

BROAD STREET BLUES

A Reader in Radical Discipleship



Reflections and Articles from
St. Francis House
TROUBADOUR 1999 – 2010

Edited by Emmett Jarrett, TSSF
and Sarah Jarrett

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“the blues is an expression of anger
against shame and humiliation”

B.B. King

Edited by Emmett Jarrett, TSSF
and Sarah Jarrett

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*This book is dedicated to the Community
of St. Francis House, New London, Connecticut
— past, present, and to come —
“I have done what was mine to do;
may Christ teach you what is yours to do.”*

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INTRODUCTION

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

B. B. King defined the blues as “an expression of anger against shame and humiliation.” We began some years ago to include a regular column in the TROUBADOUR with the title “Broad Street Blues,” because the experience of shame and humiliation that our friends who are homeless experience daily was becoming intolerable to us. But the genius of the blues is to take the experience of shame and humiliation and turn it into music, to create beauty from the suffering of the people. We thought then, and we still do, that whatever things we “do” at St. Francis House are at their best the music we share with our neighbors. We live on Broad Street. We seek to live in solidarity with our neighbors who also live on Broad Street. From their experience and ours we sing the blues.

If we had tried to write “a reader in radical discipleship” ten or eleven years ago, as we were beginning to live here and learn what it means to live here, we would not have been able to do it. For one thing, Sarah would have been nine years old! Emmett had just turned sixty and had the desire but not the experience for radical discipleship. So in a way this book is a history of our life and work at St. Francis House from August 1999 to the present, August 2010.

The book consists of articles and reflections and a few poems from the pages of the TROUBADOUR, the St. Francis House newsletter. It is the history, as it were, up to now, of our “experiment with truth.” We used this term in the first issue of the TROUBADOUR because even then we knew that we would make mistakes and hoped to learn from them. Those first few issues also claimed St. Francis of Assisi, Gandhi, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, founders of the Catholic Worker, as our mentors.

We have living mentors as well, who are represented in this book. Ed Rodman, who was the keynote speaker at our “Beloved Community” forum on the fortieth anniversary of the martyrdom of Martin Luther King, Jr., was Anne’s mentor from her college years and Emmett’s colleague in ministry in Boston in the 1980’s. Chuck Matthei was instrumental in the founding of St. Francis House and helping us find the money to do that. Eric Swanfeldt, who has lived in Christian community for 35 years was the inspiration for the Pilgrimages for Peace beginning in 2006. Our brother Mark Auer, TSSF (1947-2008), not only “kept the books” for our finances but helped teach the Bible portion of the Radical Discipleship course. We did not begin to teach until 2006, when we had learned something ourselves about following Jesus. The course continues.

The opening section on “Vision” shows us trying to articulate what it means to be disciples of Jesus in the twenty-first century. Like St. Martin of Tours, we find Jesus in the poor and in the practice of nonviolence. And our life is grounded in prayer, of which the St. Francis House meditation garden, dedicated to Francis in memory of Mark, who was professed as a Franciscan Tertiary 12 days before he died, is an expression. The section on “Franciscan Spirit” shares some of our learning from Francis and Franciscans.

When we first started in 1999 “the community” was our family: Anne and Emmett, Nate (aged 14) and Sarah (aged 10). We learned from our friends at the Hartford Catholic Worker that it is indeed possible to raise children in a Catholic Worker house -- at least no harder than in a rectory! There have been numerous people who have lived with us in various relationships: Chrissy Guarnieri, who moved in shortly after we did; Mark Auer, TSSF, who spent the last -- and many of us think the best -- four years of his life at St. Francis House. Bienvenida Mendoza and her sons Henri and Max, who have only now, after living with us for three years, gone “home” to the Dominican Republic, were part of the community. Barbara

and Doug Barrett, who live in Mystic, Conn., have been enormously important supporters of our life and work. Nora Curioso, a member of the extended community, recognized before we did that we had become “the oasis, a little cell of joy and peace in a harried world.” We could go on to include members of churches we have served in 25 years of parish ministry, various Franciscans, members of the Episcopal Urban Caucus, and others.

We were not thinking of the peace movement when we moved to New London from Stone Mountain, Georgia, but the world and the warfare state caught up with us and left us no alternative to resistance. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, stunned not only us but the whole world. The imperial military response of the U. S. Government in Afghanistan and Iraq, and now Afghanistan again, provoked our resistance. When the government tried to scare people in New London with a Homeland Security “mock terror attack,” we were ready, and worked with friends and neighbors to create “fear free zones” and speak truth to power. Emmett’s civil resistance actions with fellow Catholic Workers in Washington, DC, called attention to the use of torture and helped him overcome his cynicism about individual witness for peace.

Just as the Radical Discipleship courses grew out of our involvement in resistance to the “mock terror attack” on New London, and our work with others on homeless issues and the founding of the New London Homeless Hospitality Center developed from our relationships with homeless neighbors, so our support for the work of Arthur Lerner and Laura Burfoot in creating FRESH New London grew from Anne’s interest in local farms and urban gardening. The Peace Pilgrimages -- starting in 2006 -- also grew from our Tuesday morning study group and Eric Swanfeldt’s experience walking in Nicaragua and New England in the 1980’s.

All of these examples illustrate the basic principle of radical discipleship. You go to the poor and get to know your

neighbors. Then you work with them to bring about social change. It's the precise opposite of the "professional model" of Church ministry, in which the "expert" -- priest or minister -- comes into a community with a plan to provide "help" to "them." Rene Voilaume called this radical discipleship "being a brother not a benefactor." We call it knowing your neighbors so you can love them in reality and not in sociological categories.

Our first publication, "Rules and Observances of St. Francis House," was written on St. Clare's Day, 11 August 1999 -- before we even moved into the house at 30 Broad Street. It articulated our vision of St. Francis House as "a place of prayer, a house of hospitality, and a center for justice ministry in New London, Conncticut"; commitment to simplicity of life, chastity in relationships, and obedience to the Gospel; the Catholic Worker themes of resistance and hospitality; and the Gandhian principles of *swaraj* -- self-rule -- and nonviolence; as well as offering our life as an "experiment with truth." We publish this book -- **Broad Street Blues: A Reader in Radical Discipleship**, eleven years later, to the day. We hope our experience with discipleship will be useful to others who seek to follow Jesus..

St. Clare's Day
11 August 2010

I. THE VISION

THE NEW LIFE: EXPERIMENT WITH TRUTH

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

THIS IS THE FIRST issue of **TROUBADOUR**, the Newsletter of St. Francis House and there is much more news to share with our friends and benefactors than can possibly fit into its pages. The first thing to say is that *we have arrived*. The four of us who in some sense constitute the “personnel” of St. Francis House – Anne Scheibner, Fr. Emmett Jarrett, TSSF, and our children Nathaniel and Sarah – are now in Connecticut. We parted from friends in Atlanta on 2 August and arrived here in time to spend the weekend scrubbing and cleaning the house at 30 Broad Street, New London, which is St. Francis House and will be our home.

My first insight into our new life came as I was scrubbing the bathroom floors on the second floor of the House, the one that retains more of the “boarding house” atmosphere (and odor) than the others. I realized as I scrubbed that I had lived in apartments like this on the Lower East Side when I first moved to New York City in 1962. This was not new to me! The second insight came as we began to meet our neighbors. Many of them are older people who lived in a senior housing high rise next to Williams Park, which is on the corner of our block. Some of them eat at “A Movable Feast,” a monthly meal served by members of St. James Episcopal Church a block away. Other neighbors work out of the day labor pool across the street and hang out in front of the “California Fruit” food store. Some of these neighbors are intoxicated, some are just out of jail or waiting to go to jail. The District Court is in the next block. And some of our neighbors are lawyers and dentists and accountants who have bought up the rooming houses (like ours) which were once homes of well-to-do New London families. Our neighbors – at least the ones who stop to chat – are quite interested in what we might be up to. When

we find out, we'll tell them, and readers of **TROUBADOUR** as well. This is far more an "experiment with truth" than a program!

That phrase, "experiment with truth," brings Gandhi to mind. I was struck when we first arrived in Connecticut by Gandhi's example. When the Mahatma returned to India from South Africa in 1915, before he began the public work that led to the liberation of India from British rule, he first visited the country to get to know his people again. Second, he founded an ashram in Amedhabad where he could live with family and friends, pray and study, and from which to do the work. If I can make the comparison without presumption, I think that is what we are called to do right now. First to get to know our neighbors in New London, and second to establish St. Francis House as our base of prayer, study and ministry, or public work.

That brings me to my third insight. Most people we talk to about St. Francis House and our plans to live and do ministry here think we must be opening a homeless shelter or a soup kitchen. While it's natural to assume a "programmatic focus" for a place called "St. Francis House," in fact, the house is not nearly big enough for either of those activities. Indeed, we cannot know in advance what ministry is needed in our new neighborhood before we have lived here awhile. At this point, we have no "program" beyond moving in and becoming neighbors with our neighbors. St. Kevin of Glendalough spent two years in silent prayer in a cave before establishing a monastery there in the seventh century. I believe we are called, like Kevin and others, to move in, open our eyes and ears and hearts, pray to God for guidance, and then "Do whatever he tells us." That's what Mary said to the servants at the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee (John 2). I guess that's our motto: *Do whatever he tells you.*

Right now, we are in the process of renovating the house at 30 Broad Street. For those who have not seen photos or diagrams, let me explain in a few words. The house is a 2-story

frame house build in 1890, with a finished attic. The first floor was most recently rented out as an apartment, and will be pretty easily converted into public space for our work. The front room will be the chapel or meditation room. There is a living room for conversation – “clarification of thought” sessions – a dining room for eating and inviting others to share our family meals, and a kitchen in the rear of the building. Actually the kitchen is now in the front room and must be moved. There is also another room to the side where I have all my books that will become a library and office space for St. Francis House. It’s already possible to do individual spiritual direction there.

The second floor most resembles the rooming house it once was and will someday be rooms for people to stay in as guests, retreatants, or members of the St. Francis House community, when and if it grows beyond our family. The heat and electricity must be connected there and a huge cleaning job done to make it habitable. The third floor, where we plan to live, requires the most extensive renovation – a new roof, with dormers to give space and light. We’re looking at a minimum of \$100,000 to make the space livable, and rehabilitate the house’s heating and electric systems. We hope to be able to keep the steam heat in part because I love to hear the knock-knocking of the radiators on cold mornings!

Until these things are done – no sooner than January, 2000 – we will live in the house in nearby Stonington that Anne’s father build in 1952 when her grandfather retired as rector of Calvary Episcopal Church in Stonington village. It’s not a bad commute, and I will be working part-time at Connecticut College and St. James Church, in New London, and taking Nathaniel to school at Williams on the Conn College campus every day. Sarah will stay at Dean’s Mill Elementary, which she enjoyed very much last year, at least until we move into St. Francis House.

Our “new life” has begun. I suspect it has been happening for a long time but the pace of change has increased dramatically.

We are learning from Francis, who sought to live “according to the form of the holy Gospel.” We are learning from Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement. We are learning from Gandhi, who had the courage to make his entire life an “experiment of truth.” We expect to learn from our mistakes, as he did, and to share our learnings and our mistakes with friends and readers. The very notion of an *experiment* with truth is liberating to me! But finally we are simply seeking to follow Jesus, to be Christian disciples, to “do whatever he tells us.”

September 1999

“WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS....”

Anne P. Scheibner

“FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, there will your heart be also.” Picture St. Francis stripping himself naked in the village square. This was his first public act of identification with being a man of Christ instead of a man of the world. The reverberations of the totality of the act have been felt through the ages and when Emmett first announced his vision of our moving to New London and starting a ministry known as “St. Francis House,” I was shaken to the core. “Not a chance,” said I. It took five months of prayer and Bible study to get us to a place of making a joint commitment to setting off on this new journey in ministry. The shape of “what we are doing” is not clear and discovering the way as we go is part of the journey. Each step gives rise to new problems and new opportunities. But here is what we have done so far:

We incorporated St. Francis House and bought our 100 year old boarding house in St. Francis’ name for \$95,000. We have made a \$40,000 loan to the House which will be forgiven over the next five years as the ministry unfolds. St. Francis House and the community which forms in it and through it, is where we expect to live for the rest of our lives. The house will not be “ours” in the sense of property we can sell or leave to our children. But it is an investment both for us and for them in the kind of community we hope will embody our commitments to justice and will help build ideas of equity into their lives as well as ours.

I made a gift of roughly \$50,000 of Compaq stock – my only really successful personal investment started with \$4,000 some 20 years ago – to Equity Trust’s community loan fund which enables affordable housing, community-based initiatives. Equity Trust then lent \$55,000 to St. Francis House. Two years from now we will begin to repay that loan. The Loan Fund will give priority for the use of those funds to community-

supported agriculture in southeastern Connecticut, since we hope to be part of developing sustainable agriculture in this region and to find new ways of uniting rural and urban areas.

We put our house in Stone Mountain on the market and realized for the first time, having previously lived in church-owned rectories, how mortgages work. After five years of paying \$1,300 a month, we had only \$5,000 of equity in our home! My thought was immediately that we should be able to “recycle” homes within the community of faith through some combination of small loans from church members and thereby avoid repetition of the cycle of making purely interest payments for the first 10-15 years of a 30-year mortgage. To our great joy, we hope to be able to turn the house over to a couple who are members of our former parish. They chose to assume our mortgage of \$40,000 at 6% to be repaid over 15 years.

Over the next few months we will be involved in major renovations. Emmett has described some of the details. We don't know exactly what will be needed but even with everyone pitching in and a considerable amount of “sweat equity” we are still looking at \$100,000 plus an estimated \$20,000 in basic operating costs. These costs do not include any “salary” for us although they do include utilities, property insurance, soup supplies and local taxes. (We decided to not ask for exemption because we want to pay our fair share for municipal fire, police and other services.) Part of the experiment is to see how we can begin building a base for ministry without making “professional” level salaries a part of the “program.” We hope to be part of a network of people around the country who are making their own experiments with the truth vis-à-vis material resources. We need the ongoing prayers of our friends and readers. We also need for those who are able to be financial partners in the start-up and rehab part of the ministry to be in touch with us as soon as possible. If your heart is with us, please put your treasure there as well....

September 1999

SARAH'S SERMON

Sarah Jarrett

Sarah Jarrett preached her first sermon – a dialogue sermon – at Evening Prayer at the end of the first Board Meeting. The text was Matthew 9:35-10:4.

Today, October 9, 1999, is when Jesus went to all the cities and villages. So he could teach in their synagogues and preach the gospel of the kingdom. And healing every disease and infirmity. Once Jesus saw the crowds he had compassion for them because they were helpless and harassed like little sheep without a shepherd. Now what do you think this problem is about? When Jesus says this to his disciples, what do you think this makes you feel? The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.... To end that part of the sermon I would like to talk about St. Francis House. I think this experiment is going to be very interesting. How about you? St. Francis House was for people to stay for awhile. That is what I think. What do you think St. Francis House is here for? I think this will be a learning experience for my whole family. Do you think this will work? This will end my sermon.

December 1999

BEGINNER'S MIND

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 2:4)

After it empties itself, it begins:
A solitary duck churns steadily
Across Lambert's Cove towards Quanaduck.
A cormorant turns its sharp head
Right to left like a submarine's periscope,
Then dives to escape collision. Soon the surface
Of the water is still again. Like a mirror,
It reflects the scudding clouds on the surface
Of the sky's blue screen. Beginner's sky.

July 2000

RULES AND OBSERVANCES OF ST. FRANCIS HOUSE

MANY PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT places around the world are now beginning to experiment with new ways of living, looking to what Alasdair MacIntyre called "a new and doubtless very different St. Benedict" as a model. When Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, he first toured the country to get acquainted again with the people. Then he established an *ashram* at Ahmedabad as a place to live and work, pray and study. The place was an expression of the work itself. St. Francis House is not an *ashram* but there are some similarities. It is in the spirit of Benedict and Gandhi, as well as Francis, that we have moved to New London and established a house of prayer where our family will live and from which we will do the work we believe God is calling us to do.

If it would be pretentious to call St. Francis House an *ashram*, still it is only practical to follow Gandhi's example and establish "a code of rules and observances" for our life together, especially if we hope for people beyond our immediate family to join us. It seems helpful to think in terms of the Third Order Franciscan Rule of "prayer, study, and work" for our observances, and the Christian baptismal covenant for the rules or disciplines of our life. The baptismal promises become, in the monastic life, the vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience to the Gospel.

If contemplation is the most radical action one can take in our current situation, living the baptismal promises is perhaps the most countercultural life imaginable. In a society that distorts sex, money, and power into idolatry, a life of simplicity, chastity, and obedience to something or some One beyond oneself and one's immediate group is resistance to the principalities and powers. Here then are three practices or observances, and three disciplines of Christian community life that we seek to practice at St. Francis House.

AT THE DEDICATION OF THE ST. FRANCIS HOUSE GARDEN Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

From "The Testament of St. Francis"

To me, Brother Francis, the Lord thus gave the grace to do penance: when I was still a sinner, I thought it too bitter a thing to look at lepers, and the Lord led me to them and taught me to be merciful; after leaving them, that which seemed bitter now appeared as sweetness both for soul and body. When the Lord had entrusted brothers to me, nobody told me how to treat them; but the Most High revealed to me personally that I ought to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel. The Lord has revealed to me that we ought to give the following greetings to others: "May the Lord give you peace."

What do I see for St. Francis House over the next ten years?

In the first decade, we moved to New London, renovated the two houses on Broad Street, and established a pattern of prayer and hospitality, contemplation and resistance, as we got to know our neighbors. We became active in the life of our neighbors, in New London and nationally. Our work with the Episcopal Urban Caucus from 2000 to 2005, and with the Catholic Worker Witness Against Torture in Washington, DC, in 2006-2008, were national in scope. Locally, our work has been with homeless neighbors, community gardens, education, and peace witness.

In the second decade, I believe we are being called to a more contemplative life in community. We will become what Dorothy Day called "the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world." As our new friend Jim Douglass teaches us, it is the contemplative solitude, the darkness of faith, that leads to revolutionary change in the world.

It's the Paschal Mystery – the Cross and the Resurrection, denial of self and the vision of a new heaven and a new earth – all over again. It is the vision Thomas Merton saw in Sri Lanka

RULES AND OBSERVANCES OF ST. FRANCIS HOUSE

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Prayer. A form of common prayer for all adults in the community on a daily basis, morning or evening. A time of meditation, as each one finds it helpful, every day.

Study. Regular Bible study to ground us in the Christian story, and as a means of reaching consensus on the work to be done. Other study as appropriate.

Work. The work of the House, first of all, is living together in harmony, then the “work” of hospitality, spiritual formation, and social justice.

Simplicity. We seek to live simply in the midst of a consumer society. We will try to manage our expenses at a median level of income for U.S. households and learn to depend upon God. When others join us we will pool our earnings and decide on expenses by consensus.

Chastity. Young children live among us, not as full adult members of the community, but as our responsibility. Since sex is one of the great idolatries of our culture, we hope to model chastity – faithfulness in marriage, abstinence for singles, celibacy as a gift to be celebrated for those who have it – in our lives, not only for ourselves but for the children.

Obedience. Self-rule (*swaraj*) is the aim of nonviolent life. Like Francis, we promise “obedience to the Gospel” rather than to a religious superior. We aim at consensus in decision making, in the light of the Gospel.

We desire our life together and individually to be an “experiment with truth.” This means we don’t know in advance what action we will take, and we desire to be truthful enough to learn from our mistakes. We offer ourselves as the “raw materials” of this experiment and trust that God will use us to his purposes as we learn “to do whatever he tells us” (John 2:5).

St. Clare’s Day
August 1999

FROM ONE ST. FRANCIS HOUSE TO ANOTHER

Kenneth Leech

THE 1950's AND THE EARLY 1960's were key periods in my life. It was in those years that I came to Christian faith, began to pray, became a socialist, and was inspired by a number of movements and individuals. I hope that I have learned, and am still learning, from movements of thought and from people who have called many of my earlier assumptions into question, yet these years were formative.

A number of places stand out historically. One, which was demolished over thirty years ago, was the basement chapel of 84 Cable Street, in East London, which, from 1944 to 1963 was a Franciscan "house of hospitality." It was called St. Francis House and was located at the heart of the "café quarter" of the London Docks. This is a slum area with massive social deprivation, and it was the main center for juvenile prostitution in London. Living there at the end of the 1950's, and learning to pray in that chapel, was a formative period in my life and approach to prayer and ministry. Since then, other places have been important, both at critical moments and in an ongoing way. I recall with great affection the apartment of the Little Sisters of Jesus in Roxbury, Massachusetts to which I was taken at a particularly desolate time in my life at the end of the 1970's and where I felt a powerful sense of the presence of Christ in an hour of adoration before the Reserved Sacrament. Then, and ongoing, Bede House, a center for spiritual life in Kent, England, run by the Sisters of the Love of God, remains an important resource and source of strength for me. Houses of this kind are of critical importance.

My early experience in the Franciscan house in Cable Street was crucial. Its integration of prayer and service, contemplation and action, hospitality and commitment to justice, made an abiding impression on my whole spiritual, theological and

pastoral praxis. More than any other place, this tumbledown slum house helped me to pray, to listen, to learn, and, only then to try to minister within this troubled and turbulent, yet, in many respects, caring and loving neighborhood.

It represented in a very powerful, yet humble and largely hidden, way the importance of prayerful contemplative presence developed by Charles de Foucauld and the Little Sisters and Brothers of Jesus. Without attempting directly to evangelise, the Franciscans in Cable Street, by their stability and consistent commitment over two decades, helped to make Christianity respected, and helped to prepare the way for other forms of Christian presence in the East End of London.

I originally thought the title “house of hospitality” was an unfortunate one, since most of the houses at that end of Cable Street were brothels, houses of hospitality of another kind! I had not realized how important the influence of Dorothy Day was on the pastoral approach. This is not surprising for I had never heard of Dorothy Day or the Catholic Worker movement. I believe that Cardinal Griffin had banned *The Catholic Worker* from all Catholic bookshops in London on the grounds that it was “communist.” (Had he realized that it was not communist at all, but anarchist, he would probably have had apoplexy!) But the anarchist bookshop wouldn’t stock it either because it was religious. It was left to an Anglo-Catholic anarchist, Laurens Otter, to import it and sell it every Sunday at Speakers’ Corner, Hyde Park.

The Catholic Worker model for a house of hospitality was simple yet profound: prayer, hospitality, and waiting. My guess is that this is important for the new St. Francis House too. Prayer is central, and without a disciplined life of corporate prayer, the whole enterprise will fall. Hospitality is vital for we are disciples of One who put the sharing of food and fellowship at the heart of his ministry. But waiting matters too. It is essential to be patient, to listen, to learn from people, from the neighborhood in which God has set us, before we start to utter.

We need to earn the right to be heard, we need to be credible. Inner city neighborhoods in particular are used to people and groups who appear, stay for a while, and then move on. Word and action must grow out of stability and silence.

It is a great joy to me, having lived in, and, to a large extent, been formed by, St. Francis House in East London in the mid-20th century, to find myself involved in a new St. Francis House for the beginning of the 21st century.

Spring 2002

NONVIOLENT PRACTICES

Nobody was born nonviolent. No one was born charitable. The first duty of the nonviolent community is helping its members work upon themselves and come to conversion. The community provides a system of rules and ways of living that oblige the individual to convert, to turn around, to put the heart inside-out and up-side down.

Lanza del Vasto

Some “practices” for nonviolent living at St. Francis House:

1. We pray daily: Morning Prayer, Monday-Friday, 7a.m.
2. We meditate: an hour of individual contemplative prayer or meditation each day.
3. We study: weekly Bible study at community meeting.
4. We engage with others: participation in regular Friday night meetings for clarification of thought.
5. We fast: weekly on Friday, and other times as needed.
6. We witness: weekly peace witness in downtown New London, Saturday noon to 1:00 p.m.
7. We provide “safe space” for wider community meetings: as needed.
8. We question: we seek to help our community and others develop skills to ask questions in various settings in a nonviolent manner (Interrogative Theology).

Developed at Friday Night Meeting on October 24, 2003.

THE NAMING OF VICTORY HOUSE

Anne P. Scheibner

What to name “the house next door” or “32 Broad” as we most often called it? We have been trying to resolve that question for over a year since the renovations were completed. We considered various possibilities. “Clare House” or “St. Clare House” seemed in one sense obvious. But not all of us are Franciscans and the name suggested that we were. “Mary House” was tempting but was it because we had a ready made sign (from a previous residence) rather than a sense of Our Lady being the patron of the house? We even held a “Name the House” contest during our June Anniversary Celebration. Sarah’s entry was “St. Francis House Jr.” and in many ways that was accurate. Russ Carmichael’s suggestion of “Sanctuary House” drew us towards a reality that I at least was not sure we were ready for. And yet the groups which were already sharing in the use of the community meeting space on the first floor – CURE, Save Social Services, Mock Terror, FRESH, Constructive Program...- did not share our religious foundation and therefore the overtly religious names did not seem quite right. So we let the moment pass and waited.

On Thursday, October 20, 2005 we had our weekly Community Meeting time starting with Bible Study. The gospel reading for the day was Matthew 12:15-21. I use the Greek interlinear Bible with the New Revised Standard Version for the English text. The phrase that jumped out at me during the first reading was the last line of the Suffering Servant citation from Isaiah “in his name the Gentiles will hope.” After the second reading I found myself reflecting on the sentence preceding that one: the literal translation being, “A reed being crushed he will not break and a smoking lamp he will not extinguish until he leads to victory justice” or the RSV translation “... until he brings justice to victory.”

“Justice to victory.” I was totally bowled over by the meaning I could see embedded in that phrase. First of all, justice was the Greek word from which our word “crisis” comes. The Greek and its Hebrew antecedent both embody an understanding of “judgment” as being key to justice and restoration of the people’s (not just individuals’ but nations’) right relationship with each other and with God. So for “justice” to be brought to “victory” would mean that we as a people had crossed over a very important divide.

This victory was to be achieved non-violently as implied by the absence of quarreling or shouting (12:19). My notes from that morning indicate that I thought about people in a study group about racism and how hard it was for me to be generous – the desire to show my superiority and crush the bruised reed was strong in me. The victory being named in Isaiah was not part of “a zero-sum” game in which to win you have to have someone else lose.

I thought of Bishop Desmond Tutu preaching at the National Cathedral in Washington *before* Nelson Mandela was released from prison. I remembered the sheer radiance of his face as he proclaimed that we as Christians know that the victory is already won. We do? Did I know that? Do I know it now at least a little more certainly than I did then? During that same period we encountered another example from South Africa of that same confidence. Emmett tells the story of meeting the plane to receive South African Anglican priest Lulama Ntsingwa who had just been released from detention and of that same radiant smile signaling the victory of faith over fear.

And so as we moved to the third part of the Bible study, namely, what does this passage mean for us at St. Francis House, I suddenly thought, “What if we named 32 Broad ‘Victory House?’” Then every time we referred to the house or answered the phone, we would be telling others – and reminding ourselves! – that the victory over fear and death is already won.

Naming 32 Broad “Victory House” would be part of the Word being brought to and lived out in New London – one of the coastlines, clearly! Mark and Emmett immediately embraced the name and so at our next Tuesday Business Meeting the name was introduced and affirmed.

Naming is a serious business. “Victory” is usually heard in its narrow secular sense of winning. But the Victory being named here is the fullness that can only be achieved through the fullness of justice, of relationship restored with each other and with God. The fact is that we continue to live under judgment. The hope embodied in the name of Victory House is part of that same unfolding reality.

Epiphany 2006

BUT WHAT DO YOU *DO*?

REFLECTIONS ON LIFE AND WORK AT ST. FRANCIS HOUSE

Anne P. 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 professional 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 I Kings 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 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 a 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 is shown, for example, in the naming of Victory House. 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

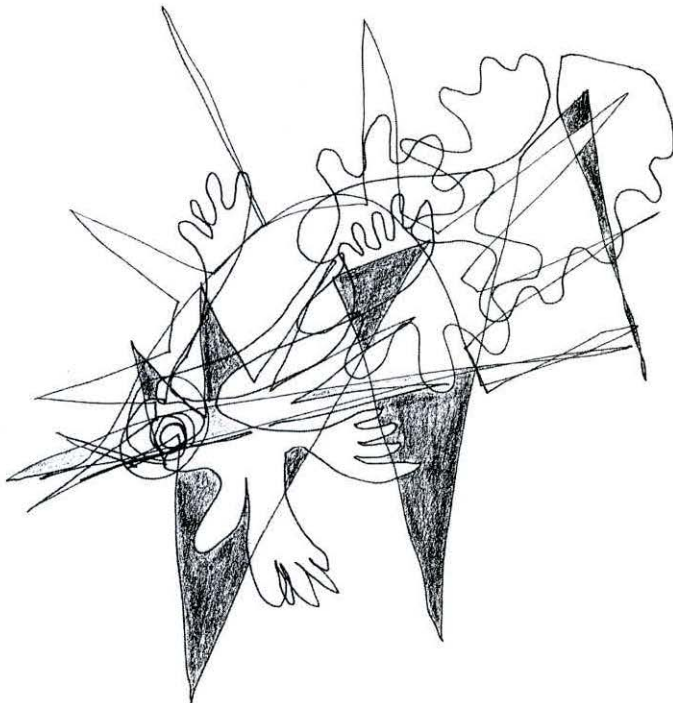
visiting Charleston where family ties were paramount the first question would be, "Who are you kinfolk?" If you were in Atlanta, the question would be, "What do you do?" because that was a northern, business oriented culture. But of course, if you were to come to Savannah where everyone understood the 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. 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 below was done in preparation for the 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 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!



6

A DRAFT OF TEN PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING IN COMMUNITY AT ST. FRANCIS HOUSE

After ten years of life in community at St. Francis House in New London, Conn., and in light of our experience during that time, we now undertake to live together according to the following principles. The principles are drawn from Christian, and other religious and radical political practices, and from the experience of other small communities in our country and elsewhere, in our time and in times past. We adopt these principles, and promise to follow them – with the help of God – because we believe they offer genuine happiness in our lives and we wish to share that happiness. We know that we can only change the world as we ourselves are changed. We seek to be the change we wish to make in the world. We choose to live by these principles also in order to invite others in our country and in the world to live similarly.

- 1. Nonviolence** This is the foundational value. Gandhi called it *ahimsa*, and it means much more than refraining from killing. It is our “way of life,” involving conversion of heart in order to honor all creation as of equal value with ourselves. We believe nonviolence is the law of the universe and we aim to live in harmony with all of creation. There are people and values we are willing to die for, but not to kill for.
- 2. Truth** Truth likewise is a foundational value. No one religion or philosophy has a monopoly on truth, and neither do we. Our commitment is to the truth itself, and to spending our lives seeking truth, being open to truth wherever it appears, and however others apprehend it.
- 3. Nonpossession** The root of war and violence is pos-

sessiveness. While human beings cannot live without material things – food, clothing, shelter – and relationships, when we turn those goods into commodities and seek to possess them, they possess us, and drive us to violence to protect them. When we achieve personal and communal self-control, we can use good things and not be used by them or destroy others in order to acquire them. Self-rule and personal responsibility are spiritual disciplines for us.

4. **Chastity** Chastity is the fundamental virtue of faithful human relationships, not only sexual relations. It involves openness to all people and sees others as belonging to God and not as a means of self-fulfillment. Chastity is the form nonpossession takes in personal relationships.
5. **Local economy** Gandhi called this *swadeshi* and saw the revival of local economy – in the food we eat, the clothes we wear, our houses and businesses – as the primary vehicle for individual self-control and communal independence. Use of locally grown food and other goods is not only healthy, it builds community with our neighbors who are farmers and artisans.
6. **Work** Work in a class-ridden society is boring and burdensome, but the work of free men and women is a primary human activity. Creative work is one of the most satisfying human achievements. Physical work is not less valuable than artistic or intellectual work. Our bodies need physical work for their well-being and our spirits need work to express our creativity. Shared work is a source of joy. Living is not something we earn, but something we do.
7. **Respect for all beings** Respect for our families and

neighbors is only the beginning of an attitude of respect for all beings. Such an attitude leads us to combat racism, sexism, class and ethnic prejudices and other forms of oppression, but also to reject “speciesism” and the attitude that all of “nature” is available for human domination and destruction.

- 8. Respect for all religions** St. Francis House is an intentional Christian community, and our corporate worship is normally Christian but we do not therefore disrespect other religious traditions. We have learned from many traditions, and incorporated much of our learning into our community life. Like others, we are – and always will be – seekers.
- 9. Fearlessness** We commit to support each other and our neighbors in courageous witness to the truth as we are given to see it and practice it, realizing that there will be practical consequences to our witness as we resist unjust social and economic structures. But living differently is dangerous. We seek to be free from fear always and everywhere, because we trust Martin Luther King, Jr.’s faith that “the universe bends towards justice.”
- 10. Community** All of us were raised in an individualistic culture that values competition over cooperation and greed more than generosity. To overcome this training, we commit ourselves to community. We desire to be accountable to one another for our actions and practices. We pledge to support each other in our personal growth, but we recognize that genuine spiritual growth is never merely individual. The practice of community, so lacking in our culture, is essential for our growth in nonviolence and our quest for the truth. Consensus decision-making is more than find-

ing common ground among ourselves. It is discerning the mind of Christ.

The living of these principles, values, or vows, can only be achieved by the practice of spiritual disciplines designed to open our lives, as individuals and as a community, to the power that Christians call the Holy Spirit. We are committed, therefore, to forms of common prayer, personal meditation and contemplation, study and work to achieve the goals of community and be a model for our friends and neighbors in New London and the wider world.

6 August 2009

Feast of the Transfiguration
The 64th anniversary of Hiroshima

AT THE DEDICATION OF THE ST. FRANCIS HOUSE GARDEN
Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

From “The Testament of St. Francis”

To me, Brother Francis, the Lord thus gave the grace to do penance: when I was still a sinner, I thought it too bitter a thing to look at lepers, and the Lord led me to them and taught me to be merciful; after leaving them, that which seemed bitter now appeared as sweetness both for soul and body. When the Lord had entrusted brothers to me, nobody told me how to treat them; but the Most High revealed to me personally that I ought to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel. The Lord has revealed to me that we ought to give the following greetings to others: “May the Lord give you peace.”

What do I see for St. Francis House over the next ten years?

In the first decade, we moved to New London, renovated the two houses on Broad Street, and established a pattern of prayer and hospitality, contemplation and resistance, as we got to know our neighbors. We became active in the life of our neighbors, in New London and nationally. Our work with the Episcopal Urban Caucus from 2000 to 2005, and with the Catholic Worker Witness Against Torture in Washington, DC, in 2006-2008, were national in scope. Locally, our work has been with homeless neighbors, community gardens, education, and peace witness.

In the second decade, I believe we are being called to a more contemplative life in community. We will become what Dorothy Day called “the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world.” As our new friend Jim Douglass teaches us, it is the contemplative solitude, the darkness of faith, that leads to revolutionary change in the world.

It’s the Paschal Mystery – the Cross and the Resurrection, denial of self and the vision of a new heaven and a new earth – all over again. It is the vision Thomas Merton saw in Sri Lanka

a few days before his death in 1968: "Everything is emptiness and everything is compassion."

This Garden, dedicated to our brother Mark Auer, is a symbol of that oasis. In the heart of the city, where summer nights bring sounds of anguish and suffering and death and inhuman treatment of the most vulnerable, we create a place of silence and of prayer. Only in this way can we sustain the compassion that Christ our God calls us to. Only by establishing a space for silence in a death-tormented and death-dealing culture can we share the oasis with the homeless and the hurt, the lonely and the lost. Only in this way of silence and compassion can we live lives that are worthy of men and women, children of God, and share that life.

May God who has given us the will to do these things
give us the grace and the power to accomplish them.

+ + +

2009 was the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Emmett, Anne, Nate and Sarah's moving into 30 Broad St. after a year of renovations. We celebrated the occasion on St. Francis Day which fell on Sunday, October 4 with friends, board members and colleagues with Nate overseeing the making of chicken gumbo for 150. Mark had always thought the hallway of Victory House should be an art gallery so we did a retrospective of Sarah's work through her high school years, a sampling of art from the pages of the Troubadour and of Amal Alwan's oil paintings of Baghdad from our hosting several exhibitions of her working starting in 2003. Sarah's painting of St. Francis in New London with a dove (ascending or descending?) was finished that weekend in honor of the 10th anniversary. The Wyland whale mural which is on Eugene O'Neil Drive in downtown New London 5 blocks from St. Francis House is in the background of her painting.

June 2009

II. FRANCISCAN SPIRIT

OPEN HANDS, EMPTY HANDS:
A REFLECTION ON FRANCISCAN VOCATION
Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

I was moved to reflect again on my vocation as an Anglican Franciscan Tertiary by an article on the same subject by Sr. Pamela Clare, CSF. This is a highly condensed version of what turned out to be a rather long essay.

Sr. Pamela Clare spoke of her experience in 1978 as a professional anthropologist, an “Indian Expert,” confronted on the streets of San Francisco with “Native American families devastated by alienation, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse.” She had nothing to give them. She came to them with empty hands, which paradoxically proved to be the only way to really approach people. “Empty hands” are not only embarrassingly empty, she found, but also open, “ready to take hold of another hand, ... naked, revealing our true selves,” and available to God.

The more I thought about her article the more it seemed to me that my own Franciscan vocation, and our experience at St. Francis House in New London, was an example of what she was talking about. Now, not all vocations are Franciscan, but a Franciscan vocation is a particular kind of calling, a particular sort of call to discipleship. It is radical, because Francis, the model for this vocation, is radical, but radical in his (and our) openness to Jesus, whose disciples we are.

Discipleship. I take my definition of discipleship from Matthew 16:24, one of the texts Francis found when he opened the Bible after Mass on St. Matthias’ Day, 1208. *Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”* This saying of Jesus indicates the three elements of discipleship: self-denial, the way of the cross, and following. The order is important, for self-denial begins with conversion from the self to Jesus; the disciple’s lifelong path is the way of the cross; and the

goal is the journey, a following in community with Jesus and other disciples. Community is essential to discipleship and to Franciscan vocation. As Ed Rodman said last February at the Episcopal Urban Caucus assembly in New London: *A vocation is genuine when the deepest desire of your heart meets the deepest need of your community.*

Franciscan vocation can be seen under these three aspects, or headings, derived from Jesus in Scripture. This involves three images, three religious vows, and is related to the three traditional stages of spiritual growth.

Nakedness involves conversion, denial of self, the purgative way, and the vow of obedience.

Passion involves darkness, the cross, a commitment to nonviolence, the illuminative way, and the vow of chastity.

Silence suggests union with the One we follow, in community, the unitive way, and the vow of poverty.

Nakedness. Nakedness is a profound Christian image. In the Bible Job, deprived of property, family, even health, says *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return"* (Job 1:21). The young man who followed Jesus on the night he was arrested *left the linen cloth* in which he was clothed *and ran away naked* (Mark 14:52). To be naked is to be unprotected, without even clothing to hide behind. When a man or woman encounters Jesus, he or she is naked. To become a disciple you must be stripped naked.

Francis was naked at the beginning of his ministry and twenty years later at the end of his life. When his father haled him into the Bishop's Court to get back the money Francis had appropriated to rebuild the church of San Damiano, he got more than he sought for. Francis returned the money, took off his clothes, and said "From now on I can freely say *Our Father who art in heaven*, not *father Peter Bernardone*, to whom, behold, I give up not only the money, but all my clothes too. I will therefore go naked to the Lord"

At the end of his life, Francis was taken back to the

Porziuncula to die. He asked his brothers to place his naked body on the ground. "When you see that I am brought to my last moments, place me naked on the ground, and let me lie there after I am dead for the length of time it takes one to walk a mile unhurriedly." The nakedness that had marked the beginning of his life of discipleship graced his end.

The journey of discipleship, or vocation, begins with the naked encounter with Jesus, which is conversion. Just as Francis had to strip himself of pride, position, wealth, even the admiration of his worldly friends, so we must come to Jesus naked, "without a leg to stand on," clothes, or reputation to hide behind. When we stand naked before God we begin to see ourselves as God sees us. This process is called "purgative" because it is painful, as giving up our egotism and self-sufficiency, or burning dross from the pure ore. Sin is purged away and pride is humbled. The clothing that once seemed to Francis beautiful now appear ugly, and rags appear as noble garments.

Francis's conversion, like most people's, was part of a long process, but one incident stands out among others. A rich young man, accustomed to beauty and health and the best that money could buy, Francis had an instinctive revulsion to lepers. This is not hard to understand because of the odor, the ugliness, and the fear people had of contagion. One day in 1206, as Francis was riding his horse on a country road, he encountered a leper. Dismounting he gave the leper a coin, then kissed his wounds. At the end of his life he described this event in these words:

This is how God inspired me, Brother Francis, to embark upon a life of penance. When I was in sin, the sight of lepers nauseated me beyond measure, but then God himself led me into their company, and I had pity on them. When I had once become acquainted with them, what had previously nauseated me became a source of spiritual and physical consolation to me. After that I did not wait long before leaving the world.

Not only does the false finery now seem like rags to the disciple, the rags he once despised have become beautiful. Conversion is not wallowing in guilt but a complete change of direction for the whole of one's life.

Nakedness, conversion, purgation, the encounter with Jesus leads to a life of obedience. We usually speak of the three vows of religious life as poverty, chastity, and obedience. But obedience comes first, not only in the order of experience, but as a spiritual reality. We cannot be chaste (or celibate, and there is a difference!) unless we are first obedient. The same is true of poverty or simplicity of life. We embrace a simple life in obedience to Jesus and the Gospel. All of this is impossible except to those who *hear* the call of God. The word "obedience" comes from the Latin *obedire*, "to listen to," from *audire*, "to hear." Obedience is not so much a matter of following someone else's command as of hearing what someone says. For the Christian, it's about hearing what Jesus says.

It is not accurate to speak of a "conclusion" to the process of conversion, but there is a transition from the initial experiences into the practice of discipleship. This is entrance upon the life of service in a community and the stage of passion and the way of the cross, the second element of Franciscan vocation.

Passion. The second stage of discipleship is to "take up the cross." The Christian and Franciscan disciple embraces the life of faith, walking in darkness. That's what the life of faith is: walking in darkness, embracing the darkness. And it is a passionate embrace. We follow Jesus and seek to become obedient to the Gospel because we are passionate. It was said of Francis that he did not simply love God, he was *in love with God*. Franciscan vocation is passionate.

Passion is a double-edged concept for the Christian. First and foremost it is *the* Passion, the suffering of Jesus on the cross, that constitutes the Christian community and draws the individual Christian into discipleship. The very word "passion," *passio*, means suffering. A deeper understanding of

sexual love is aware that passion is not torrid sex scenes on the video screen. Passion is about sacrifice and surrender more than satisfaction of desire.

