



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 7, Summer-2011

Dear Friends,



Betsy and I got the last issue of *The Sower* to the printer in early April, just before our little goat Rosita gave birth to a boisterous set of twin bucks. Our supply of milk is thus assured for the coming year as is our sense of the ever renewing cycle of Life around us. I helped till the ground

for planting the early crops and then was on my way to Western New York State.

On Palm Sunday, I joined a community of old and new friends walking from Ithaca to Syracuse, where the New York Air National Guard is operating Reaper killer drones. These unmanned drones are now operated remotely by “weekend warriors” at Hancock airfield, executing real-time air attacks in Afghanistan and perhaps other nations where our country may or may not be in a state of war.

The walk was not specifically a faith-based event, but many of us began each morning reading the gospels of Holy Week. Often we walked to Buddhist drumming and chanting and we celebrated a Passover Seder and received a blessing at the Long House of the Onondaga Nation along the road. The beautiful hills, farms, villages and vineyards of the Finger Lakes region contributed to thoughtful meditation and discussion as we made our way. Walking ten or so miles a day, often though rain, sometimes in snow and always against a raw wind out of the North, this was also a practice of asceticism for those who like me were out of shape from the winter.

By Friday afternoon when we got to Hancock Field, there were a couple of hundred of us and we found the entrance of the base barricaded by dozens of town and county police cars, with military police in full riot gear watching us from behind closed gates. I was honored to speak to the crowd from a makeshift stage on the bed of a pickup truck along with Col. Ann Wright and Kathy Kelly (both of whom were in Afghanistan with me in December)

and Elliott Adams, president of Veterans for Peace. Kathy, Martha Hennessy and I attempted to walk to the gate with an indictment listing the crimes of Hancock’s drones drawn up with the aid of the Center for Constitutional Rights while others wrapped themselves in shrouds and lay in the base drive way, a “die-in” symbolizing those killed in remote control air raids.



Kathy Kelly, Martha Hennessy and Brian, at Hancock Airbase
On Good Friday photo by Chris Sabas

An Onondaga County Sheriff’s deputy placed me under arrest for “inciting to riot” (I had quoted an airman from Creech Air Force Base in Nevada who told *America* magazine that when he was operating the drones, the war was 7,000 miles away, the distance from Nevada to Afghanistan, but the war was also only 16 inches away, the distance between his eyes and the computer screen. This new technology, I told the crowd, closes that distance, brings the war home as never before. War crimes are now committed not on far away battlefields, alone, but also right here, behind the fence at Hancock Airfield. I abjured

those listening to responsibly and nonviolently put themselves in the way of those crimes.

When our drama ("Passion Play?") was finished, 38 people had been arrested, including to his surprise, the driver of the pickup. My "Holy Week retreat" finished with a vigil with the "least of these" Jesus' sisters and brothers, Good Friday night in the county jail.

The inciting to riot charge did not hold, a police representative told the media, as my words did not result in a break out of "tumultuous behavior" as required by the statute, so I am charged along with most of the others with disorderly conduct and obstruction of government admin-



istration. Such allegations notwithstanding, our conduct could not have been more orderly, friend Vicki Ross notes, had we lain in the drive in alphabetical order and obstructing governmental crimes is a positive legal responsibility and no crime. I look forward to rejoining these friends in Syracuse to answer these false charges before a jury at a date yet to be determined.

I was bailed out in time to get to Buffalo and to celebrate Easter with our son, Elijah and Betsy's sister Kathy. Back home in Maloy, Betsy was musician and cantor for the Easter Vigil at St. Patrick's parish in nearby Grand



River. Our faithful comrade Alex Iwasa returned from his travels to spend another growing season with us.

For a week of May, I was in Chicago at the offices of Voices for Creative Nonviolence. Along with Jerica from Voices, I con-

ducted a nonviolence training for the Midwest Catholic Worker resistance retreat in Kansas City, which ended with direct action at the construction site of a new nuclear weapons factory there that threatens to extend the nuclear arms race into the next generations. A carload of Catholic Workers from Chicago's Su Casa and White Rose CW houses stayed a night with us in Maloy on the way home for a delightful but too short visit.

