

TROUBADOUR

The Newsletter of St. Francis House, New London, Connecticut



RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP COURSE: JULY 30–AUGUST 5
ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION CENTER SECTION OF THIS ISSUE

Easter 2006

Vol. 8, No. 2

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But what do you *do* ? Reflections on life and work at St. Francis House

Anne Scheibner

When we first began the experiment in intentional Christian community in New London known as St. Francis House, we said we were a “house of hospitality, a place of prayer and a center for justice ministry”. During the first few years the order of those three anchors of our self understanding evolved. We came to see that “prayer” came first because it was from prayer that both hospitality and work for peace and justice flowed. And so in response to the question, “What is St. Francis House?” we would confidently respond, “We are a place of prayer, a house of hospitality and a center for peace and justice ministry.” Then would come the next question: “Yes, but what do you *do*?” It has been only too easy to begin to list everything from working with our neighbors on homelessness, public education and community gardening to opposing the war in Iraq. The list is indeed impressive and usually receives approving nods and words of affirmation from the person inquiring. But those answers although accurate have never seemed quite right to me.

In February I was responsible for framing our Friday night Clarification of Thought session on this very topic: “What does St. Francis House do?” Three weeks beforehand I did a neat outline of our various activities and set out a framework of conversion of life (starting with our own) and resistance to the principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12). I made a second list of what we *don't* do: We don't do planned programs which need professionals and funding, i.e. we try to respond to our neighbors and work with them. We don't get paid for living and working here, i.e. we all contribute to St. Francis House including financially. But as I got within a week of the discussion, even this explanation did not seem quite right.

What *do* we do? And why is that question so difficult? I finally came back to what one of our board members – and the only one ever to have lived in an intentional Christian community – once said: the purpose of living in community is to live in community. What an embarrassing – and seemingly simple not to say, foolish – statement of purpose! And yet finally here was the point with which I needed to start the discussion. What do we do, i.e. how do we live in community?

The first thing we do is learn to breathe together. That really is what our daily practice of Morning Prayer is all about. The words – fairly inclusive, but clearly rooted in Jewish and Christian practice – are simply the vehicle for our learning a deeper rhythm and how to attune ourselves to God and to each other. The Psalms are laid out with an asterisk in the middle of the verse. That asterisk marks the point of pausing and then coming back together on the downbeat.

Many of our visitors find that pause awkward, difficult and close to irritating. But skipping that pause and the coming back together would be to miss a major part of the practice in being united in body and spirit.

Another part of Morning Prayer is the practice of being silent together. The liturgy says, "Silence may be kept." Oftentimes such silence is very perfunctory. But Laura Burfoot during her time as a member of the residential community asked that we have more silence and so we started having those times of silence after the opening canticle and after each Bible reading (two minutes each if Emmett or Mark is officiating – they have watches – or 30 breaths if I am since I do not!). Again, what turns out to be important is practicing something important together i.e. gently pushing aside thoughts and busy-ness and opening ourselves to the Spirit or to some small inkling as IKings 19:12 says, to the power of the "sound of sheer silence."

The second thing we do is break bread together. We do this in many different settings, but the ways we do it is as a community are three. We have an evening Community Meal one night a week. All members take turns cooking and we all – including Nate and Sarah – have our specialties. On Tuesday we have a community business lunch for all residents and members of the extended SFH community to discuss practical concerns (needed repairs, upcoming events and sharing news of the Shelter, community garden or whatever needs to be on the agenda). Then every other Friday evening is Clarification of Thought. Anyone who walks through the door is welcome and we usually have 12-20 people for supper. Table fellowship has been part of Christian life from the beginning. It's what the Eucharist is all about and is an essential part of the practice of hospitality.

The third thing we do as a community is study scripture. Our use of the African Method of Bible study is how we discern the will of God for our life together. How it works and the example of the naming of Victory House are described in the last issue

of the *Troubadour - Epiphany, 2006*. Through Bible Study we practice listening to the Word of God and to each other. It is how we discern what it is that we are called to do both individually and as a community. We don't engage in work with the homeless or public education or anything else because we have a grant proposal that commits us to such actions. Instead we have a cycle of action-reflection in which we try to discern the signs of the times (Matthew 16:3) and act (or refrain from acting!) on the basis of that discernment.

Out of this discernment and the shared life of the community have come what most people see (and often we ourselves experience) as a staggering array of activities. But all of the work – from the winter shelter, to supporting the development of urban gardening, to hosting bi-lingual educational organizing to peace witnesses – is simply the result of being open to engaging with our neighbors in the work of justice and reconciliation.

Our individual contributions vary with the time and the need. Mark does the behind the scenes book keeping and scheduling which keeps us all sane. Emmett uses his experience gleaned from 30 years of parish ministry with new freedom. I use the fact of being "home again" to discover a different way to struggle with being an American and a Christian in this time. Through St. Francis House Nate has developed his own talent for cooking as a gift of hospitality and community building and Sarah has day-to-day experience of volunteering at the winter shelter which has given her a knowledge of our neighbors who are homeless which few adults in this city could begin to match. These are some of the fruits of our life together. In that life is embedded an identity which is quite different from that provided by our contemporary society. This difference helps explain why we have had such trouble with the question, "But what do you do?"

Personal identity in this country is not rooted in any communal reality. What passes for identity assumes that a person's work is his or her basic reality. After you learn



someone's name, the next question is, "And what do you do?" It is assumed that that means what do you get paid to do? What is your status? And based on that work-given status, how much time and attention should I give to you and to your opinions?

I remember being at a national gathering of Presbyterian men – at least 500 of them – at a time when I was working for the National Council of Churches on Plant Closings and Economic Dislocation. One of the speakers at this conference had just been laid off from his executive level job. He told of what it felt like to no longer have his business card, to no longer be able to flash a corporate credit card to rent a car when he walked into an airport; in short, to have lost his identity as a successful, white, American adult male. You could have heard a pin drop as he spoke. The sense of identification with him was profound from all these men from similar backgrounds who still had their jobs and business cards.