But the “passion” of lust reminds us that the ancients thought of passion as a powerful, chaotic force, like a hurricane, that blows the rational creature off balance and off course. Passions are not rational. Passions in this sense are drives that must be brought under control, subject to the mind and the will. The disciple, in this way of thinking, will be a disciplined person, who has brought the passions into the service of the Lord of life, who suffered to set us free.

The Greek Fathers spoke of the contemplative life as one of *apatheia*, literally “without passion.” But George Maloney, SJ, writing of Symeon the New Theologian, defined *apatheia* as “a passionless passion to do whatever at the moment corresponds to God’s good pleasure as manifested by Jesus Christ through his Spirit in accord with Gospel values.” Passions may cloud the mind, but the person of faith walks in darkness, trusting passionately in the One who has called her.

The image of darkness, like that of passion, is essential to an understanding of faith. Faith is not the same thing as belief. I *believe* the articles of the Christian faith set forth in the Creed, but I *trust* Jesus, whom I encounter in the darkness of discipleship. Paul’s great example of faith was Abraham, who *believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness* (Gen. 15:6; II Cor. 5:7). Abraham in his old age went into a distant land, away from home and family, on God’s promise to give the land to offspring he didn’t have and had no expectation of having. The Christian disciple is likewise promised much, and trusts the Lord who promises.

Walking in the darkness of discipleship on a Franciscan vocation involves, I believe, a commitment to nonviolence. The work of the disciple is like the work of Jesus, who might have appealed to God for ten legions of angels but chose the cross in obedience to his Father (Matthew 26:53). Franciscans reject

violence as Jesus and Francis did. When his first companions had joined him, Francis was offered property by Bishop Guido of Assisi to support their life together. He refused the offer.

My Lord, if we had any possessions we should also be forced to have arms to protect them, since possessions are a cause of disputes and strife, and in many ways we should be hindered from loving God and our neighbor. Therefore in this life we wish to have no temporal possessions.

The Rule of the Third Order established by Francis as early as 1209, is now lost, but it probably contained a provision like the Rule of 1221. The Tertiaries “are not to take up lethal weapons, or bear them about, against anybody.”

Gandhi taught that nonviolence is “the law of life,” and while Francis was very much a man of his times, he may have thought in a similar way. Gandhi said:

Mutual forbearance is not non-violence. Immediately you get the conviction that non-violence is the law of life, you have to practice it towards those who act violently towards you; and the law must apply to nations as to individuals.

Jesus (as Gandhi knew) said much the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount.

The main evidence for an orientation towards nonviolence in the life of Francis is revealed in his mission to Egypt and his attempt to convert the Sultan. His methods of evangelization and his peace-making strategies in a time of Christian-Muslim conflict breathe the air of nonviolence. While the pope’s legate was more blood-thirsty than the Christians military leaders, Francis and his brothers ministered to the sick and wounded, both Muslim and Christian. When he finally was able to speak to the Sultan, he preferred to risk his own life rather than the lives of others.

There is much that is legendary in the story of Francis and

the Sultan. It is certain, however, that the highly sophisticated Sultan al-Kamil listened attentively to Francis in the presence of learned doctors of his own religion. He posed questions and trials to Francis, who answered and passed them satisfactorily. The two parted friends, though neither persuaded the other of the truth of his faith. When Francis returned to the Christian line, it is said that the Sultan asked the brothers to pray that before he died he would be shown the true faith. Meanwhile, the siege of Damietta forced the capitulation of the Muslim city at a cost of more lives than were lost in the bombing of Hiroshima. Disappointed, Francis returned to Assisi to deal with dissension in his Order in 1220.

For Francis, as for Gandhi, nonviolence was not a strategy for accomplishing an end that is external to the disciple's vocation. His sole aim was "to do the will of God." We may not know that will in detail or even at all. But if we make nonviolence our goal as well as our method we will not act violently in any event. This was Jesus' way as well as Francis's, and it must be the disciple's way as well. The test is our willingness to suffer.

Finally, the Franciscan vocation involves a life of chastity. Friars and sisters are vowed to celibacy but Tertiaries, like all Christians, practice chastity as a baptismal commitment. Our super-sexualized culture limits chastity to sexual relationships but the Christian tradition knows it to be much broader. Chastity involves self-respect and respect for the other. It is the refusal to treat another, sexually or otherwise, as a possession. It is a decision to accord the same respect to another's human dignity as one wishes for one's own.

The Rule of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis (Anglican Tertiaries) locates chastity as a practice inherent in the Order's second aim, "to spread the spirit of love and harmony."

Tertiaries fight against ... injustice in the name of Christ, in whom there can be neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for in him all are one. Their chief object is to reflect that openness to all which was characteristic

of Jesus. This can only be achieved in a spirit of chastity which sees others as belonging to God and not as a means of self-fulfillment.

The essence of chastity is openness to others and a refusal of possessiveness. If we do not wish to be possessions ourselves, we cannot treat others so. As with poverty and the decision not to own property, chastity (and nonviolence) is a matter of non-possession.

Silence. The association of silence with community may seem strange, but the community of disciples called Franciscans knows that the God for whom the soul *in silence waits* (Psalm 62:1,6) is divine community, the blessed Trinity. The communitarian nature of Franciscan vocation springs from the trinitarian nature of God. The individual, and the community, that experiences the nakedness of conversion and obedience, and walks the way of the cross in chaste and nonviolent service, is the one that “follows” Jesus. It is the “social Trinity” who is God of the community of disciples.

When Francis first began to live in community with his brothers he was in great doubt as to whether he should devote himself entirely to prayer, or should also preach sometimes. He consulted the community as he prayed about this, and asked Clare and Sylvester to pray that God would reveal the best course. Both of them received the same answer from the Lord: “that God has not called [Francis] to this state only on his account, but that he may reap a harvest of souls and that many may be saved through him.” As the Trinitarian God revealed himself to Jesus’ first disciples when he returned to the Father and sent the Spirit among them, so God spoke to Francis through his community. The unity of the community, if it is genuine, reflects their oneness with God. Community life and the unitive state of oneness with God are not strange companions but a divinely intended hospitality.

So Christian community is not an “extra added attraction” to individual salvation. We are saved together, from isolation and alienation, as we are incorporated into Christ and his

community. The atheist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre said "Hell is other people" in his play *No Exit*, but I think hell is having nobody to love. We are saved together or we are not saved at all. The reason this is so has to do with the divine nature. We are incorporated into that divine community nature in baptism. We live in that divine nature in our Christian and Franciscan community. The invitation and command of Jesus to "Follow me" is a call to follow him into community. Why? Because God's nature is social, God's divine Being is Being-in-common as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Our experience at St. Francis House in New London, Conn., grows immediately out of praying with the Rublev icon of the Trinity which is on our chapel altar. In 1998 and 1999 we prayed before this icon that God would make clear his call to us for the next step in our family life and ministry. The icon itself became a symbol, both of the God who calls us to union, and the life in which he calls us to find that union with one another and with Jesus. The Rublev icon represents the "Old Testament Trinity" of Genesis 18, the three angels who visited Abraham and Sarah by the oak of Mamre. The three figures are seated around a table altar on which is laid a bowl containing a lamb. Above the angels are symbols of Christian life: a tree, which represents the tree of life in the Garden of Eden and the tree of the cross; a house, which represents Abraham's house, the Temple of Jerusalem, and the Church as the house of God; and a mountain, the place of revelation, Mount Sinai, the mount of Transfiguration, Calvary, and Mount Olivet where Jesus ascended to the Father.

The genius of the icon, which is sometimes called *Philoxenia*, "love of the stranger," which means *hospitality*, is that the circle of persons of the Godhead draws the viewer into itself. God is not the isolated old white man of so much degenerated Western symbolism, but a community of persons in relationship, what the poet W.B. Yeats called "the dancer [and] the dance." This hospitality of God reaches out to us in the Incarnation of the

Word. It invites us into itself in the sanctification that begins at baptism. It thrives in the community we know as church. It culminates in the ecstasy of union with God. If the hospitality of God is what reaches out and includes us, what is our mission but to exhibit the same hospitality to others that God has shown us? A Franciscan community is a community of hospitality.

Indeed, it is a community which exists most fully in the silence of God. Third Order Franciscans, who may marry and have children, know the joy of sitting in silence in the company of one's beloved. This silence is not empty or awkward, waiting to be filled with talk. It is a profound silence that reflects the silence that is God, a music heard by angels with the mind's ear. This is the silence of contemplative prayer, which is prayer *for* union with God, and the prayer *of* union.

The paradoxical silence of the unitive state and the community's life is the consequence of Jesus' command to all his disciples: "Follow me." The three elements of the dominical saying are in the right order, although we too often reverse them. We begin with self-denial and conversion. We walk the way of the cross in passion and darkness. "Following" is the purpose and the goal of Franciscan vocation. The community with and in which we follow Jesus now is the community with and in which we shall be united with God forever.

It is here that we encounter Franciscan poverty, not the first religious discipline but the final one. We begin with obedience and end with the poverty Jesus chose to share with us. This poverty of Francis is not abject want, which many of us fear and most of us seek to relieve when we encounter it in others. It is the simplicity of life that knows we possess nothing. We trust that we shall have our daily bread because the Father knows our need before we ask. The essence of Franciscan poverty, I believe, is non-possessiveness. We see that the poverty of most people in the world is the result, in the first place, of the possessiveness and selfishness of the few who are rich. To relieve this poverty, to permit the abundance of the earth to supply the needs of

all, we who have possessions must abandon them, give up our violence in defense of them, and share with others. We will not go hungry if everyone else is fed. The vision of abundance is related to nonviolence because the social changes that are required to provide for all cannot be accomplished by violence, which is the source of the inequities in the first place.

Let's be honest. Francis believed that literal poverty was his vocation. He sought to imitate the poor Child of the poor Virgin by sharing a total dependence upon God and others for every mouthful of food. We are called today, I believe, to a simplicity of life that provides for everyone. Young people in America today are not impressed with the revolutionary rhetoric that inspired an earlier generation. But they are moved to imitate a *lifestyle* they find admirable. My generation thought of lifestyle as a matter of fashion in clothing and politics and spoke of it with contempt. The young call the way we live our lifestyle and take that seriously even as they are bored by our rhetoric. Here is another place where Francis's famous dictum, *Preach the Gospel always; use words if necessary*, applies.

Silence, community, union, poverty, all these apparently contradictory elements combine to reflect the Gospel imperative to follow Jesus. The silence of our following is a powerful witness to the passionate life of the Lord walking the way of the cross.

Conclusion. It all begins with standing naked before the Lord, who summons us to obedience. Franciscan vocation is about nakedness, passion, and silence. Our hands are empty when we open them. The riches of God's grace are poured lavishly into the open, empty hands of the poor. Because this is Jesus' way, this is the way of Francis. Empty hands are open hands. Paul writes in the letter to the Philippians that Jesus,

who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled

himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:6-8)

And of Francis we sing in the antiphon appointed for the Transitus on the evening before his feast day :

Francis, poor and lowly, enters heaven rich.

Summer 2001

HOW ARE WE FRANCISCAN?

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

A FEW YEARS AGO people were always asking us, *What do you do?* and not being satisfied with, “We pray, we practice hospitality, and work for justice and peace.” Now that we’ve been working for six years in the areas of community gardening, peace, urban education, and homeless ministry, we hear that question less often. But when we’re with Catholic Worker friends, they tend to refer to us as “the Catholic Worker house in New London,” or, sometimes, “the Episcopal Catholic Workers.” The Franciscans we know, including especially the Third Order, of which I am a member, think we’re Franciscan somehow, but it’s hard to nail down.

Recently, a group of Franciscan friends – in the Anglican Third Order, the Ecumenical Franciscans (mainly Protestants) and the Roman Catholic Secular Franciscan Order – met at St. Francis House as the Committee on Franciscan Unity. They asked us to spend half a day with them, sharing our life and the work of the St. Francis House Community. We began the day with Morning Prayer, as always. After breakfast, we spent over an hour together using the African Method of Bible Study. This is the form our weekly Bible Study and community meeting regularly takes. We then talked about some of our ministries. After lunch we took our guests on a walk downtown to the headquarters of the Homeless Coalition and introduced them to Russ Carmichael and other members, with whom we work closely. We concluded by asking them whether what we had shared was in fact “Franciscan.”

They, of course, were generous, but it was still hard to pin down an answer to the question: *How are we Franciscan?*

Of the four adults in the community at present, I am the only member of the Franciscan religious order. Mark Auer may become a Third Order Franciscan, but that wasn’t a condition

of his membership in the community. So we're not Franciscan by virtue of membership in an Order.

Our community discipline is one of obedience to the Gospel, not a religious superior; chastity in the sense that all Christians are called to be chaste, not celibacy; and simplicity, not evangelical poverty. This year Anne's and my "earnings" were too low to be taxed, but we are not suffering want, our children are being educated, and we enjoy a great deal of privilege based on wealth. We certainly don't embrace "Lady Poverty," as Francis did. But then, contemporary Franciscans don't think their call is to "destitution," either, but to sharing the life of the poor and relieving their necessities as much as possible.

We pray a Franciscan form of Daily Office in our regular Morning Prayer, and I certainly think of Francis and Clare as models for ourselves and our ministry. But I also think of the Little Brothers and Sisters of Jesus as models, and we work more with secular friends on the Left and Unitarians than we do with "orthodox" Christians, because that's who shows up to do the work of justice and peace in this community.

We've begun to think of affiliating with the Catholic Worker movement, much as our friends at the Open Door Community in Atlanta and Jonah House in Baltimore do, because – as Lawrence S. Cunningham once said – Dorothy Day was probably the most Franciscan person in twentieth century America. That won't make us more or less Franciscan, but it may make more sense than closer affiliation with a religious order.

William J. Short, OFM, in his book *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition*, speaks of "Franciscan themes." Some of these are:

The incarnation – the humility of God in becoming human in Jesus, the poor man of Galilee.

Life in poverty – imitating Jesus, and living a "life without grasping."

The lepers – seeking out the suffering of our time and

caring for them.

The hermitages – practicing contemplative prayer, the prayer of silence.

The cross – focus on the depth of God’s love in the sacrifice of Jesus, and the call to be “united with him in a death like his” to be “united with him in a resurrection like his” (Romans 6:5)

The creation – devotion to God’s creation and all God’s creatures.

And I would add, the troubadour spirit of Francis, praise becoming poetry.

How are we Franciscan? We are Franciscan in spirit, I think, because we hear Francis saying to his brothers, when he came to die, “I have done what was mine to do, may Christ now show you what is yours.” We want to do what God gives us to do.

Fall 2005

WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE?

Mark Auer, TSSF

Finance and money news crowd the airwaves and the print media these days. On any weekday morning at Saint Francis House, before or after Morning Prayer, the dining room resembles the periodical room at your local library, with the three resident adults hunched over three different newspapers. Visitors and guests have their choice of *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, or our local paper, *The Day*. One of the things that has caught my eye lately is the ever-increasing number of foreclosure notices in the “Legal Notice” area of the Business Section. What we are seeing here is the human cost of the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage market. Folks with adjustable rate mortgages, for the most part, are trapped with rising payments that they are unable to pay, thus losing the home to foreclosure. Two things happen next. First, the family loses a place to live. Second, their credit rating, if there is anything left of it, is wiped out.

In the August 7, 2007 issue of *The Christian Century* in an article entitled “Counting the Cost: A Crusade Against Consumer Debt”, author Jayson Byassee recounts the work of Nashville evangelical radio personality Dave Ramsey and his “Financial Peace University.” “Ramsey’s financial advice is tied to an evangelical Christian message. Scriptural teaching and practical advice go hand in hand. He quotes Paul, seemingly an unlikely source for financial wisdom: ‘Owe no one anything except to love one another’ (Rom. 13:8). He constantly preaches against flashy consumerism: ‘Barbie and Ken (you know, the couple who *appear* to be perfect—perfect clothes, perfect car, perfect house) are broke, and I don’t take financial advice from broke people anymore.’ He told *Christianity Today* last year that ‘a whole bunch of us got all this stuff that we really didn’t want with money we really didn’t have to impress people

we really didn't like.”

Economists call the phenomenon of “keeping up with the Joneses” the *Demonstration Effect*. Another name for it is *conspicuous consumption*. I remember growing up in one of the suburbs of Syracuse, NY in the 1950's. All of the houses looked pretty much alike. What was different, and always in plain view, were the automobiles in the driveways, ranging from modest Chevrolets and Plymouths to Lincolns and Cadillacs (but not on my block: we seemed to specialize in Buicks). I have only purchased one new-from-the-factory-car in my life, in 1975. It looked nice out there in the driveway with the sun glinting off the silver paint. Two years later, the paint had begun to dull, but there were still eight coupons left in the payment book. At about this time I was besieged with telephone calls from dealers to purchase another new automobile, which my wife and I resisted, thankfully. Fortunately for us, even as a ‘two-income no kids’ couple, the flood tide of credit card offers was years away. In the early history of bank credit cards (MasterCard and VISA), credit cards were quite difficult to qualify for, as they are basically an unsecured (no collateral) loan.

Byassee's article continues: “But anyone who has struggled to master his or her finances knows the profound relief that can come from setting one's house in order. And with the average U.S. household carrying between \$10,000 and \$15,000 in credit card debt (estimates vary) the problem that these ministries have identified is real. Credit card debt has almost tripled since 1989 and consumer debt generally is over \$1 trillion, perhaps approaching \$2 trillion. Laws regulating the behavior of lenders have been slashed, allowing credit card companies to raise their annual percentage rates to preposterous levels—30 percent or more—and to raise them at any time, for any reason.”

Shortly after my graduation from Episcopal Divinity School in 2004 I moved to New London. In the three years that I have lived here, I estimate that I have received more

than 100 offers for bank credit cards, all unsolicited. Now the marketers have added a new twist: a plastic insert in the envelope that makes impossible to tear it in half. A memo to banks: many who receive the degree of Master of Divinity have their income go *down*.

My sister and her husband are in the process of trying to sell their home. They have lived in an affluent suburb of New York City for several years and have enjoyed the fruits of two well-paid careers. Their plan is to sell their home and move back for retirement to a rural university community in the Midwest where they lived in the 1980's. This adjustment involves jettisoning possessions to return to a less complicated and stressed lifestyle, and I'm hard-pressed to imagine a lifestyle that is more stressed than the one that these two have lived for the last twenty or so years.

I remember well my first life here in Connecticut, in 1980 and 1981. I lived at the other end of the state, on the "Gold Coast" (Fairfield County), with an office in Stamford and a rented carriage house apartment in Westport. Occasionally I would visit my sister and her husband in their then much smaller home near Plainfield, NJ. Amy had an old Volkswagen with a bumper sticker that read, "Live simply so that others might simply live." My life at that time was that of a recently divorced thirty-something with a well-paying job and a fancy car, with lots of free time on the weekends. "Live simply" was not in my lexicon.

Saint Francis shows us precisely what is meant by living simply. Every day at the start of Morning Prayer a selection from *The Principles of the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis* is read aloud. Day Ten's selection introduces the Third Aim of the Society, "To live simply": "The first Christians surrendered completely to our Lord and recklessly gave all that they had, offering the world a new vision of a society in which a fresh attitude was taken toward material possessions. This vision was renewed by Saint Francis when he chose Lady Poverty as

his bride, desiring that all barriers set up by privilege based on wealth should be overcome by love. This is the inspiration for the third aim of the Society, to live simply.” The following two days’ selections focus on generosity and sharing, two concepts that appear to be becoming obsolete in our postmodern culture.

Followers of Saint Francis attempt to shape their lives by following the Gospels, as Francis did. I am currently reading a book by Justo Gonzalez who was at the time of its publication on the faculty of Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. Published in 1990, *Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* sheds light on practices in the life of the early church not usually found in seminary courses. Gonzalez writes: “Themes of economic justice appear repeatedly in the preaching of Jesus and the early movement. They show up often in the background, as in the many parables that deal with economic matters (the laborers in the vineyard, the unjust steward, the talents, and so forth)....

First appears the theme of the “Great Reversal,” best summarized in the saying “the last will be first, and the first last” (Mt. 20:16). This saying, which appears in several different contexts in the Gospels (Mt. 19:30; Mk 10:31; Lk 13:30) is generally considered by scholars to be part of the earliest Christian proclamation and to have existed quite apart from the different contexts in which it now appears...”. (pg 76).

The brave souls who sweated through the Radical Discipleship Course two years ago here at Saint Francis House (the temperature hovered around 100 degrees for four days) will certainly remember Ched Myers’ analysis of the story of the rich young man in Mark’s Gospel which Myers recounts in his multi-disciplinary approach to biblical interpretation *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* (Orbis, 1988). Myers calls this story in Mark the “hinge point” of the entire Gospel.

Myers writes: “One hardly need emphasize that this text,

which is so crucial to the community ideology of Mark, has been notoriously mishandled by those whose self-interest lies in soft-pedaling its criticism of wealth.... Popularly known as the story of the “rich young ruler”, Mark’s character is neither a ruler (Mt) nor young (Lk); what we are told, and only *after* he has turned away from the call to discipleship, is that he was a large landowner. This man, however pious he may be, “lacks” one thing. In Jesus’ call to discipleship, the meaning of ‘self-denial’ is further concretized in economic terms, articulated in four distinct imperatives: 1. Get up. 2. Sell what you have. 3. Give it to the poor (and you shall have treasure in heaven). 4. Come, follow me.

It is the third imperative that is exceptional. Judging the man to be affluent, Jesus stipulates that his wealth must be distributed to the poor. The implied opposition between earth (“give to the poor”) and heaven (“and there you will have treasure”) is yet another expression of apocalyptic status-reversal. It is “at his word” that the man slinks away. (pg. 272). Myers concludes “As we have seen in the discussion of class structure of Mark’s Palestine, landowners represented the most politically powerful social stratum.... As far as Mark is concerned, the man’s wealth has been gained by defrauding the poor—he was not “blameless” at all—for which he must make restitution. For Mark, the law is kept only through concrete acts of justice, not the façade of piety.” (Pg. 274).

Just a few minutes ago I had my first taste of a fresh fig. It was delicious! Last spring Emmett planted a fig tree in the meditation garden behind the house. We now have ripe figs. He explained to me that this is what one eats in heaven. That’s fine, as long as I can also order a pizza. I’m not sure what this “heaven” place is—no one has ever described it to me in a way that makes any sense. I know more about “treasure”; every afternoon, for several years, I locked a vault full of cash and valuables in my career as a bank branch manager.

Our next Radical Discipleship Course will deal with the

Gospel of Matthew. Matthew's slant on "treasure in heaven" is one of my favorite passages in the New Testament: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Mt 6:21, RSV) I'm not sure where heaven is, but this much I do know: Credit cards won't work there.

Francisitide 2007

“YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES”
THE JO ANN KOE MEMORIAL LECTURE
GIVEN AT GALES FERRY UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH – 6 MAY 2007
Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
John 13:34-35

Christians have been trying to work this out for two thousand years, and I’m not going to resolve it for you in one lecture. But I’ve been working on it for 30 years of life in ordained ministry, so I’m going to share a few of the things I’ve learned. The context of the “new commandment” to love one another in John’s Gospel is crucial. Judas, the betrayer, has just shared intimately with Jesus a “morsel” of bread, which the Lord dipped into the stew at the last supper and gave to him. Judas has now gone out to betray Jesus to the authorities and to death on the cross. When Judas leaves the room, Jesus says “*Now* is the Son of Man glorified” (13:31). And *then* he gives the disciples “the new commandment” – “love one another as I have loved you” (13:34). This is the test, for the first disciples, and for Christians today: People will *know* that we are disciples if we have love for one another.

I would suggest to you that this love which will identify us as members of Jesus’ community, as his disciples, is not a matter of sentiment. It’s not that we *feel affection* for one another in some special way. We are still human beings, and we get irritated by the annoying habits of others like everyone else. We become angry with one another as other people do. If we try to pretend that we’re different, we deceive ourselves, and our hypocrisy is worse than our anger or annoyance. No,

whatever this love is that Jesus has in mind for us is the love that enables him to love Judas as he goes to betray him to torture and crucifixion. It isn't all smiles and positive thinking. It's "the love that moves the sun and the other stars," and it is God's gift, not our achievement. It is, in other words, a matter of will rather than feeling, of choice rather than inclination.

When I was a young priest in Boston, we had 20 members of our congregation of 150 people who wanted to be ordained. There's a certain attraction to the priesthood, but this was off the charts. I told a friend who taught at Harvard Divinity School about this, and he smiled and said he understood. "People come to seminary," he said, "because they want to be a part of a community that celebrates the Eucharist, studies the Scripture, is committed to justice and peace, committed to the poor, and lives in community. Of course, that's not what seminary is. That's what the parish church, the local congregation, is meant to be. And if they found that in the local church, they wouldn't need to go to seminary." I've thought about that a lot over the years. What is it that makes the local congregation a community of disciples, and not just a place to hang your hat on Sunday mornings?

My most recent learning was in March of this year, when I attended a conference in Baltimore of 137 Franciscans. I was one of three who were not Roman Catholic, but was welcomed into the group. They gathered to discern whether God was calling them as Franciscans to speak with one voice in the Franciscan orders and organizations, and they all have some sense of their mission in the world in those terms. Were we being called to join together and speak with one voice? We heard a number of talks to enlighten our conversation, but the one which impressed me the most was given by Joe Rozansky, OFM, a Midwesterner, who said people expected Franciscans to be involved in all these things. "What do people expect of Franciscans?" he asked. "People expect three things of Franciscans:

**commitment to the poor;
peace-building and nonviolence, and
care for the creation.”**

The response to his speech was electrifying. Everyone knew he was right. That's what people expect of Franciscans, and what Franciscans expect of ourselves.

I suggest to you that it is not only Franciscans of whom commitment to the poor, peace-building and nonviolence, and care for the creation is expected, but Christians. I suggest to you today that people will know we are Christians, will know we love one another, will know we are disciples, because we are involved in these three things.

Commitment to the Poor. Christians are committed to the poor because Jesus was committed to the poor. Not only did he teach that the poor are “blessed,” and that the kingdom of heaven is theirs (Matthew 5:3), but the Son of God “became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (II Cor. 8:9). Israel's messiah, Christ our God, did not seize power with twenty legions of angels but “rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:7-8). St. Francis in his time embraced poverty because Jesus Christ was poor, and to follow Christ meant to be poor with him. The Churches have very nearly forgotten the poor Christ in our time. We must return to the Lord, in whose footsteps we follow, by embracing the poor.

The Church has gone through three stages in its relationship to the poor: first it was a Church **“of the poor,”** because its members, even though all were not slaves or impoverished, were powerless, an enemy of the state, a threat to imperial Rome, subject to criminal penalties as an illegal religion. This changed in 325, when the Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity and made it the state religion of the Roman Empire.

The Church became “rich” in worldly terms, and a lot of

Christians who took Jesus seriously went to the desert to found monastic communities that lived in the poverty of Jesus. The rest of us enjoyed the spoils, built big churches, and exercised power. But the Church never completely forgot the poor. It became a Church **“for the poor,”** and established schools and hospitals, benevolent societies and sanctuaries for the needy. A powerful church, identified with the powers, took care of the poor in a paternalistic way, as a matter of charity. Everyone had his or her place in this world: the rich, to obtain salvation by doing good works, gave alms to the poor; the poor, by learning patience under their afflictions, provided the occasion for the rich to give alms.

Something new is happening in our time. In the middle of the 20th century, first in Latin America and then around the world, Christians awoke to the injustice of poverty. We began to realize that the wealth that some of us enjoyed was related in profound ways to the poverty that others experienced. In Latin America this took the form of a “preferential option for the poor,” and the Church began to become a Church **“with the poor.”** Thinking about the poor in our modern world led us to a new understanding of what it means to be disciples. Those of us who are privileged – and wealth is not the only form of privilege – some of us are privileged by being white and male— may give away our money, but we can’t escape the privilege of race and gender. We can identify with the oppressed, and stand in solidarity with them.

In my own life, that’s where the homeless ministry has brought me. I am not homeless. I am not going to become homeless. It would not help homeless people one bit for me to join their number, and make not only myself but my wife and children also homeless. But I can *choose* to stand *with* the homeless, and try to see the world through their eyes. And when I do this, something happens to my discipleship. As theologian Leonardo Boff wrote, “What makes poverty inhuman is not only that it impedes the satisfaction of basic needs. It is scorn,

rejection, exclusion from human life together, the permanent brainwashing of a negative and unqualified image of the poor, developed by non-poor classes.” To see the world as the poor see the world, is to understand the role of wealth and power, and the ways in which we share in it. To stand with the poor is to opt for a different way of living, a way that may be something like discipleship, that may have something to do with love as a decision for Jesus, not a warm fuzzy feeling about how nice we are.

Peace-building and nonviolence. The Bishop of Assisi once said to St. Francis, “I think your life is too hard, too rough. You don’t possess anything in the world.” And Francis replied: “My Lord, if we had possessions we would need weapons to defend them.”

Christians of all people should know in our gut that there is an intimate relationship between possessions and violence, both personally and socially. When I think in terms of *my* money, *my* house, *my* wife and children, *my* country, I am not far from being willing to use force to keep *you* from obtaining what is *mine*. Remember Jesus’ teaching about the rich man who wanted to know what he could do to inherit eternal life. He had obeyed “all the commandments,” what more must he do? Jesus *loved* this man, and out of his love for him, he told him he was lacking only one thing. “Go, sell what you have and give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me” (Mark 10:21). Even the disciples thought this was too much. “Then who can be saved?” they asked. But notice, that Jesus not only told the man to give away his wealth, but invited him to follow him, to join the community of disciples, where he would have everything he needed, including persecutions, and finally treasure in heaven. “But he went away sad, for he had many possessions” (Mark 10:22).

Peace is not the absence of war in the Bible. Peace, *eirene*, *shalom*, is abundance, community, family, safety, the covenant relation with God and God’s people. But over and over again

we find ourselves equating our good with our possessions, and being willing to fight and kill to protect them. A hundred and fifty years ago, the great American writer Henry David Thoreau wrote "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience." He called into question not only the existence of slavery in our country, but the Mexican War, and went to jail for refusal to pay taxes to support war. His friend Ralph Waldo Emerson famously came to see him in the jail and asked, "Henry, what are you doing in there?" To which Thoreau replied, "Nay, Waldo, what are *you* doing out there?"

Last year, a group of us, led by United Methodist minister Eric Swanfeldt, went on a two week, 270 mile, walk from New London to New Haven to Hartford, to Norwich, and back to New London again, which we called a "pilgrimage for peace." We stopped at 20 different churches and talked with people about peace. We found that everywhere we went, people yearned for peace, and experienced frustration at the continuing war in Iraq. One of the days on which we walked was September 11, five years to the day after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in our country. But it was also the 100th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's first *satyagraha*, in South Africa, where he and thousands of Indians were arrested for refusing to obey a law that required them to register and be discriminated against because of their "race." This centenary marked the beginning of the modern movement of nonviolent social change.

If you look at the history of the last century, the world wars and the Holocaust have killed millions of people and not brought peace to the world. But nonviolent actions in India, South Africa, our own Civil Rights Movement, and the end of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet empire, brought justice, freedom, and peace to millions of people. No military force was used, but the peaceful resistance of ordinary people brought an end to tyranny.

John Adams, reflecting on the history of the struggle

for American independence, opined in his later years that independence was won in Massachusetts in 1760, when King George III attempted to take over the court system by appointing judges. Throughout Massachusetts, free people refused to serve on juries for those judges, and the King backed down. That, said Adams, was the beginning of American freedom.

There is a story of St. Francis that comes close to home. He wanted for many years to go to the Middle East and preach to the Muslims. The Crusades, organized by a combination of Church and State in Europe in the Middle Ages, were not an attempt to “evangelize” the Muslims. They were a naked power grab, to take the territory we and the Muslims know as “the Holy Land” from Muslims by force. Francis finally went to Egypt in 1219, where he found the Christians laying waste to the land. He urged them to speak peaceably to the Muslims but they rejected his overtures. Francis went to the Sultan, unarmed, and was received by him. The story is drenched in myth but it does seem that Francis and the Sultan treated one another with mutual respect and parted amicably. The Crusades continued, and it may be said that they continue to this day.

The relationship of peace to the poor will be clear to everyone. We spend \$2 billion a week on war, and don't have the money to provide adequate schools for our children, or health insurance for 40 million citizens, of whom a third are children. The number of veterans among the homeless population is staggering. At least ten percent of men in our regional homeless shelter at any time are veterans. Many are veterans of the Vietnam War. More and more are veterans of the Gulf War, and we are beginning to see men from Afghanistan and Iraq. The costs of war are not just in dollars. Visit any veterans hospital, as I do once a month with a member of our community, and you see the sadness, the needless suffering, inflicted by war.

I have learned in my experience what the great American nonviolent activist A.J. Muste taught many years ago: “There

is no way to peace. Peace is the way.” And of course Francis taught his brothers to greet everyone, friend or “enemy,” with the words, “May the Lord give you peace.”

Care for the Creation. We Christians, and our Muslim and Jewish brothers and sisters, declare that “we believe in one God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.” We did not create the earth on which and from which we live; God did. As Biblical people, we are not the “owners” of creation. God is “the only landlord.” Our faith teaches us to imitate God by resting on the Sabbath. Further, we are taught about “Sabbath economics” in the story of the manna from heaven. God commanded the people in the desert, “So gather it that everyone has enough to eat...” They did and when they gathered it, “he who had gathered a large amount did not have too much, and he who gathered a small amount did not have too little” (Exodus 16:16,18).

Because God knows our acquisitiveness, our possessiveness, God provided the Jubilee for the redistribution of the land every fifty years in Israel. Leviticus 25 teaches that we cannot sell or own the land in perpetuity, because it is not ours to sell and the land belongs to the Lord. So if we have to give up our land to a rich neighbor, it is not forever. Every 50 years, the land is redistributed, according to the original family allotments. Likewise we may not own slaves, or charge one another interest on loans. Bankers, beware!

This sense of the creation as God’s gift to be shared, rather than our possession to be owned or exploited, is the solution to our environmental crisis today. There is, after all, enough for everyone to eat. There is enough for all our need, but not for any of our greed. And the care of creation which is the third expectation of Christians is related both to peace and to the poor. The American poet, essayist and farmer Wendell Berry captures this Biblical vision in contemporary terms:

whether to pray for the two favors – that Francis was *after* his forty day fast. It's time to answer the question: Am I being invited to pray these prayers myself?

Friday, May 8 All day yesterday I thought of the hymn "Abide with me," so often sung at funerals. This morning I woke up with the words of the final verse on my lips: *Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes; shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies; heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee; in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.*

Another question: Am I depressed? Am I thinking these thoughts because I have death on my mind, and am depressed at the prospect of my own death? Does the question about the two favors arise from depression, or is it the genuine article, and invitation from God to embrace the passion and resurrection of Christ in my own life, in my own body, as Francis did?

While praying this morning, I realized that the two favors taken together reflect the unity of the Paschal Mystery: the suffering and death of Jesus on Good Friday, and his resurrection and glorification on Easter morning, is one single divine and human event. This is why the Great Vigil during the night that leads to Easter dawn is the Christian Passover and the preeminent time for baptism. As in one action Christ suffered and died, and triumphed over death and was raised from the dead, so in on sacramental act the Christian dies with Christ – is symbolically "drowned" in the waters of the baptismal font – and rises with Christ – joining the discipleship community in sharing bread and wine, the eucharist of the body and blood of the risen Lord.

So – if like Francis I ask my Lord to feel in my soul and body the suffering he sustained, and to receive into my heart the great love which moved him to suffer for me, I am asking for a share in the Paschal Ministry – no more and no less.

The antiphon on the *Benedictus* at Morning Prayer today speaks to my condition:

I go now to prepare a place for you, but I shall return to take

you with me, so that where I am you also may be, alleluia. If I'm depressed, it is strange that I'm planting a garden!

An email from my friend Ken Norian, the minister provincial of the Third Order Anglican Franciscans, informs me he's got prostate cancer. Strange how, when you get cancer yourself, you begin to be aware of how many others are suffering from the same disease.

Phoned Ken Leech in Manchester, England, to tell him of my question about praying Francis' prayer for the two favors. He's the first person I've talked to about it after Anne, since it was the article in *The Tablet* that he sent me that started me on this journey of discernment. Ken was quick to support my praying the prayer.

Talked to Linda later, who was more circumspect. She volunteered to pray the Franciscan Crown rosary (which I gave her as a profession gift last month) and phone me tomorrow night. Linda also asked me if I had consulted my spiritual director about this decision, and I hadn't.

This seeking the prayers and advice of others about a spiritual decision is quite a Franciscan thing to do. When Francis wanted to know whether he should devote himself to prayer, or preach the Gospel in the world, he asked Brother Leo and Sister Clare to pray for an answer as well. When the three of them heard the same word from God, Francis happily spent his life praying and preaching.

I'll be seeing Sister Barbara Hobbs, PBVM, my spiritual director, next Wednesday, and will discuss this with her then. That day is the feast of Julian of Norwich in Robert Ellsberg's *All Saints*, on which our St. Francis House calendar is based. The next day is Brother Juniper's Day in the same book. Juniper is the patron saint of our New England Third Order Franciscan Fellowship. By that time I will have consulted enough people and prayed quite a bit about this decision. It might be just the right day to pray the prayers for myself.

Saturday, May 9 Today is the birthday (in 1877) of Peter

Maurin, the co-founder, with Dorothy Day, of the Catholic Worker movement.

Anne has understood the question I posed to her about praying Francis' prayers to embrace the suffering and the love of the Crucified. As usual, she takes her time to "process" these things and raises good questions. For example, is this a public witness? How is the St. Francis House community involved?

She thought I was asking for forty days of solitude to prepare for this, but I think the preparation began in December with the onset of the cancer. Without the experience of cancer, I would not have taken personally Francis' timing – "before I die." Not that I will necessarily die soon, but the prospect of my own death is now more real to me than it was before. It's a commonplace to say that we are all dying – from birth! That's true, but until something makes it real for you, it remains an abstraction. "Before I die" – even if I don't know the exact time, perhaps especially because the time is unknown – is now a reality for me that it wasn't before.

But is Anne right? Do I need forty days of solitude to answer this question?

Sunday, May 10 – Sixth Sunday of Easter Today is the birthday (in 1886) of Karl Barth, the great German theologian of the 20th century. I re-read his commentary on *The Epistle to the Romans* as part of my Lenten reading this year. He began work on that book after he read in August 1914 a manifesto signed by 93 German university professors and intellectuals, including all his liberal theology professors, in support of the Kaiser's war aims. The conclusions he came to in that book led him to be a leader of the Confessing Church movement in Germany that opposed the rise of Hitler and Nazism a generation later. In the *Barmen Declaration* which he and Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others wrote then, they said: *Jesus Christ, such as Scripture bears witness of Him for us, is the one word of God that we must hear, that we must trust, and that we must obey in life and death.*

Linda phoned last night from Richmond. She wants one more day to pray for my discernment. I emailed Judith Gillette, of the Brother Juniper Fellowship, and asked for her prayers, and I'll email Rick Bellows, also a fellow Juniper, and ask for his prayers as well. I'm looking to May 14, Brother Juniper's Day, to make commitment, if that is what I'm called to do....

Went to Mass at St. James with Anne, Aunt Dorrie and Margaret Rose. Then to Louie's bar for a "mother's day lunch" with Sarah (briefly), Nate, and Anne's mother. Put Margaret on the train for New York, picked up Volume II of *The Divine Office* at St. Francis House, and came back here to Stonington for a good nap.

Nate & Zuli met me in Mystic and we went to see the new Star Trek movie. A generational event!

Monday, May 11 The sun was fully up at 6 a.m. The house faces east, so the sun rises "behind" where I am, looking out at the Cove and Stonington Harbor. How much easier it is to observe the changes in nature here than in the city! I'm going to try to make this a real "quiet day."

Email came from Rick Bellows, Third Order Franciscan brother in western Massachusetts. His first thoughts were of Lady Julian of Norwich, whose feast day was last week. Like Francis, she requested an awareness of Jesus' suffering later, in her revelations, received it – and had second thoughts: *And in all this time of Christ's pains I felt no pain except for Christ's pains. Then I thought, "I knew but little what pain it was that I asked for," and like a wretch I repented me, thinking that if I had known what it would be, I would have been loath to have prayed for it, for it seemed to me that my pains went beyond any bodily death.*

Rick went on to say that in the experience of suffering we may have second thoughts, because it hurts. This is especially evident when one considers Julian's notion that all of creation already stands in the suffering with Christ, but most of creation is unaware of it. I would be asking (if I prayed the prayer of Francis) for suffering that I – and all creation – already stand

in, but are unaware of because of numbness or blindness. For Julian the awareness was sparked by her willingness to allow her experience of suffering to make her aware of Jesus' and creation's suffering.

The motive for asking is crucial. "If your motive is to earn something through your suffering, like a spiritual master's degree, then don't do it. But if your motive is to have compassion with creation – especially those whom the rich and powerful like to ignore – the poor, the sick, the powerless – and to grow in your awareness of Jesus' love for you, then invite whatever is necessary to develop that awareness, even if it hurts.

"Finally, some thoughts about God protecting us from suffering which would undo us or crush our soul: Benedict Reid used to tell me in spiritual direction class about how helpful it can be to suggest that the difficulties one has to face did not completely crush one because Jesus took enough of the soul crushing weight upon himself. And thus one has survived...."

Rick concluded with a personal story of his experience of God protecting him from suffering he was not able at the time to bear:

"I myself experienced this after a friend drowned in college. We were swimming as far as we could under water, competing to see who could go farther. I was very good at this because to stay awake in Algebra 1 in 9th grade I would hold my breath. I could hold it for four minutes. Anyway, my friend John swam towards me, with another friend watching in a canoe, and another friend near where he was starting. John swam farther than I did – he was very competitive – and came up about twenty feet to my right, and then went back down and I assumed swimming under water. I waited about ten seconds but he never came back up. I called the alarm, we formed a long line, and searched under water. Finally we found him, and did CPT, but it was too late. Apparently when he exhaled when he came up, he passed out due to the pressure change, didn't inhale, and then went back under with empty lungs,

coasting away.

“I was very angry with God. For months, I would cuss at him every time I would take a step – what a way to walk in love! Later I saw that God took my anger, which if I had directed at myself – a logical choice since I suggested the contest, did very well, and misjudged John’s coming up for breath – if I had directed that anger at myself I do not think I would have survived it. I truly believe God took my anger when it would have crushed me, and made me aware of it only when it would deepen my appreciation for how much God loves and protects me.

