

via paciis

—The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

December, 2008

www.desmoinescatholicworker.org

Volume 32, No. 4

Annual Appeal, 2008

The common Works of Mercy that take place at the Des Moines Catholic Worker cannot be bought.

The most satisfying moments of hope and grace that occur at our Drop-in Center for the Poor and at our Free Food Store happen within poignant human encounters between workers, volunteers, and guests. These moments are frequent and free. A chilly mood is warmed; an encouraging word is spoken; a grateful look is exchanged; a hand is held. The material things we share—food, clothing, and shelter—are secondary to and less tangible than the hearts that are nourished and the spirits lifted here. It is to preserve a place that encourages acts of love and compassion—a place where it is easier to be good—that is our strongest reason for seeking your help.

Even so, we are zealous stewards of the material donations we receive, and our average annual budget of about \$50,000 accomplishes a surprising measure of good.

Last year we served nearly 40,000 meals, provided hot water, clean towels, soap and shampoo for about 5000 showers, distributed groceries and fresh produce to about 6000 families, gave clothing and toiletries to another 3500, and poured 30,000 cups of coffee. We provide use of a phone, a television room for socializing, and, for those without an address, a place to receive mail. We also publish and mail this newsletter quarterly.

In winter months the coats, hats, scarves, gloves, dry socks, candles and blankets, we distribute not only comfort lives, they save them. Often, we are the ones many call when no one else can help. Sometimes this means finding someone a bus ticket home, a dress-shirt for a funeral, a ride to the doctor, or helping any elderly person clear debris from her yard.

We can do as much as we do because our food, sundries, and labor are donated, and, while our live-in community members are given a free room, no one receives a salary or other paid benefits. Workers and volunteers may also eat the same donated food prepared and served to our guests. We receive no grants or government funds. Nor are we sponsored by or under the umbrella of any church or other sponsoring organization. Cash donations (our \$50,000 budget) are used to pay taxes, utilities, upkeep and gas for the community van, house repairs (no small thing with 100-year-old houses), and other necessary supplies. (The Berrigan House and all of our expenses for peace and justice efforts are funded independently.)

We depend as well on the enormous hearts of our large extended volunteer community—amazing souls who give us their time doing every kind of task or service imaginable.

It will surprise few to learn that the need for what we do is growing, and the food lines our getting longer. However, we write this letter confident that our ability to give will grow with that need because we are also confident that our friends will continue to be generous in their giving to our work. This confidence comes from years of experience and with the knowledge that the work we do is truly the stuff of the Kingdom of Heaven. Mostly though, our confidence rests firm in the faith that acts of goodwill are acts of God's will.

Blessed Christmas and joyful New Year to one and all!

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

via pacis

c/o Des Moines Catholic Worker
PO Box 4551
Des Moines, IA 50305
www.DesMoinesCatholicWorker.org

Editor

Frank Cordaro
frank.cordaro@gmail.com
515-282-4781

Designer and Associate Editor

Mona Shaw
monashaw@aol.com
515-282-4781

Subscriptions

Via pacis is published quarterly. To subscribe, mail, email, or phone your name and address to the editor.

Photos and Illustrations

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 forward 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
Des Moines IA 50305

Bishop Dingman House (Hospitality)

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

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: Ed Bloomer, 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
flamerrichard@hotmail.com



*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

Four in Rove Citizen's Arrest Found Guilty

Shaw, Brown, Bloomer, and Guinn stand in front of the Polk County Courthouse in Des Moines.

DES MOINES, IA - The four Iowans arrested while attempting to effectuate a citizen's arrest of Karl Rove were found guilty of trespassing Friday, November 21, 2008, in Iowa District Court in Polk County. Retired Methodist minister and Peace and Justice Advocate, Rev. Chet Guinn, 80, as well as three Des Moines Catholic Workers, Edward Bloomer, 61, Kirk Brown, 25, and Mona Shaw, 57, were arrested at the Wakonda Country Club in Des Moines, Iowa, where Rove was scheduled to speak at a Republican Party Fundraiser last July 25, 2008.

On that date the four had presented Des Moines Police with a written arrest complaint citing Iowa Code provisions for making Citizen's Arrests as well as citing Federal Statute violations they claimed Rove had violated. The four maintained during their trial that they were acting

within the guidelines of Iowa Code that obligate private citizens to make such an arrest if they believe a felony has been committed and turn Rove over to police officials to bring Rove before a judge for formal indictment.

Instructions to the jury allowed that a citizen's arrest was potentially justification for the defendants to refuse to leave the property and that if it was reasonable for the defendants to believe the subject of their arrest had committed a felony that then they should find the defendants not guilty. The jury returned a guilty verdict for each defendant nonetheless.

"It's astonishing that there are six people who still don't find it reasonable to believe that Karl Rove has committed a felony," defendant Mona Shaw said after the verdict.

Sally Frank, attorney for the defendants, said in court that she will file a

motion to set aside the verdict and that the verdict will be appealed if the motion is denied.

Judge Colin Witt sentenced three of the defendants to the minimum \$65.00 fine plus court costs. One defendant, Kirk Brown, stated he could not in conscience pay the fine and was sentenced to one day in jail instead.

Rove remains undicted for any misconduct during his affiliation with the Bush administration and has refused to cooperate with a Congressional subpoena in the Valerie Plame leak investigation.

To date there have been more than 4200 US Military deaths in Iraq, 900 in Afghanistan, about 70,000 casualties (wounded as well as those removed for other injuries and illnesses), and more than 400,000 Iraqi and Afghani citizens killed and many more wounded.

Since our last issue of via pacis...

More than one million have died from war, torture, and preventable human neglect.*

108 military personnel have been killed in the war in Iraq.*

59 military personnel have been killed in the war in Afghanistan.*

6,250 Americans have died because they don't have health insurance.*

30,000,000 have needed groceries from a food bank.*

RESIST

What are you doing about it?

* Statistics derived from U.S. Departments of Defense and Health and Human Services.

Watching, Waiting and the Ongoing State of Advent



by Renee
Espeland

Dennis Bratcher writes that "...the Season of Advent has been a time of fasting and penitence for sins similar to the season of Lent. However, a different emphasis for the season of Advent has gradually unfolded in much of the church. The season of Advent has come to be celebrated more in terms of expectation or anticipation. Yet, the anticipation of the Coming of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament and Judaism was not in connection with remembrance of sins. Rather, it was in the context of oppression and injustice, the longing for redemption, not from personal guilt and sin but from the systemic evil of the world expressed in evil empires and tyrants. It is in that sense that all creation groans for its redemption as we witness the evil that so dominates our world (Romans 8:18-25). Of course, there is the problem of longing for vindication from an evil world when we are contributors to that evil. This is the power of the images of Amos when he warns about longing for the "Day of the Lord" that will really be a day of darkness (Amos 5:18-20.)"

I kneel penitent, and anticipatory: baby Yeshua is coming to rabble-rouse in the name of justice which, is determined to be the commission of a capital offence and results in death

by lethal injection. It starts now and begins in a manger that makes the same statement as Gandhi's philosophy that: *The means is the end*. The means is without privilege of empire and in solidarity with the oppressed, as is the end—this being the advent to lent loop. Like the song that has no end, advent begets imminence, and the birth of the human one begets participation with the whole of my being. Advent requires the integration of all my parts.

I am a citizen in a country at war with everything. Some feed lot owners feed M&Ms and potato chips to cattle because these products are cheaper than the GMO corn that can digest itself so as to save a step in the process that will put it in our gas tanks that are insatiable and that politi-corps have convinced us requires the bombing of children with depleted uranium tipped bombs and the hiring of private corporations to choreograph wars for us so as to boost a U.S. economy that operates under the assumption that pretend money on computer ledgers can be better spent in foreign countries where lower wages are paid so that 2.6 billion people can live on less than \$2.00 a day while everyone lives with increased risk of flood and drought and the insurers of this brilliant system must be bailed out or, as the facsimile of a press reports, WE MAY NOT BE SAFE. Advent does not strike me as particularly safe! By definition, advent is not safe—it leads to lent.

Although it is advent, please do not let it be the "Day of the Lord" yet. I need to get busy. I am out of oil for my lamp, and I need to get some—don't let

It starts now and begins in a manger that makes the same statement as Gandhi's philosophy that: *The means is the end*.

that pesky baby/bridegroom come until I get back from wherever one goes to get oil. Is (discipleship) oil sold at the mall? Is it cheaper at Wal-Mart or should I get "fair-trade" organic? The red, white and blue "Baby Jesus" wants us to spend and shop and invest and borrow for economic health—a fiscal fitness program. Advent (burning the oil) is the only currency that I can use to secure more oil.

