

via pacis

—The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

April, 2009

www.desmoinescatholicworker.org

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Need Grows as Economy Worsens

What does it mean to love the least of these?

More than 5,700 people experienced homelessness in Des Moines at some point in 2007, up nearly 500 from the previous year—according to the Iowa Institute for Community Alliances, which conducts annual studies of homelessness in Iowa. Indications are, of course, that in 2008

the numbers increased at an even higher rate. The coming-year forecasts the number of poor growing to one that we've not known in decades, if ever.

In December we were even more deeply touched by this reality when we gave shelter to five homeless men after the City of Des Moines demolished



One of our treasured guests, Amanda, cradles Squeak. Among the six Des Moines Catholic Worker cats, Squeaks tops the chart as being the friendliest of all. (Not that we don't equally value the unique gifts of our feline friends Charlie, Dan, Frida, Miss Kitty, and Phil.)



DMCWers Tracy Robson, Renee Espeland, and Ed Bloomer and two volunteers distribute fresh produce at our Saturday Free-Food Store.

“unsafe” shanties (or “hooches”) leaving these men in precarious shelters with no shelter from the cold at all.

We also grieved when another of our regular guests had to have both his legs amputated below the knee from frostbite from sleeping outside.

The requests from our food pantry have increased to the point that we're always close to running out of food. The line for our free-food-store on Saturday mornings is now wrapping around the block.

We know those who help us by volunteering and giving us monetary donations are feeling the economic pinch as well. We know most have less to give than before, and we know that now to give requires more than generosity, it requires real sacrifice.

We carry on doing what we can. We're still feeding, clothing, and comforting the poor. We're still protesting wars and rumors of wars and confronting those who profit from war.

We're also confronting the war on the poor on even more fronts, such as the Campaign for Healthcare for All we began in March.

Even so, it's not enough. We're often frayed and exhausted, physically and spiritually, and very, very frustrated—sometimes with each other—that we cannot do more. We want to serve more meals. We want to reach out to more places for food-store donations. We want to challenge more institutions of greed. We want to have more time for relaxation and joy.

We want more community members. We want....

We focused this issue on the ideas about money and the ways we share that money. Toward the creation of a world in which it is easier to be good, we hope to encourage the courage within us all to begin to talk more openly and candidly about these things.

We're aching, probably as you are aching, to be part of a metanoia in the culture in which we're more inclined to share than hoard, more inclined to praise than criticize, more willing to uplift than to tear-down, or as Dorothy Day called it, “a revolution of the heart.”

We need your help more than ever. We desperately need your love, encouragement, and prayers.

via pacis

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Unless noted (or we goof) all photos and art are produced by the Des Moines Catholic Worker community.

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, a shower or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice.

Becoming a Des Moines Catholic Worker

We are always open to considering new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or visit our web site.

Mailing Address

PO Box 4551
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Bishop Dingman House (Hospitality)

1310 7th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-243-0765
Worker Residents: Frank Cordaro, Ed Bloomer, Tracy Robson

Phil Berrigan House (Social Justice Center)

713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-282-4781 (DMCW business phone.)
Worker Residents: Frank Cordaro and Mona Shaw

Msgr. Ligutti House (Worker Residence)

1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-288-4326
Residents: Renee Espeland, Frankie Hughes, Reetzi Hughes, Norman Searah

Lazarus House (Guest Residence)

1317 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
Guest Residents: Carla Dawson, Josh Dawson, Jordan Dawson, Irving Schroeder

Weekly Lectionary Bible Study

Mondays, 7pm. Berrigan House
Call to confirm.

Weekly Mass or Prayer Service

Fridays, 7:30pm, Dingman House
All are welcome!

The Chiapas Project

Chiapas, Mexico
Richard Flamer
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*As for ourselves, we must be meek,
bear injustice, malice, and rash judgment.
We must turn the other cheek,
give up our cloak, go a second mile.*

-Dorothy Day

Peter DeMott, R.I.P.

"He came to us a Marine; he left a Catholic Worker."



by Frank Cordaro

"Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win."

1 Corinthians 1:8

Tragedy stuck our national Catholic Worker family on February 19, 2009. The beloved Peter DeMott, the "Rock" as Liz McAlister called him, fell from a tree and died. The way he died was as unexpected as his death itself. Peter worked as a general contractor and mastered every conceivable handyman job such as carpentry, painting, masonry, roofing and landscaping, which including trimming and felling many, many trees. Peter's cautiousness regarding safety was so extreme that it would have been less shocking to learn he had been struck by lightning.

In the wake of his death he left behind his beloved wife Ellen, four wonderful daughters, a large extended family and friends centered around Ithaca, NY, and a national network of communities and individuals from the Catholic Worker Movement and the Atlantic Life.

I was fortunate to be able to drive to Ithaca with Jerry Ebner (Omaha CW), and Mike Miles and Barb Kass (Anathoth CW Farm in Luck, WI) for the wake and funeral, where we mourned with hundreds of others. It was a profound Catholic Worker family reunion and a testimony to the large shadow Peter cast. I was to share a

few words about Peter at the Funeral Mass. In my remarks I shared how I came to know Peter 30 years ago.

Most know Peter was in the military before he became a Plowshares activist. Those of us old enough also remember in 1980 while at the General Dynamics Electric Boat shipyard in Groton, CT, he spied some keys in the ignition of a shipyard van. Peter climbed into the van, started it, and then rammed it into the body of a Trident submarine. This was the second Plowshares Action, closely following the inaugural Plowshares Eight witness.

What few know about Peter is that between his military career and his instant fame as a plowshares activist, he was a member of the Des Moines Catholic Worker community (1979-80).

Peter's conversion process is comparable to that of St. Paul's. After St. Paul's encounter with the Risen Lord on the road to Damascus, he disappeared for several years. No one knows where he went or how he spent this time between his encounter with Jesus and his active work as an Apostle. We do know that Peter DeMott's missing years were spent at the Des Moines Catholic Worker. Peter came to the DMCW a Marine; he left a Catholic Worker. And, for the record, his first arrest was crossing the line at the Strategic Air Command in Omaha, NE, on December 28, 1979.

Peter's "I came, I saw, and I acted" Plowshares method gave him instant national notoriety within the growing faith-based, nonviolent resistance community, and left many asking, "Who is this crazy man, and how could he do this without going through the prescribed Plowshares process? Is he a flash in the pan who will soon burn out and fall by the wayside from the consequences that enviably come to bear?"

The years that followed became a faithful life lived in the spirit of the nonviolent peacemaking Jesus, a life of countless actions and arrests, co-creating an east coast tribe of peacemakers, living a day-in and day-out life as a simple day-laborer below the poverty line, a marriage that was truly sacramental, four extraordinary daughters, and as the gentle and genteel "rock" for the extended Grady family and Ithaca peace community.

All this confirmed and affirmed that in 1980, what some had called "a spontaneous act of disarmament" was actually the first step in a race well-run. It was the kind of race that St. Paul described in 1 Corinthians, and Peter crossed its finish line as surprisingly and unexpectedly as he started. I don't know a person Peter encountered who wasn't richer and better for having met him. He will be sorely missed. Whenever a litany of Saints is brought to mind, don't hesitate to add the name Peter DeMott, PRE-

Fr. Louie Vitale to Speak in Des Moines

DES MOINES—Rev. Louie Vitale will give a speech, "Love Your Enemies: Returning from Tehran with a Message of Hope" on Sunday, April 19, 2009, at 7 p.m. in Waveland Hall, Plymouth Congregational Church, 4126 Ingersoll Avenue, Des Moines. A recipient of the Pax Christi Peace Award, Rev. Vitale has returned from Tehran after being part of a special diplomacy for peace with the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Vitale co-founded the Nevada Desert Experience and its enduring movement to end nuclear testing and recently completed twelve years as the pastor of St. Boniface Catholic Church in a low-income neighborhood in San Francisco, California. He also served a six-month sentence for his nonviolent action in trying to draw attention to and to close the School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/WHINSEC) at Ft. Benning, GA in 2006. He is currently the "Action Advocate" for *Pace e Bene* and is trying to raise awareness about issues of torture and US involvement in it.

Steve King “Pro-Life” Speech Disrupted



Photo courtesy of Des Moines Register

Frank Cordaro is taken into custody by a State Trooper as he reads a list of reasons that King's record shows that King is not pro-life.

Four Des Moines Catholic Workers, Edward Bloomer, Frank Cordaro, Renee Espeland, and Mona Shaw, were among a group of people protesting Iowa Congressman Steve King's appearance at a "Prayer for Life" rally in Des Moines sponsored by the Des Moines diocese bishops. The protesters handed out fliers

claiming that King's commitment to life stopped immediately after birth by citing King's pro-war, pro-death penalty, anti-equal pay for women, anti-immigrant, and other positions King has taken in Congress that oppose human rights.

Banners were also draped over the railings in the Capitol rotunda, that read "The Death Penalty Is Murder,"

"The War in Iraq Is Unjust, Immoral and Illegal" Pope JP II," and "We Are All Immigrants," but the banners were removed almost immediately by State Troopers.

King's speech was interrupted three times by shouts from critics, and two, Frank Cordaro and Mona Shaw, were removed from the building by authorities but weren't arrested.