There used to be regional or local differences defining identity as well. One of our friends when we were living in Stone Mountain, Georgia used to explain that if you were visiting Charleston where family ties were paramount, the first question would be, "Who are your kinfolk?" If you were in Atlanta, the question would be, "What do you do?" because that was a northern, business oriented culture. But of course, if you were to come to Savannah where everyone understood the importance of hospitality, the first question would be, "And what do you drink?" Underneath the humor lie some revealing insights into what is important in our lives and relationships.

It is important to analyze the language that we use and to understand why we use it. "What do you do?" when asked of an inner-city organization means, "What programs do you run?" "Are you fundable?" "How many clients do you have?" "How many paid staff do you have?" It is a numbers game of a professional sort. Even churches do it: "How many people come on Sunday?" "How many clergy do you have on staff?"



Escaping these bonds of modern class identity is difficult unless you have a different context in which to practice. St. Francis House provides that different context to various people in various ways. Over the last 7 years around a dozen people have had that opportunity through varying periods of residency including retreats and sabbaticals. The wider non-residential St. Francis House Community which gathers every other Friday night for Clarification of Thought has the opportunity to experience a microcosm of the life of the House: prayer, Bible study, a shared meal and focused conversation.

This summer we will be trying a new experiment in living in community by offering the Summer Session in Discipleship the week of July 30 – August 5 (see centerfold). This offering is part of our evolving understanding that our friends and neighbors are not looking for lifelong monastic vows in a cloister or even in a St. Francis House. But many people are looking for new ways to discover their own paths of discipleship into "the marvelous freedom of the children of God." Such paths are not easy to discover in our present world. St. Francis House stands witness to the fact that it is both possible and necessary to try!

One of the commitments residents of the House make is to spend an hour a day in individual prayer or meditation. My own part of this "work of the House" often takes the form of Meditation Drawings. The drawing on the following page was done in preparation for Friday night session on "What does St. Francis House do?" The drawings are done blind – i.e. I begin by centering myself on the theme or concern I have and then I do not look at the page until after I have finished drawing. Then I reflect on what I see in the drawing itself. I am continually amazed at the balance and beauty that is always there when I practice not being in control. That is probably the key to my own evolving identity as part of the St. Francis House community. Perhaps trying to live into God's and not my "being in control" is really the main thing that I "do" here in this time and place!



February 23, 2006 - What does St. Francis House do and how to understand our life
in the light of the war in Iraq and "extraordinary rendition" and what is happening to young people.

The sun rises on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45)

Amoebic life – the daily round – what makes it Christian? To be God's hands in the world – the "wild card" and lucky love *
Heart of things – living in the present – what is given you to do –

Strip yourself first - money, privilege, see life as a verb – Walking State Street in the morning with Otis to get the papers –
State Street as a place of meeting – of relationships – truth happens in the encounter –

Sun rises in our hearts – "as we rejoice in the gift of this new day, So may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you, Now and forever. Amen."

Conversions of life present "A condition of complete simplicity (Costing not less than everything)"**

"Take up your cross and follow me" – no pattern except discipleship

Empty yourself is countercultural – self identity of America = "What do you do?"

Stand under judgment – Who is asking? No set answer

What others say – can't "define" yourself except programmatically and to what end?

* Anne Sexton, *"The Awful Rowing Towards God"* ** Julian of Norwich and T.S. Eliot's "Little Gidding", *Four Quartets*

Anne Scheibner lives and works at St. Francis House.

Broad Street Blues by Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

*The blues is an expression of
anger against shame and humiliation.*

B. B. King

IT SEEMS A LONG TIME AGO NOW, but in February 2006 Anne and I went to England to see old friends and do some work with New London Homeless Coalition colleague **Russ Carmichael** and Episcopal priest **Geoff Curtiss** from Hoboken, NJ. Geoff has worked for more than 20 years with the Rev. Dr. **John Vincent**, British Methodist minister and founder of the **Urban Theology Unit** of the University of Sheffield, England. John is also founder of the Ashram Community, from which we have already learned a lot and expect to share and learn a lot more.

England has been important to Anne and me (both separately and together) for many years. She was in England in 1972 working at Paddington Day Hospital and in 1979 to learn about group dynamics at the Tavistock Institute. I lived in London from 1976-79, working on a doctorate in the theology of the poet William Blake at King's College, University of London. It was there I met Ken Leech and joined the Jubilee Group of radical Anglo-Catholic socialists to ground my politics in the theology of the Kingdom of God. Ken has been a friend of both of ours ever since, and visited St. Francis House frequently.

So the first thing we did when we arrived in Manchester was spend time with Ken, who took us on a tour of "radical Manchester," where we saw (but could not sit on) Engels's bar stool, visited John Ryland's Library, where Marx wrote, and saw where Rutherford split the atom. We stayed with the Rev. Geni Evans, a friend of Ken's, who pastors an Anglican church, St. James, Moss Side. The congregation is working class and racially very mixed, and the worship on Sunday was wonderful, as was Geni's hospitality! I visited with a large group of Third Order Franciscans in



Doncaster, and learned about their growing witness and ministry, and shared the witness of St. Francis House with them. We spent a day with my old friend and classmate from King's College, **Fr. Neville Ashton**, who took us on a tour of Blackburn Diocese and some outstanding pubs!

Our visit to Manchester prepared us for the new Britain: at the cathedral, an ancient building creatively adapted to contemporary use for worship and mission, we saw a controversial and inspiring triptych which depicts the Trinity as a multi-racial family gathered around the table eating fish and chips! The Rublev ikon of hospitality that is the center of our St. Francis House chapel is the inspiration of the modern one, but the point is the same: God's hospitality is unlimited, and we are invited not only to enjoy that hospitality but share it!

On Wednesday, February 8, we took the train across the Pennine Mountains to Sheffield and met up with Russ and Geoff and John Vincent and his wife Mary. We stayed at accommodations owned by the Urban Theology Unit, which trains clergy and lay ministers in a Biblically rooted theology of urban mission and ministry.

The next day we met with John Vincent and other members of the **Burngreave Ashram** in their café in the Spital Hill section of Sheffield for Bible study and discussion of their ministry and ours. Part of the Ashram's process of contextual analysis is to ask people to articulate ten reasons for sorrow in their community – fighting in the street, late night drunkenness, destitution of asylum seekers and their regular deportation, struggles with the bureaucracy, the police – and ten for joy – no demolition yet, ethnic community shops, mosques and temples, a sense of history, the spirit of the Ashram, racial groups getting on together, creativity, art and culture, and happy people.

