

THE Round Table

Spring
2005

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

PRACTICES OF HOPE PRACTICES OF JOY



Why This Issue?

This winter, for the first time, we heated our home using a wood stove. And that, in a nutshell, is how this issue came about. My husband Bill was less than enthusiastic about our entry into 18th -and back - century heating, and for good reason. He knows that the old adage, "Man proposes, woman disposes," is often turned around in our household. He also pointed out, correctly, that we have far too much on our plates already with our and our three children's busy lives, to take on all the work a wood stove entails. The only practical value of the stove would be in our (greatly) reduced heating bills.

And yet, the draw of getting one was irresistible to me. Even after Sharon McMullen Orlet, despite encouraging me to get one, could not give me one good solid reason for doing so. "Is it hard getting wood all the time?" I asked her. "Yeah," she replied. "It's a real drag". But then she added something about how it was about lifestyle, and isn't heating your home with wood lovely?

It is lovely. As I tell everyone, it's only been one year, so my tune may change, but I have loved every aspect of having one. I loved heading out in my car or a friend's truck with Bill to pick up wood from a friendly donor. (It turns out there are people out there trying to *get rid of* wood.) I loved having this uninterrupted, mostly childless time with my husband. I loved learning that the insides of trees look different depending on the tree, and that each tree also has a distinctive aroma. I loved having little insights, like, *so that's why Cinderella was so dirty*, as I swept (and swept and swept) our hearth. And one day, as I bent to put a log on the fire, I realized, this is somehow saving me. Something deep within my soul is getting nurtured through this practice.

And so, we thought to pose the question to a variety of people from Catholic Worker Houses across the country: what are some practices that are sources of joy and hope for you? We have published their responses in the following pages. The answers are varied, but all express the joy which comes from responding to a need or call deep within one's soul.

Additionally, we have our Karen House article and From Abroad, and in a historic departure for us, we bring a farewell to our dear friend and fellow worker, Mary Ann McGivern. She has been here at the St. Louis Catholic Worker since its founding, and we will greatly miss her cheerful and wise presence. May she find new saving practices that bring her hope and joy.



— Ellen Rehg

Front cover by Jason Gonzalez
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Protest, 11.2004

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Brian Terrell

Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm Maloy, Iowa

When I was a young man proofreading copy for *The Catholic Worker* in the office at Maryhouse in New York City, Dorothy Day walked by the door, paused, and cocked her ear to catch the lyrics of the song I was listening to on the radio. It was a sappy and sentimental pop song big at the time, about someone who formerly brooded and worried over the state of the world and human suffering but who, after falling in love with the right person, has cheered up considerably. "I haven't got time for the pain," this song went, "not since I've known you." Dorothy, who in any case preferred opera, stiffened and shook her cane at me and said, "we must ALWAYS have time for the pain!" then shuffled away shaking her head in disgust with me and my generation.

Dorothy also insisted that there is for us a "duty of delight." To find delight in this world yet having time for the pain is a tremendous exercise in balance. The poet Wendell Berry addressed this paradox: "It is the time's discipline to think of the death of all living yet live." It is a duty and a discipline to live and find delight even in this most difficult and perilous of times, not to surrender ourselves to despair and to the reign of violence and ignorance gathering around us. At the same time we cannot allow whatever joys we can find to anesthetize us to the pain of others or to our own responsibilities to struggle for a better world, however dim the prospects.

The section of our local Sunday newspaper in Iowa that covers travel and food, that reviews movies, books, music, and plays used to be titled "Diversions!" This implies that the only reason to open a book, eat a meal, listen to an album, go to a movie, a play, a concert, or to take a trip to another place is to be entertained and diverted from the bloody mess we have made of the world. While there is a real danger that these pastimes can divert us, books, movies, plays, music, art, travel, and such can also serve to open our minds and hearts to the pain of ourselves and others even as they refresh and renew us. They can feed our imaginations and give hope, inspiration, and encouragement for the struggle. Relationships, love of spouse and children, meals with good friends, laughter, the beauty of nature, satisfaction of good work, even liturgy and devotion to God are also potentially dangerous as opiates if we use them as excuses and alibis rather than as sources of strength to deal with the world as it is.

A life of integrity and wholeness in a time such as ours is an act of balance and I must admit that at present my own life is not as balanced as I would have it. Hearing that I am asked to write on "daily practices of joy and hope," my wife Betsy and I laughed and wondered if yelling at the radio counts, as that does seem to be a daily practice for me these days. I need to take responsibility for my part of this imbalance but I do resent being continually intruded upon by the stupid and brutal people in power. The daily rising death toll in the occupation of Iraq robs me of the satisfaction that should be there for planting the potatoes just in time for the rain; the pleasure of feeling and smelling the soil in the garden, richer and finer each year from our working it and applications of manure, is mitigated by the knowledge of those many in the world deprived of their land and the remembrance of those who starve. All too often my work and my plans are interrupted by news of another atrocity, word of another lie that needs to be answered. Can we find, or dare we seek, peace and joy for ourselves when so many live in fear?

The activities that make me most tired are also those that give me joy and hope, another paradox! As the prophet Jeremiah found the word of God burning as fire in his heart, imprisoned in his body as he wearied beyond endurance for holding it in and could find no relief without crying out, proclaiming violence and destruction, so I have lately found peace (such as I find it) not in church or field or forest but in the street, courtroom, and jail. Leafleting, vigiling, writing in protest, performing liturgy and theater in the street are hard work, but silence is even harder, so hard as to be almost impossible. That so many good people are acting and speaking is a source of great joy, too. "It is not hope that gets people engaged in struggle," say Cornel West and Roberto Unger, "it is being engaged in struggle that gives people hope."

We rejoice and hope, sometimes, simply because we must even when it is most difficult. Another poet, Jack Gilbert, suggests:

We must risk delight. We can do without pleasure,
But not delight. Not enjoyment. We must have
the stubbornness to accept our gladness in the ruthless
furnace of this world.



Jenny Truax

Karen Catholic Worker House Saint Louis, Missouri

Practices of joy are so much easier to think about than practices of hope, aren't they? Joyful practices that come to mind include conversing over crayons and coffee with five-year-olds at Karen House, spending time with my significant other and working on my pathetic two-flower garden. My personality type (a 9 on the Enneagram) could be described like this: "Why stand when you can sit, and why sit if you can lie down." So, a joyful practice is seeking a healthy daily balance between the standing and the lying down. Most of the time, it's out of whack one way or another (usually towards the lying down end of the spectrum).

Practices that bring me hope are another matter. "Be the change that you want to see" is one of my favorite phrases from Gandhi, one that deeply brings me hope. My "paying job" is in organizing for social justice. I've worked on such issues as women's ordination, stopping the war on Iraq, and promoting Fair Trade coffee. The justice we seek—the end of militarism, sustainable relationships, gender equality, etc.—is often structural in nature, and the slowness of change can suck the hope right out of you (and me). I'm granted hope when I get to participate in building alternatives to these exploitative structures, which are peace-seeking, equitable, and sustainable.

One example is trying to develop skills in consensus decision-making. The Karen House community uses consensus, a radical and profound decision-making model that seeks to grant everyone a voice, diminish power-over, and engender full participation. Because it's used by humans, it's as flawed as we are. On the other hand, consensus decision-making does model the values of inclusiveness, other-centeredness, and cooperation. When making decisions in groups, it can be exhausting to wade through dynamics of personality. Using consensus, rather than another model like voting, we try and work towards a common solution and listen well, rather than win each other over. Although we as a community sometimes (or often) fail in our interactions, decisions, and practice of nonviolence using consensus, it does give me hope that at least I'm struggling in a model that enacts these values.

Another source of hope for me is in the struggle to live more sustainably. I'm finally starting to realize that most of the world's injustices stem from the over-consumption by devel-

oped nations, and especially the United States. The so-called "War on Terror," the dozens of U.S. military interventions since the 1950s, and the ocean of inequity between rich and poor can all be traced, at least in part, to the way we over-process, over-market, and over-consume our planet's natural resources. As I've realized this, I've been wonderfully challenged by the examples of several community members in changing my habits of lifestyle. I learned that the word "dumpster" can be used as both a noun and a verb. Some of Karen House's best furniture, food, shampoo, and soap have been rooted from dumpsters at college move-out time in the spring. Other practices along these lines include shopping at second-hand and/or locally-

owned stores, riding my bike instead of driving, sharing a car with others, and trying to spend less money on myself. These are basic practices derived from the Catholic Worker philosophy.

