



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 9, Spring 2012

Dear Friends,

The mild winter is ending far too early here in the mid west. The blossoms on the apricot trees that are usually a cheery harbinger of spring and the fruit to come do not bode so well this year, opening by the middle of March. We have seen temperatures in the 80s but statistically we can still expect a freeze that could wither the new fruits. Still, it gives hope to see the daffodils and rhubarb emerging from the earth and to have the quiet of winter broken by the crazy noise of returning birds and awakening frogs.

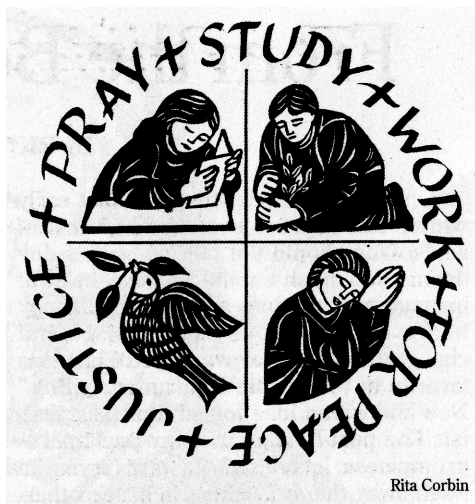
I write this in a thunderstorm on the feast of St Joseph, March 19, after spending the morning mulching the strawberries and asparagus with straw and manure dug out of the goats' barn months back. Betsy managed to get the peas planted and the flax seed sown before the rains as well. Later this evening Betsy and I plan to pray vespers of the feast with our friends the Benedictine Sisters at their monastery in Clyde, Missouri.

This past winter I continued in my pattern of travel and intense activism and more contemplative periods of manual labor on the farm. In February my work took me around the globe to the Kingdom of Bahrain as a member of an emergency delegation when the regime there banned the international human rights observers who had planned on being there for events marking one year since the "Arab Spring" uprising. I write about this journey on page 3.

"What we need and what we pray for is for someone to come and share our lot with us in this beautiful but increasingly desolate corner of Iowa.

"If what you read in this small paper resonates with you, say a prayer for us, send a check or better, come visit us and discern a future for you here.

"For just one more year, at least, we will plant our seeds and harvest our crops, make music and break open the scriptures with neighbors and guests. In this time of greatest uncertainty and peril in our own lives and in the world at large, we do not know what else to do."



In January I was part of Witness Against Torture, a community that gathered in Washington, DC, for 10 days to fast and hold vigil, remembering those imprisoned illegally at Guantanamo, Bagram and other black site prisons run by the US around the world. Our days began and ended with reflections together and the days were filled with protest and interaction with people in the streets of Washington where we walked many miles in prisoners' orange jumpsuits and black hoods, an intense schedule even if we were not subsisting on liquids only.

Our reception on the streets was mostly positive- the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act which gives the government power to detain any person, citizen or not, indefinitely and without trial on mere suspicion of involvement with terrorism, was very much on the minds of those we encountered. Many of those who took time to talk with us were tourists from various foreign places, something that I thought of a month later when I was deported from Bahrain, accused of violating the terms of my tourist visa for witnessing demonstrations there and talking with protestors.

January 11 marked ten years since the first detainees arrived at Guantanamo, Cuba, and on that day our WAT group of about 50 fasters was joined by more than a thousand others, from Amnesty International, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture and other groups. A couple of weeks ago I gave a day long re-

Dear Friends,

(continued from page 1)

retreat for the Catholic parishes of Waterloo, Iowa, "Hunger for Justice" about the place of fasting and ascetical practices in campaigns for peace and social justice.

I was sorry to miss Veronica's birthday celebration with a dance and a potluck on January 6 and arrived home too late to see her off to Costa Rica, where she is capturing and releasing hummingbirds in the rain forests, taking samples of pollen from them as a way to track global warming. When she returns in May I will be on the road as well, more literally, this time as I will be part of a walk starting in Madison, Wisconsin, to the NATO summit in Chicago on May 19.

Getting kicked out of Bahrain a few days earlier than planned meant I had a few days to catch my breath before our third annual craft retreat. Betsy reports on this event in the center of this newsletter. Betsy's winter was taken up with planning this event and with weaving, giving guitar lessons to two young students and plotting this year's gardens. We stopped milking our goat Rosita in February, too, until her next kids are birthed in a month or so, so goat chores this winter have been at a minimum.