Part of the biblical analysis that followed was to try to find stories in the Gospel that speak to the context. One person suggested the woman at the well (John 4) because they are finding water, healing and challenge in this place



abandoned by the Empire, and breaking the traditional rules of exclusiveness. Another thought of Jesus healing a deaf-mute (Mark 7) because of the need to overcome the isolation of immigrants speaking different languages, without family support. Another thought of the gift of languages at Pentecost, because here people from many nations are hearing good news in their own languages.

The next day we visited the Anglican cathedral which sponsors a large-scale ministry to homeless people in Sheffield. There were many similarities to our U.S. situation, as well as striking differences. Many services are provided by the cathedral, but no shelter. The city of Sheffield continues to try to move poor people in general and the homeless in particular out of the central city to urban ghettos on the edge of town. It was gratifying to be able to share with our hosts that New London is on the "cutting edge" of homeless ministry, because of the Homeless Coalition's work with marginalized people for self-determination, treating them as friends and neighbors, rather than "clients" or "consumers."

It was in this arena that our friend Russ Carmichael was able to teach our teachers, describing his experience as an outcast because of time in prison as well as homelessness, and the community of formerly homeless people working together not only for their own betterment but to "give back" to others in need as they had been. Russ thought John Vincent's understanding of the "radical Jesus" as a community organizer was just what he had been doing in various places all his life! And we all agreed.

A more creative ministry with homeless people in England is Emmaus, whose motto is: *"Giving people a bed . . . and a reason to get out of it."* Their definition of homelessness is also helpful: "Homelessness is not just about having nowhere to live, it is about losing your independence and purpose in life, being isolated, humiliated and ignored." Our continuing struggles in New London will benefit from our experiences in Sheffield.

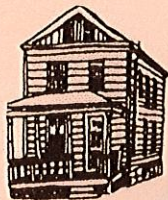


We went one day to "New Roots," a wholefoods fruit and vegetable volunteer run "shop for justice," supervised by Mary Vincent in Glossop Road near the main campus of the University of Sheffield. Both New Roots and the café at Burngreave Ashram have apartments which people who work with the various ministries rent at modest cost. We worshiped with a store front congregation of Methodists in a nearby neighborhood where John celebrated the Eucharist and the sermon was a participatory form of reflection on Scripture rather like our own African Method of Bible Study.

So aside from good times with new friends and old, what did we learn?

- * We learned that the British term for gentrification is "Regeneration." A skunk by any other name still stinks.
- * The Ashram community has been working successfully against the sort of "development" that drives poor and marginalized people out of the cities.
- * We met people who are doing what we're trying to do: get rooted in neighborhood/community in places "abandoned by the Empire," discern God's call through serious Bible study and prayer, and developing relationships with multicultural neighbors.
- * The model of the Ashram community will give us much to reflect upon in future. They have been going since 1967, have about 50 members and 40 associates who meet on a regular basis in different formats to build a movement.
- * We learned how difficult it is for a community founded by a charismatic leader to continue after his retirement.
- * There is a model for urban ministry beyond the models of the 1960's, which required denominational money that has now dried up. A more local model, using resources as available, but having no highly paid leadership can survive the loss of institutional money.
- * Russ Carmichael knows this but we've had a hard time learning it, that a "business model" is a creative one for marginalized people. The Ashram community's café and shop still use volunteers but could develop a





Radical Discipleship:
A Short Course in 21st Century Christian Life and Work
St. Francis House, New London, Connecticut
July 30 – August 5, 2006



Your are invited to join the St. Francis House for a week-long course in **Radical Discipleship**. St. Francis House is in the heart of New London - one of the "abandoned places of Empire." This course will be useful for individuals who aim to deepen their own discipleship and for pastors who must assist their congregations on the discipleship journey.

+ LIVE WITH US IN INTENTIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

+ PRAY WITH US IN AND FOR THE CITY AND THE WORLD

**+ STUDY THE BIBLE ESPECIALLY THE GOSPEL OF MARK AS
A "STORY OF DISCIPLESHIP"**

+ REFLECT ON YOUR OWN LIFE AND WORK

+ ENGAGE IN HANDS-ON WORK IN THE COMMUNITY:
COMMUNITY GARDENS PEACE WITNESS
HOMELESS INITIATIVE PUBLIC EDUCATION

The week will begin with arrival and orientation at 5:00 p.m. Sunday, July 30 and conclude with a final morning session ending at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, August 5. Basic leadership will come from members of the St. Francis House community with other discipleship practitioners joining us for specific work and reflection.

Not only will we study the Bible, we will study ourselves and our social context through systematic theological and political analysis of the world and what God is up to in 21st century America. Participants will have the opportunity for recreation and play, for rest and spiritual retreat, for work in the community and for small group reflection to apply the week's learning to your situation in your own city or community.

Our principle for financing this week is the same as our principle for the House:

Where our hospitality meets your generosity!

Therefore there is no set fee for the week. In a profound sense we hope you will find the experience priceless and we do not wish to artificially price it. We expect to provide you with food and housing for the week. This is an experiment for us as well as for you so please pray about it and come prepared to let the Spirit be your guide in this as in all things! The expenses of St. Francis House are covered by donations including monthly contributions from all the regular adult residents of the House. We have budgeted \$1,000 for the week and, of course, there are the usual overhead expenses. All donations from participants and from anyone who cannot come but would like to contribute will be gratefully received. You will be expected to bring a copy of Ched Myers'

"Say to This Mountain"- Mark's Story of Discipleship.

