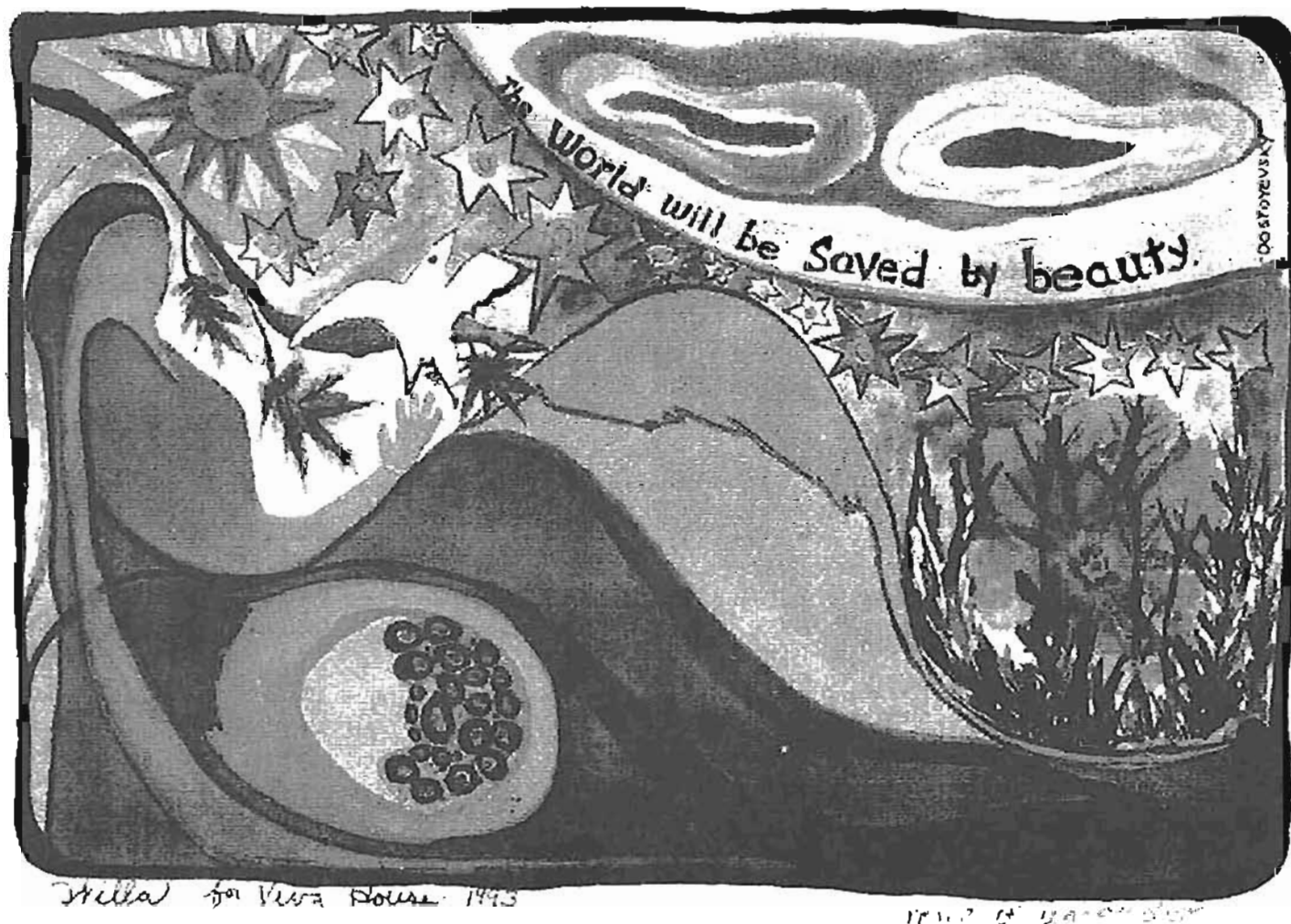


THE Round Table

Spring
1997

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



Why This Issue?

In the current film Paradise Road, I caught a glimpse of this theme of The Round Table. A group of women of various nationalities is enduring W.W.II in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. They experience many brutalities, but they are sustained by a seemingly outlandish project: to practice for and perform as a vocal orchestra for each other. And after much surreptitious practice, they come together one evening to perform their vocal rendition of Dvorák's New World Symphony. One nay-sayer among the women refused to participate, seeing their efforts as mere "humming," nothing special. Did such beauty save the imprisoned women? Well, if we have a modest, rather than grandiose, notion of "save," yes, the music inspired their best selves and formed them into a harmonious community in the midst of desperate circumstances.

In their joint reflection, Mary Dutcher and Ellen Rehg address this hunger for beauty in Dorothy Day, a hunger that was not adventitious but integral to her spirituality. Two of our long faithful friends ponder our daily need for beauty: Mary Ann McGivern shares her experience of nurturing roses which, like her writing, is a work of love, and Joe Angert testifies to beauty's power, from Verdi to Picasso. Bill Miller elicits from folksinger Charlie King some of the struggles and joys of being a musician who not only calls attention to today's political issues, but also has to make a living on the road. And we are pleased to present the reflection from poet and former Nicaraguan Minister of Culture Ernesto Cardenal on the Nicaraguan people's commitment to old and new popular art forms, including painting, poetry, and music.

The text of our centerfold is a reprint of a Summer 1987 Round Table--the "From Karen House" article by Ann Manganaro, SL, (1946-1993), in which she also meditates on our central theme, graced by photos by Ellen Rehg and Teka Childress.

In From Abroad, Anne Montgomery shares a reflection on the violence in Hebron, reprinted here with permission, in an article from Christian Peacemaker Teams. Saxophonist Teka Childress also addresses the desire for beauty in From Karen House, while in From Little House, Mary Ann McGivern recounts her enlightened dealing with credit cards. Teka and Rebekah Hassler, RN & FNP (Family Nurse Practitioner), raise critical questions posed by the closing of Regional Hospital in Round Table Talk.

With this issue, we invite you to meditate more deeply on the mystery of beauty in our daily life and moreover, we encourage you to savor others' creations and give birth to your own, for the healing of our world.



--Mark Chmiel

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Dorothy Day's Aesthetic

by Ellen Rehg and Mary Dutcher

That Dorothy Day was sensitive to art and beauty is abundantly clear from any reading of her life and works. Dorothy's decision to enter the church was occasioned by her months of pregnancy when she lived in serenity, surrounded by natural beauty, in a rural area of Staten Island. In Loaves and Fishes, she writes:

Out in the woods of Staten Island (still a nickel on the ferry) there are birches, and beeches with their round gray bolls, the willows yellow-twigged, the pines bright green, the maples rosy even on a gray day. There is green moss in the swamps, and the spring peepers have started their haunting call. Skunk cabbages in all their glory of striped greens and maroon have started up from the marshes and the little brook. . . Oh love, oh joy, oh spring, stirring in the heart. (p. 76)

Obviously, for Dorothy, nature was a primary source of beauty. She and St. Francis of Assisi seem to share an aesthetic in this regard.

She was wont to quote Dostoevsky that the world is saved by beauty. This was her reply to her friend Kathleen De Sutter Jordan who had asked her how "people can combine voluntary poverty and family life." (The Universe Bends Toward Justice, Ed. Angie O'Gorman, p.120)

On the face of it, this seems like a strange reply. Perhaps in saying this Dorothy was thinking of her own conversion and how connected it was to the beauty of nature; to her long walks on the beach, contemplating the sea and the sky, and the awesome beauty of the natural processes she was experiencing within her, the growth of her child. Jordan writes that Dorothy "encouraged others to 'feast on beauty', on God in all God's manifestations." (Ibid.) If one has the eyes to see, this beauty is all

around us, no matter what our vocation or where we reside.