It's really depressing to me that we in this country throw away literal mountains of perfectly usable products, and that individualism has become such a primary value. This path will only lead to destruction—of our planet, our families, and society. One of my favorite Ani DiFranco songs describes this element of our society: "We're led by denial, like lambs to the slaughter, serving empires of style and carbonated sugar-water and the old farm road's a four-lane that leads to the mall and our dreams are all guillotines wait-

ing to fall..." So for me it's a hopeful exercise to challenge my own perceptions of what I need versus what I want. Maybe this brand of shampoo that I found in the dumpster will do just fine. Maybe I can keep checking at the thrift store for a pair of work shoes, rather than heading straight to the mall.

People who are economically poor can provide a wonderful example of this practice. They have to make things work



Victor, Jenny, and Walter

with what resources they have. They give each other rides even when it is inconvenient, provide space because of necessity, and share resources better than most people of privilege I know (including myself).

For me, practices that elicit hope aren't necessarily the practices that are easiest (the aforementioned standing rather than lying down). Sometimes, they even seem to embody the

"harsh and dreadful love" described by Dostoyevsky and quoted by Dorothy Day. They bring me hope because when I, we as a community, and "we," in the much larger sense, craft such practices into lifestyles, we are truly "being the change we want to see." And that change brings me both hope and joy!

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Kathy Kelly

Voices in the Wilderness Baghdad, Iraq Chicago, Illinois

The Shock and Awe bombing of Baghdad had been going on for at least ten days. At the Al Fannar hotel, an eight-story, family-owned hotel across from the Tigris River, the Muslim owner had invited his own extended family to take rooms in the hotel and also the extended family of the Christians who lived across the street from him in his own neighborhood. These families, several hotel workers and their families, plus about two dozen Iraq Peace Team members had formed an unusual community while the Shock and Awe attacks raged. Toward nightfall, or during extended daytime bombing raids, elderly people, mothers, and small children would descend a short set of stairs and take shelter in the basement. The only shelter the basement provided, realistically, was a slight muffling of the ear-splitting blasts or sickening thuds as bombs smashed into buildings and streets, sometimes very close to our hotel.

One afternoon, I happened to go to the bomb shelter unexpectedly, looking for one of our peace team members. As my eyes adjusted to the dark room, I spotted an endearing scene. Two husky Arab men, perhaps in their thirties, lay side by side on cots with their heads in the laps of their mothers, who sat cross-legged, stroking the curly heads of their beloved sons. The sons saw me staring, a bit embarrassed at first, and burst out laughing. The mothers began to laugh, as did I, and soon we were all near tears.

In a city where security was so elusive for adults, how wonderful to be big children again, lying in their mamas' laps. In a setting where the world's largest arsenal could literally puree your very own son with bombs that caused gut-wrench-

ing explosions morning, noon, and night, how wonderful to luxuriate in the safety of one's beloved son lying in one's lap.

In the first floor tea room, we rearranged the furniture so that people could cluster around small tables, over candlelight, and chat with one another face to face. An intimacy developed as we grew to know one another and, on the part of the westerners, sort out who belonged to which family.

When the bombing ended, we were relieved that all of us in the little hotel had survived. Yet all awaited, anxiously, news about relatives and friends of the Iraqi families with whom we'd been living.

Predictably, when we were no longer cooped inside the hotel, our routines changed and we spent much less time talking by candlelight over tea. Two days after the Occupation began, the hotel owner was able to hook up a satellite dish

on the rooftop. Swiftly, the tables were turned so that most of the people in the lobby could watch a television screen. Iraqi friends beamed with pride and happiness. "This equipment, it is, for us, freedom," said Fadi, the son of the Christian neighbor. "We have waited a long time, believe me."

But Iraq Peace Team members quietly groaned as the television occupied the tea room and conversations dwindled.

What continues to provide happiness and hope in a war-weary world? I cherish the images, so real, unpredictable, and incalculably nourishing, that occurred in an unexpected beloved community. Is it possible, I wonder, to hold in one's heart the Pietà and my basement bomb shelter scene, and yearn for hope?

The wonderment suffices.

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Shelley Douglass

Mary's House Catholic Worker Birmingham, Alabama

It's hard to know exactly when joy will break into my life. There are many things I enjoy, but joy itself comes unexpectedly, welling up from some hidden spring—sometimes when the task is drab, the moment dull. When does joy come?

Joy is likely to come in the early morning, when I sit out on the front porch in the cool of the day and read the Psalms of morning prayer. So many of the Psalms are songs of joy that they often evoke what they name. I love to sit and notice how much the leaves have greened since the day before, or what tree is now in bloom, or to watch the birds go about their early morning business. In that calm quiet time it's easy to give thanks for all that is before me. I marvel, too, at how nature builds around and amid human wreckage, so that the old trees in the abandoned lot across the street become nesting sites, and the vacant lot next door, always overgrown, provides a haven and a foraging place for flocks of birds.

Joy comes often on Sunday morning. Jim and I usually go to early Mass, and as sleepy people straggle in, our pastor often reminds us that we gather together as one Holy Family (our parish) and tells us to welcome each other home. When our little group of twenty or so regulars takes to the aisles to greet and hug each other, we really are a family. That is joy.

Joy wells up when I run into a former guest and we recognize and greet each other with love. Sometimes they're doing well, and that makes me happy; sometimes they're not, and that makes me sad—but joy comes from the relationship, the love connecting us. Joy comes when Kenny, who is two and a half, comes back to visit and runs up to the door with his arms wide to be picked up and held.

Some days are days of drudgery, lots of cleaning and laundry, grubby and mucky. They aren't very inspiring days, but sometimes they are lit by a flash of joy as I wonder for whom I'm preparing: What holy family will be using these rooms in the next days and weeks? After 11 years there's still anticipation to see who's coming next, and what experiences, hopes, and dreams they'll bring.

Some days are days of sorrow, days when someone dies, days when the war or neighborhood violence or sickness or drug use seem extra close, and my quiet times are filled with mourning. Even in those times I can have an awareness of joy

in the background: at a life well-lived, at someone's anger at injustice, at a hand reaching out to help.

Happiness is predictable. My friends and family bring happiness—a visit, a call, a note, word of a new baby or a new idea, a cup of coffee, a long phone call. A good book, a new author, something new learned well—these things make me happy. But joy—that's something more mysterious. Some days standing on the vigil line with a sign is tedious and dull. Other days, in the midst of the tedium or over someone's hostility, there is a flash of light and hope: joy! Why some days and not others? Why with some early mornings, and not others?

If I knew the answer, of course, joy would also be predictable. I think it has something to do with congruence: Joy is born when, even for a moment, what I'm doing and thinking and being fulfills my beliefs and my calling, and I'm a whole person, as I'm meant to be. It doesn't last long because I always fall away from that congruence. But it happens: It happens often enough that life here at Mary's House is lit up and made possible. Joy comes in the morning, but also the afternoon, evening, and night, as gift and treasure, not earned but surprised.



Andrew Wummer

John Roarick

Catholic Worker Farm Sheep Ranch, California

I often walk my soft pygmy goats, Holly and Rhonda, and that makes me really happy. A farm cat will follow the goats and me, and the pig will run around his pen, wanting to join the parade. The turkeys will gobble and laugh at us. And while the whole darn scene is like a Disney movie, all of the animal camaraderie brings me joy.

My goats and I go up and down the dirt road and the grass path; we have pretty much covered this Catholic Worker Farm's eighty acres. It is a lot of fun to have two small goats follow me. I feel important when I am with them, like an older brother with younger siblings.

Holly and Rhonda relish in walking around outside their pasture and almost always stay near me. However, if they climb up on the front deck of the volunteers' house, they won't come down when I walk away. I usually have to pick up Holly from a picnic table and walk down the trail with her in my arms. Rhonda will follow us, for goats are herd animals.

Holly doesn't mind if I carry her like a housecat. In fact, for a while she was a house-goat. Holly's twin sister was still born so Holly's mom thought she was too and her former owner brought the tiny pygmy inside. Holly spent her first four weeks with Chihuahua puppies. I continued to bottle feed her after I adopted her. She stayed in a doggy bed at my place for about a month.

Holly cries and cries if nobody is with her and she loves to pee on couches. When my small friend was two months old she was banned from the retreat house, where I spend a lot of time. So I adopted Rhonda to befriend her. The two became roommates in a small pasture near my home.

I take them out of their pasture a lot. Here and there we go.