Dennis Bratcher goes on to say that "it is truly a humbling experience to read back through the Old Testament and see how frail and imperfect all the "heroes" actually are. Abraham, the coward who cannot believe the promise; Jacob, the cheat who struggles with everybody; Joseph, the immature and arrogant teen; Moses, the impatient murderer who cannot wait for God; Gideon, the cowardly Baal-

worshipper; Samson, the womanizing drunk; David, the power abusing adulterer; Solomon, the unwise wise man; Hezekiah, the reforming king who could not quite go far enough; and finally, a very young Jewish girl from a small village in a remote corner of a great empire." God can reduce, reuse and recycle me, you and any other poor *schmuck* who can convert to the currency of advent.

Because of advent's paradoxical nature of being singularly universal, I am called to engage from the quark to the cosmos. Anticipation and expiation with finger pointed at systemic injustice as well as with the three fingers that point back at me. This event of advent compels surrender to actions so annoyingly small and so dauntingly large that it is no wonder I want Santa Claus instead of a colicky baby. Advent is not particularly appealing.

The girls and I have moved into the Des Moines Catholic Worker commu-

nity. We are trying not to leave all our dirty dishes for Eddie to wash since he is unstinting in his contributions. We are trying not to drink all Norm's good juice or good graces—we want to be considerate. Reetzi, 15, is on board with Monday night bible study, "food store" veggie give-away on Saturdays and will add an evening hospitality shift. Frankie, 11, is chatting up the Catholic Daughter women letting them know of current needs; she is Squeak's litter box cleaner and has found great girls to play with next door. As for me, my intention is for a conversion of all my parts with this currency of advent—the jeopardy of burn'n oil to make oil. When making Baklava, the last step is pouring the honey lemon syrup over the hot pastry. This tart sweetness sizzles sensationally and is quickly absorbed, "Emanuel" enough to make John the Baptizer's loins tingle. If I said this is how good I am feeling to be at the DMCW, it would be really sappy—so I won't. Advent can be a good move.



An Afghan refugee child watches and waits.



Norman's Whereabouts

by Norman Searah

Hello there! I've been pulling grass and dirt from a sidewalk made of bricks, and I'm not done yet. Along with picking up trash from the empty lot across the street, I have too much to do to travel now. I'd planned to go to New York City, dressed up as a court jester to make people there happier. They seem so sad there these days. I'd like to see them happier, if only for a minute.

When I am able to travel there, I plan to go to the United Nations to see if they have a report on global warming and to see if the report includes information about how war contributes to global warming. I'm sure it does, and this is another reason to stop all wars.

Each war is more advanced than the last one. One day someone will have their fingers on a weapon that can instantly destroy the whole world. I don't know about you, but this is important to me. I call this world "Home." It feeds me and more.

Right now, our Home needs all of us, not only politicians, scientists, or big business. We can all do more, no matter how rich or poor. Everyone can pick up litter like empty bottles and cans and cigarette butts. Everyone can recycle more and put less trash in the dump (which our getting overloaded). We can car pool more when we shop and play and go to work. Maybe you could start your own car pool club.

Speaking of clubs, how about starting a Culture

Feast in your community? You could get to know others better and learn how to cook a new dish of food you've never tried at the same time. If we get to know each other better, we'll be better able to help each other with our problems. Everyone has problems, and everyone has a good way to help with some problem. Think about groups to help people get jobs, or learn what it's like to live in shelter, or find housing if you're homeless, or about mental illness support, or how to cope if you or someone you love is in prison or jail.

Start a club to visit V.A. hospitals or homes for the elderly. And really talk to people when you visit them. You might just learn something. You might even meet your best friend. Or,

volunteer with the Catholic Worker or places like it.

I hope you don't mind my suggestions and ideas. We need to make people feel wanted. I learned a long time ago that you have to walk in the other person's shoes. So, I sometimes go to other churches, etc., to understand other people's religion and lives.

I won't tell you all my ideas in this column, but one more won't hurt. Why not suggest to your workplace, church, school, neighborhood, to pick a section of town that your group will get together to clean up? Okay, others, like "adopt a highway" have had this idea, but, as an idea, it's a very good one. You might even make that vacant lot you're cleaning up into a community garden.

Don't laugh. Some people will do this. And it is these people who will change the world.

Help. Help put an end to war and change yourself into someone who wants to do that. Take care of yourself this way. You have a right to be here. So will the next generation. Let's leave a better place and a better self and perhaps the next generation will do this too.



Weapons Come Second

Can Obama Take on the Pentagon?



by
Frida
Berrigan

Photo by Tom Good

Even saddled with a two-front, budget-busting war and a collapsing economy, President Barack Obama may be able to accomplish a lot. With a friendly Congress and a relieved world, he could make short work of some of the most egregious overreaches of the Bush White House—from Guantanamo to those Presidential signing statements. For all the rolling up of sleeves and "everything is going to change" exuberance, however, taking on the Pentagon, with its mega-budget and its mega-power, may be the hardest task he faces.

The Mega-Pentagon

Under President George W. Bush, military spending increased by about 60%, and that's not including spending on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Eight years ago, as Bush prepared to enter the Oval Office, military spending totaled just over \$300 billion. When Obama sets foot in that same office, military spending will total roughly \$541 billion, including the Pentagon's basic budget and nuclear warhead work in the Department of Energy.

And remember, that's before the Global War on Terror enters the picture. The Pentagon now estimates that military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will cost at least \$170 billion in 2009, pushing total military spending for Obama's first year to about \$711 billion (a number that is mind-bogglingly large and at the same time a relatively conservative estimate that does not, for example, include intelligence funding, veterans' care, or other security costs).

With such numbers, it's no surprise that the United States is, by a multiple of nearly six, the biggest military spender in the world. (China's military budget, the closest competitor, comes in at a "mere" \$120 billion.) Still, it can be startling to confront the simple fact that the U.S. alone accounts for nearly half of all global military spending -- to be as exact as possible in such a murky area, 48% according to the International Institute

Unfortunately, when it comes to military spending and defense, the record is reasonably clear—Obama is not about to go toe-to-toe with the military-industrial complex.

for Strategic Studies. That's more than what the next 45 nations together spend on their militaries on an annual basis.

Again, keep in mind that war spending for 2009 comes on top of the estimated \$864 billion that lawmakers have, since 2001, appropriated for the Iraq war and occupation, ongoing military operations in Afghanistan, and other activities associated with the Global War on Terror. In fact, according to an October 2008 report by the Congressional Research Service, total war spending, quite apart from the regular military budget, is already at \$922 billion and quickly closing in on the trillion dollar mark.

Common Sense Cuts?

Years late, and with budgets everywhere bleeding red, some in Congress and elsewhere are finally raising questions about whether this level of spending makes any sense. Unfortunately, the questions are not coming from the inner circle of the president-elect.

Representative Barney Frank (D-MA) drew the ire and consternation of hard-line Republicans and military hawks when, in October, he suggested that Congress should consider cutting defense spending by a quarter. That would mean shaving \$177 billion, leaving \$534 billion for the U.S. defense and war budget and maintaining a significant distance—\$413 billion to be exact—between United States and our next "peer competitor." Frank told a Massachusetts newspaper editorial board that, in the context of a struggling economy, the Pentagon will have to start choosing among its many weap-

ons programs. "We don't need all these fancy new weapons," he told the staff of the *New Bedford Standard Times*. Obama did not back him up on that.

Even chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense John Murtha (D-PA), a Congressman who never saw a weapons program he didn't want to buy, warned of tough choices on the horizon. While he did not put a number on it, in a recent interview he did say: "The next president is going to be forced to decrease defense spending in order to respond to neglected domestic priorities. Because of this, the Defense Department is going to have to make tough budget decisions involving trade-offs between personnel, procurement and future weapons spending."

And now, President-elect Obama is hearing a similar message from the Defense Business Board, established in 2001 by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to give advice to the Pentagon. A few weeks ago, in briefing papers prepared for President-elect Obama's transition team, the Board, hardly an outfit unfriendly to the Pentagon, argued that some of the Defense Department's big weapons projects needed to be scrapped as the U.S. entered a "period of fiscal constraint in a tough economy." While not listing the programs they considered knife-worthy, the Board did assert that "business as usual is no longer an option."

