod in September. But signs of life, the new life, the Easter life, are already there.

The bare branches of the trees seem to be reaching to the sky in prayer, and when



Dorothy Armbruster has supported the St. Louis Catholic Worker since the opening stages of Karen House. She is a participant in many peace and justice activities and mother of nine. We have known many glorious hours at the country house Dorothy mentions.

you look closely, you can see that these branches are not really bare, but are loaded with buds waiting to burst open when the time arrives -- when the entombment is at an end.

Later, when the buds have opened fully and the spring winds have picked up, the leafy branches will be swaying and giving praise, "The Lord is risen, that is true. Everybody sing, 'Allelu'."

Walking in the woods in early spring is such a thrill, so many signs of new life poking through the fallen leaves. And even in our city gardens we catch signs of crocus pushing through the ground when it's still only January. Such courageous flowers they are! They challenge us to stick out our necks, even when it might be risky to do so.

There was a time when I found fall and the the onset of winter rather depressing, like death. But no more -- now I find that season to be a reminder that constant high lacks stimulus. Nature (and we as a part of nature) needs to take time out to rest, to be quiet and to restore energy, eventually to emerge in the fullness of the glory of spring. As the leaves fall to the ground, beginning their recycling process...Look!...the bud, the new life, is already in place. Spring is on its way!

Sometimes we need to sit quietly on a balmy day, not thinking, just feeling, with the warmth of the sun and maybe a gentle breeze washing over us -- God's love caressing us. There are so many portents of God's presence in nature. I'm reminded that I was sitting in the field at that aforementioned country h(e)aven and enjoying a charming little book that contained the following (author unknown):

The boy whispered, "God, speak to me."

And a bird chirped, but the boy did not hear.

So the boy yelled, "God, speak to me."

And the thunder rolled, but still he could not hear.

And the boy looked around and said, "God, let me see you."

And a star shone, but still he did not see.

And so the boy screamed, "God, show me a miracle."

And a Child was born, but the boy did not know.

So the boy yelled, "God, touch me and let me know you are here."

So God reached down and touched the little boy, but the boy brushed the butterfly from his shoulder and walked away unknowingly.

As I finished reading it, a butterfly flew over, landing on my arm...and it sat, and sat, and sat... +

From Karen House



by Ellen Rehg

If you walk into Karen House these days, you will be welcomed by a cacophony of shrieks, wails, incoherent babblings, pounding footsteps and the repeated whammings of some object against another. No -- we have not all gone mad, yet. Train your eyes downwards about two to three feet off the ground and you will see the origins of this House "symphony," which resembles at varying moments either a dirge or an ode to joy. Quite an assortment of toddlers, babies and little children will eye you mischievously, perhaps ready to waddle with furious concentration down the hall, or perhaps poised to throw a broken piece of some toy into some forbidden area. They will await your cue, and if you smile encouragingly at them you will be immediately and enthusiastically welcomed with outreached arms into the tiny band of havoc makers. And soon you will find yourself a part of this conspiracy to make noise, as you run after them down the hall, babbling sweet incoherent sounds at them, ready to bang objects with them or sweep them up and twirl them through the air.

The children welcome us with expectant smiles and we respond, touched by their delight in us. The invitation issued to us by some of our adult guests is not always as easy to respond to; no easier maybe than the call to the people fishing in their boats to drop their nets. Although that was a once-in-a-lifetime call, we experience daily calls to stop what we are doing and attend to the word of God.

One day as I was walking to our cozy oasis upstairs, a guest came banging out of her bedroom, listening to her radio. "Lord, have mercy," she said. "Lord, have mercy," I responded. Was that a lyric to a new Madonna song? Or was she calling this sinner about to retreat from the complicated and intrusive invitation she offers? Christ have mercy. I confess that I frequently return to my nets, to cast them into the sea of my choosing.

It is like a living mass, a mass on the world, as someone once said, to live at Karen House. We are invited to share in the Body of Christ, but we constantly call to mind our sins as we hesitate to respond to the invitation. To respond to someone's need can mean helping them to shoulder the burden of their cross, and I admit, that always gives me pause!

