



THE

SOWER

True justice is the harvest reaped by peacemakers

from seeds sown in the spirit of peace.

James, 3:18

Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm, Maloy, Iowa Number 3, Summer, 2010

Dear Friends,

Our springtime here in Southwest Iowa was particularly verdant. An unusually heavy and durable blanket of snow insulated the fields from the winter's record breaking low temperatures. When the snow finally receded around Easter the grass was still green from the year before and even a few of the annuals in the garden were found to have survived. Flax was sown in early April and the cycle of planting began.

April also brought the birthing of kid goats, one set of triplets and one of twins. Any day now we will wean the kids and have access to all their mothers' milk and start cheese and yogurt production. Over the years we have made do with adopting homeless chickens or corralling stray, nearly feral fowl from the rafters of friends' barns and garages. For the first time this spring, though, we went to the farmers' cooperative and bought a straight run of a dozen chicks of various breeds. Their first weeks were spent in our family room in the kids' old wading pool. From there they graduated to the garage and now live in the chicken coop and share a pasture with the goats. It is getting to be apparent which ones are the roosters and which the hens and soon we will be gathering eggs and making pot pies.

Our good friend and comrade Alex Iwasa returned from his winter travels in time for the planting to spend another growing season with us. Alex is a strong proponent of social revolution through handcrafts and is spreading his knowledge of the art of card weaving as he travels. For a few days in May, Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, invited Alex to share this skill with its students.

Leona May, a friend of the Waterloo, Iowa, CW, helped plant our famous beans and Mallory and Tracy returned to help out with the planting as they did last year. Mark Lindahl came down from Des Moines recently to join us in our every Tuesday Bible study (9 am, all welcome) and a personal weaving tutorial from Alex.

"We believe that our words will have more weight, our writings will have more conviction, if we ourselves are engaged in making a better life on the land," Dorothy Day wrote in 1936, three years after she and Peter Maurin



Nuclear weapons protest in Grand Central Station, NYC, May 3

Photo by Ellen Davidson/ War Resisters League

founded the Catholic Worker as they expanded from New York City to begin their first rural experiment. We hope that it is same for us as we publish this little paper and take our words on the road.

On May 2, Betsy spoke of "the Benedictine influence on the Catholic Worker Movement" at Emmaus CW house in Yankton, South Dakota (excerpts of her talk on page 3). Hers was the keynote address at an event marking the founding of the CW on May Day, 1933 and the golden jubilee of Benedictine Sister Ann Kessler. Sister Ann and the nuns at Yankton's Sacred Heart Monastery are a mainstay support for the work of the CW there. Similarly, we in Maloy depend upon the friendship, solidarity and prayers of the Benedictine Sisters at Clyde, Missouri, where Betsy and I are both oblates.

In April, Brian travelled to Chicago to join with Catholic Workers from around the Midwest for their annual resistance retreat. The theme of the retreat was "The Cost of War: at Home and Abroad." After a time of intense study and prayer, the workers went to Chicago's federal building to dramatize the contrast of the "works of mercy" (the heart of the CW vocation, feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, etc.) with the works of war (destroying crops, killing the stranger, etc.). Brian was one of 17

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Dear Friends,

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arrested for "failure to comply with signs and directions" while performing this piece of theater and will return for trial on July 12.

From Chicago Brian travelled east to New York City where the United Nations opened its review conference for the Nuclear Nonproliferation treaty on May 3. Nuclear abolitionists occupied the grand concourse of Grand Central Station that morning, greeting commuters, tourists and conference attendees with leaflets and signs. Banners were dropped from balconies reading "Talk Less- Disarm More" and "Nuclear Weapons= Terrorism." Brian was among 22 activists arrested for disorderly conduct. On his way home, Brian got off the train in Buffalo to visit with our son, Elijah, and Betsy's sister Kathy.



Beth Preheim of Emmaus House, Benedictine Sister Ann Kessler, and Betsy in Yankton, SD, May 2 photo by Michael Sprong

The wheels of "justice" grind slow and 14 people arrested at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada in April 2009 (see *Sower* #1) will finally, it seems, go to trial on September 14. This was one of the first public protests of the use of unmanned drones as a weapon of war which has dramatically increased in the intervening time.

With Alex assisting, Betsy continues our custom waving business, mostly on the rainy days. We appreciate many orders for rugs, placemats, etc, that have come through this newsletter.