They are the size of dogs. Holly is about the size of a beagle and Rhonda is about the size of a collie. Rhonda does not want people to pet her. However, she likes the company of humans. Holly enjoys a belly scratch or a head rub and she sometimes escapes her pen to find an available masseuse. If Holly does climb under a loose part of the wire fence, Rhonda will scream. They like to be close to each other.

We have a pig here too, and he likes to be visited by people. Floyd the pig oinks and runs around his yard when someone



approaches him. He is joyful. My fiancée, Sara, and I laugh that when a mountain lion climbs the pigpen fence to eat the pig, the pig will greet it with a smile on his snout and a wag of his tail. A mountain lion was near the pig's place about a month ago. It was walking in the meadow, by the seasonal pond and singing tree frogs, when Sara noticed it. So many deer, like thirty or so, are in our meadow each evening it does not surprise me the big cat was near.

The deer are around here in the colder months, and about the time they head back up in the mountains, the dragonflies—blue ones, and red ones, and black striped ones—arrive. Those colorful creatures zip over the pond all summer. It is so fantastic and surreal to see them.

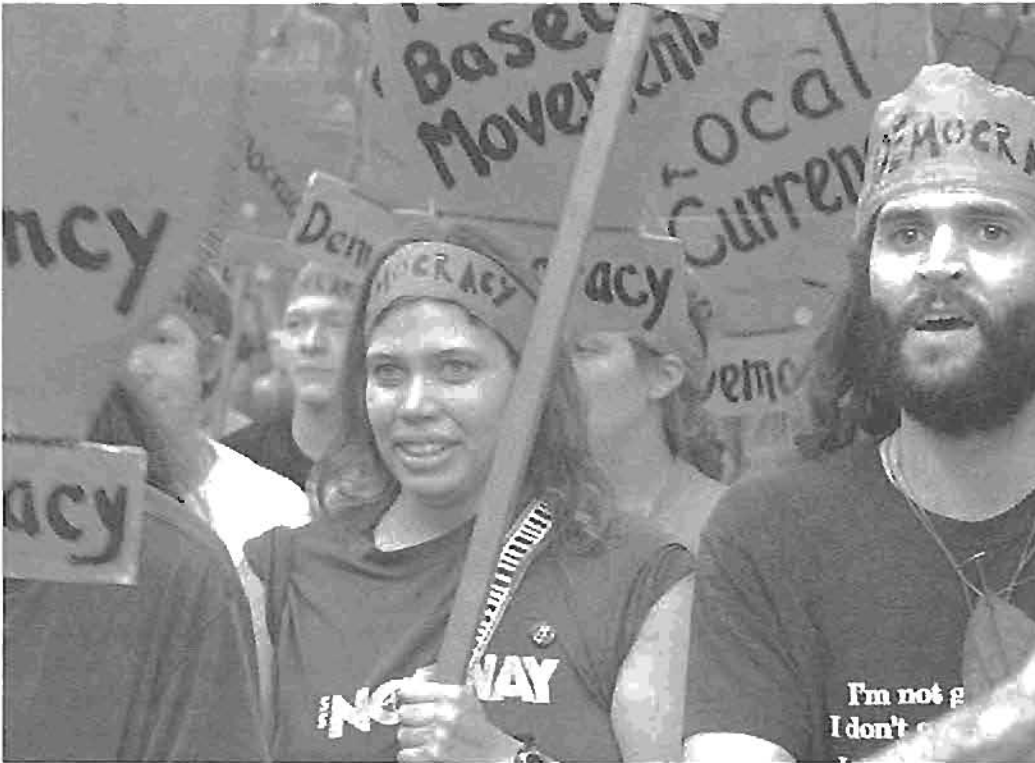
All of the creatures here, I haven't even mentioned the chickens or rattlesnakes, create a pleasant feeling in me, and with that feeling I am joyful and with my joy I am hopeful. I don't know exactly why they make me feel so good.

I am going back to school soon and I will leave the farm to do so. I am lucky, though. I got a job at a petting zoo.



Sue Frankel-Streit

Little Flower
Catholic Worker Farm
Trevilians, Virginia



Andrew Wimmer

This morning, after a somewhat intense communal discussion on money, I sat down on my 12-year-old son's bed. My seven-year-old daughter, just awakened, came and sat on my lap.

"How'd that discussion go, Mom?" asked my son. As I sat holding Gaby, talking to Isaac, and listening to his stories, I felt a surprising sense of joy. It came from our deep connection manifested in a few moments of honest, loving communication.

That moment will get me through the day—and not just that; the sense of communion I felt in those moments helps me to seek out communion with others in my community. For I know that for me, hope and joy come from right relationship and communion with others—other people, animals, and the earth.

Our life is stressful—sometimes because of circumstances (broken plumbing, lack of cash, cold weather), sometimes, most

of the time, because of our humanness (our baggage, our fears, our unmet needs). So anytime I experience a moment of simple communion—standing in the chicken yard, being heard in a meeting, holding a child—I am filled with hope and joy.

As for practices ... I am not very good at practices; that's my partner Bill's domain. Hanging laundry, daily meditation, even cooking meals three times a day—these practices, which I know give Bill joy, are stifling to me. On the other hand, I am always grateful for an unexpectedly abundant dumpster haul that leads to a spontaneous communal fest, a last-minute trip to the ocean, a stolen hour to lie in the sun, a play created in the afternoon ... these creative, unplanned actions always make me happy.

And anytime we gather with a group, large or small, to publicly proclaim our Yes! to justice, our No! to violence—these acts of resistance sustain me. For there is a joy and sense of hope in being part of a larger community of visionaries, people with a vision of a just, loving, and creative society, people who are willing to work and sacrifice to get there.

Then, too, drinking a good cup of coffee, making love, playing guitar, making a puppet, reading with kids, weeding the garden, even going to meetings sometimes give me hope, when we really hear each other and create, together, a better plan than any of us could have come up with on our own.

Creating loving relationships, acting together on a shared vision, and maintaining an attitude of gratitude: I suppose these are the "practices" that bring me hope and joy in my daily life as a member of my family, community, and world. ✦

Ruthy Woodring

Pedal People Northampton, Massachusetts

I've had the good circumstance to be able to create a livelihood that brings me hope and joy. I live in a town (Northampton, MA) where the city does not pick up trash or do recycling, so shortly after I moved here a couple of years ago, my partner Alex Jarrett and I started a trash/recycling and general hauling business using bicycles and trailers. So every day I do something related to Pedal People, whether it's actually riding around town hauling things, or talking with people interested in what we're doing, or doing something to get the word out about the power of bikes. I am able to do something every day that I feel contributes to making my community a little more peaceful, and this is enriched with personal interactions I have with people I meet on the street who generally share my excitement about this rare-in-the-US use of human power.

Pretty much all things bike-related bring me hope and joy. I think of the H.G. Wells quotation, "When I see an adult on a bicycle, I do not despair for the future of the human race."

Every Saturday, in the basement of a friend who opened her house to us, a Pedal People partner and I have The Bike Lab ("where you don't have to be a scientist to be mad"). People come and we have tools and help them fix their bikes. Helping people learn a skill they can use for nonviolent transportation is rewarding to me.

One more critical practice for my hope and joy is PLAYING!!! I especially love to play Ultimate Frisbee and basketball. Anything where I can chase friends and run and leap and throw things and catch things and laugh all the while. When I make eye contact with someone I'm playing with, and smile mischievously, fake, make dramatic sounds, all that, it's a way of showing love, and combined with the physical high, in that moment I get a pleasure rivaled by little else in this world, and when I feel that joy to be alive, despite the sorrows of the world, that sheer pleasure, at least once a week, is enough to live for!



Judy Sausen

Loaves & Fishes Catholic Worker, Duluth, Minnesota

Recently, I read an article in the March/April *Orion* magazine entitled "Fishing Lessons," by Cynthia Myron. In the article, Ms. Myron reminisces about going fishing with her father, his friend, "The Old Man," and his daughter Kathi. These fishing expeditions were times of fun, friendship, and bonding. Years later, in talking with her father, Ms. Myron learns of the tragedies—death and broken relationships—that had fallen on "The Old Man's" family. The article concluded with the "lesson": "There are no perfect worlds, only perfect moments . . . Moments that could reveal the majesty and mercy of God if I paid real good attention."

True, we do not live in a perfect world. Wars are being fought all around the globe with millions of innocent victims; natural disasters, like the recent tsunami, result in death and devastation for thousands of people; children are starving from drought and other conditions of poverty; dysfunctional families lead to abuse, broken bodies and spirits; people are suffering from addictions and illnesses of all kinds. The list could go on and on. But if we focus only on the brokenness and suffering, how do we continue to choose life?