Radical Discipleship:

A Short Course in 21st Century Christian Life and Work

St. Francis House, New London, Connecticut

July 30 – August 5, 2006

A typical day will look like this:

7 a.m.	Breakfast available
8 a.m.	Morning Prayer in St. Francis House chapel
9-12 a.m.	Bible Study and theological reflection
12 noon	Lunch
1-3 p.m.	Free time for rest and recreation
3-5 p.m.	Outdoor/ community work
5:30 p.m.	Evening Prayer
6:00 p.m.	Dinner & Conversation
7:00 p.m.	Guest speakers/movies/ Group & personal reflection time
8:30 p.m.	Compline (Night Prayer)

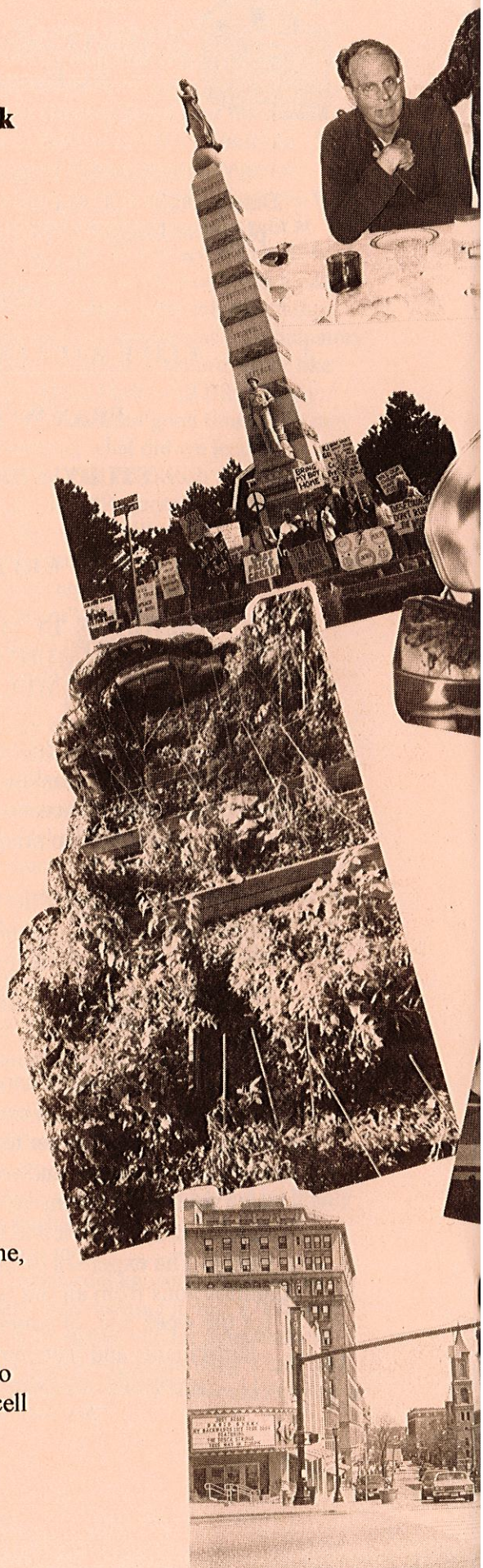
The Biblical study for the course will be the Gospel of Mark as seen through the reading of Ched Myers and others in *"Say to This Mountain"* – *Mark's Story of Discipleship*.


Each of the five full days of study will be based on a section of the Gospel:

- Monday – *Liberating Space for Change*: Mark 1:1-4:34
- Tuesday – *Journey of Solidarity*: Mark 4:35-8:21
- Wednesday – *The Discipleship "Catechism"*: Mark 8:22-10:52
- Thursday – *Jesus the Questioner*: Mark 11:1-13:37
- Friday – *The Way of the Human One*: Mark 14:1-16:8

Mark wrote his Gospel to help disciples in his day be faithful to their call to follow Jesus in challenging times. *"Say to This Mountain"* adapts Ched Myers' monumental study of the Gospel to a work that is ideal for study and reflection by groups who are not necessarily biblical scholars. It shows that Mark's story has transforming power especially as it intersects with our own life-stories and the broader story of the times in which we live.

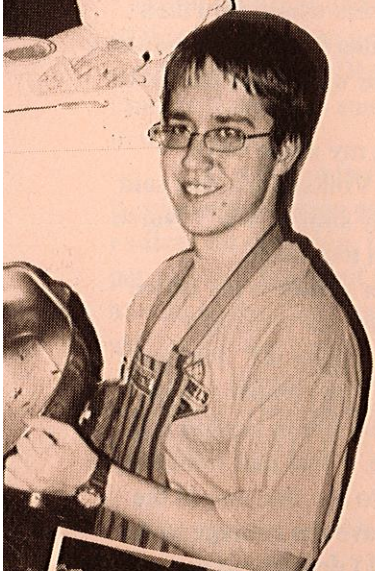
If you live in the New London area and prefer to sleep at home, that would be fine. However, we do wish to stress that local participants need to be committed to full participation in the entire week i.e. no work commitments, dentist appointments, or even occasional meetings! We know how hard this is to do and so we offer a special alms box in which to lock up your cell phone! Guests from outside the area are welcome to take advantage of that offer as well!





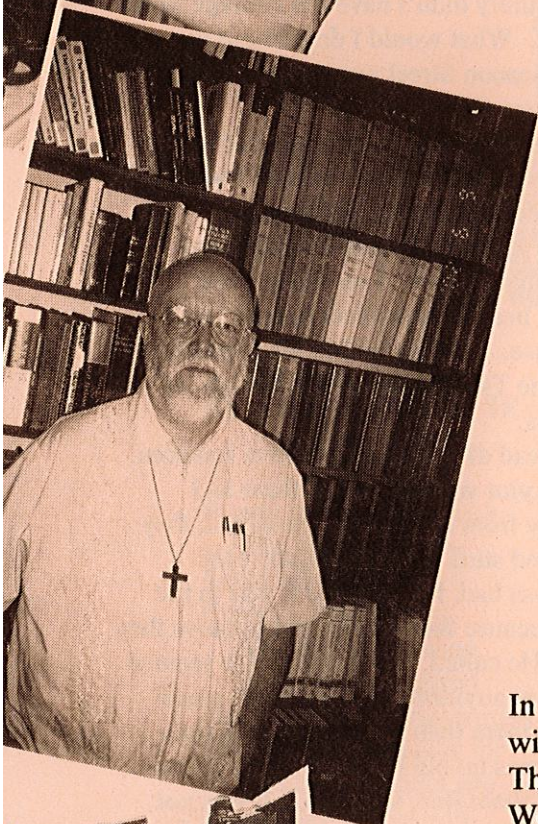
I was very excited when I read the "course outline" for Radical Discipleship. I've been longing for an opportunity to more fully experience community life at St. Francis House, and this seems like a good fit. It is definitely on my summer calendar.