“Do not ask that God remove God’s protection from you. Ask for perspective, awareness, sensitivity, and as full a measure of Christ’s suffering as you can bear, and no more. Trust God regarding the timing....”

How fortunate I am to have such wise friends to counsel me in this, as in other matters. Thank you, Jesus, for brother Rick Bellows.

Tuesday, May 12 Slept late. Anne is going to the Study Group but I’m staying home to prepare for the Homeless Hospitality Center 3-hour reflection meeting this afternoon in New London.

Executive Director Cathy Zall has invited the Board of HHC and several other interested people and supporters, to share a broad reflection on “where we are and where we should be going” in our homeless work in New London. The decision of the City Planning and Zoning Commission is to permit shelters in commercial districts – the sub-text is that we move the shelter out of St. James’ Church, which is in the downtown central business district, where City leaders don’t want us – but to limit the size of shelters to 25 beds. Our present shelter has 50 beds and sometimes in the winter especially we have a much greater need.

The meeting was both frustrating and encouraging. Frustrating because our “consultant” had an agenda which she pushed very hard, and encouraging because our local leadership

group was not intimidated and pushed back. She is a disciple of Dennis Culhane's "housing first" ideology. Like Dennis, she thinks that shelters are a big mistake and a waste of money, and that the 10% of the homeless population that is chronically homeless should be given supportive housing, and the 90% remaining can be taken care of through the labor and housing agencies around the country. That's not our experience. And we began our work as a "ministry" with homeless guests, not a "program" to provide services to "clients." More on the follow-up meeting on Friday.

Wednesday, May 13 Julian of Norwich's Day in the St. Francis House calendar. Just in time to reinforce Rick's counsel.

Lots of resonance in the texts of the Liturgy of the Hours this morning:

He brought me forth into freedom,

he saved me because he loved me. Psalm 18:20

God is King over all the earth; make music for him with all your skill, alleluia. Easter antiphon on Psalm 47

...In the same way you must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus. Romans 6:11

Today I begin to be alive! *Today* I sing "a new song" to my Lord Jesus Christ.

Chemotherapy in New London from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., then raced home to meet Sr. Barbara for spiritual direction at 1 p.m. The main agenda was to consult with her about my discernment of whether to pray the prayer of Francis for the two favors. I was a little anxious about the conversation because Barbara is quite the "no nonsense" type of person, not impressed by religious language or practices, always trying to get down to the practical root of any question. What is God calling you to do? How do you go about doing it?

I explained to Barbara – as I have to Rick and Judith, Linda and Anne – everyone I've asked to share in my discernment – that I am *not* asking God for a literal wound like Francis' stigmata. I am asking what Francis asked – to share Christ's suffering and

his love – and will accept whatever God gives me. I do not believe that God “sends” diseases like cancer on me or anyone else, but I do believe that such natural occurrences can become an opportunity for me to embrace God’s will and pray fervently “Thy will be done,” whatever form that takes. Also, a great part of the experience I’m having with this cancer is an experience of “not knowing.” I don’t know if there are more cancer cells, though there probably are, and that’s why chemotherapy is worth trying. But even at the conclusion of the treatment in September, I won’t know whether the chemo got all the cancer or not until I have it again, which seems relatively likely, whether in two months or ten years. But I simply don’t know. That is part of the “trial” for me. And finally, Francis’ prayer for the “two favors” is in fact a wonderful sign of the Paschal Mystery: holding the passion and resurrection of Christ – and of myself as I embrace the Crucified and Risen Christ in a single event or moment of truth.

So Sr. Barbara asked a few questions, mainly about how expansive the prayer I’m contemplating can be. She said, “Pray the Francis prayer, by all means, but pray it in an open-ended manner, asking God to tell you when the suffering comes.” Like Rick Bellows, she cautioned me that God would let me know in God’s own time what sort of suffering I’m to experience, and that God characteristically protects people who might not be able to endure the suffering. God might be sparing me physical suffering now, because it would be too hard for me.

After my direction session was over I went downstairs to have Janet Minella-Didier give me an hour’s *reiki* treatment while Anne had her spiritual direction with Barbara upstairs. In the evening Anne and I prayed Evening Prayer together, ate supper of macaroni and cheese. She stayed downstairs and watched TV while I came back to finish Graham Greene’s *The Power and the Glory*. I may not be a martyr, even an unwilling one, but the God I worship and serve – and who I wish to ask for Francis’ “two favors” – is the same God who turns the

world upside down in Greene's novels, and always in my life. The martyr, the witness to Jesus, is not the person one expects, but the failure, the "whiskey priest," the sinner. That's who this perverse God chooses to invite into his friendship.

Thursday, May 14 Today is the day I pray the prayer of Francis, Brother Juniper's Day, Juniper the "fool for Christ," of whom Francis said, "My Brothers, if only I had a great forest of such junipers!"

Email from Judith Gillette this morning.

"Thank you for including me in this discernment I believe the desire to pray the prayer, to make it your own, is an invitation from God.

"...I have loved the writings of Clare and Agnes of Prague, especially the few phrases of one letter (which I first saw on a stained glass window at the Franciscan Center chapel in N. Andover) which read: 'Gaze at Him, Contemplate Him, Consider Him, [as you seek to] imitate Him.'" I was completely captivated by this, and over the years I found I could live into the first three phrases, but was stymied by the last.

"[After experiencing a deep sense of Clare's presence during this retreat], I realized that I knew what the fourth admonition was. For me – and I stress that this felt very personal – for me 'Imitate Him' meant 'Be as dependent on Our Lord Jesus as He was on the Father.' And further, for me, how do I do this? 'Repent, and believe the Gospel.'

"Oh, so simple....and knowing me, you must know I will be at this, repenting and believing and learning to trust all my days. But I have never since doubted the directive.

"So, now your invitation. Of course I can't answer for you, but I hear the Spirit's invitation to 'rest in My charity, rest in My suffering.'"

Prayed the Vigil Office and Morning Prayer upstairs in this house of healing and love on the seacoast in Stonington. Psalm 57, in the Office, encouraged me to pray for the two favors of Francis:

My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.

I will sing, I will sing your praise.

Awake, my soul, awake, lyre and harp.

I will awake the dawn.

I will thank you, Lord, among the peoples,

among the nations I will praise you

for your love reaches to the heavens

and your truth to the skies.

O God, arise above the heavens;

may your glory shine on earth!

And so I stood – before the large glass doors opening out to the sea and the sky – “with hands outstretched,” and prayed the prayer:

O Lord Jesus Christ, two favors I beg of Thee before

I die. The first is, that I may, as far as it is possible,

feel in my soul and in my body the suffering which

Thou, O gentle Jesus, sustained in Thy bitter passion.

And the second favor is, that I, as far as it is possible,

may receive into my heart that excessive charity by

which Thou, the Son of God, wast inflamed, and which

actuated Thee willingly to suffer so much for us

sinners.

That’s it, it’s done. Now to live the prayer and trust God for the favors, and the strength and courage to accept them when they come.

Pentecost 2009

A version of “The Two Favors” appeared in *The Cord*

III. COMMUNITY

“AND WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?”

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

On September 8, 2000, St. Francis House began a series of Friday Night Meetings for Clarification of Thought on the general topic of neighbors and neighborhood. We invited various neighbors in New London to join us in these conversations: members of the Hispanic community, college students, local youth, civic leaders, business and labor leaders, among others. Fr. Emmett led the first conversation with a reflection on Jesus' teaching about neighbors to establish a theological context. The following is a summary of his talk.

LAST TUESDAY THERE WAS A RALLY in front of New London's City Hall to support efforts to “move ahead with redevelopment” of the city's downtown. A young man was holding a sign which read: “**IF NOT NOW, WHEN?**” I introduced myself, and asked if he knew where the phrase came from. When he didn't, I told him it was part of Rabbi Hillel's famous first century saying about self-reliance and community. The complete saying is:

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

If I am for myself alone, what am I?

If not now, when?

Hillel's advice is highly appropriate for the contentious debates presently taking place over development in New London. The saying expresses the ancient teacher's ability to see and bring out the best in people, to encourage others to compassionate and generous action. It is not true that enlightened self-interest and compassion for others are necessarily opposed. In the heat of debate they often become polarized along with the people arguing the issues. My

experience at the rally, as well as at the City Council session which followed, led me to think again about Hillel's teaching which fits neatly with Jesus' teaching in the story of the Good Samaritan and elsewhere about who our neighbors are.

Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) in response to a question from a lawyer who is trying to "test" him: "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Ched Myers, in his reflection on Mark's story of the rich man (Mark 10:17-31) helps us understand the curious concept of both questioners about "inheriting" eternal life, or the Kingdom of God. Both men can only understand eternal life in terms of a "status" to be inherited. In their world, land is the basis of wealth, and the rich "inherit" properties while the poor lose their holdings through default on their debts. The privileged can only envision religion as a reproduction of their own socio-economic situation; "eternal life," like property, must be inherited [Ched Myers, *Who Will Roll Away the Stone*, p. 165].

Jesus answers the lawyer's question by asking him what he reads in Scripture. He answers with what Christians have come to call the Summary of the Law: Love God without reservation, and love your neighbor as yourself. The first commandment is *Sh'ma*, the creed of ancient Israel (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) and the second is from the Holiness Code (Leviticus' 19:18). Jesus congratulates the lawyer on his insight and encourages him to persevere. But he, "wanting to justify himself," asks Jesus the fateful question: "And who is my neighbor?" He wants to know what the limits are to his duty. The Torah commands him to care for his fellow Israelite and for the resident aliens in the land. But he gets to define who is the beneficiary of his charity. Jesus turns the whole thing upside down. He puts the neighbor at the center of the situation, and not the lawyer, by telling the story of the Good Samaritan.

You remember the story. A certain man went down to Jericho and was set upon by robbers who beat him, stripped him, and left him half dead on the road. A priest and a Levite

happened that way, noticed the man, but passed by on the other side of the road. A despised Samaritan, “moved with compassion,” gave aid to the man, took him to an inn, and left money for his care until he came back. Jesus asked: which of the three proved neighbor to the man?

The word “neighbor” here translates the Greek word *plesion*, the root of which is the adverb “near.” The neighbor, in both Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, is the one who lives nearby *but is neither a blood relative nor a foreigner protected by the Torah*. The Greek Septuagint, translates the Hebrew word *rea*, which means “the other,” as “the neighbor,” the one who draws near. The neighbor, then, for Jesus, is the “other,” any person who draws near to me, even an enemy.

Only Luke tells the story of the Good Samaritan and it is consistent with his emphasis on the inclusion in the Kingdom of God of the poor, women, and Gentiles (foreigners). The Christian community has thought about this story ever since Jesus told it. St. Augustine of Hippo read it as an allegory. The man who fell among robbers is Adam, wounded by Satan in the Fall. The priest and Levite represent legalistic religion which cannot save him. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, the inn is the Church, the innkeeper the local bishop or pope and the two denarii are the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. It's a wonderful reading but not what Jesus had in mind for the parable, I think. A parable, after all, is not an allegory but a story told to challenge its hearers to change.

The lawyer came at it backward. It is not a matter of determining who the neighbor is, so I can calculate how much I owe him. Rather it is I who am judged by the need of the neighbor. Whoever “comes near” to me is the other who is “near,” and hence “neighbor.” Whoever I encounter on the road, to Jericho or New London, is the neighbor I am commanded to “love as I love myself.” It is easy to love those who are like us, as the priest and the Levite knew. The other who is *not* a friend or relative, whom we fear because we do not

know him, is the test case. When the other “draws near” to us on the road, becomes our “neighbor,” he is the center of the story and I must love him as myself.

The neighbor does not have to earn or deserve my love. The lawyer will not even name the hated Samaritan but refers to him as “the one who showed him mercy.” *Mercy* is the operative term. The lawyer thinks the great man shows mercy to his inferior, as the rich give charity to the poor. But in Jesus’ view, none of us is in a position to condescend to a neighbor because all of us need – and receive – God’s mercy. There is radical equality among all who need God’s mercy.

Another famous “neighbor” passage in the New Testament – The Sermon on the Mount – puts love of neighbor in the difficult context of loving the enemy. The reason we are to love our enemies is “so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; *for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous*” (Matt. 5:45). We are to “be perfect” as God is perfect, but the perfection of God is revealed in his indiscriminate mercy toward all people, the evil as well as the good. We must be like God, who is like the Good Samaritan, who does not discriminate between relatives and aliens, citizens and foreigners, among races and sexes. God is *profligate* in his mercy, and a good thing, too, for us!

St. Catherine of Sienna once said that “the only thing we can offer to God of value is to give our love to people as unworthy of it as we are of God’s love.” And the rabbi of Sasov gave away the last money he had in his pocket to a man of ill repute. When his disciples berated him for his action he asked, “Shall I be more finicky than God, who gave it to me?” That’s where I think Rabbi Hillel’s saying becomes relevant to ethical reflection and civic discourse. When it comes to who will be our neighbors in New London, shall we be more choosy than God? We must be self-reliant, as Hillel taught. We must take care of ourselves and help others learn to do the same, for “if I

am not for myself, who will be for me?" But if that is our *only* concern, if self-regard is our exclusive regard, "what are we?"

The last sentence in Hillel's saying is cryptic. "If not now, when?" The young man holding the sign up at the rally wanted City Council to act on the proposals put forward by the New London Development Corporation for the creation of housing in downtown New London. Now is *always* "the acceptable time." Procrastination is not a virtue but careful consideration is. When we have considered a matter carefully, however, we have not only to balance the budgetary costs, we have to estimate the devastating cost to ourselves when we claim for ourselves superior status to others and sit in judgement on them.

When we realize that the neighbor whom God wants us to love is precisely the "other" whom I must love as myself, even the enemy, then we do not make distinctions. Once I acknowledge my own need for mercy it becomes impossible for me to think of the other who comes near as any less needy than I, any more or less deserving than I. The question for New London, and for other cities around the world, is this: How do we live this out in a practical world of competing interests, different viewpoints, and limited resources? New London neighbor Charles Granville recently wrote a letter to *The Day* about people in state prisons which ended with this reminder: "There but for the grace of God go I." Christians who genuinely know their own need for mercy will be the first to rush to the needy neighbor's aid and show mercy.

September 2000

REFLECTIONS

Chrissy Guarnieri

*How pleasant it is, at the end of the day,
No follies to have to repent;
But reflect on the past, and be able to say,
That my time has been properly spent.*

(Jane Taylor 1783-1827)

I thought I knew what I was doing with my life, what was important and where I was headed. I had plans and goals like most people. During my first year at Saint Francis House I have learned that no matter how well we make plans, there are detours that are in our best interest. Saint Francis House should be a required stop on anyone's journey. I came to SFH by the grace of God working through Reverend Mark Robinson. I remain at SFH because of the grace of God working through the paradigm that Emmett and Anne have established in the New London community ***'representing a place of prayer, a house of hospitality, and a base for justice ministry grounded in Franciscan life'*** and are committed to living.

Often during my first year I was filled with trepidation and questions. How long can I stay? Am I an imposition? Does anyone like what I cook? Is it okay to allow others to see my vulnerability? What do I have to offer anyone? How can I ever repay the kindness and support of strangers? I found answers to these and many other questions that used to keep me wide awake nights.

I found out, in a relatively short period of time, that I was among intelligent, loving human beings and now they are my family, friends, and cheerleaders. What I do, what I think, what I feel, what I believe matters, to someone other than myself. That is important to me. I am not currently the sole or soul caregiver that I was for thirty-four years. I am nourished

daily by members of SFH and all those that enter in, regularly or only once. Like a bulb that needs time to rest deep within the soil before blooming, I have been given a place to rest my heart and head. Before SFH, the concept of being refreshed in order to help others and the notion of being refreshed just for myself was inviting albeit alien practice for me. Before SFH I had existed in an environment that was primarily tit-for-tat.

Now, a year later, midst redefined terrorism and renewed world conflict that is in our backyard, I understand that I am an integral part of SFH. The things that I contribute are recognized and encouraged as important talents. Things that I 'just do' are skills that others need. SFH taps into my creative side and my fledgling computer savvy to help our commitment to community life move forward. The emergence of new self-confidence has been an added blessing.

I no longer feel fretful of the decisions I make about my life. I know what my part is in God's wonderful plan, because like Job I 'answered the Lord saying, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted,"' (Job 42:2). I confidently and consciously select those opportunities that help me fulfill the purpose that God is revealing to me. I thank SFH with all its elements: Anne, Emmett, Nate, Sarah, Aunt Dorrie, the board members and Father Mark and the friends from Calvary Church who continue to give me loving support so I am able to finish my BA (Interdisciplinary Media Writing and Production for the Deaf and Hearing-Impaired) at Eastern Connecticut State University. Also, for their encouragement during the process of finding a graduate program suited to my goals.

The atmosphere at SFH heartens me to create a life in which I fulfill a divine purpose. I may discover the mission of my lifetime (while I'm here) or one that is just for today – perhaps to be an artist, a teacher, a peacemaker, or a problem solver. Together, God and I are a team. SFH allows me to practice my beliefs and stay focused on what is truly important.

I believe the earnest desire to understand spiritual things will open the way and revelation within and without will follow. In Daniel 10:12 it is written: *“Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard: and I am come for thy words’ sake”*.

Winter 2001

“I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING”

Barbara Barrett

In September, 2001, I was casting about – looking for a place to do a four-hour-per-week practicum, a requirement for a program I’m enrolled in through the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut: Ministry Exploration and Education Program (MEEP). The practicum needed to be a new experience, a learning opportunity which would help me discern the direction of my servant ministry in the world. I had approached a couple of agencies, but the doors were not opening. At the same time, I was feeling helpless in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks. I wanted to do something – act in some way – to counteract the hate crimes being perpetrated on Pakistani business owners in my hometown of Norwich. I was looking for others with whom I might join in practicing and promoting understanding, justice, and peaceful co-existence.

Enter St. Francis House. In October, I began joining with the gathered community on Friday evenings for evening prayer, dinner, the Clarification of Thought discussions on the works of mercy, and the Truth Forums which had been added to the schedule to provide an opportunity for people to express their concerns as our country responded to the terrorist attacks. I did feel a bit out of my element at first. I was interacting with people who not only mourned for the lives lost on September 11 but also for those lost since October 7 when US bombs began dropping on Afghanistan. I was praying and eating and talking with people who questioned the social, economic, and military policies of our government. Scary stuff. But there were also discussions about ecology, love of neighbors, concern for the welfare of children, health care. I felt warmly welcomed by the members of St. Francis House and saw their hospitality extend over and over to friends and strangers alike.

By rite of Baptism, I and all Christians are called to share in

the general ministry of the church , the work of reconciliation. I've seen people fasting, praying, witnessing, studying and speaking – all trying to help create a more equitable and humane global community. What will my role be? I don't know yet. But I will continue my practicum with the St. Francis House community at least through the spring, and I will continue to search.

The ministry of hospitality practiced at St. Francis House is awesome. Not surprising that, when those other doors were closed to me, the folks at St. Francis House said, “Yes, come in. Sit down. Would you like tea?”

Spring 2002

THE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

ARTHUR LERNER

Hello Troubador readers! My family and I recently moved to Southeastern Connecticut. My wife Emily grew up on the shoreline and we are presently raising our one year old daughter, Ellanora, in Emily's grandmother's house on Becket Hill in Lyme. We try to live simply and take lots of time to enjoy our family, friends, and the wonders of creation.

I am a carpenter by trade and a gardener by vocation. My past experience includes volunteer work on an urban agricultural center in Holyoke, Massachusetts, as well as professional carpentry from framing to finish. Since January I have been working for Saint Francis House (SFH) as "Construction Supervisor" on the various building projects that are in the works at 30 and 32 Broad Street. It was as a gardener, however, that I first came in contact with SFH.

A little over one year ago, Emily and I were living in Western Massachusetts and considering making a move to Connecticut. While scouting out this area we heard about a group in New London that was interested in urban gardening. This group turned out to be SFH. Gardening projects excite me because they are able to address a whole range of critical issues in America today. Some people simply do not get enough food; others get too much of the wrong food. A gardening project that is rooted in the community which it is to serve can address both of these types of malnourishment and also feed the soul. In a garden we find fresh nutritious food and a connection to the grandeur of creation. Emily and I are both very interested in any kind of innovative agricultural enterprises, urban or rural. By the end of our first encounter with Emmett and Anne, we were also both very interested in SFH.

Our introduction to SFH included a discussion of what is now called the "Constructive Program" of SFH. I remember being impressed by the commitment to non-violence paired

with a commitment to anti-racism. I resonated immediately with the spirit of faith-based activism. I approach my work as supervisor of the “Construction Program” from within the context of the “Constructive Program”.

Thus far in my work I have been focused on the renovations at 32 Broad St. I have worked with contractors (to remove asbestos from the basement) and a great crew from the Alternative Incarceration Center (AIC) to do a general clean-up of the house. Phase Two is now underway as we prepare to sign contracts to have extensive electrical and plumbing work done. This will include a new gas fired heating and hot water system.

It is exciting to watch this project slowly develop into the future of SFH. Where presently there are piles of tiles, toilets, and lots of sheetrock to finish, there will soon (God willing) be energetic activists living, praying and working. Although our progress is slower than on most commercial jobs, we are working phase by phase towards clear goals. We plan to have the second and the third floors of 32 Broad St. done by mid-summer and the remainder of the building done by the fall.

We pray daily for peace in our country and our world. We yearn for a change of heart amongst our leaders and an end to this military adventure in the Middle East. And we are so thankful for the safety and abundance in which we daily live. Still, there are some things we need to make the “Construction Program” of SFH a success. I will end this article with the first installment of what will be an ongoing wish list.

One wish that I have is for an apprentice carpenter. I am thinking of someone who is young (at heart at least), who wants to make a significant contribution to SFH while learning some basic carpentry. If this sounds like you or someone you know please let us know. Other things we need are:

- Gift or loan of step ladders, construction staging and work lights
- Volunteers to finish (sand) sheetrock and to paint
- A good idea of what to do with two 50 gallon electric hot water heaters that are in excellent condition

ELEVEN DAYS IN JANUARY

John Robertson, OEF

For the last four years, I have taken a period of solitude after Christmas and before the semester starts. This year, I was excited to use the Hermitage at St. Francis House for the time. I had a blessed time of prayer and sleep and manual work here in New London.

While being apart, I was excited to see St. Francis House in full swing. Emmett and Anne keep up an amazing pace. This peace and justice center dedicated to St. Francis and honoring the Catholic Worker tradition shows how much a little leaven in the lump can accomplish. They have become a center of witness in this part of New England.

New London is the home of Electric Boat, General Dynamics Corp's submarine building unit, and of the Navy's submarine base. There is a very dynamic collective of people standing for peace. **Cal Robertson** leads a weekly demonstration at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in downtown New London on Saturdays from noon until 1 p.m. Cal has been doing this for 17 years except when he is in jail for civil disobedience. One of the St. Francis House community joins him. There are also regular demonstrations in front of the plant and the sub base. St. Francis House is an important gathering place for this continuing witness for peace and to end war industries. At the monthly meeting of the Southeastern Connecticut Peace and Justice Network, people organizing Wal-Mart workers meet with people struggling for a more just world trading system meet with people witnessing for peace and ending war industries. St. Francis House becomes a creative catalyst for relationships among activists.

On Wednesday night Emmett and **Rev. Mardie Chapman** are part of the weekly meeting of the New London Homeless Coalition. They have worked with a group of homeless folks

as well as **Russ Carmichael** and **George Clarke** to create a dialogue between the City of New London Social Service providers and those on the street. As a result they have engaged local churches in providing space and have advocated for needed shelter services. Several people are now joining the St. Francis House community for daily Morning Prayer.

Anne is the secretary for **CURE**, a New London education reform group. After several years of relationship building and planning and discussion with the New London Board of Education, a strong multi-racial, multi-lingual organization has been formed, a big step in education work. While I was with them, they were building a community-wide meeting using the local Martin Luther King Day Parade as the kickoff.

Anne continues to work for Connecticut land reform and with Community Gardens of New London. She is taking a significant role in assisting the Hartford Catholic Worker in its effort to purchase an historic peace farm in Voluntown, CT. She is also thinking about how to put the St. Francis House community garden to bed and what to plant in the spring. **Arthur Lerner**, another member of the St. Francis House team, is spending the weekend researching seeds. Arthur also serves as project manager and general contractor for renovation of the new building next door to St. Francis House.

This is now the third building on the St. Francis House campus. The original building is a three storey Victorian home that had been broken into rooms for rent and done some time as a "crack house." It is presently home to Otis, the Beagle, Emmett, Anne, Sarah and Nate Jarrett (when Nate is home from college) and Jody, a seminarian doing CPE at the local hospital. It is also the location of the chapel, meeting rooms, and lots of books. The second building is attached to the first and includes the Hermitage, a lovely three room apartment, and an undeveloped apartment planned for use as transitional housing. The new building is next door and also a beautiful Victorian home that has many apartments. When St. Francis

House acquired it last year it was semi-abandoned. Arthur has been working with volunteers and contractors to restore the building. They have now built three beautiful apartments on the second and third floors. Any of these apartments in Manhattan would rent for \$3,500 per month. The plan is to provide space for people who would like to come and join the community permanently or for an extended period. Emmett and Anne are working to raise \$100,000 this year to retire the debt on the buildings.

St. Francis House is located in downtown New London. It is four blocks from the main post office and six blocks to the harbor and shops. It is a block from the major theatre where Emmett and Anne and I heard the Southeastern Connecticut Symphony last Saturday. This Wednesday, the Broadway cast of "Saturday Night Fever" is making a video in the theatre. Even though it has been very cold while I have been here, I have already enjoyed exploring New London.

Lest you think that St. Francis House is all activity, prayer is very central. Morning Prayer from *Celebrating Common Prayer* is prayed together in the chapel daily and Evening Prayer is also observed. The community participates in parishes on Sundays. People come for spiritual direction. The Third Order Principles are read as part of the Office.

During the eleven days I was at St. Francis House, I participated in two community bible studies, both of which took a morning and led us deeply into the connect between scripture and our lives. I also was part of the weekly ecumenical study of Ched Myers's *Who Will Roll Away the Stone?* leading the eight participants from local churches to support one another in our vocations. Last night about 25 people gathered for the biweekly Clarification of Thought. The topic was money and the Christian life. Very interesting and challenging reflection came about how we live with our money and what our options are, being among the richest people on earth. Everyone seems to squirm when asked about how they handle their money.

The Spirit is working and faithful people are responding here. Come and see!

Note: John George Robertson will be a resident of St. Francis House in the fall of 2004.

Pentecost 2004

THERE, AND BACK AGAIN

MARK AUER, TSSF

Writing about his friend Dorothy Day, Daniel Berrigan, in his autobiography *To Dwell in Peace*, notes: "She would live and work among the urban poor; she would commend the Gospel by living it; the first change would be exacted of herself: she would declare peace, as others declared war."

I remember quite early in my career as a student at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA, one of my professors lamenting the fact that he had to preach the Beatitudes at least once a year, and had been doing so for two decades. Having had a few years to reflect upon what he said, I have come to the conclusion that it is far easier to preach the Beatitudes than to live them. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." As I began to search for a concrete way that I could be of assistance to Saint Francis House, I kept returning to this sentence of scripture.

On September 2, 1968, I returned from a 13-month tour with the Army's Fourth Infantry Division in Vietnam. I returned to our family home in Princeton, New Jersey on my Dad's birthday. I was twenty years old.

In May 2004, as the final part of my seminary education, I completed a 10-month internship at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Hospital in Bedford, MA. I worked in the outpatient psychiatry clinic as a co-leader of three psychodynamic psychotherapy groups. The members of all these groups were men severely disabled with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The twenty-seven men in our groups showed me again, after 35 years, the result of the tragedy that has defined my generation of Americans.

Four months before I left for the Far East, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, in an address at New York's Riverside Church said in part: "A true revolution of values will lay

hands on the world order and say of war: 'This way of settling differences is not just.' This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and mentally deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs for social uplift is approaching spiritual death." By the time I returned home in September of the next year, King was dead.

Today war news is all around us. The hospitals and clinics of the DVA are again filling with injured young men and women. I have a 24-year-old son and a 20-year-old daughter, both in college in Massachusetts. I know now just how worried my own parents were in 1967 and 1968.

I arrived at 30 Broad Street on July 31, 2004 through a rather painful portal: in February I had suffered a collapsed lung, requiring major chest surgery. I was able to complete my studies and receive my Master of Divinity degree along with my classmates, but my plan to spend a year in residency as a hospital chaplain has had to be put on hold, perhaps indefinitely, until I recover fully from the surgery.

At lunch in the EDS refectory in late April old friend and mentor Ed Rodman recalled my experience in the banking industry and mentioned that St. Francis House was in desperate need of someone to develop budgets and generally run the 'front office'. I needed a roof over my head. Shortly after having lunch with Ed, I made formal application through Emmett and Anne to the Board of Directors of SFH. I spent a week in June living and working at 30 Broad Street, to see if my needs and the needs of the community intersected. Our conversations over that week uncovered several mutual needs – although if someone had told me two years ago that I would again be doing a financial analysis of a construction project, I

would have looked at them as if they had three heads.

I moved into 32 Broad on July 31 with the help of friends from EDS and Otis the wonder-hound, my seatmate at the Morning Office. We have had a few minor medical emergencies this summer, but the house is humming along as we begin our fall season. I look forward to the coming year, as I begin to recover my strength, and continue to grow spiritually alongside, and assisted by, good friends.

Francistide 2004

IN CONVERSATION WITH CHUCK MATTHEI

“LIVING IN COMMUNITY”

Note: This conversation is transcribed from the tape which we made that night. Including it here as part of our tribute to Chuck will give our wider readership a chance to learn about the history of the Catholic Worker movement, hear Chuck's many insights on community, farming and hospitality and enjoy his story telling which was central to his life and work.

When Anne first invited me to be here tonight she told me of the opportunity that St. Francis House has to buy the house next door and that this was providing an impetus to reflect on what it means to live in community. Everyone brings their own particular experience to such a topic because it means so many different things both in concept and in practice. So you can never really be objective about such questions. All we really can do is share our own experience and hope that it will help us to be better prepared for things that may come up unexpectedly if we embark upon that journey.

My own experience of community began when I left home at age 18 and found myself not long afterwards living first in the Catholic Worker farm in upstate New York at the beginning of a long and for me very formative association with the Catholic Worker movement. Not too much longer after that I spent a year in residence at the Committee for Non-Violent Action here in Voluntown, CT which at that time was structured as an intentional community devoted to peace action throughout the New England region.

It's been quite a few years since I was 18. I'll be 55 in a few weeks. The truth of the matter is my life has been spent on the road more than in any place, but to the extent that I've had home bases, they've always been communities of one sort

or another. In these 35 years I've never had a personal home in the traditional private sense. I've never had a personal income in the traditional private sense. But I've lived in a number of different kinds of communal settings ranging from the Catholic Worker communities to CNVA to draft resister households in the '60's and then I spent a dozen years with the Institute for Community Economics (ICE) which when I joined it was structured as a traditional non-profit with a conventionally paid staff each with a private home and lifestyle. We restructured the organization as a kind of community in which almost all the staff lived and worked together. Compensation was based on a need and not an age or seniority or education or role and we lived and worked as a community together.

When I left the organization in 1990 and with some former colleagues and others established a new non-profit which we call the Equity Trust, we maintained the same model while ICE gradually departed from it. Equity Trust took over the old CNVA farm property in Voluntown. So my life has been spent in one kind of community or another: some more intentional than others, some more successful than others, some more lasting than others. And I've had a chance to observe and hear the experience of other people. So I thought I'd just make some observations coming from those years and identify a few of the kind of issues that persistently arose and then we can continue the conversation in whatever ways you think would be useful.

A couple of observations:

As we approach the idea of community, it's always useful to remember that we come from a society in which the bonds of community both geographical and generational have been substantially strained and for many people broken altogether. We don't come "from communities" in that almost romantic or traditional sense any more. To some extent you could say we are all damaged goods and we come to the effort to create community or the search for community as people who to some extent are looking for what we think we've lost or what we have

lost or what we imagine someone might once have had.

We are also each of us part of many different communities and it's important to remember that. If we come together in a St. Francis House or any other chosen grouping it is only one of many circles of relationship in which each of us is a part and we have to recognize and respect the other relationships and responsibilities which people carry with them. We are part not only of a St. Francis House community but we have families, we have associations which also lay claim to us in different ways.

A third thing to remember is that with the affluence and mobility and the technology of modern society, in some respects we no longer need one another. In a simple economy in which people depend on manual labor and on their ability to produce the basic necessities of life, the mutual dependence was obvious. We don't have that anymore. We can afford easily to leave which is probably one reason divorce has increased as much as it has. And if marriages break up then so do communities intentional or otherwise. Do we need one another? In some respects maybe more than ever. But in other respects, no, we no longer need one another. We can survive given the structures and resources of modern society without one another which makes it easy to come in but just as easy to get out. And that's something we have to bear in mind.

Another thing I've found from my experience in community is that while we may all be quite sincere in our engagement with that formation of an intentional community, we may not be equally self aware. My experience is that very often the people who are the loudest and most insistent advocates are the ones who are struggling most with trying to act out for themselves what they are advocating for others. So you often find out that the person who is most certain that we need to do this or do that is the one who is going to have the most trouble doing it. So you need to take everything with a bit of a grain of salt and maybe the most important thing is to remember that an inveterate problematic as countercultural as

creating community in the midst of this chaos is, requires a lot of patience and humility and not a small sense of humor. The contradictions are going to be inevitable and numerous.

So these are a few of the background thoughts I keep in mind when I think about my own experience or hear someone else talk about creating or recreating or expanding a community. It's worth remembering that people choose community for many different reasons. One group of people will look for community for very personal or emotional reasons; they want the warmth, they want the support, they want the fulfillment of the human relationships. Or to be a little more crass, they want to fill an emotional black hole that they feel in their lives or their psyches. Others will come to community for much more practical or plebian reasons.

I've often said to people that although I've spent my entire adult life in communities of one sort or another, I'm probably one of the least adaptable people (laughter) to that model and what that model represents of any of the people I know. There are some personal rewards which I very much enjoy and equally there are sacrifices. There are benefits, but there are surely costs. As my friend Dorothy Day used to say, "Voluntary poverty means giving up your privacy; anybody can wear old clothes." (laughter) I would repeat that to myself as a mantra twenty times a day in any community I've been a part of. I've long since learned to enjoy finding old clothes. Giving up one's privacy is not easy to do. So for me it's never been a choice motivated primarily out of emotional satisfaction although sometimes it's brought that.

For me there are two motivating factors, two opportunities that community represented and that have kept me at it even when temperamentally I would happily have gone in another direction. One is that if properly constructed, it's cost effective. That's a pretty reductionist way of looking at the wonders of human relationship. But more people can get by on less which is both a convenience and also a moral commitment if they live

together and share what they need.

The other even more important issue for me is hospitality or service: how do you respond to the traveler, the stranger, the person in need, the person in transition? If you're in the conventional non-profit office and each of you leaves your personal home in the morning and goes to the office so the house is empty until you come back at night, what do you do when you meet the person on the street or the person in transition who needs a kind of hospitality, a kind of welcome, a kind of care you can't provide at home when you're not there all day and you can't provide at the office either.

So for me organizing both life and work within the structure of community has created the ability to respond to kinds of needs that I don't think can be met any other way. You've got three choices: 1) You can ignore people in need. 2) You can create modern social service institutions and bureaucracies. But then you've got to be willing to fund them adequately to do the job which this society has never been willing to do—able maybe but not willing—or 3) you have to find a way to organize your life and work to get the job done and still respond to people in need.

When groups of people choose that structure of community for life and work, they do have the ability to keep both the necessary work going and also to respond to all the peculiar needs that human experience puts before us. So for me it's cost effective and provides the ability to respond to those needs and to offer hospitality that have kept me at it even though living in community is at best a two-sided coin with as many costs as benefits.

I've found it helpful to think about the choice as being not so much one that we make. It's not so much that we choose community as that we are chosen. It's the circumstances, the inescapable realities of human nature and human life that require this of us rather than our finding that this is a way to maximize our joy.

So I think of it as something more to which we are called

or committed as opposed to a commitment which we choose to make. It's a community of need in a sense of that's a helpful perspective because if you go in thinking of it solely as choice and a choice that is made for all the best of reasons and all the best of hopes, that also means there's a great deal of room for disappointment. Whereas if you go into it with modest expectations and just say, this is something we will do because it's practical and necessary, we'll do it in good faith hoping for the best and we'll do it expecting the worst (laughter), there's a great deal of room to be pleurably surprised.

If you think that this will fulfill your emotional black hole, you are almost certain to be disappointed. If you go in realizing that, "Well, I never chose to live with these people; they're not the people I would have chosen to live with! (laughter) But here I am because it's the only way to operate and get the job done – both the daily necessities and those who pass through our lives and bring their own particular needs to us. If you come to it with that, then you can position yourself to be gratefully surprised when the relationships turn out to be better than one might have expected. So I come to it with that jaded but I think useful perspective (his own chuckle).

Having said that, the issues are obvious: Who is the community? What does it mean to belong? How do we understand membership? What kind of preparation if any is required or expected or provided? Is there a commitment asked? Is so, what is it? How does this group of people relate to a larger community?

Decision-making: How are decisions made? The endless discussions about majority rule or consensus and all the different ways in which people do – or don't – make decisions! The question of authority: Is this a democratic community? Are people equal? Is there a hierarchical structure? Do we pretend as the Catholic Worker used to that there is no structure to authority although granny is clearly the mother superior?! (laughter) It's very different when you live with a saint. But

there is always authority in one form or another.

What are the values and spirit? What brings us together? What are the signs of grace that love does not consist of looking one another in the eye but looking outward together in the same direction? Where is it that we look? What is it that not only binds us together but draws us out of ourselves and gives us a reason to stay together when looking at one another no longer is enough? There are plenty of times – this is also true in a marriage – when you look at a partner and say, “I don’t want to be with him or her any more; there’s not enough.” What is it that keeps us together? So there’s the question of what those values are and how we acknowledge them, the spiritual life together, celebration, the worship, the recreation – how do we address that dimension?

But if there’s a spiritual life, there’s also a very practical life of labor. What are the tasks that have to be performed? How are they divided? What are the expectations? What’s fair to ask? And then, of course, there’s the question of how you balance theory and practice.

The Catholic Worker has this idea that the workers will become scholars and the scholars will become workers and everyone will become a political activist and a theologian as well! Well, it was never quite so neatly integrated. You often had the great struggle between the workers and the scholars. So how do we not only develop a spiritual life together, but develop a practical life together and then balance the two appropriately?

The issues of economics: It’s easy to talk about “from each according to his ability to each according to his need.” The principle is an appealing one. But what do we expect of one another? How do we deal with income? What do we do with personal assets? Will people develop equity over time? These are all very practical questions.

And, of course, they ultimately point to the issue of security. What can we count on? It’s easy to talk about coming to a community, giving yourself to it, drawing from it and that’s

easy to do when you're 20, 25, maybe even 35, maybe even 40. People get to a point though when they begin to say, "What will happen when...? What will happen if...? Can I count on them? And if I can't, what do I need to do? What will I take if I walk away?"

These are all very real issues which we surely confronted over and again in the various communities of which I was a part. We confronted them on a day to day basis when we talked about whether to provide health insurance and how to live without it. We talked about it when we talked about should everyone's compensation be equal or should there be a difference based on age or seniority or length of service? Do we provide a retirement plan?

What kind of commitment can we reasonably offer or should people reasonably expect? The goodwill may be there but is there any real assurance that when they're 65 or 70 or if a disabling illness hits that the support and resources will be present? How do we balance some means of material security and the realistic need for it with a life of faith? So these are all practical issues that arose and a thousand others as well. I just thought I'd mention a few of them.

The Catholic Worker farm that I lived at was in Tivoli, New York, about 80 acres. It was a collection of old, rather large buildings. It started off as one of the old Hudson River estates. The upper class of that day built these grand estates and this one was on a bluff overlooking the river; it was quite a stunning property. When it was abandoned by the upper class, it became variously an orphanage, an Italian resort and a variety of other things. The carriage house was cut up into a number of little rooms and there were dormitories; the old mansion was basically just a shell of a building.

When I lived there we had on average about 75-80 people living there including some young folk who came because they'd heard of the Catholic Worker vision, some people who'd come to retire or spend their last years there and quite a number

who came because they had nowhere else to go. Many of them had substance abuse or mental health problems. Most were impoverished and had no family or no one to turn to and if the police within 50 miles ran into someone they considered was vagrant, they would just drop them off in the front yard and drive away. There was even one man who came with the property. He had just been there forever and if you bought it, you got him.

There was another man who was slightly retarded and had lived with his mother and when she died in her 80's, he was in his 50's. He had never lived anywhere else except in town. The town selectmen came to us and said, "He can't live on his own. He's not able to care for himself reliably. But we hate the thought of his having to be institutionalized. He wanders around town. He knows everyone in town. Can he live with you?"

So we had 75-80 people of varying capacities and needs. And it worked pretty well for quite a while. But one of the things that happened in the late 60's, early 70's is that there was a kind of generational change underway. Of course, nobody analyzed this or thought about it or organized it. But the fact of the matter is that the way the Catholic Worker had worked was that it was a kind of anarchistic community in which there were no roles. Dorothy, as I've said, was—especially by that time in her life—the unquestioned authority; she *was* the foundress. She had an acknowledged authority and people acceded to it.

That was not true in the early days. There's a marvelous book which I found in a bin of used book discards one day called *House of Hospitality* which was Dorothy's first published work after the founding of the Catholic Worker. Of course, I jealously kept this book guarded it for years after I'd found it for 35 cents in this bin until one day about 5 years ago one of my friends at the Catholic Worker said, "Could I borrow it?" And I looked at him with steely eyes and said, "Not on your life! I'd never get it back!" "Oh, no," he said. "I promise. You'll get it back." So I lent it to him and of course, he lost it – got

down to that house and disappeared, never to be found again. So finally I abandoned my commitment to voluntary poverty and called a used bookstore and had a search done and replaced my 35 cent book for \$35!

That book is really a delight to read. It's drawn from Dorothy's journals of those first few years. And it's a young woman who was not "the foundress," not "the saint," not the "acknowledged authority," but a young woman who was caught as a much more equal participant in the day to day struggles and conflicts of a Catholic Worker house.

By the time I was at the Worker, Dorothy was a fountainhead of authority and she used to appoint a house manager. So Marge Hughes in those years was in charge of the farm and she carried that designated authority. Well, there came a time when Marge decided that she was going to move to West Virginia; she didn't want to run the farm anymore. And none of the younger people had the age, the experience, the confidence or the conviction to take over that role.

