

THE Round Table

SPRING
1989

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --Peter Maurin

On 3 votes, justices deny appeals to stop execution

Denver Post Wire Services

- **FEW PROTESTS:** Most death-penalty critics are quiet/8A
- **NO FORGIVENESS:** Victim's father can't forget/9A
- **UNCERTAINTY:** Families may never know the facts./9A

Killer's execution awaited with grim satisfaction

By The Washington Post
STARKE, Fla. —

FACES EXECUTION

Father can't forgive daughter's murderer

By Knight-Ridder News Service
DETROIT —

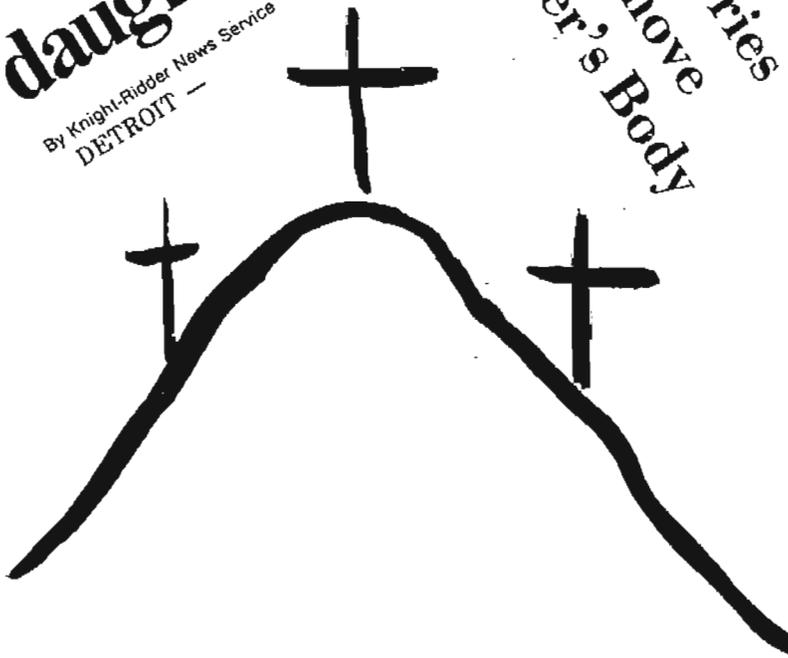
More Executions Are Foreseen

Dead girl's uncle barred from prison
By The Orlando Sentinel
TALLAHASSEE, Fla. —

Bundy Is Put to Death in Florida, Closing Murder Cases Across U.S.

By JON NORDHEIMER
Special to The New York Times

STARKE, Fla., Jan. 24 —



Widow Tries To Remove Mercer's Body

Ex-Law Officer Tells Courts of Death Penalty's Grim Reality

Execution becoming a grotesque gala

WHY THIS ISSUE?



The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights bans torture as behavior unbecoming human beings. So does the gospel. So does common sense. What, I wonder, is the difference between the painful torture of imprisoned South Korean activists by applying electrodes to their bodies, and the application of 2,000 volts of electricity in a U.S. electric chair? In the latter case, the victims eyes have popped out of their sockets, smoke and steam rises from the "death mask" that shrouds their head, the putrid smell of singed and burning flesh is strong and unmistakable, and the body is so hot immediately following the execution that it would blister anyone who touched it. Otherwise there is little difference. The death penalty is merely torture carried to an extreme.

In the U.S. we are carrying the death penalty itself to an extreme. Beginning with Gary Gilmore in 1977, over 100 Americans have been executed, most in the last few years. 1986 brought the execution of two minors: Jay Pinkerton and James Roach. In 1985 Virginia executed Morris Mason. He was retarded, with an IQ of 66. Over 2,200 people are now on death row; we add about 250 more each year. Most have "lived" at this forbidding address for years. Many for over a decade. Such a life is itself a torturous existence. If the condemned all stood single file at arms length, the line would stretch for over two miles. Up and over Golgotha and back again. To empty death row, we would first have to summon the nerve, and then we would need to kill two people a day---every single day---for two years. When finished with this barbarous task, we would have 50 new criminals to gas, hang, shock, shoot, or poison.