- Barbara Barrett



In parish ministry, I find the greatest challenge to be that of empowering people in radical discipleship: we are not meant simply to receive. I hope to gain new insights with all of you this August!

- Gail Keeney-Mulligan



I recall that when Jesus spoke to me on the Taconic State Parkway in December 1972, the only way I had at the time - and the only way the Church had - of understanding this call was as a vocation to priesthood, ordained ministry. After 30 years as a priest, I still believe Jesus and his community want some people to be ordained to a ministry of Word and Sacrament. But after seven years at St. Francis House, living in an intentional Christian community, I now think that radical discipleship comes first. The call of Jesus is first to "follow him," become his disciple, walk in his way.

- Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

I'm looking forward to the first week in August as a time to share what we've been learning here and also to gain new insights into that work by the participation of old and new colleagues from near and far. We'll have our season pass to Ocean Beach to share as well!

- Anne Scheibner

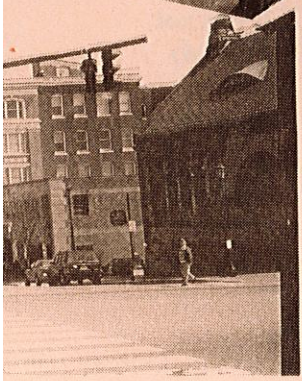
In order to ensure attention to all, the number of participants will be limited to about ten, so apply now!

The deadline for receipt of applications is June 1, 2006.

We will let you know by June 15 if you have been accepted as a participant.

After June 15, call us at 860-437-8890 or e-mail

stfrancishouse@mindspring.com to check on availability.



Photos top to bottom, left to right: Mark, Anne and Emmett in the SFH dining room. Peace Witness at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument. Nate Jarrett will be resident chef. New London Community Gardens site at SFH. Emmett in the SFH Library. View of State St. one block from SFH looking down to the river.

The Opening Day of Disciple Season

-by Mark Auer



"And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.'" (Mk 1:17, NRSV)

Ched Myers, writing in *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, (Orbis, 1988), states: "There is perhaps no expression more traditionally misunderstood than Jesus' invitation to these workers This metaphor, despite the grand old tradition of missionary interpretation, does not refer to the 'saving of souls', as if Jesus were conferring on these men instant evangelist status. Rather, the image is carefully chosen from Jeremiah 16:16 where it is used as a symbol of Yahweh's censure of Israel. . . . Taking this mandate for his own, Jesus is inviting common folk to overturn the existing, 'order of power and privilege'". (p.133)

I am struck by the commentator's observation that the first men that Jesus called to follow him were 'workers'. Andrew and Simon and James and John were all members of the artisan laboring class, as was Jesus. They had responsibilities in their work, probably hired others to work for them, and may have had families to support. But they left everything and followed Jesus. There is no mention of the risk involved, no discussion of what to do about the 'business', they just packed up and followed when Jesus asked them to. They were not the only ones, either. They were just the first ones. Could they possibly have had any idea of what the future held for them? I think not. I doubt that thoughts of an overthrow of the 'existing order' had anything to do with their decision.

In all of Mark's Gospel only one person refuses Jesus' invitation: the rich young man in Chapter 10. He has kept the commandments, has done everything he was expected to do by his faith tradition, but he cannot part with his worldly goods. At this point the story gets a little personal, and uncomfortable to read.

Noted author and preacher Barbara



Brown Taylor writes in *The Preaching Life* (Cowley, 1993) "Then Jesus said 'How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom of God!' They were amazed at his words . . . positively astonished by them. He was challenging the social order, turning it upside down. Those who rode through the gates of Jerusalem on golden litters would find their handlebars stuck on the gates of God's kingdom. But so would everyone else who could not leave things behind." (p. 125)

Several years ago, my sister had a bumper sticker on her old Volkswagen that said "Live simply so others may simply live." Nurse Amy had it right. We own too much.

I vividly remember sitting in my office at 4:00 in the morning about ten years ago thinking 'and is this all that there is?' Perhaps I was being called- to leave 'the company' and my comfortable, predictable life in Boston and set off on a new adventure. I feel that someone, or something was calling to me, because at the age of 48 I surely didn't have the courage to do it for myself. What would I do without my salary, my Beacon Street apartment, my Red Sox tickets, *my Cadillac*?

What I did was something that was at the time beyond my comprehension. I went deeply into debt to finance a seminary education. I spent two years in chaplaincy internships in hospitals. I moved to New London and became a resident here at Saint Francis House. I am beginning the formation process in the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis.

Instead of things, I now have freedom. The Rev. Taylor writes: "All of them had walked away from something. He called, they answered, and stuff got left behind. Not because it was bad, but because it was in the way. Not because they had to, but because they wanted to. He called, and nothing else seemed that important anymore. Jesus was so much more real to them than anything else in their lives that it was no big heroic thing to follow him. He set them free, that is all. It was not their achievement, it was his gift." (p. 126)

Mark Auer lives and works at St. Francis House.

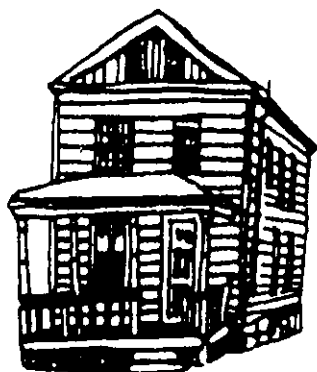


business model to train people out of work very effectively.

* It came home to me again that British Christians are far more deeply grounded theologically than Americans. We can still learn from good scholarship.

* And we have already decided to put some of this learning into practice by offering the course in **Radical Discipleship** at St. Francis House this summer (see centerfold in this issue).