This was the late 60's, early 70's and consensual, participatory democracy was the buzzword of the day. So with that kind of philosophical construct, we would have no formal leader. But what was really going on was that no one person was able or willing to step in and take the bull by the horns. So what happened was that life went on pretty well –pretty well – but life became gradually less manageable because when push came to shove and Dorothy put her foot down on one of her visits, no one really had the ability "to make it happen."

What was particularly frustrating was the presence of a handful of relatively young, relatively sane and physically able people who were deadwood – a bunch of poetic deadbeats who wouldn't do any work. You didn't mind if it was someone who really had a meaningful disability, but that wasn't the problem. This was a group of people who wanted to sit around and pontificate over tea all day while a handful of folk had to do all the work. *That* was frustrating.

The house physically was old and needed a lot of work and we didn't have the money. We didn't have the kind of organization and structure and authority which would have made it easier to make it happen. So there came a point where the people who were more responsible said to Dorothy, "This place is too much to handle. It needs major renovations. It's falling down around us. We have neither the money nor the capacity to do this. And it's too much to manage all these folk."

So using the physical decline as a pretext, that property was sold. And a similar, more physically fit, more manageable property was purchased. All the older folk and people who really had needs moved to the new place. Because since the new place wasn't big enough for such a large group, it was a convenient way of leaving all the deadwood behind. They were quite capable of going off and finding someone else to sponge off of. So the move was made and it's worked pretty well. That farm continues to operate to this day.

I always thought it was quite a striking achievement that Dorothy died in her own bed, in her own community and it wasn't substantially different in character or charism almost 50 year after the founding than it had been at the beginning. Very few of the saints can claim to have lasted that long. (shared chuckle) The Franciscans are certainly a far cry from what Francis was. The Catholic Worker still to a large degree maintains its character – for the better, for the most part and also, to a degree, for worse. (chuckle)

There had been a couple of Catholic Worker farms before the one in Tivoli. The first farm attached to the New York Catholic Worker was in Easton, Pennsylvania. They bought the farm, I think around 1936 – 2 or 3 three years into the life of the Catholic Worker. The Catholic Worker was definitely established by urbanites. But Peter's theory (Peter Maurin – co-founder with Dorothy Day of the CW movement) included the grandiosely named "agronomic universities." Anyway, Peter kept talking about farming and farming communes and that didn't mean

much to Dorothy who wasn't a farmer and had no particular inclination to become one! But Peter kept talking about it so they thought about it and the opportunity came along and for a very modest sum they bought this farm. Then, of course, the question was what are we going to do with it?

For many years, the principal farmer was John Hildegard. Farmer John came from a farm family in Vermont and had been a merchant seaman. In 1936 the seamen went on strike and the Catholic Worker set up a second soup line on the docks. They were feeding several thousand striking workers a day. John was temporarily unemployed by the strike and he'd been feeding off the soup line on the docks. One day he and some friends, some other sailors, decided to go to the home base for the folks who brought all this soup to the docks and find out where all the soup was coming from. So they went up to visit the Catholic Worker headquarters and the editorial offices.

Nobody knows whether this is true, but what John always said is that he got drunk a day or two later and came back. They had just acquired this farm and someone found out that he'd grown up on a farm. So he always told visitors that Dorothy having discovered that he was by birthright a farmer got him drunker and the next thing he knew he woke up at the farm and he never left. (laughter) Now whether that is true or not, I wouldn't know. I wouldn't put it past her. (more laughter) But anyhow, John ended up at the farm and spent the next 40 some years there as the principal farmer. So they had the farm at Easton.

They left Easton because one family who had come to reside there came more and more to act as though it was their personal property. Now this was a property acquired by the Catholic Worker which was a Catholic Worker community. People came from all different circumstances and they lived together there and they grew food there for themselves and for the city and they had their discussion groups and provided hospitality and whatever.

Catholic Worker farms have always been more houses of

hospitality than serious farming enterprises. But things were being grown there. Anyway, a couple of families but one in particular got themselves rooted in there and in spite of the fact that they had no more claim to this place than anyone else, they began to act as if it were theirs and they became progressively more inhospitable. And ultimately they wouldn't leave and people didn't like the character that they had brought to the place and so the Catholic Worker walked.

Dorothy never yielded the title, but they left the place and got another farm. It was either call the police and have these people evicted which they weren't willing to do or let this private, inhospitable spirit prevail which they weren't willing to do or leave and start over. So they started over.

And I remember one day in the 1970's when Dorothy said to me, "Do you know what happened yesterday?" She said, "I got a call from an attorney. The last member of that family left that old property in Easton and it's still in my name. And it's coming back to us." (responsive "wow") They had kind of run their course there. Functionally, they'd treated it as their own, but they'd run their course and it came back. I don't know what happened after that, but the Worker went from there to Newburgh to Staten Island to Tivoli to Marlborough. So the farm continues.

The number of people who knew something about farming varied greatly from time to time. It was not a stable cast of characters. There were people at the farm for many, many years like John who literally spent the bulk of his life there. Stanley Vishnewski who would tell people he'd come to the Catholic Worker at age 16 and hadn't decided whether to stay yet. Even at 65 he would tell you he wasn't sure. For all I know he may have not been sure and just wanted to keep his options open. But he wasn't about to leave. So there were people who came for many years and there were people who came for a day, a week, a month or a year. Dorothy used to say, "The Catholic Worker is a school" by which she recognized that most people

would come and go.

And that was a decision. If you want to join a Catholic order, there's a formal process of preparation, reflection, training and commitment. It doesn't mean that they'll stay either as we've found out and many of them left. But relatively speaking there's a kind of preparation and a stability of commitment, a constancy that you can count on or build upon.

The Catholic Worker never had a formation process, it never had a formal membership, no commitment was required, no vows were taken and therefore no expectations were applicable and so while some people made commitments that were every bit as deep and lasting as any priest or nun ever made, others would come and go. And Dorothy always saw one of the functions of the Worker as being an experience in life, a time in life that would help to shape people as they went into other places and other circumstances.

One thing I really appreciated about Dorothy was her sense that there are many vocations and her respect for those different vocations. She understood family life to be a vocation. Is it the only vocation? No, it is not. Is it a good vocation? Yes, it is. It has its own unique set of opportunities and responsibilities.

I was telling someone the other day about a remarkable priest that I met in Kenya who had run afoul of the Vatican during his work in Italy and was in a sort of exile and had become the pastor of the second largest squatter settlement in Nairobi. Well, he got there and to make a long story short, he sold the car and opened the doors of the school and increased the number of students from 500 to 8000. Then he left the rectory, this nice modern house on the edge of an appalling slum and he moved into a single mud room in the poorest part of the settlement.

So I was going with him down to his mud hut with my Kenyan attorney friend who was leaning over my shoulder and saying, "Stay on his heel; I don't care if you step on him. This place is dangerous for Kenyans and the rest of you are going to

get killed.”

At one point my Kenyan friend turned to this Italian priest living in the midst of one of the toughest situations you could imagine and said, “You’re going to get murdered one of these days down here.” And Alex turned to him and said, “Why do you think it is that priests are single? We are expendable.” And I really appreciated that because I thought, “In this narcissistic society of which we are a part, we’re treated to these endless, useless discussions about celibacy as an issue of morality. Celibacy is an issue of freedom.”

Different people came to the Worker and some were farmers, but most were not and John trained some of them if they wanted to become farmers. But there never was a plan, a training, a program, an organization chart that said we need this many farmers to produce this many hundreds of pounds of produce. It was just whoever came, whoever was willing and as much as they were willing. And then the food that wasn’t eaten was shipped to the city. Was it a reliable supply? No. Was it helpful? Yes.

You have to decide what you want to do. You can always grow for the esthetic pleasure of it. You can grow and share what you have and make some contribution of useful, wholesome food and you can say we’re actually going to produce x amount of food for this much of the community’s food needs and generate this much income. And based on the experience of successful farmers, these are the number of personnel, this is the equipment: let’s organize the endeavor. The Catholic Worker never had it that together! So it has to do with choices, but not only choice of objective and style. There is also an inherent tension between that kind of productivity and order and the commitment to hospitality and service. It’s not easy to do both.

I spent a lot of years working on affordable housing and it’s a very tempting vision to think that we can save money and make the housing cheaper by using lots of volunteer labor.

Most nonprofit groups have found that volunteer labor or job training does not match with cost effective production. It's often cheaper to pay the going rate to hire skilled builders to do the job and get the job done right the first time than it is to train young people or to utilize volunteers. I'm not suggesting that that's not as good a way to go. But I'm just saying you can't always do it all.

You may be familiar with Lanza del Vasto, a sort of "Fr. Gandhi" as he is sometimes called, who was the founder of an intentional community called the Community of the Ark in France which modeled itself in some ways on Gandhi's ashram and set up a discipline of life and labor and was also involved in larger social and political issues. They really were quite instrumental in mobilizing opposition to the French war in Algeria and did a number of things in social and political policy that were quite important in France.

The Community of the Ark was quite well organized and efficient, well managed and productive. They actually lived out Peter Maurin's vision of the self supporting, productive community on the land. They lived it out and made it work in a way that the Catholic Worker never did.

What we had in the Catholic Worker were hospitality houses in the country much more than we had sustainable communities or productive farms. They had the other, but they didn't practice hospitality to the degree that the Catholic Worker did. That's not to say that they wouldn't have taken in somebody in need, but they didn't have 50 out of 80 people who were there largely because they had nowhere else to go or had serious physical, mental, substance abuse or other problems.

I remember one night at the local parish on the lower East Side when Lanza del Vasto was visiting the states that he and Dorothy engaged in a kind of public dialogue. They were talking about their respective experiences. It was kind of nice because what you had were the two dimensions of this vision (or the two horns of this dilemma!). You had one community

that had realized the vision of the good life but at the cost of limiting its vulnerability and service. You had the other one which had thrown open its doors at the cost of never quite getting that other part accomplished.

I remember at some point talking about the difficulty of practicing that much hospitality while maintaining the order and productivity. Lanza del Vasto looked at Dorothy and he said, “Yes, the problem is that it’s just so contagious” which I thought was a very graceful way to deal with the need or insanity which so many people brought to the Catholic Worker. He wasn’t saying, “The problem is these crazy people.” He was saying, “The problem is that it’s just so contagious and the rest of us are so quick to succumb to the disruptive influence and temptations and that’s why we have limited our exposure in that way.”

So I just think you need to decide what your goals are in any particular situation and then you have to recognize that you may not always be able to do everything in every place. I mean you could conceivably have a hospitality house that was predominantly defined by the spirit and practice of hospitality and then have an affiliated rural facility that was more defined by its productive activity. But to think that the two are going to be identical – in population, in management, in style – is probably unrealistic. So you want to be clear. What is it you’re trying to achieve? What is required to do that and how much can you handle?

If the goal is to have a seriously productive agricultural operation then the first thing I would do is go visit several of the more successful farms more or less of the type that you are interested in. From our work at Equity Trust we could easily point to a number of them. Sit down and talk with those farmers and be serious about how many people, what kind of equipment, what kind of capital and what kind of acreage is required to produce this much food. You also need to think about the lifestyle and labor.

I noticed in your recent newsletter you set forth this vision for an expanded St. Francis House and there was a projection for acquiring a farm and reference to Community Supported

Agriculture and the like. And, of course, our Equity Trust organization, among other things, is working with CSA's around the country helping them to acquire land and financing land acquisition, capital improvements and the like. So we have a lot of opportunity to interact with these farmers.

Most CSA farms in this country are not yet what I would call sustainable. They either haven't reached break even or they're operating on such tight margins that it's hard to believe that the farm family will be able to stick it out for the long haul with the operation at the level that it's at even if they are able and willing to do it today. Are they at a point where they can carry it tomorrow? No, not yet. There are relatively fewer where you can say, "This looks like a sustainable lifestyle and a sustainable income." And that means that the farm has to be productive and not only support these folk today, but to anticipate their retirement and the transition to another generation.

If I were serious about an agricultural endeavor, I'd go look at some of the farms that have reached a certain threshold of success and sustainability. I'd talk with those farmers. I'll tell you a couple of things I've observed about those farmers. Almost every one of the people who've reached that level of success have an almost maniacal energy. (laughter) And these are not rich people. I'm talking about sustainability meaning that they've got to the point where they could keep it going. Any farmer could drop that farm and go into the traditional work force and double or triple his or her income and cut their hours in some other vocation. But at least they've built a farm that might work. So they work incredibly hard.

There are skills. They have developed agricultural skills. This is not a hobby. If they weren't trained for it or educated for it, they've gone and cultivated relationships with farmers and learned the craft.

February 1, 2002

SAINT FRANCIS HOUSE: A SUMMER WELL SPENT

Nate Jarrett

When I finished the spring semester of my sophomore year at Loyola University in New Orleans, I was left with the typical pressure of finding a summer job. A yearly undertaking to supply oneself with the spending money to keep oneself occupied in this consumercentric world. This summer however I realized something new about myself: at least for the time being, money was not a very important or necessary thing for me. I didn't really need any money for myself and aside from wanting to occasionally take my girlfriend, Zuleika, out on dates I had no need for money. So this meant I didn't need to get the typical hourly wage job my friends all go out and get. Instead I decided to become the first St. Francis House summer intern.

Some may wonder what a SFH intern does. I did a lot of different things around the house and the community. From helping build the raised bed tomato and basil garden in the backyard, to being the glorified typist for our glorified CFO Mark Auer to install our new accounting system, and, of course, cooking for the multitudes of people (including the Micah Fellowship Urban Ministry group, two different groups of Franciscans and various other guests) who end up eating at our dinner table. In August my father and I drove to Oak Ridge, Tennessee for the witness commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. All this and whatever else needed doing was how I spent my summer vacation and I have to admit it's the most fun I've ever had on break.

As the summer comes to an end I find myself dreading the return of classes more than ever. Even the allure of New Orleans life is not enough to make me ready for the end of my summer. In a week after I'm writing this I will be back at school and missing all the little things at SFH. From Mark's

passion for the Red Sox, to the constant flow of different people on whom to test my cooking creations, to my sister's teenage growing pains, it will all hold a special place in my heart until I get to come back home to SFH.

Note: Nate arrived safely home September 1, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina after being evacuated with the rest of Loyola University. Thanks to so many of you in the extended community who kept him in prayer and called to make sure he was all right.

Fall 2005

“OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE!”

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

If the title doesn't scare you, it should! It scares me. It is not the preachment of a fundamentalist trying to frighten you into an insipid heaven, but the cool conclusion of the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews about the God revealed in Jesus, the crucified Messiah. It's not designed to separate you from your money or your sex but from the self that holds back from surrendering all of life to the Creator. It is, in a word, a description of the Word of God who is God “living and active” not only in our personal life but in the world God created and redeemed. That's what this issue of the **TROUBADOUR** is about.

The theme of the issue – which is also the theme of our winter-spring meetings for clarification of thought – is *Saint Francis House and the Word of God*. There are outstanding exceptions, but over the years, we in the St. Francis House community have found ourselves working more with people who are not Christians than with our co-religionists. We are glad to work with others – Jews and Muslims, people with no particular religious affiliation, people who have left the Churches – but we are disappointed that fellow Christians are often not involved in “communities of resistance and solidarity” in our country today. We wonder why that is, and the question leads us more to self-reflection than criticism of others. What do we mean by “the Word of God”? How do other communities live in the light of the Word of God? How does St. Francis House witness to the Word of God who calls us?

Happily, I did not write this article until after I had read the essays by Danny Malec, of the Voluntown Peace Trust (VPT) community, and Chris Allen-Doucot of the Hartford Catholic Worker. These communities, and the ways they respond in faith to their call to witness, are remarkable. Each has helped

me understand better what we are trying to do at St. Francis House. I trust you will benefit from their experience as well as ours.

The Word of God

The culture of the United States of America today is indeed bizarre. On the one hand, we have many people – usually identified as conservative Christian fundamentalists – who use the language of the Word of God, referring to the books of the Bible, with ease and authority. On the other hand, we have a liberal community, many of them members of mainline Christian churches – who are on the defensive about religious language and have virtually abandoned the Biblical basis of their faith. A bit of history may help get our bearings in this era of “culture wars.”

The term “word” in the Bible translates the Hebrew **dabar** and the Greek word **logos**. In the Bible, word and reality are indissolubly united, so that **dabar** means equally a word (an account, a commandment) and a thing (the reality). There is no word which is not a reality and no reality which is communicated without a word. Word and action are bound together. To speak is to act, and this is true above all of God, who created with a “word.” The Book of Genesis states: “In the beginning God created...,” and goes on to begin each of the six “days” of creation with the words, “And God said...” (Gen. 1).

When the Hebrew prophets spoke to Israel they announced God’s judgment upon the people and promised God’s blessing by speaking “the word of the Lord.” The eighth century B.C. prophet Amos said: “Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel...” (Amos 3:1). Ancient Israel associated the Torah, or Law of Moses, with God’s “word,” as in Deuteronomy 30:11,14: “For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off.... But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in

The Bible as the Word of God

When I was ordained a priest of Christ I took a solemn oath that “I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation.” The Bible is the Word of God in a different sense from that in which the Word of God is a divine person who became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. The Bible is the Word of God *by extension*, because it is the record of the mighty acts of the Word of God. The Bible tells the stories of God’s action in creation, in the calling of Israel, in the liberation of God’s people from slavery at the Exodus, in the giving of the Torah and the proclamation of the prophetic Word, in the preaching of Jesus and the early Christian community, and in the Christian hope for the fulfillment of God’s purposes in history and the restoration of all things by the Word of God at his second coming to judge the living and the dead. Because the Bible is all these things, Christians believe it “to be the Word of God.” So do I.

But the Bible is also a work – or rather a series of works – of literature of various kinds. There is history in the Bible, to be sure, and creation myths, but very little biological science. There is wonderful poetry in the Bible, even erotic poetry. There is much wisdom in the Bible, but also some common sense that is neither common nor sensible anymore. There is legal material in the Bible. The *lex talionis* in the Bible, fixing “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” as a *limitation* on revenge, was an ethical advance for its time but is not the last word on the subject. The Bible also contains Jesus’ revocation of the law of revenge and his commandment of nonviolent resistance of evil (Matthew 5:39). The Book of Revelation, oft quoted by people who have apocalyptic visions for our own times, was in fact written to encourage a persecuted Christian community to keep up their resistance and trust that Jesus Christ had won the victory.

The Bible is a book, or more properly a collection of books, that requires interpretation. It is not, as some think, perfectly clear about everything and self-interpreting. The question is, how to interpret? For Roman Catholics, there is the *magisterium*, or teaching authority of the Church, especially of the Pope, to interpret the text for the times. For Protestants, it is the individual or the local congregation prayerfully working with the text and their own sovereign conscience. Tradition is an important part of the interpretive process, but people differ as much about the meaning of tradition as of Scripture.

I have a simple way of trying to read and interpret the Bible. I pay attention to what the Church teaches – even to what is said by popes and councils of bishops. And I pay careful attention to what others in my community say. See Mark's article, "The Still Small Voice," on *The African Method of Bible Study*, which we use for discernment and decision-making at St. Francis House. But my own principle of interpretation is this: **I read the Word of God – the Bible – in light of the story of the life and ministry and death and resurrection of the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus of Nazareth.** Jesus revoked the *lex talionis* so I consider revenge prohibited. Jesus "declared all foods clean" (Mark 7:19) so I don't think the food laws of the Hebrew Scriptures are binding for me. Jesus said nothing about homosexuality, so the sayings in Leviticus and Paul are not the last word for me.

On the positive side, Jesus prohibited not merely killing but anger and put the burden of repairing broken relations on me. He said "Swear not at all," so I agree with the Quaker George Fox that there is no need for oaths when a simple "yes" or "no" will suffice. And most importantly, Jesus commanded love of enemies, so war is not permitted for me. One can go deeper than this. The reason I am to love my enemy is that God loves me. See Luke 6:27-36.

Reading the Word of God Today

How did we get to what Chris Allen-Doucot calls “a land of topsy-turvy Christianity”? Why do many liberal Christians as well as secular folk not talk about the Bible? Why do conservative fundamentalists seem to have the biblical territory all to themselves?

From the sixteenth century on, both Protestants and Catholics tended to focus on abstract statements of universal truth as God’s revelation, or Word, to humanity, leaving aside the stories of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Gospels. They tried to conform theology to the ways of physical science, reduced it to statements, and sought to prove the statements by reason. But literalists on both sides of the cultural divide thought there could be only propositional truth, not stories that told the truth. They looked to Genesis to describe a cosmic creation, and not to do what it really does, which is ask the questions about how we came to be in the situation we find ourselves in. The great 20th century theologian Karl Barth, reacting to this literalism, observed that “it isn’t a question of whether a snake could talk (Genesis 3); rather, it’s a question of what the snake said!” Talking serpents are part of the mythological equipment; the human temptation to reach out and grasp as possession what God wants to give as a gift is a profound spiritual truth.

In the eighteenth century, rationalism and deism dominated. (Most the U.S. “founding fathers” were not orthodox Christians but deists, by the way.) Historical criticism began at the end of the century and continued through the nineteenth, as Christians and others began reading the Bible as ancient texts, in the light of their historical context. Instead of looking, for example, for the wreckage of Noah’s ark on some Middle Eastern mountain, scholars read ancient literature and discovered that most cultures had a “flood story,” and began to admire the spirituality of the promise to Noah by the God of the rainbow sign. By the 20th century it was again possible to read the Bible without checking

your intellect at the church door.

The fundamentalist reaction set in at the beginning of the 20th century, with special virulence in the United States of America. Narrowing the principle of interpretation down to a naïve literalism, the fundamentalists insisted on “the verbal inerrancy of the Bible,” a view which the Bible itself nowhere claims. In a world of rapid change, cultures often become defensive, and ours did, and still does. Lost in all the fireworks of the Scopes monkey trial of the 1920’s, and efforts to teach “intelligent design” as a biological theory along with evolution in public schools in our own time are the truly earth-shaking claims of the Bible on our personal and social life. Jim Wallis’s book, *God’s Politics* (2005), while not nearly radical enough in its reading of the Word of God, has the merit of understanding that the Bible is a profoundly political book, concerned with the life of the community of God’s people in God’s creation, not simply with a handful of “hot button issues” that many find distressing. As Wallis points out, the Bible is saturated with God’s concern for the poor, and has very little to say about homosexuality. The Bible is concerned with social justice, not simply personal ethics. Indeed, the Bible makes no distinction between personal and social morality.

We do not have far to look to find the Word of God doing its proper work in the lives of Christians and other people of faith. I will give only two examples, but they are crucial ones. When Adolph Hitler’s Nazi Party took over the institutional structures of the Protestant Churches in Germany in the 1930’s, most Christians went along. They saw no harm in asserting German national (and racial) superiority and claiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ as their foundation. A handful of courageous pastors spoke out in what became known as the “Barmen Declaration.” That said in bold words that the Word of God, Jesus Christ, was the *only* name that they could trust as Christians: **“Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear**

and obey in life and in death.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose *Letters and Papers from Prison* were so influential after the war, was executed by the Nazis in 1945.

And the U.S. theologian William Stringfellow, who taught a generation to “read America biblically, rather than read the Bible Americanly,” got his start and his perspective just after World War II when he met members of the European Resistance to fascism who had stayed sane when the world went mad around them by meeting together to plan their resistance actions, and grounding their life in Bible study. He wrote later of their shared experience:

In this dimension of the resistance, the Bible became alive as a means of nurture and communication; *recourse to the Bible is in itself a primary, practical, and essential tactic of resistance.* Bible study furnished the precedent for the free, mature, ecumenical, humanizing style of life that became characteristic of the confessing movement.

Stringfellow became the leading example of a theologian of the Word of God in America. He was trenchant in his criticism of religion as a means of diluting the Word of God and domesticating the power of the Gospel. He knew – and we know because he has taught us – that “the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

“Our God Is a Consuming Fire”

I believe it is time for Christians who read the Bible seeking the Word of God to speak out boldly and proclaim what they hear and see. It is time for us to speak up loudly about the God of justice and the justice of God, to acknowledge and respond actively to the call of the Word of God who is not confined to the

churches or the pages of a book but active in the world. Using the Bible as our guide, and trusting our lives to the Author and Giver of life, we must live and die as Jesus did, and rejoice as we go on our way together. For the fire of God's judgment is not punishment for us, but liberating fire that burns away selfishness and possessions, and sets free the joy and peace of living as fully human beings. It's time to trust God's promises and rely on them. For, as the ancient writer said:

...you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further message be spoken to them....But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,.... and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant....Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.

(Hebrews 12:18-19,22-24,28-29)

May God give us, the community of St. Francis House, like our brothers and sisters in Voluntown: in the Hartford Catholic Worker and other communities seeking to live a life of Gospel discipleship, the courage and strength to do this.

Ephiphany 2006

Prayer we adjourn to the dining room for weekly Bible study using the African Method of Bible Study; we use a shortened version for our Evening Prayer service at bi-weekly Clarification of Thought meetings. A quick surf of the internet yields over twenty different methods of studying Scripture. Why do we use this one? I think I can sum it up in two words: participation and silence.

After the first person reads the passage *aloud*, the group remains silent for one minute. At that time, in turn, members of the group recall a word or phrase in the reading which catches their attention. Then the passage is read again, preferably by a person of the opposite sex, and using a different translation. The group remains silent for five minutes. At the end of the silence members reflect on, "what is God saying to me, personally, in this passage?" You may want to write your reflections as a short paragraph, a drawing, or a chart. All members share their reflections. There is no subsequent discussion of what various members speak about. The passage is read for the third time, again using a person of the opposite sex (if possible) and a different translation. For about five minutes after reading the members focus on, "what is God saying to us, as a community, in this passage?" Again, the group shares its individual reflections, without further comment. In the last part of the study each participant agrees to pray until the next meeting for the member on their right, for concerns arising from the readings, or for any other issue. We join hands and conclude with the LORD'S prayer.

Why is this such a powerful vehicle for the study of Scripture? By meditating on the passage for a period of time participants invite the Holy Spirit to do its work in our busy lives. During the silence, we allow the Spirit to plumb the depths of our being; sometimes the result of reflection is uncomfortable, sometimes challenging, and often surprising. The point is that in the silence, and in the respect we show for others by *not* commenting we allow the Spirit to do what

the Holy Spirit does best: to inspire, challenge, and comfort us. I feel that the Thursday morning Bible Study here at Saint Francis House is the 'engine' that drives the entire enterprise. I invite you to give it a try—on your own or with us. I am reminded of Elijah's experience on the mountain:

He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting the mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him... (1 Kings 19:11-13, NRSV)

Epiphany 2006

“DEVIANT CHRISTIANS”

Chris Allen-Doucot

A casual observation of twenty-first century Christians by someone completely unfamiliar with the teachings, scriptures and traditions of the Judeo-Christian movements would conclude that being Christian may have something to do with gathering on Sunday mornings, something to do about condemnation of personal sins, and maybe something to do about an impersonal and bureaucratic response to poverty. Perhaps a closer examination would uncover fringe groups also calling themselves Christian. Contrary to the majority, these other Christians live in communities and are personally engaged in the suffering of the world. This engagement inevitably leads them to search for underlying causes of suffering which then leads to condemnation of societal sins and affirmations of personal responsibilities for complicity with such sin. These sort of condemnations and affirmations invariably rankle the standard-bearers of “normative” Christianity like our President. I don’t doubt that Mr. Bush hears the Word of God as he claims. Rather, I don’t think he listens.

If Mr. Bush and those Christians like him were listening, how could they construe the words of Mother Mary saying, “God has filled the hungry with good things and has sent the rich away empty,” and the words of her son Jesus who said “love your enemies,” to mean “tax cut for the rich and program cuts for the poor” and “bomb you enemy”?

By living in a land of topsy-turvy Christianity, we “deviant” Christians can feel out of place and find ourselves under scrutiny. This is not far-fetched as the nation recently learned that the FBI has declared the Catholic Worker to be a “semi-communist” group. They made this determination after sending agents under the guise of volunteers to different CW communities. Here in Hartford they have been more direct.

During our 12 years of existence we have been visited openly by the FBI and the IRS. Who knows if and how often they have come disguised as good souls pretending to be Christians by feeding the hungry? Given this, our casual observer could conclude that we deviant Christians are just wrong in our understanding and practice.

A simple defense could be that we have it in writing that we got it right, or at least that we're on the right track. Nearly 3000 years ago Yahweh told Micah, a simple man from rural Judea, near Jerusalem, that all we had to do to be faithful to God's Covenant was "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly" with our God. A thousand years later, after it was more than apparent how difficult this simple credo can be to live out, God sent flesh and not words to guide us. The flesh explained to us simply that if we want to return to a time and place without violence and poverty we must build that society by living that society.

To do so, he told us, we must love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, that we must love our neighbor as ourself, and that we must love our enemy, too. Jesus told us that it is He who is the outcast, it is He who is despised, it is He who is caught in adultery, and it is He who is a sinner. Obviously the way to love God and God's child is to love the outcast, enemy, adulterer, and sinner. This is what Jesus did.

He did not gather people on Sunday mornings, take their money, admonish their sins and leave them to go about their business as usual for the rest of the week. Rather he formed a community around himself. His spoken lessons often arose from his day to day activities. Like the preachers of today, Jesus condemned the adultery of the woman caught in it, but unlike today's moral leaders he didn't condemn the woman. Rather he taught us about forgiveness, he reminded us of our common humanity, and he rejected state sanctioned murder. Jesus was a deviant in his day and was accordingly put to death by the state with the tacit blessing of the "church" of the time.

But of course he couldn't be killed. With his Resurrection meeting with the apostles he reaffirmed the fundamental role of communal living to the ability of his followers to faithfully live his message. This first Christian community was a glimpse of what might have been. Faithfully loving neighbors and enemies as much as they loved themselves they revealed the glory of God for "there was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made to each as any had need" (Acts 4:34-35).

Jesus' message has been so thoroughly eviscerated by mainstream Christian leaders that everyday Christians see poverty as the problem, not wealth; they look the other way while their nation kidnaps and tortures hundreds of people, some of them children!, they cheer executions and celebrate wars. So called "semi-communist" pacifist deviants like ourselves could easily be overcome with grief and moral anxiety if we tried to love our neighbor and enemy as ourself, by ourself!

While few tell us we're crazy and fewer still think we're criminal, the majority of society implies as much. A society based on the nuclear family which most often looks to others to love their neighbors, their elders, their children, the poor, and the insane for them, while not loving (and even outlawing the love of) enemies, criminals, and foreigners is a society which tacitly rejects a society based on communities and extended families whose citizens assume personal responsibility for each other. *Living in community is a tactical act of resistance to our government and society.* It would be almost impossible to survive in our society and have the freedom to practice our faith by feeding the hungry, housing the homeless and loving our enemies if we lived either alone or as individual families and worked full-time paying jobs, which too often create more wealth for the already wealthy. Moreover, full-time paying work would oblige us to pay income taxes to a government that spends billions of dollars

to destroy God's kingdom and God's people.

Perhaps most significantly, living in community and practicing the works of mercy is tantamount to daily receiving Eucharist. Christ lives not only in the bread and wine; he is resurrected in the flesh and bone of all of us and most readily apparent in the least among us. Each new community formed to resist wealth and violence while affirming life and equality is another glimpse of what still could be: a new earth which is a new heaven. From where I stand, living in community allows me the freedom to follow my faith while nourishing me with the company of Christ.

Ephiphany 2006

THE PEACE FARM COMMUNITY

Danny Malec

Mary Novak, Harold Burns and I moved to Voluntown in May 2005 to begin building community together (as we have not arrived at a name for our community yet, we will refer to it here as the “peace farm community”), as well as to help initiate the most recent incarnation of the Voluntown Peace Trust (VPT). For nearly 50 years, the 57 acres of land on which we live has been a place for equity-based community economics and nonviolent living, organizing and action. Grounded in this history, our goal as VPT Partners is to bring together individuals and groups that are developing constructive alternatives to the violence of our age. Alongside our work at VPT, the peace farm community is also separately engaged in radical organizing, nonviolence strategy and action, and various other works of resistance, transformation and solidarity.

In the midst of our work supporting movements for peace, justice, sustainable living and social change, we are more deeply realizing that the way we live our lives has as much to do with our ability to promote a just and sustainable way forward as our work for VPT. Thus, at the peace farm community we have chosen a collectivist structure over a hierarchical one. We make community decisions through consensus. We share resources. We support one another through our individual needs for spiritual growth, healing and transformation. We earn a poverty salary as a form of war tax resistance – as long as 50% of federal taxes go to warmaking, we refuse to pay taxes. We are seeking ways to reduce our dependence on oil through growing more of our own food, reducing our energy, and permaculture. We are committed to nonviolence as a way of life and a strategy for challenging injustice and systems of domination and oppression.

Our life in community calls us into mutual accountability

as we confront our brokenness and the broken values engrained in us through life in the U.S. Empire. During times such as these, where war, violence and torture are seen as acceptable tools of the state, where children go to school for imperial indoctrination, where retribution and revenge are equated with justice, where the democratic process is bought and sold like a commodity, and where we go to work to be able to live and not because it gives us life, intentional community living while doing work we believe in is inherently an act of resistance. Through this simple act of resistance – living and working together – we begin to tear down: the walls that divide us; the ways of seeing that keep us blinded; and the values and ways of being that keep us slaves.

While VPT is committed to building a better world, that process requires us to recognize the ongoing reality of structural violence experienced by economically disadvantaged, marginalized and minority communities throughout the world. It also requires us to develop greater awareness of the destruction to the earth engendered by such violence. In response to the reality of this cycle of violence, we look to natural systems and those people who are marginalized and oppressed to better understand how to move towards integrated, just and sustainable relationships.

In our coming together as a community and embracing VPT's vision, our commitment to live in solidarity with poor and oppressed communities and peoples primarily takes the form of inviting them to be our teachers. It is clear to us that the U.S. political and economic system meets the needs of few at the expense of many and that this is violence. We believe that we must listen to the voices of those many in order to find our way forward, a way that allows for the liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressor. As Paulo Friere has said, "In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity, become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of

both.” In the face of ever-increasing dehumanization and violence throughout the world, we side with the oppressed in the struggle for the restoration of humanity. Will you join us?

Epiphany 2006

RIP: MARK AUER, TSSF

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

I first met Mark Auer in Boston in the fall of 1981, when I had just become vicar of St. John's, Bowdoin Street. Without so much as a "by your leave," Mark announced that his father, Canon Rugby Auer, was going to baptize his son Michael at St. John's on the following Saturday afternoon. For some reason I didn't object and our long friendship began. Mark became the chair of St. John's social action committee, overseeing the Thursday night supper and outreach to the homeless in downtown Boston.

But Mark was also an active alcoholic, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder arising from his service in Vietnam. After spending a night on the couch in the Mission House, he let me take him to the VA Hospital, where he was admitted, and spent nearly two months getting sane and sober. When his marriage broke up, Mark drifted away from St. John's, but not before he took Anne and our infant son Nathaniel for a ride in his taxi to help calm the baby. We stayed in touch after I left Boston in 1987.

Mark was a "preacher's kid," and like so many had a love-hate relationship with the Church. He was admitted to the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge for seminary training in 2000, a year after Anne and I came to New London, Conn., to establish St. Francis House. Mark's seminary dorm room was next to our friend Ed Rodman's office, and they shared cigarette smoking and a passion for Gospel justice during his years there. He majored in Bible study at seminary, and thus was prepared to lead that portion of the St. Francis House Radical Discipleship course when he came to live here.

Shortly before he graduated from EDS in 2004, Mark suffered a lung collapse, and two-thirds of one of his lungs was removed in surgery that saved his life. It also put an end

to his ambition to become a hospital chaplain. Ed Rodman sent Mark to St. Francis House to join us on August 1 of that year. Mark lived in the studio apartment on the first floor of Victory House and undertook to organize our finances as well as participate in the social ministry of the House. He used his banking skills (from an earlier time in his life) to help launch F.R.E.S.H. New London and the Homeless Hospitality Center.

He also became a special friend and confidante to our daughter Sarah, also a "preacher's kid." They have a lot in common. In some ways, it seems Mark was able in these years to have a relationship with our children that he had not been able to form with his own. His daughter Catie, however, corresponded with him while he was here, and was planning a visit this summer. Many of his past relationships were beginning to heal in the last four years of his life.

Perhaps the crown of his life was his formation as a Franciscan. Mark was attracted to the Anglican Third Order not by the example of Francis but by the Brother Juniper Fellowship, the group of Tertiaries in New England who meet occasionally at St. Francis House. The most unpretentious group of people you can imagine, the Junipers are well named for our patron, one of Francis's first brothers and a man of such simplicity that his fellow friars often thought him stupid. Mark's prayer life deepened during his period of formation, and when he went for his final hospital stay in June, the provincial chapter elected him to profession three months before the usual novitiate was up. With his sister Amy, St. Francis House community members, fellow Franciscans and other friends, Mark was professed on June 28 in Lawrence and Memorial Hospital. He came home six days later and on July 10 he died. He was twelve days a professed Tertiary, but he is now a Franciscan for eternity.

What made the difference for Mark? He had a hard life, and his maturation as a human being was costly to him and his family and friends. He knew at first hand what Dorothy

Day, founder of the Catholic Worker and with Francis one of our models for life together, called “the long loneliness.” He himself attributed his spiritual growth to the accountability he experienced while living in community. Dorothy put it this way:

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship. We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.

It all happened while we sat there talking, and it is still going on.

Dear God, please welcome Mark to your banquet table. May he rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.

Summer 2008

MARK

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

I can't get over expecting
To hear your voice on the answering
Machine when I pick up the phone
In the morning to record the day's
Message. The painted wooden
Robin still hovers over your place
In the chapel. Any minute now
I will hear your raucous cough
Or the "kich,kich,kich" snicker
Of your laugh. Now Russ has only
One of us to tease him about being
Baptist in an Anglo-Catholic company
Or the token liberal among the orthodox.
You took up a lot of room.
Your tiny apartment has expanded
To include four years worth
Of memory. Military decorations
Compete with seminary honors
For first place. Your own children
Have come back for your burial
And my children have mourned your loss.
Your "advice to the young marrieds"
Given to Nate and Zuli on the last night
Of your life was simply "Be kind."
You and Sarah shared the dark
Knowledge of a preacher's kid.
I don't know what we'll do
With your father's purple cassock.
Nobody I know is likely to become
A bishop. Nobody you know either.
Anne cleaned the apartment yesterday,

Giving away books to would-be Bible
Scholars and clothes to homeless men.
You wore the same sizes as her father did,
Who never threw anything away.
She wiped up a fine layer of dead skin
From four years of suffering from psoriasis
In the apartment. We celebrated Mass
For you on July 19, with incense
From St. James Episcopal Church
And holy water bucket borrowed
From St. Mary Star-of-the-Sea,
And many more hymns than you
Would have liked but you weren't
In charge of the service. It's over now,
All the alcohol and violence, your father's
Disappointment in you and yours in
Yourself and your own children's in you
Your mother, who abandoned you and Amy
When you were small, is reunited now
With you, and all the disapproval
That was wasted on both sides is given up.
Perhaps you are fishing in heaven.
You don't need "scooter races" now,
Because you have what Aquinas called
"The resurrection body" – eighteen years old
Physically, but wise as all eternity.
Good-bye, old friend.

Christmas 2009

VICTORY HOUSE VISIONS

Paul Jakoboski, TSSF

Wendy and I moved into Victory House in May. A lot about the life of the House can be seen in how events unfolded in one recent 72 hour period.

On Friday night December 18 we had a community dinner with thirteen of us gathered around the conference table at Victory House. All eleven members of the resident St. Francis House community brought festive food to share. Bob was in Alaska so he was absent, but former House residents Ben Parent and children Gabriel and Madeline (now 5 and 3) were reunited with “Big Brothers” Henri and Max, Bienvenida’s now teen age sons. It was Emmett’s 33rd anniversary of ordination so we toasted him as well. Trimming Aunt Dorrie’s Christmas tree in the conference room area outside her door and setting up the African and Bethlehem crèches on the mantelpiece were interrupted by the arrival outside our doorstep by choirmaster Kit Johnson and more than a dozen carolers from our neighbors at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Congregation. We crowded out onto the porch and joined them in a rousing chorus of “O Come All Ye Faithful.” Wendy spent years in the Connecticut town of Coventry and this was the first time she ever had experienced carolers!

Late in the afternoon the next day of a rather uneventful Saturday I found myself sitting around the conference table with Aunt Dorrie and Anne setting up a production line to process a direct mailing, the St. Francis House annual appeal letter. Anne, as usual, trying to combine past experience with current talent, set up the various stations and tasks. We got into the flow and began having output by four forty-five with just the three of us.

Soon Bienvenida stopped by with a meal for Aunt Dorrie briefly interrupting the production, but then she and Wendy

joined us and the line continued its output. Again others began to pop in, first Max and Henri then Nate and later Emmett.

Altogether nine of us working in sync were making short work of the more than 1300 envelopes being readied for the post office. Every once in a while Max, or Henri would jump up to see if the great snow storm predicted by the weather forecasters had begun yet. Although predicted to start at five p.m. we had pretty much finished most of the mailing by seven without a snowflake, much to the disappointment of the boys.

When Wendy and I moved to New London one of the side benefits we thought would be the more mild winters. So we were chagrined to find the first snowstorm of the year to hit the hardest in New London with close to two feet of snow. Sunday morning came with the first light showing the weather forecasters had been more right than wrong. The storm was winding down by sunrise, but through the morning lights it was clear the city was blanketed.

We rose to enjoy the quiet of the first snowy morning of our life in New London. After a leisurely breakfast we put on our outdoor snow clothes and went out to the sidewalk. We had positioned snow shovels on the porch the day before so it was easy to jump right to the task of clearing the walk way. We needed to clear the path in front of 32 and 30 Broad St, a distance of about 100 ft. A neighbor using a snow blower saw us shoveling and made one swipe in front of 32 Broad St. down to the driveway and back to where he came from, waving a greeting, acknowledging we were all in this together. By ten a.m. the sidewalk was clear, and we needed a break. By now a number of residents were out walking about on the streets, greeting us and offering observations on the beauty of the day. Bienvenida and her two boys came out along with Anne a little later to pick up the shoveling for the whole driveway and parking lot. They were joined by Nate and Zuli til all the shovels were busy. Jumping right in to manage the task at hand everyone was out in the brisk late afternoon air, the boys finding

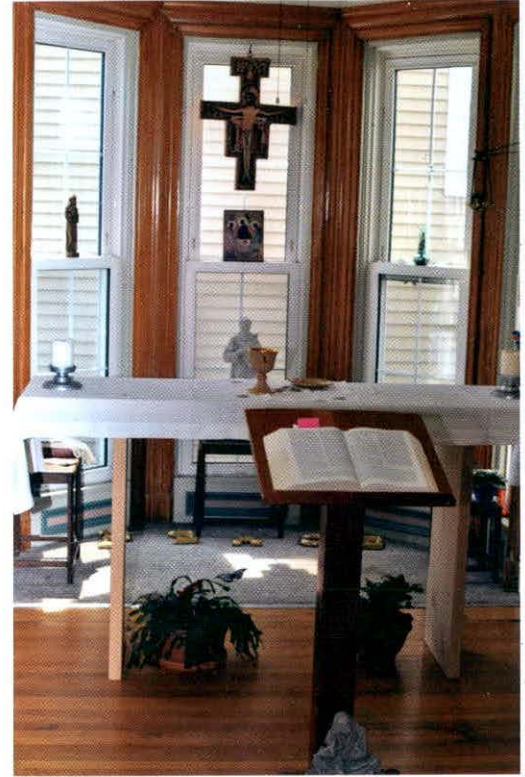
time to throw snow at each other, the others enthusiastically getting their winter exercise, enabling all to access their cleaned off cars. By five o'clock the driveway was clear and Wendy and I took our car out for an errand (just to be sure we would be able to get out in the Monday morning rush).