We know that the common good and justice demand that those guilty of violent crime cannot be allowed to go free. But we believe there are alternatives. In our lead article Marietta Jaeger, who lost a daughter to kidnapping and murder, offers a moving reflection on the Christian call for reconciliation and forgiveness. Jackie Tobin reflects on her experiences working with the imprisoned, as does Hugh Behan, chaplain on death row at Jefferson City.

The death penalty is not an equal opportunity killer, as the statistics Mark Scheu has gathered reveal. And in our center spread Larry Nolte presents a chilling visual history of death penalty techniques.

From the other end of the spectrum on life and death issues, Karin Tanquist reflects in the "Round Table Talk" on children's death and its denial in the world of hightech medicine. Harry James Cargas makes a welcome return to our pages with a book review, and our house articles update you on life at the St. Louis Catholic Worker.

Polls indicate that 70% of the U.S. citizenry support capital punishment, with Christians not differing significantly from other Americans in this regard. In his 1957 essay, "Reflections on the Guillotine," Albert Camus expressed dismay at this. "The unbeliever," he wrote, "cannot keep from thinking that people who have set at the center of their faith the staggering victim of a judicial error ought at least hesitate before committing legal murder."

I was graced to work on this issue during Holy Week. I am convinced that any prayerful pondering of the forgiveness and love that Jesus modeled during his passion and death should give rise in Christians to more than Camus' hesitation. As Missouri builds a new death row, and gears up for more executions with the other 36 states who sanction capital punishment, we hope you'll consider resistance, and not mere hesitation. +

-Pat Coy

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FROM FURY TO FORGIVENESS

by
Marietta Jaeger

Few people would challenge a mother's right to vengeful feelings when her child has been kidnapped. Yet, Jesus insists we must forgive 70 x 7 if we want to be in good relationship with God. This was the quandary/challenge thrown into my life in the summer of 1973.

While my husband and I were on a camping vacation with our five children in the state of Montana, our seven-year-old daughter, Susie, was kidnapped from our tent during the night while we were all asleep. A massive investigation ensued, headed by the F.B.I., and day after long day, we waited as clues were pursued and suspects questioned. Though it took me a while to own it out loud, I admit that initially I ran the gamut of outraged reaction. I could have happily killed the man with my bare hands even though we had reason to believe that Susie was still alive. The kidnapper had delivered a message that he wanted to exchange her for ransom. Still, I wanted him to pay and pay plenty for what he had put my family through, and at the time in Montana the punishment for kidnapping was the death penalty. Let me tell you, I wanted the man to swing!

But God had laid a good foundation in me and I knew the principles by which I would be held accountable. The day finally came when I had to reconcile my feelings with God's mandate of forgiveness. It was the wrestling match of my life--would I be betraying Susie by my forgiveness? Would

justice still be done? Typically Christian, my struggle ended "on the cross," with me dying to my desire for revenge and giving God permission to do what was necessary in my heart. How grateful I am today that God did not leave me where I was, ravaged with hatred! How grateful I am for God's persistence and insistence that the only way I could ever be healthy and whole was to forgive! Resurrection truly follows the Cross; the change of heart, healing, and peace I have received are precious gifts for which I continue to praise God!

However, the decision to forgive was only the beginning. There were attitudes and actions that I had to take on. I had to behave according to my decision in order to facilitate the work of God's grace in me. The first exercise was simply to spend more time with God--in prayer, reading Scripture and other books written by folks who knew God better than I. As I did, I came into a relationship with God who, concisely and succinctly, is simply crazy about all of us--a God who loves lavishly and forgives wholeheartedly! As I allowed myself to be rocked to my foundation with that reality, I understood much better what I was being asked to extend to another: But because I myself knew myself to be such a needy recipient of that love and forgiveness, I had greater compassion for anyone else with the same need.