Perhaps the fishing lesson really points to a profound truth: "There are only perfect moments." As I was walking this morn-

ing and reflecting on that statement, I began to enumerate some of the "perfect moments" in my days: times of deep and loving connection with a friend; a sky so blue it takes my breath away; a baby's smile; the sun rising out of Lake Superior amid flaming dawn colors; an insight into a perplexing problem; coming upon an act of kindness; being absorbed in a piece of music; a book that transports me into another world; prayer that lifts me to a new understanding of the Sacred; looking out on a snow-laden tree in the yard; a canoe trip down a gentle, clear river. The list could go on and on. I treasure and become aware of these moments as gifts, as surprises, as breaking into my consciousness and holding me in a moment of joy and contentment. I am able to say, "It is good to be here, just here, for now." Thich Nhat Hanh talks about mindfulness—being in the moment, aware of the "now." For me, practicing this mindfulness and awareness



Andrew Wimmer

can open up my spirit to the "perfect moments"—the times of overwhelming goodness and joy.

Beyond these very personal and intimate moments, I find hope in reading about or hearing stories of other peoples' faithfulness and perseverance through struggles and hardships. A recent article in the paper told of a woman who faced with a man intent on probably raping and even killing her, talked him out of his crime. Through her gentle kindness and her treatment of the man as a valuable human being, she was able to reach the goodness within him and prevent him from harming both her and himself. The movie *Hotel Rwanda* tells a violent and brutal story of the genocide in that African country, but also portrays the courage and goodness of one man who sacrificed himself to save many of his country's people.

In an article in the January/February *Fellowship* magazine, a number of activists, in light of the election results, wrote short responses to the question, "Where do we go from here?" They spoke of the need to keep acting in faith, to continue searching for truth, to care, to hope, to show compassion. One writer, Angela Boatright, an Episcopal priest in New York, talked of "subversive joy"—choosing on the side of faith, goodness, and love. She points to the small acts of love she finds all around her and how they confirm her in the strength and power of goodness. Like Ms. Boatright, I too observe love and caring among people: guests in our house who are willing to share experiences that may be helpful to another person; friends who contribute meals, clothing, blankets, time, money, etc. to our houses; librarians, clerks, bus drivers who often show much patience in trying to help a person with a disability or someone who needs extra assistance. I am involved on a committee to

solve homelessness in our city. I see dedicated people on the committee trying to formulate plans and work out solutions to provide housing for everyone. All of this caring can indeed lead to "subversive joy." My housemates in the Catholic Worker community where I live also inspire me as we pray, discuss, search, support, and care about each other in our daily lives and in the resistance work that we carry out. Although I have not been arrested for civil disobedience, I have participated in many vigils, protests, and marches. We realize that we may be only planting a seed as we stand on a corner with a peace sign, yet joining with others in voicing our commitment, and receiving affirmations from passers-by bring hope that one day peace will spread and prevail in the world.

Most of my days begin early with a one-and-one-half to two-hour walk along Lake Superior—a time for reflecting, singing, clarifying, thanking, and greeting other walkers and the sun. Living by the lake is an incredible, mind-expanding blessing. Spending time by the water beckons me to awe, calmness, wonder, and sometimes excitement on stormy days—truly spiritual experiences. Following my walk, I try to spend 20-30 minutes in prayer, reflection, and spiritual reading at home. This time was originally designated for community prayer, but my housemates are usually still in bed at 7:30 a.m., so this has become my own prayer time.

In conclusion, I think that, for me, joy and hope come from both the outside and the inside, from my practices of walking, praying, reading, observing, and from my inner awareness, mindfulness, and spirit. Joy and hope are all around us. Sometimes we just need a nudge to help us open our eyes and hearts to the beauty and goodness of life.



Daniel Berrigan, excerpt from *Ten Commandments for The Long Haul*

[People] also ask frequently: "Where does your hope come from, how do you keep going?" Which seems to me a serious question, but composed out of insufficient evidence, a question having about it a certain immodest aura, which I'm being invited to stand under. (Should one stand under a light he did not kindle?) I like [my brother] Philip's typically laconic answer: "Your hope is where your ass is."

As in the case, I judge, of those who sit in. Or, in another version: "Your hope is where your feet are" (as in the case of those who march). But hardly ever, in my experience, is one's hope where his head is. Passing strange, to think of it, that those whose heads are presumably screwed on straight, should ask me, "Where is your hope today?"

Passing strange, and strangely true. Hope dwells in the posterior, or in the hands and feet. But hardly ever in that noblest of human members, whose functions, we are told, are to speculate and ponder and envision and calculate and predict and do all those things named by us, properly human. But in fact, so tragically and often: improperly inhuman.

...It is mass action people think of these days. They lose sight of the sacrament of the present moment, of the little way...

Dorothy Day



cooking

julie



dumpstering

david

PRESENT MOMENTS



drumming

jason



singing

annjie



discovering

trevion



bonding

laura and jerry



recreating

shameka, melissa, shannon, amaura

IN ST. LOUIS

...some thoughts and images on practices of joy and hope from Dorothy, Peter, and the St. Louis Catholic Worker Community.



celebrating

becky, shannon, teta



resisting

annjie



strumming

jenny



smooching

tania and tony

To give and not to take,
That is what makes us human.

To serve and not rule,
That is what makes us human.

To help and not to crush,
That is what makes us human.

To nourish and not devour,
That is what makes us human.

And if need be,
To die and not to live,
That is what makes us human.

Peter Maurin

Michael Latsch

Loaves & Fishes Catholic Worker Duluth, Minnesota

I'm standing in the snow in front of the house, yelling at no one in particular and casting my mittens down onto the sidewalk. It has not been a good day. Maybe a pipe blew up, or maybe a guest came back drunk and I kicked him out. Whatever the cause, I am far from joyful, and in desperate need of an attitude adjustment.

Joy is the fuel of the Catholic Worker Movement. Trying to grit your way through the works of mercy out of any other motivation, be it a sense of duty or anything else, is a sure way to annoy your co-Workers and your guests. Nobody likes to be around a grim servant.

So you have to do the work—and if you're going to stick at it for long, you have to enjoy it, too. Now that's a tall order. Taking a hint from Dorothy Day's gravestone inscription ("Deo Gratias"), I suspect that the key to achieving this joy is thankfulness, and in particular thankfulness to God.

Being thankful is, of course, no small feat either. It's always a struggle to give thanks to God in this world. When things are bad—when illness, destitution, and violence both interpersonal and national break out all around—there seems little to give thanks for. And when things are good there's the ever-present temptation to leave God out of the loop entirely and see success as purely the result of our own efforts. It's this duality in the modern world that the French Personalist Emmanuel Mounier was referring to when he commented that whether the bourgeois world has frowned or smiled on a person, it has made it difficult for her to contemplate the truth and beauty of God.

Getting out of this duality requires the practice of a practice. In my experience the foundation of this practice is sacramental, big "S" and little "s" alike. There's the central Catholic Sacrament of the Eucharist, which includes giving thanks to God for our creation and our redemption. There's the sacrament of waking up in darkness or in light and realizing that you are alive. There's the sacrament of giving and receiving from each other and from the Earth in which we realize that we are all connected in the mystical body of Christ and in the unity of creation. All of these, and many others, are potential occasions of grace in which we can give thanks for the unconditional love of God.

In addition, I've found that a practice of voluntary poverty buttresses the sacraments, if by no other means than by adding some degree of material unpredictability to my life. When I lack, I give thanks for what I have, and when I receive, I am prone to

some very real thanksgiving. What natural serendipity and supernatural thankfulness to find coffee beans in the dumpster, new pants in the clothes closet, and only slightly out-of-date chocolate bars at another Catholic Worker house (shout out to everyone at St. Francis in Chicago).

It goes without saying that this is all far from foolproof. God knows I may well be casting down my mittens in Duluth next winter—but God willing I'll be able to pick them up and give thanks for having them in spite of whatever difficulty I face. ✦

Ode to thanks

--Pablo Neruda

Thanks to the word
That says thanks!
Thanks to thanks,
Word
that melts
iron and snow!

The world is a threatening place
Until
thanks
Makes the rounds
From one pair of lips to another,
Soft as a bright
Feather
And sweet as a petal of sugar,
Filling the mouth with its sound
Or else a mumbled
Whisper.
Life becomes human again:
It's no longer an open window:
A bit of brightness
Strikes into the forest,
And we can sing again beneath the leaves.
Thanks, you're the medicine we take
To save us from
The bite of scorn.
Your light brightens the altar of harshness.