More information. More videos. More links. More photos. More stories. More.

www.desmoinescatholicworker.org

Rally Marks 6th Anniversary of the War in Iraq

About 75 people attended a rally in Nollen Plaza in downtown Des Moines on March 19, 2009, the 6th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq in the War on Terror. Jade Howser, a member of Military Families Speak Out, addressed the rally. Names of Iowans who were military personnel and killed as well as names killed Iraqi civilians were read. A display for 52 pairs of combat boots were placed in the plaza in remembrance of those slain. Iowa's "Raging Grannies" led the gathering in song and chants.



Mona Shaw, an unknown woman, and Chet Guinn were among those who attended the rally.



Norman's Whereabouts

by Norman Searah

Hello there! I would like to share an idea with you, if I may. I believe that the poor and homeless have a voice in this world. I believe they have talent too. They are human beings like us that need to be heard as much as they need to be seen.

Some places and some people won't have much to do with the poor and the homeless, I believe it is wrong to arrest them for being in the wrong place or neighborhood or for having no money or place to go.

Many poor people are smart and clean. Some will even cash in empty bottles to be able to wash their clothes and to buy soap so they can wash

themselves. I know many who clean and care for their homes even when home is just a tent, a box, or a shack.

The poor and homeless aren't just single men and women. They are families too. They are the young, the old, sometimes they are our military veterans. The poor and homeless come in all sizes, color, languages, and whatever.

My idea is, as Mickey Rooney said, "to put on a show," a talent show starring the poor and homeless—a show where the people we ignore can show us they are artists too.

However, just like the poor, I don't have the place or the money to put on this show. So, now, I am lost. I am stuck. But, maybe, just maybe, if I

share this idea with you, maybe, just maybe, you'll like this idea too. Maybe you will help.

All we need is a place. Then we gather together the people willing to sing, read their poems, or whatever. We could also use I guess some newspaper people or radio station people to cover it. Maybe we could find people to give money so we could give prizes. (We could charge to see the show, but we also don't want to shut out anyone because they can't afford it.)

I have another idea. Maybe at the next Sugar Creek Catholic Worker Gathering, we should have a writers' workshop. We need a workshop so writers can learn what to do if they have a book they want published. A lot of writers like me want to

share what they write, and we feel stuck at finding places to send our writing. I am a writer for this newsletter, but otherwise, I'm stuck; and I want to grow.

I am sorry about the bad weather in New England and other parts of the country. I am from New England, and I have family there. I worry about the Catholic Workers there too (as well as Catholic Workers in other places, of course).

Another thing about the poor—along with the homeless and immigrants—they DO pay taxes. Even if they don't have income, if they turn in soda bottles or get a gift and then buy something with that money, they pay taxes on a lot of things they buy.

Why don't businesses hire the poor who want to

work? There's a lot of clean-up they could do that no one is doing now—like cleaning out the street corners or gutters or around fire hydrants. I know it's needed because I never get done trying to clean some of this up in my own neighborhood.

We can make things better for people. We can. Well until next time, I thank you for your time.



Campaign for Healthcare for All



"I was sick, and you cared for me." Matthew 25:34

A coalition of Iowa peace groups has launched a Des Moines-based Healthcare Campaign to end the war on human health. The campaign begins by focusing on the abuses of health insurance corporations. The first action of the campaign, which took place Monday, March 16, is a weekly vigil in front of Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield headquarters in Des Moines.

Healthcare (or the lack of it) has reached a national crisis in the United States and is the number one killer of people for simply not having enough money. 20,000 (or more) die each year due to lack of health care. Fifty million Americans have no insurance or access to medical care and, with the economic crisis, this number is skyrocketing. Millions suffer disability and chronic conditions that would have been prevented by access to adequate health care. Millions who have health insurance are denied necessary care by their insurers. Health care bills (of people who HAVE health insurance) are the single highest reason for filing bankruptcy in

the U.S. Untreated disease and injuries hurt those who do have access to healthcare and make us more vulnerable to pandemics.

Other first-world, industrialized nations already have national health care, and they pay far less for health care per capita than we do. Except for some elective procedures, they wait less time than we do on average for medical treatment. Expropriating health insurance profits will ultimately create more jobs, (most of them in actual healthcare). They just won't be in the health insurance industry.

The health insurance industry is a powerful player in the corporate greed and gambling game that has led to America's

economic collapse. Insurance companies collude with profiteers in investment schemes, secret deals and other shady wealth-building capital ventures.

Insurance companies realize a huge share of their profits from war manufacturers and contractors and others that promote military spending for corporate profits.

20-40% of every health care dollar goes to profits and overhead and things other than anyone's healthcare.

Single-payer healthcare is the viable way out of the crisis. Experts (and even Presidents Clinton and Obama) agree, but claim the public doesn't have the political will to make it happen—even though 63% of

Americans (according to CNN) want single-payer healthcare.

The "Insurance Profits Make Us Sick" campaign will encompass a wide range of strategies and tactics including weekly vigils, educational programs, speakers, movies, public prayer services, legislative advocacy for single-payer health insurance, direct actions, demonstrations, and nonviolent civil disobedience.

Because Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield is the Iowa icon for the industry and because of their huge financial investments in things that are not healthcare, we've begun our campaign there. For more information and/or to join this campaign, go to either website on the photo below or phone 515-282-4781.



Harkin Des Moines Office Occupied over US Influence in Gaza, 7 Arrests



Fifteen occupied Sen. Harkin's Des Moines Office to protest US involvement in the war in Gaza.

DES MOINES—Seven were arrested at U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin's Des Moines office February 25, 2009, when they refused to end a peaceful demonstration and allow the office to close. Fifteen activists had occupied the office beginning at 1:30 p.m. and had alternated reading aloud written accounts of violence from the Gaza Strip.

In a letter, penned in the name of the Des Moines Catholic Worker and friends of the people of Gaza, the group thanked and praised then congressional aide Harkin for his actions in 1970 to expose the use of "tiger cages" in South Vietnam. They likewise praised his work as a young congressman when he opposed military support for the invasion and occupation of East Timor by Indonesia.

The letter continued, "while

this record is remembered with gratitude, they "regretfully recognize that we have not seen such leadership and courage in many years."

Harkin staff office gave the demonstrators a freshly pre-

pared statement by Harkin regarding the Gaza Crisis. Those participating said the statement failed to meet their requests for Harkin to renew his commitment to peace by calling for a cease-fire in Gaza, open borders for Gaza's injured and an end to military appropriations for Israel.

Those arrested include Frank Cordaro, 58, Renee Espeland, 28, Ed Bloomer, 62, Sherry Hutchison, 91, Elton Davis, 47, Rev. Chet Guinn, 80, and Brian Terrell, 53. All are from Des Moines except Terrell who is from Strangers and Guest Catholic Worker House in Maloy, IA. All seven were cited and released by local authorities.



Participants above hold a banner at the annual Feast of the Holy Innocents Retreat, Dec. 26-29, 2008, in Omaha at the STRATCOM site. The annual witness draws attention to the parallels between Herod's killing of the infants during the time of Christ and the killing of the innocents by the weaponry and US Military presence represented at Offutt's Nuclear and Space Commands.

Omaha Catholic Charities Holds Benefit in War Museum

OMAHA—After a few years of absence, on March 14 the Archdiocese of Omaha returned to the Strategic Air and Space (SAC) Museum as the site of their annual Catholic Charities Fund Raising event. (The Archdiocese had moved the event after we'd protested the decision in the past.) So, the DMCW returned to remind the Bishops why this was a shameful place to hold an event to benefit the poor.

Mona Shaw, Ed Bloomer, Tracy Robson and Frank Cordaro (after being ordered to leave SAC premises by police) held vigil from 5-7:00 p.m. on the right-of-way outside SAC property. They held a banner that read, "Catholic Charities Pimps the Poor and Blesses War" and handed out flyers stating in part:

"It is a moral outrage to raise money for the poor while feasting at the temple of the death machine that keeps them poor."

"The billions spent on the weapons of mass destruction enshrined at the SAC Museum would easily shelter and feed not only the poor in this nation but around the world. By hosting their annual Catholic Charities Fund Raiser at the SAC Museum, the Omaha Catholic Archdiocese mocks and exploits the poor we are called to serve and instead blesses the very arms race (as well as the hideous weapons worshipped here) the Catholic Church has repeatedly condemned."

The Des Moines Catholic Community has pledged to return each year until the Archdiocese again changes the venue for this event.



Tracy Robson kites the banner in the wind while being forced from SAC grounds by police.

Heterosexism as a Metaphor for Capitalism and Other Sins

by Mona Shaw

"In America everybody is of the opinion that he has no social superiors, since all men are equal, but he does not admit that he has no social inferiors, for, from the time of Jefferson onward, the doctrine that all men are equal applies only upwards, not downwards."

Bertrand Russell

It is never just one thing, is it? You decide to clean a room, and you need to empty the vacuum. The vacuum filter is broken, and you leave to buy another, but the car is low on gas. Because the car is low on gas, you have to find your new debit card, and the PIN doesn't work, so you have to phone the bank, which means you have to dig through a cluttered drawer for the secret answer to your security question that you now can't remember. When you finally return to the room with the new filter, someone has borrowed the vacuum. By the time you find the vacuum, there is no longer time that day to clean the room. However, while you were at the store, the clerk tells you a neat little trick about vacuuming pet hair that makes the job go much faster when you are able to tackle it. And, the cluttered drawer search has unearthed a document you thought you'd lost.

It's a lot like that to struggle for peace and justice. No task within this effort ever involves just one thing. Even our interruptions are interrupted, only to be interrupted by yet more interruptions. And, because of this, it becomes not concentrated effort toward our goals or objectives, but interruption that comprises the bulk of our quotidian lives.