Though it took a lot of discipline, I had to call myself to my faith that said however I felt about the

Marietta Jaeger, lives in Detroit, MI. She lectures nationwide on issues of criminal justice and reconciliation.

kidnapper, in God's eyes he was just as precious as Susie! Jesus had died for this man also; that meant that he too had dignity. Translated pragmatically, I had to think and speak of him with respect and I asked others to do that also, at least in my presence. I couldn't put him down, I couldn't cuss him out. Once I'd made the decision to forgive, I had to forego the indulgence of using all the derogatory terms that so easily came to mind. I had to repeatedly remind myself that however he was behaving, he really was a son of God and as such, was worthy of respect.

Later, after he was identified and the case moved closer to resolution, I tried to do some data-gathering about his background. The more I learned about him—his background, his woundedness and unrelieved loneliness, his mental disorder, the easier it became to feel compassion and concern for his welfare, to understand a little about why he did what he did. It should come as no surprise to anyone that in studies done with death-row prisoners in states with capital punishment, there is the consistent factor of child-abuse or sexual abuse in most of their histories. When human beings are victimized and violated, and violence is the means modelled by which one copes with fear, hatred or frustration, is it any wonder that when these challenges present themselves in adulthood they respond likewise?! Learning as much as I could about the kidnapper helped a great deal to move my heart from fury to forgiveness.

Lastly, I prayed for the man every day. At first, this was very difficult---we were all suffering; why shouldn't he? But I came to understand that we have been given an awesome power by God. What we bind on earth is bound in heaven, and what we loose on earth is loosed in heaven. So, as we work to forgive someone, their spirit is unbound and made more accessible to God's Spirit who can begin the healing necessary for mutual reconciliation and that individual's spiritual well-being. Even if we start by praying that just one good thing happen to the other each day, as the days go by it becomes easier to want more good



for that one who has hurt us because we ourselves are being healed by trying to love the other as God calls us to.

This certainly was my undeniable experience. Indeed, when the kidnapper called on the first year's anniversary of my daughter's disappearance, one year to the minute that he'd taken her out of the tent, he was so taken aback and moved by what God had done in me that he inadvertently revealed enough information about himself to enable the FBI finally to identify the man.

When he was arrested and incarcerated they found irrefutable evidence with which he was confronted in the presence of his attorney. At that time in Montana the penalty for kidnap-murder was the death penalty, but they offered him, at my behest, life imprisonment with the opportunity for psychiatric help if he would make a complete confession. This had been my prayer for this very sick young man. By this time I had finally come to understand that God's idea of justice is not punishment but restoration. As

The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence, to which it owes its very existence.

—Mohandas Gandhi

Christians, we say that Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. That means that Jesus is the "Justice" of God. If we look at Jesus' life, we see that Jesus did not come to hurt or punish or destroy us, but rather to reconcile, rehabilitate and restore us. This was what I had finally come to desire for this man---that he be restored to the man God had created him to be. I saw the offer of psychiatric help as the beginning of the healing he so desperately needed, and his incarceration without threat of death as necessary for the protection of both the community and himself.

The young man, David, accepted this opportunity and confessed to taking Susie's life as well as the lives of three other young people. There was evidence that he had taken the lives of other children, but those deaths had occurred in counties where the prosecutors were holding out for the death penalty. David would confess only to the deaths which occurred in the county where the prosecutor offered him life imprisonment. Clearly, the death penalty had no deterrent value for David. It did not save the lives of any of those children and in fact there was a negative deterrent value, because it prevented the legal resolution of all the deaths which occurred in other counties. I am opposed to capital punishment. I believe it violates the mandate of forgiveness to which we, as people of God, will be held accountable.