Eric Anglada

Saint Jude Catholic Worker Champaign, Illinois

As spring comes to bloom, I cannot help but meditate on what the medieval saint, Hildegard of Bingen, called *viriditas*. This term loosely translates as green power or greening, meaning God's creative energy active in all of life. This sublime act of creation is admittedly easier to discern on beautiful spring days when everything is flowering, but it is there always, even when it is so dim as to seem absent. I write this fully conscious of the vast misery and destruction that exists in the world. Living within a Catholic Worker House I have seen the exploitation of the poor and their exploitation of each other. Still, I remain fundamentally joyful and hopeful.

My own spiritual journey has been a growth into paradox: a profound experience of the absolute fullness and depth of life with an equal sense of its vast emptiness. These, in my experience, don't exist dialectically but *both at the same time*.

Withdrawing to the margins of society and living as a Catholic Worker have acutely brought these two experiences into one, strange whole. Creation, unity, stillness, and harmony coexist with chaos, commotion, resistance, and pain. The process of reconciling fully these seeming opposites is the path to profound joy and hope. That journey is borne out of a distinctive practice. This practice must not be understood as a "technique" used to manipulate the joyful presence of the transcendent. Rather, the practice is merely a positioning in such a way so as to be increasingly open to the reception of gift. That practice, for me, has found fruition within the setting of a house of hospitality for the poor and homeless.

At the fount of the practice of the Catholic Worker is what has traditionally been dubbed "voluntary poverty," though I prefer the term "simple living," which more accurately reflects my own existential situation. Within our capitalist society affluence and security have become virtually the *sine qua non* of being human. This, in my view, is utterly pernicious—spiritually, ethically and environmentally. Our society has become astute at *having* and has almost totally forgotten the vital importance of *being*. We've become too busy to know joy. Simple living is resistance to that tide and has helped me regain a sense of dignity. If we pause to consider how much time we spend working—in most cases, renting ourselves out to an employer until weekends and taking the two-week annual vacation—I think we would soon see that we are living irrationally. Simply asking myself, "Do I really need this?" is an important step. The gradual shift away from the religion of consumerism

has allowed me space to think, read, and pray—in short, to *be*.

Upon arrival in the Catholic Worker a few years ago the community made the conscious decision to cancel our subscription to cable TV. We realized that we were vulnerable to the insidious influence of that machine and decided that, no matter how appealing, we knew that we could easily be pacified into living through the images of TV instead of living directly. The sheer deluge of images that it provides—technological, sexual, militaristic, etc.—has created a false perception, for real perception consists in seeing the hidden fecundity permeating everything. Moreover, the virtual omnipresence of images has created a topical, even one-dimensional culture.

Living in a house where a soup kitchen feeds the hungry every day, and in which several women and children live, makes it imperative to create a personal space—one of silence and solitude. Balancing the communal work of the house with solitary withdrawal has given me a clearer perception, one that on good days brings me closer to invisible unity that lies behind everything.

The experience of community within the Catholic Worker House has perhaps been the most moving aspect of my own pilgrimage. In an increasingly atomized society, the intentionality of living and working with others becomes deeply radical and opens new possibilities for that type of profound relationship for which we all yearn: communion. Certainly this revelation is not always palpable. But if we shut off each other from that possibility, we are committing something akin to spiritual suicide. Communal living is the clearest expression of our fundamental interconnectedness. In living with others from a different background—race, class, gender, etc.—I have been exposed to wholly different worlds of experience. Crossing barriers that have long divided people, as Jesus quite clearly did during his subversive ministry, has been a joyful learning process while, at times, stressful and painful. We must, however, be willing to take risks in order to move closer to a sacramental solidarity with the least of these.

The context of the Catholic Worker has become for me the most pointed way to live out all of the paradoxes and mysteries of life: fullness, emptiness, perception, blindness, conviviality, silence, creation, chaos, exile, homecoming: It's all there in the inexplicable mystery of life. And if we engage it deeply enough we can accept the invitation: "Come dervishes: this is the water of life. Dance in it." [Thomas Merton] +

Jane Sammon

Maryhouse Catholic Worker New York, New York

As we watch the burgeoning growth industry of small mindedness, particularly as it's been promoted since September 11, 2001, the spirit sags and the utterly wasteful sense of despair rears its ugly head. The reader, the viewer, just has to imbibe the news of the day to know that a certain part of the ruling segment of this country has been able to convince a larger number of Americans that fear rules and new fears need to be created--just to keep us on our toes. There are several methods that aid this process, including subtle and not so subtle curbs on dissent, casting a wider net over non-citizen residents, or foreign nationals deemed suspect--all done in the name of National Security. One cites the case of a writer from Nicaragua, now somewhere in her forties, who was denied a visa to guest lecture at a leading university. It seems she was with the Revolution as a Sandinista when she was in her twenties. One has to wonder if in the intervening years she spoke unfavorably about the U.S. government, or if she might have said something supportive about someone we don't like--you know: the enemy of my enemy is my friend, but watch out if you're a friend of someone on our enemies' list! Unarguably, the fear factor is lucrative business, making security firms, along with the usual suspect, defense corporations, bigger bucks than ever. Fear has been given performance-enhancing drugs, and the king-pins are laughing all the way to the bank.

The question is posed: What practice can counter this new order of false security, and the notion that terror lurks behind every door, embedded with each nook and cranny? How can one find hope and joy in this "fear of the week" ambience, full of petting zoo bacteria, identity theft, and electronic spying? That credit card you just slipped through the machine at checkout tells Someone, Somewhere Else all about your buying habits, and, if you believe in God, sooner than you can watch your canned goods lumber down the conveyor belt and into your awaiting grocery bags.

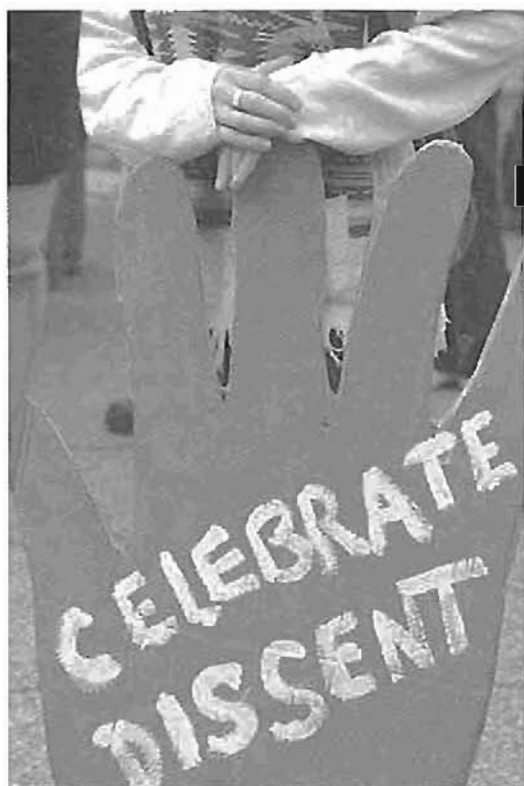
"Resistance"--any nonviolent act, small or large, the practice of trying to steer clear of those thoughts, words and deeds

that would paralyze us--this is what gives me hope in these times of immeasurable anxiety. For those of us in the rather large, often diaphanous tent known as the anti-war movement, works of resistance encourage us. But what are these acts? Are they only ones which draw the public observer, such as blocking the doors of the evil corporation, or the "business as usual" recruiting center? I would say no, although some would question the relevance of anything less than those of the grander scale variety. This is where the thoughts of Dorothy Day or the Little Way of the Little Flower kick in. It is the frequently tedious work of "house justice and peace," living and working among those closest to our muck-about daily lives, which both wears me out, but spurs me on, paradoxically enough. In a Catholic Worker house of hospitality, we are among those who *don't* hold many things in common, from our faith to our politics, not to mention our varied tastes in music, or personal abhorrences, from bare midriffs, to purple hair and black nail polish.

Of course, this is neither the first, nor is it the most brilliant treatise on the joys of the BIG IMPRESSIVE ACT versus the small and seemingly insignificant encounters that attempt to hold the world together--these acts of the 36 Just Ones, in Talmudic literature, binding the wounds of the world, keeping it from the potential to be destroyed through humanity's sins. To be part of this sort of resistance is akin to those "random acts of kindness," of years gone by, except in today's 2005 resistance, the state will view some acts as anything but kind, and, at times, even dangerous.