We also cannot express enough our gratitude for all the help we get from friends near and far, gifts of money, labor, friendship, and prayers that enable us to keep our precarious hold on this bit of land on the edge of Iowa. We are grateful to be able to sow literal seeds in the ground here in Maloy and also to our metaphorical seeds in places far away.

With love, Brian and Betsy

Please come celebrate the triumph of the Cuban Revolution with us on the farm this July 26th with a screening of "The Greening of Cuba" and a pizza and ice cream dinner!

'(In) the parable in the Gospel of the man born blind who said to his questioners, after he had been hectored and badgered by men who said, "'Give glory to God. We ourselves know that this man is a sinner.' He therefore said, 'Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.'"

'The Cuban people are in that state now, and so are the poor and oppressed of South America, of all Latin America. One thing they know, and that is that work and schooling, land and bread are being provided, and that the Colossus whom they feared and hated, the Yankee of the north, had been defied.

'We are not going to win the masses to Christianity until we live it.'

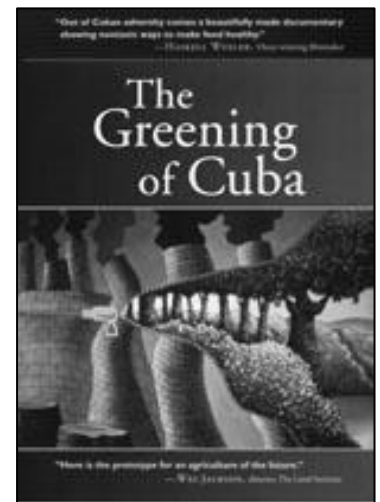
Dorothy Day, December, 1961

The *Greening of Cuba* profiles Cuban farmers and scientists working to reinvent a sustainable agriculture, based on ecological principles and local knowledge rather than imported agricultural inputs. In their quest for self sufficiency, Cubans combine time-tested traditional methods with cutting edge bio-technology.

When trade relations with the socialist bloc collapsed in 1990, Cuba lost 80 percent of its pesticide and fertilizer imports and half its petroleum--the mainstays of its highly industrialized agriculture. Challenged with growing food for 11 million in the face of the continuing US embargo, Cuba embarked on the largest conversion to organic farming ever attempted.

Told in the voices of the women and men--the campesino, researchers, and organic gardeners--who are leading the organic agriculture movement, The Greening of Cuba reminds us that developed and developing nations alike can choose a healthier environment and still feed their people.

Please RSVP to Alex at cardweaveralex@gmail.com 641-785-2321



The Benedictine Influence on the Catholic Worker Movement

by Betsy Keenan

This is an excerpt from a talk Betsy gave at the Emmaus Catholic Worker House in Yankton, SD, in honor of the golden jubilee of Sister Ann Kessler, OSB, on May 2, 2010.

Dorothy Day encountered Peter Maurin, in her search for a way to bring her new Catholic faith into action, and the Catholic Worker newspaper and movement resulted. She was indoctrinated by Peter about a legacy of many holy men and women, meeting the challenges of their own times, and among them the Benedictines had much to offer. She had been attracted to the Benedictines by previous reading, now she put the ideas to use. Stanley Vishniewski observed, "I am sure without the influence of the Benedictines there would be very little to the Catholic Worker Movement- from them we got the ideal of Hospitality, Guest houses-Farming Communes-Liturgical Prayer. Take away these and there is very little in the Catholic Worker program."

Hospitality

Chapter 53 of the Rule of St Benedict states; "Any guest who happens to arrive at the monastery should be received just as we would receive Christ himself, because he promised that on the last day he will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

You will note this is not, "Every one you invite to the monastery should be received just as we would receive Christ" but "Any guest who happens to arrive ..." Encountering Christ in the stranger at the door, and learning in how to welcome that other is one of the distinctive experiences of the CW, always challenging us. The Benedictine houses of the Dark Ages, though they seemed islands of stability, order and learning, did not isolate themselves, but offered shelter and protection to pilgrims, travelers, and refugees. That open door is means of grace, a way to encounter Christ in the world, a way to be of service.