Meeting many other parents of victims confirms my own experience. Those folks who have seen their kind of justice exacted, who've gotten their



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obsessed and often sick---the quality of their lives is severely diminished. To legalize that same unforgiving mindset in the form of capital punishment would have the same deleterious and destructive consequences on a much larger scale! The capacity for compassion and forgiveness is what sets us apart from the rest of creation. The laws of our land should reflect that and call us to those higher principles.

Please hear me. I am not advocating forgiveness for people who hurt us and then allowing the hurting to continue. That is not God's justice, that is not restoration. The death penalty will not effect God's justice because it denies the opportunity for repentance and rehabilitation, and, very importantly, with too frequent incidence, enables the execution of a truly innocent person.

Concerning the claim of justice for the victim's family, I say there is no retribution that would compensate me for the loss of my little girl, nor restore her to my arms. In fact, to say that the death of any one other person would be "just retribution" is to

For me to want to kill someone in Susie's name would be to profane and violate the sweetness, goodness, innocence and beauty of her being.

revenge, are left empty, unsatisfied and unhealed. Those who retain an attitude of vindictiveness are being undone themselves by their own unforgiveness. In a very real way, the offender gets another victim because they are tense, tormented, embittered,

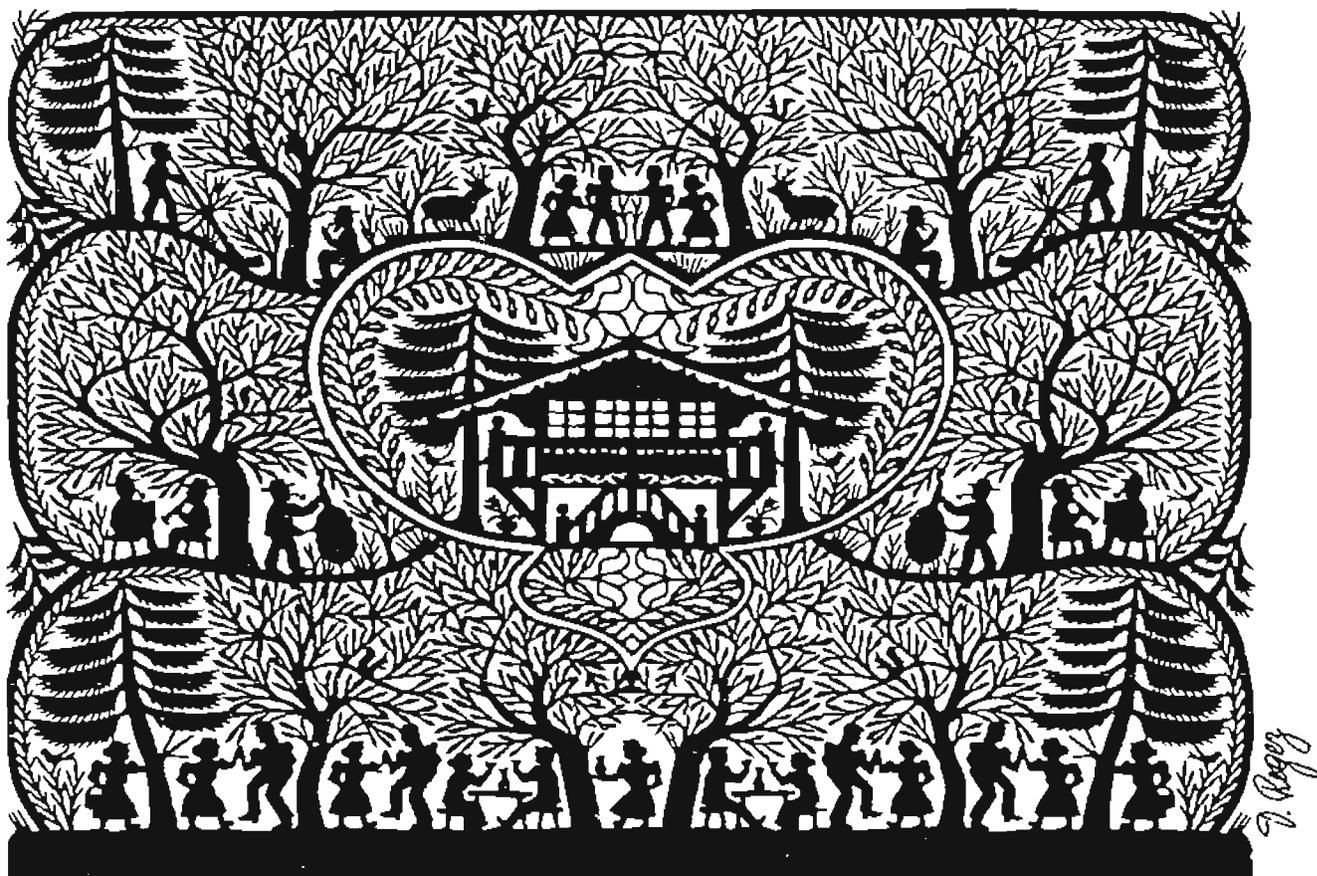
insult the immeasurable worth of our loved ones who are victims.