The beauty which she feasted on and which fed her soul included not only natural beauty but also literary art. She was a great lover of books. Her love of the Russian novelists is well known, but her tastes also ran to contemporary American. It seems that Dorothy saw her life and the struggles of the poor reflected in literature; and in turn, the literature she read helped to illuminate different aspects of her life.

Dorothy saw her life and the struggles of the poor reflected in literature

She wrote an article for Commonweal in 1957 in which she described an experience she had in jail. What is interesting is the way a short story by J.D. Salinger helped her to make sense of her experiences there. The story helped her to see what she considered to be her failure to love her fellow inmates. One of the women jailed with her was a beautiful young woman, and Dorothy was shocked and filled with fear for her when the other prisoners attempted to attack her. She demanded that the young woman be put in a cell with her or another friend. She later reflected that her fear for the young woman had caused her to react harshly to the other inmates.

Ellen Rehg, INFP, and Mary Dutcher, ESFJ, engaged in an "experiment in truth" in collaborating on this article, a first for The Round Table.

She thought of Salinger's story in which a woman named Franny is so entangled in a religious practice called the Jesus Prayer that she had become emotionally disturbed. Her brother is able to show Franny that her problem is caused by her attempt to escape from the duty to love humankind in all its nitty-gritty reality. He tells her that "Jesus Christ is the fat lady," and that there are no short cuts to God that ignore the human reality. This was precisely what Dorothy felt she had done in her reaction to the other inmates.

I thought of this story of Salinger's and I found it hard to excuse myself for my own immediate harsh reaction. It is all very well to hate the sin and love the sinner in theory, but it is hard to do in practice. By my peremptory rejection of the kind of welcome we received, I had of course protected Judith, but there was no expression of loving friendship in it towards the others. Lying there on my hard bed, I mourned to myself, 'Jesus is the fat lady.' Jesus is this unfortunate girl, Jackie, who is making advances. Jesus is Baby Doll, her cellmate. (*Selected Writings*, Ed. Robert Ellsberg, p.291)

Literature served to remind her of this lesson, that God lives in the ugliness of people's lives, as well as in the beauty of them.

Another aspect of Dorothy's aesthetic that we can identify is her conviction that beauty or culture is not just for the rich. There is a well-known story about a beautiful diamond that came as a donation. Dorothy promptly gave it to one of the women guests. Someone (who, we might say, had an aesthetic akin to that of Judas) asked if it would not have been better to sell the diamond and acquire material resources for the guests. Dorothy's reply was to the effect, "Do you think the poor do not appreciate beauty?" Along the same lines, Dorothy notes when discussing a workers' school at one of the New York houses:

The best was none too good for the poor, we thought, so we had such priests as Father La Farge, S.J., Father Joseph McSorley, and Father Paul Hanly Furfey of Catholic University, not to mention such distinguished visitors as Jacques Maritain and Hilaire Belloc. (*Loaves and Fishes*, p. 30)

Yet another identifiable aspect of Dorothy's aesthetic, again akin to St. Francis, is that beauty is not an escape from ugliness nor a means of denial. She wrote of feeling guilt for listening to the symphony on the radio, perhaps believing that it was escapist. So strongly did she believe that beauty is not to be used to escape from the ugly, she once felt compelled to kiss a woman with cancer, as St. Francis had kissed the leper.

A woman with cancer of the face was begging. . . and when I gave her money. . . she tried to kiss my hand. The only thing I could do was to kiss her dirty old face with the gaping hole in it where an eye and a nose had been. It sounds like a heroic deed, but it was not. We get used to ugliness so quickly. What we avert our eyes from today can be borne tomorrow when we have leaned a little more about love. Nurses know this, and so do mothers. (*Ibid*, p. 79)

Dorothy's appreciation for beauty led her to seek good illustrators for the Catholic Worker paper. In 1949 she met the German born wood cut engraver Fritz Eichenberg, whose prints now typify the classic Catholic Worker "look," so much a part of the publication did they become. Eichenberg shared a love for Dostoevsky with Dorothy. She knew him from his illustrations for *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers' Karamozov*. Eichenberg thought that Dorothy "had such an intense





Alta Corbin

love of beauty, for art of every kind. It was deeply embedded in her. For me this was one of her most striking qualities." (Fritz Eichenberg, Works of Mercy, Ed. Robert Ellsberg, p. 18)

Dorothy asked Eichenberg if he would be willing to do some work for the Catholic Worker paper even though she could not pay him. "Dorothy wanted something emotional, something that would touch people through images, as she was trying to do through words, and something that would communicate the spirit of the Catholic Worker to people who, perhaps, could not read the articles," he later recalled. (Ibid, p. 53) She was "so hungry for art." (Ibid, p. 54)

Where did this hunger for art come from? Did she feel surrounded by ugliness at the New York houses of hospitality and so need art as a recompense for that? Yet when Dorothy writes of her life in the city she rarely mentions ugliness in connection with the urban squalor and poverty around her. Instead her eye was drawn to the beauty that shone through the cityscape before her. She wrote: "At exactly 8:05 a.m., the morning sun gilds the upper floors of the buildings across the street, creeping from the gray one to the red brick one. A lovely sight." (Selected Writings, Ed. Robert Ellsberg, p. 360)

And again:

'I know not ugliness, it is a mood which has forsaken me.' Where does that quote come from? Suddenly, these words had come into my mind this morning while I enjoyed watching the rays

of the sun rising over the East River, touching up the withered leaves on the little tree across the street. (Ibid.)

Although the leaves are withered, they are still made beautiful by the rays of the early morning sun. I don't know if these were the leaves of a tree in autumn or the leaves of one of those sad and bent trees with which we are all familiar, that are unequal to the assault of city life. I picture the latter, though, and find it instructive that even here Dorothy can see beauty. I wonder if this is similar to the way she could see Christ in every person? No matter how obscure or hidden, or how peripheral, there is beauty everywhere in creation as there is God in every human heart.

No, far from beauty being absent or scarce in her life, Dorothy was constantly reminded of it. It loomed so large that it could not but speak to her of God. And this is why she hungered to put art in the Catholic Worker paper. It was beauty that had brought her soul to God, that had, with quiet grace gently effected her conversion to Catholicism. What words and theory had failed to do, what even the example of good people around her had failed to do, the beauty of God's creation, and its expression through art, had accomplished. Of course she could not rely solely on the articles in the paper no matter how theoretically sound or stirring. It was, after all, beauty that would save the world, not theory or even the practice of good works, but the beautiful, blessed vision that permeates creation in every face and place around us. +

A Rose by Any Other Name is Social Change

by Mary Ann McGivern, SL



Over the years, when I have sometimes said that perhaps the biggest contribution I have made to social change is to plant roses in my garden, nobody has taken the gambit and responded with a reflection about beauty and social change. They may think that I am modest, or humble, or fishing for compliments about my writing or organizing efforts. But really, I'm proud of planting those roses.

The point isn't my gardening skill. They are Simplicity roses from Jackson & Perkins, guaranteed to resist disease, survive below 0 and above 100 degree weather, deadhead themselves, and bloom all summer. What I'm proud of is my artistic vision of the beauty they would provide in the distant future when all I had in the present moment was a lot filled with rubble — and I'm proud of my hard work clearing the land, planting the roses, mulching them every winter, and pruning them every spring. Beauty is a great gift to the universe, and my garden adds some to a small corner. I'm grateful I had the wit to do it.