This uncontrollable and unavoidable phenomenon flies in the face of the cultural paradigm that tells us that the accomplishment of goals requires singular focus. This is not true. Accomplishing goals requires us to widen our lens and include more in our vision. A goal is not abandoned because we have been able to incorporate the interruptions and employed them toward a fuller result.

When I first learned that Pope Benedict had compared same-sex relationships unfavorably with killing the rainforests, it was a draining interruption, but I was inclined to brush it aside. Not because I didn't find the comment painfully ignorant and cruel. I did. Nor, was I reluctant because I was afraid of some possible disapproval or fallout from even members of my own movement if I publicly challenged it. I wasn't. Homophobia and heterosexism have already taken from me

lives far more precious than such a confrontation had the potential to levy.

While I may be wrong, I assumed the Pope wasn't much interested in my opinion of his opinion. I wanted to focus on something else, I was in the crux of honing a metaphor, obvious and ac-

cessible enough, that it might persuade more people to consider, if not agree, that capitalism (the admiration of wealth) hurts us. I have become convinced that our collective unwillingness to deeply explore this consideration is the root of all war and human suffering, and that human suffering will not only persist but worsen until we do.



Illustration by Brittany Jackson <Aspen_313@yahoo.com>

cessible enough, that it might persuade more people to consider, if not agree, that capitalism (the admiration of wealth) hurts us. I have become convinced that our collective unwillingness to deeply explore this consideration is the root of all war and human suffering, and that human suffering will not only persist but worsen until we do.

It was implicit or inferred permission, too facily given, for ignoring this that led me to reconsider. Remarks that were intended to support and comfort were instead demoralizing and discomfiting.

"This isn't a 'peace' topic."

"The issue is too divisive."

"People aren't ready to hear this yet."

"This could derail the good we're trying to do."

"We don't have time for this right now."

The "least of these" is not usually identified by conscious selection but are a revelation by default. The "least of these" are the oppressed among us we are least inclined to help. The "least of these" are the lepers, the "unclean" who we will not touch. They are those we ask to hide themselves. They are those of whom we will not even speak. Or, if we speak of them, we do so in hushed tones and whispers, looking around to see who might be listening. When we make excuses for not unabashedly prioritizing a stand against the discrimination and persecution of LGBT people, the Catholic Worker Movement—if not the entirety of Christen-

dom—positions lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people as the least of these.

Unfortunately, the pain wrought by persecution is not ameliorated because the persecutor didn't know any better. The statement "I wasn't raised that way," or "We all used think that way," may be

explanations, but they aren't exoneration. It's one thing to disagree with Wittgenstein's assertion that the avatar (teacher) must come from the affected class. It is another to pretend we value the wisdom and witness of the oppressed more (or at least as much) as those with status and privilege when we're not willing to act as if we do.

This pattern of reluctance to reconsider our evaluation of human life worth cherishing (or the relative importance of people in our lives) draws a template of humanity's rejection of itself. By noticing this, I discovered that heterosexism was a neat metaphor outlining the functional or dysfunctional operatives of capitalism.

Like the Sword of Damocles, the only conclusion greed can reach swings wider and lower toward our necks, but, we risk it rather than walk away from the chance at wealth beneath the blade.

Any human construction (such as capitalism and heterosexism) that requires us to sacrifice our children to it rather than encourage our children to struggle against it is an agent of homicide that has tricked us into fearing the loss of property, public favor, and status more than we fear losing those we love.

The same way parents will turn away from a gay son or a lesbian daughter, we will watch sons and daughters sent to wars based on lies and greed and do little to stop it. The same way we dismissed the nearly 100,000 deaths in the 1980s caused in this nation by homophobia

(AIDS, gay-bashings, and executions), we allow 20,000 each year to die from lack of health care. The same way we give money to the United Way, the Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, churches, and other entities that have blatantly homophobic policies, we keep cutting checks to a Health Insurance Industry that thrives proportionately according to how much healthcare it denies not by how much it provides.

We want to end senseless death and suffering, but we're willing to pay more to perpetuate it than we're willing to pay to stop it. Some, but very few, are brave enough to pull a few branches off this evil tree; even fewer are willing to go after its roots. This apportionment of our resources not only exposes our accepted national routine of serving mammon more than good, it begs a question.

Why are we faithful to those constructions that lead us to do less good rather more? Why do we continue to cooperate with systems that compel us reject one another rather than love one another? Why won't we pull the roots?

When Jesus said, "The love of money is the root of all evil," he may have meant that the love of money is the root of all evil. It is pathological denial to think we can compromise our morality for the acquisition of money without loving money. Heterosexism is mostly driven by fear of being associated with a lower social caste. Capitalism, on the other hand, goes further. It not only encourages the love of money (or caste superiority), it requires it. By these prerequisites capitalism surfaces as not only evil, but the root of contemporary evil. A less hubristic, Bill Clinton might have said, "It's not the economy; it's the economic system, stupid."

It is an insidious evil that has convinced us that we are dependent on it for survival, when it is the thing that threatens human survival. It is a

Like the Sword of Damocles, the only conclusion greed can reach swings wider and lower toward our necks, but, we risk it rather than walk away from the chance at wealth beneath the blade.

sadistic stimulus that will sentence a poor woman who has cheated the system out of \$100 in food stamps to more years in prison than a rich man who has stolen billions and has a \$100,000 toilet. It is insanity that prizes the risk of the coal mine owner who only risks money, more than the risk of coal mine worker who risks his life in that mine.

The domination of heterosexism and capitalism requires we accept (or least cooperate with) three common lies.

Property is more important than people.

It is blasphemy of the human spirit or the potential for anything sacred to propagandize that people are more inclined to work for property than for the good of others. History has proven we do our best work when we are motivated by love and the satisfaction of accomplishment rather than material gain. Jonas Salk didn't invent the Polio vaccine for the check. Martin Luther King, Jr., didn't spend a night in the Birmingham jail because he was auditioning for the million dollar Nobel Prize. When it's only for money, we do only enough to get the money. When we're motivated by love, we give as much as we can give.

We know who or what we love by how we calculate the

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Photo by Max Knauer

Mona Shaw shares a joke with long-time sister-activist Mandy Carter (left) at the Ritual Café in Des Moines. Carter is a founding board member of the National Black Justice Coalition and was in town to speak to African American clergy and others faith-based leaders on the legalization of same-gender marriage.

Is the Next Defense Budget a Stimulus Package?

Why the Pentagon Can't Put America Back to Work



by Frida Berrigan

It's the magic incantation to fix our economic woes.

Many states and federal agencies have already gone from scouring their budgets for things to cut to green-lighting construction projects. The Obama administration's \$787 billion stimulus package is sure to muster many shovels in an effort to rouse a despondent economy and put Americans back to work.

Here's the strange thing though: That package was headline news for weeks, bitterly argued over, hailed and derided in equal measure. And yet road construction, housing projects, and green retrofits aren't the only major projects getting the shovel-ready treatment via massive infusions of cash.

At the end of February, another huge "stimulus" package was announced but generated almost no comment, controversy, or argument. The defense industry received its own special stimulus package — news of the dollars available for the Pentagon budget in 2010; and at nearly \$700 billion (when all the bits and pieces are added in), it's almost as big as the Obama economic package and sure to be a lot less effective.

Despite the sort of economic maelstrom not seen in generations, the defense industry, insulated by an enduring conviction that war spending stimulates the economy, remains almost impervious to budget cuts. To understand why military spending is no longer a stimulus driver means putting aside memories of Rosie the Riveter and the sepia-hued worker on the bomber assembly line and remembering instead that the Great Depression came before "the Good War," not the other way around. In World War II, it's also important to recall, the massive military buildup was labor intensive, employed millions, and was accompanied by rationing, austerity, and very high taxes.

This time around, we began with boom years and spent our way into the breach, in significant part by launching unnecessary, profligate wars. Meanwhile, President George W. Bush cut taxes at a more than peacetime pace and borrowed like an addicted gambler on a losing streak to underwrite his wars of

choice, including his Global War on Terror. If the former president's nearly trillion dollar (and counting) global war got us into this mess, by simple logic it's not likely to bail us out as well.

If war spending had been an effective stimulus for the economy, we would be roaring along on 12 cylinders today. But increasingly this kind of spending mainly stimulates corporate shareholders, stock prices, and (of course) war itself.

Riding the Slide to Billions

While the good times rolled during the long slide from surplus to deficit, from no war to global war, it wasn't just the Merrill Lynches and subprime mortgage giants that cleaned up. Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and Northrop Grumman—the top three defense contractors—had a ball, too.

In 2002, the first full year of what came to be known as the Global War on Terror, for instance, those three companies—ranking first, second, and third on the Pentagon's list of top ten contractors—split \$42 billion in contract awards, more than two-thirds of the \$67 billion distributed among the top 10 Pentagon contractors.

In 2007, the last year for which full contracting data is available, the same Big Three split \$69 billion in Pentagon contracts, which was more than the total received by the top 10 companies just five years earlier. The top 10 divvied up \$121 billion in contracts in 2007, an 80% increase over 2002. Lockheed Martin, the number one Pentagon contractor, graduated from a mere \$17 billion in awarded contracts in 2002 to \$28 billion in 2007. That's a leap of 64%. Given such figures, it's easy enough to understand how the basic military budget — excluding money for actual war-fighting — jumped from about \$300 billion to more than \$500 billion during the Bush years.