For me to want to kill someone in Susie's name would be to profane and violate the sweetness, goodness, innocence and beauty of her being. Far better should I honor her life and memorialize my precious daughter by saying that all life is sacred and worthy of preservation and restoration.

Having to accept Susie's death was the most difficult task of my life, but as only God can do, it has become truly "Gift" for me. I've learned that we do need to give ourselves permission to express freely our rage and anguish, our honest, human gut-level feelings, because healing doesn't happen unless we're willing to start where we're really at. It's very biblical---the Psalms are full of the angst of God's people. Read the last line of Ps. 137---we cringe at the words!

"A blessing on the one who treats you as you have treated us, a blessing on the one who takes and dashes your babies against the rock!" But it's an honest expression of real anguish and we have to own that.

However, God knows we've been hurt and loves us much too much to give us attitudes and principles to live by and then leave us powerless to do so. The Spirit that God gives is the power to live the life we're called to---a life of love and forgiveness, concern and compassion. I know in my own life it was the power that moved me from fury to forgiveness, from revenge to reconciliation. It is the power that makes us whole and healthy and holy people. The Spirit of God is the power available to us all, to stand up and be counted as men and women of God, to claim and proclaim the reign of God, on earth as it is in Heaven. Amen. †



WE KNOW BETTER

by
Jackie Tobin, S.S.N.D.

"I kid you not. I deserve certainly the most extreme punishment society has, and I think society deserves to be protected from me and others like me, that's for sure ... but, what I'm talking about is going beyond retribution, which is what people want for me ... there is no way in the world that killing me is going to restore life or correct or soothe the pain." (Post, Jan. 25, 1989 interview with Bundy)

As we stood outside "The Walls" in silent vigil the night George "Tiny" Mercer was executed, many people wore buttons that said, "Why do we kill people to show that killing people is wrong?" Why? Why this execution? Why capital punishment? Certainly the taking of a human life, any human life, is a very serious matter. Cardinal Bernadin, in an address to Fordham University entitled "A call for a Consistent Ethic of Life," explained this well: "Precisely because life is sacred, the taking of even one life is a momentous event. Indeed the sense that every human life has transcendent value has led a whole stream of the Christian tradition to argue that life may never be taken." Yet, on January 6, 1989, we, the citizens of Missouri, took the life of George "Tiny" Mercer.

For what purpose? To deter crime? We know better. Violence tends to beget violence. Andrei Sakharov says it in these words: "I regard the death penalty as a savage and immoral institution that undermines the moral and legal foundations of a society. I reject the notion that the death penalty has any essential deterrent effect on potential offenders.

I am convinced that the contrary is true - that savagery begets savagery."