My Metaphysics 101 professor, Dan Walsh, dinned the Good, the True, and the Beautiful into us, and I find myself honoring his memory by contemplating those Platonic ideals. It was a long time ago, but I think Dan said that the Beautiful is the full expression of the Good and the True. If something were evil or false, it could not be Beautiful. I know that now from my own experience, too. Beauty attracts us and helps us to be good and true. It shapes and changes our lives. Creating Beauty is a good way, maybe the best, to resist violence. (When Dan Walsh spoke about the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, it was clear to me he capitalized them.)

Beauty offsets our unrequited desires for vengeance, enabling us to love our enemies, do good to those who persecute us, turn the other cheek, and walk the extra mile. Maybe the seamless garment ethic of choosing life hasn't taken hold because too many of us have

too much ugliness in our lives and we view art and beauty (e.g., a tunic woven without a seam) as luxuries.

The task of creating beauty requires hard work and attention to detail. Gardening demands my full attention, lest I mistake seedlings for weeds; so I come into the house dirty, but with my head cleared of conversations, lists of unfinished tasks, fears of obstacles and risks. Similarly, when I write an article or a radio commentary, I work at it. I focus, rewrite, spend time clarifying and ordering my thoughts into words, sentences, and paragraphs. When I stop I'm tired and my body hurts from the effort. It's worth it because, sometimes, the finished product is not only clear but beautiful.

Making music, doing carpentry or pottery, painting, cooking, and home decorating are all both work and acts of making beauty that resist the violence surrounding us. To spend an hour baking bread is to spend an hour defying evil not only by refusing to participate in it but also by creating a peak experience of sensory satisfaction.

Generally speaking, creating beauty demands blood, sweat, and tears. A few times, though, in the act of writing, eloquent words have seemed to pour effortlessly through my mind and fingers from some other source. But even then, I've set the stage for my muse by early drafts and outlines; and the task of seamlessly binding the inspired parts to the rest of the play or essay demands meticulous attention.

Creating art and beauty is different than the work of reducing opportunities for violence or building a just society. But creating art and beauty is work, essential work. We need poetry and roses along with tractors, economic analysis and wheat flour.



Mary Ann McGivern, SL, has been commissioned, as an experiment in truth, to author 80 meditations for busy meal planners.

"I Believe in Michelangelo..."

by Joe Angert

"I believe in Michelangelo, Velasquez, and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of colour, the redemption of all things by Beauty everlasting; and the message of Art that has made these hands blessed. Amen. Amen."

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

George may sound a bit irreverent in his rewording of the Nicean Creed, and I'm sure that would please him; but I think he's precisely and profoundly correct in his observation. I also believe in beauty, or rather I believe through and because of beauty. Beauty is our link



between the physical and spiritual. Beauty is the proof and reassurance that we need day in and day out to make sense of our lives and the world around us. Beauty is the fuel that sustains us one day to the next. Today is April 13th and the morning is nearly over. I had to rise early today and that was all the more difficult after a five a.m. phone call that turned out to be a wrong number. My morning was salvaged shortly after I awoke by the beauty of music. From far back in my memory came a Verdi melody from *Il trovatore* — the aria *Ai Nostre Monte*. Soon I was whistling away in complete contentment, captivated by the nostalgic sentiment of the song.

Throughout our lives we return again and again to the most fundamental questions: Why are we here? What should we do? What does it all mean? Philosophers continue to think deeply about these questions but in the end they can offer little more than argument and opinion. Our religions tell us that in the end what's required is a leap of faith. There is no rational path to enlightenment. Leaps are scary. I like to think that beauty is God's way of bridging the gap for us. In and of itself beauty is not an answer, but it is our reassurance and encouragement.

Beauty is irrational. There is no scientific explanation for it. Physically beauty doesn't exist — it's only a perception we have and share. Yet beauty, or rather the recognition of it, is considered a hallmark of humanity. As archeologists unearth the remains of our earliest ancestors, it's the discovery of their art that most forcefully reaches across the millennia and reveals for us our "hereditary" bond. So what that DNA testing demonstrates our genetic linkage: It's the Lascaux cave paintings that really excite us. Beauty which has no physical presence, and which is irrelevant to a scientific explanation of what makes the universe tick, is nonetheless a defining characteristic of humanity. In our art we see the clearest reflection of ourselves. Art and beauty define us as we recognize our face in the reflection.

Joe Angert engages in a challenging "experiment in truth" when he lays out *The Round Table* in collaboration with the rest of the editorial committee. See more of Joe's photography at: <http://home.stlnet.com/~jangert>

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Art has always been one of humankind's primary activities. It falls in place on the priority list right after safety, eating and procreation, unless you're a Republican. One could argue that in other than acutely stressful moments, art rises up to supercede even the most primal instincts. We all must eat, but given the opportunity, we choose to adorn our eating experience in ways that are biologically unnecessary, yet attractive.

Art is fundamentally social. We have the ability to experience beauty as individuals and the personal experience can be quite powerful, but the experience of beauty shared is the most rewarding. This social component of beauty and art is likewise political. Beauty, as I noted above, helps us find meaning in our lives. Beauty leads us to God and so politically it is a most serious threat to tyrants. Adolph, Mao, and Jesse knew/know full well the threat that art poses. Art reveals and encourages humane behaviour.

I began writing these notes two weeks ago. As I take up the task of finishing, it is now April 27th. Yesterday was a paradoxical anniversary for great beauty and great ugliness. Sixty years ago on April 26th during the Spanish civil war, a squadron of German bombers obliterated the small Basque town of Guernica and ushered in a

new era of inhumanity. Bombs dropped from the air were a relatively new idea and although they had been used before, they had not been seemingly dropped indiscriminately on a civilian population. Hundreds died and the world was shocked. A week later Picasso produced what is arguably now the most memorable painting of the 20th century.

Picasso's Guernica is both beautiful and terrifying. Art and beauty are redemptive. Beauty celebrates life and is most often a revelry, but beauty can also address our wounds and our ugliness and turn us toward healing. Handel's Missa in Tempore Bellum is another example of the power of art and beauty to respond to evil with an invitation to heal. Handel's prayer for peace is all the more compelling because it is so beautiful.

I believe I was asked to make these observations because I'm an artist by profession, and I suspect I've strayed from the task assigned me as the editors were more interested in an inside perspective. Art is very important to me, but I'm not foolish enough to think that beauty is the province of artists. We only spend a little more time pointing it out, and are privileged for that. To be redeemed by beauty and to become beautiful are the joys of living for all of us. ✦



Joe Angert

Charlie King: Music to Serve the People

Interview by Bill Miller

[Editor's note: Charlie King, folksinger and songwriter has been performing for over twenty years throughout the U.S. and has over a dozen recordings to his credit. He usually performs in St. Louis in March. Over the years many of us at the Catholic Worker have been inspired, challenged, humored and touched by his songs.]

Round Table: In your perspective, do few or many artists take up the cause of social change in their art?

Charlie King: In my immediate experience, lots of artists do, but that has to do with the circles that I travel in. I helped to organize the People's Music Network, a gathering place for political music people whether they write or sing or collect—whatever. And also I'm active in the Labor Arts Exchanges, which are for artists who use their art in connection with their union activities. So I work in small subsets of politically active artists. . .

In folk music I think people feel that political messages are kind of corny now. I find a lot of singers/songwriters re-focusing on relationships, which is dismaying to me. And the political artists—unless they're very well established like Pete Seeger, Joan Baez or Tom Paxton—are not, in my opinion, very political.