One lesson we have learned from our guests is that while the cross is not always the final word, the resurrection doesn't occur without it. Our friend, whom I'll call Marie, lived in the streets for years but now has a stable home and adequate medical care. Who would have thought, seeing her before she received the help she needed, that she could have risen from the disorder of her former life to become like a new person? She truly created a new life for herself within the shell of the old; defeating the callousness of the streets and the dehumanization of poverty. She and many others are witnesses to the truth that God lives always in each of us and is ever ready to burst forth from hard and lifeless ground into the tender buds of hope and joy. Had we not remained friends with Marie through all these years, and she with us, we would have missed the glory of her rebirth. Although it is hard to be a part of people's struggles, we are surrounded by signs that suffering is redemptive, that

OUR NEEDS

- large upright refrigerator/freezer
 - picnic table
 - volunteers
 - help with landscaping our back yard
 - your prayers
 - money for a new roof for Karen House
-

pain, borne through to the end, leads to new life.

Of course, I don't wish to cast a romantic spiritual glow around life in a shelter. Much of our life here is very ordinary: people visiting over a cup of coffee, awaiting the birth of their children, looking for work, following up leads on apartments. Sometimes it is so ordinary that it's boring, and the most exciting thing going is the newly-waxed floors. At other times it is as if we are on the road to Emmaus and we suddenly recognize the face of Christ. For all of us here our struggle to become one in the Body of Christ is sometimes very hard, but it is our bread and wine: the bread of hard work and the wine of celebration.

We still miss our scattered community members, Ann in El Salvador, Mary in Nicaragua and Pete in Peru. We pray for them daily and ask God to bless their work. We are also going to lose Angie from the community as she leaves for various and sundry projects. We will miss her cheerful presence, her enthusiasm and her cooking! But she assures us that we have not seen the last of her. To salve our losses we have been graced with Katrina's presence in the community; we appreciate her many gifts which she shares with us. We also have been blessed with the arrival of Monsignor John Schocklee as our new pastor at St. Liborius church. We pray that his work in our neighborhood will bear abundant fruit. And we still await Clare and Joe's baby who, by the time you read this, may already be among us, another visible sign of God's new life in our midst. +

Ellen Rehg, Karen House member, returns part-time to her favorite endeavor this April as she begins as a philosophy instructor at the Metropolitan College (Saint Louis University).

From Little House

by Mary Ann McGivern



Early morning, Ash Wednesday. Every dawn is earlier, the sky is light sooner. Christmas day it was an act of faith that the day was longer than the day before; but now I can measure the light in extra minutes. By Easter, the light will wake me up. Virginia hung her wash outside yesterday and today I will do a month's accumulation of sheets and towels and blue jeans. I've begun pruning the fruit trees too. They count these nights below freezing and warm days and after thirty or so of such days and nights (each species of tree keeps its own record, has its own stringent weather requirements) the fruit buds open. Then it's too late to prune. So now the kitchen is filled with branches in jars that we're hoping we can fool, forcing them to blossom in the house.

Those are the signs of early spring in our house — morning light, laundry on the line, the need to duck tree branches whenever you open a cabinet or reach for a dish towel.

Outside, around us, the neighborhood is like the fruit trees, not ready to bloom yet. No one else has ventured forth to hang out laundry. The only people on the street are the men who collect metal and cart it to the salvage yard at the end of our block. On days it is even too cold to walk Fleetwood, there are still some men trudging along Mullanphy, pushing old grocery carts, rooting through the dumpsters for aluminum cans, tire rims, electrical cord that can be stripped for copper wire.

One old man I haven't seen since Christmas. He's a knowledgeable gardener, sixty-nine years old, thin with a huge smile and terrible teeth. He was sick in the fall, lived in an unheated house with two friends who took care of him. He grew

up on a farm in Arkansas and spent most of his life on the migrant circuit, picking fruit and vegetables in Michigan and Maine and Florida and Texas.

I finally saw another neighbor, a man who'd been shell-shocked in World War II, who is reclusive and eccentric — but who catches Fleetwood when he's escaped and has patched his house with black plastic and tar paper. He has no phone and in the bitter cold we worry about him.