In a future issue I'll write about the Burngreave Ashram as a **community of radical discipleship**, partly residential and partly living apart but meeting regularly for mutual support and accountability. For now, suffice it to say we are "twinning" with the Ashram Community in Britain, will share publications and resources with them, and visit from time to time.



ST. FRANCIS HOUSE WISH LIST

Sturdy kitchen table with
four sturdy chairs
Small office copier
Curtains for closet:
Material and sewing
machine (to borrow)
Herbs to grow in our garden
Community gardeners for
the Cottage Street site
Volunteers to help with
June 10 Fiesta

NONVIOLENCE AS A WAY OF LIFE

Taylor Branch, at the conclusion of *At Canaan's Edge*, the final volume of his study of "America in the King Years," observes that with King's death in 1968, our country retreated from a vision of a "promised land" of racial equality, economic justice, and world peace. Nonviolence, so completely identified with King in our country, lost its appeal. The US embraced the Reagan vision of government as useful only for military power and not a vehicle for social justice. A small but important number of individuals continued to keep alive the vision of nonviolence as not just a tactic but a way of life. Perhaps now is the time to begin again to imagine "the beloved community," starting in small local efforts, and building to a mass movement for social change. St. Francis House is a part of this tentative but hopeful effort. Our community reflection in the fall-winter 2006 series of meetings for clarification of thought will take **Nonviolence as a Way of Life** as a theme. Join us every other Friday evening.

September 22 – Overview: Nonviolence as a Way of Life

October 6 – Nonviolence of Jesus and the early Christian movement (with St. Francis House Board)

October 20 – Nonviolence of St. Francis

November 3 – Nonviolence in the Radical Reformation of the 16th century

November 17 – Nonviolence of Gandhi

December 1 – Nonviolence of Martin Luther King, Jr.

December 15 – Nonviolence in America Today: *Building a New Movement*

December 29 – Annual St. Francis House Christmas Party:

Friday Night Meetings

5:30 p.m. Prayer and Bible Study

6:00 p.m. Supper

7-8:30 p.m. Conversation

(Children welcome, childcare provided)

WAR PROTESTERS SAY ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Recruiting center, Simmons' office are targeted in Norwich

By KENTON ROBINSON
Day Staff Writer

Norwich — At the end of their march through the city Monday, protesters delivered one of their cardboard coffins to the vestibule of the U.S. Armed Forces Recruiting Center.

As the recruiters closed the doors to their offices, the protesters knelt on the floor and prayed for an end to the war in Iraq.

And then, as the protesters prepared to leave the coffin behind, a police officer asked them to take it because the recruiters found it offensive.

"And I find it offensive," said Rick Gaumer of Norwich, "that there's nothing else in this office to tell people this is one of the ways they may come back from the war."

And so the protesters left the coffin behind and returned to the side of the road, where a chill wind threatened to blow away their four remaining cardboard coffins.

They had begun their march down by the river, where, to the funeral thump of a drum, they bore the five cardboard coffins draped in black to the sidewalk in front of the office of U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, at 2 Courthouse Square.

The coffins represented the five soldiers from the 2nd District who have died thus far. More than 2,300 U.S. servicemen and women have died since the war began three years ago.

The protesters took up their post across the street in front of the courthouse, where they waved signs and sang songs composed by the Raging Grannies of Greater Westerly.

"We're the Raging Grannies singing our songs,

DOO-DAH, DOO-DAH,

We're the Raging Grannies singing our songs,

All the doo-dah day.

GONNA ROAR ALL NIGHT

GONNA RAGE ALL DAY,

Build a better world, we say,

Let's make a start today!"

Their protest marked what Father Emmett Jarrett of St. Francis House in New London said was "the first day of the fourth year of this illegal and immoral war."

"It's been three years too long," said Raging Granny Maureen Logan of Westerly. "And part of our anger and frustration we put into song, into protest music, and that's what the Raging Grannies are."

Altogether, the protesters were three dozen strong. But as they marched across town to the recruiting office, they were serenaded by drivers who honked their horns and gave them the thumbs up.

Did they think their protest would



TIM MARTIN/The Day

Rev. Emmett Jarrett, right, of New London, leads Debby Dear, left, of Stonington and Nancy Law, of Pawcatuck, both members of the Raging Grannies of Greater Westerly, as they carry a cardboard coffin while protesting the third anniversary of the war in Iraq near U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons' Norwich office on Monday.

make any difference?

"Absolutely," said Cybele Locke of New London. "I'm a historian of social-change movements, and if you look at the history of people's resistance through different means — coming out, protesting, writing letters — all of those different kinds of acts, little acts that people do every day, do make a difference."

"We brought the Vietnam war to a stop; I think we can do it again, and so that is why I'm here today."

Paul Shaffer of Norwich was less sanguine, but nonetheless committed.

"I think this administration has just lost track of reality," he said. "I'm going to do what I can to help and show our displeasure, and maybe it'll make a difference, maybe it won't. But I'll feel a little better about it, anyway."

Simon Hay of New London admitted the administration of George W. Bush seemed indifferent to the concerns of the protesters.

"They cheerfully ignored the 15 million people who protested before the war started, but then ... what are your other options?" he said. "Do you write letters to your governor, who cheerfully ignores those as well?"

But, he said, there was still a moral responsibility to act.

"There are two reasons," Hay said. "One is that, yes, you hope that this will change their minds; the other is you hope the people of the rest of the world learn that not all Americans are in league with their government."

Danny Malec of Voluntown, one of the organizers of Monday's protest, pointed out that there were protests taking place around the world.

"We do believe that direct action is effective when it's done in collaboration, and today there are actions similar to this all around the world going on," Malec said. "So I do believe that over time actions like this can make a difference."

The protesters plan to disrupt "business as usual" in the New London re-

cruiting office next Monday, he said.

And he added, "I just want to note that it's not to demonize the men and women that work there in any way, nor the troops, but because" the recruiting office is "a symbol of support of the war, we want to demonstrate there."

Jarrett said that "in coming months, local resistance will focus on the Norwich office of Rep. Rob Simmons, our elected representative, who continues stubbornly to support the war, and the recruiting centers that attempt to lure young men and women from poor, minority and immigrant communities into military service with false promises of educational opportunity stolen from them by the war itself."