Our last issue of The Sower, featuring Betsy's recounting of our 25 years here was very well received. It is clear



Rachel with the Goats

that many understand and value the witness of our lives and work here in Maloy. One friend we heard from, Rachel Howell from England came to us from the Oxford Catholic Worker and is now finishing a doctorate at the University of Edinburgh. Rachel lived with us off and on from 2001 to 2003. Had she been asked to reflect on her time here, she wrote, "I would have sent something about how the Gospel felt so real to me when we did Bible study gathered around your table, and how at home I felt, how wonderful it was not to be looking over the edge of my work, waiting for playtime..."

"What parties you hosted!" remembers Barbara Hannon, who lived in near-by Bedford until moving to Denver recently. "Your Tuesday Bible studies were always a highlight of my week and you made an enormous impact on my life, my faith, my political views."

We are grateful for all who have graced our home and for those whose material support helps us hang on to the



Brian in Washington, January 11, Photo by Justin Norman

thin edge of precarity. We do, though, find ourselves discouraged at times. More and more we ask ourselves hard questions about how sustainable this whole thing is. Money is always short. Betsy's lessons, the weaving, are mainstays. Once in a while I find an odd job or get an honorarium for speaking that pays for more than transportation costs. Occasionally I get paid (not much) for my writing. Much of my travel, to Bahrain for instance, is covered by Voices for Creative Nonviolence and sometimes more.

It always seems that just when we are broke, some cash comes from somewhere. Our immediate needs are always met ("daily bread" is all we should pray for or expect, but we can't imagine how we will afford to reroof our 100+ year old house) and we have lived this life long enough not to be too worried. Our doubts over sustainability are more concerned with having the people we need to keep our work going. Our children, Elijah and Clara, pitched in before they were grown and gone and we often have fellow travelers join us for weeks or months at a time. What we need and what we pray for is for someone to come and share our lot with us in this beautiful but increasingly desolate corner of Iowa.

If what you read in this small paper resonates with you, say a prayer for us, send a check or better, come visit us and discern a future for you here.

For just one more year, at least, we will stay. We will plant our seeds and harvest our crops, make music and break open the scriptures with neighbors and guests. In this time of greatest uncertainty and peril in our own lives and in the world at large, we do not know what else to do.

Peace to all, *Sumoud!* **Brian**

Witnessing Oppression in Bahrain

by Brian Terrell

On the long flight to the Gulf Kingdom of Bahrain on February 10, I had been studying the Lonely Planet guide to the region in order to be able to explain at the airport, if needed, that I had come as a tourist. As it happened, while most passengers on our plane sailed through passport control, my travel companion Linda Sartor and I were pulled from the line and subjected to a closer examination. My sketchy knowledge of the historic and cultural sights that I had come to see was good enough to satisfy official scrutiny. We were granted tourist visas and sent on our way.

That we had come as tourists was true. We had intentionally neglected to mention, though, that we had been invited to Bahrain along with a few other international activists to monitor the government's response to demonstrations marking the one year anniversary of Bahrain's "Arab Spring" pro-democracy uprising on February 14. This demand for basic rights was brutally suppressed by Bahrain's police and military backed by the army of Saudi Arabia.



The road to the Pearl Roundabout, blocked by riot police on February 13. Photo by Wafa Alnoaimi



Some members of "Witness Bahrain"

"To the police who arrested us, a tourist with a gas mask is a hopeless contradiction and proof of culpability. For the tourist who wants to learn the present reality of Bahrain, a gas mask is more indispensable than sunscreen."

We certainly would have been barred entry to the country had our full intent been told—but, as Daniel Berrigan once mused, "How much truth do we owe them?" In fact, our invitation from Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, came because the government had made it known that observers from established human rights organizations would not be granted visas until the next month and that access to the country by the international media was to be severely limited during that period. The regime's resolve that there be no witnesses to the events surrounding the anniversary made our presence for those days all the more crucial.

The morning after our arrival, we met with local activists and the small group of U. S. citizens who had come before us. Before long we were in the streets of Manama, the capital city, accompanying a march to the Pearl Roundabout, the focal point of last year's demonstration. This peaceful march of men, women and children was quickly

"Tourists for Human Rights" continued on page 6

Craft Retreat, 2012

by Betsy Keenan

In February we offered a Craft Retreat-smaller and more restful (at least to me) than earlier offerings. A number of last minute changes in plans meant the result was unexpected, but not less creative, for those who had the time and energy to attend.