RT: How do the economics of being a professional artist affect your art?

CK: It's very dramatic. I've learned from more successful people, John McCutcheon for example, to really downplay my political nature as a writer and performer when I promote myself. So, for example, if you read my press releases, they [don't say] Charlie King is a seeker of peace and justice, a political songwriter who talks about the issues of the day and who's written songs about soldiers with leukemia. It kind of dances around that issue and focuses on entertainment . . . I make choices based not on my political integrity but on what I feel will

best serve my career. You can not put an idealistic spin on that. I know I don't want to set-up a promotional image for myself that says, "Charlie King is a pacifist and a labor activist and if you're a pacifist and labor activist, come to his concert. Otherwise, stay away."

You don't want to set up an image that chases people away because they think they are going to be assaulted in their sense of what's right and wrong. So, as someone who tries to make a living at this, just the way I present myself to the public is affected by the need to generate support in the commercial world and not limit that to the faithful remnant of politically active people.

RT: Would this influence a topic that you would write a song about or what you would say in a song?

CK: I think that my style of writing and selecting songs has definitely changed. It's shifted away from the more head-on confrontational political broadside, which characterized a lot of my early recordings and writings, and moved in the direction of [writing] political songs that are more like movies or plays in the sense that they present a story and the audience is invited to make their own judgements based on the story. But obviously you weight it in the direction you want people to go; you imbed your ideology in the story or song. . .

If you go to a rally or picket line then you sing songs more like "we're right, they're wrong, hurray for us." But it's only in those charged, functional political settings that [such] songs are really the best choices. So I find myself wanting to write and collect songs that invite the audience to be more of a participant in the process of selecting values and making choices. . .

The place where I write songs now is on airplanes and in rental cars. So I make choices to spend my time doing stuff that's based around making a living rather than making choices around how I can best be a singer, a songwriter and a politically conscious person. I hardly

Bill Miller engages in an ever-present "experiment in truth" by parenting a teenager and a toddler.

ever find the time to ask myself that question. . .

I haven't been able to find a way to break out of the clerical track I'm in. That's where livelihood really conflicts with art for me--it eats up all my time trying to earn a living in a very small market where most of us are scratching.

RT: Do you think artists and musicians should do what they're drawn to do even if that overlooks the suffering of people around them? Do artists have responsibilities outside their art or inclinations?

CK: There's a quote I always associate with Chairman Mao (which may give him more credit than he deserves), and he said, "Serve the people." It's a nice pungent sentence, I like it. Bob Franke, in a column about songwriting, says, "Write for your community." I think that artists should have a sense of social responsibility and should ask themselves whether their art--let me just talk about music--is serving the community, is serving the people. But it's not a very helpful statement because then you have to ask, "Well, how does it serve the community?" Did Corita Kent serve the community? Did Otis Redding, who wrote "Sitting on the Dock of the Bay," serve the community? What is art that serves the community? Utah Phillips, who is a good singer/songwriter and a political activist, said that bad art is bad politics. If you are turning out art that is not well-developed, not polished--whatever that means--and it's merely politically useful, then not only is that bad art, it's bad politics. You can turn that around and say that anything that's exquisite and uplifts the community is politically valuable. . .

I like useful songs. I like learning historical songs written for a very narrow, specific political situation. I like framing songs in a specific historical context. I like getting songwriting assignments--having people call up and say, "Can you come to a rally next Thursday and write about the garbage workers who are out on strike?" I go, "Yes!" Part of it is that it's easier to write a song about garbage workers on strike than it is to write a song about the heart of God or what it means to be human.

I think that a function that I do, when I am doing my work at the best level that I want to be doing it, is to be able to sing a song that shines a light on something important in our lives as a people--where people go, "Aha, I never thought about it that way before." . . . I think about songs I write around gay and lesbian issues. I feel like

what I'm shooting for and have some success at, is to present gay and lesbian issues to straight and sometimes relatively conservative audiences in a way where they feel at home with the issues, where they feel like these are our children, our brothers, our sisters, our parents. They feel at home with the issue because the song is funny or it comes in a familiar package or the characters in the song are empathetic and not threatening. . .

When I wrote "If Jimmy didn't Have to Go," I felt like I really had broken something open there. I had drawn people in with a sense of compassion with this American family and all of a sudden they found out where the song needed to be and where it directed their compassion was with an Iraqi family--the people we were murdering--we needed to see them as our children. . .

I don't write much as personal self-expression. Maybe some of the joyful anthems like, "Pour Yourself Out in Love," or "Our Life is More than Our Work," or "Step into the Holy Circle." [In songs like these I had] this feeling, this insight and it makes me feel good and I want to sing about it. But even there I'm singing about this because I want you to know about this insight or feeling I've had--so it's all pretty didactic.

RT: Has it been a struggle for you to combine your concerns for justice with your love for music and singing or do they go hand in hand?

CK: . . . I go on vacation and I pack all of my non-political T-shirts and we have people over and sing non-political songs. Not entirely but pretty much so. I've



ADA BUCHINE

thought of doing an album entitled, "Songs I Sing on My Day Off." Some of my favorite recordings are by Linda Ronstadt and Maria Muldarr. So there is part of me that would like less school and more recess. I guess the magic moment is when someone comes up with a song that is both politically astute and artistically beautiful. I think that's probably what we're all shooting for. I don't think as a songwriter it's a big conflict for me because I'm really not drawn to writing about other stuff as much as I'm drawn to writing about the political realities that we find ourselves in and the stories that give us a sense of hope or a sense of warning. I think about the three words in the song, "If I Had a Hammer": Danger, Warning and Love. Those are good categories for political songwriters. . .

Actually, that's one of the nice things about making the Irish album: politics kind of went out the window—that was not important. . . So I guess I've taken the Irish music project as a license to not worry about politics and it's been fun to just sing songs for the joy of it, for the sound or the lilt of it. . .

There are sometimes when I feel like I should change a song to make it more politically correct so that might be a sense of restriction. This might get back to that thing of the songs I sing on my day off. There aren't a lot of songs I sing [in my performances] just for the ecstatic experience of it. I tend to have a pretty politically focused performance repertoire and don't include a lot of

songs in it that don't work the agenda.

RT: What do you, as an artist and folksinger, give up in your decision to pursue your craft? What do you gain?

CK: . . . I'm very fortunate to be able to do the work that I like and work that feels meaningful because my assumption is most people don't have that in their lives. Most people are working at jobs they don't like and that they don't feel meaningful. . .

So when I say I feel I'm lucky and I like doing this work maybe I'm glossing over some of the price that I pay within my family and the price I pay in terms of my spiritual well-being. When I hit the road, my spirituality hits the skids. I don't build into the day or into the week disciplined time for prayer or meditation or church-going or any of the things that I do very regularly when I'm home. When I'm home for any length of time, what I do that's different than being on the road is that I work on certain spiritual and personal disciplines that help me be more sane at home. But I'm really drawn into the merry-go-round of the road. I'm drawn into the chaos of the road. It's not like I sit on the edge of my bed and say, "God, I can't believe that I have to go back out on tour again." There is the attraction of it but I also realize that I lose things when I do that. But my overall impression is, it's good work, I like the experience of travelling and singing.