We have enjoyed several visits from good friend and former neighbor Veronica between her stints working with wild bird projects in Florida and Missouri. We have had some younger visitors, as well, with Tiffany Martinez who



was in school with our children, helped in the garden with her 10 year old twin sons, Cristian and Adeah. 13 year old Frankie Hughes from the Des Moines Catholic Worker spent a week with us and later so did Etienne Porras, who will start high school in Des Moines in the fall.

Our own kids, Elijah and Clara, unfortunately could not come home this summer. Elijah continues to work for the Erie County (New York) Public Libraries and Clara finished her *second* masters degree this summer and was promoted to service manager at Hutch's Bicycles shop in Eugene, Oregon.

Photos this page: upper left, Cristian and Adeah Martinez, by Tiffany Martinez; lower right, our garlic won "Best of Class" at the county fair! Upper right, one of our deceased hens; lower right, solstice fire, by Brett Terrell



One more time, the summer solstice saw our yard turn into a tent city. My brother Brett, came from Los Angeles, as did friends from Chicago, Kansas City, Des Moines as well as from the country side and the small towns around Maloy. Music, dancing, good food, and good company were enjoyed until the fire died down not long before dawn.

We had lunch one day with Sisters Joanna, Nan and Miriam, who lived at our parish rectory and worked around Maloy for many years before they retired to their mother houses in Dubuque two years ago. Don Ray, our neighbor up the hill and proprietor of downtown Maloy's Foxtown Dance Hall, has been in Spain for most of the summer and will be home soon.

The gardening goes on. This article is written in prime okra growing weather, hot and humid. We are blessed with a great variety of crops coming ripe. One loss to note- after many years of living in peace with the local raccoons, they seem to have developed an insatiable taste for chicken. We surrendered after weeks of trapping the beasts, chasing them off in the night and hopelessly reinforcing the chickens' shelter. The surviving rooster, too dispirited to crow, did *not* go to the 'coons, though, but made a delicious pie for us. We will miss the eggs!

We are still here, surviving by the work of our hands and with the help of our benefactors. Betsy has picked up some guitar students and continues to sell her weaving. My travel to Afghanistan and experience resisting drones in Nevada and New York has brought invitations to speak, radio interviews, etc. and my articles are being published widely. Some of this pays, most does not, and I try to respond to invitations regardless. I must confess that I am challenged, maybe even convicted, by Betsy's "Plea for Stability" which is centerpiece of this issue. I must confess to feeling almost rootless right now, even planning my



Brian, Betsy, Cecilia the cat and Alex at home.

Photo by Brett Terrell

third trip to Las Vegas in a year, this time for a conference at the U of N Law School on "Law and Social Movements" in August.

Standing as I am with one foot planted on this farm and the other on the shifting tumultuous sands of the big world, my experience is more of vertigo than balance and don't know where it will all lead, even in the short run. In what Dr. King called "the fierce urgency of now!" I cannot imagine doing anything but continuing to totter here on the edge.