We know we've made the right discernment in moving here. The experiment in truth is still evolving with much work yet to be done, but being flexible, patient and seeking, the process continues to evolve.

Christmas 2009



St. Francis House Chapel
drawn by Sarah Jarrett, Spring 2002



New altar in the St. Francis House Chapel,
June 2010



View from St. Francis House
drawn by Sarah Jarrett, age 12,
from her bedroom window, Spring 2001



New Residents, Summer 1999: Emmett, Nate, Anne, Sarah.



SFH Residents after Easter dinner, April 2010: Seated, Dorothy (Aunt Dorrie) Paulsen with Otis; standing left to right: Sarah, Emmett, Wendy, Anne, Paul, Max, Henri, Bienvenida.



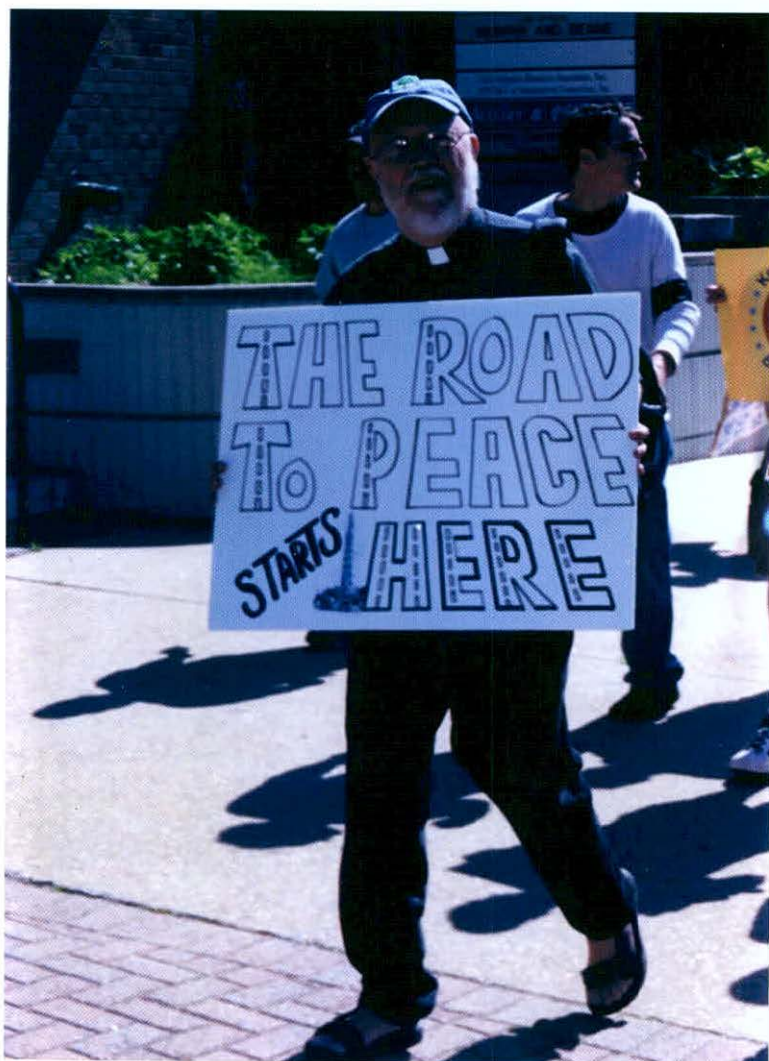
Collage announcing the first Radical Discipleship Course, Summer 2006. Top to bottom: Mark, Anne and Emmett in the St. Francis dining room; Peace Witness at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument; Nate as resident chef; SFH Community Garden; Emmett in SFH library; Downtown New London.



Top: Broad Street: St. Francis House, Victory House and Williams Park Apartments.

Middle: Ted Olynciw priming the sheetrock at Victory House.

Bottom: Building an organic garden in SFH back yard.



Emmett leading Peace Witness to the Coast Guard Academy when President Bush spoke on May 23, 2007.



Emmett and Eric Swanfeldt in Rhode Island on the Peace Pilgrimage. Peace Responders returning from patrol to Fort Trumbull to Fear Free Zone in downtown New London, April 5, 2005.

"The Rev. Carolyn Patierno of All Souls Unitarian Universalist Congregation in New London leads people chained to symbolize Guantanamo Bay prisoners Friday to U.S. Representative Courtney's office in downtown Norwich for a silent vigil to protest the U.S. prison camp in Cuba." Published in the Norwich Bulletin, January 12, 2008. Photo by John Shismanian/Norwich Bulletin. Sarah is the second prisoner in line.



Supper at SFH for Clarification of Thought – 12 - 20 people usually attend.



Barbara Barrett and Arthur Lerner watering the new Victory House window boxes under the banner of "Save Social Services". Spring 2005.



Ed Rodman giving the keynote address at the Burn the Mortgage Celebration, May 18, 2007.

IV. RESISTANCE

POLITICS AND THE JUBILEE

Anne Scheibner

This morning's newspaper headlines trumpeted primary election news – or what passes for news. Although I do not share one commentator's yearning for Pat Buchanan to blast the blah-blandness of the so-called "issues," I did wonder at the paucity of Jubilee themes in what would seem to be a ripe year. So the next time you're in a "town meeting," here's a starter on your crib sheet of questions to ask the candidates:

1. Sir, it says in Leviticus 25 that God owns the land. The land is not to be treated as a commodity. And further the Jubilee is the year in which everyone is to return to their home. That presupposes the idea of community as real, renewable, and rooted in place. Isn't it shortsighted to allow corporations to buy up woods and prime farmland as if "development" were something to be measured in new subdivisions, jobs and profits? Shouldn't we be looking for ways to help people have a stake in the land and houses in their urban and rural neighborhoods? How about re-envisioning the local market economy so that farmers see their work not as a business in a global marketplace but as a responsibility to feed the people in a locality? Around the world indigenous people are being evicted from their ancient homes to provide Americans with cheap French fries and export fruits and flowers. Having homes and feeding people needs to be seen in a human, regional scale. What does your Administration intend to do to help all of us – from local schools to local banks – begin to use the bioregion and ideas of shared and sustainable resources as the base on which to measure progress and productivity? Both Jeffersonian democracy and the Reconstruction vision of "40 acres and a mule" demand that we act now

before the promise of the American dream drowns in a violent sea of consumer products, packaging and lost community.

2. I trust that you are supporting the **Jubilee 2000** initiative begun in Europe to forgive the overpowering debts of Third World countries. Those debts were incurred because of First World banks eager to find a place to invest money and the principle has been repaid many times over. Forgiving debts – or in fact foregoing to collect more interest – is part of recreating the level playing field which is part of the Jubilee idea of return and restitution.
3. I also trust that you are opposing the continuing privatization of the nation's prisons. One of the Jubilee provisions is the release of captives. Of course, in biblical times this meant indentured servants and not people convicted of criminal acts. But it would seem that it is an act of imprisoning the American people to make them assent to a system which actually is designed to profit from the incarceration of fellow citizens. Such a notion is totally contrary to a biblical understanding of retribution and makes us all party once again to condoning chattel slavery in this country, i.e., turning human beings into commodities not to mention the use of prison populations as a labor pool.
4. There has been some talk this election year about the national debt and what to do with the current budget surplus. It seems clear to me that the real debt needing to be paid is to the earth. The wealth of the industrial revolution and the new paper wealth being created by “downsizing” and gutting older forms of business organization needs to be used to halt – if possible – the accelerated degradation of the land, air, and water. This degradation has been the cost of “development” which

no company has incorporated into its bottom line. Do you favor holding companies responsible for their toxic byproducts or having the government take responsibility? Taking one example of the above, would you favor refitting Trident submarines to retrieve the canisters of toxic and nuclear wastes which have been dumped into the oceans of the world instead of refitting them for conventional warfare as the current Administration has proposed?

5. I'm sure you have given some thought to the long term implications of genetic engineering. Who, for example, will be responsible if major famines occur as native plants are inadvertently – or even intentionally – sacrificed? Do you feel that government matching funds should be made available and that the companies seeking to market genetically altered seeds and food products should have all short term profits held in escrow? These funds would ensure that the entire population of the earth and not just a few rich Westerners could be sent into space if the earth is rendered unfit for life as we know it. Evolution is the course of our development as a species. Development is endless and as we know from our saints, the highest forms of human development generally end in martyrdom and a loin cloth. Unlimited growth is a cancer. What are you in favor of doing to reinvent an economy currently based on endless consumption? If you think unlimited growth is the solution and not the problem, in whose back yard are your Think Tankers planning to place the garbage dumps of the next 100 years? Or will it be left to the market to decide where poor people live so that God's earth can be degraded selectively – at least until after your second term?

March 2000

that highlight the racism of society and offer people a chance to see things more clearly, step by step.” We agreed to keep working both sides of the street: to deepen consciousness, and to seek ways to live differently and “build the new society within the shell of the old.” But I embark upon this quest with a chastened spirit, and perhaps a bit less egotism in my discipleship.

Gandhi, my hero, called his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. In that book, he reports his mistakes and failures, in personal as well as political life. He tells of the things he learned from his wife Kasturbai and the costliness of his own humility. In sharing my experience with the St. Francis House community and the readers of the TROUBADOUR, I’m trying to do that, too. It has to do with spiritual transparency, letting the light shine in the dark corners of my own life. As Alyosha said in *The Brothers Karamazov*, “I can’t give two roubles instead of ‘all,’ and only go to mass instead of ‘following Him.’”

I hope sharing this story of my belated attempt to live my life as an “experiment with truth” will help you do that, too. I know it’s helping me.

Advent 2004

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March 2000

FAITH IN TIME OF WAR

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 is one of those days that everybody remembers. Like the day President Kennedy was shot, or Martin Luther King, Jr., was martyred, you always remember where you were, who you were with, what you were doing. A priest from New Haven, was late for an appointment with me that day, because of the terrorist attacks in New York City. A Roman Catholic priest friend from Norwich had come for lunch and conversation about a broad-based community organizing effort we are working on together. Anne and Nate and Sarah and I watched a lot more television that day than we usually do. Ed Rodman telephoned from Boston to make sure we were okay. A lot of people telephoned friends and relatives that day. We knew that something important had happened, and that life would be different for us from that day on. We didn't understand yet just how different.

October 7, 2001, is the other day I won't forget. We had finished the St. Francis House fall board meeting the day before. Dick Marks stayed over to go to church with us on Sunday and be present to accept seven beautiful quilts that women at St. James Episcopal Church, New London, had made for us. We got home from church on that sunny autumn Sunday and learned that US bombing of Afghanistan had begun. Our Sabbath peace was broken by news of the bombing raids. The "war on terrorism" had begun in earnest, and its end seems distant even today. It's important to speak of October 7 as well as September 11. The terrorist attack and the US military response are aspects of the one world of war we have all begun to live in.

This issue of the TROUBADOUR has two purposes: first, to communicate to our friends and supporters our response as Christian peacemakers to the war, and second, to outline

our plans for expansion of our ministry in the light of recent events. A Christian cannot live in a world of abstractions. Our ministry is our response to God's call to us to live faithfully in this world, not another, different or better one. Our life at St. Francis House is an "experiment with the truth," so our efforts to be faithful are experiential. We share what we have prayed and thought and said and done with you, and invite your responses. We are seeking clarity not giving answers. We can only grow from our engagement with the Word of God in the world, and with our friends.

The St. Francis House Board approved a "six point plan" to expand the ministry and share our experience with the wider world. We made that decision with the events of September 11 in mind, anticipating that some form of US military response would soon begin. It seems important to go ahead with these plans. We act, not in spite of world events, terror and war, but because our life and ministry is, we hope, a response in faith to injustice and war in the world. The Word of God calls us "to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8). Indeed, the bleaker the picture for life, justice, peace, and human dignity, the louder and clearer God's call sounds.

We were already involved with global economic justice issues. Partly as a result of what we learned from the Episcopal Urban Caucus assembly last February, as well as Anne's deep commitment to renewal of local use of land, we have been thinking for some time about the movement to resist global corporate control of the world economy. I had planned to go to Washington at the end of September to join the religious community's witness at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings.

After September 11, both the meetings and the protests were cancelled. In response to national religious working group efforts, we issued a local **"call to prayer and fasting for planetary community,"** and fasted for five days during the week of September 26-October 2. It seemed clear to us

9-11, which went along the lines of "Whom should we invade first?" Extending the metaphor of fire triangle yields a whole new model for protecting ourselves from terrorism. Rather than fight a succession of wars abroad in a futile effort to hunt down every last terrorist, perhaps we should focus on the pods of the terrorist triangle that are in our own backyard, especially our explicit policy of monopolizing global power and the doctrine of preemptive war that this policy entails.

To suggest that civilians and the fire department have more say in the building codes is in part to say that we should not build structures like the WTC, erected under the auspices of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and a monument to the coalescence of corporate and political power which is the hallmark of our age. New York City's building code was relaxed in 1968, a few years before construction began, to allow the use of a spray-on fire retardant rather than traditional cement. It was the failure of this retardant that caused the steel to melt and the towers to collapse. The fire department expressed reservations at the time of the towers' construction both about the efficacy of the new retardant and about corners being cut in its application.

More civilian input would mean that our skyline would reflect, not simply the quest to maximize profits by building as big as possible as cheaply as possible, but a broader array of concerns, including safety, and perhaps human-scale aesthetics. We would see fewer buildings that produced the seemingly impossible effect achieved by the WTC, that of being both mind-numbingly ugly to those who live with them every day and insanely provocative to those who wish us harm.

The tragedy of 9-11 has been turned, with deft swiftness by the Bush Administration, into a pretext for launching an agenda, large chunks of which, such as the Patriot Act and the neo-conservative dream of overthrowing Saddam Hussein, were actually drafted years before the WTC fell. We are told that these sacrifices, which entail Washington's further monopolization of

both domestic and global power, are necessary because now we are at war. The example of the firefighters who were the first to respond to 9-11 suggests an alternate response. The just sharing of power – in the workplace, in the nation, and among nations – is not a peacetime luxury; it is the bedrock of any true society.

Summer 2003

LOST IN THE WOODS: AN ADVENT MEDITATION

Mark Auer, TSSF

One of the things that most frightens children is not knowing where they are. We call this being “lost”; lost in the wilderness, lost in space, lost to the world. When I was a boy I was a member of the Boy Scouts of America. We spent a lot of time hiking around the woods of upstate New York, sleeping in tents, walking some more, climbing tall hills, sleeping in the rain in tents, walking some more, eating undercooked and over seasoned food, sleeping in underheated cabins in the winter, walking through the snow, and generally getting out from underneath the feet of parents for weekends, or in the summer, weeks at a time. I remember those days fondly. At the time, I was an indifferent student, not a particularly gifted athlete; about the only thing I really enjoyed was participating in the life of our parish church, St. Mark’s in Syracuse, where my father was the Rector. Troop 34 met in the church undercroft on Wednesday evenings. My father soon signed me up as a new member, a “Tenderfoot” Scout. In the 1950’s all young Scouts learned the rudiments of camp craft, cooking, and how to navigate with a map and a compass. Maps have always fascinated me, and my first exposure to practical navigation was in the Boy Scouts. Here I had found an activity at which I could excel. I could get from point A to point B and not get “lost in the woods”. One way that we were taught to keep our bearings was to keep track of where we had been. We learned how to mark trails, build cairns and leave signs so that even if we were unsure about where we were going, we knew at all times exactly where we had been, and could retrace our steps to a previously known position. It was with great glee that I won a statewide contest at the age of 11 for what has now become known as the sport of “orienteering.” Orienteering, indeed. In the summer of 1967 I was able to put my scout skills to good

use as an infantry soldier in Vietnam. We had a good story in Vietnam about our Army. We said that the only difference between the Boy Scouts and the Army was that the Scouts had adult leadership.

Now, I wonder about leadership. I am concerned about where our nation has been; not so much for me, but for my children and their friends, companions on the way. I wonder about leadership for two reasons: first, that the leadership of our country does not know where it has been; second, and more chilling for me, that the leadership knows exactly where it has been and is committed to “stay the course,” the course of the American Empire.

Published in 1980 and now, sadly, out of print, William Appleman Williams’ *Empire as a Way of Life: An Essay on the Causes and Character of America’s Present Predicament Along with a Few Thoughts About an Alternative* is a deceptively thin tome. Early on in the book Williams confronts us with the truth about what the United States Constitution really is: “The Constitution was both the instrument and the symbol of a conscious decision to create a particular kind of system rather than allow the society to develop through random competition between economic and other forces.”

Williams writes his history in precise language. Our spoken language today has become flabby. We find it difficult to say exactly what we mean, and then, I think, because we are by nature lazy, we finish the sentence with some inanity such as “You know what I’m saying”? which was common a few years ago.

Williams begins his analysis with an explanation of the difference between “The State” and “The Establishment”: “The man who revived the term The Establishment, Henry Fairly, based his usage on a sophisticated understanding of why and how a way of life, a world view or *Weltanschauung*, informs and guides the people who constitute the State. The Establishment, he insightfully insists, ‘is not those people who hold and exercise power as such. It is the people who create and sustain

the climate of assumption and opinion within which power is exercised by those who do hold it by election or appointment'. He is making a crucial distinction." Williams notes that we make a serious mistake if we confuse the two terms. "In the first place, we foster an illusion that electing or appointing different people will produce or lead to a change in the outlook or *Weltanschauung*. But we are in reality changing the wrong people...The central issue here does not involve the small or elitist nature of the Establishment: all groups of people produce leaders who become the spokesmen of the shared interest or idea. The important consideration is our lack of participation in the dialogue. In a republic or a democracy, we the citizens are supposed to order the priorities and relationships between the economic, the political, the social and intellectual, and the military aspects of life through an on-going discussion. *We are supposed to be the Establishment*. As it is, we limit ourselves to choosing between generally minor variations on one theme composed by others."

As I read through *Empire as a Way of Life* I was struck by the fact that here was not only a "history" of the American Empire, but even more intriguing, a *systematic* history. Jefferson, Madison, Henry Clay, Woodrow Wilson, the Monroe Doctrine, Manifest Destiny, the League of Nations, all of these I remember from High School and College history classes. What I never had been exposed to was the system which held the entire enterprise together. The system is deceptively simple: I want to have more than I need to live on. If I have to invade your territory and subjugate you in order to do this, I will. I will do this under the banner of "free elections," or "democracy," "Free Trade Agreements" or whatever nice, happy, hopeful sounding slogan I can think of. I'll "make the World Safe for Democracy," so that I can have more than you have, and make you economically dependent upon me.

I think that I was in the third or fourth grade when the Pledge of Allegiance was altered to include the words "under

God". You remember how it goes: "I pledge allegiance to the flag/ of the United States of America/ and to the Republic, for which it stands/ one nation, under God, indivisible/ with liberty and justice for all." I think that we would have been more honest with our selves if we had left out "under God".

I think that our country is "Lost in the Woods" – lost because we have followed the law of Empire, not the law of the One who created us, all of us, as equals. Perhaps we need to revisit that road map that is delineated so explicitly in the Hebrew Scriptures. As I sit here in my office on the last day of the Christian year, I am resolving to revisit that map to see if I can find some pointers to help me better "love my neighbor as myself." As we approach the season of The Incarnation, I invite you to join me.

Advent 2004

AN EXPERIMENT WITH TRUTH

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

When Ed Rodman agreed to join me in a Friday night Clarification of Thought presentation on Gandhi and King, I didn't realize how important that public conversation would be for me. Ed is a good friend and a wonderful man to work with on the issues of justice and peace that animate both our lives, so I expected to learn something, be challenged about something, and to have a good time. All those things happened on Friday night, November 19, at St. Francis House. But for me something much more important also happened, something that deepened my understanding of my own life, and challenged me to live my commitments and convictions more fully.

In the presentation on Gandhi and King as examples of "saints for the 21st century," I talked about Gandhi and Ed talked about King. Ed knew King personally in the early days of the Civil Rights struggle, and was able to speak of the stages of King's development, his conversion to nonviolence. He mentioned a gathering of young activists at the CORE meeting at the Highlander Center in Tennessee where King expected to be the center of attention. Ella Baker told him the movement "didn't need leader-centered groups but group-centered leaders."

I talked about Gandhi's life and commitment to nonviolence. I chose to focus on the famous Salt March of 1930, where Gandhi led thousands of Indians to the sea to "make salt" and avoid the British government's tax. The choice of salt was brilliant – everyone needed it, and God provided it free of charge in the oceans and the earth. The Empire's tax was clearly an exercise in imperial power to humiliate a subject people. The public outcry that followed Gandhi's imprisonment and the British police brutality against Indian

nonviolent resisters (*satyagrahi*) turned the tide of world opinion in favor of Indian independence. Independence took seventeen more years of struggle, but the Salt March was the turning point.

I wanted the people assembled at St. Francis House to discover what "our salt march" against imperial power might be. When I posed the question, after a silence Ed said, "It's not going to happen. This country is not ready for mass action like that." Nobody disagreed. Ed suggested that we work with others to end the death penalty and expose the "prison industrial complex" that is the result of massive privatization. If we're courageous enough we could advocate repeal of the drug laws which account for 70% of the prison population and were not in force in 1970. But we're not going to have a salt march any time soon.

The conversation went on that night and people talked about ways to expose the racism in US domestic policy and its logical extension in the war against the people of color in the Two-Thirds World. But I was inwardly facing up to the egotism of my assumption that I could be the one to find the "salt march" for our time. In the light of Ed's analysis, which is always kind but also relentless, I knew I had let my own need to be the center of attention delude me into thinking we could do "bigger things" than in fact we can. The problem with such an attitude is that it short-circuits my (and our) ability to do what we *can* do, and leads to frustration if not despair.

John Robertson told me later that it reminded him of Eliot's play, *Murder in the Cathedral*, in which Thomas Becket had to ask himself whether he was "doing the right thing for the wrong reason."

The next morning, when Ed and I talked over coffee, I told him all this. He said, "No, no, man – anybody who has the will to look for revolutionary actions should do it – always being aware of the cost to himself of such action. Try to find the 'salt march' for our time. Just don't give up on the issues

that highlight the racism of society and offer people a chance to see things more clearly, step by step.” We agreed to keep working both sides of the street: to deepen consciousness, and to seek ways to live differently and “build the new society within the shell of the old.” But I embark upon this quest with a chastened spirit, and perhaps a bit less egotism in my discipleship.

Gandhi, my hero, called his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. In that book, he reports his mistakes and failures, in personal as well as political life. He tells of the things he learned from his wife Kasturbai and the costliness of his own humility. In sharing my experience with the St. Francis House community and the readers of the TROUBADOUR, I’m trying to do that, too. It has to do with spiritual transparency, letting the light shine in the dark corners of my own life. As Alyosha said in *The Brothers Karamazov*, “I can’t give two roubles instead of ‘all,’ and only go to mass instead of ‘following Him.’”

I hope sharing this story of my belated attempt to live my life as an “experiment with truth” will help you do that, too. I know it’s helping me.

Advent 2004

THE POWER OF THE POWERLESS: A SEQUEL

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

1

A specter is haunting the American Empire: the specter of *nuestra America*, “our America,” drawn from the hopes of people everywhere that the revolutionary promises of 1776, 1863, the 1930’s, 1968, might be fulfilled. The American vision of freedom and equality has turned to ashes in the mouths of people around the world who looked to our country as an example. The dream of independence and democracy has turned into the nightmare of Empire for countries who took our Declaration of Independence as a model. But even now, the dream has not quite died, the hope is not yet crushed, the example is rising again from the grave in the ideas and actions of Americans and others whom our corporate media can only sneer at as “protesters.”

Who are the “protesters”? What do they protest? Can they in fact change anything? Vaclav Havel said in his essay “The Power of the Powerless,”

...an examination of these questions – an examination of the potential of the “powerless” – can only begin with an examination of the nature of power in the circumstances in which these powerless people operate.

I read Havel’s essay during the weeks when Anne and Mark and Laura and I as members of the St. Francis House community, worked with the Mock Terror Attack Task Force of the Southeast Connecticut Peace and Justice Network, prepared to make a public witness against the Homeland Security Department’s TOPOFF 3 exercise in New London. As we presented our arguments to local officials and the public that the real purpose of the “mock terror attack” during the week of April 4-8, 2005 was not to train local first responders

to meet disasters of whatever kind, but an exercise in state-induced fear to intimidate opposition to government war policies, I felt more and more that Havel's description of "post-totalitarian" Czechoslovakia in October 1978 fit the American Empire under George W. Bush in our time. I write this essay – a sequel to Havel's – for two reasons: first, to draw out the comparison and reflect on the similarities, and second, to claim for those who resist the monolithic power of Empire in our time and place the dignity and strength of earlier revolutionaries, both Americans and others.

2

I was first struck by the practice of newspaper reporters, local politicians, and others, to refer to us as "protesters." Our friend Cal Robertson, Vietnam War veteran and twenty-year peace witness in Southeast Connecticut, declines the title. "I am not a protester," he says, "I'm a witness." A protester is against something; a witness speaks for what he believes to be true, and is willing to risk his life for the truth.

"Protester" is a catch-all term for anyone who thinks or acts in nonconformist ways. It is a noble calling. But citizens who attended our Community Forum on March 13 were referred to as "protesters," even though the city's emergency management coordinator was in the audience and spoke to the issues. The Rev. Canon Edward Rodman spoke of the pattern in U.S. history of the use of fear to intimidate dissenters and support war, and Megan Bartlett, a New York City first responder on September 11, 2001, and founder of Ground Zero for Peace, spoke of the need for first responder training not exercises in state-induced terror, but both were labeled "protesters."

At a Quaker meeting conversation about the mock terror attack, a well meaning Friend suggested that we be careful not to appear as 1960's "hippies" in our opposition to the exercise. But who characterizes the witnesses for peace in this way? Who benefits from the depiction of supporters of nonviolent social

change as “hippies”? Protest is a legitimate activity, especially when one accepts the assumption of the political system and wishes to oppose a particular policy within that system. But when one wishes to witness to a different way of being that contradicts the political system under which one lives, it’s not protest but witness in which one is engaged.

Havel’s comments on the use of the term “dissident” for himself and others in the “post-totalitarian” systems of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and finally Russia itself, are useful in this regard. The Communist Party-dominated press referred to him and his friends as “dissidents,” meaning renegades or backsliders from the socialist vision. But, he argued, “a ‘dissident’ is simply a physicist, a sociologist, a worker, a poet, individuals who are doing what they feel they must and, consequently, who find themselves in open conflict with the regime.” A wonderful witness joined our number who fits this description completely. She works at our local hospital as a respiratory therapist, and threw herself into resistance to the mock terror attack because she was convinced it was wrong. It was the first act of political resistance of her life. She deserves not dismissal by fellow citizens but admiration and respect for her faith and her courage. She is a witness, like the “dissidents” of Havel’s society, not because she is a professional political activist but because of “an existential attitude” of a free human being in the face of repression. Her constant presence in our “Fear Free Zone” in New London’s Union Plaza made our witness more powerful than it would have been without her.

3

“Who are these so-called dissidents?” Havel asked, and “Can they actually change anything?” We have been dealing with that question all of our lives. Can we really change anything? This is a question about power. Nonviolent activists in the U.S. today are almost as powerless as Havel and his friends in Europe in the 1970’s. But what is the nature of power?

Havel defined the system under which he lived – which we

in the U.S. called “the Soviet bloc” – as “post-totalitarian.” It was not a simple dictatorship, in the classic sense of a small group who take over power in a society and rule by military or police force an unwilling people. The system had been in place for decades, and used the external forms of democratic government and guaranteed human rights. Indeed, the Communist Party rule in these countries claimed to institutionalize “the leading role” of the workers’ party in society. He saw also that Western democratic society had strong resemblances to post-totalitarian society. For the post-totalitarian governments that fell in 1989 were “simply another form of the consumer and industrial society, with all its concomitant social, intellectual, and psychological consequences.”

This is hard for Americans to realize because we have so many residual forms of democracy in our society. Our imperial ideology is largely invisible, because we truly believe ourselves to be free when in fact we are as deeply ensnared in our system as Czechs and Poles and Russians were in theirs. Like them, for example, we have elections which do not really offer any possibility of change in our system. As Howard Zinn remarked in *A People’s History of the United States*, we learn in our history books that “the supreme act of citizenship is to choose among saviors, by going into a voting booth every four years to choose between two white and well-off Anglo-Saxon males of inoffensive personality and orthodox opinions.”

The first election I participated in was the 1960 contest between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon. It felt to me, as a young soldier defending the Empire from the shores of Okinawa in the East China Sea, like a real choice. Successive elections have seemed less so. Dorothy Day knew that when there is never a substantive choice to be made, elections are farce, and never voted. I now believe she was right.

4

Havel argues that voting in such elections is cooperating

with the system, giving it one's approval and blessing. Believing that such elections can change anything is colluding in an ideology of falsehood and keeping the powerful in power. Ideology, he says, "is a specious way of relating to the world. It offers human beings the illusion of an identity, of dignity, and of morality while making it easier for them to part with them." We spoke in America in the 1950's of "the end of ideology," and the belief that we live without an ideology is the most subtle and effective strategy of our imperial ideology to protect itself. One doesn't revolt against something that isn't there.

A good example of our ideology at work is the widespread belief that the Soviet Union collapsed because of Ronald Reagan's military strategy, when in fact it was the work of people like Havel in Czechoslovakia, Lech Walesa in Poland and others, against incredible odds, that won freedom for their people. Reagan and his successors – Democrat and Republican alike – claimed that the end of the Soviet empire was the triumph of capitalism, but in fact it was the triumph of working people seeking to live their lives in freedom. It was not capitalism but Polish industrial workers, fighting for a union, which brought down the government. The fact that their struggle was nonviolent makes it all the more tragic that we Americans refuse to believe it. Ideology by its very nature is opposed to the human quest for truth.

It is truth that is at issue for us today, as it was for them in the 1980's. "The principle involved here," Havel writes, "is that the center of power is identical with the center of truth." When the system is a lie, then the man or woman who says "No" in some small way begins to live in the truth, and exposes the system as a lie. Havel uses the story of a greengrocer who refuses to put a political slogan in his shop window. It's not that he doesn't believe the slogan. Nobody believes it, least of all the government that articulates the ideology. But nobody denies it either, and therefore the lie continues. A simple act of resistance calls the whole system into question. The desire

to live in human dignity with a modicum of self-respect denies the validity of the dominant ideology. That is why our resistance to the mock terror attack on New London – a small gesture, ignored by most, known only to a few people – was so important. To speak truth to a system that is lying is a dangerous witness.

But what is truth, and who dares to claim to speak the truth? American society in the twenty-first century might have been in Yeats's mind when he said

The best lack all conviction
while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Post-modern academic thinkers seem to deny the existence of any objective truth. They seize upon the fact that different observers describe different experiences of a thing or feeling or concept, and leap to the conclusion that subjectivity is all. Right-wing Christians in politics assert a reductionist version of Christianity and seek to impose it on others. Vaclav Havel, speaking of the post-totalitarian system in another book, claims that ours is the first truly atheistic worldview. We cede to systems the truths of life. Our bureaucracies seek a “least common denominator” understanding of human life. We proclaim that we are open to freedom and new understandings of human nature, but we ultimately deny difference by making everything and everyone the same as every other.

5

A key element in understanding the similarity of the situation of nonviolent war resisters to that of the “dissidents” in post-totalitarian societies two decades ago is an understanding of the nature of bureaucracy. When Havel speaks of the post-totalitarian system he calls it a bureaucracy. But bureaucracy is as much a part of life in the U.S. as it was in the states of the Soviet

bloc. Havel writes of a system “utterly obsessed with the need to bind everything in a single order: life in such a state is thoroughly permeated by a dense network of regulations, proclamations, directives, norms, orders, and rules. (It is not called a bureaucratic system without good reason.)” This description sounds like our experience of U.S. government, especially the burgeoning bureaucracy of the Department of Homeland Security. “With ever-increasing consistency, it binds all the expressions and aims of life to the spirit of its own aims: the vested interests of its own smooth, automatic operation.”

Alasdair MacIntyre, in his seminal work on moral philosophy, *After Virtue* (1981), spoke of the bifurcation of our social world into organizational structures in which “the ends are taken to be given and are not available for rational scrutiny” and the personal world in which argument about values is central “but in which no rational social resolution of issues is available.” MacIntyre specifically compares societies which define themselves in terms of individual liberty and those which focus on planning and social goods, and notes that both societies are bureaucratic in their organization. He quotes the Russian novelist Solzhenitzyn as saying that “both ways of life are in the long run intolerable.”

In the days before the mock terror attack on New London, the Connecticut State Department of Homeland Security became aware that some of us were planning “acts of faith and resistance” to the exercise. They learned this from a paid advertisement in the local newspaper, and contacted a Groton city policeman who had experience with war resistance actions at the U.S. Submarine Base and Electric Boat in Groton. Joanne Sheehan, of the War Resisters League, and I, met with them. They were relieved to learn that we did not intend to block ambulances or throw ourselves in front of fire trucks during the “drill,” and we were happy to know that our actions would be understood as protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution for free speech. As we talked, it became clear that the police

and Homeland Security folks thought in terms of first responder activities: police, fire, emergency medical technicians, etc., and we were thinking in terms of the broader political perspective of the “war on terrorism.” We tried to widen the conversation, but were met with the belief that “you can’t change the people at the top.” After several such frustrating exchanges, I said to the young man in charge of the drill: “But we *can* change things at the top!” Such is the nature of monolithic bureaucratic systems that it’s hard for even intelligent and good-hearted people to believe in the possibility of change.

6

One of the ways we sought to educate ourselves and our fellow citizens about the upcoming “mock terror” event was a film series, and one of the films we showed was the PBS series on twentieth century nonviolent social revolutions. The ones I know most about are the Indian liberation from the British Empire under Gandhi, the Civil Rights movement in the United States led by Martin Luther King, Jr., and the South African struggle against *apartheid*, led by Nelson Mandela with strong support from Christian churches in that country. I looked first at the story of the Polish worker revolt against their Communist Party government led by the Solidarity movement. It was there I discovered Vaclav Havel’s essay, “The Power of the Powerless,” for the leaders of Solidarity were inspired by that work.

It should come as no surprise that the struggle was nonviolent, not from a theoretical commitment to nonviolence, as with Gandhi and King, but for the practical fact that the Poles had little hope against the Red Army in Russia, which had already intervened in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. But they worked nonviolently to build what Havel called “parallel structures” that ultimately replaced the ideological structures of the state. The workers in the Gdansk shipyard had a “union” – what we in the United States would call a “company union” that served the interests of the Party rather than the workers –

so they built a union of their own that was responsive to their needs, and because their union actually represented the workers, they forced the government to recognize their presence.

If I look back to Dorothy Day and the early Catholic Worker movement, in a time of labor ferment in the U.S., I'm reminded of the Industrial Workers of the World – IWW, the “Wobblies” – whose strategy was embodied in their motto: “To build the new society within the shell of the old.” Solidarity actually did that. I believe that we can do that in America today.

It's a question of power. Havel called his essay “The Power of the Powerless,” and I am writing this essay as “a sequel.” What is the nature of power in our world, and what is the power of the powerless for us?

Power seems to be either “power over” others, domination, or the “power of being,” the ability to do what you choose to do in the living of life. It is easier to see the difference in the lives of individuals. The dominance of one person over another seems wrong to us, and the exercise of the ability to create, to work, to relate to others, seems right. The American poet Robert Duncan said, “I make poems as other men make love, make war, make states or revolutions: to exercise my faculties at large.” The power of the powerless – a social power for those whom the state or system denies power – is like this. Havel says:

Therefore this power does not rely on soldiers of its own, but on the soldiers of the enemy as it were – that is to say, on everyone who is living within the lie and who may be struck at any moment (in theory, at least) by the force of truth (or who, out of an instinctive desire to protect their position, may at least adapt to that force)... This power does not participate in any direct struggle for power; rather, it makes its influence felt in the obscure arena of being itself.”

In an authoritarian system of “power over others,” the individuals and groups who first see the truth of the situation, and then act, in some initially small way, to say “No” to the

claims of truth and power by the system, are the “powerless” of whom I speak. When we had 50 people in New London’s Union Plaza, reading Martin Luther King, Jr.’s 1967 Riverside Church speech, and the government had 600 reporters in busses going to press conferences, and 1,200 “victims” going into hospitals, not to mention the Homeland Security forces, the police, fire, and EMT personnel, and finally the U.S. military, we were few in number. But we said “No” to the concept of fear as security that the might of the U.S. government was promoting. We lived in that moment the Christian conviction that “there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (I John 4:18). We had power in that moment – the power of the powerless.

7

The word “freedom” is used by many today and means many things. We must be clear that “free markets” and “free people” are not the same, and may often be opposed to one another. On the other hand, both state planning and corporate dominance work through bureaucratic structures to deny freedom to individuals and communities. An imperial ideology masks the truth of human freedom and resistance, and gives the impression of a monolithic power that is, if not worthy of human life, irresistible by human beings. Either way, we are trapped by our circumstances. But the circumstances serve the interests of an elite that is as powerful – and as wrong – as the leaders of post-totalitarian society.

An important thing about freedom is that you lose it if you don’t exercise it. We are not free if we do not act in freedom. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructs his disciples to “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Matthew 7:13-14). We stand today before the narrow gate. The multitudes are being herded through a wide gate into an intellectual and moral prison of imperial power. The fact that resisters are few is not a disappointment. It is what

we know from experience. All revolutions begin with a few people recognizing the lie and beginning in small ways to live the truth in the face of the system.

There are “false prophets” aplenty. The prophets of an individualistic and reductionist Christianity lead many astray. The prophets of doom, who say change is not possible, lead more to resignation and despair. The prisoners of hope see the narrow gate, and invite us to follow them out of the prison into the freedom of the children of God. Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

8

“What then is to be done?” Vaclav Havel asked that question in 1978, recalling Lenin’s question at the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917. We ask the question of ourselves today. What is to be done?

I am often asked the question in another form. Where are the Martin Luther King, Jr’s and the Gandhi’s of today? Who will lead us to the promised land? Who will be our savior? My answer is: we do not need a savior. We need to trust our experience and begin to live as free men and women today. The Buddhists say, when the pupil is ready, the teacher will appear. I say, when we are ready to say No to the lie and begin to live in freedom, we will produce our own leaders, and walk together into freedom. As Ella Baker said in the Civil Rights movement, “We don’t need leader-centered movements; we need movement-centered leaders.”

The first thing we have to do is recognize that we are not free, that our imperial American ideology has blinded us to our slavery. Havel wrote:

The post-totalitarian system is only one aspect – a particularly drastic aspect and thus all the more revealing of its real origins – of this general inability of modern humanity to be the master of its own situation. The automatism of the post-totalitarian system is merely an

extreme version of the global automatism of technological civilization. The human failure that it mirrors is only one variant of the general failure of modern humanity.

This is our problem. The Soviet Empire is gone. Why does the American Empire still have a military budget that squeezes out education, housing, health care for citizens and exports arms to client states? Why are we still working on the militarization of outer space, when no one but North Korea is threatening us with missile attack? Whatever happened to the “peace dividend”?

Once we recognize our situation, we must, like the “dissidents” in Eastern Europe a generation ago, begin to build “parallel structures” of society where we can exercise our freedom as people.

Whether we are religious or not, we must recognize the spiritual dimension of our crisis, and honor the traditions that have nourished us in the past: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and others, including the best of the tradition of secular society informed by the free expression of faith by people who believe in the God of justice and peace.

Those of us who are Christians have a special responsibility. We must claim the mantle of Jesus and the prophets. We must begin to live as they lived, not in a ghetto of faith protected by the armies of our Empire. We must refuse to offer the pinch of incense to Caesar, and be willing to die for our faith rather than kill, to live for Christ rather than “kill a Commie” or a Republican or a terrorist “for Christ.”

We must follow Gandhi’s example and work together on “constructive programs” for individual and communal well-being. At our “Fear Free Zone” in New London we named a number of such possibilities, including housing, creative work, art and music, alternate forms of transportation (bicycles don’t require dependence on oil!), continuing film series, work with returning veterans and families, counter-recruiting in schools, more and more “fear free zones.”

Furthermore, we must not try to prescribe the outcomes of our conversations in advance. Joanne Sheehan pointed out in one of

our task force meetings that the beginning of resistance to fallout shelters and civil defense drills in New York City in the 1950's was a small group of individuals from the Catholic Worker and the War Resisters League. I couldn't help noticing that our mock terror attack resistance was rooted in the same configuration: St. Francis House and the War Resisters League. Our conversations around the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in New London's Union Plaza doubled the number of people committed to resistance. These new resisters will bring their own visions and interact with ours to produce a new agenda.

Speaking of the organization of economic life in the "post-democratic" world that would succeed "post-totalitarian" states in Eastern Europe, Vaclav Havel said:

I believe in the principle of self-management, which is probably the only way of achieving what all the theorists of socialism have dreamed about, that is, the genuine (i.e., informal) participation of workers in economic decision making, leading to a feeling of genuine responsibility for their collective work. The principles of control and discipline ought to be abandoned in favor of self-control and self-discipline.

Students of Gandhi will think immediately of *swaraj* – the "self-rule" which went far beyond Indian independence from the British Empire, to include each person's responsibility for himself and his neighbors, and each community's responsibility to their own people and other communities.

These virtues will be no easier for us to achieve than they have been for Indians, or South Africans, or Poles, or Czechs, or African-Americans in the United States. But they are the means to nonviolent life in our country, *nuestra America*, "our America."

Eastertide, 2005

Mock-attack opponents were not destructive

To the Editor of *The Day*:

In the story about lawmakers at the mock-terror attack on New London, 4th District Rep. Christopher Shays says, "I've heard that there are some people protesting this event, and I can't tell you how destructive their position is, though they have the right to do it" ("Lawmakers say drill is far from needless," April 5).