Many individual Catholic Workers have been recipients of Benedictine hospitality, when they have needed

(Benedictine, continued on page 7)

by Brian Terrell

*From Brian's introduction to the 2003 edition of **Holy Work- Towards a Benedictine Theology of Manual Labor** by Dom Rembert Sorg.*

The Catholic Worker Movement is known best for soup lines and houses of hospitality for the homeless in the slums of large cities, and for an active pacifism that often puts in members in court or in jail for acts of conscience and civil disobedience. With no recognized leadership, no definition of membership, vows or formal process of formation, no regular source of funds, and operating without license or authorization from church or state, precariousness, rather than Benedictine stability,

would seem to be the mark of the Catholic Worker. The intense, often messy activism of the Catholic Worker and the well-ordered contemplation of Benedictine monasticism would appear to be unrelated or even conflicting traditions. St. Benedict warned about monks whom he called gyrovagues and sarabaites, that is, monks living without accountability or discipline and those continually drifting from place to place----"It is better to keep silence than to speak of all these and their disgraceful way of life." Despite the resemblance of many Catholic Workers to sarabaites and gyrovagues there is a connection, an affinity, between Benedictine monastics and Catholic Workers. This affinity has nourished and inspired the Catholic Worker from its inception. Dorothy Day was herself a Benedictine oblate-a layperson committed to living in the monastic spirit and attached to a particular monastery, and

so are a growing number of contemporary Catholic Workers.

The program of the Catholic Worker includes houses of hospitality, where at a personal sacrifice, the hungry and poor are fed, clothed and sheltered. In his Rule, St Benedict admonishes the monks to welcome visitors and the poor in particular as though they were Christ himself, and this is the ideal of Catholic Worker hospitality. Unlike

(Holy Work, continued on page 7)



**Benedict,
Abbot**

Ade Bethune

“You must not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have come not to bring peace, but a sword.”

A meditation on Good Friday, 2010

By Brian Terrell

“You must not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have come not to bring peace, but a sword.” This verse from the gospels, Matthew 10, 34 and Luke 12, 51, is a text often offered as a clincher argument against any who would witness for the nonviolent Jesus and against Christians who publicly denounce any war. It is apparent that in the minds of many Christians, this verse alone trumps Jesus’ many admonitions to love our enemies, to “turn the other cheek,” to do only good to those who would harm us.

As this thinking goes, “I have come not to bring peace, but a sword” definitively negates all Jesus’ pleas for peace, including his warning to his disciples on the night of his arrest, “Put away your sword. All who take the sword will die by the sword.” (Matthew 26, 52) “I have come not to bring peace, but a sword” is held to justify just about any act of violence or vengeance by the state, it would seem. Capital punishment, torture of prisoners, saturation bombing, even nuclear annihilation is OK by this warrior-savior who came to bring us peace not on this earth but in heaven only and that only after we are dead.

“You must not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have come not to bring peace, but a sword,” is used not only to tell Christians who protest wars and state sponsored violence that we are wrong. It is also used to tell us to shut up. Wartime patriotism requires good citizens and good Christians to put up a united front, to put a lid on our fears and doubts and our grief. Words as well as bombs might be employed to kill the other, the “enemy,” but among “us” insiders, no criticism of our leaders and their wars can be tolerated.

Jesus’ words taken in context, however, do not support this concept of violent struggle with outsiders and uncritical obedience and docile compliance within. In both the gospels of Luke and Matthew, Jesus is quite deliberate in saying where the sword shall fall: it is not between “us” and the “enemy” but rather it falls right into the midst of our most intimate circles. One’s foes will be found, Jesus says, within one’s “own household,” (Matthew 10, 36) “for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three.” (Luke 12, 52)

There is a paradox, here, in Jesus’ instruction, if not an outright scandal. Could Jesus have really taught this impossible ethic? Only gentleness, love and forbearance for our enemies but a sword, however metaphorical, deliberately drawn to cause division at home?

Many commentators have tried to explain this “sword” as one dividing those members of a family who become Christians and those who don’t. John Dominic Crossan (*JESUS: a Revolutionary Biography* 1994 page 60) points out, though, just where and how emphatically the axis of separation lies: “They will be divided,” Jesus taught,

“father against his son and son against his father, mother against her daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” (Luke 12, 53) “But why should faith split along that axis? Why might faith not separate, say, the women from the men or even operate in ways far more random?” Crossan asks. “*The attack has nothing to do with faith but with power,*” he insists. “The attack is on the Mediterranean family’s axis of pow-



er, which sets father and mother over son, daughter and daughter-in-law."