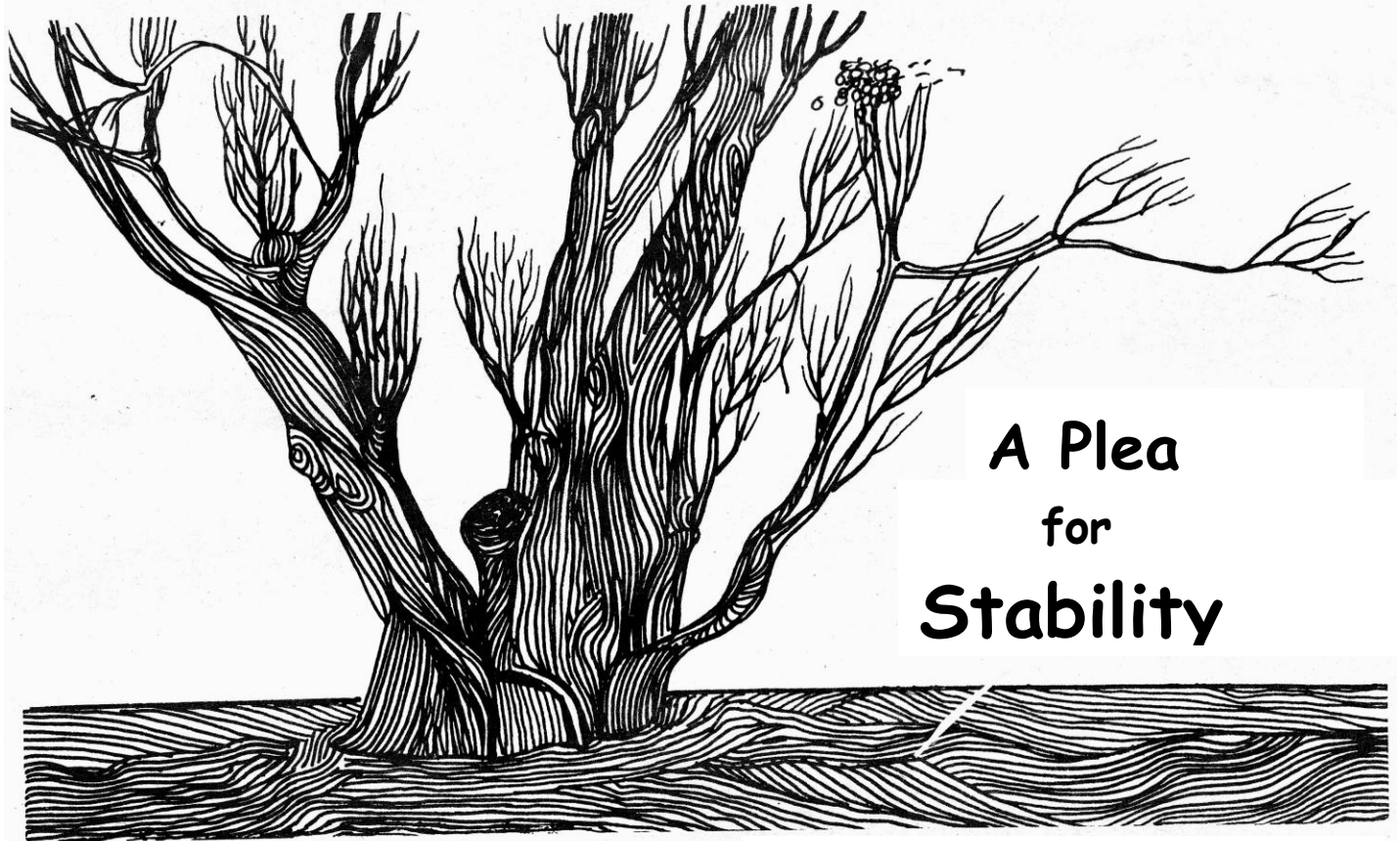
We are grateful for those who help keep our life and work going. Please keep us in mind and prayer and buy a rug or spare us some cash when you can.

Love,

Brian



. . . weaving traditional hand woven rag rugs that combine beauty and durability. Betsy can custom weave one-of-a-kind rag rugs to complement the colors in your home and unify your décor. Contact Betsy for prices.



By Betsy Keenan

Rita Corbin

My purpose is to bring two ideals, from different sources, forward for consideration by those who are or who aspire to be Catholic Worker farmers. First, Wendell Berry's sense of place, that informs the work of the farmer who strives to make a life, beyond making "a living". The other, the Benedictine value and vow of "Stability." There are so many powerful, thought-provoking quotes on these topics I am tempted to string them together in "Easy Essay" style. But for now, real sentences! (mostly)

"How blest are those of gentle spirit they shall have the earth for their possession."