Desperate Defense

Meanwhile, defense executives and industry analysts are predicting the worst. Boeing CEO Jim McNerney wrote in a "note" to employees, "No one really yet knows when or to what extent defense spending could be affected, but it's unrealistic to think there won't be some measure of impact." Michael Farage, Sikorsky's director of Air Force programs, was even more colorful: "With the

Association, a trade group representing companies like Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman.

Listening to defense industry figures talk, you could get the impression that the Pentagon's larder was empty and that the pinching of pennies and tightening of belts was well underway. While the cuts suggested by the Defense Business Board report got a lot of attention, the Pentagon is already quietly laying the groundwork to lock the future Obama administration into a possibly slightly scaled-down version of the over-the-top military spending of the Bush years.

Business as Usual?

At the beginning of October, the Pentagon's latest five-year projection of budget needs was revealed in the *Congressional Quarterly*. These preliminary figures -- the full request should be released sometime next month -- indicate that the Pentagon's starting point in its bargaining with the new administration and Congress comes down to one word: more.

The estimates project \$450 billion more in spending over those five years than previously suggested figures. Take fiscal year 2010: the Pentagon is evidently calling for a military budget of \$584 billion, an increase of \$57 billion over what they informed President Bush and Congress they would need just a few months ago.

Unfortunately, when it comes to military spending and defense, the record is reasonably clear—Obama is not about to go toe-to-toe with the military-industrial complex.

On the campaign trail, his stump speech included this applause-ready line suggesting that the costs of the war in Iraq are taking away from important domestic priorities: "If we're spending \$10 billion a month [in Iraq] over the next four or five years, that's \$10 billion a month

Continued on page 11



Eight arrested at annual "Strategic Space and Defense Conference"

OMAHA, NE—Eight peace makers were arrested October 8, 2008, at the Qwest Convention Center during a space weapons bazaar hosted by U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) in Omaha. Midwest Catholic Workers and their friends were charged with "Failure to Leave" while they participating in a "Die-In." Among those arrested was long-time peace activist Peg Gallagher who turned 90 October 15, 2008. Other Omaha-area activists arrested and released included: Kathy J. Peterson; 54, Mark Kenney, 51; and Jerry Ebner (Omaha Catholic Worker), 58. Also arrested were: Frank Cordaro, 57, Des Moines Catholic Worker; Greg Boertje, 53, Duluth, Minnesota, Catholic Worker; Michael Walli, 60, Duluth, Minnesota, Catholic Worker; and Steve Jacobs, 53, Columbia, Missouri, Catholic Worker.

STRATCOM continues to be a primary, international promoter of space weaponry. Activists also wanted to draw attention to the United Nations' "Prevent an Arms Race in Outer Space" (PAROS) resolution that is currently opposed by only two nations—the United States and Israel.

In the action, the group held a rally, shared reflec-

tions, and read the following prepared statement.

"We recall Martin Luther King, Jr.'s admonition that, '...a nation which spends more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.'"

"We are here to expose the lie of legitimacy given by the City of Omaha and the Qwest Convention Center to the 2008 Strategic Space and Defense Conference and we name this an unholy alliance which can only end in global death and destruction. We refuse to surrender the land, sea, air and the heavens above to those who have given their allegiance to the gods of war and greed. For the scriptures remind us of the hypocrisy of those who put their faith in "gods of metal" to protect them."

"We call on the city of Omaha and this conference's sponsoring organizations to turn away from this unholy collaboration with global death and evil and to choose life. So, we stage this 'Die-In' to say as clearly as we can, that "Space Weapons = Death."

After reading the statement, the participants lay down near the entrance to the Qwest Center to symbolize the thousands of people who die each year at the hands of the rampant global militarization. After a

thirty-minute "Die-In" outside, they proceeded through the conference center doors and repeated the action inside, where eight who refused to leave were arrested and charged with trespassing.

Residents from the Omaha area were given citations and released on their own recognizance. The four from out-of-town, Frank Cordaro, Greg Boertje, Michael Walli and Steve Jacobs were held over night in the Douglas County Jail. All the defendants, except Walli, pleaded no contest (Boertje, Cordaro, Jacobs, Peterson) or guilty (Gallagher, Kenney) or were found guilty (Ebner). (Greg Boertje initially pleaded not guilty but changed his plea after eleven days in jail and was sentenced to time served.)

Only Michael Walli maintained his not guilty plea and was held in jail until his trial on November 14, 2008, 38 days later, when a judge found him innocent by dismissing the case for lack of evidence.

Those who participated emphatically pledged to return each year in the future as long as STRATCOM's Space Weapons Bazaar, (officially named the "Strategic Space and Defense 2008 Conference") continues to be held.



Massacre of the Innocents, Giotto di Bondone, 1315

Feast of the Holy Innocents Retreat, Witness and Line Crossing Begins Dec. 26.

The Des Moines and Omaha Catholic Worker communities invite you to deepen your Christmas observance and join us as we examine an often-ignored element of the season. Taking cues from the Gospel of Matthew's infant narrative, we will study the parallels between King Herod's first-century killing of the innocent children in Bethlehem and the murderous acts committed by twenty-first-century Herods in the U.S. The Herods of Jesus's day carried out their deeds through their command of legionary Roman armies. Modern-day Herods employ the U.S. Global Military presence and Offutt's Nuclear and Space Commands.

This year's retreat takes place in the basement of St. John's Church on Creighton University campus at 2500 California Plaza, Omaha. The Retreat begins at 7:00 pm Friday, December 26, 2008, and concludes Sunday, December 28 with a 10 a.m. Mass at St. John's followed by the Witness and Line Crossing at Offutt Air Force Base. For information contact: Frank Cordaro <frank.cordaro@gmail.com>, 515-282-4781, or Jerry Ebner <cwomaha@gmail.com>, 402-502-5887.



Photo courtesy of Omaha Catholic Worker

Participants in the "Die-In" lying in front of the Qwest Center.

Related Links for more information include: the Des Moines Catholic Worker "Die-In" page: <www.desmoinescatholicworker.org/qwestaction.html>; Strategic Space and Defense 2008 Conference: <www.stratspace.org>; and Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space: <www.space4peace.org>.

I may bend, but I'll not be broken.

I may fall, but I'll rise back up.

Clip my wings, and I'll learn to walk there;

Take my feet, and I'll still go on.

As long as life's breath is in me,

I'll drink from life's loving cup.

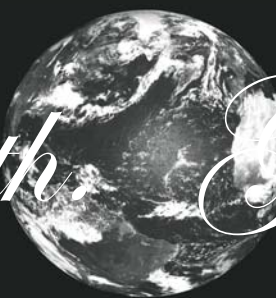
I may bend, but I'll not be broken.

I may fall, but I'll rise back up.

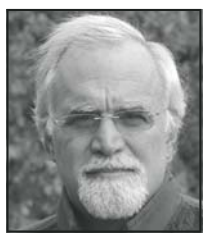
-Jan Covington

(Note from the poet: "I wrote this a few years back basically as a statement of and for myself, to remind me not to let things get me down. However, now I see it is NOT just about me or for me. Since doing shifts at the DMCW I can honestly say it could easily be a statement for so many of our guests we serve, as well as the staff and volunteers and the love I see in action each time I come to DMCW.")

Peace on Earth. Goodwill to all.



Celebrating Advent with President-Elect Obama



by
Frank
Cordaro

Throughout our 75-year history—as many in the Catholic Worker movement know—there has been rife discussion about the pros and cons of voting and the electoral politics that come with it. The Catholic Worker movement is a "personalist" movement, and personalism effectuated in the political arena depicts Catholic Workers as Christian Anarchists. For me, identifying as an anarchist has always been more functional than philosophical. Were a government, on a decentralized human scale, to actually function nonviolently and in the best interest of its people (starting from the bottom up), I could and would support that government.

Founders and many leading lights of the Catholic Worker movement have taken a dim view of the whole voting process. Even though Dorothy Day's first arrest and imprisonment were at the White House as a suffragette, she never voted and was fond of saying, "Don't vote. It just encourages them." And, Ammon Hennessey, who never voted either, recommended we use our bodies as ballots, "Cast that body ballot on behalf of the people around you every day of your life, every day, and don't let anybody ever tell you that you haven't voted."

These "to vote or not to vote" discussions are most intense during the presidential election cycles. This was especially true this time around, and I'm thankful the ordeal wrought by the two-year campaign is finally over. (We in Iowa get an even earlier measure of election madness with our first-in-the-nation caucuses.)

Now that Barack Obama is our president-elect, the nation is assessing what it means to have elected for the first time an African American to the highest office in the land. It is only by an accident of divine providence that as the nation assesses the Obama win, the Church is celebrating the season of Advent.