Sandy Maxa gets Betsy started weaving a basket from newspapers Photo by Don Ray

Mark Kenney arrived from Omaha on Thursday, and we got a start on setting up the loom for weaving and selecting and preparing fabric for his rug. Brian and I also caught up on recent news from Mark, whom we hadn't seen since his recent stint in Federal prison camp in Duluth. Brian was just back from Bahrain the night before, so he had plenty to share

Navvab Munirih, arrived from Boone on Friday. She had been to our house for crafting two years back, and Saturday morning Sandy Maxa, from Lenox, joined us at the Foxtown music hall, to share her techniques for weaving baskets with recycled newspaper. We began by rolling tubes,- doubled sheets for spokes and singles for weavers. She recommends the tube-rolling as a stress reliever!

After shaping our bases, we turned our spokes upward to shape the sides- I had a small project, Navvab and Mark larger baskets, and Mark pressed on to

'I am left that the thought that "Small is Beautiful" in craft retreats, as in many other things.'

weave a lid for his as well. Brian got one started, and just got back to finishing it in March! Don Ray, our host at the Hall, visited to watch our progress, get some photos and then joined us up at our house for supper and some music making. He got out his guitar, Mark had brought several instruments along and we did some singing in the evening.

Sunday we got an early start and drove down to Clyde Missouri for Mass at the Benedictine Sisters'



Navvab concentrating on learning a new skill- Photo by Don Ray

chapel-and stayed for coffee and visiting with some sisters. When we got back to Maloy, Alice McGary had arrived, and was getting her rag material sorted and sewn for her rug making. She got a good start on that while we got ready for the afternoon potluck, and around 3 we headed back to the Hall for dancing, with Sophie who leads and brings us music for these sessions. This time, though, we had the advantage of some live fiddling from Alice and Mark. Also coming

from Lamoni, new comer Scott Derrico , recently moved to Lamoni, and Monica Torres and Geraldo Santo, Don's Spanish friends from Clarinda, came with their children Martin and Estella, to dance and to eat. Old friends Lee and Betty Little, arriving in time to watch some dancing and join in a potluck supper, meeting and visiting with all these interesting folks. Navvab had to take off back to Boone, but Sophie had brought her knitting and stayed over.

Local soapmaker, Debbie Larson demonstrated her soapmaking process Monday morning, at the Hall. Once a skill practiced in most households, Debbie has revived it in hers- and has a cottage industry (and



A circle dance, clockwise from front center, Estella, Sophie, Navvab, Alice, Scott, Mark, Monica and Don

photo by Geraldo Santo

a website) selling her handmade cleaning and skin care products. Alice, Mark Sophie, Scott and I watched the chemistry happen- she makes it look easy, and her soap is so nice! We had time to swap some garden hints too.

In our basement Brian, Mark and Scott melted wax and dipped candles.

After lunch Sophie and Scott headed back to Lamoni and Alice wove and wove. Mark got his rug fringe tied up and we had a last supper together. Tuesday morning brought Tim Maxa to the table for our regular weekly bible study- a lively discussion focused on the readings for the 1st Sunday of Lent- Noah and the rainbow sign of covenant, temptations in the desert.



Fully rehabilitated, Mark Kinney is a now a productive member of society

Photo by Don Ray

Alice finished of her 4th rug and headed home to the Mustard Seed Farm. I am left that the thought that "Small is Beautiful" in craft retreats, as in many other things. I am thinking perhaps next year, depending on other options, perhaps a small craft retreat in Advent could be offered for people interested in handcrafting woven gifts. Let me know if this interests you.



Rita Corbin

Tourists for Human Rights

Continued from page 3

set upon by police in full riot gear and dispersed with tear gas and percussion grenades. Our first encounter with the Bahraini police appeared to be vicious, but our local friends assured us that our presence was a restraining factor. Two of the Americans we had just met, Huwaida Ar-raf and Radhika Sainath, were taken into custody at this march and later that evening deported, the government said, for activities not consistent with their status as tourists.

Our small group, called Witness Bahrain, grew over the next days, even as several friends who traveled to join us were turned away at the airport by a regime made even more hyper-vigilant after deporting Huwaida and Radhika. While being careful to remain at large at least until the events of the 14th, we toured Manama and the villages over the next couple of days, hearing testimony of government abuses and accompanying demonstrations and marches.

On February 13, Tighe Barry and Medea Benjamin of the peace group Code Pink joined us, and our Bahraini guide Wafa took some of us on a tour of the zoo and the National Museum. In the afternoon we witnessed a march of tens of thousands through the main thoroughfares of Manama. This march was tolerated by the authorities until a large group split off to walk to the Pearl Roundabout.