In our current culture- opportunity comes with mobility- young people are expected to go somewhere for training/education, to get ahead, and move where the jobs are. People who make the choice to stay or return to the homes of their families, ancestors, and heritage are often deemed less successful. Cultures where maintaining traditional values and practices are stressed are considered backward. The people with the strongest ties to this land, both the Pre-Columbian indigenous people and multigenerational farmers, are often trampled by "progress."

It is hard to miss what you never had- but Wendell Ber-

ry identifies many of our current problems, policies and even neuroses with our lack of roots. Displacement- a lack of a sense of place results in an ignorance of the impact our actions have on our environment. In his own home place, when he returns, Wendell Berry mourned the loss of a living culture of interdependence that had flourished a generation before. It had been a "subsistence" economy, but sustaining to a human community and a local culture. In reflecting on some writing by Thomas Hardy, who valued the agricultural way of life that was disappearing in England in the late nineteenth century, Berry says "if the land is made fit for human habitation by memory and 'old association,' it is also true that by memory and association men are made fit to inhabit the land. At present our society is almost entirely nomadic, without the comfort or discipline of such memories." (from *The Regional Motive in A Continuous Harmony-Essays Cultural and Agricultural*).

The Benedictine way of life was designed as a school where, by the tasks of living together and providing for the needs of the community and the poor, we simultaneously learn our proper place in Creation and before our Creator, the life encompassing cultural and agricultural work, prayer and study. Stability entails commitment, perseverance and constancy- trust in God's promises of presence and grace and "acceptance of our human community

as the ground of conversion." Our spirits need continuity and accountability to achieve growth and conversion. (see Joan Chittister, OSB, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily*)

I have been reading from John O'Donahue's book *Anam Cara*-a book of Celtic Wisdom, teachings that help bring lessons from the natural world for spiritual growth. Sometimes he shocks me! In "There is no Spiritual program" he is attributing this to Master Eckhart -"There is no such thing as a spiritual journey," and adds "if there were a spiritual journey, it would be only a quarter inch long, though many miles deep."

Who are the blessed people of the Beatitudes? They are the gentle, perhaps the ones who would be happy with the earth as God gave it to us, diverse, teeming with life, offering us sustenance and shelter. In our environmental crisis we need to know and love our place on earth and seek its good. While we have concern for the whole, attention to detail is key; to water-flow, sources of contamination, pressure on wild animal populations, and plant diversity. Watching the migrations of birds, the signs of Spring. Slowing down, staying put, paying attention is vital.

Wendell Berry in *What are People for?* has a pair of poems "Damage" and "Healing," where he reflects on a project he undertook on his land that he regretted. "The problem was a familiar one: too much power, too little knowledge."

In "Healing IV" he says:

Good work finds the way between pride and despair.

It graces with health. It heals with grace.

It preserves the given so that it remains a gift.

By it, we lose loneliness:

we clasp the hands of those who go before us, and the hands of those who come after us;

we enter the little circle of each other's arms,

and the larger circle of lovers whose hands are joined in a dance,

and the larger circle of all creatures, passing in and out of life,

who move also in a dance, to a music so subtle and vast that no ear hears it except in fragments.

It is a beautiful vision. In a movement where so often people are "reaping where others have sown" this is long haul business. Please consider this argument in favor of stability, that you may be "a tree planted beside a water-course, which yields its fruit in season and its leaf never withers." (Ps 1)

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Are monks and hippies and poets relevant?

No, we are deliberately irrelevant. We live with an ingrained irrelevance which is proper to every human being. **The marginal [person] accepts the basic irrelevance of the human condition,** an irrelevance which is manifested above all by the fact of death. **The marginal person, the monk, the displaced person, the prisoner, all these people live in the presence of death, and the office of the monk or the marginal person, the meditative person or the poet is to go beyond death even in this life, to go beyond the dichotomy of life and death and to be, therefore, a witness to life.**

Thomas Merton.