Given the economic climate, it's no surprise that the three defense giants have all posted losses in the past few weeks. But before the hankies come out and the histrionics start, it should be noted that Lockheed Martin alone has an \$81 billion backlog in

orders, enough to keep chugging along for another two years without a single new contract.

If such war spending had been an effective stimulus for the economy, we would be roaring along on 12 cylinders today. But increasingly this kind of spending mainly stimulates corporate shareholders, stock prices, and (of course) war itself.

No matter, the staggering new defense budget ensures that, for the defense industry, some version of good times will continue to roll, even if the economic impact of these huge military investments proves negligible and the need in other areas is staggering.

The 2010 Defense Budget

President Obama is reportedly intent on digging deep into the Pentagon budget. He has given his Office of Management and Budget until April to complete an "exhaustive line-by-line" review of the detailed budget request before it is released. In speeches, he has focused on wasteful and unnecessary defense spending.

Just days ago, Obama insisted that "the days of giving defense contractors a blank check are over." To underline that assertion, he cited a 2008 Government Accountability Office study that found 95 military projects over budget by a total of \$295 billion. He pledged to end such egregious practices, and the no-bid contracts that often go with them. That applause line plays well at a time when belts are tightening uncomfortably and boot straps remain elusive, but it misses a reality, no less potentially important in the Obama era than in the preceding one: for (at least) the last eight years, defense contractors haven't needed a "blank check" because they already have the combination to the safe, the PIN number to the account, and a controlling interest on the board of the bank.

Given the promised size of the next Pentagon budget, no matter what weapons programs are cut or companies and contracts disciplined, the "bank board" will remain the same because the overall amount available to it shows no signs of changing. In fact, basic funding levels (not including money still being set aside for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq) are remarkably in line with the most recent Bush administration budget, right down to prospective further increases. The just released overall figure for the

2010 Pentagon budget is actually \$533.7 billion; that is, \$20.4 billion higher than Bush's last base budget.

President Obama does not like the term "Global War on Terror" (GWOT), dispensing with the Bush administration's moniker of choice to describe the most costly array of military operations since World War II. But Obama's Pentagon will continue to spend a

GWOT-sized chunk of our national treasure, even as troops trickle home from Iraq, and the surge relocates to Afghanistan's inhospitable steppes. The preliminary figure for war-fighting in 2010 is \$130 billion, which represents a modest decrease from the \$144 billion that is expected to go to military operations in 2009. Add that to the base Pentagon budget and you get a subtotal of \$664 billion for 2010 military expenditures.

If the estimated costs of military spending lodged in other parts of the federal budget (like funding for nuclear weapons which is considered the bailiwick of the Department of Energy), as well as miscellaneous non-Defense Department defense costs — about \$23 billion last time around — are also included, then President Obama's first military budget should come in at around \$670 billion.

After the preliminary budget figures were released, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told reporters, "In our country's current economic circumstances, I believe that represents a strong commitment to our security." Almost \$700 billion is a strong commitment alright. Unfortunately, as a stimulus commitment — and a largely unquestioned one at that — it is certain to prove a drag on our economic recovery, despite the claims of the defense industry and their ever-present publicists and lobbyists.

Lifting America by the (Combat) Bootstraps?

And are we hearing those claims these days! The Aerospace Industries Association (AIA), representing more than 100 leading defense and aerospace corporations, has been trumpeting their

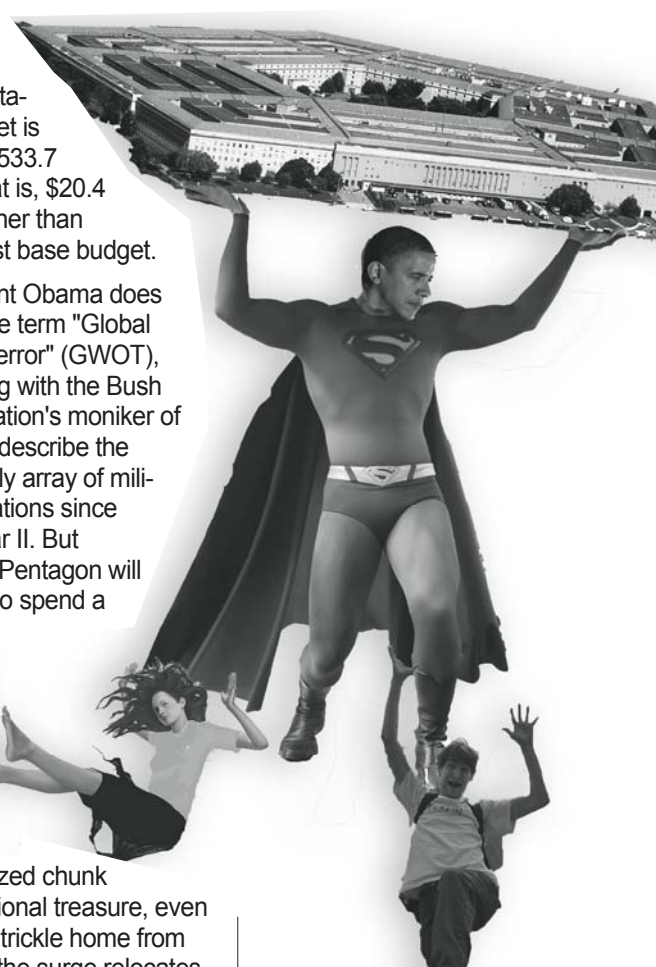
contributions to the economy in a print ad campaign and on their website under the catch-phrase: "Aerospace and Defense: The Strength to Lift America."

In terms of American well-being, the AIA estimates that defense and aerospace manufacturers contribute \$97 billion in exports a year, while maintaining two million jobs. As Fred Downey, an association vice president, told the Associated Press, "Our industry is ready and able to lead the way out of the economic crisis."

As the association sees it, defense and aerospace corporations are about as shovel-ready as you can get. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), however, offers quite a different view of the AIA's two-million jobs claim. Their "Career Guide to Industries," for example, looks intensively at Aerospace Product and Parts Manufacturing (which would also include some non-defense related corporations) and finds that the sector employed 472,000 wage and salary workers in 2006. Now, this is not the whole picture of defense-related employment, but according to the Associated Press, the BLS estimates that only 647,000 people work in industries where at least one-fifth of the products are defense-related.

Perhaps the AIA was including not just jobs making weapons, but jobs lobbying Congress to pay for them. Then Downey and crew might almost have a case. The BLS would probably not consider lobbyist jobs to be defense-related, but maybe they should because the Center for Responsive Poli-

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The Economy



by Renee
Espeland

The economy: notions of justice (scraps from the table vs. a place at the table), heterosexism, hospitality codes, purity codes, and debt codes. These were the topics of discussion one day as a friend and I sat in the dining room at the DMCW.

My friend ponders, "Have you ever heard the phrase 'If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him?' People ask, 'What would Jesus do?' How do we know what Jesus would do? I think that if we were to see Jesus on the road we should kill him... and get to work."

Well, not every conversation seems this provocative! Yet, is this really the case?

Amongst DMCW community members we have been having a discussion about heterosexism. If we stand in solidarity with our LGBT sisters and brothers (or stand in solidarity with women and our brother Roy Bourgeois who is threatened now with excommunication), could the diocese get mad and black-list us from having priests celebrate mass? Would our wonderful friends who are Sisters of Humility be at risk if they come here to worship? Would the Catholic high school be prohibited from sending kids to do service work? This is provocative. Billions of dollars in bail-out money goes to those who need it least and that will benefit so few that I dare say it will benefit no one. This is provocative! Obama's policies are a blood-curdling mess--thus Afghanistan and Pakistan and Palestine and Iraq and Iran (very little health or care for anyone). The droning on and on of the war machine is literally that of [un-manned] drones that drop bombs on children. This is provocative!

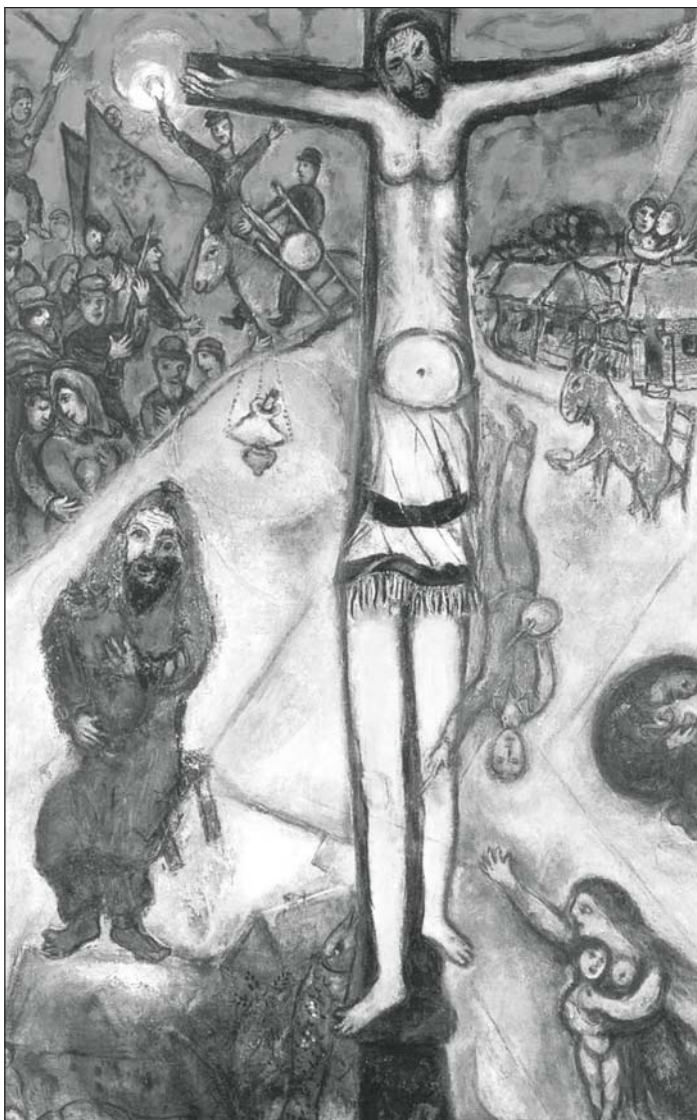
Following are two stories which could act as scaffolding in our process of determining a response to these aforementioned provocations.