The police response was immediate and appalling. Tear gas in Bahrain is not used as a means of crowd control so much as collective punishment—crowds dispersed by gas are not allowed to escape but are pursued, cornered and gassed again. Many are injured by direct hits from gas canisters and percussion grenades. We witnessed beatings and heard reports of injuries by birdshot and rubber bullets.

On the actual anniversary, the police had the country locked down. Patrols of armored cars sped through the



A young man protects his community from police violence, tossing away a tear gas canister. Photo by Wafa Alnoaimi

“We were in Bahrain as tourists, not of the malls and golf courses and museums but of the streets and villages where real people live and struggle.”

streets of Manama and the roads out of the villages were blocked by tanks. Many hundreds still made it to the streets, many were injured, many arrested. Six more of us were taken by the authorities.

In my case, finally getting pinched by the Bahraini police was anticlimactic. Four of us Americans with a Bahraini friend were taking a back way along a quiet street to catch up with others to attempt reaching the

roundabout when a passing police patrol stopped us and asked for identification. One more time, we explained that we were there as tourists. “If you are tourists,” we were asked, “why do you have gas masks?”

A few hours later we were in a police station where we met two more from our group who had been captured under more dramatic circumstances. One by one, we were summoned to talk with representatives from the Ministry of Information and were told that we would be put on a

flight to London at 2 a.m. as our visas had been cancelled. Our claim to be tourists was regarded as a deception by the authorities. My protestations to the contrary were to no avail.

Bahrain is a tiny island kingdom that is home to about a million people—half of whom are not citizens—that is visited by 8 million tourists a year. Many of these, we were told, are Saudis drawn there by the night life and legal alcohol. Others visit the museums and beaches. In the brochures produced by the government, tourists are encouraged to meet the friendly people of Bahrain. This is what we did and it was for this that we were deported.

We were privileged to tour this beautiful and afflicted country and to live the reality of its people, if only for a little while. Not content with having our photos taken with camels, we spoke with emergency room doctors who, after treating victims of last year's crackdown, were themselves tortured and charged with sedition. We met with mothers mourning their children who were killed or imprisoned, and workers barred from practicing their professions for being in favor of freedom.

We were in Bahrain as tourists, not of the malls and golf courses and museums but of the streets and villages where real people live and struggle. Anyone who visits Bahrain and never gets a whiff of tear gas is a poor tourist, indeed. To the police who arrested us, a tourist with a gas mask is a hopeless contradiction and proof of culpability. For the tourist who wants to learn the present reality of Bahrain, a gas mask is more indispensable than sunscreen.

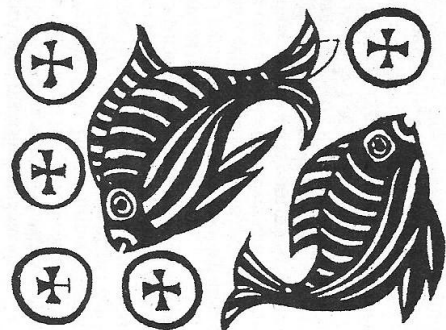
The faithfulness and solidarity of the people of Bahrain will prevail over the perfidity and cruelty of its backward and crude monarchy, supported as it is only by the brute force of its sponsors, the governments of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. "*Sumoud*," meaning be strong, hold fast, is the Arabic word by which the resisters in Bahrain greet and encourage one another. Their peaceful strength is a challenge and an inspiration as we continue our common struggle on the far ends of the globe. *Sumoud*.
This article first appeared on Wagingnonviolence.org

IN MEMORY OF RITA CORBIN 1930–2011



Rita Corbin, whose art has graced this humble journal and most other Catholic Worker periodicals over many years, died on November 17th, at the age of 81.

Betsy knew her years ago at the CW farm at Tivoli, NY, and in 1976, Rita and her family took Brian in when he was a hitchhiking teenager and they were living in Montreal. Rita saw the beauty in this broken world and had a vision of how things might be better. Our prayers are with her family and we remember, too, her grandson Daniel who died in the same car accident. God's love and peace be theirs.



The whole idea of
Compassion
is based on the
interdependence
of all these living things
which are all
part of one another
and all
involved in one another

-Thomas Merton

THE SOWER

Strangers and Guests

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Chuck Trapkus

Celebrate the Summer Solstice and Feast of St John the Baptist in Maloy!

Saturday June 23 potluck supper, dancing, bonfire, camping space available. **RSVP**