Advent is the four-week period before Christmas in which the Church invites us to do the necessary spiritual work that is preparation for the celebration of Christmas. Advent may be the most invisible and non-

practiced liturgical season in the U.S. Christian calendar. Coincidentally, Christmas is the most visible and practiced holiday in the United States.

How does this happen? Beyond the token recognition that December 25th is the day Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Christmas season in this nation is completely overtaken by our secular consumer culture. The Christmas season is the make or break period for our entire consumer economy. Forty percent of all retail sales in this country are made in the month of December. Advent's timing almost perfectly coincides with the American holiday/consumer

A proper celebration of Advent must be done with a three-tense sense awareness of the three comings of Jesus in the past, the present, and the future. The first or past tense is the celebration of the birth of Jesus as retold in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The second or the present tense is in the here and now, or where we seek and find Jesus as he is manifested in the human family today. The third or future tense is the celebration of the promised return of Jesus during what is often called the "End Times," or more accurately understood as the Great Transformation. In this future time the Reign of God and the Lordship of Jesus are finally

The allegiance Jesus called for in the New Testament is more profound than a simple proclamation of "faith" in Jesus as a personal Savior.

ferred great oppression under the rule of the Roman Empire and its Jewish collaborators. When information of his birth reached the

bottom-up cultural movement that was intentionally and directly at odds with and in opposition to the Roman Empire. A review of the titles ascribed to Jesus in the Christmas stories, with the help of modern scriptural scholarship, reveals ascriptions such as "Messiah," "Lord," "Son of God," "King of the Jews," "Light of the World," "Redeemer," "Liberator," and "Savior of the World" were the same titles the Roman Empire conferred upon Caesar. And, the Caesar of Jesus's day did not take lightly competing claims for the allegiance of the people under his control.

The allegiance Jesus called for in the New Testament is more profound than a simple proclamation of "faith" in Jesus as a personal Savior, and it is deeper than a belief in any creed or set of dogmas as commonly understood. The allegiance to Jesus called for in the New Testament is an allegiance to a concrete divine plan that was both demanding and dangerous. The authors of the New Testament were keenly aware that there was a competing and different divine plan to the one they were presenting. The singular dominating divine plan of the day was Caesar's and the Roman Empire's. Any other claimant to Rome's divine view was targeted for elimination.

Caesar's divine plan and worldly kingdom was based on violent Gods of power and domination. Belief in Caesar's deities meant using violent methods of worldly powers, confronting any and all enemies with these violent means and trusting that your Gods will ensure your victory. When violence won a battle (as was the case for Rome in Jesus's day), the Romans declared this to be "God's peace." And, the sitting Caesar was proclaimed the most favored one or the "son" of God. Caesar and the Roman Empire's divine plan was a top-down system in which the most favored people in the Roman divine plan were also the richest and most powerful. Those at the top of this pyramid of privilege were fully confident in their divine selection and more than willing to use the means of "redemptive" violence to certify their divine favor and just causes.

Jesus's divine plan and worldly kingdom is wholly different. It is based on a singular God who loves unconditionally and offers



season, which begins the day after Thanksgiving when the retail buy, buy, buy frenzy officially commences. There is literally no time on Main Street or Wall Street to celebrate Advent.

More to the point, our consumer based Christmas is far too important for the health and wellbeing of the USA economy and the Empire it sustains to allow any thing near an authentic celebration of Advent to take place.

In order to celebrate the true meaning of Advent, this must be done from the margins and spaces hidden away from the dominant cultural landscape. Yet with the election of Barack Obama as our first African American president we have a factor to add to our Advent spiritual mix that we've never had before.

established. All false kingdoms, their "powers and principalities," are overcome, culminating in the death of death itself, death being the final or ultimate ungodly power and principality.

As a Christian seeking to observe and celebrate all three comings of Jesus, I know some ideas of what I'm looking for. At the same time, I also have some idea of what I don't know to be looking for as we embrace the spirit of this Advent season.

I find what I know to look for in the first coming of Jesus, through the accounts of Jesus birth in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. I know that Jesus was born in a manger to a family of poor peasant stock and lived as a Jew in an occupied homeland. Jesus and his people suf-

political rulers of the day, they were threatened and ordered the slaughter of infants born in the region, forcing the family of Jesus to become political refugees as they fled with him to a strange land. Innocent children were killed by a local war lord and agent of the Roman Empire in his absence. The accounts of these murders of the innocents in Matthew and Luke prefigure the adult life and ministry of Jesus Christ recorded in all four gospels.

What is also known by a growing number of committed Christians—but by no means the majority of those who self-identify as Christians—is that the infant massacre narrative and the subsequent Gospel accounts of the teachings of Jesus, paint a picture of a teacher and a New Testament church that was an anti-empirical, grass-roots,

Continued on page 11

Octogenarian Nuns and 6 Others Arrested at Bomber Demo



Photo courtesy of Salina Journal.

Frank Cordaro in front of an A-10 bomber at Hawgsmoke.

Related Links:

Heartland Conference: <members.cox.net/states4peace>

Hawgsmoke 2008: <www.warthogpen.com/Hawgsmoke_2008.html>

Video: <vimeo.com/2011070?pg=embed&sec=2011070>

SALINA, KS—Eight anti-war activists were arrested at Hawgsmoke, a biennial worldwide A-10 bombing, missile, and tactical gunnery competition. Those arrested are two St. Joseph's nuns from Salina, Agnes C. Teter, 79, and Margaret Rourke, 80. Others arrested were Martin Bates, 53, Janie Stein, 50 and Ralph C. Kresin, 71, all of Salina; as well as Frank Cordaro, 57, Des Moines, Iowa; Wesley Rehberg, 72, Chattanooga, Tennessee; and Gerald Paoli, 28, Chicago, Illinois.

The eight were participants in "The Heartland Speaks: a Peace Coalition Action Glimpsing the Beloved Community." a gathering organized by People for Peace, Salina, Kansas.

Held October 13-15, 2008, the gathering was called in response after the city of Salina raised \$40,000 to host the Hawgsmoke competition at Salina Regional Airport on October 15th.

The gathering featured workshops on the effect of militarization and war especially the effects of depleted uranium which the A-10 Hawgsmoke bombers use, the history of Peacemaking in the Christian Tradition, a

power point presentation on STRATCOM and the articulation of war making in the 21st century, and nonviolence training.

Several accomplished peace activists were among those in attendance including Bill and Jean Durland, Pikes Peak Justice and Peace Commission, Colorado Springs; Susan Crane, Jonah House, Baltimore, Maryland; Mike Sprong, Yankon (South Dakota) Catholic Worker; Jeff Leys, Voices for Creative Nonviolence, Chicago; Baltimore, Maryland resident Ellen Barfield, Veterans for Peace and the War Resisters League; Bill Sulzman, Citizens for Peace in Space, Colorado Springs; and Frank Cordaro, Des Moines (Iowa) Catholic Worker.

The morning of the Hawgsmoke A-10 Bombing and Strafing Competition, about fifty peacemakers gathered for a rally at the Salina Regional Airport gates, which were cordoned by yellow police tape. While A-10 bombers flew in the background, and at times drowned out the speakers and music, this statement was read.

"We are here today to say yes to life, yes to hope,

yes to the earth, and yes to a future for our children. We say no to weapons of death and to all the ways our society is a culture of death and uses our name to prepare for killing. We ask everyone to join us and train and prepare for a world where peace and justice prevail."

After the statement was read, eight from the group led the others across the police tape and fastened to the fence two large banners that read, "Respect All Life" and "Train For Peace." When police ordered them to move back behind the police yellow tape, all but these eight complied.

The eight, who led the crossing, stayed behind, were arrested, and held overnight in jail. They were charged with trespassing, pleaded guilty or no contest and were sentenced to fines and court costs.

For information contact:
Salina People for Peace
Martin Bates
<martinbikes@cox.net>
Janie Stein
<hopenow1@cox.net>
141 S. Clark St.
Salina, KS 67401
(785)643-5334
(785)643-5332



Jeremy Scahill

Dates Set for Spring Midwest Resistance Retreat

This year's Spring Midwest Catholic Worker Resistance Retreat will take place on April 24-27, 2008. 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*.