To that end, Jarrett delivered a letter to Simmons' office, calling for him to vote to end the war.

Simmons was not in his Norwich office Monday, but he later released a statement thanking the protesters for "taking the time to share their thoughts with me."

"During a recent trip to Iraq, I had the opportunity to speak with many of our men and women in uniform. They believe their work is important and they want to complete the mission," Simmons said. "As the Iraqis are increasingly able to meet their own security needs, we will bring our soldiers home. I look forward to our troops coming home safely, successfully and soon."

For the protesters, the war cannot end soon enough.

"We know very well that if we pull out right now it's going to leave a terrible, terrible mess, but if we don't pull out now, then when? And how many more American soldiers are going to die?" said Kit Johnson of Stonington.

"A lot of people say, 'Well, we've killed over 3,000 soldiers, and won't they have died for naught?' Are we going to wait until we've killed 6,000, and then will their lives be for naught?"

k.robinson@theday.com



Emmett and Sarah (left and third from left) praying after carrying one of the coffins into the Recruiting Center in Norwich. Emmett and Sarah were both members of the Affinity Group which prepared for the March 20 action.

Photo by John Shishmanian,
Norwich Bulletin.
March 21, 2006: Front page

Why Risk Arrest?

My name is Father Emmett Jarrett, TSSF, and I live and work at St. Francis House, 30 Broad Street, New London, Connecticut. I appear today before the United States District Court in Alexandria, Virginia, charged with "disobeying a lawful order of a government employee or agent," 32CFR2346(b) on the Pentagon Metro Platform at 7:10 a.m. on September 26, 2005.

I did indeed sit down on the sidewalk, briefly blocking an entrance to the Pentagon, and refuse to move when asked by Pentagon security personnel. In so doing I chose to "risk arrest." That's a curious term, but one I've grown fond of in recent years. Arrest is not inevitable, nor is trial on the charge for which one may be arrested. There is a risk involved. When I risked arrest on September 26, 2005, I was in fact arrested, and I am now here, in the United States District Court in Alexandria, Virginia.

When I left home yesterday to appear in this Court, my sixteen year old daughter told me she didn't want me to go to jail. In fact, she would be angry with me if I went to jail. She is not a supporter of United States wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, or anywhere else. She just doesn't want her dad to be away from home, in jail.....

Why risk arrest? Why risk anything? Why not stay comfortably at home, work with homeless people, as I do, seek to reform our local public education system, as I do, grow tomatoes in an urban garden, as I do, or stand, legally, at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Union Plaza, New London, Connecticut, every Saturday at noon, as I do?

There is risk in anything that is real. There is a genuine risk in our country that we will forget the power of truth and learn to believe the lies our government leaders tell us about Afghanistan, Iraq, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction. So the risk of arrest is not the greatest risk I could take. I would risk the salvation of my soul if I



consented to the falsehoods our government proclaims to justify its wars.....

But if I were to go to prison, the worst part would be my daughter's disappointment, the time not spent with her and her mother and brother, and other members of our intentional community in New London. Prison, however, has played an important role in Christian history. It is part of God's plan for those who seek to follow Jesus. The theologian and Biblical scholar Walter Wink wrote:

... Jesus' way has built into it an uncanny solution. It lands many of its practitioners in jail. That is where Paul did most of his meditating, thinking, and writing, and Gandhi and King as well. South African opponent of apartheid Beyers Naude says that the best thing that ever happened to him was his banning. Strange, wry providence, that prison should have been, for so many, not the unfortunate price of protest, but the gracious, fiery crucible that, as one black labor organizer told us, "killed my fear and made me all the more determined to struggle for liberation, to death if necessary" – not said with bravado, but with a quiet, serene smile.



It is for Jesus' way of nonviolent love of enemies that I "risk arrest." If prison is the result, I hope to rejoice in that result. And to enjoy the time away from my family and my work to reflect on the love of God for enemies, and the possibility of our turning to that way in our time.

But most important, the risk is worth it because, even though my daughter Sarah will be angry with me for being away from home, I will be able to look her in the eye when I return and say, "My child, I took the risk for the truth as it is in Jesus, and paid the price of faithfulness, so you can live in a world of justice, freedom, and peace."

February 17, 2006

WINTER SHELTER, 2006**by Sarah Jarrett**

I started working at the New London Emergency Homeless Shelter as a volunteer on December 1st, the night it opened. One reason I started was because it was at my church (St. James) so I felt it would be the right thing for a parishioner to do. Another reason was - and I am not afraid to say it - was to get out of my house. It was a way to leave and see people to talk to. Another reason was to try and impress my dad (which I still don't know if I accomplished).

The last reason was to try and get to know as many homeless people as I could. I remember looking out of a window at St. Francis House and seeing all these people sitting on the wall across the street and just chilling. So I was always just curious about those people that always were there. I wanted to get to know them because I see them everyday walking around the city. So that's why I volunteered from the first of December to the end of March.

The first few weeks before Christmas I really didn't think I was making much progress on the guys and ladies knowing me and that I was there. However once I left for a week for Christmas break the first night I was back one guy named Gary came in and asked me, "So where did you go?" I responded saying I didn't know anyone had noticed. But he assured me that when you hang around the shelter people notice who shows up. Talking with some of the guys was a very interesting experience. Some just chatted, while others indulged me in their whole life story which I was more than happy to hear if they wanted to tell me. During this process of getting to know them I did have a few experiences. But what can you really expect when being at a wet shelter? I mean I wasn't expecting to be disrespected like that. It was a learning experience for me, but I never want to experience it ever again. Other than the one awful experience there were only a few inappropriate comments here and there, but most of the time they were said by some one who was drunk. A thing I did learn was not to take it personally.

So I really did get to know a lot of the people at the shelter, and I will absolutely call them all my friends. Of course every time a person lost their cool and abused the church space I got very angry because it is my church and I don't want anybody no matter how mad they are slamming and breaking a door. But everyone loses their temper now and then. I realized how much I enjoyed the shelter once it came down to the final week. I began to think, "Now what am I going to do on my Friday, Saturday nights and early Sunday mornings?" I mean I am glad I am not waking up at 5:30 am to go to the shelter at 6 am on Sundays anymore to help with breakfast, but it gave me a reason to get up because I would be going and seeing people I liked being around. Not many teenagers I know are willing to give up their entire weekends and some week nights and go work at a shelter. But I did and enjoyed it, and will be doing it again next year. I really realized the shelter was done with when I came in to church Sunday morning and didn't see any cots or anything. And I just laid my head on the table and kind of cried.