I'm sorry Rep. Shays did not consult those who opposed the mock attack before characterizing our actions as "destructive." The Patriot Act, for which he voted, is destructive of civil liberties, but the exercise of those liberties is not. The war on Iraq, based on lies about WMDs and false claims of a relationship between Iraq and al-Qaida, for which he voted, is destructive, but peaceful protest of war is not.

The Southeast Connecticut Peace and Justice Network demonstrated peacefully throughout the week to build awareness of nonviolence and the fact that "another way is possible" in foreign policy and domestic well-being and safety.

Our efforts were all open to the public. As the government was busying reporters from briefing to briefing during the mock-terror attack, we were presenting evidence that this exercise was more a scare tactic for citizens than training for first responders. Documentation is on www.riveredgerecord.org.

The next time any official wishes to find fault, I urge that he or she discover the thoughts of the people to be criticized before characterizing them as "destructive." I urge Reps. Shays and Rob Simmons, and Sens. Christopher Dodd and Joseph

TRUTH TELLING

APRIL, 2005

Lieberman, to vote against expansion of the Patriot Act, against tax cuts for the rich, against bigger military budgets for a failed war policy, and for the welfare of citizens, especially the poor.

Father Emmett Jarrett
New London

The writer is with Saint Francis House.

Left: Full page ad in *The Day* sponsored by the Mock Terror Attack Task Force of the SE CT Peace and Justice Network on March 20, 2005.

Above: Emmett's Letter to the Editor published on April 13. Below: Collage of articles and our sticker "We are Not Afraid". The Mock Terror attack occurred in New London from April 4-8, 2005. All these were part of the Center Section print out of the *Troubadour* published in Eastertide, 2005 - Volume 7, Number 1. Other cities in the United States had such state-sponsored attacks. Ours is the only one that we know of to engage in a nonviolent resistance.



THE HUNDRED YEARS (AND CONTINUING) WAR

Mark Auer, TSSF

During August here in New London members of my family gathered for a reunion. As usual in reunions, the talk turned to the “Family History”, who was married to whom, and where in Connecticut did great-granduncle Mike settle after his discharge from the Union Cavalry in 1865? (Greenwich). This led me to realize that in my own small family we have had at least one member serve in every war that the United States has been involved in since 1862. Major Michael Auer served with the 15th New York Cavalry in the Civil War, great-uncle Ben Auer in WWI, uncles Tom Auer and Dick Kogler in WWII, uncle Mike Bell in Korea, my year in Vietnam, 1967-1968, and now, my youngest sister’s husband, serving first in Kuwait, then Afghanistan, and now in Iraq. Only the last has chosen to make a career in the military. The rest of us just happened to be around when there was a war going on. The Auer family is not particularly fond of wars; we don’t travel around the globe looking for conflicts to become involved in. The plain truth is that our country has been at war, almost constantly, for 140 years.

In the November-December 2001 issue of *Duke Magazine*, Michael Hardt, then an associate professor of literature at the institution, discussed with the editors his book, *Empire*, coauthored by Italian philosopher and economist Antonio Negri, published in 2000 by Harvard University Press. The *New York Times*, commenting on the book called Hardt “America’s next master theorist.” *Empire* was an instant sensation. The book details the demise of the nation-state, the rise of the new global world order and the shifting of political and economic power, seen through the lens of Neo-Marxist economics and the 17th century philosophy of Baric Spinoza.

Last August the sequel to *Empire* was published. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin

Press, 2004) attempts to clarify and expand the concepts articulated in the first book. The new book is shorter, and the prose less dense. Perhaps the authors were unprepared for the wide readership of *Empire* outside of academia; the language in *Multitude* is considerably clearer—but, it is by no means an ‘easy read’. “We have made every effort to write this in a language that everyone can understand....Please be patient. Keep reading. Sometimes these philosophical ideas take longer to work out. Think of the book as a mosaic from which the general design emerges.” (p.xvii)

An article of this size prohibits an exhaustive analysis of the entire work. Events of the recent past both here in New London and abroad show a chilling correspondence with principles articulated in the first section of *Multitude*, entitled ‘War’. In August members of the SFH community participated in a vigil at the soldiers and sailors monument in support of Cindy Sheehan’s one-woman vigil at the Bush ranch in Crawford, Texas. This spring we were involved, with the SE Connecticut Peace and Justice Network, with resistance to the Department of Homeland Security’s Mock Terror Attack on the City of New London. Emmett and Nathaniel Jarrett, accompanied by my friend and classmate Tupper Morehead, TSSF, recently returned from Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where they participated in a civil action at the Y12 nuclear site in conjunction with the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. What Hardt and Negri are writing about in their two books is not science fiction. It is not 1984. War and its consequences have begun to overwhelm America.

The authors write that this ongoing state of war is not confined to the United States and is no longer waged by nation-states in a contest for national sovereignty, but across the global terrain. “From this perspective all the world’s current armed conflicts, hot and cold—in Colombia, Sierra Leone and Aceh, as much as in Israel/Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq—should be considered imperial civil wars.... The pretense of sovereignty

of these combatants is doubtful to say the least. They are struggling for dominance within the highest and lowest levels of the global system.... There is no escaping the state of war within Empire, and there is no end to it in sight.” (p.4)

This has not been the case throughout history. The notion of *exception* is introduced in the beginning of the book. Briefly stated, it has been the aim of governments throughout history to make war the exception and peace the norm. Hardt and Negri call this ‘the fundamental goal of modern political thought and practice.’ With the state of war being now the rule rather than the exception, nation states are now free to embrace war as the norm. “The state of exception is also a term in German legal tradition that refers to the temporary suspension of the constitution and the rule of law....in a time of serious crisis and danger, such as wartime, the constitution must be suspended temporarily and extraordinary powers given to a strong executive or even a dictator in order to protect the republic.” (p. 7) The authors conclude that this general state of global war erodes the distinction between war and peace so that we can no longer hope for or imagine a real peace.

The authors note further the current view that, in the words of former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, the United States has become the ‘indispensable nation’ and as such is free to use force wherever and whenever it pleases, in order to protect its interests. ‘American exceptionalism’ has been, in fact, exception to the rule of international law. Our country continually exempts itself from international treaties covering everything from human rights, to the environment, to the treatment of prisoners.

I recall as a young person the stories that my parents told me about rationing and the trials felt by those who experienced WWII on the ‘home front’. I vaguely recall the Army/McCarthy hearings in the 1950’s – my first glimpse of television. I certainly did not want for any material thing as a child growing up in the suburbs. I know that one of the things that I took

for granted was the individual liberty guaranteed to all citizens through the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Now our rights are being eroded in the name of 'homeland security'. I fear the consequences of the Patriot Act. Members of our extended community have suffered arrest and imprisonment for disagreeing with the current regime in Washington.

Hardt and Negri argue that "War is becoming the primary organizing principle of society, and politics merely one of its means or guises. What appears as civil peace, then, really only puts an end to one form of war and opens the way for another....War has become a *regime of biopower*, that is, a form of rule aimed not only at controlling the population but producing and reproducing all aspects of social life." (p.13)

Not all of our recent wars have been armed conflicts. I recall Lyndon Johnson's 'War on Poverty' in the 1960's. Despite heroic efforts the War on Poverty was doomed from the start, due to the increasing costs of escalation in Vietnam. The 'War on Drugs' has been being waged for quite some time now, the primary result being the filling of American prisons with people of color from the inner city while the regime in power maintains friendly relations with the countries that supply the poison. We now have the 'War on Terror'.

The authors note two defining characteristics of this new type of warfare. First, this new type of war is conducted with an open-ended time frame. The war might possibly go on for generations. The war provides for the continued and uninterrupted use of force and violence, indeed, "War has thus become indistinguishable from police activity. A war to create and maintain social order can have no end." (p.14) Second, the line between international and domestic politics becomes blurred. "In the context of this cross between military and police activity aimed at security there is ever less difference between inside and outside the nation-state: 'low intensity warfare meets high intensity police actions.'" (p.14) How long before our own citizens are detained for unspecified amounts

of time for unspecified crimes? How close are we to rounding up and incarcerating 'enemies of the state'?

Hardt and Negri note the close correspondence of the modern wars against terror to the old wars of religion. They close the first part of their treatise on war with the following chilling paragraph: "The domestic face of just-war doctrines and the war against terrorism is a passage from the welfare state to a warfare state, and others characterize it as a so-called 'zero-tolerance' society. This is a society whose diminishing civil liberties and increasing rates of incarceration are in certain respects a manifestation of a constant social war." (p.17)

This is where we stand today. Not even Orwell's dark genius could have thought this up. We are in a very frightening place.

Fall 2005

WHY RISK ARREST?

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

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 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 in 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 her 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

**CLOSING STATEMENT IN THE TRIAL OF 34 DEFENDANTS
IN GUANTANAMO WITNESS AT THE U.S. SUPREME COURT**
Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

My name is Father Emmett Jarrett, and I speak today for one who cannot speak for himself, Osam Ahmad, a prisoner at Guantanamo prison camp in Cuba.

I was looking forward to speaking about my friend and fellow priest, Bill Pickard, who was charged, with Chris Brandt, under 40 USC 6134, when two of the gentlest men I know were accused of threatening behavior, abusive language, and making a harangue – but Ms. Acevedo [the prosecutor] dropped the charge yesterday.

All of us defendants now stand charged under 40 USC 6135, which makes it a crime to “*parade, stand or move in procession or assemblages in the Supreme Court building or grounds, or to display....a flag, banner, or device designed or adapted to bring into public notice a party, organization or movement.*”

The DC Court of Appeals ruled on January 30, 2007, in *Potts et al. v. U.S.*, that “an orange jump suit and black hood constituted ‘device(s) designed or adapted to bring into public notice a ‘movement,’ for the purpose of the statute setting forth the offense.”

While this decision is being appealed to the United States Supreme Court, we do not argue that the meaning of the costume of Guantanamo detainees on January 11, 2008, was without a purpose. All of us who came to the Supreme Court on that day came with an intention. Our intention was to put dramatically before the court – both the Supreme Court of the United States, and the court of public opinion and conscience – the plight of the men and boys detained at Guantanamo and elsewhere without being charged with any crime, without legal counsel in many cases, the right to know the evidence against them and confront their accusers, and the right of *habeas corpus*;

not to mention their human right, guaranteed by the Geneva Convention, the United Nations Convention on Torture, and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, to all of which our country and its government are signatory – *not to be tortured!*

The Government in this trial has made much of the fact that “protests” are legal on the public sidewalks and in parks, but prohibited on the grounds of the Supreme Court. One can protest anything one wants to, in most any manner one wishes to, as long as it is away from the center of judicial authority.

But we came to the Supreme Court of the United States on January 11, 2008, to present a letter to the justices, asking them to act on behalf of detainees imprisoned at Guantanamo, to restore their human and legal rights – to give voice to the voiceless. That letter has been entered into evidence here.

The defense did not have to show that we were *not there*, but that we were there for a legitimate, moral, and constitutionally protected *purpose*.

Our purpose was not “to be arrested.” One does not act in nonviolent witness in order to be arrested. We risk arrest for the cause of justice, and we are willing to suffer the consequences of our action.

It has been noted by the defense that the defendants in this trial have gotten further along in the criminal justice system than *any* of the men who are imprisoned at Guantanamo.

In testimony for the defense, Tarak Kauff, a carpenter from Woodstock, N.Y. and a veteran, stated that he acted on January 11 in obedience to the oath he took when he entered the Armed Forces of the United States, “to uphold and defend the Constitution.” Your Honor, I took that same oath on April 1, 1959 – before any of the Guantanamo prisoners were born! – and I acted in the same way on January 11, 2008.

The court has heard from defendant Timothy Nolan, a medical practitioner among the poor in Western North Carolina. He acted on January 11 in fulfillment of the ethical

principles of his medical profession. Tim Nolan is a “mandated reporter” of abuse under the law. And his Hippocratic oath “to do no harm” was the basis for his action.

Your Honor, on January 11, 2008, we who are on trial here today made a witness against our Government’s *policy* of torture, indefinite imprisonment, and denial of *habeas corpus*. The U.S. prison camp at Guantanamo, in operation since January 11, 2002, is both a symbol of our national apostasy, and the place where these crimes are committed in our name.

Today we have offered a legal defense of our actions at the United States Supreme Court. We also offer a moral justification for our action. It was a witness to conscience and truth. Our testimony in your court is likewise a witness to the moral basis of law.

To summarize: those arrested inside the Great Hall of the Supreme Court, as you have heard, were arrested – some without any warning – before any demonstration occurred, before any banner was unfurled, and the “noise” began after the arrests began. Their only “crime” was wearing orange t-shirts. They were carrying a letter to the justices. Basically, nothing happened to require arrest. Defendants clearly met the “tourist standard” for noise making.

Those arrested outside, on the steps of the Supreme Court, were basically kneeling in prayer. Their First Amendment rights were violated because they were not informed of their option to continue their witness on the public sidewalk.

In conclusion, Your Honor, this morning several of us prayed with a Franciscan community in Northwest Washington. The reading from Scripture was the story told in Mark’s Gospel (chapter 10, verses 46-52) of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, who cried out as Jesus was going through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem, to confront not only the Roman Empire but his own people’s leadership, in the name of the God of justice. When the poor beggar cried out, everyone told him to stop, to be quiet, not to bother them. But Bartimaeus would not be

silent. He continued to cry out until Jesus heard him, asked him what he wanted, and restored his sight. Then Bartimaeus followed Jesus on the way.

Today we, like blind Bartimaeus, cry out for justice for the prisoners held by our Government at Guantanamo. We, too, cry out for justice, not just for ourselves but for them. We seek to give voice to the voiceless. We are in good company.

And we invite you, Judge Gardner, and you Ms. Acevedo, and all in this court, to join us in our cry. We ask you, Judge Gardner, to acquit us of the charges against us because of our witness. We ask you, we invite you, we plead with you to join us in acting to end torture and restore *habeas corpus* to prisoners at Guantanamo and elsewhere. Become our companion on the way. Join our good company.

Thank you.

*Presented in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.
Thursday, May 29, 2008.*

BUILDING THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

Ed Rodman

April 4-5, 2008, on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

What did Martin Luther King, Jr. mean by the Beloved Community? The cultural anthropologist Alan Lomax spent some considerable time in the 1930's going around the country and recording folk music before the culture died. He was particularly intrigued by the work songs he heard from prisoners on chain gangs – the call and response, the relationship between men and the leader. He asked the leader how the men learned the music. “Well, captain,” he slowly replied, “the men learn the music by doing the work.” And how did you become the leader? “I guess I become the leader because I did the work best.”

Woke up this mornin' with my mind stayed on freedom, (3 times) Allelu, allelu, alleluia

Walkin' and talkin' with my mind stayed on freedom, (3 times) Allelu, allelu, alleluia

Music and work. Spirit of movement rooted in a cultural base.

How do we understand that relationship today between leadership and the work? What is the nature of the struggle for justice and human dignity in which we are involved? This truth was taught to me in a moment of riveting clarity in the early 1960's thanks to Ella Baker who at the time was Executive Secretary of the newly formed Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Now she had convened a meeting of some of the leaders of the sit-in movement at the time that SCLC was trying to figure out how to do what it was doing. It was a meeting that nowadays we would call networking (we were able to turn thousands of people out in the days *before* the

internet!) Martin King walked into the room expecting to take over the meeting. Ella Baker told him in no uncertain terms to sit down and be quiet. And then she said these words that are fundamental to my understanding of the nature of leadership and the struggle we are in. She said, "Martin, what we need are movement-centered leaders; not a leader-centered movement." How much different might history have been if Martin Luther King, Jr. could have heeded that advice? What might have happened if he could have avoided the temptation of Jesus on the mountain top when his pride and ego got invested in his own propaganda and he allowed himself to become an icon rather than a servant leader?

If you want to be a group centered leader, you have to lift up, engage and empower everyone around you. You know it's happened when everyone steps forward and says, "I am Spartacus." Everyone did not stand up and say, "I am Martin Luther King, Jr.," did they? If you are trying to build a movement as King eventually understood and actually tried to embrace at the end of his life you have to appreciate the importance of four principles. These four principles are united at their foundation by non-violence and undergirded by servant leadership.

What would happen if I tried to light up a cigarette right now in this room? You'd throw me out, right? Who started that movement? Who led it? It was based on deconstructing the lie that cigarettes aren't bad for you. Then people did whatever they could. And finally everyone had to change their behaviors. And that led to the reconstructed vision of a smoke free environment.

So there you have the four principles: Deconstruction to reveal the lies; Behavior Analysis to see what is happening as a result of the lies; Power Analysis to see who has the ability to achieve what part of the necessary change and finally a Reconstructed Vision. The nature of the oppressive systems of this country is that we have bought into the rampant materialism based on individual gratification and not on group

elevation. So now we have the four pillars of the Beloved Community: History, Compassion, Vision and Sacrifice.

Maya Angelou at Bill Clinton's first inaugural read that wonderful poem she wrote for the occasion in which she said, "History with all of its wrenching pain cannot be un-lived, But if faced with courage need not be lived again." Americans' biggest problem is that we have amnesia. We do not learn from our history. We do not know or care about our history. As Shakespeare said, "What's past is prologue," but we do not realize the truth that follows from that insight which is that prologue leads into tragedy as it unfolds.

2008 is not just the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. It is the 200th anniversary of the end of the legal slave trade as agreed to by the framers of the Constitution who set 1808 as the date on which such trade would be terminated. We can look back over these 200 years and see a certain number of individual successes. But it is critical to remember that history is written by the victors. It is not written by the people who got defeated. The celebrated linguist and social critic Noam Chomsky was once asked what is the difference between a *language* and a *patois*? He looked his questioner squarely in the eye and said, "An army and a navy."

Four days before Martin Luther King was assassinated, Lyndon Baines Johnson announced that he was giving up running for the presidency of the United States *because he knew that he had failed, that the war was wrong and that he needed to try to heal the country*. How many of you remember that? One of the tragedies of King's assassination was the fact that this decision was obscured. And then Bobby Kennedy was shot. And then the Democratic Convention in Chicago. What happened in 1968 was that all the struggles for justice that everyone has such high hopes for were put on hold. And the movement fragmented into groups each trying to develop its own struggle for liberation. Not that those struggles weren't needed. But the coherence around a single concept was lost.

The reason Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed was that he recognized that this was happening and the Poor People's Campaign was his effort to try to reconnect the dots – to challenge America on the basis of the three major fault lines of our system, namely, class division, race division and justice division or the misunderstanding of justice. In America we believe in retributive justice i.e. an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Restorative Justice, on the other hand, would mean that we all take responsibility for the present situation and don't seek to scapegoat anyone. And things are far worse now than they were in the 1960's. Major transfers of wealth were started under Ronald Reagan with major contributions from the current Bush administration.

Compassion: you have to see what it isn't before you can see what it is. It is not two rich city guys going for a hike in the woods and then running into a bear. They started running, but then one of them stopped, reaching in his backpack, pulled out a pair of Nikes and started pulling off his hiking boots. "What are you doing?" yelled the other. "Don't you see that the bear is going to catch us?" whereupon the first replied, "No, my friend. You do not understand the situation. I don't have to outrun the bear. I just have to outrun *you*." But ultimately we cannot outrun the moral arc of the universe which bends to restorative justice. That just can't happen.

Vision is not a matter of not seeing clearly. It is a matter of having an understanding of what you are looking at. You have to look at the situation to realize there is something wrong. If you don't see anything wrong, nothing needs to change. White people and Black people have a fundamental problem within this culture and have never been able to communicate. We know why you think it's all right because it's working for you. But you don't believe that we know it's wrong because it's not working for us. There is a quote in an old English church that goes like this: "A vision without a task is but a dream." Martin Luther King had a dream, but the problem with a dream is

that you wake up. The quotation continues: "A task without a vision is drudgery. But a task coupled with the appropriate vision is the hope of the world."

What is the song we have to sing? What is the work we need to do? We need to do more than just going through the motions. America is more than a bully, more than just a consumer, more than just a destroyer of creation. Everyone has a piece of the vision. Barack Obama has a piece of it; Hillary Clinton has a piece of it; John McCain has a piece of it. A lot of people have a piece of it.

But if we don't sit down together and figure out what's wrong, how are we ever going to figure out what's right? There is a West African saying, "If you don't know where you're going any path will take you there." Traffic jams are a compelling metaphor for our chaos and lack of vision. That's why the movie *Crash* is so powerful. Here we are crashing into each other with no compassion, no sense of history. The lay Anglican theologian William Stringfellow was asked in the sixties what he thought we needed to do to avoid the destruction of America. "The destruction of America," said he, "is not an apocalyptic event." That's really all that Jeremiah Wright was saying, too.

Sacrifice. Sacrifice is something that only occurs when you believe that it will make a difference. Why should I give up being Black, rich, male, female, white, gay, straight – whatever my situation is – why should I give it up if it gives me some advantage in this jungle we call a society? Until we have built trust and have a common interest in the common good, it's not going to happen. Until we are all ready to give up whatever it is and become Americans. Sacrifice is not giving out of your surplus. That's charity. That's chump change.

So what do we need to be mindful of as we seek to organize on behalf of the vision of the Beloved Community? Point one: *Never believe you own propaganda*. Understanding where people – including yourself – are coming from is very important. People from different generations have very

different experiences and contexts for interpreting reality.

Point two: *The most dangerous thing you can do is leap a chasm in two jumps.* Concentrate on building bridges.

Point three: *Nothing has a greater hold on the mind than ignorance fraught with technicalities.* Huge amounts of time and energy can be absorbed and wasted by getting caught up in foolishness.

So stay focused with your eyes on the prize by learning from history, practicing compassion, owning a vision, and being willing to sacrifice. Always remain anchored in non-violence. And so create the new music to lead us to the Beloved Community.

THE TEACHABLE MOMENT? A NEW YEAR'S REFLECTION

Anne Scheibner

That phrase “the teachable moment” is one I remember over the years from various articles and conversations focused either on classroom education or parenting. It served to articulate that moment of recognition by a heretofore recalcitrant or at least disinterested student or child of something new. Or perhaps more accurately it served to identify something newly recognized because the context shifted and provided a different framework for recognizing the subject in a memorable light.

To be ready for that moment in the midst of the regular repetitions of daily life requires being fully in the present – not tied to the patterns of just before or just after. Daily morning prayer at St. Francis House which begins with five minutes of centering silence is one way that we practice breaking the habit of automatic action and response and making ourselves truly available to each other, our neighbors and the opportunities that come with each new day.

Emmett’s cancer which was diagnosed last December has provided a year’s worth of teachable moments for me because it changed everything about our daily lives and routines. First, there was the time of surgery at Yale-New Haven followed by the six months of chemo-therapy while we were based in Stonington. Cancer like baptism is a transforming framework. Once I put aside the fear of losing the most formative force in patterning my present daily life—i.e. my partner in marriage and in our work at St. Francis House – I was free to engage in new moments of recognizing and enjoying our life together. I told Emmett that this was the first time in our twenty-five years of marriage that we had been a “normal American couple.” He said, “Because you’re waiting on me?” And I laughed because I really hadn’t been thinking about that part, but about how the life-giving but nonetheless numerous, unscheduled and in that sense round the

clock demands of “the open door” of rectory life and then life at St. Francis House has shaped our life as a couple.

During our time in Stonington Dr. Henry Louis Gates had a different memorable experience of life in his home. I started thinking about this article on the “Teachable Moment” after reading Bob Herbert’s *New York Times* Op Ed piece on August 1 which pulled me up short. How had I missed the fact that the elapsed time between the phone call to alert Cambridge police about a possible break-in and the snapping of handcuffs on Dr. Gates’ wrists was 5-6 minutes? It took me ten times five minutes fourteen years ago to read Dr. Gates brilliant essay on the O.J. Simpson verdict *13 Ways of Looking at a Black Man* which first appeared in the *New Yorker* in October, 1995. There Dr. Gates reflects in detail about the Driving While Black experience as well as offering a perceptive analysis of why Black and white people reacted so differently viscerally to the announcement of the not guilty verdict in the O.J. Simpson trial. So would not this be another “teachable moment” on the meaning of race in this society?

I myself was astonished but delighted by President Obama’s candid reaction to the Cambridge arrest. I was therefore dismayed to see that “teachable moment” disappear in the foam of publicity around the “beer summit” which appeared to reduce analyzing the racial dynamics and meaning of what happened between Dr. Gates and Sgt. Crowley to a matter of reconciling two individuals with two different views of what happened in Dr. Gates’ kitchen.

Another kind of teachable moment on the national scene appeared with the President’s order to increase by 30,000 souls the number of Americans in Afghanistan and the border with Pakistan. I’ve certainly heard some persuasive arguments about not equating Viet Nam and Afghanistan. After all, Pakistan has nuclear weapons. So I all the more mourned the loss of the opportunity to say that this country is no longer interested in military interventions around the world as a primary means of

foreign policy. What I learned was that at least on the national level the basic framework of perception and action has not changed. Why not?

Last month a group of five of us from SE Connecticut attended a conference on economic conversion at the University of Connecticut reinaugurating a public conversation which has been dormant for some 20 years. Can we reinvent a peacetime economy based on sustainable practices and personal skills? From whence will come that commitment and imagination to transform the *underlying* economic and political framework?

Recently I heard a twenty-two year old woman ask the Stonington Planning and Zoning Commission to allow the construction of a shopping mall, 48 townhouses and hotel on 35 acres of what was the Perkins Farm. What was compelling and distressing about her appeal was her conclusion that her high school classmates have moved away from the area because of a lack of affordable housing, job opportunities and a sense that this area is boring – without its own young adult shopping and hang-out scene. Twittering and cell phones are more real than woodlands which after all as one of the supporters of the development proposal said are “vacant.” Her thought was to use the moment to teach a room full of predominantly grey-headed elders that we needed to make room for the next generation. I struggled but could not find a way to say to her that perhaps we needed to reinvent both housing and work in a way that would not require hundreds of parking places in a former Connecticut cow pasture.

Of course, our present state economy dependent as it is on defense, gambling and tourism replaced the one based on small scale manufacturing and that replaced the one based on agriculture and “the home” as the center of both family and economic life. And perhaps it is past due time for those of us of European, African and Asian ancestries to understand the life lived by Native peoples in these watersheds. Work there was, but not jobs. Work there is, but not jobs. Can we just do it?

So perhaps some New Year's resolutions around "Teachable Moments" are in order. I certainly don't wish for any of you the kind of crisis opportunity provided by Emmett's cancer. But especially in the light of the recent financial and economic meltdowns, each of us could be more intentional about allowing time and space to question our own day to day practices in this New Year. We cannot just hope that President Obama will articulate those moments for us or fear the FOX News will do it for everyone else. Can you find someone or a group to reflect on what those moments reveal?

What if people in every local faith community saw this coming year as the opportunity to have local teach-in's on the meaning of peace and justice within our various traditions? Can we figure out how we as ordinary citizens and people of faith can undo the apparent triumph of what President Eisenhower warned us against – namely the unchecked power and influence of a technological elite and the (at that time newly formed) military-industrial complex? Then President Eisenhower's other statement would be true: "I think that people want peace so much that one of these days government had better get out of their way and let them have it." Maybe the change we need needs to start locally. And President Obama would have had some much needed support in picking up that Nobel Peace Prize.

Christmas 2009

V. HOMELESSNESS AND HOSPITALITY

TRAVELS WITH OTIS

Anne P. Scheibner

My experience of “walking the bounds” i.e. the neighborhood around St. Francis House, has been greatly enhanced by the arrival of Otis. “What kind of dog is that?” asked a slightly disheveled man standing in front of the Covenant Shelter. It was early morning and Otis and I had just walked Sarah to school. “Well, the Humane Society said he’s mostly beagle, but maybe some basset, too,” I said. “No,” my interlocutor replied, “that dog has coon dog in him. I know, I used to raise them.”

Later I saw this Neighbor sitting on a bench on State Street and staring blankly ahead as I was driving past. The next week Otis and I walked down State Street to get the papers at Parade News where the owner always gives Otis a dog biscuit. There was our Neighbor in a clean shirt drinking coffee at an outside table at the shop next door. I asked him to watch Otis while I went inside to get coffee. He asked where we’d met and I reminded him of the street location and our conversation about coon dogs. He clearly appreciated my not mentioning the shelter. But then he told me about the humiliation he had suffered going to the furniture repair store near the shelter in the hope of finding work. “Get out,” the person at the shop barked at him without any conversation. He told me about the furniture and antique restoration business he had had with his father who was a skilled craftsman from Germany. “The guy in that shop didn’t do such good work,” he added. “But he still shouldn’t have talked to me like that.” We finished our coffee while Otis, too, basked in the sun.

Several weeks later I was strolling one evening with friends when our Neighbor emerged from the shadows of an alley again looking disheveled and glassy-eyed. I greeted him by name and next morning found him again. We shared my Danish pastry and he told me about his children now grown, the house his mother had lived in and his desire to visit her in her assisted living residence

across the river. He didn't think he would stay in New London. He didn't like the shelter and everything else was too expensive.

Two days later I dropped a note off at the shelter inviting him to help rehab a hundred year old door that Paul, another friend, and I were working on. Later that afternoon Otis was supervising our work on the porch. Our Neighbor passed by on the other side of the street. He did not acknowledge our salutes but went on hurriedly. Should I go after him? One of the hardest lessons here at St. Francis House has been understanding what it means to be a neighbor. "Guess he can't do it," Paul said softly, as we watched him limp off.

Later that week I took Otis to the bottom of the L-shaped lot on which St. Francis House is situated. It has weeds and an occasional chicken or pork chop bone. Otis is fond of the bones and the weeds are one of his favorite places to poop. That day we found a young man with a knapsack earnestly scraping in the soil. "Great worms," he told me confidentially. "I've been getting worms here for twenty years." I nodded, surprised, while Otis looked around for a place to do his business. I asked him where he lived and he laughed and said he was camping over near a pond on the outskirts of town. "I'm homeless now," he said. "I fish in the pond. These worms are like snakes!" He held up a long and juicy specimen for approval.

Otis helps me see nature on the block every day. Standing at the other end of the leash while he sniffs excitedly each blade and hummock, I notice the buds on the trees, the fresh smell of morning, the spider webs, the stranglehold vines twisting up the tree trunks. I notice the potato chip bags and old tires. Along with Morning Prayer, going out with Otis is my most regular reminder of the dailiness of life and the constancy of life's demands. And greeting, talking about and caring for this dog gives a natural equality to the beginning of relationships among the two-footed creatures who stop to admire his shining presentness.

Summer 2001

ON HOMELESSNESS AND NEW LONDON: OR, WHAT MAKES A CHANGE OF HEART?

Laura Burfoot

“The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us?” Dorothy Day

The New London Emergency Homeless Shelter and Hospitality Center opened December 1, 2004 and officially closed March 31, 2005. I had the good fortune of being employed there as a staff person. During the course of 4 months we had over 140 people stay. What a blessing these 4 months have been for me. Lessons on faith, generosity, love, privilege, patience, and judgment rippled and rolled throughout the course of each night I was there.

We must begin with this common understanding: “homeless,” according to the 1981 Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, is defined as “having no home or permanent place of residence.” The only intelligent conclusion we can draw about the nature of homeless people, then, is that they do not have access to a home or residence. That’s it. We can assume nothing more. It is a phenomenon of this culture that never ceases to confound me – how it is that we conflate poverty with immorality, with meanness of spirit, with lack of character or good intention, with stupidity. Homeless people are neither bad nor stupid, neither mean, nor immoral. They are humans, like myself, like yourself, complete with grace and flaw. They are economically poor, yes. Many have little access to money. Access to money, however, is not directly related to access to generosity, love, compassion, competence, humor. There is no relationship, no pie chart to be drawn, no logarithm to graph.

I had a realization one night in speaking with a guest

at the shelter. This guest happens to hold a master's degree in electrical engineering from a university in St. Petersburg, Russia. (Remember, we can assume nothing beyond a lack of access to housing). He was inquiring as to why I, a young college graduate, was spending my time at a homeless shelter? I responded something about wanting to be a responsible, seeing (as opposed to blind) member of the community. And as a seeing member, how could I justify doing much else? He asked me what my goals were. My goal, of course, was to be unemployed the following year. My goal, of course, was to ensure that every single person in this community had access to a comfortable, healthy, secure living situation. This said, a homeless shelter is certainly not the solution. It is the means. It is the means by which community is built, camaraderie is felt, peoples' lives are saved. But what is the solution?

As the conversation continued, I spoke about the necessity of building solidarity within the homeless community, of uniting with other concerned residents, putting real pressure on political institutions and officials to address the crisis of homelessness. The result, then, might be the creation of more subsidized housing units. Or, perhaps more importantly, the creation of more accessible qualifications for folks trying to access such housing. It is my understanding that there are currently many open units throughout the city of New London; the problem is that people cannot access them because they do not meet the qualifications (credit, criminal, and renting history are all taken into account). The other obstacle is that many of the units need some work done, but with tightening budgets, agencies don't have the time or money to allocate to fix them up.

It is absolutely maddening to know that there are many units of affordable housing currently sitting unoccupied. Especially considering that about half if not more of the guests at the shelter have skills at construction, carpentry, painting, roofing, etc. These are skilled people, sleeping in a shelter

because the politics of local, state, and national bureaucracies won't allow them to use their skills to fix up these open units. What is going on here? What sort of reality are we living in? And who gets to write the rules? Community organizing, then, is one route by which to achieve the goal of putting pressure on political officials to address the crisis of homelessness.

The second route is to challenge the community itself to address the crisis of homelessness. The goal of this route is none other than to mend the holes in the fabric of our community that have allowed for people to be forced to sleep outside. Why is it that a person, when faced with the prospect of a winter night outside, does not knock on the door of a neighbor or stranger, to ask for assistance? Why does that not happen? Why is this very question considered crazy, insane, soaring off the idealism charts? What has happened to us, that we are so capable, in fact, so competent, at ignoring the needs of our fellow human beings? What does it say about us? And if we are displeased with what it says, how can we change?

As with most contemporary social dilemmas, the problem is not that there is not enough for all, the problem is in the allocation. What would it take for people to open their homes to homeless people? What would have to shift in our consciences, in our imaginations, in the very deepest recesses of our fears and of our hopes, to change this? And how can we begin to do that work? How does one do the work of changing people? If, as Dorothy Day wrote, the revolution need be one of the heart, how can we be revolutionaries in that struggle? What does it look like to be a revolutionary of the heart? What does it feel like? How is a person transformed?

Much of my own transformation has occurred through proximity, through access. I now know dozens of homeless people. I know them to be generous and funny, I know them to be brothers and lovers, I know them to be grouchy when sleepy and patient in their listening. I can recognize the light that glows in their eyes when speaking of their children. And

the fire in those same eyes when recalling struggles in the past. They have become a part of my family. As family, I am no longer able to ignore their experience- their needs, their triumphs, their aspirations, and their defeats.

A good friend of mine, who happens to be 7, offered this the other day: "Laura, we're all family, in God's way." What does he know that we do not? How can we begin to learn?

Eastertide 2005

HOW I UNDERSTAND SOCIAL SERVICES CUTS

Sarah Jarrett

What right does a human have to take away basic needs for other humans? For the people by the people is what I thought was supposed to happen – not take away Social Services to save money. The problems here in New London are becoming more visible every day I live here. Now it is not safe to walk home alone. So whether it's me walking from the Garde Theater or church, it's not safe. Personally, I don't see why I can't walk a block and a half alone, but my grown up friends (especially men) will want to walk me home. I know it's because they love me, but what should be done about a city who has so many problems? Is this when you lock your children inside so they won't get hurt and see the bad in things? What gives people the right to take away, but not give? They weren't born higher than anyone else so what gives them the right?

I am 15 years old and already don't believe politics are good. What does that say about our government? It means it's screwed up being run by white middle-class (or higher) people. In New London I started to go to the City Council meetings when they threatened to take away basketball. Basketball is the way out of drugs and gangs in New London. It's something to do to stay out of trouble.

Social Services is a basic necessity of every city, town or state. Taking it away only creates more problems. What's next? Will they tell us how much air we can breathe per day? Because we are already allowing them to run our lives and tell us what we can live without. Break free. Rise up. FIGHT!

Fall 2005

WINTER SHELTER, 2006

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 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 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.

Easter 2006

ROOFS OVER HEADS: HOMELESS IN THE PROMISED LAND

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

“**ROOFS OVER HEADS**” is the theme of this issue of the *Troubadour*. When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush in the Sinai desert, this was the promise: “*I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey*” (Exodus 3:7-8). This is God’s hospitality to Israel, and God requires of us a like hospitality to one another, especially the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. The most basic form of hospitality is shelter. Jesus, in turn, said that when we shelter the homeless we shelter Christ.

Homelessness is one of the most basic signs of what is wrong with our society as a whole, and with our community in New London. Hospitality, for St. Francis House, is the promise of a solution. When we came to New London in 1999, Anne Scheibner and I had to promise the New London Planning and Zoning Commission that we didn’t plan to make St. Francis House a church or a homeless shelter. There were already too many non-profit institutions in the city and far too many homeless for a beleaguered social services department to care for. We agreed we were not a church – we have now been listed in the December 2006 issue of *The Catholic Worker* as a Catholic Worker house – and, while we knew we would be involved with homeless people – they are, after all, our nearest neighbors! – we didn’t see 30 Broad Street as a shelter.

But we soon became involved with shelter for the homeless, and with organizing with our friends at the **New London Grassroots Homeless Coalition**, led by **Russ Carmichael**, to promote respect for the dignity of homeless and marginalized people and better services, including but not limited to “shelter.”

The year 2006 brought homelessness to the forefront of our lives at St. Francis House. After the failed attempt to shut down the “temporary winter emergency shelter” at St. James Episcopal Church in December 2005, we convened a task force to deal with homeless hospitality that included faith communities, social service agencies, police, doctors and nurses, homeless advocates, and the homeless themselves. That group completed its work just at the time when a regional *Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in Southeastern Connecticut* was published. Our **New London Homeless Hospitality Center** was incorporated in September and in November received a non-profit 501(c)3 designation from the IRS, thanks to the help of **US Representative Rob Simmons**, a loyal supporter. The shelter in St. James Episcopal Church – not yet the year-round shelter that is our goal – opened November 1, 2006, our friend, fellow Franciscan, and co-worker **John Robertson** spoke of American society as one that “sorts” people: some are “sorted” to education, privilege, wealth; others to poverty and indignity. The homeless are the “bottom of the sort.” Our work, at the Homeless Hospitality Center and St. Francis House is to assist those who have been “sorted” to the bottom with respect for their human dignity we believe God has granted them in equal measure with ourselves. Our name for this work is **hospitality**.

But “Roofs over Heads” is not only about those who are literally homeless. It is about hospitality as a way of living. Our **transitional apartment** at St. Francis House is once again occupied, this time by a woman and her two children who were already our friends. **Victory House** is home not only to St. Francis House partner Mark Auer but to Ben and Nancy Parent and their children, Gabriel and Madeline, and two tenants who are also friends, Sarah Barr and Matt Turcotte. **Calvary Hermitage** continues to be a place of spiritual retreat and reflection for those who seek that ministry with us in the midst of urban life. **Owusu Slater** from the Biko Center in Brooklyn

spent two weeks with us in October. **Dick Marks** from Silver Spring, MD spent two months with us exploring his vocational direction following retirement. **Gail Keeney-Mulligan** from St. John's, New Milford, CT joins us for regular weekend and weeklong retreats. New guests are always welcome.

We have long understood hospitality as a major metaphor for our understanding of who God is and what our call – and that of all God's people – is. The **Rublev ikon** of the Holy Trinity, based on the story of the visit of the three angels to Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18, stands at the center of the altar around which we pray every day. As God is generous and hospitable to us, including us in the loving embrace of the Blessed Trinity, so we must be hospitable to others, sharing the love God has shared with us.

Catholic Worker houses generally describe their work as **“resistance, hospitality, or both.”** Our experience of sharing our space and our lives with others takes many different forms. But all of them convince us that genuine hospitality requires resistance to what William Blake called “the mind-forg'd manacles” of Empire. We can't have one without the other. It's about roofs over heads.

Epiphany 2007

SEEING THE INVISIBLE: A MEDITATION ON LUKE 16:19-25

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

The story you have just heard – the story of Lazarus, the poor beggar, and the rich man – is one of the stories Jesus told to call people to live not in selfish isolation but as sisters and brothers. It's also a story that Martin Luther King, Jr., the great American patriot, preached on many occasions, including the last Sunday sermon he ever preached, a few days before he was assassinated in April, 1968. King said of this story that it was not about Jesus condemning wealth, or the rich. "There is nothing in that parable," King said, "that said [the rich man] went to hell because he was rich. [He] didn't go to hell because he was rich; [he] didn't realize that his wealth was his opportunity....to bridge the gulf that separated him from his brother, Lazarus. [He] went to hell because he passed Lazarus by every day and he never saw him. He went to hell because he allowed his brother to become invisible."

Our country remembers Dr. King because of his dream that America would some day fulfill its promise and become a land of freedom and equality for all. But King was not just a great patriot, he was not just a great civil rights leader. He was also a leader in the movement to end the war in Vietnam. He was a leader in the struggle to end poverty in our country. When he preached his last sermon at the Washington National Cathedral in 1968 he was on his way to Memphis, Tenn., to support sanitation workers in a strike for decent wages. He was preparing to lead a national march on Washington from the rural South, from Appalachia, from the ghettos of Northern cities, a march of white as well as black people, a "poor people's march." He was working to make the invisible people in our country visible. He was working for brotherhood and sisterhood, for what he called "the beloved community."

We are gathered here today to remember an invisible brother, Bill Walsh, who died in the woods a few days after the New

London winter emergency shelter closed. Bill died in the woods – technically in Waterford – but he was a New London resident. His last residence had been the shelter at St. James Church around the corner, but his last proper home was an apartment in the Mohican just down State Street from here. But Bill was invisible, and so he died, without the minimal attention any human being requires and is entitled to. Like Lazarus, the poor beggar in Jesus' parable, Bill was our brother, and most of us didn't see him.

So we gather here today in the First Congregational Church of New London, the church where Bill worshipped, and where he ate breakfast many mornings. Because the beloved community includes not only like-minded people who worship together, but people who break bread together, people who eat together. As the prophet Isaiah says, the life God asks of his people, of us, is a practical life of friendship and service. God requires of us that we "share our bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into our house" (Isa. 58:7). It is appropriate, then, that we gather this morning and remember Bill, and pray for him and for ourselves.