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Bread and Roses

*As we go marching marching in the beauty of the day
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lots gray
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses
For the people here us singing: bread and roses, bread and roses!*

*As we go marching marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient call for bread
Small art and love and beauty their dredging spirits knew
Yes it is bread we fight for, but we fight for roses too.*

(Bread and Roses, a song that is "both politically astute and artistically beautiful," to use Charlie King's definition of a magic moment, was written by James Oppenheim and Caroline Kohlfat. It refers to the 1912 IWW-organized textile workers' strike in Lawrence, MA, where one of the women strikers carried a placard stating, "We want bread and we want roses, too.")

I have been thinking lately about weeds and wild things, about how insistently life springs up, even in the midst of our forlorn, abandoned neighborhood's cracked sidewalks and rubble-strewn vacant lots. Those lots are teeming just now with chicory and clover and all kinds of other wonderful weeds. I even see an occasional rabbit darting nervously about among our "lilies of the field."

And throughout the day the air is filled with the sound of all those sweet little unassuming gray-brown birds that don't mind living in cities -- sparrows and wren and warblers and such. An occasional cardinal or red-winged blackbird appears, to join in the singing and scolding. Our yard is especially blessed with birds, thanks to Lee's birdfeeder, but they throng all through the neighborhood (drawn perhaps by all those weedy miniature prairies).



Then there are the ailanthus heaven." Not originally wild world, imported, in fact, years ago to "ornament" the dens of the well-to-do. But time intervening, finding them trivial, I suppose. They are so incredibly hardy trees, so seem to sprout straight from brick. Ailanthus trees are ebling building across from dow, softening its demise. A good parable, St. Louis' own Reign of God is like an ailanthus grew up through a crack in the concrete to become the tallest tree of the neighborhood, offering shelter and shade to birds and whatever human souls seek refuge and fort.

And even so the Reign of God does grow in our midst, right here in Karen House, in our neighborhood. In the midst of all the harshness and adversity around us, life teems, grace abounds. Frail tormented guests find the wherewithal to aid each other. Stressed, struggling young mothers nourish their children's needs. Children whose lives form a shocking skein of pain and suffering still play, laugh, sing, offer joyful hugs to the casual stranger.



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It is, none of it, our doing, no more than the weeds and the wild things. It is a gift to us, like the chicory, the wren, the ailanthus, the cooling rain after long dry days. It is the mystery of redemption at work in the world, in us and around us, in "all things wild and wonderful, all creatures great and small."



Beauty and Liberation

Culture in Nicaragua's Revolution

by Ernesto Cardenal (trans. Michael Dulick & Mary Dutcher)

The Literacy Crusade was one of the great campaigns of liberation in Nicaragua. One half of the Nicaraguans taught the other half—59% were illiterate. But this was not only a liberation at the scholastic level. Not just a transmission of knowledge but rather a process of consciousness-raising. Sergio Ramirez said it at the beginning: "We are teaching to read not just to teach but in order to change."

Thousands of young people spread throughout the entire country, even to the most remote places, in the heaviest forests, in the most inaccessible mountains, with the greatest sacrifices, living with the peasants, eating with them, sleeping with them, working with them, until they triumphed, leaving all of these areas that had been drowned in ignorance declared territories free of illiteracy. These young men and women, besides going to teach, went to learn from the peasants. And the most important of all is that they fraternized with them; the young literacy crusaders were called "son" or "daughter" by the peasants in whose houses they lived; and they called them "papa" and "mama." They returned to their old homes feeling that they had another family—humble, poor and peasant. The entire country admirably formed community after this great Literacy Crusade. And all of this was a triumph of love.

With our democratization of the formerly illiterate, the peasants not only knew their letters but also their reality and themselves. Edmund, a 16-year-old literacy crusader says, "They learned quickly because we talked about their reality, the exploitation, the Revolution. They were not abstract themes in the air."

And for the young alphabetizers it was also a school of Revolution. Says 16-year-old Oscar, "For me it was the best school, the best workshop, the best study circle that we have ever had because we didn't just talk, but actually went to see and know the conditions in which the peasants live." They experienced peasant labor. Ligia,

17, says, "It was lovely because I hadn't known how to sow seed." Another young woman relates that she returned with the desire to study medicine soon, and to have the time pass quickly "because the peasants need it." A 16-year-old says, "After the Crusade I discovered my parents to be my political enemies."

The arts and crafts tradition had been decaying more and more under the long Somoza regime. At the end, Nicaragua was a country very poor in arts and crafts; and it was thought that this was something irredeemably lost. The Revolution came to the rescue. In very little time in many parts of the country, the old lost popular art appeared and so did a new popular art. It is one more expression of our identity, of the Nicaraguan being, of our own self. For this we struggled; the struggle was against foreign domination. And this was reached with the triumph of the Sandinista revolution.

And all of this was a triumph of love.

In a population whose great majority is indigenous or mestizo and Negro or mulatto, the canon of feminine beauty was of the Venus of Hollywood. Indigenous artisans of Masaya made dolls with blond hair and blue eyes. We were asleep, and for that reason were in a process of losing our culture.

The Revolution recovered the popular Nicaraguan clothing. This was not merely a matter of being picturesque. The traditional clothing is beautiful and appro-

Ernesto Cardenal, minister of culture during the Sandinista years in government (speaking of "experiments in truth"), certainly knows what many of the rest of us don't: that Dorothy Day was a major advocate for Augusto Cesar Sandino.

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

priate to our climate. The *cotona*, the white cotton pull-over that I use, has been the traditional shirt of the Nicaraguan peasant. It had practically disappeared for a time; later it was the most popular shirt in Nicaragua. As the shirt of the peasant, it is a symbol of work, of struggle, of liberty, of the Revolution. The *cotona* was the uniform of the literacy workers.

The masks of the indigenous continue as a living tradition. One day the indigenous population of Monimbó, a population of artisans, rose up against Somoza. They fought with pistols and 22-rifles, with machetes, sticks and stones. The iron construction bands they made into lances, with tubes they fashioned bazookas. With the firework dust from their folkloric fiestas they invented a tremendously powerful bomb, and the cherry bombs from their fiestas they threw against helicopters. Their marimbas made the sounds of war from African Dance and they gave press conferences using the masks from their fiestas so their faces would not be recognized.

Does the possibility of a culture exist in an underdeveloped country? It exists, but it should not be an underdeveloped culture, but rather a culture against underdevelopment. And a culture that is not just an area of development but rather one that includes everything: the economic, the social, the political, education, health. An example: the health campaigns—like the eradication of polio and the vaccination of all the children of the country—were campaigns of all the people, popular mobilizations. That has signified a new culture among us, some new relationships between each one and all the others, a culture of companionship. One saying from the Ministry of Health was: "To vaccinate them is also to love them." This reminds me of the billboard that Catalán-Brazilian bishop Casaldáliga saw: "Love your neighbor. Teach literacy." He called that "a beautiful Nicaraguan version of the new commandment."

Education also changed. It was made truly popular. It was made truly free for everyone. And not an education to create egotistical persons that learn how to exploit others but rather one that creates persons ready to be in solidarity. A liberating education does not create beings docile to a system of exploitation but rather liberates their consciences and minds from that exploitation. The quantity of students, professors and schools grew

enormously. In a Nicaragua that had at that time three million inhabitants, there were one million persons studying.

In theater during the Somoza regime, actors knew that they were doing a work that was part of the revolutionary process. Some of them had political activities in the unions and neighborhoods, and this made them identify more with their public—its oral language and gestures, its myths and ideology. The representations were in places that belonged to the public: the street, parks, dirt patios and plazas. When a work was written, it was given to read or was read with worker friends, taking out the words

that they did not understand, consulting about the gestures, etc. They did not have the intention to make a traditional theater, says dramatist Allan Bolt, but rather one that, besides being an aesthetic experience, would also serve as an impulse to action, "a theater that would make us feel co-responsible for the destiny of the country."