For one reason being I didn't know if all the guys were okay. So I was very worried and relieved when I saw a few that day and Monday. However the worst was yet to come. On Friday as I was being picked up from school, I learned that one of the guests had been found dead in Waterford.

**Sun-downing
for William Walsh**

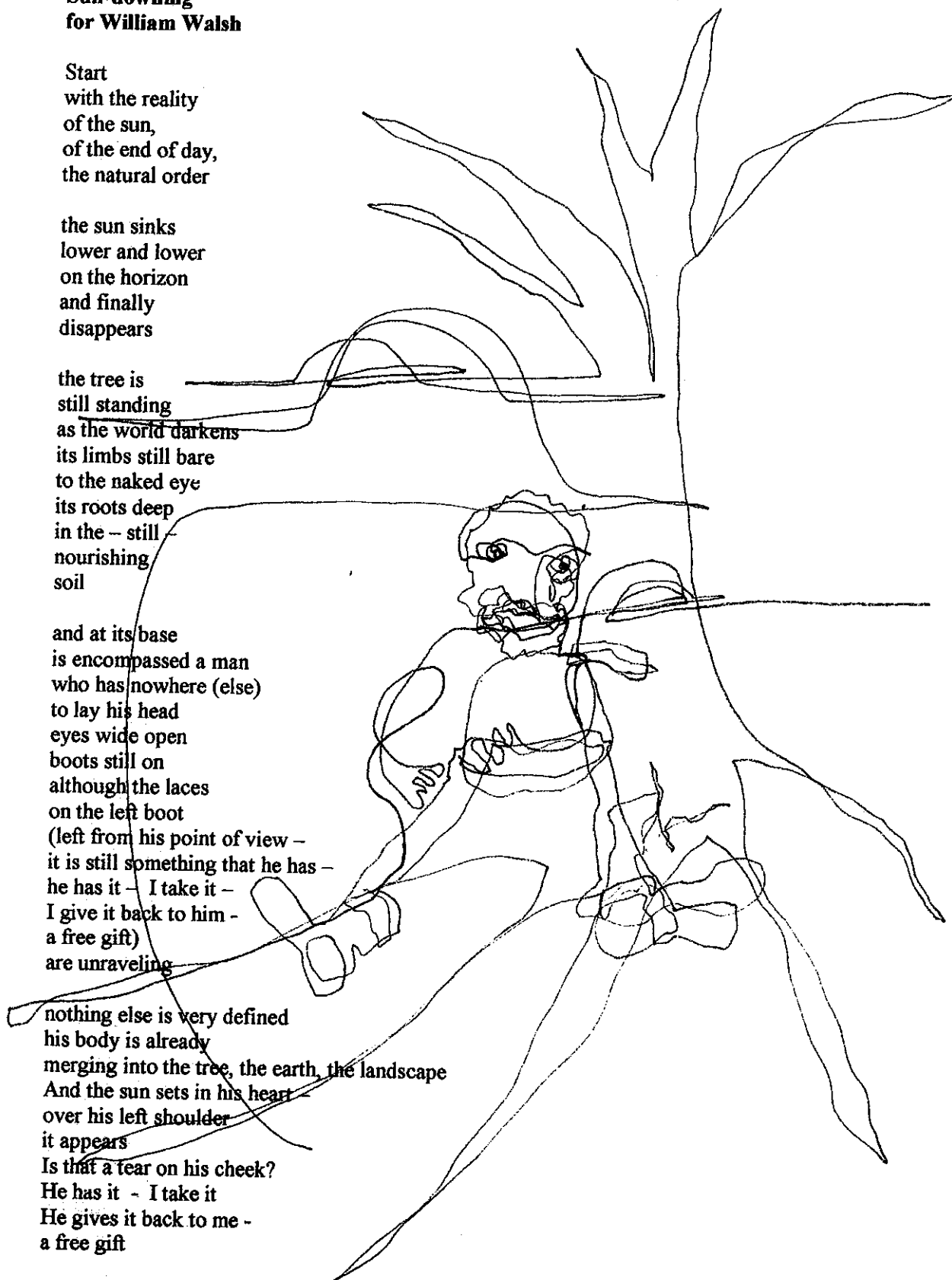
Start
with the reality
of the sun,
of the end of day,
the natural order

the sun sinks
lower and lower
on the horizon
and finally
disappears

the tree is
still standing
as the world darkens
its limbs still bare
to the naked eye
its roots deep
in the – still –
nourishing
soil

and at its base
is encompassed a man
who has nowhere (else)
to lay his head
eyes wide open
boots still on
although the laces
on the left boot
(left from his point of view –
it is still something that he has –
he has it – I take it –
I give it back to him –
a free gift)
are unraveling

nothing else is very defined
his body is already
merging into the tree, the earth, the landscape
And the sun sets in his heart –
over his left shoulder
it appears
Is that a tear on his cheek?
He has it – I take it
He gives it back to me –
a free gift



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in 21st Century Christian Life and Work"
Mark Auer, "The Opening Day of Disciple Season"
Application form



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

+ + +

FIESTA – SATURDAY, JUNE 10

Noon to 4 – Mass on the Grass at 4 p.m.
Williams Park (Corner of Broad & Hempsted)

Our Annual Anniversary Party
Music by John Scott and *Amizade*
Meet our colleagues, enjoy and learn
about all the groups with whom
we have worked this year!

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CLARIFICATION OF THOUGHT

Will resume in the fall

On Friday, September 22 at 5:30 p.m.
NONVIOLENCE AS A WAY OF LIFE

+ + +

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ORGANIZATION
U. S. Postage Paid
Permit #122
New London, CT 06320

Saint Francis House
P. O. Box 2185
New London, CT 06320-2185
Telephone (860) 437-8890
E-mail stfrancishouse@mindspring.com