On second glance, this new order of false security isn't novel at all, although its packaging might be, for we hear the words from biblical texts, over and over again: "Do not be afraid." "Why are you afraid?" "Fear not." Being spooked is an old saw dressed up in hi-tech haute couture.

Within the ambit of this post 9/11 practice of resistance, the most attractive direct action to my eyes is that of



Andrew Wimmer

welcoming the stranger. This work of mercy, so essential to our life in the Catholic Worker, so demanding in its discipline of taking risks, runs counter to the cant of "always watch your back."

Here in New York, where the burnt flesh and pulverized bones of almost 3,000 people, along with the collapse of the World Trade Center, is noted in the media every single day up to the present, there are public service announcements on bus and subway that read: "If you see something, say something." It's easy enough to understand why this sentiment is still displayed, given the scale of destruction that was done here. Added to this, it's ludicrous to think anymore that another event like 9/11 could never happen again. But public service messages asking people to constantly be alert runs the risk of rendering each of us stolid, or making everyone dis-eased in public venues, encouraging unrelenting anxiety toward anyone fitting a stereotypical description of what a person bent on harm looks or acts like. Beyond the obvious commonsense understanding of what constitutes threatening behaviors (yes, if I "see something" like a weapon, I pray to "say something" in hopes of disarming the potential wrongdoer), we have to resist manufacturing suspicions that can spill over into our houses as well.

The welcome of a stranger acts to equalize the relationship between ourselves and this person who does not know us as we do not know him/her. The wound of being unknown must be mitigated by the welcome that turns a stranger into a potential friend or ally, becoming one who now belongs, and has some identity—no matter the duration of his/her encounter among us. But *a priori* to reject the stranger, citing our inability "these days" to distinguish peculiarities from perversions in that unknown person is to succumb to the credo of distrust and climate of fear foisted upon the stranger, even the one considered to be the least threatening.

How much easier to form our potential bonds of solidarity with those whom we think we trust, whom we already know: the neat, the clean, the well dressed, the one with all those lovely white teeth, etc. After all, many of us in our highly commercialized world have been taught that affect is everything, and this, long before 9/11. Or who more deserving of a warm welcome than the person who's been tipped by someone we already know as intellectually attractive, someone who thinks like we do. Then, there's our family (except for those we are on the outs with). In Scripture we listen to the instruction of Jesus, against the attitude of welcoming only those who come from our own blood line, or village, tribe, and nation: the "Us versus Them" syndrome. Yet we have to face it: eating with those who spiritually nourish me, while at the same time abjuring all others who seemingly don't enhance the small world wherein I dwell, is quite tempting. Granted, the stranger among us might not be a potential terrorist, but she makes demands of my time, stretches my level of comfort.

Let's go back to the sacred texts, where we are exhorted to make friends as well among the poor, the ultimate stranger among us in so many ways, no matter their place of origin. Despite her daily trek to our doors for basic sustenance, we may never be privy to the life of the poor person whose often unbearable grief acts to disguise and protect her from our sometimes less than noble reasons for getting acquainted.

Probably the most difficult task in a movement like ours is

the welcome to that stranger who is not down on her luck, who is well beyond the pale of the downtrodden. Although solidarity with the poor is a benchmark within our ranks, we have great potential for imitating Christ with our greeting to those displaying wealth and well-being. Yet here is where our judgmental attitudes come to the fore. "Why can't 'they' be more like us?" we mutter under our breath. Does this sound silly? I've done it myself, and I've seen it done. Our arrogance can be our undoing in such situations, but I firmly believe that if we especially welcome the poor, the disenfranchised, those whom society deems as unproductive and less than scintillating, then that genuine welcome will be extended to all. It may even lead to a deeper comprehension of each person's dignity: that being-in-the-world is not confined to one social class, a particular gender or specific frontier. The joy of welcoming others while mindful of this, might lead to our own conversions, to become more like the poor, who don't choose, as we do, to rely on the goodness of others and the providence of God. But if the stranger remains just that—a stranger without our intervention to aid in the grace of establishing parity—we will be stuck in a place of false security and profit-making insularity.

We remember the description that Thomas Merton offers on leaving Gethsemane for a few hours, the famous "Fourth and Walnut" narrative: "In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the centre of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers."

We can be snide about that passage, so many years after his death, and yet the reader is invited to share in this epiphany. Like Thomas Merton, we have the potential to love those whom we do not yet know, but who we are already spiritually disposed to receive into our lives.

And so we want to go forward in our resistance, refusing to be lulled into a state of fear and revulsion toward those who are deemed the stranger, considered least in the world's schema. Our hope is to grow and inspire mutual aid, the praxis of anarchist theory, ever mindful of our first responsibility to the stranger whom we are warned against: the Muslim, the undocumented, the frail of body and mind, the poor on our streets and at our doors, longing to be strangers no more. But recent times legislate against such nascent respect; the ones who often craft the policies which keep so many in this position of being unknown, say they do it as Christ-followers, who believe in charity and "faith-based" initiatives, yes, but ones well protected by an even stronger defense and expanding lists of would-be enemies. One recalls the words of French social thinker, Charles Péguy. Fierce in his loyalties, he spoke a language that brings us full circle back to our own adherences:

"I will have none of a Christian charity which would mean the constant capitulation [of the spiritual] before temporal powers. I will have none of a Christian charity which would be constant capitulation before princes and rich men, before the powers of money. I will have none of a Christian charity which would be a constant abandon of the poor and the oppressed. I recognize one Christian charity only and it is that which comes directly from Jesus: it is the spiritual, temporal and constant communion with the poor, the weak and the oppressed." [from Péguy, *Basic Verities*]

Frank Cordaro

Phil Berrigan Catholic Worker House Des Moines, Iowa

I remember reading somewhere that, towards the end of her life, Dorothy Day felt that the health and well-being of the planet were worse than when she started the Catholic Worker Movement in 1933. Dorothy saw that the wars were bigger and more deadly, the number of people living in poverty and in oppression were far greater, the gap between the rich and the poor was wider and the over-all health of the life forces of the planet were greatly diminished. What I cannot remember was what Dorothy's response was to this otherwise bleak assessment of the human-planetary condition after nearly 50 years of her struggle for justice and her service to the poor.

After 30 years of my own investment in the Catholic Worker Movement, I find myself considering and reconsidering my own response to that same bleak assessment.

When I joined the Movement, I was 24 years old. Filled with the Holy Spirit and the energy and spunk of youth, I was ready to take on the world with a crusader's vigor. In those days, joy and hope came easily to me. I embraced the voluntary poverty, communal life and the pacifist, nonviolent resistance ways of the Catholic Worker with a convert's zeal. No doubt about it, God's saving ways were working through me, as was my very large ego. I was very much filled with myself.

Through the years, life has taken its toll on my youthful spirit and outrageous ego. Carrying the scars of communal living, falling in and out of love, becoming a priest on the rebound, fighting the good fight with both the world and the Church, suffering a life-threatening heart attack and resigning priestly life after 18 years, has taken its toll on my spirit. I now find myself literally in the same place I was when we first started the Des Moines Catholic Worker back in 1976.

Our newest Catholic Worker House in Des Moines is the Phil Berrigan House. It was the original Catholic Worker House in which we started our community. A couple of years ago we bought it back from a Mexican family we gave it to 15 years ago. I am currently living in the same bedroom that Joe DaVia and I shared when we first opened our house.

Over the last 30 years a lot of good things have happened to and for me. And I have had my share of heartaches and failures. I have no doubt that the Catholic Worker path I embraced over 30 years ago is the path God wanted me to travel. And, mercifully, my outrageous youthful ego has greatly diminished and is much more manageable.

Recently, I have recognized a more cynical and negative spirit in my every day life, a dark spirit that did not exist when I first embraced the Catholic Worker Movement. However, none of my core values or beliefs has changed; at its core, Christianity is a very hopeful and positive faith tradition. Yet, in my every day life a dark spirit had taken hold. I suspect it reflects a measure of what we call "Burn Out."

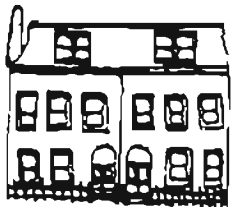
I didn't really know how cynical and negative I had become until it was pointed out to me by my friend Elaine, the love in my life. Elaine is one of those people in the world who is a natural healer and light-bearer. She left organized religions long ago and has embraced the truth found in all traditions. She has a bedrock optimism about the future of the planet and the human race. It's not a Pollyanna optimism. Her positive spirit and outlook is akin to the joy and hope that we Christians claim from the Cross.