The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton



**BENEDICT,
Abbot**

Ade Bethune

PAX

The word "radical" comes from the Latin, *radix*, meaning "root." When Benedictines are not radical, they are rootless, and when Catholic Workers are rootless, they are not really radical. Today, especially, these two movements need what the other offers if either is to be the dynamic social force that the church and the world needs it to be.

Brian Terrell,
from his introduction to *Holy Work* by Dom Rembert Sorg,
2003

Writing to Prisoners

By Alex Iwasa

“I think, without a doubt, that the Prison Industrial Complex is one of the flash points of Class Struggle and internal colonialism within the United States.”

In April when I was still in Tucson I attended a monthly Political Prisoners' Birthday Party at the Dry River Radical Resource Center, an Infoshop currently located in the Dunbar Spring neighborhood.

Every month the Chapel Hill Prison Books Collective puts together a poster with the birthdays, contact information and brief descriptions of various Political Prisoners



While there is a lower class I am in it, while there is a criminal element I am of it, while there is a soul in prison I am not free.

Eugene V. Debs

and Prisoners of War [POWs].

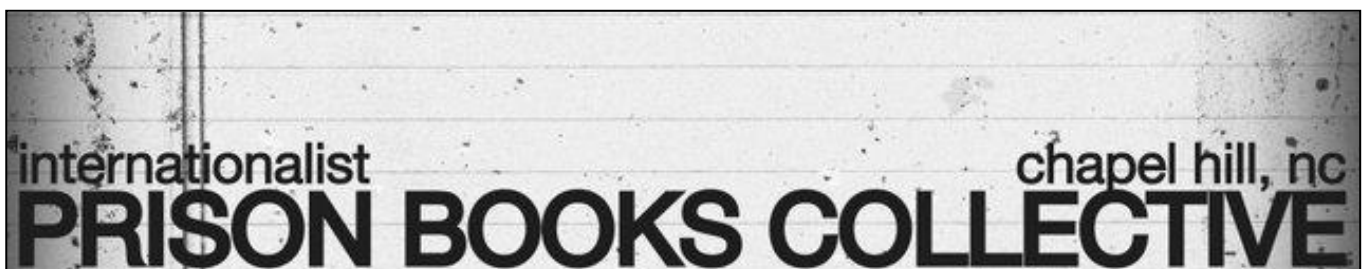
At Dry River we made and signed cards, took pictures to send along, smashed a piñata and snacked. It was a great deal of fun! Though I can't really do anything like that around here, I've still made a point of going to the web site <http://prisonbooks.info/> to keep updated and make sure I could download the posters for May, June and July, and keep up with the writing.



Alex, second from the left, celebrates a Political Prisoners' Birthday Party at the Dry River Radical Resource Center. In the photo at left, Alex strikes a blow at a piñata and all manifestations of oppression. Photos by Eric

I think, without a doubt, that the Prison Industrial Complex is one of the flash points of Class Struggle and internal colonialism within the United States, so therefore Political Prisoners and POWs are some of the main people we should be supporting and looking to for at least some political direction.

Two more online resources for writing Political Prisoners and POWs are: prisonactivist.org/ and zinelibrary.info/political-prisoner-and-POW-support-resources.



A prison limerick

by Mark Kenney, #14018-047

A young man went into the Navy.
He saw things that made him quite crazy
The great weapons of war,
He just could not ignore
His witness to Christ had been lazy.

Missile silos at sea in a sub
Did we really need such a big club?
Targeting towns of our foes,
Should they step on our toes;
We'd nuke 'em right down to the nub.

It certainly seemed something amiss.
Did the Gospel teach something like this?
Was God in this mess:
Or did we egress?
Betray Christ with a nuclear kiss?



Chuck Trapkus

Years later, he's a sittin' in prison,
For protesting nuclear fission.
To have bombs that were nuke,
He did oft times rebuke,
The Feds ruled with no indecision.