Virginia spent two weeks in Salvador. She visited with Ann and translated for a delegation. The delegation visited a community of thirty displaced persons at San Juan Del Gozo. The community is surrounded by the army who deny them food or the chance to fish and who have tortured some of this small group. Just after the delegation visited the army took two members away to join the "disappeared."

Virginia came home, but she fears for them. Perhaps she'll go back to Salvador to work someday. Perhaps our neighbor Fred will let me in his house and help him bring it up to code. I hope the morning light is lifting the migrant worker's heart, wherever he is.

Selma moved out in January. She's living with her friend Debbie and is well. Stanley had another stroke and lost a little more ground, then regained it by sheer determination and his own ability to laugh. He's still at Mary Queen and Mother.

Elijah and Tom took the engine out of Elijah's Pinto and replaced the cracked oil pan. They put a thermostat in my car and fixed its gas tank leak. Maybe today Elijah will wash my car — another sign of spring.

Mary Ann McGivern cultivates not only her garden, but her other community, the Sisters of Loretto.

Round

Table

Talk

by Carol Donahue

Why do you do what you do? More specifically, why are you involved in the Community Land Trust of St. Louis?

In order to answer this question, I need to tell you who I am. I am a woman religious who is committed to the Catholic Worker way of life. My journey in faith has led me to affirm and accept as my own several values. I believe in the value of presence; I believe in the values of self-help and empowerment; and I believe in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Nine and one-half years ago when I began a one year commitment to hospitality at Cass House, I shared a vision of hospitality which called for "spending time in the neighborhood." However, with the every-day operations of a house as large as Cass it was impossible to offer any kind of personal presence outside of the house. That vision of being present to the people of the neighborhood had long been gnawing at me, and so when the Land Trust opportunity presented itself I was quite willing to "jump right in."

Early on in my involvement at Cass House I had the opportunity to attend some neighborhood meetings. At that time the brick thieves were tearing down buildings almost as fast as they became vacant. We were told to try to prevent the stealing, as there were plans for the area and we would need the empty buildings. How do you tell people who lack skills to stop doing whatever they can do to earn a living?

Employment of people from the neighborhood community has been a part of the Land Trust's program from the beginning. Furthermore, when a person has a permanent home he or she can begin to do the things that are necessary to help oneself become independent. Working with the tenants on self-help goals has been very uplifting for me.



Michael McCurdy.

Lastly, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy have always been important to me. Through the Land Trust I have experienced first-hand a genuine spirit of ministry in the love and care which Land Trust members have for one another. Members care about one another. The generosity which most members show for one another as well as for other neighbors is a source of much pride as well as joy. I do what I do because my faith and my commitment continue to be nurtured by the people within the community. +

Carol Donahue, C.P.P.S., mild mannered school secretary in the morning, wheels and deals in the fast-paced St. Louis real estate market in the after-noons.

Working For Democratic Change In Chile: A Personal Testimony

Round Table Discussion • Karen House
Sunday, April 10, 7:00 p.m.

Omar Williams Lopez has been active in the struggle for democratic change in Chile for fifteen years. He has co-founded a Chilean chapter of Servicio Paz y Justicia (SERPAJ), a network of organizations working for nonviolent social change, has worked with indigenous peoples to protect their water rights from transnationals, and been active in other "popular education" campaigns.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

KAREN HOUSE needs part-time volunteers to take house especially during the summer months. Please call Mark at 621-4052 if you are interested in helping.

Help!
We Are
Getting Wet!



Our stately old convent, built in 1904, needs a new roof. This is the largest capital improvement we have undertaken in our ten-year residency at Karen House; it is likely to cost \$6000-\$10,000. Like all of our work with the poor, we can't do it alone. We depend on God's grace, and you, our faithful supporters. Will you contribute to our roof fund? Every little bit helps keep the cold and rain out...Thank you.

THE ROUND TABLE is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free, but donations are gladly accepted to help us in our work with the poor. Write to THE ROUND TABLE, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO 63106. People helping on this issue include Margaret Boyer, Katrina Campbell, Pat Coy, Angie Davidson, Virginia Druhe, Darlene Garbo, Larry Nolte, Jim Plato, Barb Prosser, Ellen Rehg, and Mark Scheu. Letters to the editor are encouraged.

THE ROUND TABLE

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