After the triumph of the Revolution, dramatic activity was part of the new democratic culture of the grassroots. Collective theaters surged in all parts of Nicaragua, in the factories, schools, cooperatives, placing on stage the conflicts of daily life. Theater was converted into a free means of communication of the masses, and brought with it the knowledge of an essential fact: that reality is transformable.

The German critic Helmut Scheben related to

us his encounter with a drama group in a truck: "I had to journey twenty hours in a truck to see something that perhaps exists only in Nicaragua, peasants who in the midst of a war, and in a war zone, tell the story of their life in war to other peasants who live the same war. That truck, full of guitars, militia and songs (and a little girl who sold oranges 'two for a peso') was an allegorical truck journeying toward the new Nicaragua."

When I lived in my semi-contemplative community in Solentiname on an island in Lake Nicaragua, I encountered a peasant who drew drawings on water jugs, and I thought that he could paint equally well. We gave him brushes, oils and canvas; and he painted a beautiful primitive painting. It was much liked in Managua and was sold immediately. He painted others with the same suc-





Gen Cassani, SSND

cess, and seeing this, another peasant began to do the same thing. After that another, and another. Afterwards, there came to be 30 or 40 primitive painters in Solentiname, with expositions first in Managua and later in many other foreign places—one, for example, with great success in New York.

When I was named Minister of Culture it occurred to me that just as we had promoted this type of painting massively among the Solentiname peasants, we could also promote it at the popular level in the whole country. And that's what we did. And this type of painting proliferated everywhere, with all kinds of themes, styles, and landscapes throughout the country.

Before, this primitive painting—or better called popular painting—existed only in two countries: Haiti and Yugoslavia. In those two countries it had been promoted personally by one person, a Protestant pastor in Haiti, and a painter after the Second World War in Yugoslavia. What that proves is that this painting cannot exist massively if it is not promoted because this was also the case in Nicaragua. And from that, to the two countries of primitive painting another was added: Nicaragua. Yugoslav Oto Bihalji-Merin, the world's greatest authority on primitive painting, declared that when one speaks of the centers of primitive painting like Haiti and Yugoslavia, one now must talk also of Nicaragua.

These painters are in the great majority peasants, artisans, workers. They paint nature and human work—their own work that has transformed nature. They paint the world as it is, and also as it should be. They paint the world as it is and as they dream it.

Music was a weapon along with rifles ever since the time of Sandino. The barefoot and ragged soldiers of Sandino always had guitars. As a troop of Yankee Marines was entering into a pine grove at evening time, they soon heard the sound of guitars being strummed and they ran like rabbits: they knew that Sandino's soldiers were

there.

In more modern times, along with poetry, it is impossible to quantify how much song helped the revolution to triumph. The song of commitment or protest denounced oppression in that long dark night. It announced a day in which everything would be different. It enlivened the struggle. From the trenches and barricades one heard songs from all over America. Many times the songs were from authors that the people came to know face-to-face and hear in live voice when the revolution triumphed, because from everywhere the artists arrived to visit Nicaragua, where they had helped the triumph with their songs.

The Misa Campesina [Peasant Mass] of Carlos Mejia Godoy was also another arm of the struggle, both in Nicaragua and abroad. The popular Nicaraguan tunes were converted into sacred music. This is not novel. In other ages sacred music had a popular origin. But the Misa Campesina was sacred music that inspired in the people a spirit of struggle for their liberation—and this, yes, was novel.

Carlos Mejia Godoy has said that what he did had arisen from the people—the music, the tunes, were taken from the people. He merely organized what arose from the people. And this does not apply only to musicians. I consider very appropriate the words that according to a Malreaux story Mao Tze Tung told him: "The role of the intellectuals is to return clarified to the masses that which they have received in a confused form from the masses."

Philosophy should exist in order to transform reality, said Marx. And literature also, and all the arts, I say. And theology, too, and that is what is called Theology of Liberation. I want to add that in Nicaragua, following the example of the Popular Workshops of Poetry the Ministry of Culture created, there also existed Popular Workshops of Theology.

In a working document of one of these work-

shops it is expressed: "We are inspired by Liberation Theology, which has made us change and discover new values that permit us to make the theme we are considering more profound. . . This innovation we have made from the light of Christian reflection has been possible only in a country in revolution, in which the people assumed the responsibility to transform this society and make their own popular theology." (Popular Theology Workshop of Condega) These were new roads in the method of theological production, just as the Popular Workshops of Poetry were also new roads in the production of poetry in the Sandinista revolution.

The Nicaraguan people have held their poets as the maximum expression of their culture, as their voice, as their tongue. The poet in Nicaraguan society has been guide, mentor, leader, teacher. And poetry is where the Nicaraguan culture has committed itself most of all—principally the culture of emancipation and liberation.

The Nicaraguan revolution, we could say, had its beginnings in our national poet, Rubén Darío. He made a literary revolution in the Spanish language but it was not only literary. He said in 1907: "God seems to have determined that what is usually accomplished by literature is realized in Central America by politics, because of historical law and by the necessities of our civilization." After Darío, all Nicaraguan poetry has been especially committed to this reality up to the present.

The poet in Nicaraguan society has been guide, mentor, leader, teacher.

Among the most committed in a poetry already committed was a priest-poet, Azarias H. Pallais. Born in Nicaragua in 1884, he was committed not only in his work but in his life. Poet and priest—in him one could not be separated from the other. His poetry was impregnated with his priesthood and his priesthood with his poetry. Priest of the humble and poor, he was also the poet of the humble and poor. He lived what he wrote and wrote what he lived. He walked around with a faded, raggedy cassock. Everything that was given to him he immediately gave to the sick, the drunk, the prisoners, the shoe shiners, the prostitutes, the little delinquents. ("The little thief is my little brother!") It is said that he was the first to talk about socialism in Nicaragua. He said about the Biblical prophets: "Read them. They are great masters of socialism."

One of his obsessions was Yankee imperialism:

Our country in disgrace, like Christ spit upon,
The night of the Yankees darkens our skies. . .

As a professor in the city of León, he was accustomed to give banquets for the poor with his students every year. This would not be of particular note if it were not for the fact that the date was July 19—the day in which many years later the triumph of the Sandinista revolution would occur.

Another of the more committed both in poetry and his life was Leonel Rugama, who died at the age of 20. In 1970 three young Sandinistas of the urban guerrillas fought against an entire army battalion that had surrounded their house in Managua with tanks, cannons and even an airplane. They died heroically after a spectacular combat where a great number of people were present. It is said that when they were almost out of room to maneuver, one of the army shouted to them to surrender, and Leonel Rugama answered, "Let your mother surrender!" He had been studying for the priesthood for five years in the seminary. His change of vocation appears to have been gradual rather than abrupt, and this did not signify a rupture in his life as much as it was for him the same self-donation and the same vocation.

This young man is a national hero and a national poet. Unanimously Leonel Rugama is considered in Nicaragua as one of the greatest poets in our literature. I believe, moreover, that he is one of our greatest geniuses, perhaps comparable only to Darío, because he has occupied this place in our literature having died at the age of 20.