"The family is society in miniature," Crossan continues, "the place where we first and most deeply learn how to love and be loved, help and be helped, abuse and be abused... since it involves power, it invites the abuse of power, and it is at that precise point that Jesus attacks it." The Christian churches traditionally have also recognized the family as society in miniature but they have not usually perceived any attack on the "traditional family" and its power structures in Jesus' teaching. On the contrary, most often they have construed Jesus as unconditionally commending the family and the power structures that grow from it as ideal. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, for one example, bases the "duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administer and govern it" on the fourth commandment to honor and obey one's parents (2199). In apparent disagreement with the *Catechism*, Jesus' "ideal group" according to Crossan, "is contrary to Mediterranean and indeed most human familial reality, an open one equally accessible to all under God. It is the Kingdom of God, and it negates that terrible abuse of power that is power's dark specter and lethal shadow."

The sword that Jesus recommends, then, is not a literal one (always forbidden) but a symbolic one that attacks fearlessly close to home and hacks away at our own finely turned and deeply ingrained constructions of hierarchy

and dominance of one person or one class of people over another. Rather than defending and preserving our way of life, this sword cuts it to pieces. This sword flays and destroys the false "peace" upon which violence and abuse depends; the "peace" of

good people not raising a fuss, just trying to get along, trying to stay out of trouble, trying not to rock the boat.

Our struggle, then, as Christians is not with those who are far away and different no matter how much these might hate us or how much they might threaten us, as much as it is with our own homegrown power structures.

These structures are not only those of the state but include those of the church as well. "It is my intention to make my entire life a rejection of, a protest against the crimes and injustices of war and political tyranny which threaten to destroy the whole race of man and the world with him," wrote the Trappist monk Thomas Merton in 1966, two years before his death. "And when I speak it is to deny that my faith and my church can ever be aligned with these forces of injustice and destruction. But it is true, nevertheless, that the faith in which I believe, is also invoked by many who believe in war, believe in racial injustice, believe in self-righteous and lying forms of tyranny. My life must, then, be a protest against these also and perhaps against these most of all."

"No one," says Jesus (Mark 3, 27) "can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless one first binds up the strong man." It is too easy, perhaps, to perceive the strong man that Jesus bids us to bind and plunder in the empires, the huge and oppressive military, ecclesial and financial institutions of the world or in these institutions' big shots, their generals, presidents, bishops and CEOs.



Dorothy Day, "a dictator legislating herself out of existence," left, Frank Donovan, center and the author, right, on Second Avenue and Third Street in New York City, April 1978.

Photo by Stanley Vishnewski

While such perceptions would not be inaccurate, we should resist the temptation to wash our hands of our own collusion with the strong man's house.

"That terrible abuse of power that is power's dark specter and lethal shadow" manifests itself also in "society in miniature," namely in the family, in our friendships and partnerships, in our most intimate relationships. The "strong man's house" is certainly the White House, the Pentagon, the Vatican and the New York Stock Exchange but it is not only these. The strong man's house might also be our own home where we live with those whom we love. It may be our parish, our religious community, our neighborhood association, our peace group; anywhere power is abused is the strong man's house and there will be no peace in that house until the strong man is bound.

Communities of good people who gather to resist abusive power structures and witness to the Kin-dom of God that negates "power's dark specter and lethal shadow" too often adopt the deadly patterns of the institutions they oppose. Dorothy Day, cofounder of the Catholic Worker movement, was keenly aware of her own authoritarian streak and felt "bitterly oppressed," too, by Catholic Workers who looked to her for leadership, "all looking for organization instead of self-organization, all of them weary of the idea of freedom and personal responsibility... they all complain at the idea of there being this freedom, that there is no boss." (*House of Hospitality*, 1939)

Dorothy's life and writings are testimony to her arduous struggle not only to bind the strong men of church and state but also to her deliberate attack on the axis of power within her own Catholic Worker community, the power over others that her own ego and others in their weakness urged her to take onto herself. She saw her own position as that of "a dictator trying to legislate herself out of existence" and this "certainly at the price of bitter suffering" for herself.

Dorothy Day's extraordinary courage might be noted especially in her struggle over her own domineering nature, even as she recognized that she sometimes failed. For most of us, though, the struggle to bind the strong man within our own small circles of those we love or, indeed, within our own hearts is so difficult that we do not even try. The courage that comes to hand as we face down and "speak truth to power" in society at large fails us when we contemplate addressing power at home and we retreat to the safety of old hierarchal patterns of relationship. Contending with the most heavily armed empire the earth has ever been cursed with seems easier, at times, than confronting the petty little kingdoms of our own making. Yet it is exactly here, first, that Jesus says a sword must fall.