So he sits now, six months in Jail
No hope of reprieve, and no bail,
Three hots and a cot,
Rehabilitated, he's not,
He continues his quest through the mail.

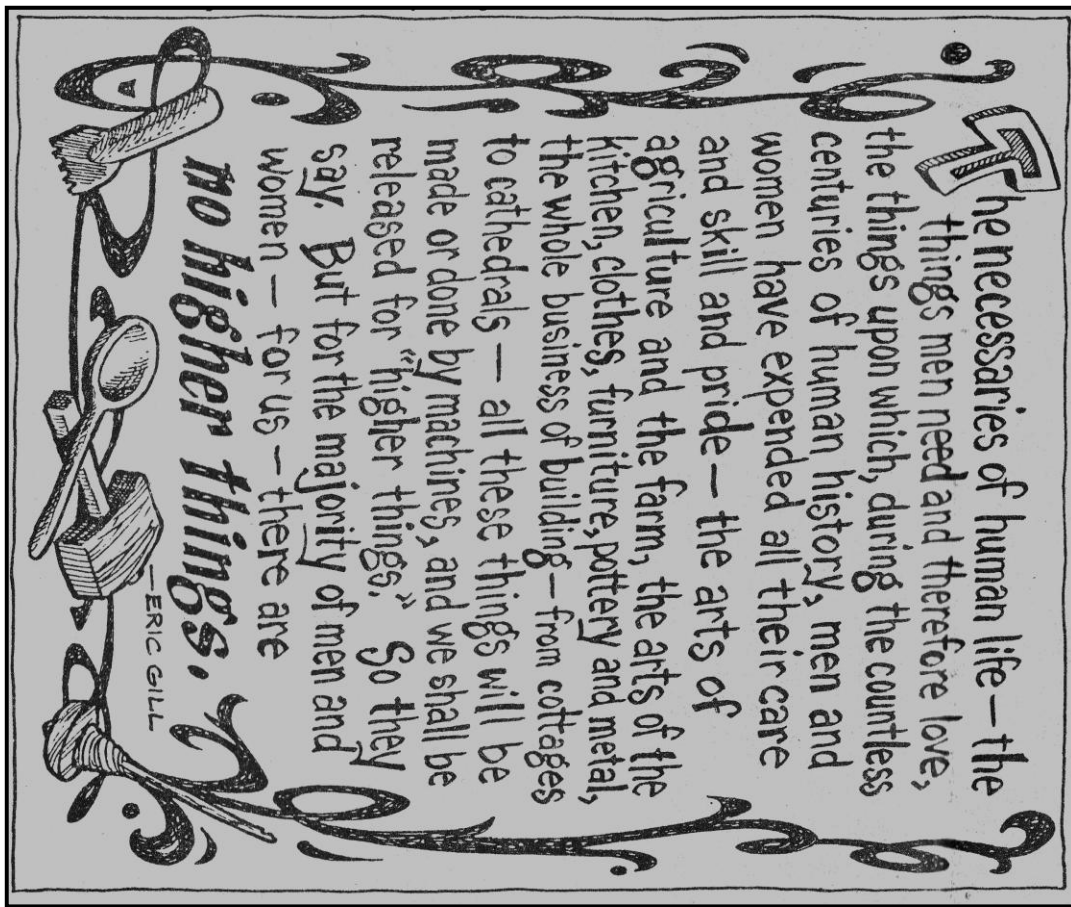
So with prose from the pen, he doth write.
With a limerick, he tries to bring light.
The good news, he sighs,
Says "No!" to war's lies.
To be Christian, to be complicit, it's not right!

He misses those back on a farm
Misses goats who do no one no harm.
It's a place called Maloy, Iowa
Where folks practice joy,
And live, that we all should disarm

+

On April 27, Mark began a six month sentence for trespassing at the Strategic Nuclear Command, Offutt Air Force Base, last August 9.

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THE SOWER

Strangers and Guests

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