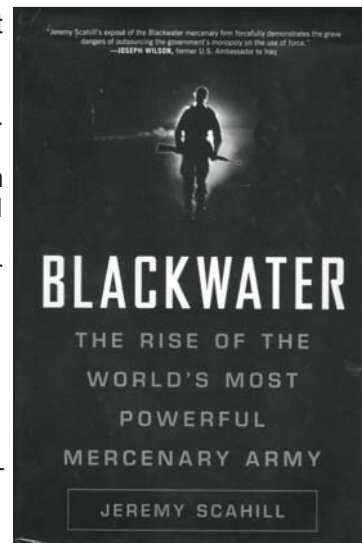
We are working with CLEARWATER, an organization whose mission is to preserve the public nature of and civilian control over law enforcement and military personnel.

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>.)

See the YouTube Video "Blackwater Invades Illinois" <www.youtube.com/watch?v=uP_m4m62lfl>.

Details for the weekend are still pending.

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

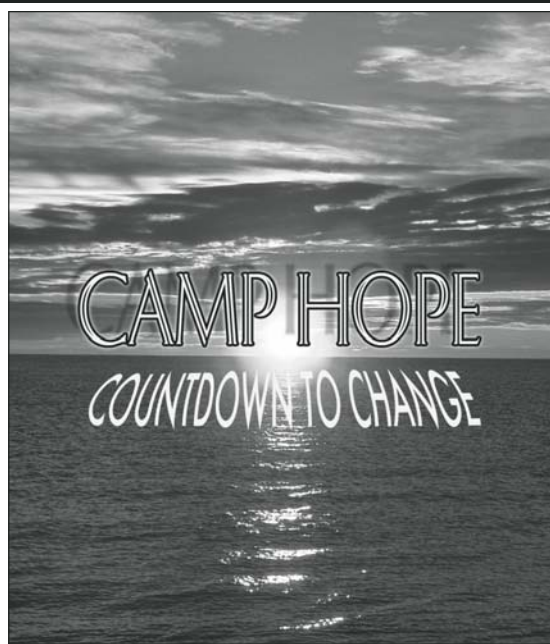


Last Request from a Beloved Community Servant



I've had a good life, nearly sixteen years. All of my nearly 200,000 miles have been blessed hauling food to the hungry, donations to the house, and the poor to the bus station, doctor's appointments, etc., etc.—things that wouldn't have happened without me. But, the auto doctor tells me, my days are numbered. My shocks, bearings, and electrical system are shot. Only one of my doors work, my grill is shredded, and my heater is ready to blow. I've lived a good life, done my best, and I'm ready to go to my eternal home, but I'll die happier knowing a younger, more reliable van will take my place for the important work I've done here. You won't find a more grateful group to live with, and you'll be well cared for all your days. If you're that van, just phone Mona or Frank at 515-282-4781.

Edna, the DMCW Community Van



Camp Hope: Countdown to Change

In a nineteen-day advent prior to the inauguration of President-elect Barack Obama—i.e., every day from New Year's to Dr. Martin Luther King Day—Voices for Creative Non-Violence with other peace groups invite you to join them in Chicago at the intersection of E. Hyde Park Blvd. and 5100 S. Drexel Ave to recommit themselves to national policies for peace and social justice and to urge President Obama to take specific eight actions immediately upon being sworn into office. For details on these actions and further information, to the Camp Hope web site at www.camphome2009.org or email <contact@camphome2009.org> or phone: 773-878-3815.

Bourgeois Faces Excommunication



Photo by Dan Bocher

Maryknoll Father Roy Bourgeois, a priest for 36 years, principle founder of the School of Americas Watch, Vietnam Veteran, Purple Heart Recipient, and torture survivor, is facing excommunication for attending and preaching a homily at the ordination of Janice Sevre-Duszynska at a Unitarian Church in Lexington, Ky., this past August 9. In a letter from the Vatican's Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, Bourgeois was told he had 30 days to recant his "belief and public statements that support the ordination of women in our Church, or (he) will be excommunicated." The letter indicated that Bourgeois received notification from the congregation October 21, 2008

The letter, on the right, is Bourgeois' response to the Vatican. The letter was distributed by Bourgeois' attorney, Bill Quigley, <duprestars@yahoo.com>, 7214 St. Charles Avenue, Box 902, New Orleans, LA 70118, 508-861-5590.

Did the woman say?

by Frances Croake Frank

Did the woman say,
When she held him for the first time in the
dark dank of a stable,
After the pain and the
bleeding and the crying,
"This is my body, this is my blood?"
Did the woman say,
When she held him for the last time in the
dark rain on a hilltop,
After the pain and the
bleeding and the dying,
"This is my body, this is my blood?"
Well that she said it to him then,
For dry old men,
Brocaded robes belying
barrenness,
Ordain that she not say it for him now.



Rev. Roy Bourgeois, M.M.
PO Box 3330
Columbus, GA 31903

November 7, 2008

TO THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, THE VATICAN

I was very saddened by your letter dated October 21, 2008, giving me 30 days to recant my belief and public statements that support the ordination of women in our Church, or I will be excommunicated.

I have been a Catholic priest for 36 years and have a deep love for my Church and ministry.

When I was a young man in the military, I felt God was calling me to the priesthood. I entered Maryknoll and was ordained in 1972.

Over the years I have met a number of women in our Church who, like me, feel called by God to the priesthood. You, our Church leaders at the Vatican, tell us that women cannot be ordained.

With all due respect, I believe our Catholic Church's teaching on this issue is wrong and does not stand up to scrutiny. A 1976 report by the Pontifical Biblical Commission supports the research of Scripture scholars, canon lawyers and many faithful Catholics who have studied and pondered the Scriptures and have concluded that there is no justification in the Bible for excluding women from the priesthood.

As people of faith, we profess that the invitation to the ministry of priesthood comes from God. We profess that God is the Source of life and created men and women of equal stature and dignity. The current Catholic Church doctrine on the ordination of women implies our loving and all-powerful God, Creator of heaven and earth, somehow cannot empower a woman to be a priest.

Women in our Church are telling us that God is calling them to the priesthood. Who are we, as men, to say to women, "Our call is valid, but yours is not." Who are we to tamper with God's call?

Sexism, like racism, is a sin. And no matter how hard or how long we may try to justify discrimination, in the end, it is always immoral.

Hundreds of Catholic churches in the U.S. are closing because of a shortage of priests. Yet there are hundreds of committed and prophetic women telling us that God is calling them to serve our Church as priests.

If we are to have a vibrant, healthy Church rooted in the teachings of our Savior, we need the faith, wisdom, experience, compassion and courage of women in the priesthood.

Conscience is very sacred. Conscience gives us a sense of right and wrong and urges us to do the right thing. Conscience is what compelled Franz Jagerstatter, a humble Austrian farmer, husband and father of four young children, to refuse to join Hitler's army, which led to his execution. Conscience is what compelled Rosa Parks to say she could no longer sit in the back of the bus. Conscience is what compels women in our Church to say they cannot be silent and deny their call from God to the priesthood. Conscience is what compelled my dear mother and father, now 95, to always strive to do the right things as faithful Catholics raising four children. And after much prayer, reflection and discernment, it is my conscience that compels me to do the right thing. I cannot recant my belief and public statements that support the ordination of women in our Church.

Working and struggling for peace and justice are an integral part of our faith. For this reason, I speak out against the war in Iraq. And for the last eighteen years, I have been speaking out against the atrocities and suffering caused by the School of the Americas (SOA). Eight years ago, while in Rome for a conference on peace and justice, I was invited to speak about the SOA on Vatican Radio. During the interview, I stated that I could not address the injustice of the SOA and remain silent about injustice in my Church. I ended the interview by saying, "There will never be justice in the Catholic Church until women can be ordained." I remain committed to this belief today.

Having an all male clergy implies that men are worthy to be Catholic priests, but women are not.

According to USA TODAY (Feb. 28, 2008) in the United States alone, nearly 5,000 Catholic priests have sexually abused more than 12,000 children. Many bishops, aware of the abuse, remained silent. These priests and bishops were not excommunicated. Yet the women in our Church who are called by God and are ordained to serve God's people, and the priests and bishops who support them, are excommunicated.

Silence is the voice of complicity. Therefore, I call on all Catholics, fellow priests, bishops, Pope Benedict XVI and all Church leaders at the Vatican, to speak loudly on this grave injustice of excluding women from the priesthood.

Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador was assassinated because of his defense of the oppressed. He said, "Let those who have a voice, speak out for the voiceless."

Our loving God has given us a voice. Let us speak clearly and boldly and walk in solidarity as Jesus would, with the women in our Church who are being called by God to the priesthood.

In Peace and Justice,
Rev. Roy Bourgeois, M.M.