A man named Leuthard grew tired while working in the fields one day and decided to take a little rest. He fell asleep and dreamed that a huge swarm of bees had in some mysterious way gotten inside his body only to escape from his mouth with a roar. With

their stings, the man felt, the bees had given him an unheard-of inspiration. He ran home to his wife, and in a state of wild excitement declared their marriage at an end. He then hurried at once into the nearest church, ripped the crucifix out of its fastening, and trod it underfoot. As the peasants came running in, he preached that God had revealed wondrous things to him. There was no need to pay tithes to the clergy. Not

time stillness of a hot summer's day. Suddenly he knew what he had to do. The things in his head, acquired from others or thought-out for himself, the usual jumble, fall together in a recognizable pattern. In a burst of ecstatic clarity he leaves his wife and his hut, and does something dreadful: He stomps on the crucified God.

Forty years after Leuthard's death, between 1043 and 1048, a bishop



everything in the Bible was holy and beneficial; it also contained all kinds of nonsense. People listened with pleasure, and increasingly large crowds gathered around to hear his disclosures. The bishop succeeded with his clever words in driving the man into a corner and convincing the people that his message was confused. In this way the danger was averted, and in the end Leuthard was abandoned by the people, fell into despair, threw himself into a well, and drowned...

Adolf Holl continues by asking, "...then what of the dream with the bees, those learned, eloquent creatures?"

From time immemorial their buzzing and swarming, as well as their circumspection, their busy and frugal housekeeping, have appealed to people as symbols of inspired, single-minded intelligence. They descend upon Leuthard in an open field, in the noon-

from this area wrote his Episcopal colleague an anxious letter. He spoke of people who rejected marriage as absurd, abstained from meat, and refused to kill even the smallest living thing. And to top-off their blasphemous arrogance, they practiced the laying on of hands to administer the power of the Holy Spirit, which by hallowed custom only bishops may do, and with their great eloquence poisoned the hearts of the faithful--so much so that very soon even the simple souls began to feel superior to the most learned Catholic teaching. The sword of the Holy Inquisition was forged for use against these people. And a holy war was waged against them in the south of France between 1209 and 1229, which saw entire towns wiped-out in the name of God. (1)

This next story takes place in Japan where a priest is attempting to avoid "apostasy" by refusing to

step on a picture of Jesus. His heretofore life's dedication and intention is at stake.

"Tonight you will certainly apostatize," the interpreter had said confidently [to the priest].

How like the words that man had addressed to Peter: "Tonight, before the cock crows you will deny me thrice."

Ah! That snoring again! It was like the sound of a windmill turned around in the breeze. Here was the stupid groaning snore, now high, now low of some ignorant fellow who felt no fear of death. There, fast asleep like a pig, opening his big mouth he [wished that he] could snore just like that.

"What is wrong?" It was the interpreter who spoke; and his voice was that of the cat playing with its prey. "It's terrible, terrible! Isn't it better for you not to be so stubborn? If you simply say, 'I apostatize,' all will be well. Then you will be able to let your trained mind relax and be at ease."

"It's only that snoring," answered the priest through the darkness.

Suddenly the interpreter became silent as if in astonishment.

"You think that is snoring? That is the moaning of Christians hanging in the pit."

"Why do these people not apostatize [asks the priest]?"

"They have already apostatized many times. But as long as you don't apostatize these peasants cannot be saved. Behind their ears a small incision has been made; the blood drips slowly through this incision and through the nose and mouth."

"In return for these earthly sufferings, those people will receive a reward of eternal joy," [the priest said].

"Don't deceive yourself."

The priest shook his head; yet he had no self-confidence. "What do you mean? It's because I believe in the salvation of these people..."

"You make yourself more important than them. You are preoccupied with your own salvation. If you say that you will apostatize...those people will be taken out of the pit. They will be saved from suffering. And you refuse to do so. It's because you dread to betray the Church. For love Christ would have apostatized. Even if it meant giving up everything he had."

"Stop tormenting me! Go away!" shouted the priest wildly....

How tender-footed and hard-hearted are we? Are we courageous enough to risk love?

The priest raises his foot.... He will now trample on what he has considered the most beautiful thing in his life, on what he has believed most pure, on what is filled with the ideals and the dreams of man. How his foot aches! And then the Christ in bronze speaks to the priest: "Trample! Trample! I more than anyone know of the pain in your foot. Trample! It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world. It was to share pain that I carried my cross."

Dawn broke. And far in the distance the cock crowed.(2)

How tender-footed and hard-hearted are we? Are we here at the DMCW courageous enough to risk love? The saints have risked more yet have been beatified into a dishonest state of blissful impotence--flaccid and diluted. We will not face torture, the guillotine or the inquisition as a result of a commitment to provoke love. We will have to grieve the lack of mercy in ourselves and in our mirror the church. This grief is with us whether we are conscious of it or not.

Shusaku Endo claims that, "Sin, is not what it is usually thought to be; it is not to steal and tell lies. Sin is for one man to walk brutally over the life of another and to be quite oblivious of the wounds he has left behind." Martyrdom to oblivion holds no reward.

In regards to the Pope's end-of-year address to the Curia, Deborah Orr writes that "The Vatican this year refused to back a UN resolution urging the banning of criminal penalties against homosexuality, explaining that while it was against 'unjust discrimination,' it remained very much in favour of what it sees as "just discrimination."

Homosexuality is still punishable by law in 77 countries, including the US, and in seven of those, including four Muslim states, it is still punishable by death. While the Catholic Church declares itself to be against the active criminali-

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A CALL FOR THE REPENTANCE OF HETEROSEXISM

In December, 2008, a number of cruel and ignorant public statements regarding same sex relationships were made by church leadership that weighed heavily on the hearts in our community.

After prayer and reflection, our souls insisted that we publicly confess and repent our sins of heterosexism and call others to do the same.

After sharing our intention with other sisters and brothers, some asked that their names be added to this public statement. Some of their names are listed below.

Kara Speltz
Bob Bossie, SCJ
Rosalie Riegler
Fr. River Sims, *Temenos Catholic Worker, San Francisco, CA*
Ellen Naney
Jacqueline Dickey, *formerly of Des Moines Catholic Worker*
Jerry Ebner, *Omaha Catholic Worker*
Jim Reagan, *St. Joseph Catholic Worker, New York*
Dale King, *Mary House Catholic Worker, Austin, TX*
Lynn Goodman Strauss, *Mary House, Austin, TX*
Mary Margaret ("Mia") Nussbaum
Elton Davis
Brian Terrell, *Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker, Maloy, Iowa*
Sarah Brook
Scott Mathern-Jacobson
William F. Watts, *Martin De Porres, San Francisco, CA*
David and Barbara Corcoran, *Des Plaines, IL*
Vicki Kline, *formerly of Holy Family Catholic Worker, Kansas City, MO*
Stephanie Riccobene, *Cleveland, OH*
Eda Uca-Dorn, *formerly of Dorothy Day Catholic Worker*
Steve Clemens, *Community of St. Martin (Minneapolis)*
Martha Hennessy
Karla Hansen
Denis Murphy FSC, *Su Casa Catholic Worker, Chicago, IL*
Roger F. Miller
Cheryl Schultz, *Lily Sparrow House, Owatonna, MN*
Robert Cook, *Des Moines, IA*
Maria Downs
Mary Sullivan, *(Pax Christi Member), Hilton Head Island, South Carolina*
Mary McDonough-Harren
Robert Oberbillig
Michael Harank
Lynn Fallon
Don Timmerman
Roberta Thurstin Timmerman
Margaret Vernon, *Indianola, IA*
Eloise Cranke, *Des Moines, IA*
Jack Hereford
Mrs. and Mrs. Marla and Phyllis Stevens

Continued on page 11

We are past and present Catholic Workers who come together to speak in support of The United Nations Declaration on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity presented to the United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 2008. The declaration condemns violence, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, stigmatization, and prejudice based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It also condemns killings and executions, torture, arbitrary arrest, and deprivation of economic, social, and cultural rights on those grounds.

For nearly a millennium, millions of our sisters and brothers who have been, or were perceived to have been lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender have endured unspeakable acts of hatred and violence that have devastated their lives and, in countless instances, led to their deaths. Today, 77 nations still criminalize these children of God based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, and in seven nations these "crimes" are punishable by death. As recently as 2003, the United States of America still had such laws in effect in several states.

Throughout the history of the Catholic Worker movement, these brothers and sisters have stood with us, praying together, performing works of mercy together, witnessing for justice together, being arrested together, and sitting in jail together. They have stood with us even though we have often denied and mistreated them. We have done those things we have done together because we shared a common belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ that the greatest commandment is that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves and that our love is measured by what we do for the least of these.