The first thing she did for me was to give me two cats. As a child I used to threaten to torture cats! She thought they would be a good vehicle to get me in touch with my own heart. I named them Daniel and Philip. Next, she challenged me to start practicing in my daily life, the joy and hope I claimed in my Christian beliefs. I have taken her challenge to heart.

For us Catholic Workers, the practices of joy and hope are found in the way we do the works of mercy. We call it Hospitality. It is a mystical dynamic in which we believe we are the host to the Christs in our midst. We Christians call ourselves God's Kingdom's people, whose realm is claimed, not in the bleak big picture realities of the human and global situation but in the mustard seed personal acts of love and forgiveness that take place from one person to the next.

These days I am making a conscious effort to live in the now. And when I am on duty at Dingman House, I am paying more attention to our guests than to the endless tasks and worries that come with operating a hospitality house. In the process, I am rediscovering the joys and hopes that come with doing the works of mercy.





Farewell to MaryAnn

by Teka Childress

It was the day Mary Ann McGivern would leave St. Louis after about 30 years (almost 28 spent at the Catholic Worker). As I got up to say goodbye, I suddenly started to tear up, not just in sadness over her leaving, but also because I was suddenly touched, thinking of her life all these years at the Little House. It was then I decided that I had to write this public "thank you" to her.

If people's dogs tend to mirror their people, it is probably even truer that their gardens do. Mary Ann's garden was full, to say the least; wildly expressive, full of color and with all kinds of unexpected finds. It appeared to this unimaginative observer that just about anything was allowed to come and visit and express itself in its own manner without too much hindrance. But Mary Ann seemed to recognize the treasures that she had and gave them space to grow. And, most importantly, she was out there tending to them day after day.

Of course, after all of these years at the Catholic Worker, there are many stories to tell about Mary Ann, but I'm at a disadvantage because she's our best storyteller and certainly one of our best writers. One of my favorite stories about Mary Ann, though, is how she virtually, single-handedly changed the opening date of Karen House, accepting a young family a full week or so before the house was due to open. Now, Mary Ann will always protest with a certain amount of mock innocence that St. Ann Manganaro was also involved in this decision, but since Ann is not here to defend herself it hardly seems fair to blame her. Wherever the actual truth lay, though, I think it is pretty clear that Mary Ann is willing to throw out a few rules in favor of the person standing there before her. But one would be mistaken not to see a certain amount of deliberation in her actions and, certainly, determination.

If anyone ever doubted Mary Ann's determination, they would only need to attend a meeting with her or take note of her years of work with the Economic Conversion Project (later, the Peace Economy Project), or attend one of the million stockholders' meetings at which she spoke. Her intelligence is daunting. Her understanding of economic issues on the grand scale or school board issues on the local level has always amazed me.

Mary Ann has added color to our lives and great fun. And

she reminds us how one person can change the world and how she will do it like no one else can. We could never express well enough our love or gratitude to her. We wish her continued joy in her work in New York, and hope for great things. But if she doesn't like the Big Apple, maybe she will remember there's always room here for a (re)transplant from New York, even if she shows up a week before expected. +



Mary Ann, circa 1984

Teka Childress is now also the name of Annjie and Jenny's future abode and house of hospitality.

From Abroad

by Christen Parker &
Rodney Yarnal



We recently returned from 10 weeks in southern Haiti. We stayed in a small town outside of Les Cayes, the 3rd largest city in Haiti. Fulfilling his final months of medical school, Rodney worked at several clinics and a birthing center, Maison de Naissance (MN)—an Episcopal mission. Christen helped the clinics as a make-shift pharmacist and translator, did surveys for MN, and taught English classes.

The “Mobile Clinics” we did were a full day of seeing patients (ages 25 to 45) out of a schoolroom, a church, or even a tent. There were no labs or tests, and rarely any follow-up. At first these clinics were exciting. The need was tremendous in some areas, as you’d guess. Health care in Haiti is a luxury, and even the relatively wealthy find it a struggle to afford the counsel of a physician and medications. We saw severe malnutrition; unchecked upper respiratory and skin infections in children; and tuberculosis, malaria, and high blood pressure in adults.

Over time our excitement about these clinics waned, though, as we realized how impotent our efforts were in the face of Haiti’s stultifying poverty. The lack of labs made diagnosis a guessing game—certainly a slap in the face of “do no harm.” Even when fairly secure with a diagnosis, we realized that patients often misunderstood or disregarded prescriptions. Finally, on many occasions, patients came with pangs of hunger. How could you tell the hungry to eat more?

Doing the women’s health surveys allowed us to enter into people’s homes and glimpse daily life. Homes were usually thatched wood with straw roofs and a packed dirt or cement floor. Fancier houses had tin roofs and cinderblock walls. Every house was sparsely furnished, overcrowded, and immaculately clean. People would pull chairs out into the front yard for us to sit on—intent on providing good hospitality.

During those visits we surveyed women’s knowledge of pre- and postnatal health, assessing education needs as well as



Christen Parker

Christen Parker and Rodney Yarnal will celebrate their commitment to each other, with the community in attendance and dancing, this May.

gathering statistics about infant and maternal mortality. Deaths were reported with stoicism—it was just all too common. In addition, we treated children with a dose of Vitamin A and an anti-worm treatment. We saw a lot of big bellies and red-tinted hair—indicators of worms and malnutrition. We were able to hand out prenatal and children's vitamins, but only a few weeks supply, and only until our own supply ran out.

The elementary school Christen taught at seemed pretty typical—barren classrooms with no electricity. Chalkboards were painted plywood in various states of repair. Students sat in benches or small desks. No school is free; uniforms and books must be purchased. By the end about a fourth of the students had been kicked out for lack of tuition (about \$6 a year). Corporal punishment and recitation illustrate the tragic lack of educational advancement. Students are expected to learn in French, while the language at home is Haitian Kreyol. What will be in store for even the brightest students when lack of opportunity is the norm?

Adult classes were really exciting. Word of mouth brought people who really wanted to learn and provided motivation to prepare good lessons and stay animated. Most of the students would have loved to continue English education in the city, but again the costs are prohibitive.

One of the most rewarding experiences was our involvement with a mother and twins we met at MN. Little baby Sandy, one of twins born eight weeks premature, came to her one-month check-up weighing three pounds, chronically dehydrated, and almost lifeless. In the U.S., this patient would've been admitted to the I.C.U.; in Haiti, the public hospital refused her. We decided to bring her to our home to intensively feed and care for her, and her mother agreed. We later discovered that she believed she was giving her child up—a misunderstanding we regretted but that pointed to this mother's courage and love for her child. After two weeks, Sandy had gained a pound and some, and she returned home. By the end of our stay, Sandy reached 6.6 pounds! A near miracle.

Through these trials we came to know the family well. In their small thatched hut live six people, including a grandmother with dementia. Even with a weekly stipend they struggled to obtain enough to eat. We asked why this should happen while many live in opulence in the U.S. Reappropriating resources would have a good chance of saving lives, or at least sharply changing them. This is sobering and calls for restructuring our lives to serve those most in need with all the tools at our disposal. Haiti asks us to align ourselves with the poor, to live in and among their suffering, and to effect the kind of change for them that we would wish for ourselves, if the tables were turned.

Returning to Karen House, we've found a deeper appreciation for the philosophy and work of the Worker, a place where opting for the poor is commonplace and not extraordinary at all.



Poems by Christen Parker

Precarious -
Machetes in small hands
Bare feet on rocky roads
Bathing in a dirty river
Drinking from a tire well
Life here, like a goat,
Is often tethered
With a coarse rope.

In Haiti
It is safer
for a woman to carry
something on her head
than in her womb.

Our still life images
Of poverty and suffering
Now walk around
In our memories
Real, Breathing, Speaking to us
Confessing for us
The crimes of humanity
And then sitting to peel vegetables
And offer us mangoes.

From Karen House

by Becky Hassler



While I was on house yesterday, I started browsing through some of the back issues of *The Round Table* that we keep in the cubbies of the Quiet Room. No one would ever know, but in the room that we use for our "emergency couch" for someone to spend the night when we are otherwise full (and they have nowhere else to go) are the tucked-away treasures of voices from previous years. All the volumes of *The Round Table*, dating back to the late 70's are there, so full of wisdom and passion, history and compassion, knowledge and love. Voices from former community and dear friends of Karen House. Most have moved on and some have died — our dear Ann, Mev, and Mark. They, this community of saints (though many would shun this thought as did Dorothy) surround, on any given night, perhaps the most desperate and vulnerable guest in our house.