But we will not be the beloved community if we do not accept our responsibility for Bill's neglect, and for his death. The great rabbi Abraham Heschel said that "in a democracy, some are guilty, but all are responsible." All of us, as a community, as the people of the City of New London, are responsible when some of our brothers and sisters, some of our neighbors made in the image of God, have no place to lay their head. Thomas Jefferson said about slavery in America, "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just." Well, friends, I tremble for our country today. There are more than three million homeless people in the richest nation in the world. We are that rich man, who went to hell not because he was rich but because he allowed his brother Lazarus to become invisible. We have an opportunity to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless. It's no use blaming other towns and cities. God will judge them. It is myself and my city that I tremble for. It is for New London that I will be judged.

So I ask you this morning, as we remember Bill Walsh, to join

the struggle in our city to make him and others like him visible. I invite you this morning to see the homeless poor, many of whom are present in this house of worship today. Look around you. See your neighbors. Some of your neighbors have homes to go to tonight. Some don't. But all of us are neighbors. All of us are brothers and sisters to Bill Walsh and to one another. Let us resolve today, in his memory, to make our city a "city on a hill," to which everyone can look for inspiration, to make our country "a light to the nations," that cares for its neediest citizens. We have to see each other to do that. As the great labor organizer Mother Jones said, "we've got to mourn the dead, but fight like hell for the living." We can't bring Bill Walsh back from the dead. He is with Lazarus, the poor beggar that Jesus talked about, "in Abraham's bosom." But we can see the invisible poor, and shelter the homeless and needy, and not find ourselves under judgment for our failure to see.

Now let us remember Bill. But let us get up tomorrow morning and start to work together to create a homeless hospitality center in New London that will be a model for the rest of our region and our nation. Let us see the invisible poor, and live together with all our sisters and brothers in the beloved community the God of justice invites us to become. Then Bill will be like one who has risen from the dead and brought us to the promised land.

This sermon was preached at the Memorial Service for Bill Walsh, a 64-year old homeless man who died "in the woods" on April 5, 2006.

GOODBYE, DANNY

Nora Curioso

My friend, Danny Worobel, died last night. Although he looked like he was deep into his 60's, he was only 45. He was really funny, though; told great stories; had great timing. He made me laugh.

I hadn't seen Danny much since July, but now that I know I will never see him again, I miss him so much that it hurts. Like I already told you, he made me laugh. But I'm not laughing now. You see, the thing that I didn't tell you yet, is how Danny died. Danny died half in, half out, of his tent, in the woods, in the cold, alone, "because there was no room for him..." well, anywhere, at least not anywhere in New London – or Groton, or Norwich, or Lyme, or.... well, you get the picture – at least not between May 1st and November 30th when, God willing, the shelter will reopen.

This past April, about six months ago, a man named Bill Walsh died in the woods, in the cold, alone. I did not know Mr. Walsh, but Danny did. In fact, six months ago, Danny was one of the guys who showed the police where Bill Walsh's body was. He joked about how the police kept him so long (while they tried to figure out whether Bill's body was actually in New London or, rather, Waterford), that Danny missed lunch at the Soup Kitchen – "and they didn't even buy me a grinder – not even a cup of coffee – and I was one of their star witnesses..." was how he always ended that story.

After Mr. Walsh died, many people in our "beloved community" (as Fr. Emmett calls New London) got together to "do" something. Some priests and ministers planned, and conducted an inter-faith memorial service, which was beautiful and appropriate; others wrote a "Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness," which was thoughtful and appropriate; others formed a committee to create a year-round homeless

hospitality center, which was audacious and appropriate; Kenton Robinson wrote a long article in *The Day* about Mr. Walsh's journey to homelessness, which was touching and appropriate. None of this saved Danny though. Very early this morning, a different homeless man got to be the "star witness," when he found Danny's body, half in, and half out, of his tent.

During the next several weeks, a lot of people will talk about Danny's life and death, and about his addiction to alcohol. We will speculate about how his addictions played a role in his death. Answers to these questions will matter, but only so much because, well, a lot of us are addicted, but most of us aren't homeless. At the end of the day, addicts with resources get to die inside, where it is warm. Those without resources, like Danny, die in the cold.

Goodbye dear, sweet Danny. Thank you for being a part of my life, however briefly. Thank you for being my friend. And thank you, thank you ever so much for making me laugh.

Epiphany 2007

VI. RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

**RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP: A SHORT COURSE IN 21ST
CENTURY CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORK**
ST. FRANCIS HOUSE, NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT
JULY 30 – AUGUST 5, 2006

You're invited to join 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*

Easter 2006

THE OPENING DAY OF DISCIPLESHIP SEASON

Mark Auer, TSSF

“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)

Easter 2006

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP WEEK: PARTICIPANTS RESPOND

“To Live the Gospel Story in Our Lives”

Geoffrey Curtiss

The opportunity to spend several days within a base Christian community is both a challenging and a liberating experience. Recently I participated in a Radical Discipleship Course at St. Francis House in New London, Connecticut. For five days we gathered in community to explore the practical implications of living out the gospel together and to explore how others were doing so. New London provided the laboratory to listen to people tell their stories about working on the margins of our society to bring radical change. It was a walk with “Jesus” on the margins seeking to provide opportunities for people to transform their lives and become whole.

St. Francis House was the setting for us as a small Christian community who gathered regularly for daily worship, biblical study and vocational discernment. The day began with Morning Prayer and breakfast followed by morning study and reflection using the Gospel of Mark. Over the five days we read together the Gospel of Mark and delved into the practical questions where our experience and our journey of discipleship overlapped. In the afternoons and evenings we visited with people who were living their faith as they cared for the homeless, sought to reconnect to the earth, were active in the peace movement, or working to reform public education.

It was a week to recover the foundation of our journey into discipleship using Mark as our focus and sharing the stories that have shaped our lives. Personally it was a chance to go small, to return to the mustard seed in my life and see how it begins, where two or three are gathered together to live the Gospel story in our lives. I came away refreshed and restored, grounded in the truth of the Gospel and recognizing that smallness is the power of the Gospel to transform and radicalize my own vocation to discipleship.

“My Deepest Sense of Vocation”

Gail Keeney-Mulligan

It was a wonderful week for me. I had lost sight of the power of Mark's Gospel as being at the heart of my deepest sense of vocation until I read the Ched Myers book [*Say to This Mountain*] in preparation for the class. The time spent together in a flow of prayer, study, rest, exploration, sharing and praying again created a wonderful rhythm for each day, a rhythm I would love to maintain in coming away from St. Francis House.

I found the experience of each community unique and enlightening. It was a grace to see the community of the homeless wake up to the fact that they are a community and that they powerfully modeled the interdependence of the corporate body.

I especially appreciated the time with the three people at the Peace Farm in their sharing of the journey, the hope and the vision they held together, and the way they chose to live their lives together.

I am deeply fond of Arthur [*Arthur Lerner, of FRESH New London*] and was blessed with the time we worked together on Victory House and was blessed with the time we had during radical discipleship week to acknowledge the radical faithfulness with which he lives his life and bears witness for us all.

The hardest times were the piece on education which covered lots of territory but it was difficult for me to get a handle on. Perhaps it would have helped to focus on a specific aspect of education, e.g., “where is our school system failing those with the greatest need and what is our responsibility for addressing these issues?” In that context, some back and forth dialogue with our presenter would have helped.....

The one suggestion I would make is that we do some additional work-related tasks together with the communities we visited. We could have worked with Arthur in the community

garden. Granted, we did prepare breakfast with the Homeless Coalition community (though I slept through the peace witness at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in New London). These parts are so very important to the program in giving more than lip service to these ideals, and standing in solidarity with those who do these things.

All in all, there is very little I would change about the week. I loved it and I thank you for doing it.

“Living a Cruciform Life”

Clare Berry, TSSF

I learned so much from participating in the Radical Discipleship Course. First, I realized that radical discipleship means living a cruciform life ready to die and rise again with Jesus everyday. Radical discipleship requires courage and demands humility. We are called to live a sacramental life.

Second, St. Francis House is a unique place. I felt privileged to experience your model based on Dorothy Day’s Catholic Worker. While one can see the work presents challenges at times, it continually reflects Christ’s love and patience in the world. Truly, one doesn’t know from one day to the next what is going to happen. This characteristic represents the essence of the cruciform experience. This uncertainty prepares us for discipleship-in-action, not as followers but as servant leaders.

Personally, I loved the Bible study and Ched Myers’s text. Mark will inspire all my work, wherever God takes me. The Radical Discipleship Course provided me with tools for God’s work through me. I can’t thank you enough for these resources.

Seeing the multiple ministries taking place in New London was wonderful. The gardens were incredible! The formerly homeless individuals are doing amazing work for others. We packed so much into five days. I can’t thank you enough.

“A Good Beginning”

Barbara Barrett

“So, what did you do on your retreat at St. Francis House?” ask family and friends. “Retreat” seemed to work better than “Radical Discipleship” – at least it conjured up an image. “Well,” I say, “we began each day with Morning Prayer, and anchored the day, in addition, with Evening Prayer and Compline. The culmination of the week was a Eucharist celebrated on Friday evening. Prayer is the basis for everything that happens at St. Francis House, and it felt wonderful to be part of that cycle, that rhythm of the day.

We studied the Gospel of Mark and a commentary on the gospel written by Ched Myers and others. I soon learned that the Gospel of Mark is a political statement describing Jesus’ relentless challenge of unjust religious leaders and the oppressive Roman Empire. We talked about denial, and we challenged ourselves to look at our own religious institutions and the ramifications of our own government’s actions.

A couple of highlights for me were visiting other communities with whom St. Francis House is associated. One was the Grassroots Homeless Coalition. Members of the Coalition told us about their work on behalf of people who are homeless and graciously invited us to join them the following morning when they served a community breakfast. We also visited the community at the Voluntown Peace Farm, again a gracious and welcoming group who share their resources and skills as they work toward a more peace-filled and nonviolent world.

It was stimulating for me to experience the city of New London, the hospitality of the KREAM coffee shop where we watched the film *Trashed*, and of the air-conditioned public library, where I escaped in the afternoons to get out of the 100-degree heat!

Some of the most lasting memories for me will be the members of the group. We were led by the St. Francis House

community members, Anne, Emmett and Mark, and fed by Nate, assisted by his and our friend Zuli, with child-care for Nancy Parent's son Gabriel provided by Sarah. Fellow disciples discerning their continuing response to the call to radical discipleship were Geoff Curtiss, Nora Curioso, Clare Barry, Gail Keeney-Mulligan, Maria Procaccino and Nancy Parent.

So what did we do? We prayed together, we ate together, we explored the Gospel of Mark together, and we experienced the neighborhood of St. Francis House. I came away more grounded in the personal and social justice message of Jesus found in the Gospel of Mark and with the conviction that I cannot simply add radical discipleship into my life. Radical discipleship for me will require a transformation of how I use my time and energy, more prayer, and a willingness to risk failure and to be vulnerable. Will I be like the rich young man in Mark's Gospel, who went away grieving because what Jesus asked of him seemed too difficult? At least I'm asking the question. That's a good beginning.

"From My Eyes"

Nora Curioso

In the Book of Mark, Jesus tells us to sell everything, give what we have to the poor, and to follow him. Of course, nobody does that. Nobody could do that...could they? Jesus didn't mean that literally; he means to go to church on Sunday and give generously at Christmas....right? But what if Jesus meant what he said? What if we have a standing invitation to follow? What would it look like to accept? This is a radical notion. Jesus was a radical. Thus began the week-long St. Francis House course in Radical Discipleship.

One caveat, I would have signed on to any course given at St. Francis House. Bread Baking? Count me in. (Actually, that is not a bad idea.) I met Anne, Emmett, Nate, Sarah, Mark and Otis just this past April. They are different; they live

differently; there is a kindness about them.

My experience with this particular course began in June – when I was told about it and given an application (an application?), complete with an essay to write, a list of recommenders to include, and a due date to get it back by. Hmmm. The application wasn't completely normal, however. Oh, they wanted one's autobiography all right; but they didn't care so much about work feats and educational accomplishments. They wanted a Spiritual Autobiography. Now, that's a bit different to write. Next, the recommenders – I listed three homeless friends. Phone number? Well, none. Address? Two in Tent City, one in Corrigan [state prison]. Nobody at St. Francis House blinked. Oh, and the deadline? I missed it by a day, but was the first person to hand in the application. Soon I was told that the "Committee" had met, and that I was accepted. I never found out who was on that Body; but I soon found out that I already had homework. I had to read the Book of Mark, stem to stern, and a book by Ched Myers which follows and analyzes the text.

Now I'm embarrassed to write this, but I had never read any of the Gospels in their entirety, and I had no idea what I was getting into; but I borrowed a Bible, and plunged in. (If anyone reading this is as Bible illiterate as I, FYI: The Book of Mark is short and easily read; Ched Myers's book? Much longer and denser.) And so I read, and re-read; on the beach, at the gym, on the bike, on the treadmill, in front of the TV, before bed, upon waking; and I was amazed: God, at least Mark's God, is a socialist. Like Myers, I asked, "What would my concept of God be in a world not shaped by Capitalism?" I couldn't wait for classes to start.

Eventually July 30th arrived. I woke up, checked for the umpteenth time what time I was expected at St. Francis House, missed church, did laundry, complained about the heat and argued with my husband. I arrived at 30 Broad Street feeling neither holy nor scholarly. I was one of the first ones there,

though, so Otis and I sat on the porch waiting and greeting. There would be ten of us, including Anne, Emmett and Mark; all but three deacons, ministers or other serious theologians, and all but two Episcopalians. I was the only one in neither of the above categories and felt a little bit like an intruder. Although most everyone knew Fr. Emmett and Anne, only two seemed to know each other, so the first night began with us meeting, praying and eating.

Day Two began the first day of serious study, after praying and eating (which will be themes throughout), we took our Bibles, books and notepads to 32 Broad Street. Just as Jesus went back and forth between prayer and ministry, reflection and action, we spent each day praying, studying/reflecting in the morning, and then going out into the world in the afternoon. The theme of this day was the theme of Place; we read the first part of the Gospel aloud, going around the room, each person with a different version. Then we looked at Jesus' place – his world socially, geographically, historically – and the places he chose to teach and heal; his movements from the margins of society to its center and back; and the movement of those from society's center to its margins to find God.

In the spirit of this day's theme, our group traveled around the place we found ourselves: we explored New London County; its places of power – Pfizer, Monsanto, Pequot Avenue, City Hall, and its margins: the soup kitchen, last year's emergency homeless shelter, the few houses left at Fort Trumbull.

The theme of Day Three was Solidarity and Community with those living on the margins, with the ministry of John the Baptist, in the wilderness. In Mark's upside down world, those from the center of the religious and civic universe are coming to the margins to find salvation. In the Bible, the Divine speaks in a remote place, through an obscure figure of doubtful social origins; as Myers writes, "Not everything that the poor tell us is the truth of the gospel, but we cannot know the truth of the gospel without listening to the poor." The rest of the

day, and part of the next was spent listening to some of New London's marginalized. We spent the afternoon and evening with the Grassroots Homeless Coalition, hearing their stories, watching their film, and began the next morning helping to serve and eat breakfast with some of the city's homeless at the Congregational Church on State Street.

Day Four was about Discipleship – taking up the Cross, choosing to live differently; resisting systems that perpetuate injustice and what it means, what are the consequences, of being a non-violent committed disciple of Christ, in First Century Palestine and Twenty-First Century USA. We studied the cast of characters Jesus assembled to follow him, and were reminded that none of them “got it right” at first. We were also reminded that none of them had to do it alone. We thought about the concept of “Community” and reflected about the communities we surround ourselves with, of the rights and responsibilities of living in Community, and of their formalization and institutionalization. We also thought about the rich man, the camel and the needle's eye, and what we would have to “give up” in order to fully follow, fully live. That day we continued the conversation while exploring a community dedicated to living differently – the Peace Farm in Voluntown.

And so we continued, thinking about peace. Then the storms hit. If this were a movie, the first, a huge, powerful, thunder and lightning storm, which knocked out power to our neighboring communities for days, served mainly to foreshadow the second, the human storm, much scarier to us than Mother Nature's display. A large, drunken, angry, mentally ill man stormed in on our last Morning Prayer service and threatened the group, and particularly one of its members. Our reaction was non-violent to a certain extent; certainly no one tried to engage him physically or verbally. But, to a person, everyone thought it was the right idea to contact the police and make use of the solution the police suggested, which involved the court system. It seemed as though, at crunch time, “Caesar's laws”

and not God's, were immediately invoked, without anyone sensing any irony. This got me thinking – could it possibly be true, that which my militaristic, law-and-order type, friends believe without question – that the only reason we can even talk about peace and living differently is because we are surrounded by people with guns on whom we rely when we are scared? I hope not. I really, really hope not.

I am just happy to remember that apostles from 2,000 years ago struggled with these issues too.

Fall 2006

VII. F.R.E.S.H. NEW LONDON

EXTRA! EXTRA! F.R.E.S.H.! F.R.E.S.H.!

Arthur Lerner

Saint Francis House is excited to shepherd a new initiative called F.R.E.S.H. (Food: Resources, Education, Security, Health) New London. SFH will act as this start-up program's fiduciary umbrella for 2005.

The mission is to work in partnership to strengthen food security in our region and to move beyond 'anti-hunger' activism by building local capacity and control. Current collaborators include: The United Way/Labor Food Center, Community Partnerships, Connecticut College, Drop-in-Learning Center, Temple Beth-El, O.I.C., Housing Authority and the Alternative Incarceration Center.

The heart of our work in 2005 will be our youth work corps. I will be organizing the training of six teenage workers in issues of hunger, nutrition, diet, as well as in culinary and agricultural skills and then provide these young people paid experience doing positive work in their community. Their work growing and cleaning food for free distribution will add precious nutrient dense produce to the free food supply in New London. Their efforts at developing and sharing educational tools with food recipients and children will help build the capacity in the community to appreciate, grow, handle, and prepare fresh food.

Our projects will include our own production gardens, assisting an interfaith group to grow a 'soup-kitchen' garden for free distribution, advocating and supporting new and existing community gardens in New London, and broad community education focused on food relief recipients and children.

We look forward to our list of collaborators growing. Maybe you want to be one? For those who want to roll up their sleeves to help plow the back forty, please be in touch. For others who have a financial contribution in mind, our

current needs include:

\$1,500 for each of 6 teenage workers –(275 hours)

\$1,200 to buy and operate a good rototiller

Donations in any amount, in kind or in cash, to buy everything from compost to poster-board, from seeds to gas, all needed in order to make this a success.

Advent 2004

A FRESH* SUMMER: EARLY REFLECTIONS ON YOUTH, POWER, AND THE GARDEN

Laura Burfoot

I find myself approaching the end of the first FRESH growing season with few answers and many questions. FRESH has been absolutely everything and not quite anything that I expected it to be. Education and farming both have at their essence the same principle – growth. Yet I could envision only the beauty I would find in the growth of the plants around me; the world of educating, of encouraging the growth of people, was entirely a new terrain.

The garden is a place of transformation, of growth, of miracles. Of sights and scents, of dynamic beauty, of taste, and of nourishment. I am wildly blessed to have spent so much of my summer in such a place. I deeply thank the St. Francis House community – both for their organizational support for FRESH, as well as for their daily, emotional support of me – for making this work possible.

Before the FRESH summer began, my expectation (though I pretended to myself that I didn't have one) was that each day in the garden (we worked at four main sites) would reflect those very principles of transformation and change; that these eight teenagers and Arthur and I would let each other in, and we would begin the work of addressing life, together. With the garden as our model, collective insight would blossom into collective evolution. As I have learned, however, gardens are slightly more predictable than people; and to nurture the growth of a carrot is vastly simpler than to nurture the growth of a person.

Or is it? Perhaps they are the same, but a carrot is more forthright in showing its progress. What I do know, is that the work of the educator is a matter of faith: it is my choice whether I believe that every day we were out there we were all learning – about ourselves, about life – in ways that may not

bear fruit until years from now.

The FRESH crew consisted of eight New London teenagers, four boys, four girls, all between the ages of 15-18, all self-identified as non-white. All but two attend New London High School. All occupy a middle to lower income economic status. Arthur Lerner, and I, both white, both of middle class backgrounds, both educated, comprised the leadership team.

To be a teenager is to be a marginalized member of society. In general, the world around us does not hold respect for young people – especially young people of color (especially young men, who are devastatingly criminalized). Most young people of color experience constant distrust by the white power structures surrounding them – whether it be white folks they pass on the street, whose fear and recoil are tangible or their white teachers making middle class incomes who neither live in their neighborhoods nor are friends with anyone who does. These children – because that's what they are, still, in many ways – are disrespected, disempowered, and are attempting to grow within the confines of a society whose expectations for them are entirely uncreative and inflexible. As students, their lives have been greatly formed and informed by their experience in school. I cannot begin to decipher them, then, without also deciphering their experience of school.

I do not intend to put many words to the argument that school in general is not an empowering experience. If power is defined in the American Heritage Dictionary as “the ability or capacity to perform or act effectively,” or “the ability or official capacity to exercise control,” then it seems pointless to spend much time arguing that school is not full of moments in which students are exercising power. (I am not, here, blaming teachers, but instead calling into question the early 20th century model of industrial education still in use today). I write from my own experience as a 1999 New London High School graduate, as well as from accounts of my students' experiences. High school was not for me, and still is not, from what I gather, a

place where students are encouraged to be their most powerful selves – to design their courses of study, to decide when their attention is there to listen and when they'd rather be moving their bodies, to “exercise control” over themselves. I recall high school – and school in general – as a place where those around me were exercising control over me, often without my consent.

What of this lack of power, this lack of control over oneself? In my experience, disempowerment is felt in my bones, and in my eyes, and on my chest. When I think of moments in my life when I've felt disempowered, I recall them as weighted, heavy, arresting experiences. I remember them (and continue to live them) as moments when it felt (feels) as though the air has been knocked out of me. It is a deflating experience.

If school is a disempowering experience, and it is the institution that has most shaped the FRESH students' lives, then what is to be done? How do I work to create a learning space in which these people are not marginalized, a space in which their independence and creativity is honored? How do I communicate that FRESH is a space in which they have full power over themselves, as well as over the project that we are collectively creating? How do we work together to repattern ourselves away from the disempowerment of school and society, and towards a place of power? How do we undo years of teachers' low expectations? How do we, collectively, as people coming together to learn, unlearn the dynamic in which teacher knows all and students know nothing? How do I, as an educator, create an opportunity for transformation, for a new way?

At this early stage in my reflection, many of the answers to these questions seem to revolve around the issue of trust. Young people have zero reason to trust that I – in my position in FRESH as both educator and boss – am on their side. They have no real reason to believe that I am operating under any different understanding of myself, or of them, than the world around us.

How, then, do I begin to build trust amongst us? Of this I am not at all sure. What I suspect, however, is that the solution lies in being an ally. This in part is one of the most important lessons that has emerged from my experience as a leader of FRESH New London this summer. The American Heritage Dictionary defines ally as “one in helpful association with another.” Being an ally is, fundamentally, about taking risks and making choices that bring you into question in the eyes of the “power holders.” Being an ally to youth means trusting in their power to make decisions for themselves. It means enabling them to trust themselves to make those decisions. It means supporting them through discovery. It means being there, it means commitment.

What that commitment looks like could be the subject of another article. For me, it necessitates thinking beyond the professional model. We, the FRESH students and I, are all members of the New London community, sharing in the common graces and disappointments that are community life. I understand myself as resident of this community first and foremost. From what I can tell, students do not need more professionals in their lives. They need friends, they need mentors, they need allies who are willing to listen, to learn, and most importantly, to respect and to honor.

Sometimes it is as simple as this: during a workshop at a conference that FRESH attended, one of the crew quietly motioned to me and asked if he could go outside. At first, I said no, feeling that it was an inappropriate moment for him to leave the room, and that the others would think it rude. I thought it might look bad, not only for him, but for me, because as their leader I was somehow expected to be “in control” of them. And then I realized what a mistake that decision was. I realized how disrespectful it was for me not to trust his own judgment – that it was exceptionally hot, that he was tired, that he needed a breath of fresh air, and that he had in the first place looked to me to legitimize his choice. So I

motioned back and told him of course he should go outside if he needed to. And he did. And then he came back in shortly, and proceeded with the conversation.

I've been meditating on the meaning of radical action – on what constitutes a radical person. I once thought that radicals were on the barricades. Now, perhaps, I have a different understanding. I now suppose that to be radical is also to be committed; and that commitment is often mundane, and is always daily. What young people need is commitment by the people and community around them – commitment that we trust in their own judgment and experience, and commitment to support them through mistakes. I think of the tomatoes in our garden; of their wild, tangled, exploring growth, and of the stakes and twine that keep them standing, supported. Perhaps the model is there.

Fall 2005

VIII. FRIENDS

“A ONE-MAN REVOLUTION OF PEACE AND MUTUAL AID”

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

AT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR CHUCK MATTHEI (1948-2002), Bill Wylie-Kellerman quoted a poem of Denise Levertov's that referred to Chuck as "intransigent Chuck Matthei." Every one of the hundreds of people gathered in the First Baptist Church in Providence, RI, laughed at that description, because they knew it was true. Chuck was one of the most determined men I've ever known. I thought at the time that here was a mysterious connection between Chuck's life and my own, and a few days later located my copy of Levertov's book, *Relearning the Alphabet*. The poem in question was written in 1968-69, at the height of Levertov's participation in the Resistance to the Vietnam War. That's how she met Chuck. Levertov was my first teacher of poetry (in 1964) and I lived in her apartment on Greenwich Street in Manhattan when I came back from Greece in 1967.

Chuck is a much larger figure in the poem than the brief quotation at the memorial service might suggest. He was 20 years old when Denise first met him, traveling the US to encourage resistance to the war. Chuck carried with him a copy of a poem of Denise's, on the back of which he had added these thought in his own words:

This is your only life – live it well! No one man can bring about a social change – but each man's life is a whole and necessary part of his society, a necessary step in any change, and a powerful example of the possibility of life for others. Let all our words and our actions speak the possibility of peace and cooperation between men. Too long have we used the excuse: 'I believe in peace, but that other man does not – when he lays down his arms, then I will follow.' Which of us deserves to wait to be the last good man on earth; how long will we wait if all of us wait? Let each man begin

a one-man revolution of peace and mutual aid – so that there is at least that much peace....a beginning:....

When I read these words written 35 years ago, I was overwhelmed by the consistency of his vision. Chuck Matthei was, quite simply, “*a one-man revolution of peace and mutual aid.*”

Chuck's life and work

Chuck Matthei was born in 1948 in Chicago. As a teenager he became involved in the Civil Rights movement and brought Martin Luther King, Jr., to his high school. Instead of going to college, he burned his draft card, waited to be arrested, and met Dorothy Day. He spent a number of formative years in the Catholic Worker and peace movements. From Gandhi he learned the philosophy of *ahimsa* and the practice of nonviolence as a way of life. His interest in the land, affordable housing, affordable farms, and community supported agriculture were part of his vision of life as it might be lived, if we gave life a chance.

From 1980-90 Chuck served as Director of the Institute for Community Economics (ICE) in Greenfield, MA. ICE pioneered the modern community land trust and community loan fund as models of economic development. With others, he guided the development of 25 regional loan funds, helped to create hundreds of permanently affordable housing units, and organized the National Association of Community Development Loan Funds. A man who lived a life of voluntary poverty, Chuck was a genius at raising money and using it for human purposes to benefit whole communities.

In 1991 Chuck moved to Voluntown, CT, and founded Equity Trust. There he used his vision and expertise as well as his financial management skills to provide leadership and support for important US and international projects. At Equity Trust he focused especially on alternative models of land tenure and economic development. An article in *Sojourners* magazine, “Economics as if people mattered,” gives a succinct statement

of his principles of human economic and social development.

Chuck's friends were numerous and were drawn from the many movements for justice and peace he was part of. Although he never married, he was devoted to his family, including his sisters and niece and nephews, who were present at this memorial service in Providence. Appropriately, the service held in the church founded by Roger Williams when he was exiled from Massachusetts in colonial days.

Someone at the service observed that for Chuck there was "no distinction between his life and his work." Part of Chuck's wisdom was knowing the goodness in both and relishing in each what his friend Dorothy Day termed the "duty of delight."

Personal connections

I certainly was not among Chuck's closest friends. In fact, we did *not* meet in the 1960's when our mutual friend Denise Levertov might have made a connection. But Chuck was in a very practical sense one of the "godfathers" of St. Francis House, and a very important person to both Anne Scheibner and our children and me.

Anne knew of Chuck's work when she and I were recently married and she was pregnant with Nathaniel. She traveled around New England while working for the New England Network Organizing Project and met Chuck at ICE. She and Chuck shared a passion for the land and when we came back to New England it was a joy to find Chuck in nearby Voluntown.

We spent the 1998-99 school year with Anne and the children in Stonington, while she worked with Chuck at Equity Trust, and me back in Atlanta, trying to discern God's call to us for the future. Chuck was a witness to us of the possibility of doing things without professional status or institutional support. It was in part his experience as a practical visionary, a man who not only dreamed dreams but was able to raise money to make the dreams real, that gave us hope. And in practical terms, Chuck and Equity Trust provided an initial

loan (now repaid) to buy the first house at 30 Broad Street in New London, and a bridge loan for the purchase of 32 Broad Street so the St. Francis House community can grow.

“A one-man revolution”

Chuck and I only got to know each other toward the end of his life. Much happened in both our lives since the connection in the 1960's that is chronicled in Levertov's poems. But I am encouraged, in the prophetic sense of that term, *given heart* by the witness of this friend who proclaimed himself in 1968 a “one-man revolution for peace and mutual aid.” The war in Vietnam went on for many years after we began to be a part of the Resistance. A new war has now begun that will go on, no doubt, much longer than any of us would like. But with witnesses like Chuck, we can have the faith, the courage, and the sheer practical determination to resist it every step of the way. We can be witnesses in our turn to the practicality of nonviolent living, in stark contrast to the life-denying, death-dealing impracticality for human life of the warfare state.

Chuck's witness gives me hope. Hope, as he knew, is not optimism, not a naïve assumption that “things will somehow be okay.” Hope is a decision. It is a choice made daily in the ways we live our lives. As Gandhi said, “we may never be strong enough to be entirely nonviolent in thought, word and deed, but we must keep nonviolence as our goal and make strong progress towards it.” We may not be able to do everything we want to do, but we can do what we can, and refuse to be defeated by cynicism and despair. Like Chuck, we can “choose life” day after day. And by the grace of God we may, in our turn, be faithful to the truth, and shine its light out brightly in the darkness where we live.

Winter 2002

BISHOP PAUL MOORE JR: A COMMITTED LIFE (1919-2003)

John Robertson, OEF

The son of a wealthy New York/New Jersey banking family, Paul Moore Jr. returned a Marine hero from World War II where he was wounded leading his company at Guadalcanal. His war experience led him to ordained ministry. At General Seminary, in the excitement of the post-War explosion, he was inspired by the example of French worker-priests ministering in the poorest parts of the country. Dorothy Day and the Catholic worker commitment to peace and justice were also a great influence. During his seminary days, Paul visited Little Portion Friary and began a life-long association with the Anglican Franciscan movement.

After seminary, Paul decided to put his discipleship into practice by developing an urban ministry team at the failing Grace Church, Van Vorst, in Jersey City. By doing street ministry and maintaining an open door rectory the team built a new community at Grace Church. Grace became a center for open housing struggles in Jersey City with Paul and others leading marches through the city. His wife Jenny wrote a book, *The People on Second Street*, about their life and work in Jersey City.

After a time as Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis, he was elected Suffragan Bishop of Washington, where he became a leader in the Civil Rights Movement and walked the streets of the city following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968. He became Bishop of New York in 1972. A leader in the peace movement, he was gassed in Saigon on a mission there. He also took risks in support of the women's movement in the Church and struggles for the rights of gay and lesbian people.

He went to jail, he preached everywhere, he marched, he spoke, he wrote, he prayed. He wrote two books about his ministry, *Take*

a Bishop like Me and *Presences: A Bishop's Life in the City*. In 1980 he was a founding member of the Episcopal Urban Caucus, and led the assembled Episcopalians on a picket line. He said over and over that the Church should not become a "donut," with lots of activity in the community and the world but an empty hole where the worshipping and witnessing community of believers was meant to be. He embraced in his life the vocation St. Francis received from Christ to "rebuild my church."

In his last few months of life Paul spoke every time he had a chance, always on the mystery of the Word becoming flesh. His last major speech was at the Episcopal Urban Caucus assembly in Chicago. He said that the enfleshment of Christ would lead us to a new understanding of what it means to be human, since all that we are is made holy in the taking of our flesh by Jesus.

Paul telephoned in October to tell me he was dying. He was very comfortable with this next step in his life in Christ. I had not seen him since the summer and was uncertain about his condition. In November I walked over to a peace demonstration in a park in front of the UN. As I walked over I saw all the usual suspects standing again for peace at a time when it had become unpopular again. Over the loudspeaker I heard a familiar voice. Paul was reading a list of names of children who had died as a result of the UN sanctions against Iraq. A life well lived is always ready for death. Francis taught us that in his meditation on the skull. If this were our last day, what would we want to do? Bishop Paul Moore Jr. was there preaching and living the gospel justice of Christ to the day he was carried off. ***May he rest in peace and rise in glory!***

Summer 2003

This article first appeared in "The Little Chronicle," the newsletter of the Society of Saint Francis.

MATZOH, BREAKING BREAD, AND LIBERATION

Ted Mellor

At a rally for hotel workers yesterday in front of the virulently anti-union Loews Hotel in Santa Monica, a Rabbi broke a piece of Matzoh in two and explained that the Matzoh's significance is precisely in its brokenness. Unless it is broken, it cannot be shared; and it is God's commandment that God's gifts be shared among all, not hogged by management and stockholders and withheld from minimum-wage service employees.

I was reminded of the breaking of the bread at Eucharist, reduced during the middle ages to a single breaking of the "priest's host" and explained as a kind of allegory of the breaking of Christ's body on the cross. But the broken body of Christ, it is often forgotten, "brings joy to the whole world." The whole Paschal Mystery celebrates not just the death and resurrection of a remarkable individual visiting as if from another planet, but, at a deeper level, our own death to the world of this present age and our liberation into a new way of living together in the world – a way characterized by the freedom to love, to be at peace one with another, and to share joyfully the gifts of God rather than engage in a bitter competition for each morsel of food. The Eucharist, I think, is one of God's ways of showing us in action how we are to live in the world, and in the ancient liturgies the bread was broken very deliberately in order that it might be shared – equally and by all, as St. John Chrysostom stresses – and the breaking went on for some time.

I like liturgies in which the breaking of the bread is more than just a quick gesture, liturgies in which the bread is broken and then broken and broken again into ever smaller pieces, and the wine is poured into extra chalices, so that the breaking and pouring become a sign of the sharing. And everybody gets her or his share – the rich do not get "more Communion" than the poor.

A passing motorist hurled what he supposed was an insult at our procession yesterday. I was reminded of Stewart Headlam's remark (paraphrasing the Didache) that "The Holy Communion pledges all who partake of it to be sharers of their wealth, whether spiritual or material, to be holy communists." How I hope this year's Paschal celebration will bring us closer to the day when that "insult" will be justified!

Summer 2001

THE SOUTHEASTERN CT PEACE & JUSTICE NETWORK AND ST. FRANCIS HOUSE

Ronna Stuller

On Wednesday, October 16, 2002, Connecticut College students invited the public to participate in a rally opposing military action in Iraq. Students, staff and faculty members, as well as local religious and community leaders, read their statements of peace to the concerned citizens who filled Crozier-Williams' 1962 Room. As the meeting drew to a close, three New London residents – Sheila Herbert, Bob Stuller, and Anne Scheibner – found themselves at the back of the room, asking, “What can we do?” The Southeastern Connecticut Peace and Justice Network arose out of that brief meeting, and St. Francis House was there at its inception.

The three continued to meet, along with a growing assortment of like-minded individuals, to find a response to the question that brought them together. When it became clear that a regular meeting schedule was necessary, Fr. Emmett and Anne graciously offered the use of St. Francis House. The SECT Peace & Justice Network has met there ever since, and St. Francis House has become a center, physically and spiritually, of our local peace movement.

It is simply not possible to list all the actions in which St. Francis House and the SECT P&J Network have worked in partnership over the last 4 ½ years, but I will try to provide a few examples that illustrate the range of our activities and interactions.

- In February and March 2003, Fr. Emmett helped plan the Connecticut College series “If War is the Answer, What is the Question?” and brought in members of the SECT P&J Network as speakers and participants.
- Both Anne and Emmett participated in the “Not in Our Name” task force, which engaged in civil resistance at

Rep. Rob Simmons' office in Norwich, challenging him to tell the truth about the reasons for going to war in Iraq; the network participated in the Iraq forum convened at Three Rivers Community College as a result of this action.

- The association between St. Francis House and the Hartford Catholic Worker has resulted in a number of opportunities for our local network. In April 2004, the SECT P&J Network hosted an exhibit and sale of original paintings and prints by Iraqi artist Amal Alwan, along with a presentation by Chris Allen-Doucot about his recent visit to Iraq.
- Both Anne and Emmett participated in the Mock Terror Attack task force, formed in response to New London's TOPOFF 3 drill in April 2005. The task force organized a forum featuring First Responder Megan Bartlett and Civil Rights Activist Ed Rodman, as well as a variety of TOPOFF week activities. After the drill, the group decided to focus on strategies for a just and peaceful future, and the Constructive Program Working Group was created.
- On January 11, 2007, the International Day to Shut Down Guantanamo, Fr. Emmett traveled to Washington DC to participate in a demonstration and civil disobedience at the US Federal Court; in New London, Anne organized a downtown procession of 'guards' and 'prisoners' to raise local awareness of Guantanamo prisoners' plight and to offer opportunities for action.

Of course, ongoing involvement in the SECT P&J Network has also included, over the years, weekly vigils at New London's Soldiers and Sailors Monument, civil resistance at Electric Boat's all-too-frequent submarine launches, protests of USCGA graduation speakers Pres. Bush and Vice Pres. Cheney, peace education at New London High School, and so much more.

I think that, more than anything else, St. Francis House has become a community center for all who are working for peace and justice. Because it has been a constant presence and a welcoming one, St. Francis house has made it easier for us to meet each other and come together. May we have many more years working and playing together.

May 2007

REPORT FROM THE TUESDAY MORNING STUDY GROUP

Eric Swanfeldt

George W. Bush was president, how awful it would be we did not yet know. The World Trade Towers and the Pentagon, signs of our economic and military hegemony, had been attacked, clearly a response to our terrorism and domination – but finer administration minds said that ‘they’ hated us for our freedom. And a small group of church folks decided to read – study – reflect – discern the Way together in the company of Ched Myers and his book *Binding the Strong Men: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus*.

Ched says in his preface: “It is offered as the Gospel itself is, to discipleship communities, however discouraged and weary, as part of our ongoing search for renewed direction and hope in our struggle to follow the way of Jesus in difficult times. A true reading of Mark compels us to come to terms afresh with our faith and most certainly our lack of faith (Mk 9:24). I pray that this study might help Mark to speak, and the reader(s) to have ‘ears to hear,’ the good news that promises yet to overthrow the structures of domination in our world.”

Wonder-full folks gathered – hosted in St. Francis House: people and priests/pastors, women and men, Catholic – Reformed – orthodox (but certainly all somewhat subversive) and began sharing. “Here indeed, we quickly agreed, was a scriptural study to reckon with. It invited (and shortly received) serious pursuit: reading, meditation, passionate discussion. Through Myers, Mark spoke, as the Quakers say, to our condition.” (Daniel Berrigan in his Foreword to Ched Myers’s book).

Each person brought to the group wisdom (lived – mother, pastor, welfare, church structures, patriarchy). Reading, we opened ourselves to the wisdom of Mark and Myers. We were not seeking ready-made prescriptions (though some of us may

have been secretly ready to offer them) but we were inviting ourselves to be challenged by the text and our contexts. Would we give-up long-held convictions, preconceived notions – or at our ages (a rather mature group) were we already beyond such re-envisioning? But we found that, for example, Mark's story of the rich man (Mark 10:17) "sell all that you have, and then come and follow me" even now audits us, and invites radical response – does it not?

We learned, shared, knit together, enjoyed each other, ventured beyond where we had been. Significantly, we continued, after Mark and Myers, to gather for study and *koinonia*. Reading, always, books/articles/novels that challenge the conventional wisdom of this age of domination and violence, materialism and militarism, the growing chasm between rich and poor – our world and the third world. We tend to be, want to be resisters, subversive – embracing the vocation of making and keeping human life human – peace-makers, justice bringers. We need and are encouraged and strengthened by this community of resisters in order to survive – both in the church/our churches and in this society.

Howard Zinn, Arundhati Roy, Noam Chomsky, William Stringfellow and many good others became wisdom-sharers for us, our companeras of the Way. We share their "seeing," we know that Babylon cannot be forever, in this reading-reflecting community we search for the Way – toward resistance, in continuing to do the desperately needed acts of mercy (society fails to respond), and moving beyond to do the justice that brings peace. Justice work is hard, not so immediately rewarding as acts of mercy – a sharing community is thus an exceedingly valuable asset for the continuing struggle.

Last September we chose to do an action together. We would be Peace Pilgrims – walk 275 miles around Connecticut to share and invite sharing around Peace. One of our guides in study, Arundhati Roy, said: "It would be naïve to imagine that we can directly confront Empire. We need to create a universe

of alternative information. The only institution more powerful than the U.S. government is American civil society. Yours is by no means a great nation. But you could be a great people. History is giving you the chance. Seize the time.” (from her book *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*) The Peace Walk was a pioneering venture on behalf of our country and the world. Perhaps our vision can be that a small group, partners in study – dialogue – responding, can change the world. As Margaret Mead says: “Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”

May 2007

IX. PEACE PILGRIMAGE

REFLECTIONS ON PEACE & PILGRIMAGE

Janet Minella-Didier

We loaded the sleeping bags and pads, duffle bags, first aid kit, handouts, etc., into the trunk and back seat of my car. The peace pilgrims walked down the driveway of Mercy Center in Madison and I drove out. It was early morning of a lovely, sunny day.

That first day I did little reflecting on this pilgrimage. I did wonder what I would accomplish. I wondered about the lack of signs. But I concentrated on driving, making a stop every one or two miles so the pilgrims could get some water, a snack, or Vaseline their feet.

It was the following day that I began to think about this pilgrimage, this “praying with the feet.” I compared this walk with the medieval pilgrimages I had read about, and even with the journey through life each of us is on. There are the daily struggles and discomforts, the stumbling, falling, and being helped up, the temptation to quit, the decision to go on, in hope and trust. I decided that journey’s end is not nearly as important as the love, self-sacrifice, commitment, and pure intention that keep pilgrims moving forward.