The sanctity of romantic and filial love inherent in this commandment is self-evident. The clear God-given blessing of these expressions of love inspire us to care for one another as much we care for ourselves and lead us to form families and communities to more closely express, as Jesus taught, that God is Love.

When there is no greater love than that love for which one would lay down one's life for a friend, love so expressed can only come from God. Where there is love so compelling that one will stay true to that love even when it calls one to leave one's father and mother and all that was treasured before that love was known, that love can only come from God. When a love triumphs over grave after grave after grave, that love can only come from God. To confess rather than deny before the world the love placed in one's heart by God though others revile you, persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you for its sake is striking and irrefutable evidence of God and that the words of Jesus are lasting and true.

The trust that God has given to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender daughters and sons has not been misplaced, and this is evinced by their unfailing witness of love so described. By their fruits, we know them. They have continued to love us, even when we didn't love them, and their labors have led only to a deeper understanding of love, strengthened and expanded communities, reconciliation among the faithful, and a world in which it is easier to love.

To neither cherish nor express our gratitude for this blessing is a desecration of God's love and therefore a sin. This sin is not ameliorated by abstractions or by hiding behind the parsing of terminology or other deviations that serve to rationalize the sin. Exposing this sin, however controversial, does not derail nor shrink any other concern for peace and justice on our path. We know that fearing to take this position now will.

Because historic and contemporary acceptance and practice of a sin does not diminish the obligation of a contrite heart to confess it, we choose to repent. Furthermore, we hold that heterosexist bigotry is not based in nor supported by the gospels but is a human invention wrought by fear, ignorance, and greed. Therefore, now and forever, we confess all our sins of heterosexism against our lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender brothers and sisters within and outside the Catholic Worker Movement; we ask these sisters and brothers and God to forgive us our sins against them, and we pledge our best efforts to go and sin no more.

As part of our penance, we call upon all nations, in particular the United States of America, all organized entities, and people of faith to join us in repentance and to:

Endorse enthusiastically and without equivocation the 2008 United Nations Declaration on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity as well as any such future declarations.

Renounce all public remarks made regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people that serve to demean, degrade, or foment hostility toward and discrimination against them such as, but not limited to, those comments made by religious leaders comparing them to pedophiles or saying they are more threatening than global warming. Moreover we ask those who have made such ascriptions to confess the cruelty of these words and to recant them.

While we pray and wait for these things, we join hands with our lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender brothers and sisters willing and prepared to share any slight, bear any burden, and suffer any affliction with them until the day they are regarded by all human kind as worthy and equal to us all, as they have always been held in the eyes of God.

Respectfully submitted March 1, 2009
The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

This letter touched us so much that we printed it here.

March 1, 2009, 11:30 p.m.

Dear Des Moines Catholic Worker Community:

The darkness has descended now. The gentle rain no longer sounds out its musical rhythms, and the Sabbath has ended. I decided to check my mail before going to sleep. I clicked on one of your many and welcomed emails with the eyebrow raising title of "A Call to Repentance of Heterosexism." I am tired but I needed to write these words to you. They are an offering of incense in the night.

As my tired eyes read the profoundly moving confession of repentance, a surge of volcanic emotion rose up in my heart. I received what St. Ignatius called the "gift of tears." They are the anguished tears of remembered personal pain inflicted by family, strangers and "friends;" a torrent of tears remem-

bering centuries of inflicted suffering toward GBLT people by the church; a litany of broken tears for the countless (remembered and unknown) GBLT men and women throughout history who suffered unimaginable violence and death as they courageously declared the covenant of love between them an incarnation of God's all-embracing Love. They are a stream of compassionate tears shed in the face of unconscious ignorance and scapegoating fear that drives all blinded persecution and hatred by family, strangers, tribes, communities and nations. They are the painful but cleansing tears that "see" with clarity of vision, the horrifying and prophetic truth of Jesus' words that the worst enemies of the people of God would be found among those of our own household (the church). Hence HIS command—not suggestion, not advice, not opinion—but the COMMAND to "Love your enemies and do good to those who harm you for the sake of the good news." And finally, they are the joyful

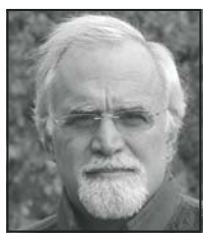
tears of a profound and abiding gratitude for the infinite grace to stay awake, to name our sin, confess, repent and begin anew expressed in the words of the Spanish poet Antonio Machado:

"What was your word, Jesus?
Love? Affection? Forgiveness?
All your words were
one word: Wake-up."

So I send you and the community of Des Moines my deepest love and abiding gratitude for the wakefulness expressed in your call to repentance. Thank you for another metanoia moment in my life as a gay man and hopefully in the life of the Catholic Worker community.

In the hope of the empty tomb,
Michael Harank

Trying to Serve God and Money Is a Losing Bet



by Frank Cordaro

I don't believe you can strive to be rich in the United States and follow the Gospel at the same time," is one of the things I am apt to say when giving a talk on a college or university campus.

This almost always causes otherwise timid and polite students to voice strong disagreement with my assertion. And, why wouldn't they? Most students are motivated to go to college because they believe they will get a better job with a college degree than without one. There are very few, if any, truly Liberal Arts academic institutions left in this country. The idea of learning for learning's sake—the theoretical basis of a liberal arts education—has long been overtaken on college campuses by ever-growing departments of business and professional degrees. An academic major is chosen according to its income potential as much, if not more than, according to the student's interest in that particular area of study.

My "you can't get rich and follow Jesus" statement is even more strongly resisted on Catholic college and university campuses. These students are painfully aware that they are paying extra money to get a Catholic education, and most go into big debt for this choice. The extra investment should, at least, include the moral backing of their Faith and Jesus for selecting a Catholic education.

Students often dispute my statement by pointing to doctors and lawyers, or of whom they know or have heard, who devote months of service out of every year to the poor. Or, they speak of the philanthropic work of "well-to-do" people, who generously give of their time, talents and riches to help the needy. Bill Gates is one that is often mentioned.

Each and every time I hear them, I concede to their examples. Yes, there are individual rich people who do indeed make room in their lives to serve and give to the poor. But, then I quickly follow-up by noting that the rareness of these examples only proves the point that Jesus makes. On rare occasions, a camel can go through an eye of a

needle, but the odds are overwhelmingly against it. This is brought home to the students when we compare those few rich and well-to-do people, who do live to serve the poor, with the vast majority of the rich and wealthy in the U.S. In the latter bunch, the call to serve the poor hardly crosses their consciousness. It is at this point I tell the students that the social justice teachings of the Catholic Church include a principle that commands a "preferential option for the poor," and that this principle is not an elective component of living our Faith. The Church's "preferential option for the poor" describes the constituent aspect required to describe oneself as being a follower of Jesus. (Matt 25: 31-46)

ism) that darker, lower trait of human nature called greed is elevated to the central motivating principle for success.

I recall my encounter with James T. (JT), a guy I met in a federal holding facility in southern Maryland while awaiting trial for our 1998 Gods of Metal Plowshares witness. JT was a professional gambler who only bet on NFL games. He was locked up pending trial for some drug charges. JT became part of our daily bible study and showed a sincere desire to turn his life around, make amends, do right and to follow Jesus. When we broached the issue of money and material wealth in the bible study, I shared with the group my admonition that I

because he had a sure-fired winning system. JT explained to me that if you do not have a system in which the odds to win are in your favor; a gambler, no matter what his intentions or desires, will always be a chump, who will ultimately be the loser every time. I told JT that it is the same way when being a follower of Jesus. The smart gambler who wants to be a follower of Jesus will trust the sure-fire system presented in the New Testament. They will play the system that puts the odds in their favor. I told JT don't be a Gospel chump when it comes to seeking and acquiring money and material wealth.

"Sure," I told JT, "you might beat the odds and be



It is a surprising thing to me that most Christians in the United States don't realize that nowhere in the New Testament are money and material wealth seen as positive or good. Whenever money and/or material wealth are mentioned, they are attached to "red flags" and other warnings of grave danger. When people do have money and material wealth, they are counseled to give it away to the poor. (Mark 10:17-22) The possession of money and material wealth are never presented as a neutral moral state, but as threats to moral integrity.

I don't recall ever hearing a sermon on the Tenth Commandment, "You shall not covet your neighbor's property." (Exodus 20:17) This is not surprising given that in our economic system (which we call capital-

ism) don't believe you can strive to be rich in the U.S. and follow the Gospel at the same time. JT could not disagree with me more.

The singular thing JT wanted to do most when he was released from jail (besides turning his life around, making his amends, doing right and following Jesus) was make as much money as he could. He knew good times in the past, and how, when flushed with lots of money, he was able to help his family and friends; although he readily admitted, he did not help them as much as he could or should have. But, he "just knew that when he got out this time, it would be different.

I reminded JT what he had taught me about gambling. JT told me that he only bet on NFL games

that rare camel that squeezes yourself through the eye of the needle, but why risk it? The smart follower of Jesus will stick to his advice and use a system that puts the odds in one's favor and neither seeks nor acquires money or material wealth."

Tragically, today's Church does teach in the abstract that money and material wealth are neutral, neither good nor bad, and that its moral status depends on the spirit in which it is embraced. This way of thinking is also how the Church teaches that war in the abstract can be justified if fought by the principles of the Just War Tradition. The problem is, between the non-existent world of the Church's abstract dogmatic statements and teachings and the bloody realities of

Any Church that has more moral clarity on the use of condoms than it does on thermo-nuclear weapons is seriously unbalanced.