Credentials Cannot Cast Our Quality



by
Lydia
Wylie-
Kellermann

Defying the stereotype of her generation as self-absorbed and materialist, honored scholar, Lydia Wylie-Kellermann delivered this address at her commencement at the College of Arts and Sciences, Loyola University, Chicago, on May 9, 2008.

Good morning dear friends. It is a gift and a joy to stand among this community today. Here in this place we are surrounded by our teachers, our mentors, families, friends, those who love and support us. We are mindful of those whose hearts are present but are not physically among us. We are so grateful.

Today we each take a step into our life's work. As we've been told a million times, we are entering the "real world." But, what is this real world? It is a world built on white privilege, on the prerogatives of wealth, on marginalization through homophobia, on the violence of patriarchy and militarism, and the addictive mechanisms of consumer culture. It is a broken, hurtful, and hurting world. In many ways, we are inheriting a world that is not worth inheriting. It is a broken world- that we didn't break.

We have not, however, been blind to these truths during our time at Loyola. In these four years, we have dealt with the reality of this unjust world. Our time at Loyola has been a crucial historical moment. Our first encounters were affected by the presidential election

We must move away from the values of money and individualism and transform them into community and simplicity.

and we leave at the height of yet another. As we studied beside students from New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina made visible the reality of poverty and racism. We have witnessed the horror of war and violence, as the War in Iraq enters its sixth year, as torture has been called legitimate and even rationalized legal by our government, as students protested the School of the Americas, and as Invisible Conflicts raised our global awareness.

At Loyola, we have worked through conversations about hate speech as Ann Coulter came and left. We have asked critical questions about Loyola's building expansion, investments, and environmental impact. We have faced our own participation in injustices like our contract with Coca Cola and its involvement in Colombia. And we have challenged the institutional racism on our campus. The "real world" we are entering has long been a part of our lives.

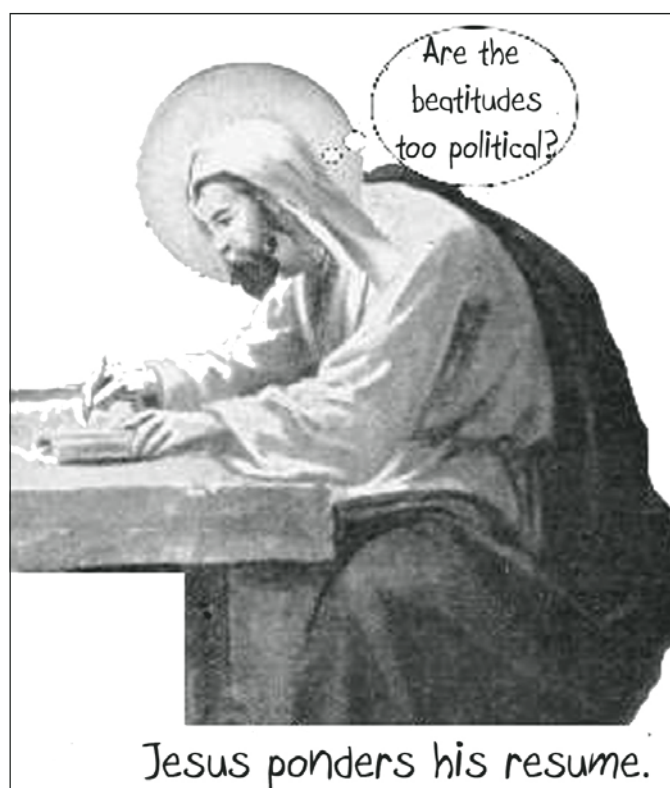
Today the question becomes: *How* shall we walk into this world? In fact, the true test of a Jesuit education begins at graduation. Are we entering the world with a strong reliance on

our ethics—calling us to work for justice? Does our work stem from a passion and love of the people we meet?

We cannot move forward in this world, without first naming and understanding our privilege. Although we have worked really hard (and we have), we are also here because of unearned privilege. Everyone deserves a good education, but the truth is, it's not accessible to most people. We graduate one in a hundred with a college education. This is a privilege we don't deserve more than anyone else. With our education, we have been given great tools, which is to say great responsibility, to help mend this broken world. Will we use them?

Our culture does not teach us to use these tools for justice, but rather for gain. We live in a culture based on money, individualism, and fear. Our whole lives, we have been sold a myth. We are supposed to leave this school, enter the economy, compete to get to the top, and make as much money as fast as we can. This equation promises happiness. Suddenly, the people sitting around us today change from our friends to our competition. This myth is a scam. An outright lie.

We *must* move away from the values of money and individualism and transform them into community and simplicity. Through community, we hold one another, loving each other in the midst of our weaknesses. These relationships build and inspire new hope and action. Great change can come from a small group of people. There are a *thousand* ways to be community. Be creative. Plant a garden



with friends, buy local, speak truth to power, turn off your i-pod, spread rumors of hope, dance in the rain. Hold true that our lives depend on one another. I am because we are. Keep community at the center of your life, even when everything in our society is attacking it. Creating community is some of the best work we can do in this moment. In fact, it is our hope for survival. Not to mention a place of hope, strength, and joy. Through simplicity, we strip down. In the face of massive consumerism calling us to surround ourselves with stuff, we step back and only hold onto what is truly important. The world cannot sustain the lifestyles we lead in the United States. For the earth, we must reduce our impact.

If our work is for wealth, ownership, and excessive material, poverty and inequality will continue to grow. Living with less is an act of solidarity.

Be courageous. Build community. Live Simply.

We are also sold a culture dominated by fear. We are to fear our neighbor, our enemy, and anyone who is other or different. It is a fear that drives our way of life and makes us obsessed with security. Let us live in freedom from fear.

Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid to trust a homeless person on the street, to do something that doesn't make any money, to love someone society tells you not to, to take real risks for justice, to imagine that a new world is possible, to listen to the voice calling in the night, to follow a vocation your parents don't want you to, to hope in the midst of despair, to see beauty in the brokenness, and to live with fearless joy. Don't be afraid to stop right now, right here, and change the direction of your life. It is through freeing ourselves from fear that we begin to truly live.

Let us leave here today filled with passion for our work, care for creation, anger at injustice, love of people, hope for the future, and deep, deep childlike joy.

Advocates for Closing School of Americas Look Forward with Hope



Photo by Rodger Routh

While thousands gathered at the gates in Ft. Benning GA, thirty Des Moines area peace and justice activists rallied at the corner of 2nd and Euclid Avenues for a Solidarity School of Americas Vigil on Sunday Nov 23. Brian Terrell, director of Catholic Peace Ministry, Frank Cordaro of the DM Catholic Worker, and Rita Hohenshell, 83, who served two terms in Federal Prison for crossing the line at Ft. Benning, spoke and are featured in a YouTube video by Rodger Routh: www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1Ay2cmDm8Y.

COLUMBUS, GA – About 20,000 gathered, November 21-23, at the gates of Fort Benning, GA for what organizers hope will be the last mass protest to close the controversial School of the Americas, renamed Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/WHINSEC).

Each November since 1989, the annual "Vigil to Close the SOA/WHINSEC" has drawn thousands to the gates of Ft. Benning, the army base that holds the School. Organizers hope to make the most out of the changing political climate

revealed during this year's elections. "We feel qualified optimism," said SOA Watch founder Fr. Roy Bourgeois. "By closing this notorious school of assassins now, Obama and the new Congress can show the world that we genuinely honor human rights."

On Sunday, November 23, following a funeral procession to Ft. Benning's gates, six human rights activists crossed through the I-85 Highway entrance onto the military base. The six were arrested and face up to six months in federal prison for carrying the pro-

test onto the base. They are: Sr. Diane Pinchot, OSU, 63, Cleveland, Ohio; Father Luis Barrios, 56, North Bergen, New Jersey; Louis Wolf, 68, Washington, DC; Theresa Cusimano, 40, Denver, Colorado; Al Simmons, 64, Richmond, Virginia; Kristen Holm, Chicago, Illinois.

Des Moines residents attending included local attorney Sally Frank, who served as a legal observer, and former member of the Des Moines Catholic Worker, Elton Davis. For more information, go to: www.soaw.org.

Sodomy and Civil Rights



by David R. Weiss

This country has a sodomy problem. And until we have the wisdom and the courage to be honest about what that means we're not going to resolve the question of civil rights for LGBT people. We need to be clear about why sodomy is such a threat to the common good of civil society, why it undermines the family, and why it is such an evil when afoot in faith communities. It's not going to be easy. But it needs to be done.