The Poetry Workshops created by the Ministry of Culture in poor neighborhoods, small hamlets, indigenous communities and even in the Armed Forces, were not always about committed poetry, nor was this the purpose; rather, it was that the poetry be of the people and for the people. In fact, the poetry became committed in great measure without intending it because it arose out of a committed people. One Venezuelan critic called it "the socialization of the poetical means of production." It was a way of struggling against what Fidel once called "the elitism of culture." The Tablet of London noted that the poetic norms of a North American poet like Ezra Pound, comprehensible only to "the most cultured of the most cultured" in the English language, were being presented in a simple and comprehensible form to the workers and peasants of Nicaragua.

The most novel thing of all is that these workshops produced poetry from the Police, from the Army, from the Air Force, and even from State Security (intelligence and counter-intelligence). For example:

Gerardo Gadea, a member of the Army, describes in a poem the joy of the birds in the Military School when the rains come (he observed them while on sentry duty) and the joy of the new students who arrive with guitars, songs and poems, just like the bird when the rains come. Also Solorzano, of the Police, writes a poem to a young mulatto woman, also a poet from a Poetry Workshop like him, whom he knew through the newspaper. One poet from the State Security Poetry Workshop (and these could not sign with their own names) sang to his love, dirty with

sweat and earth, who had gone to do voluntary work cutting cotton. Salvador Velázquez, of the Military Engineering Battalion, sings to the pretty student that he watches pass every evening from the watch tower of his military unit. . . .

I believe that no other country in the world has had poetry from police or soldiers. I clarify that they were not the usual professional police or soldiers, but rather were young men and also women who were combatants in the struggle for liberation; and they did it for love, and were full of tenderness and very profound human feelings. That is to say, very different police, very different soldiers, very different state security from those found in other countries, one could think.

Because of this, the theologian Arturo Paoli said in Nicaragua: "I have seen for the first time people who do not feel fear or aversion to persons seen as military." For that same reason Leonardo Boff has said that Nicaragua was the only country in which he had witnessed joy. And my friend the Spanish poet José María Valverde told me that in Nicaragua what had most impressed him was to see what he had never seen before: a people radiant with hope.

This has been our study of the culture of libera-

*[N]o other country in the
world has had poetry from
police or soldiers.*

tion. Sandino had said he came from the womb of the oppressed. The Sandinista revolution also surged forth from the womb of the oppressed, and from the womb of the oppressed surged forth this culture of liberation.

Our revolution has been frustrated for now, by interference from the United States and also by our own errors and sins. But I firmly believe that it will resurge anew. It has been a light and a hope for Latin America and other parts of the world. For many, it was a miracle; and for me, too. Don Quixote said, "Miracles, Sancho, are simply things that occur on rare occasion." Many of us are begging God that this miracle will, simply, repeat itself.



Fritz Kischberg

From Abroad

by Anne Montgomery, rscj



Some Reflections on the Holy Land

Often we walk through the land of a Palestinian friend and see a garden plot buried by the scattered stones of a wall built to terrace its rich soil. The hands of the whole family: parents and children, even a lame little girl filling a bucket with stones, labored to build this wall. The army's bulldozer casually and quickly destroyed it. We also see stones smashed into small pieces by the hands of other children, thrown high in defiance of soldiers perched on market rooftops. Will the boy who sees his wall or home destroyed, his brother killed, or his father imprisoned become the next fierce 10-year old with his sling?

Who will cast the first stone of judgment? Those who pushed boulders onto struggling cabbage plants? Those who smash a family's belongings and life-savings under a bulldozed house, over a Beduin encampment or even a cave in a hillside? Then there is the growing heap of daily humiliations accumulating to crush any hope for dignity, reconciliation, and a life worthy of humanity.

This is a land of stones, laboriously cleared from fertile ground to become the weapons of the powerless in the face of overwhelming military strength. They embody a determined resistance, a refusal to be coopted by promises or fooled by lies, but also a reluctance to use the weapons of the enemy and a willingness to suffer deadly consequences. Stones are as much a statement as an expression of frustration and anger: "You seize our beloved land, so painfully cleared and planted with new life. So take it! Here it is we throw it at you, the stones of our demolished homes."

Some anger is both legitimate and a necessary human response to injustice. The violence here is not so

*The violence here is not so
much in the stones. . .but in
whatever hatred propels
them and even more in the
humiliating and dehumaniz-
ing structures. . .*

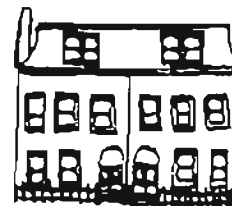
much in the stones—usually thrown high and far to reach a target, but in whatever hatred propels them and even more in the humiliating and dehumanizing structures, legalized and so "set in stone." Ezekiel called for stony hearts to be replaced by hearts of flesh. For this the stones cry out. They beg us to gather the scattered stones, rebuild the broken houses, and cleanse the poisoned fields of a land thirsting for the seeds of justice.



Anne Montgomery, rscj, has committed the major part of her life to experiments in truth on behalf of peace and justice.

From Little House

by Mary Ann McGivern, SL



I confess, I have a credit card. I applied for it after I decided to leave the Economic Conversion Project. A banking company in Delaware that seems to be comprised of initials only, MBNA, informed me by mail that I had been preapproved for a \$10,000 credit limit and a platinum-no fee MasterCard.

A credit card is a useful thing, especially when you travel as much as I do. For years, I resisted getting one on principle, testing the kindness of sales clerks by offering my library card as identification, writing checks to friends who used their credit cards in cash machines for me, and carrying large amounts of dollars in foreign countries. Now I saw the application on my desk as an opportunity that might not come again.

So I filled it out, disclosing my \$10,000/year income — but not telling them I was on the verge of quitting my day job. A lady called me from Delaware days later, telling me I wasn't pre-approved after all. In fact, I was rejected. So I did what I never do. I told her I was a nun.

The lady was charmed to be talking to a real nun. She saw the opportunity, if I was telling the truth, of making a safe bet. She put me on hold, talked to her supervisor, decided no one would make up being a nun, and promised me the no-fee card on the spot, but with a \$1,500 credit limit, not \$10,000. She wasn't totally trusting.

It's been a very useful piece of plastic. I've ordered a computer printer and Zip drive by phone, changed my flight home to a different day, and taken friends out to dinner. The card spoke digital German to the ATM in Frankfurt, putting Deutschmarks in my pocket at a favorable exchange rate.

The monthly bill is a much more accurate record of my spending than my checkbook ever is, and I pay it on time, never incurring interest. In February, my credit limit was increased to \$2,500.

Then, this last month, My billing statement announced:

"DUE TO YOUR EXCELLENT PAYMENT HISTORY, YOU HAVE QUALIFIED TO SKIP THIS MONTH'S

PAYMENT! IF YOU SKIP THIS PAYMENT, THERE IS NO NEED TO NOTIFY US. FINANCE CHARGES WILL CONTINUE TO BE APPLIED TO YOUR ACCOUNT." (Caps theirs.)

Do they think I'm an idiot? Do they hope I'm so unsophisticated and fiscally unlettered that I'll feel honored? Do they presume I don't know that interest is a major tool for transferring wealth from the poor to the rich? Do they want me to look at the box that says, "minimum payment due," see \$.00, and, in relief, throw my bill away? (Probably yes to all four.) It was the bill with the computer equipment on it, so it was big. I had to request money from Loretto so that I could pay it on time. The interest charge would have been 16.9%.

I did pay promptly. I tear up the blank checks with my name attractively printed on them that MBNA sends monthly, telling me I can use the checks at only 9.9% interest. I'm playing the game of using an international finance corporation for my convenience, betting I won't be outsmarted and forfeit an interest charge.