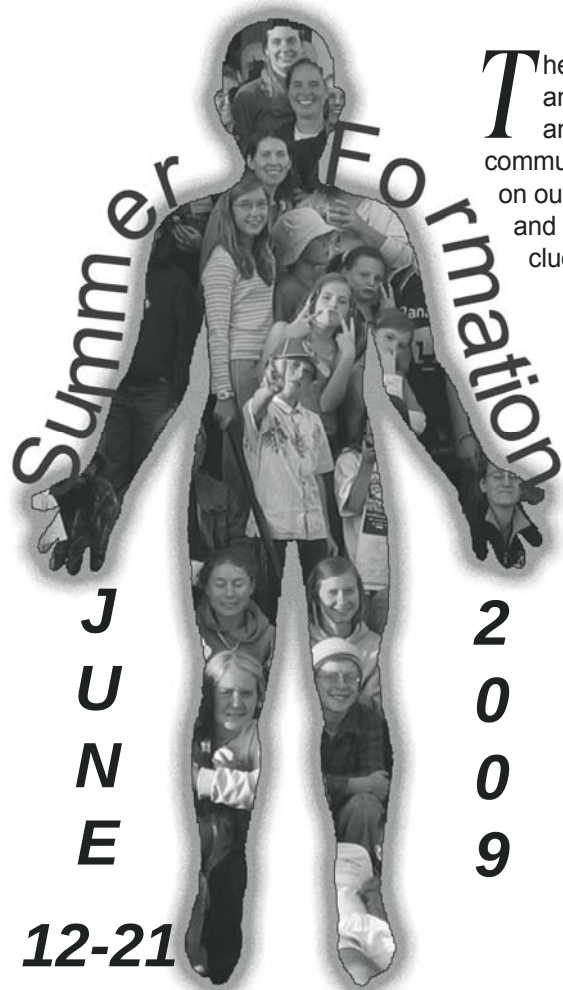
modern history, the followers of Jesus have come to justify the worst abuses in the social, economic and political realms, ignoring their direct biblical responsibilities to the poor, neither acting nor living justly with their fellow human beings. Nowhere is this modern disconnect between the professed faith and the practiced faith more evident than with modern warfare. No where is it more unbalanced than with the Church's positions on human sexuality. As I have often said, "Any Church that has more moral clarity on the use of condoms than it does on thermo-nuclear weapons is seriously unbalanced." Nowhere has this fuzzy thinking caused more pain and injustice to the poor than in our acceptance of U.S. capitalism.

Dorothy Day said it best in her article "A Personalist Economics" published in the September, 1956, issue of New York City's *Catholic Worker*. "We need to change the system. We need to overthrow, not the government, as the authorities are always accusing the Communist 'of conspiring to teach to do,' but this rotten decadent, putrid, industrial capitalist system which breeds such suffering in the whited sepulcher of New York...."

Dorothy Day could sure turn a phrase and be plain-speaking when she needed to be.

What is needed from U.S. Christians is more humility and less certainty in what we profess to believe and more proactive witnessing of the charity and justice that our many Church statements and pronouncements announce but do not fulfill.

DMCW Summer Formation and Intern Retreat



The Des Moines Catholic Worker will host its annual Summer Formation and Intern Retreat June 12-21, 2009. The retreat invites those wanting an immersion in the experience of being a Catholic Worker to join our community for nine days of living and working with the poor and reflections on our roles in responding to social justice. The retreat is free of charge and includes room and board for all nine days. This very full time will include:

- Daily prayer and reflection
- Working and living with the poor.
- Educational Sessions
- Participating in vigils and other forms of witnessing for social justice.
- A great deal of fun.
- Free-time to socialize and just enjoy summer in Des Moines.

All are invited to participate, regardless of background, any or no faith, or any orientation or identity. Those with no experience and those with much experience will be equally welcomed.

Interested?

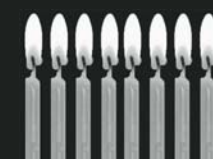
Write, phone, or email us by June 1, 2009—include your name, contact information, and your age to help us in assigning housing. Also let us know if you have cat allergies. (Late registrants are also possible, so if you find at the last minute you want to attend, let us know.) Our contact information is on page 2.

We look forward to meeting you!

Write down the date!



**May 1
2009**



*Birthday party
for the
Catholic Worker
Movement*

*Details announced April 10.
Check our website or
Phone 515-282-4781*

Is the Next Defense Budget a Stimulus Package?

Continued from page 6

tics, a research group that tracks money in politics, reports that the industry spent \$149 million on lobbying firms to get its points across to Congress and the administration last year. That has to be a lot of shovel-ready jobs right there.

Speaking of shovel-ready jobs shoveling out defense industry claims, if the lobbying sector is happy, ad firms must be ecstatic. These days, defense contractors and associations spend striking sums on what's politely termed "public education": full-page ads in major newspapers, ads in Washington metro stations near the Pentagon, Crystal City (a Virginia community where many Pentagon satellite offices are located), Capitol Hill, and other places where the powerful congregate when their limos are in use, not to speak of aggressive pop-up ads on political news sites like the National Journal.

Lockheed Martin, for example, recently unveiled a new ad campaign pitched toward troubled economic times. It

depicts proud blue-collar workers above the tagline: "95,000 employed, 300 million protected." At the bottom of the ad are the logos of the supersonic fighter plane known as the F-22 Raptor and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers whose members build it. As if to underline these messages, 200 members of Congress signed a January 20th "Dear Mr. President, Save the F-22" letter, meant to be waiting for Barack Obama as he entered the Oval Office. The letter asserted that the F-22 program "annually provides \$12 billion of economic activity to the national economy."

Even if that dubious claim were substantiated, the economic activity comes at a high cost. The United States spent more than \$65 billion to design and produce the F-22 Raptor - a fighter plane originally conceived to penetrate the airspace of the long extinct Soviet Union, to counter large formations of enemy bombers in Cold War scenarios that are today inconceivable, and to achieve air superiority high over East-

ern Europe whose greatest problems now involve a potential region-wide economic meltdown. In the wake of the Cold War, as military analyst Chalmers Johnson recently pointed out, the F-22 lacks a role in any imaginable war-fighting scenario the U.S. might actually find itself in.

Efforts to promote the plane as a critical tool in the Global War on Terror floundered when Defense Secretary Gates spoke plainly about the system's uselessness last year. "The reality," he said, "is we are fighting two wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the F-22 has not performed a single mission in either theater."

Fortunately for Lockheed Martin, once the U.S. economy began to crater, it could emphasize a new on-the-ground use for the F-22—as an instant make-work jobs program.

However, even there the plane's utility is questionable. William D. Hartung, director of the New America Foundation's Arms and Security Initiative, points out that, if the F-22 program is cut, the "job losses will be stretched out over two and half years or more, and could happen after the end of the current recession." In addition, Lockheed has had to back away from the 95,000 jobs claims, clarifying that more than 70% of those jobs are only indirectly related to the F-22, and that just 25,000 workers are employed directly on the plane's construction. Winslow Wheeler is head of the Center for Defense Information's Straus Military Reform

Project and his scholarship is built on more than 30 years of service at the Government Accountability Office and on the Senate Budget Committee, among other places. He points out that, when it comes to high-tech weapons, today's military-industrial complex bears not the slightest resemblance to its World War II predecessor as a job generator. As he describes it, in the early 1940s "production lines cranked out thousands of aircraft each month: as fast as the government could stuff money, materials and workers into the assembly line."

In stark contrast, the F-22, is essentially an artisanal product. "Go to Lockheed Martin's plant," he writes. "You will find no detectable movement of aircraft out the door. Instead you see virtually stationary aircraft and workers applying parts in a manner more evocative of hand-crafting. This production rate generates one F-22 every 18 days or so." This is, in fact, what shovel-ready largely means in Pentagon stimulus terms these days.

War for Jobs?

Economists have also weighed in on why "war for jobs" as a way out of recession or depression has entered the world of mythology. An analysis from the University of Massachusetts' Political Economy Research Institute, for instance, finds that, for every one billion dollars invested in defense, 8,555 jobs are created. By contrast, the same billion invested in health care would create

12,883 jobs, and in education, 17,687 jobs or more than double the defense stimulus payoff.

It has often been said that World War II—and the production stimulus it offered - lifted the United States out of the Great Depression. Today, the opposite seems to be the case. The "war economy" helped propel the U.S. into what might turn out to be another great depression, and so, unlike in 1929, as our economy crumbles today, we are already on a global war footing.

As the Obama administration grapples with economic disaster and inherited wars, it has the added challenge of confronting a military-industrial complex accustomed to budgets that reach almost three quarters of a trillion dollars, based on exaggerated global threats, unsubstantiated economic claims, and entrenched profligacy. When Obama's analysts pour over the budget, looking at all those overpriced weapons and plum contracts, they'll have to ask: Is each weapons system or program actually needed for American security and is it cost effective? Or are the defense contractors shoveling a load of shovel-ready bull?

Frida Berrigan is a Senior Program Associate at the New America Foundation's Arms and Security Initiative (ASI). She is a columnist for Foreign Policy in Focus and a contributing editor at In These Times.