The word "sodomy" comes from a biblical text (Genesis 19) where the ancient city of Sodom is marked out for divine destruction because its evil ways so angered God. Sodomy names those who act like the inhabitants of Sodom.

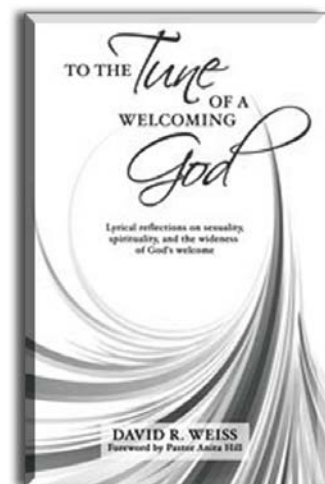
Fine. But listen carefully. Not in this text—nor in any other biblical text—is there a condemnation of committed same-sex relationships. Not one. Not anywhere. There are a small handful of texts that condemn same-sex prostitution in pagan temples, and perhaps military rape and pederasty. But nowhere in the Bible is there a single word that condemns committed same-sex relationships.

To vote on Proposition 8 in California, or on any of the other state initiatives seeking to ban same-sex marriage, based on the Bible is the moral equivalent of using biblical texts to support slavery or apartheid. It is obscene.

So having cleared that up, let's talk about the real problem here: sodomy. Acting like the inhabitants of Sodom.

The prophet Isaiah (1:10-17; 3:9-15) knew

something about the reputation of those who lived in Sodom. He says they despised justice, especially for widows and orphans—those at the edges of family structures in the ancient world. And he says they built an economy that stole the goods of the poor. Likewise, the prophet Ezekiel (16:49) was also acquainted with the sodomy "lifestyle." He rails against them because in the midst of their abundance they were indifferent to the needy.



Even Jesus, some 2000 years after its destruction, can employ a reference to Sodom with full effect. Twice (Matthew 11:19-24 and Luke 10:12) he invokes the memory of Sodom as a city condemned for its treatment of the marginalized and its lack of hospitality to sojourners.

For both the Hebrew prophets and the Christian Messiah sodomy is not about acting on same-sex attraction; it is clearly and unequivocally about social injustice and horrendous breeches of hospitality, of which the attempted gang rape of Lot's guests is simply one final bit of damning evidence.

Sodomy, understood biblically, is the sin of creating social structures that systematically isolate those already at the margins of society. It is roundly condemned by the prophets and by Jesus. And for good reason.

It destroys the fabric of families by teaching even the youngest children to dehumanize persons simply because of difference. It undermines the common good of society by scapegoating a minority in ways that contradict the very ideals we claim to hold in a democracy. And it is simply an unforgivable evil in faith communities where it betrays the very messages of justice, mercy, and compassion that are at the heart of religious faith.

So let's be clear: the desire to close off the protections afforded by marriage to persons living in committed same-sex relationships (and to their children) is itself an act of sodomy, and it has no place in civil society or in communities of faith.

Further, when African-Americans and Hispanics vote in large numbers alongside conservative white Christians to ban same-sex marriage they ally themselves with the same strand of Christianity that in the past quoted other biblical texts just as effectively to justify genocidal policies toward Native Americans, xenophobic laws toward immigrants, and abominations like slavery, Jim Crow, and apartheid.

So, yes, this country has a sodomy problem. But so long as we think it has anything to do with gay sex we've missed the point of God's outrage. Sodomy happens when any group uses their majority or their power to abuse and marginalize another group. That's what happened in California, Arizona, Florida, and Arkansas on November 4. And it's time for us, as citizens and as Christians, to stop acting like the inhabitants of Sodom.

David Weiss, a highly-regarded theologian, is the author of *To the Tune of a Welcoming God* (2008). Email: <drw59@comcast.net>.



Witness Against Torture, a national initiative to shut down Guantanamo, is excited to announce a new campaign to end torture committed by the United States. Kicking-off with a nine-day fast, the campaign will consist of a daily, sustained, physical presence across the street from the White House and a weekly schedule of Executive and Congressional education, public teach-ins and film screenings, prayer and vigiling, direct action and public pressure throughout the first 100 days of the new administration in January, 2009. Members of the Des Moines Catholic Worker plan to join this action. For more information go to the initiative's website at <www.witnesstorture.org/100days> or call, 212-777-9617

A Contemporary Adaptation of Psalm 146

*Praise God our Creator, Source of all life.
I will sing praise to God as long as I live.
Do not put your trust in princes and presidents,
in mortals, in whom there is no salvation.
When they die they, too, return to earth;
on that very day their plans perish.*

*Happy are those whose hope is in the Lord, their God,
who made heaven and earth,
the sea and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry;
who labors for the common good
and the beloved community.*

*For the Lord sets prisoners free,
and opens the eyes of the blind;
the Lord raises up those who are bowed down
and loves those who do what is right.*

*The Lord watches over the strangers, refugees and homeless
and upholds the orphan, the widow and the immigrant.*

*But the way of the wicked—those who commit acts of violence,
who kill, exploit, wage war, perpetrate injustice,
trust in idols, demonize and scapegoat are
brought to ruin!*

*God is sovereign over all earthly rulers and powers.
God, alone, is our Judge—it is God who will have the last word!*

*God will reign forever— not presidents, judges or generals,
the rich and powerful.*

To all earthly rulers, to all who hold political power, to people everywhere— take notice: do what God requires— follow God's commands, not opinion polls.

*End all poverty, killing, warmaking;
beat all swords into plowshares;
renounce all idolatry;
eradicate racism and all forms of discrimination;
stand with and for the victims.
Happy are those who put their trust in God.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice;
who care for the earth and practice unconditional love;
who do the works of mercy and peace;
who work for reconciliation for all peoples.
Let all generations praise God.
Let us praise God forever!*

Adaptation by Art Laffin

An organizer, writer and speaker in the faith-based movement for peace and justice for more than 20 years, Art Laffin <artlaffin@hotmail.com> is a member of the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker in Washington, D.C.



Photo by Liz Mangelsdorf

Prior to Proposition 8, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon (a faithful and devoted couple for 55 years) were finally allowed to legally marry in California on June 16, 2008. Del died August 27, 2008.

Celebrating Advent with Pres.-Elect Obama

Continued from page 6

unlimited forgiveness. Jesus's divine peace plan is based on people seeking justice by means other than the justice sought through violence. The justice of the Jesus plan calls for the use of non-violent means. It calls us to resist our enemies by loving them. Jesus' divine plan of redemptive suffering illustrated on the cross and professed in our Christian creeds and dogmas was not meant to end with his death. It was intended to be repeated by his followers, each was to pick up his or her cross and follow in those steps.

The justice in the Jesus plan is rooted in the equality that all people share before an all loving and forgiving God, each one created in God's image. The favored of humanity in Jesus's kingdom are those at the bottom of the privilege pyramid. As God's favored, they have a greater claim on the followers of Jesus and until their basic human needs are met, until they live with dignity, respect and freedom from oppression, the work of the people of Jesus is not done.

One commonality in both Caesar's and Jesus's divine plans is the expectation that their followers be willing to die for their cause. The biggest difference between their plans is that Caesar would have his followers kill for him, and Jesus would not.

What I also know about the season of Advent from my search for Jesus in the world is revealed to me through the poor we serve at the Des Moines Catholic Worker, in the jails in which I've done time, in the meager witnesses I've made to resist war and Empire, and in my inadequate efforts to live lovingly in community. In these places I find the "least of these" of today are treated about the same way that the historical Jesus was treated in the New Testament era. I must rush to confess I personally fall far short of the mark set by Jesus and the New Testament church in living out the divine plan of Jesus. Still, though I fail miserably along the way, I cannot let these failures allow me to abandon my allegiance to Jesus and the claim his divine plan has on me as I try again and again to live the Gospel dictates of unconditional love, unlimited for-

giveness, radical equalitarianism and deferring always in human interactions from the bottom up.

I also know that in this so-called Christian nation, with its many Christian denominations, Catholicism being one of them, when it comes to God and country, what is called Christianity is really an allegiance to PAX USA with its blind nationalism and rampant militarism.

What I *don't* know in this Advent season has to do with the future tense of Jesus's coming. What I don't know is when and how the Great Transformation is going to come about.

This is what makes President-elect Barack Obama such an enigma and a paradox for me this Advent season. After years of schooling myself to take on the mindset of the divine plan of Jesus in opposition to the societal norm with all the cultural trappings of USA-empire-mania, I find myself asking, "Could a President Barack Obama be an agent for the Great Transformation for which we are all looking?" Might he, from the most unlikely of place, as President and Commander in Chief of the richest, the strongest and most powerful and violent nation in the world, the Roman Empire of our times, be a partner to those seeking to nonviolently dismantle the very Empire that he has been elected President to run?