During a discussion following lunch one day, Donna reminded those gathered that when we walk we are joining the majority of the people of the world, who walk for their water, food, medical care. I thought of all the people who are displaced by violence or natural disasters and, carrying their few possessions, walk to safety, to temporary camps, to new beginnings in unfamiliar places. I thought of the thousands of people, deprived of even the basic necessities, leaving families and friends and taking that dangerous walk across borders in a desperate search for a better life for their children.

I thought of Jesus’ three years of ministry as a pilgrimage, ending in his carrying the cross to his death. I wondered if his message of love, compassion, justice, and forgiveness would

have lasted 2000 years if he had stood on a platform while proclaiming it, and then driven off in a car to his next scheduled stop. I wondered if Gandhi and Martin Luther King would have successfully, and nonviolently, challenged unjust political laws and systems if they had not talked and walked with their people. And I thought of all the nonviolent marches taking place across the country and around the world at this present time – where ordinary people are expressing their hunger for peace and justice and are demanding that their governments change.

And I began to understand the power of our modern pilgrims' prayer and why posters were not needed.

I also thought of energy. As a Reiki practitioner, I have learned that the body is made up of and surrounded by energy. Robert Lax, the minimalist poet and friend of Thomas Merton, said, "We are beings charged with energy, exchanging charges throughout the day." (*The Way of the Dreamcatcher*, S.T. Georgiou, Novalis 2002, p. 30.)

Positive thoughts and pure intention lead to positive energy, to health and to a positive energy exchange. I could see the energy generated by our modern peace pilgrims expanding out into the community through which they walked, and even beyond. A pebble dropped into the energy of the planet, sends out ripples of energy that slowly spread, further and further from their source. Who knows how far this energy will flow or what positive changes, great or small, will take place in our world because of this seemingly minor contribution and prayer of our peace pilgrims.

When I left the peace pilgrims after my final day of driving I felt hope, for the first time in many years. I do believe that a small group of people can, indeed, bring truth, justice, and peace to this troubled world.

Francistide 2006

“SING ALLELUIA AND KEEP ON WALKING”

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

“SING ALLELUIA,” wrote St. Augustine of Hippo in his Sermon 256, “and I keep on walking.” This text is read in the Roman Breviary Office of Readings for the Saturday before Advent Sunday, the day before the Church begins a new liturgical year. We have walked, as it were, for the past year, and we are about to “keep on walking” for another year. And another and another. But we “sing Alleluia,” even while we walk.

This text was much in my mind as we walked around Connecticut in September 2007 on the second annual **Pilgrimage for Peace**, and it is in my mind as we plan for a third pilgrimage in 2008. The concluding paragraph of the sermon says this:

So, brethren, let us sing Alleluia, not in the enjoyment of heavenly rest, but to sweeten our toil. Sing as travelers sing along the road: but keep on walking. Solace your toil by singing – do not yield to idleness. Sing but keep on walking. What do I mean by “walking”? I mean, press on from good to better. The apostle says there are some who go from bad to worse. But if you press on, you keep on walking. Go forward then in virtue, in true faith and right conduct. Sing up – and keep on walking.

Those who work for peace, who struggle to resist the power of the Empire and the warfare state, who yearn for justice in the world, have a long road to walk. We contend, as St. Paul said, “against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). But we have faith that the reign of God which Jesus proclaimed will finally be victorious, that God’s poor who cry out for justice will at last be vindicated.

Our friend Ken Leech wrote in *The Eye of the Storm* (1992) that, as Jacob emerged from his night-long wrestle with God limping and wounded, so “a pilgrim church is a church of the wounded,” and that “the sacraments of the pilgrim church deal with basic things – bread, water, oil, the clasp of our sister’s and brother’s hand, ...the food, provisions, and resources for a people on the move.” That’s what it felt like we were on the days of the Pilgrimage for Peace: *a people on the move*, the beginning, I dare to hope, of a Movement.

Christmas 2007

PILGRIMAGE FOR PEACE 2007

Glennys Ulschak

*I've got the love of justice
Deep down in my heart.
And it's deep, deep,
And it's down, down,
Deep down in my heart.*

A new song; a new path; another peace pilgrimage.

Why do this? Were you successful? Did you accomplish what you set out to do? Good questions that push for conversation and clarity of thought.

Like the familiar image of a rock thrown into a pond creating ripples well beyond the point of entry, so to the "accomplishments" of the Pilgrimage. Our means were simple: we **walked**, we **prayed**, we **walked**, we **prayed**, we **talked**.

We **walked**, we **prayed**, we **walked**, we **talked** with people in faith communities about peace; we prayed with our feet for some 250 miles circling out from New London and returning to New London.

One of my favorite theologians, Alice in Wonderland, says to the Mad Hatter, "Don't just do something; stand there!" The Pilgrimage for Peace is kind of "standing there," making a statement with our presence, our feet, that says there is another way **other than** violence, greed, injustice and war. Walkers, drivers, hosts, all who made up our team of Peace Pilgrims, at the simple/most profound level, were a witness of Peace. We invited conversation on people's hopes, their faith and ideas on peace; and we were usually not disappointed. We heard people shout "**Where is the outrage over this war? Why aren't people, young people, in the streets?**" We heard sharp analysis of cultural and religious institutions, we heard deep passion and desire for a compassionate, loving, humane

society; for loving care of one another and the earth; we heard despair and disillusionment, disgust and anger. **And** hope – beacons of caring in faith communities, caring for each other and vulnerable elder and ill ones in their midst; we saw children eagerly doing food drives and being taught nonviolent ways of being together; we walked in the crisp air and forested beauty of Connecticut. (We also got soaked from driving rains a couple of days!)

“We need to make it easier for people to be and do good,” said Peter Maurin, co-founder with Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker movement. That hope we also hold in our vision during and following the Pilgrimage. The country is woefully off track – homelessness, hunger, poverty of body, mind, and spirit, growing economic and social inequity, war-making, and the list goes on and on. And communities of faith? Weary with much maintenance though well meaning in purpose. People are more and more fed up and are, I believe, lurching toward what Democratic candidate Barack Obama urged this week to **“get fired up”!** Will we do so in large enough numbers to turn the corner? Barriers abound. Again spoken well in one of Peter Maurin’s pithy **Easy Essays** entitled:

“War and Peace”

**We call barbarians
people living
on the other side of the border.
We call civilized
people living
on this side of the border.
We civilized
living on this side of the border
are not ashamed
to arm ourselves to the teeth
so as to protect ourselves**

against the barbarians
living on the other side.
And when the barbarians
born on the other side of the border
invade us,
we do not hesitate
to kill them
before we have tried
to civilize them.
So we civilized
exterminate barbarians
without civilizing them.
And we persist
in calling ourselves civilized.

The Green Revolution (1949)

...civilized meaning human civilized human behavior of respect, fairness, understanding, mutuality. Can praying, walking, talking, inviting people to share in conversation and to walk with us promote civility? Can it change our world? Will praying, walking, talking, singing rise up to a movement? A **loving surge** toward greater boldness? Firmer commitment to act for nonviolence and peace in our communities, our houses of worship, our state and nation? Can we change the world? Our forebears Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., say nothing else will. Nothing else will....one footfall at a time, we move toward peace. ***Si, se puede!*** Join us in 2008. Come out for a mile, an hour, a day, a week.

Christmas 2007

WHY WE WALK

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, BOSTON ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2008

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

*These people who have been turning the world upside down
have now come here!* (Acts 17:6)

I am one of a number of pilgrims who are walking around southern New England this fall and I have come here to do my small part to “turn the world upside down” by preaching peace. My old friend, Dean Jep Streit, has kindly invited me to use this pulpit to proclaim our message. I am grateful to him for the opportunity to speak with you today and to you for listening.

My friend Eric Swanfeldt, a United Methodist minister from Uncasville, Conn., is the inspiration for the pilgrimage for peace. In the 1980’s, during our country’s proxy war against the Nicaraguan people’s revolution – the Contra War – Eric walked around New England talking with Methodist congregations and persuading them to enter into a covenant with the Church in Nicaragua. In 2002, when our country invaded Afghanistan, Eric and I started a study group at St. Francis House, in New London, Conn., to encourage one another during the war fever that was building in our country. In 2006, Eric said, “It’s time to stop talking and start walking.” So we walked for two weeks around Connecticut in 2006 and 2007. This year we are walking for 43 days around southern New England. We walk because talk is not enough.

Our mutual friend Canon Ed Rodman reminded us in 2001, after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, that the 911 operator has a standard question when one phones the emergency number – “What is the nature of your emergency?” The nature of our emergency – as people,

as a country, as Church – is that we have lost our way. We don't know who we are any more, and so we don't know where to go or what to do. The economy is a symbol of our situation. Every day we lose more and more of our value, and the end is not in sight. Our problem is, **We have forgotten how to be human!**

Thomas Merton – poet, Trappist monk, and incisive writer about civil rights, war and peace, as well as Christian prayer – wrote a book in the early 1960's called *Raids on the Unspeakable*. He defined our nation's willingness to destroy the world with nuclear weapons to protect “our way of life” as just that – **unspeakable**. And Richard McSorly said long ago that once we have become willing to do that, all other moral questions are relative. Nicaragua is a lens through which we can look at ourselves. I heard a Methodist pastor in Watertown, Mass., say the other night that, given the difference in population, our country inflicted the equivalent of a 9/11 attack on Nicaragua **every week for ten years!** Seen through the eyes of the victim, it's not a pretty picture.

You know the history of the last 8 years as well as I do. After the terrorist attacks on 9/11/2001, when 3,000 civilians were tragically killed, our country came to a crossroads. Nelson Mandela said it best. We Americans, at that moment, were like everyone else in the world. We experienced tragic loss and profound suffering. At that moment, we were in solidarity with oppressed people around the planet. We had a choice. We could react with humility and seek to join with other countries to remove the *causes* of terrorism, in the Middle East and elsewhere, or we could lash out with our enormous strength and military power and try to crush – who? The 19 Saudi Arabians who died when they flew planes into buildings? Or a conveniently unappealing dictator in oil-rich Iraq? We could become the enemy we feared – the terrorist.

On our 2006 Pilgrimage, which began September 11, we learned that 9/11 is not only the emergency phone number. It is an historic date for several reasons. In 1973 it was the day

the Chilean military, guided by Henry Kissinger and the CIA, murdered their democratically – elected president and installed the dictator Pinochet. But 9/11 in 1901 – exactly a century before the attacks on the U.S. – was the date of Mahatma Gandhi’s first nonviolent action for change. On that date, in Johannesburg, South Africa, Gandhi and several thousand Indians vowed to resist the apartheid government’s racist “pass laws” and go to jail or die – but not to kill – for their freedom. That freedom came, at last, in 1989.

If you look at the history of the 20th century, it is the history of wars that failed to bring peace and security. It is also a history of nonviolent struggles that brought freedom to oppressed peoples around the world: India in 1947; South Africa in 1989; the countries dominated by the Soviet Union, including Russia, in the 1990’s; and our own, on-going, Civil Rights movement. As we all know, our country did *not* make the nonviolent choice in 2001. The consequences of the choice our leaders made are not only endless war in Iraq, Afghanistan, and now northern Pakistan, but insecurity for Israel and Iran, nuclear expansion in India and Pakistan, and a new belligerence in Russia. Not to mention the fact that the U.S. is now upgrading and replacing its nuclear weapons arsenal with “reliable replacement warheads,” and establishing new missile sites in Eastern Europe to defend against – Iran!

The consequences of our choice of revenge instead of reconciliation are also domestic. The present economic collapse is a case in point. As Jim Carroll pointed out in the *Boston Globe* last week, the (apparently ineffective) \$700 billion Wall Street “bail-out” should be a familiar figure to us. **We spend \$700 billion on our military every year!** Meanwhile our education system is gutted and privatized. Our healthcare system is a failure – at least Massachusetts is *trying* to cover everybody! We haven’t the resources to deal with natural disasters in New Orleans and Texas. We build more prisons for profit and do not find ways to change the lives of prisoners. We lock up

people who use *some* drugs, and allow others to make a killing in advertising for the “legal” ones – alcohol and tobacco. I could go on. **The point is to understand the relationship between war as the preferred option of our country and the continued racism, militarism, poverty, materialism and moral failure among our people and around the world.** And so some of us walk.

I’ve learned this past week from my Nicaraguan brother Benjamin Cortes that walking is a spiritual discipline. In Nicaragua, they walk in order to stay in touch with the people. The leaders walk, the clergy walk, the old people and the children walk. And their revolution is committed to education for all, housing for all, jobs for all, clean water for all, land for all, a future and hope for all. Benjamin came from Managua last week to walk in solidarity with us. Some of us, who live in what the Nicaraguans call “the colossus of the North,” have been talking for a long time about peace, justice, care for God’s creation. Now it is time to walk, because talk is not enough.

When Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica – *walking* of course! – everybody got upset and said, “These people who have been turning the world upside down have now come here!” Why were the people upset? Why was the Roman government disturbed? How had Paul and Silas “turned the world upside down”? Read on in the 17th chapter of Acts: **“They all act in opposition to the decrees of Caesar and claim that there is another king, Jesus”** (Acts 17:7).

Jesus of Nazareth, whom we Christians call our Lord and Savior, *walked* all over his country, Palestine, teaching and healing, gathering disciples, listening to his people and sharing with them a vision of human life made human. He called it “the Kingdom of God.” Martin Luther King, Jr. called it “the Beloved Community.” All people everywhere catch a glimpse of this vision and desire to live in its beauty.

Yesterday, on Boston Common, several hundred people gathered to speak out against the wars our country is involved

in. These wars and the consequent economic turmoil spoil our community life for children and families diminishing education, housing and health care. There were lots of young people there, but no visible Christian presence. The nearest thing was a young man with a Bible quotation on his T-shirt. It said, **“The effect of justice will be peace.”** (Isaiah 32:17-18) My friends the Pilgrims for Peace from Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Hampshire – *and Nicaragua!* – walked with them yesterday.

I invite you to walk – with us or with others – and learn what walking teaches: humility and courage. The Church – you and I – must not just talk. We must walk with Christ and the people to change the world.

October 12, 2008

THE PEACE CHARTER

The **Peace Charter** is the creation of all the people we talked with during the 2008 Peace Pilgrimage throughout southern New England. We made notes of our conversations around the table during and after meals people provided for the pilgrims as a gift of hospitality. Our experience is that people are smarter and more sophisticated than they are often given credit for being. We found people able to think about complex social, political and economic issues from a profoundly compassionate and spiritual perspective. They were able to understand people and cultures that are different from themselves. They spoke of those our society calls “enemies” with compassion and respect. They have a vision of a society based on peace and justice and a shared home on the one small planet we inhabit.

Our inspiration for the **Peace Charter** comes from South Africa. In 1955, in the worst days of *apartheid*, the African National Congress sent people into all the towns and villages to ask people what they wanted for their country when liberation came. The faith required even to think this way in 1955 is astonishing. But they got answers from the people about their desires for governance, equal rights for all national groups, economic justice, the land, equality before the law, equal human rights, work and security, learning and culture, housing, peace and friendship. After publication of the “Freedom Charter” the leaders of the ANC were imprisoned. Liberation came in 1989, when Nelson Mandela walked out of Robben Island prison to become president of the country. They had a vision for the kind of country they wanted that the people had created 34 years before.

We do not imagine the transformation of our society will be accomplished in less time than it took our South African sisters and brothers. Real social change comes from below, from the people, and takes a long time. But we are patient. We invite

all who read this **Peace Charter** to work with us and with others for a better way “to make and keep human life human” on our common earth. Let us know your experiences. Share your successes and failures with others. Let us learn together. As Gandhi said, “We must be the change we wish to see.” Let our life be “an experiment with the truth.” Let there be peace among us, and let us not be instruments of our own oppression.

PEACE CHARTER

The 2008 Pilgrimage for Peace began in New London, Conn., on September 28, and concluded in the same city 43 days and 800 miles later on November 9. We were a team of pilgrims. Scores of people were part of our team: walkers, drivers, host communities. Everywhere we went – from New London to Providence to Boston, to New Hampshire, to western Massachusetts, and back to Connecticut – host teams welcomed us, offered hospitality, and joined in conversation about peace. The question we posed to all of them was:

What is the deepest desire of your heart for yourself, your family, your community, your country and the world?

This **Peace Charter** is a summary of what people told us of their desire for peace, justice, and a new way to care for creation. Through all the topics discussed, there was a single animating principle: *The way we live now is not sustainable. Or, to put it another way, In whose interest is it for us to live this way? – Another way is possible.*

Many particular issues were discussed, some of which are listed below under three general headings. People desire an end to our country’s current wars, but they recognize that peace is not simply an absence of war. They want a transformation of the way we live in the world that will make future war less likely or even impossible. Genuine peace is the fullness of life in community. The Biblical traditions shared by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, among others, speak of peace, *shalom* and *salaam*: the tranquil possession of the good things necessary to life in

community, safety, health and happiness, a process of “making and keeping human life human.” So the vision of peace that people shared with us is a vision also of justice and care for the creation all of us share. This perspective is a spiritual one; there is one human family, and we share a single planet as source and locus of life. We need alternate ways for people to live together – *Another way is possible.*

We learned another way by walking. Walking is a spiritual discipline, a way of paying attention to ourselves and our neighbors, of learning about our neighborhood and our world. When we walk we are grounded in reality. We meet other people, learn from them, and share with them what we have learned. When we walk with people of other cultures—like our brother Benjamin Cortes, a pastor from Nicaragua who came to walk for a week in solidarity with us—we are able to see ourselves from their perspectives. We learn to be better neighbors in this way, and we renounce the desire to dominate others. We have learned that most people want the same things we do, for themselves, their families and communities, their nations and the world. Here, in the **Peace Charter**, is a declaration of the call and commitment to transformation, an agenda for a future worthy of Earth’s peoples. *Another way is possible.*

The People Want Peace

Let us create a culture of peace throughout the world, and let us teach peace to our children.

Let us work for international understanding, through serious use of the United Nations and other international organizations and agreements.

Let us put an end to racism, and discrimination of all kinds.

Let us abolish nuclear weapons and reduce military spending to a minimum.

Let us create a culture of nonviolence to replace the glorification of violence, and let us not torture any more.

Let us work for an equitable peace in Palestine and Israel

with land and equal rights for all.

Let us give up the use of propaganda for self-interest, and let us understand that truth is in the interest of all peoples and nations.

Let us have civil dialogue among national and ethnic groups.

Let us completely eliminate international debts that are crucifying the poor.

Let us progress toward including a version of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution in our U.S. Constitution, the U.N. Charter, and all national constitutions, renouncing war as a right, force as a means to settle disputes, and armed forces with war potential.

Let us relate to other people and nations with humility.

The People Want Justice

Let us provide free education for all, and let every child and young person be educated to the fullest extent of their abilities.

Let community service be an integral part of all people's education.

Let us have healthy individuals in healthy communities, and let health care be available to everyone at costs they can afford.

Let us provide affordable housing for all, and let us end homelessness.

Let us recognize housing as a fundamental human right.

Let all the people have work that provides for their welfare and enhances their dignity.

Let us provide food security for all people, and let us end hunger around the world.

Let us provide protection and safety for everyone, especially the children.

Let us redistribute the wealth of our country so that all may have enough, and let there be no privatizing of services.

Let us open our borders for the free movement of people.

Let us change our perspective on the economy, recognizing that its purpose is not profits for some but the production of goods and services for all.

Let us seek justice for ourselves and our fellow human beings with humility.

The People Want a New Way to Care for Creation

Let us have clean air and pure water for all, and let us have respect for the land.

Let us have food security through the encouragement of local economy and sustainable family farms.

Let us free ourselves from our addiction to oil and other fossil fuels, and deal responsibly with the crisis of global warming.

Let us encourage the development and use of renewable resources.

Let us recycle and reuse what we can, and not use what is not reusable.

Let us take to heart Henry David Thoreau's dictum, "Simplify, simplify," and let us simplify our lives and realize that "enough is enough."

Let us show our gratitude to creation by respecting the earth and the myriad other beings with whom we share life on earth.

Let us learn to treat our Mother Earth with humility.

We present this **Peace Charter** to our new President, our Congressional representatives, international leaders, our state and local political and religious leaders. We commend to them the desires of the people for a responsible way of life and a respectful sharing of the creation among all. The United States of America is not meant to be the ruler of the world. Let us renounce this role, and become leaders in the world for the renewal and re-creation of the earth in justice and peace. When we share that responsibility with other peoples and nations, we will be secure in our own life and enjoy the respect and cooperation of others.

Created by Carolyn Cicciu, Emmett Jarrett, TSSF, Larry Swartz, and Eric Swanfeldt on behalf of all the pilgrims.

December 2008

LARRY'S INTERVIEW

Larry Swartz walked with the Peace Pilgrimage for 28 of the 43 days on the road. **Nora Curioso** conducted this interview with Larry for the **TROUBADOUR**.

So, Larry, tell me about this walk: Did you know any of the walkers before the trip?

No, except for Fr. Emmett, of course. Fr. Emmett, I know from St. Francis House, and I think maybe I had seen Janet there too, but I had never talked to her. I never even met the others. And they're amazing. Eric – he's very out-going, very talkative, and he *loves* to walk. He's got like 24 years on me...he's 76 years old; and Emmett, he's going on 70. I believe he'll be turning 70 in January or February. Carolyn is 63, and Janet's probably in her 60's too. Must be. She's retired; she used to teach kids with learning disabilities.

I was probably the youngest one there. Eric's a hell of a walker, though. He's going to walk in Nicaragua in February. I don't know how he does it. But they were all amazing – Carolyn, Janet, Emmett, Marion – they were up early and ready to go every day.

I heard that Eric invited you to walk in Nicaragua with him...

Yeah, he did. That's true.

Would you like to go?

No doubt about it.

Tell me things you remember about the walk, things that stand out.

I don't remember every day of the walk, but I do remember my first day, Friday, October 1st. Bob (Bassett) and I went up to meet the walkers together – Bob drove. We met them in Jamestown, Rhode Island. We were trying to walk over the Jamestown Bridge,

but we couldn't. No pedestrians allowed. That was my first day walking. Everyone else had been together for about 5 days.

You didn't start the walk with the rest of them?

No.

Tell me about that.

Well, I went to the party, the send-off party, the Sunday before, and I really wanted to go with them. I thought it would be a fun thing to do, to take an 800 mile walk through New England. But before that day, I didn't even know they were going.

I was in the hospital before that for a couple of weeks.

ICU?

Yeah, for some of it.

What was wrong?

My stomach was messed up. Messed up pretty bad. People had been all worried that it was cancer, but they ruled that out. But I couldn't eat. And I couldn't drink. It had been three or four days this time. You can go without food that long, but four days without water...and you're getting close to death. I was a total wreck.

And what about vodka?

I tried like heck to get it down, man, but I couldn't hold it. Couldn't even drink water. I took a sip, and 10 or 15 minutes later I barfed it up. Then I had enough man, that was it. I couldn't take it any more – I was so dehydrated. I was starving. And on top of that I couldn't sleep.

So what did you do?

I went down to the Seven Eleven, and called an ambulance.

And they admitted you into ICU?

I guess, I don't remember much after that. I needed a rest. Then, when I was in the hospital recuperating, I had a hernia operation. I got out of the hospital right before the walk.

Did a doctor need to give you medical clearance to go on this walk?

Yep, and I got it. I got it the day Bob picked me up to start the walk. Bob picked me up from the doctor's office, actually. I had already packed my bags.

So twelve days after surgery, and sixteen days after getting out of ICU, you started on an 800 mile walk?

Well, I only walked maybe 400 or 500 miles of it...I walked for 28 days, maybe 20 miles a day. We didn't usually walk as much on Sunday.

Did you have much experience walking before this?

Yeah, I used to walk everyday, all day, all over New London and Waterford...and sometimes Rick (Perry) and I would walk to Montville or Niantic for something to do. Back in the day though, I would have been drinking.

When was your last drink?

September 9th.

What did you drink?

Uh, Vodka.

How did you stop?

Well, like I said, before I went to the hospital, I was sick and I couldn't get it down – I was so sick, man. Then, after the operation, I thought I would just not drink for 3 days – because, you know, I didn't want to puke my guts out after the hernia operation....

Then what happened?

Then there was this walk. I kept thinking that, at all costs, I gotta

do this till the walk's over.

Do what?

Not drink.

Did being on the walk help you stop drinking?

Absolutely. I was away from it. And I was doing something for the whole day. I was walking; it kept my head off it. I didn't think about it.

And who is Rick?

What?

You said you used to walk all over the place with Rick. You also told me a couple of times when you were on the Peace Pilgrimage how much Rick would have loved it.

Yeah, he would have definitely gotten a kick out of it.

So, who is Rick?

Ricky Perry, 'One-Eyed Rick'. You know Rick.

Yeah, but tell me as if I don't. How did you meet him?

The first time I saw Rick was at the train station in New London. He had on a pair of crazy cowboy boots, and I noticed him. The next night, when I went down to the truck where I'd been sleeping, I opened the door, and saw these same stupid cowboy boots. I knew it was him. I thought about pulling him out, but I just let him sleep. I slammed the door though. The next day he told me that he'd heard me, and thought I was the cops. I told him that's where I had been sleeping. He gave up the front seat of the truck after that.

Where was the truck?

Off Bank Street.

Abandoned?

Yeah. That's when we became friends. I taught him how to collect cans – where to go on which days. And he taught me how to go to churches to get some money and get some food. Sometimes we took long walks to go to these churches. That's why we'd go to Niantic, to go to the churches. I used to let Rick go in first. He was the blabbermouth. He just kept talking and talking and talking. Me, I'd ask if they had anything, and if they said 'no,' I'd say 'Thank you very much and have a nice day'. Rick, he kept talking.

Does Rick still live in an abandoned truck?

Rick's dead.

How did he die?

Seizure, probably.

A lot of your friends have died in the last couple of years.

Yeah, that's true...Rick, Danny, Bill Walsh, Fred Finn, LaLa, June....

Where do you live now Larry?

In a rooming house on Broad Street.

Do you like it?

Yes, I do, yes.

So your first day of this 2008 Peace Pilgrimage was Friday, October 2nd in Jamestown, Rhode Island? Tell me more about it.

Emmett, Eric, Carolyn and I walked from Jamestown to Newport, and then to Boston...and we kept picking up people along the way.

Like who?

We met up with this guy who flew all the way from Nicaragua to Rhode Island just to walk with us...and people were interviewing us for their newspapers..and there was a huge peace rally in Boston...but then I had to stop. I had to take a week's break for more doctors' appointments. So, I went back to New London for a while.

That was when Emmett had to walk all alone. The group split up in Boston. Carolyn and Eric went north to New Hampshire, and Emmett was all alone going west through Massachusetts, with Marion driving.

I think Fr. Emmett may have said that he wasn't actually walking alone – that he was walking with the Blessed Mother; but anyway, when did you meet up with them again?

I met back up with Emmett and Marion in Western Massachusetts, at this community with people who lived in a hay house, and who had a car that ran on cooking oil. It was cool.

Could you stay longer that time?

I hated that Emmett had to walk all by himself, but I couldn't stay. I had a few more doctor's appointments. But I came back the next weekend to meet him north of Hartford, somewhere. At that point I could stay pretty much all the way to the end.

And that time you came back wearing hearing aids for the first time in your life too, right?

Yes, I did.

Did they help?

Yeah, I could hear better. I could understand what people were saying at all the meetings and dinners we had in the churches we went to.

I understand your least favorite part of the pilgrimage was when it was your turn to talk at these meetings.

Yeah, I got like stage fright. I have this phobia about speaking in front of people. It got easier by the end of the walk.

What sort of things would you talk about with the church people?

I would say that I thought it was a very bad move to invade Iraq and send all those troops over there. Some churches aren't talking about that. I don't really understand that. If churches are talking about God, I don't see why that would not include peace. If churches aren't teaching peace, what are they teaching?

Larry, I heard the last couple of days on the walk were just wonderful. Tell me a little about it. I heard you had a surprise at the synagogue in Waterford.

Yeah, Judy Mann was at the synagogue the last night of our walk. I was so surprised to see her. First I saw her picture on the synagogue's bulletin board – and I told Carolyn that I knew her – that she was a lady who worked at the soup kitchen and at the shelter. And then she showed up. And her husband was there, too. She knew I was going to be there that night. She brought us all dinner for the last night of our walk.

How long have you known Judy?

I first met her up at the soup kitchen, years back, and she took a liking to me. I could never understand why. Someone else at the soup kitchen, and I'm not naming names, called the cops on me once – but Judy always liked me. Once she drove me to my dad's house in Pawcatuck.

Now, tell me about the very last day of the walk.

Something like 80 people showed up at the synagogue in Waterford on the last morning to walk with us to All Souls Church. And a lot more people were waiting for us at All Souls. The church service there was just about ready to begin when we got there.

Is that when Carolyn Patierno blessed you?

Yeah, she blessed me and Carolyn [Cicciu], Fr. Emmett and Eric. And she gave each of us an iris. And a couple of tears came to my eyes for some reason. It kind of jolted me. I don't know what came over me. I wasn't expecting it, that's for sure.

You see, I knew Carolyn [Patierno] was a lady from the shelter, but I did not know she was a lady of the cloth. And she gave a very nice blessing to everyone. Except Janet. I wish Janet had gotten up there with us. She wasn't one of the main walkers, but she was with us driving and she should have been up there. It did bring a tear to Janet's eye though when she saw me.

How do you know?

I saw her wiping away tears. I heard later that Reverend Carolyn got a little emotional too, but I didn't see that. The other lady who was on the altar shed a few ears also. I don't know her name. I'm not used to doing things like that.

Like what?

Like being blessed.

So Larry, the interview is almost over, just tell me, what was your favorite part of the walk?

Just waking up every morning. Every day I woke up and said, "Thank you, God, for waking me up this lovely morning...to go on this walk, with these people."

Christmas 2008

HOW THE PEACE PILGRIMAGE CHANGED MY LIFE

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF

Three years ago, before the first Pilgrimage for Peace, my friend Rabbi Aaron Rosenberg said: “Emmett, this is going to change your life.” I had not expected him to say that, and I hadn’t thought at all about whether a two-week walk around Connecticut would change much of anything, in my life or anywhere else. I realized on reflection that I am an impulsive person. If someone suggests, as the Rev. Eric Swanfeldt did in 2006, that we “walk around Connecticut and talk to people about peace,” I just say, “Sure, let’s do it.” But now, after three pilgrimages, and the one this year lasting 43 days and extending for a total of 800 miles, my life has been changed.

The 2008 Pilgrimage began in New London on Sunday, September 28, with a gala “send off” from Second Congregational Church by leaders of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities and our families and friends. Three of us walked the whole distance: Eric Swanfeldt, from the United Methodist community in Uncasville, Conn., Carolyn Cicciu, a former Sister of Mercy and retired schoolteacher from Manchester, New Hampshire, and me. My friend Larry Swartz, a formerly homeless man from New London, walked at least 30 of the 43 days with us. Benjamin Cortes, from Nicaragua, came from Managua to walk in solidarity with us for a week. Newell Hendricks, from Boston, and Lyn Shaw, from Middletown, Conn., each walked with us for a week. Forty others walked for short distances of a few hours or a few days.

Everywhere we went, we stopped at a church or a synagogue or a mosque, or a peace group meeting place, and local people offered us hospitality. They provided meals and the ones we visited each evening gave us a place to sleep – sometimes beds in people’s homes, with showers and laundry facilities – other times church or parish house floors or couches. Always we

shared a meal with our hosts, and then engaged in conversation about peace.

It was important that the conversations were “around the table.” For Christians this gave a “Eucharistic dimension” to our conversation. It’s a very different thing to talk about important questions, especially ones where people are likely to have different opinions, in a context of food and fellowship. It’s not the same as an interview, a telephone survey, or a written set of questions where you “choose one from column A and one from column B.” There is a human dimension to conversation with friends around the table.

The first year we went on pilgrimage we found people troubled about the war in Iraq and ready for a change. Then there was an election but nothing much changed, so the second year people were angry. This year there was a sense of hope. Part of that was what I call the “Obama effect” of having many young people involved again in politics. Those who have been criticized for being “apathetic” are energized. Still, people are not pinning their hopes on a new leader. Attractive and smart as he is, Mr. Obama is not a savior. He is a creative politician, and he may be able to “create a space” for real social change in our country. But real change comes from below, from the people, not from above, from leaders no matter how intelligent or progressive they may be. It is very hard to turn an Empire around, and Barack Obama has not been elected to reverse the course of Empire. It is we who must do that.

And that is what people talked with us about in our “Eucharistic conversations” around the tables in their homes and places of worship: what the deepest desire of their heart is for themselves, their families, their communities, their country, and the world. It is, after all, our country. And it is God’s world, but our responsibility. We asked people what they wanted, and they told us. We are putting their responses together in what we call a “Peace Charter,” which we plan to give to Mr. Obama, when he becomes President, and to members of Congress and

our state and local political and religious leaders.

Here are some of the things people told us: A Japanese-American woman, wife of a retired Methodist missionary, spoke of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, adopted in 1945 after World War II. In Article 9 the people of Japan renounced war and military power as a means of settling international disputes. The U.S. government is now trying to persuade Japan to repeal Article 9 and join its “war on terror,” which often looks like a war on just about everybody. Many Japanese people are resisting this change. We need an Article 9 in our constitution.

Seventeen year-old Sam, in a Unitarian-Universalist congregation, wants people in power – right now in his life that’s parents and teachers, but he plans in future to include the government as well – to respect him and other people who do not have power, the young, the poor, the immigrant, the “other.” He wants to turn the world upside down.

People expressed a need for genuine security, but most seemed to realize that military might is not bringing security to the most powerful country in the world. They see that meeting people where they are is better than telling them where to go.

There is a widespread awareness that people desire the same things for themselves, their families and communities, that we do: education, housing, health care, work with dignity, culture, land, care for all of creation, and peace. If we all want the same things, we should be able to cooperate and share the goods we hope for.

There is a growing “planetary consciousness,” an awareness that nations are not secure in isolation, but interrelated. We share the same air and water and earth, and we will be happier if we really share them rather than hoard them for ourselves. This ecological awareness of global warming, and a shared destiny on our one planetary home, is transcending ideological boundaries. The planet is neither liberal nor conservative, and responsibility for it involves a radical sharing by all.

Finally, there is a profound spirituality underlying all the

things people have told us. Ordinary people are deeply aware that generosity is more satisfying than possessiveness. I often thought of Tolstoi's famous story, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" The answer, of course, is that one only needs enough earth to be buried in, and possessions will not protect us from our mortality. People know that. Many are ready to stop relying on military might and begin to trust each other. They want an end to racism and discrimination. They desire to share the riches of God's earth and not die defending their possessions from other people.

So we walked through Connecticut and Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, then back into Connecticut again, and spent our final night in the Temple Emanuel in Waterford, with my friend Rabbi Rosenberg, who asked me the big question three years ago. The next day we were joined by Muslims from the Islamic Center, Hebrew school students from the temple, and people of other religious traditions and none to walk the final three miles to All Souls Unitarian Universalist Congregation for a "welcome home" celebrations, tired but happy.

How has the Pilgrimage changed my life? Or, to put it another way, What have I learned? First, I think I have finally learned that the "bottom line," for me and for our country, is humility. We are not – and I am not – better or worse than other people. I have to share my life and we have to share God's earth with all God's children. And the "big things" I would like to do will be accomplished in small steps, by ordinary people working together in cities and towns, villages and farms, factories and forests, for our common goals. St. Therese of Lisieux, "the Little Flower," spoke of a child-like spirituality, a "little way" of doing God's will, that all of us can practice. God will combine our small contributions into God's one big success.

Second, walking is a spiritual discipline. It's a way of becoming and remaining "grounded" in earth and our common

humanity. When the eternal Word of God took human flesh in the Incarnation, God experienced what it's like to have sore feet and a tired body. When Jesus taught in Galilee and Jerusalem, he walked around a small country the size of southern New England. That was enough to change the world, and if we want to change the world, that is the way we will do it.

Third, most of the people of the world walk. They walk to work, they walk to school, to get water, to get food, to visit their neighbors. When I walk, I am engaging in an act of solidarity with friends in the rest of the world. Benjamin Cortes, from Nicaragua, joined us for a week on our Pilgrimage. Benjamin sees our country from the perspective of one of our "victims," and is willing to share that with us. That's solidarity. I want to be in solidarity with him, and with people of other countries, who have a perspective on my country that I need to understand and share.

Fourth, pilgrimage is not just a religious exercise – for Christians and Jews, Muslims and Hindus, Buddhists and others – it is a way of life. Pilgrimage is a perspective, a way of looking at the world, from the side of the road, not the inside of an automobile. Dorothy Day called her monthly column in *The Catholic Worker* by the name "On Pilgrimage." Pilgrimage is a way of life.

Fifth, I've begun to trust "the people." We have a fine rhetoric about the people. We speak of "government of the people, by the people, for the people." But unless we talk with the people the words remain empty rhetoric. When we share a meal with people, take the time to be with people, we learn that they know things we didn't know they knew. People are smarter, more sophisticated, more generous than we give them credit for being. I hope our politicians can learn from Nicaraguan leaders and walk among the people – our people – and learn from them.

A century ago, Eugene V. Debs said, "While there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free." Whatever

may become of Barack Obama's presidency, people around the world know that something important has happened in our country. If we embrace the opportunity this may be a chance for us to live into the promises we claim for our America. If we can see ourselves through other people's eyes we may learn what the Indian writer Arundhati Roy told us:

"Another way is possible."

As we begin to take small steps towards solidarity with others, sharing the things of earth which God has shared with all of us, and living in mutual respect and commitment to God's peace, God's justice, and the care for God's creation, we may begin to see that "other way." It is the promise we claim for America. More important, it is the promise of the "long-expected Jesus" whose Advent we celebrate at this season and whose second coming in God's justice, peace, and love we – with all the people of the world – yearn for today. "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!"

Christmas 2008



CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

Mark Auer, TSSF, came to St. Francis House in August 2004, lived there for four years, contributed enormously to the community, and became a Third Order Franciscan 12 days before he died, on July 10, 2008.

Barbara Barrett was the first person to serve as an intern at St. Francis House in 2002, and has been a strong supporter ever since. She serves on the St. Francis House Board.

Laura Burfoot is a New London native who spent six months at St. Francis House after college. She contributed significantly to work with homeless neighbors, FRESH New London, and peace actions.

Nora Curioso, a member of St. Francis House's extended community, is a fierce advocate for her friends who are homeless in New London.

Janet Minella-Didier, a member of the St. Francis House extended community, has been a support driver for all of the Peace Pilgrimages, and a generous supporter of peace and justice in New London.

Chris Allen-Doucot is a founder of the Hartford Catholic Worker and a partner in the work of the Voluntown Peace Trust. He and his wife Jackie showed by example that you can raise children in a Catholic Worker house.

Paul Jakoboski, TSSF, and his wife Wendy joined the St. Francis House residential community in May 2009. Paul is director of the New London County Food Bank and Wendy teaches yoga.

Emmett Jarrett, TSSF, is a poet, Episcopal priest and Third Order Franciscan who lives and works at St. Francis House.

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Arthur Lerner is a founder of FRESH New London, a program to strengthen food security in the region and teach high school students about food and farming.

Danny Malec was a member of the Voluntown Peace Trust Partners community in Voluntown. He now lives with his wife and son in Washington, DC.

Chuck Matthei, founder of Equity Trust, based in Voluntown, Conn., and a major encourager of St. Francis House in its earliest days, was called by the poet Denise Levertov “a one-man revolution of peace and mutual aid.” He died in 2002.

Chris Nelson is a boatbuilder and resident of downtown New London.

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Anne Scheibner grew up in southeastern Connecticut. Before marrying Emmett in 1983, she worked with the Episcopal Women's Caucus, the Urban Bishops Coalition, and the National Council of Churches. She lives and works at St. Francis House.

Ronna Stuller is an early childhood educator, serves on the Board of Education, is a Green Party activist and a founding member of the Southeast Connecticut Peace and Justice Network.

Eric Swanfeldt has lived in an intentional Christian community of the United Methodist Church in Uncasville, Conn., for over thirty years, and is the guiding genius of the Pilgrimage for Peace.

Larry Swartz lives in New London and participated in the 2008 Pilgrimage for Peace, walking nearly 800 miles.

Glennys Ulschak, after retiring as chaplain of the local hospital in New London, has participated in all of the Pilgrimages for Peace.

What happens when God mixes together two aging Episcopal Church leaders and their coming-of-wisdom children (a teen and a fifth-grader) with St. Francis of Assisi, Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin, the homeless of a blighted city, and a stream of searching pilgrims to engage in an experiment with the radical truth of Jesus?

Broad Street Blues is the remarkable record of this unlikely community (spanning heaven and earth) as they take Jesus seriously. Their journey into the truth, when everything and everyone in the world is at stake, is a revelation of hope to us all.

Jim Douglass

Catholic Worker and author, *JFK and the Unspeakable*

The move from Rectory family life in an Episcopal parish to the radical welcome of St. Francis House was not so big a leap as one might suppose. For this family, it was a natural progression of deepening faith, seeking truth and the courage to live daily as a community of social change. **Broad Street Blues** not only relates the experience of one answer to a prophetic calling, but invites everyday Christians to explore their own Gospel yearnings and the call to discipleship, and also for pastors who must assist their congregations on the discipleship journey.

The Rev'd Margaret R. Rose

Co-director of Mission, The Episcopal Church Center
New York City

The spiritual energy of St. Francis of Assisi and Jesus of Nazareth leap off the pages of **Broad Street Blues**. This inspiring work illustrates how human life can be transformed from aimlessness and despair to hope and purposefulness. The vital connection of prayer and action is made real—a “must read” for 21st century Christians.

Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF

Former Minister Provincial, Province of the Americas
The Third Order, Society of St. Francis

We have been more than blessed over the past 12 years to share the journey of radical discipleship with our friends Emmett Jarrett and Anne Scheibner as they left home to follow God's call to the “far country.” New London, Connecticut, is the place for their experiment in truth as they set down roots there to pray and celebrate sacrament, to create family, with their own kin and the others who came, to welcome the poor and oppressed, and to take their particular stand against the domination system with all its war mongering and death dealing expressions. They have learned to sing the blues on Broad Street: Ah! the Lord's song in a strange land! They shout the amazing grace of God and dance their Franciscan joy. Thankfully for all of us, they have documented this faithful journey with their intermittent journal the *Troubador*; and now we enjoy the fruit of their collected writing as **Broad Street Blues**.

Read and be amazed. Read and give thanks. Read and be encouraged for the journey. Here are ordinary people who have done an extraordinary thing. Are we not all called by Jesus to do the same? Their journey enriches our own and we are deeply grateful for this fruit of their labor.

Murphy Davis and Eduard Loring

Founders and Partners in the Open Door Community
The “Protestant Catholic Worker” in Atlanta, Georgia