Original cartoon by Bob Patton, <cartoonbobpatton@gmail.com>

Heterosexism, Capitalism and Other Sins

Continued from page 5

return on our investment. Love is measured by how much we're willing to give regardless of what we get in return. Contempt is propagated by wanting as much as we can get for giving as little as possible.

It is epidemic social insanity when one will not risk one's job or social status to save a life, but will take one's own life after losing a job and its status. Human suffering is not going to end by learning ways for ourselves and others to acquire more, but by striving together to teach each other how to desire less.

Some people are more worthy than others.

Heterosexism, like all, human oppression, sprouts in the roots of human greed and grows into a clinging vine of superiority. Both heterosexism and capitalism are constructed to rationalize why some things in life should be denied others.

Sacrificing human beings to protect property is exercised not so much by witting acts, but by blind acceptance of a scale of human worthiness. Every construction that justifies one human being having a better quality of life than another is an indirect, if not direct, act of violence.

The American Dream is a human nightmare. This "dream" of success determined by material gain is the most powerful provocateur of human isolation. The fact that few routinely socialize with those outside their economic class proves we view our monetary income as the best informant of whether we have "things in common" with each other.

Capitalism and heterosexism disparage mutual human regard simply on the basis of being human because they need cultural hierarchy and the admiration of wealth and exceptional favor in order to grow wealth for wealth's sake. Oppression controls the privileged with the threat of the same treatment received by the underclass unless the privileged do not shun them from their intimate or private lives.

We size each other and ourselves according to the clothes we wear, the cars we drive, and the china we set on our tables—whether we fall in love with someone of the same or the opposite sex. We awaken from the nightmare by daring to reconsider, by daring to question our paradigms of human worthiness.

Silence will protect us.

This delusion emerges as the most dangerous to the human condition and our survival. The idea that if we "keep our heads down" and everything will be okay can

never come true because it is not based on anything true.

The lies and corruption recently revealed in the financial crisis have shown us this. When we spin, as shrewd or talented, the ability to lie convincingly, we exaggerate fear and mistrust and ultimately collapse into a complete degradation of human character.

Why do we teach children that it's impolite to talk about sex, politics, and religion, when sex, politics, and religion frame every reality? If being polite is an act of mutual consideration, why isn't it impolite to not discuss these things?

Heterosexism clearly demands silence and often shames LGBT people for openly identifying themselves—"Why do they have to talk about it?"

Tragically the damage done by this worsens as acceptance of LGBT people improves. Twenty years ago to expect silence was to be normative in an environment of silence. Today it is a proactive choice that requires a lot more malice and cruelty. Yet those forces remain not only powerful, but dominant.

To disclose or discuss one's economic class if one is working class or poor in "mixed company" is met with no less social derision. Accusations of "victimhood" are common and most ironic, because it would be a capitulation to "victimhood" to remain silent.

While we all may be "equal" in the eyes of God, the realities of the privileged and not-so-privileged are very different. Silence or pretending things are the same—while it may make the privileged feel more comfortable—does not and will not make it so.

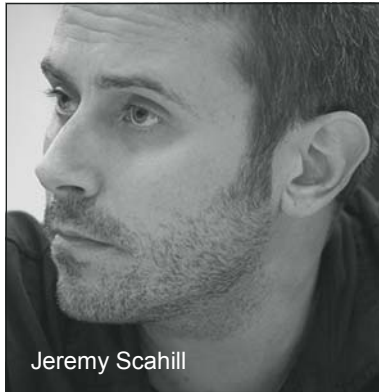
Our lives together are superficial and phony until we talk openly about these differences and decide together what to do about them.

This is not to say that the affluent or those who enjoy any form of societal privilege necessarily have less character than those with less privilege. They do not. Greed/generosity, honesty/duplicity, kindness/cruelty are truly democratic phenomena that dance equally among us all.

However, the time has come for us to sit together at the human table and talk about how privilege affects us individually and collectively. Now more than ever, we need to talk about capital or money—what we think about it, what we do about it, and what it does to us. To study war-no-more is to study humanomics, a system that puts people before profits.

Our species and our planet may not survive if we don't.

Spring Midwest Resistance Retreat Focuses on Blackwater



Jeremy Scahill

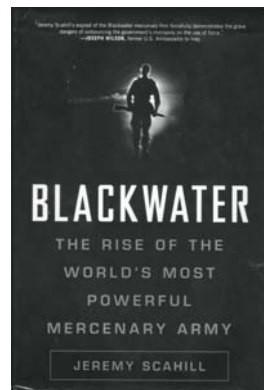
This year's Spring Midwest Catholic Worker Resistance Retreat takes place April 24-27, 2009. The focus will be the Blackwater site in Northern Illinois, with Jeremy Scahill as the keynote speaker. Scahill is a former member of Jonah House and author of *Blackwater: the Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*.

We are working with CLEARWATER, an organization whose mission is to preserve the public nature of and civilian control over law enforcement and military activity and training for law enforcement and military personnel.

Clearwater opposes the privatization of war and of law enforcement. They are located in northern Illinois and have worked to expose and resist Blackwater's presence in that region. (Go to: <www.noprivatearmies.org/mission.html>.)

The link above and more links to further information can be found on our website. <www.desmoinescatholicworker.org>

For information contact Frank Cordaro, 515-282-4781, <frank.cordaro@gmail.com>



The Economy

Continued from page 7

zation of same-sex relationships, the Vatican places more importance on guarding against gay marriage in liberal countries than it does on challenging barbaric practices in draconian ones. In doing so, it shows an unseemly tendency to tolerate anything except toleration. There may be a big dollop of media spin in the emphasis on "saving the rainforests." But Benedict did prefer to talk fairly elliptically about the twin perils of ecological and economic unsustainability, except for this one specific reference. Significantly, it is in the developing world that fundamental Christianity's recruiting grounds are most fertile. In invoking the rainforests, the Pope made a deliberate reference to those parts of the planet where the schism in the worldwide Anglican Church is most deeply felt.

The convulsions suffered by the Anglican Communion, as its most liberal proponents press ahead with the ordination of gay and female priests, have proved to be a rich motivator of Anglican conversion to Catholicism, especially in Africa. It was widely anticipated that the Anglican Communion would collapse under the weight of its own contradictions this year, as the Archbishop of Canterbury hosted a 10-yearly

Lambeth Conference that was threatened by a powerful African-led boycott.

Somehow, the riots were averted, and this Christmas, Williams has doggedly aimed his own Christmas pronouncements in the direction of those issues that really do threaten humanity. Williams is right in targeting Gordon Brown's logic-defying economic policies, which are all predicated on the impossible assumption that the bubble that has just been burst can somehow be gathered up, mended, and re-inflated (while the rainforests, miraculously, get saved). Williams has even declared that disestablishment would be not be such a bad thing, as it would at least free the Church of England to stand against the Government with greater strength.

But on the global stage, it is Benedict's sound-bites that have popular appeal, not Williams's. It would be a luxury if one could dismiss the storm around Benedict's speech as of little importance. Instead it is a nasty reminder that much of organized Christianity is powerful only when it is sanctioning the persecution of individuals, and worse, seems entirely untroubled on the many occasions when it stoops to doing so.

Is the refusal to stomp and trample the crucified Christ; to kill the Buddha—

the Jesus that we meet on the road, "a vast potential for blazing ecstasy smoldere—a magnificent conflagration left unlit—all for lack of a match that can hold its flame?"

Might the stomped-upon and trampled-on Christ have beckoned, "When you loved me I gave you the whole sun and stars to play with. I gave you eternity in a single moment, strength of the mountains in one clasp of your arms, and the volume of all the seas in one impulse of your soul?" Does the resurrected Christ provoke a visceral response of expectancy and if so how? I suggest that, "...part of what it feels like is this, that you're just a drop of oil on a white tablecloth, just a tiny, still drop of oil, and then in a flash you're expanding outward in every direction, evenly, turning into a stain, a little drop expanding into a bright stain that corners the universe, the process of that, the expanding... that's part of it." (3)

This is provocative!

(1) Adolf Holl, *The Last Christian* (Doubleday & Company, INC., 1980). p 26.

(2) Shusaku Endo, *Silence*, (The Charles E. Tuttle Company), p 265-271

(3) Ian Kerner, *She Comes First* (Collins Living) p.19, 65, 205.

Repenting Heterosexism, More Names

Continued from page 8

Bryan, Liza and Francesca Apper, St. Benedict CW, Fresno, CA
Kathleen Desautels, SP, 8th Day Center for Justice, Chicago, IL
TL Michael Auman, OFM Cap., formerly of Detroit Catholic Worker
Leonard Simons
Jack Mayer
Suzanne Sheridan
Dr. Peter Gathje, Emmanuel House CW, Memphis, TN
Mike Uca-Dorn, formerly of Dorothy Day CW, Washington, DC

Mary Pope
Rev. Rex E. Piercy, former Des Moines pastor chair of Interfaith Alliance of Iowa
Rich Reinhardt, OFM Cap., formerly of Haley House (Boston)
Jack Hereford
Yvonne Williamson Rooney, Vancouver Catholic Workers Canada
Chris Williamson Rooney, The Christian Radical and Van CW
Bruce Triggs, formerly of Tacoma, WA, Catholic Worker

Petria Malone, formerly of Portland Catholic Worker, OR
Steve Jacobs, Catholic Worker, Columbia, MO
Chris and Joan Montesano, Sheep Ranch Catholic Worker Farm
Pam Quatse, formerly of Maryhouse Catholic Worker, New York
Martha Miller, formerly of the New York Catholic Worker
Robbie Gamble