First, it is likely obvious to all that Barack Obama will be a much better president than George W. Bush. The past eight years have been god-awful. Bush set the bar so low, how could Obama possibly slide under it?

Secondly and more importantly, Barack Obama is Black. His election represents a sea change in the physiological and moral landscape of our national consciousness. The stain of slavery and the reality of racism are deeply imbedded in our history, and electing an African American President is a critical step in putting this shameless past behind us. This fact is not lost on the rest of the world. Barack Obama represents perhaps the last real chance for the U.S. to do right and change its imperial ways. At least that is how many peoples of the world are viewing his election. Like most people, I too want to believe this is true.

On the other hand there is nothing Barack Obama has said during his campaign or in his written positions on policy and governing that suggests he will be about the dismantling of the United States Empire. Quite the opposite, in fact. What I have heard from Barack Obama is that he and his administration merely want to manage the existing U.S. Empire in a far better and more enlightened way. Under a Barack Obama presidency, the U.S. Empire will be friendlier and more cooperative with other nations. Yet, it will still maintain its nuclear arsenal and the STRATCOM in Omaha. Moreover, Obama states he wants to increase the size of the military and shift the hot war in Iraq to Afghanistan. From all indicators given the economic situation, the Wall Street elites have nothing to fear from a President Obama. He may need to change some of the economic rules but the Global Economy and the corporate structure it maintains will stay the same during an Obama administration. I could go on and on, but suffice it to say that the Obama plan as he currently describes it is not good enough, not even close.

Still, anything can happen. If the Advent season means anything at all, it means to stay open to surprises. My faith in the Great Transformation of the human world order is tied to my faith in the Easter Resurrection of a dead Jesus. There was no greater surprise than the empty tomb on Easter morning. My spiritual Advent task is to be open to surprises and keep living out the Gospel mandates as best I can, resisting the U.S. Empire from the inside out. If in the process President Barack Obama is a help in this effort, I say "Amen." If he is not, I still say, "Amen." Regardless of who is president of the United States, the Great Transformation will take place. The Reign of God and the Lordship of Jesus will be established, period. This will happen with or without the help of Barack Obama or for that matter or with or without the help any established church or group or even Frank Cordaro. It will happen as souls answer correctly the central questions of advent facing each follower of Jesus, President Barack Obama and myself, "What divine program do I choose. Do I give my allegiance to Caesar or Jesus?"

Weapons Take Second

Can Obama Take on the Pentagon?

Continued from page 4

we're not using to rebuild the U.S., or drawing down our national debt, or making sure that families have health care."

But the "surge" that Obama wants to shift from Iraq to Afghanistan is unlikely to be a bargain. In addition, he has repeatedly argued for a spike in defense spending to "reset" a military force worn out by war. He has also called for the expansion of the size of the Army and the Marines. On that point, he is in complete agreement with Defense Secretary Robert Gates. They even use the same numbers, suggesting that the Army should be augmented by 65,000 new recruits and the Marines by 27,000. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that these manpower increases alone would add about \$10 billion a year -- that same campaign trail \$10 billion -- to the Pentagon budget over a five-year period.

The word from Wall Street? In a report entitled "Early Thoughts on Obama and Defense," a Morgan Stanley researcher wrote on November 5th, "As we understand it, Obama has been advised and agrees that there is no peace dividend... In addition, we believe, based on discussions with industry sources that Obama has agreed not to cut the defense budget at least until the first 18 months of his term as the national security situation becomes better understood."

In other words: Don't worry about it. President Obama is not about to hand the next secretary of defense a box of brownie mix and order him to hold a bake sale to buy a bomber.

Smarter, Not More, Military Spending

Sooner rather than later, the new administration will need to think seriously about how to spend smarter—and significantly less—on the military. Our nose-diving economy simply will no longer support ever-climbing defense budgets.

The good news is that the Obama administration won't have to figure it all out alone. The contributors to Foreign Policy In Focus's new Unified Security Budget have done a lot of the heavy lifting to demonstrate that some of the choices that need to be made really aren't so tough. The report makes the case for reductions in military spending on outdated or unproven weapons systems

totaling \$61 billion. The argument is simple and straightforward: these expensive systems don't keep us safe. Some were designed for a geopolitical moment that is long gone—like the F-22 meant to counter a Soviet plane that was never built. Others, like the ballistic missile defense program, are clearly meant only to perpetuate insecurity and provoke a proliferation.

To cut the military budget more deeply, however, means more than canceling useless, high-tech weapons systems. It means taking on something fundamental and far-reaching: America's place in the world. It means coming to grips with how we garrison the planet, with how we use our military to project influence and power anywhere in the world, with our attitudes towards international treaties and agreements, with our vast pastels of real estate in foreign lands, and, of course, with our economic and political relationships with clients and competitors.

As a candidate, Barack Obama stirred our imagination through his calls for a "new era of international cooperation." The United States cannot, however, cooperate with other nations from atop our shining Green Zone on the hill; we cannot cooperate as the world's sole superpower, policeman, cowboy, hyperpower, or whatever the imperial *nom du jour* turns out to be. Bottom line: we cannot genuinely and effectively cooperate while spending more on what we like to call "security" than the next 45 nations combined.

A new era in Pentagon spending would have to begin with a recognition that enduring security is not attained by threat or fiat, nor is it bought with staggering billions of dollars. It is built with other nations. Weapons come second.

*Frida Berrigan is a Senior Program Associate at the New America Foundation's Arms and Security Initiative (ASI). In December, ASI will release **Weapons at War 2008: Beyond the Bush Legacy**, co-authored by Berrigan and William D. Hartung, an examination of U.S. weapons sales and military aid to developing nations, conflict zones, and nations where human rights are not safeguarded. Email berri-gan@newamerica.net if you would like a copy of the executive summary.*

Des Moines Catholic Worker
via pacis
PO Box 4551
Des Moines, IA 50305

Change Service Requested

PRESRT STD
U.S POSTAGE
PAID
NEWTON, IA
PERMIT NO. 371

via pacis

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

December, 2008

www.DesMoinesCatholicWorker.org

Volume 32, No. 4

How you can help...

<i>Prayers and Love</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Health and Hygiene</i>	<i>Household Supplies</i>	<i>Clothing and Bedding</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>Cash Donations</i>
<i>Without, your prayers and goodwill, nothing else matters.</i>	Cereal Coffee Fruit Vegetables Beans Meat and Fish Soups and Stews Sugar and artificial sweetener Coffee Creamer Juices Milk Cheese Butter or Margarine Eggs Salt and pepper Salad dressing and condiments	Tylenol Ibuprofen Multiple Vitamins Ointment Disinfectants Band-Aids Feminine Hygiene Items Disposable Razors Shaving Cream Shampoo and Conditioner Lotion Deodorant Toothbrushes Toothpaste Toilet Paper	Bleach Laundry Detergent Dish Soap Murphy's Oil Soap Pinesol Toilet Cleaners Paper Towels Sponges Trash bags Brooms Rugs Floor mats Candles Light bulbs	Underwear T-shirts Towels Blankets Sheets Pillows Socks Sweatshirts Hoodies Anything warm for winter.	Individuals and work crews for hospitality (serving food, clean-up), cleaning and general inside and outside maintenance.	Cash donations are essential to pay taxes, utilities, repair and maintenance bills and to purchase supplies.
House Repairs: With four old houses, there are plenty of projects large and small. We invite do-it-yourselfers--individuals or groups--with skills in carpentry, plumbing, painting, electrical, etc. to come in, look over our housing needs, and choose a project. Bring your own tools if possible Community Vehicle The community also desperately needs a new van (see page 7) and an extra car or smaller vehicle for routine errands and transportation not related to larger hauling.						
Peace and justice books and videos are always welcome donations for the Berrigan House Library.						

In this issue...

- Annual Appeal for our Hospitality Mission 1
- Weapons Come Second by Frida Berrigan 4
- Celebrating Advent with Obama by Frank Cordaro 6
- Roy Bourgeois' Letter to the Vatican 8
- Sodomy and Civil Rights ... 10 by David Weiss
- A Contemporary Adaptation of Psalm 146 by Art Laffin 10

- Plus columns by Renee Espeland..... 3
- Lydia Wyllie-Kellermann 9
- Norman Searah 3

And more!



Mother and child,
Afghanistan, 2008