I write this in a bleak time, Holy Week of 2010, amid the craven alibis of strong men in the Vatican defending a power structure that enables the abuse of the innocent and in the second year of a new president who promised change but seems instead hell bent to surpass the cruelty and lawlessness of his predecessor. I write this at a time when close friends at a beloved Catholic Worker community are painfully addressing their own history of autocracy, struggling to accept the burden of freedom and personal responsibility to which they are called. I write this, too, as one full of complicity in the strong man's works, as one who enjoys the privileges and comforts of

living in the false peace of his house.

For what can we hope? The sword that Jesus came to bring will fall, as it must, to rend and to destroy forever our households of dominance. The strong man at last will be bound (and so find liberation) and the "hungry will be filled with good things" (Luke 1, 53) from the treasury of his (our) ill-gotten goods. I pray that we will have the courage not to fear that sword or the pain and confusion that it is likely to bring to the likes of us. May we have the courage not to raise a hand in defense against this holy and righteous sword.



Des Moines Catholic Bishop Richard Pates was part of a "Center of Influence" lift, an opportunity for leaders in the community to fly with the Air National Guard. He flew with the 132nd Fighter Wing, which hosted the event.

The Catholic Mirror, May 15, 2009

"The faith in which I believe is also invoked by many who believe in war... My life must, then, be a protest against these also and perhaps against these most of all."

Thomas Merton

Benedictine Influence on the CW

(continued from page 3)

times of retreat, reflection and rest. That quiet support has bolstered spiritual health for the long haul and strengthened bonds between the two groups.

Ora et Labora

This motto of the Benedictines: "Prayer and Work" is rich in meaning as people learn that the two are inseparable. The Liturgy of the Hours, bringing praise, thanks, petition for help and forgiveness repeatedly into the daily schedule of community life and work, was a great inspiration to Dorothy Day and the early community, in very hard times. The influence of Virgil Michel, OSB, from St. John's in Minnesota, who was a prominent theologian and liturgist, enhanced understanding of the Mystical Body of Christ, in liturgy and life, charity and justice. He was a major force in the movement to reform the liturgy, as was brought forward in the Vatican II reforms. The Catholic Worker was ahead of the official reforms in that lay people were praying Vespers and Compline, starting in the 1930's, as well as attending Mass and saying the rosary.

In the monastery, the requirement of manual labor for those who are able, helped overcome class differences within the community, since some were from backgrounds where such labor was seen as demeaning. The privilege of serving the brothers by preparing and serving meals is rotated among the community, and at harvest time everyone may be expected to lend a hand in the fields as needed. Likewise, many young radicals joining Dorothy Day's movement were college graduates (or college drop-outs) but were expected to chop onions, sweep floors and wash dishes along with other guests, if they wanted to stay in the community. Rembert Sorg, in his 1951 book 'Holy Work' lifts up manual labor as a standard for healthy monasticism and shows how the balanced life of prayer, study and work is effective in supporting communities that will have a simple, yet generous life.

In a recent newsletter from a fairly new community, in Bloomington Indiana, "The Christian Radical" the influence of Benedictine practice can be seen again. In an article "The government will not set you free, Chores will set you free." Lauren Johnson wrote:

"Chores are not merely the daily business of running a House of Hospitality. They are the performance of the Works of Mercy. That being said, they are time consuming, tedious, and often boring. To do the chores of the community is to engage in good work. It is not necessarily work in the modern capitalist sense (labor for wages) but spiritual work. In the oft quoted words of the Benedictines, "Ora et Labora" or work is prayer. Work done as

a community allows for the unlearning of work as a solitary, selfish pursuit: in contrast, we re-learn work as a spiritual practice best performed in community." Lauren doesn't quite have the Latin- but she has learned, thru the Catholic Worker and Benedictine traditions the truth about this work.