As I was looking through many of these treasured pieces, our newest community member, Laura Ragan, whose energy and enthusiasm has been a lovely addition here, began looking through some of them asking questions about many faces of former community she did not recognize. It was delightful to tell her stories of who they were and what they brought to Karen House or about some aspect of their personality that was so unique or endearing or funny. I showed Tony an article written by Pat Coyin a 1994 edition on how the Worker still influences his life. There were articles from Virginia, Ann, Mary Ann, Sue, Joe, Zach, Tim, Mitch, Mary Dutch,



Mark, Ellen, Mev, Bill, Jim and Katrina... and so many more. It gave me such a sense of history — a history of such goodness and love and passion for life — a sense of peace and justice and personalism.

As I read these articles and marveled at the young faces of yesteryear (including my own!), I'd get "interrupted" by the doorbell as someone came for sandwiches. I'd invite them in the dining room for leftovers from lunch and, of course, bread and other donations for them to take "home" with them. There, on the wall of the dining room, is the quotation from Dorothy Day on community, the one about... "how we know each other in the breaking of bread and we are not alone anymore..."

As I pondered yesterday that though so many of these amazing folks have moved on from Karen House and how others, just as amazing, have come to take their places, I realized yet again how each and every person that comes through the doors of Karen House, to stay for a short while or a very long time, affects the lives of our community and those of our guests. Each has made a difference in what is still going on here today.

Christen, Laura, and I were talking about how it would be so cool to put the names of everyone who stayed in each room on the third floor on the doors. Depending on when one of us came to the community, we call the rooms by different names. Teka's room, for so many, was Elizabeth's room to others; Ann and Virginia's room was Dan and Jason's room; Jim and Katrina's room was my room and is now Annjie and Jenny's room.

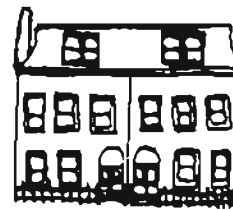
One of my favorite pieces from Dorothy is her postscript in *The Long Loneliness*: "We were just sitting there talking when lines of people began to form... and it is still going on today..." People still coming for sandwiches, still coming to spend the night and feel welcomed when they have been turned away everywhere else.

So thank you all from the bottom of my heart for your piece of history here at Karen House. May your lives be blessed as you continue to strive to build a new society in the shell of the old, wherever that may be. Your labors and love have been blessed and continue to bless so many of us — even the woman staying on the emergency couch tonight.



Becky Hassler enjoys watching the children in her home, Grace House, as they grow and play.

From Little House



by Mary Ann McGivern, SL

Dateline New York City
Dear Catholic Worker Community,

I have accepted a job with Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. WILPF is an accredited non-governmental organization at the United Nations. In short, I am the director of WILPF's NGO UN office.

I live in an abandoned convent (13 bedrooms for me, the grade school principal, my two cats, and assorted guests). My cats roam the whole house, claiming possession if not outright ownership.



Still faithful, 2004

Andrew Wimmer

The WILPF office runs two projects. Our web site for our anti-nuke work is, reachingcriticalwill.org. We coordinate NGO efforts, report on the governments, publish an analysis of the 13 steps to disarmament, and publish an inventory of nuclear holdings, country by country.

Peacewomen.org tracks and promotes Security Council resolution 1325. (Everybody here lives by resolution numbers

and initials.) 1325 calls for significant numbers of women at every level of peace-keeping—at treaty negotiations, directing peace keepers, standing against rape and pillage, and so on. 1325 is a remarkable document and the peacewomen website documents its effectiveness and highlights the needs for intervention.

I'm a director, so as glamorous as working at the United Nations sounds, my job is to raise money for the three staff who manage these projects and to start WILPF UN projects on financing for development and the right to water. I'd say that all this work keeps me off the streets except that I didn't bring a car to New York, so I walk the streets a lot.

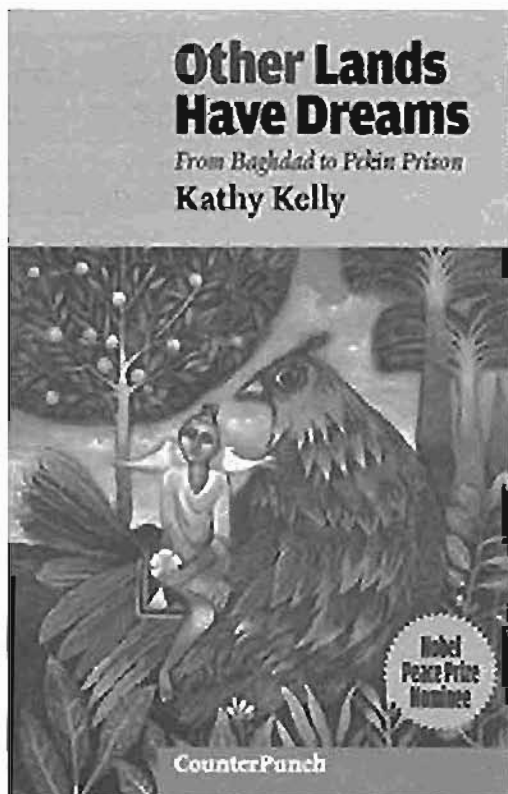
The move was a great simplification of my life. Any talk about living close to the bone is belied by ready access to Catholic Worker donations of clothes, microwave oven, futon, coffee maker, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. I gave away at least 400 books, plus plants, my garden, my car, and my house. Of course, none of this stuff was really mine to start with—and I took a lot with me.

Twenty Catholic Workers came over Wednesday night, April 14, to pack my U-Haul truck. Elijah directed the loading and Mike tied it all in tight. What was left has been sold off to benefit Downtown Teens. And then we all had pizza and beer.

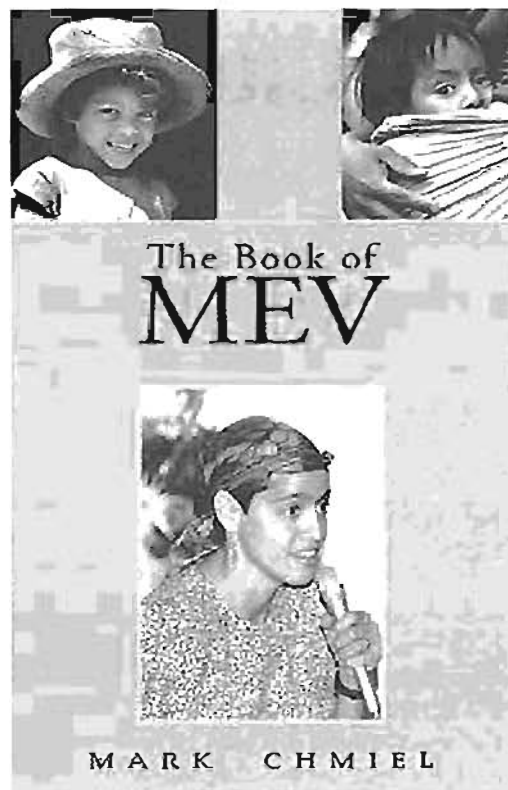
Thursday, just past Terra Haute, a right front wheel bearing blew out. I was lucky, got over to the side of the road easily. But the tow truck driver had to tip the U-Haul way back to remove the drive shaft before he could tow it to Indianapolis. There they gave me a different truck. When the men opened the rear door, none of the boxes had shifted. Nothing broke. Thanks, Elijah. Thanks, Mike.

Teka and Mike are the Little House proprietors now and New Roots Urban Farm, operated by Trish, Joe, and Amy, owns the garden. Sometimes my thoughts drift to what's in bloom: lilies by the time you read this, hibiscus, hyacinth, ripe strawberries, and apricots. Making a list of plants is less painful, though, than imagining how Tevon likes summer camp or how big Finn has grown. As much as I like my job, as busy as I am, I miss you all. +

Mary Ann, we have known you in the breaking of the bread. You will never be away from our hearts.



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Karen House needs: Money (see enclosed letter), Laundry Detergent, 100% Fruit Juice, Cereal, and Fair Trade Coffee.

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to *The Round Table*, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO. 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work with the poor. People working on this issue include: Joe Angert, Melissa Brickey, Teka Childress, Mark Chmiel, Carol Leslie, Bill Miller, Barb Prosser, Ellen Rehg, and Jenny Truax. Letters to the editor are encouraged: we'll print as many as space permits.

The Round Table

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