But what do the poor do? One time, prior to MBNA's courtship and my acquiescence, when I was buying stamps with a check and the postal clerk wanted a credit card for identification, I told her I didn't have a credit card. She said, "Honey, I don't either," and she took my check. I've lost that small connection with the working poor. Of course, another time, the Amtrack clerk refused to take my check and I missed my train. I had to take a bus to the supermarket to cash a check to pay for the ticket and catch the next train. That's what the poor do.

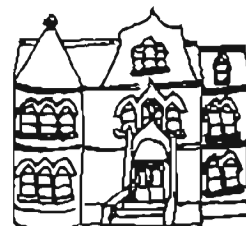
Well, the poor actually don't do that either because, the banking service charges eat up accounts under \$500. Few poor people can afford a checking account.

My Mastercard possession isn't a big sin; but it is an accommodation with the Powers and Principalities. Ephesians tells us to stand firm our ground against them. I've lost a little ground, but maybe I gained some back by making fun. God knows we need a little humor in our day-to-day resistance.



Mary Ann McGivern, SL, will host a series of salons to invent jokes about the military budget and the foreign arms trade for material for an article. If you'd like to engage in banter with like-minded peaceniks, give her a call.

From Karen House



by Teka Childress

Just a little over two years ago I began to play the saxophone. Even though it has taxed the community's tolerance and has often been more a matter of discipline than of fun, my playing has brought me a certain measure of joy. I was trying to explain this to a friend recently; and I hit upon why I love music, even the learning of it. It is because music is a place where the infinite and finite seem to meet. There is an order to it, yet the possibilities seem limitless. To say it in yet another way (forgive me if it's a bit hokey) the ordinary or mundane meets the transcendent; the quantifiable becomes magical.

Beauty found in art and nature can give us an entrance into something greater than ourselves. I think this is why it draws us so. Speaking to some of the guests at Karen House convinced me even more of this. Beauty is especially accessible and striking in nature, even if you have little money. One woman who lives here with her

two small children described the sense of peace she gets walking in the park. Another woman described her love of trees, particularly ones without leaves. I think she likes the simplicity of them. Yet many of our guests have found great happiness in music and art as well. One rarely enters the library without hearing the radio on, in fact, it is usually the favorite room of the house and I dare say the music in the room is a large part of it. But even more striking to me is the memory of just how much the women of our house loved working on art projects with Katrina as she offered art therapy.

In thinking of the story of Dorothy Day giving a diamond ring to a woman rather than selling it off for the proceeds, I realize that Dorothy had that insight, so central to her own life; human beings long for beauty, the transcendent, and the spiritual and they should not be deprived of it.



Teka Childress moved into Karen House 18 years ago as an experiment in truth.

From Our Mailbag



Dear Catholic Workers:

Thank you for sending The Round Table. I admire you all very much. If our institutional church used its funds the same way you do and did not build such ostentations, ornate cathedrals and churches this would be a more loving world.

I applaud you for saying you want to feed people, not the Pentagon. I wish our church would speak our telling people how "the ordinary practice of capitalism is currently robbing the poor throughout the world of the very little that they have", as Sr. Mary Ann McGivern has.

Thanks again, much love,

a friend

Dear Staff:

Your are doing marvelously sacrificial work with the poor and I applaud you in this regard.

I do question, however, whether your views on "economics" and the welfare state are truly biblical. I heard the enclosed sermon on the air and requested a copy in the hopes that some or most of you would at least read it and ponder the principles set forth. I would greatly appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Kari Frey

(Enclosed was a copy of "The Bible and Economics" distributed by Coral Ridge Ministries. For a copy one can contact them at: P.O. Box 40/ Fort Lauderdale, FL 33302)

Ann Arch*

The Round Table

Karen House

Dear Ann:

I have an embarrassing problem. It involves—how shall I put it?—issues of money (yuck) and class (yum). Like most of us lucky St. Louisans, my little heart truly was aflutter upon learning the neat news from City Hall re: the proposed golf course on the cusp of Downtown. Word has it that the site of the course is some simply dreadful locale, no doubt begging to be evacuated. As a matter of fact, the parents of one of my nearest and dearest sorority sisters actually spent their (very) early childhoods not far from that ominous "neighborhood!" (Doesn't life just amaze you, Ann?) Needless to say, few are aware of the poor dear's shame.

But I digress. Like yourself, no doubt, I am an avid linkstress and would just love to be able to shoot a quick 18 after dropping Chip off/ before picking him up at the bank. Doesn't it sound simply wonderful?

My question, Ann, is this: how, in heaven's name, do I deal with the (very remote) possibility that I actually might be seen on that course?

Smooch, smooch,

Buffy (aka: Larry Willard)

P.S. Any word yet on membership fees, food and amenities? Won't it be fun?!

*Readers may recall our own "Miss Manners" from an earlier issue, and the proposed downtown golf course.

by Becky Hassler and Teka Childress

Though there is no final decision (as of this writing) about the fate of Regional Hospital, the City began the process of its closing some time ago. Even when Homer G. Phillips and City Hospital #1 were closed, the City was already trying to "get out of the hospital business." It opened Regional Medical Center as a privately run hospital that had a contract with the City and County to provide care for any in need. When the County and City's commitment officially ended in 1995, those governments stopped funding the hospital. Thus began the crisis we now have.

Adding to the funding crises at the hospital is the situation in St. Louis of "an excess of hospital beds." One might reasonably ask, though, are there too many beds for uninsured or underinsured patients? Yet, because of the empty beds at local hospitals there was a competition for insured patients, including those receiving Medicaid in Missouri, under the Managed Care + program. Unfortunately some representatives of those hospitals competing for those patients are on the very board of Regional which decided to close it down.

If we believe that everyone deserves health care and that we are all responsible for it being available and accessible, then we must ensure that people will not be turned away when they are in need of it. Yet, can we do this without a hospital such as Regional? Will other hospitals accept all uninsured patients in need? Will there be quotas? How will people obtain this health care? Will they need referrals? Who will be ac-

countable? If we judge the future by the past, uninsured people have been turned away time and again from local hospitals and "transferred" to Regional. Will people be turned away again, this time with nowhere to go?

While ideally people should be able to choose where they go for care, perhaps through a nationalized health care system, having a specific hospital that specializes in the care of indigent people has been a wonderful thing. Caring doctors and nurses who have chosen to work at Regional have come to know many of their patients and the variety of particular health care issues they face. Additionally, as long as a hospital was there whose mission was to treat the sick regardless of their ability to pay, people didn't need to fear being turned away.

The desire to close Regional is just another step toward the privatization happening all around us, and it may benefit the larger area hospitals. But will it benefit the poor among us?



Becky Hassler, RN, FNP and Teka Childress have joined many others in opposing the closing of Regional Medical Center, where Becky and other dedicated health professionals work.

Karen House 20th Anniversary Gathering

Labor Day weekend

Saturday, August 30th:

Reunion of former and current St. Louis Catholic Workers (time for visiting, reflection and recreation)

Sunday August 31st:

Gathering of workers and extended community for Mass and barbeque.

We need help planing and implementing these events.

Will you join us?

Call Mary Ann McGivern at 231-2039, Ellen Rehg at 652-1637 or Diane Beckerle at 621-4052

House needs: sandwiches (urgent)
 house takers (needed badly for summer)
 fans
 money

Another Catholic Worker Salon to discuss the theme of this issue:
Karen House, Friday, June 20 at 7:00 p.m.

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, Teka Childress, Mark Chmiel, Julie Doorack, Mary Dutcher, Mitch McGee, Bill Miller, Ellen Rehg, and Mark Scheu. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

The Round Table

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