Holy Work

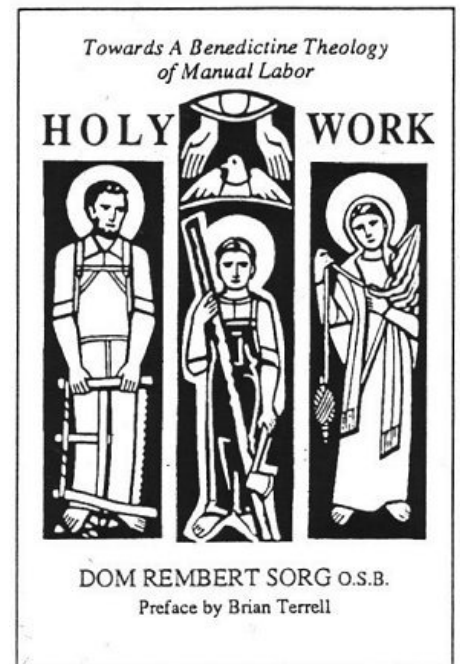
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many other good Christian initiatives that serve the poor and have evangelization and conversion of the poor as an end, it is the conversion of the server rather than the one being served that is the point of Catholic Worker hospitality. Catholic

Workers do not presume to evangelize the poor or to bring Christ to them; rather they go to the poor in order to find Christ and to know Christ. Seeing the face of Jesus in the most distressing disguises, they do not seek the conversion of the poor. They seek their own conversion and the conversion of a society for the evils of which they bear responsibility. In this sense the Cath-

olic Worker is essentially a contemplative vocation.

But it is not enough to comfort the victims of an unjust social order; the order must be changed. To bring peace, order and justice to this chaotic, fractured world, Day and Maurin recommended not only nonviolent direct action and protest, but also prayer, manual labor, simple living in community, hospitality, study and liturgy. They considered the non-violent revolution whereby Celtic monks and early Benedictines rescued Europe from an earlier Dark Age, and sought to use the same "revolutionary techniques" to bring light to the present darkness. They sought to create a society, Maurin said, "Where it is easier to be good."



Copies of **Holy Work** are available through Strangers and Guests.

Suggested donation \$15

Support the 'Creech Fourteen'

"The problem of nuclear weapons is so familiar as to be almost beyond comment, but take the apparently less momentous military revolution that has been launched by American drone warfare. No one can predict the consequences *for the meaning of war* of this total removal of one combatant from the field of battle on which the other is met. War's mainly personal character has, until now, been its only check. The video-screen pilot in Nevada, whose weapon obliterates lives half a world away, is a psychological mutant. The technically ingenious Pentagon has set devils loose here, without regard for ultimate consequence — either to drone victims, drone victimizers, or a drone-infested world."

James Carroll, *Boston Globe*, June 7, 2010



Brian Terrell, Kathy Kelly and Renee Espeland at Creech AFB in Nevada, Good Friday, April 2009

In Lent of 2009, two Catholic Workers from Iowa, Brian Terrell of Maloy and Renee Espeland of Des Moines, travelled to Nevada with activists from around the country for a ten day vigil, "Ground the Drones; Lest we Reap the Whirlwind, A witness in the desert that peace will come through love and not through predators armed with hellfire." The vigil ended with the arrest for trespass at Creech Air Force Base of Terrell and Espeland and twelve others, who will be going to trial in Las Vegas on September 14. As this was one of the first public protests of this insidious new technology, a spirited defense, including an appeal to international law, is being prepared.

Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Nonviolence in Chicago is one of the defendants going to trial in September and has recently returned from Pakistan and Afghanistan where she met with victims of drone warfare. Kathy will be in Des Moines on July 30 to raise awareness about the drones and their effects and to raise funds for the defense of the 'Creech 14.' Donations to the defense fund can be made out and mailed to Strangers and Guests CW farm, with 'Creech 14' in the memo line.

Hear Kathy Kelly on Friday, July 30 at 7:30 pm

Grace United Methodist Church

3700 Cottage Grove, Des Moines

"Human interaction, negotiation, diplomacy and dialogue, not surveillance and bombing by robots, will ensure a more peaceful future at home and abroad." Kathy Kelly

THE SOWER

Strangers and Guests

Catholic Worker Farm

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Brian Terrell, <terrellcpm@yahoo.com>

Betsy Keenan, <keenanweaving@yahoo.com>



Proud mother Jemima with Carmella, about one hour old, April 15, 2010



News Flash! Oboe Recital in August

Clara Keenan Terrell, presently of the University of Oregon in Eugene, is planning to give a recital when she visits home in late August, including works of Barber, Nielsen and Saint-saens. The time and place (somewhere in Ringgold County) will be settled soon. Contact S&G for more information.