There is no evidence that capital punishment deters crime more effectively than other punishment. In 1980 a United Nations study concluded: "Despite much more advanced research efforts to determine the deterrent value of the death penalty, no conclusive evidence has been found on its efficacy." The same conclusion was reached by a U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee. Rather than curbing crime, exactly the opposite seems to happen: executions escalate the rate of murder. When Jesus told Peter to put his sword back into its place "...for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword," (Matthew 26:52) he could just as well have been speaking to civil societies as to an individual. By legally sanctioning executions, the state gives witness to the belief that killing is the way to deal with people who have given offense. That is not the lesson that needs to be taught in any society.

So why do we execute? To do justice? We know better. From first hand experience we know that death sentences are imposed quite capriciously. We know that different juries can arrive at disparate sentences for individuals with similar charges on even the same case. How can we call that just? The state, county, district, judge, color of skin, poverty or wealth, all have an effect on the verdict. Furthermore, we know that righteousness and justice have to do with relationships. Justice can never be served when we abdicate our responsibilities in relationships with

Jackie Tobin, S.S.N.D. is the director of the St. Louis Archdiocesan Criminal Justice Ministry. Call her if you want to visit or tutor in the St. Louis area jails.



*lonely spirit
running from a darkness
you will never understand*

those who have broken the law. Terminating the relationship does not serve the cause of justice. Nor does executing the perpetrator of a crime heal the wounds of those left behind or of society as a whole. Our Christian faith calls us in these situations to love and to forgiveness and to reconciliation. "You have heard the commandment, 'You shall love your countrymen and hate your enemy, 'My commandment to you is: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors.'"

This concept of reconciliation was beautifully expressed by Kathleen and John Colligan of Endwell, NY, whose son was murdered in Colorado. "As the parents of a murder victim, we would like to see an end to the death penalty. We still long for our son, but we don't want anyone else's son or daughter killed in our name or in the name of justice."

At this point in putting these reflections together, the phone rang. It was a collect call from a man on death row. He calls often because he has no one who has maintained contact with him. On this particular afternoon, he was extremely distressed. He told me how he and a few of the other men had been moved from their death row cells to 5C while some repair work was being done. He felt strange in his new surroundings, with different guards and different routines. He told me a guard asked if he wanted to

watch TV. He figured, why not? He had nothing else to do. So he was taken to a cell - alone - with what he thought was a TV. However, it was an Atari game. He turned buttons, knobs, pulled wires - whatever - trying to watch TV. Finally, however, he gave up and asked to go back to his cell. All this is background for the reason of this particular call. He had just received a violation for destroying state property - the Atari game. His conversation reflected his frantic state. He was upset - this was the first violation he had received on death row. What was going to happen to him? He didn't mean to destroy the TV, he said. He was just trying to make it work. He read me the violation indicating the charge and his right to a hearing - spelling some words because he did not know how to pronounce them or what they meant. He explained to me while he was doing this that his IQ was 59. And he continued on, talking about himself, his previous violent behavior, his loneliness, his powerlessness, his fear - and he cried as he talked.

When he hung up, I sat in silence for a few minutes. I thought about the violent actions that led this man to death row; about the abuse he suffered as a child; about his low intellectual ability and his unstable emotional conditions. I know this man needs to be confined to a safe environment, for his protec-

tion and that of society. He knows that also. But death? Will justice be served if this man is executed? Will our society be safer?

In their statement on capital punishment, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops have said, "The critical question for the Christian is how we can best foster respect for life, preserve the dignity of the human person and manifest the redemptive message of Christ. We do not believe that more deaths are the response to the question. We, therefore, have to seek methods of dealing with violent crime which are more consistent with the Gospel's vision of respect for life and Christ's message of God's healing love. In the sight of God, correction of the offender has to

take preference over punishment, for the Lord came to save and not to condemn."

A woman on Missouri's Death Row recently wrote to me: "I feel the death penalty is the public's answer to legitimizing revenge and violence. It's too bad that our society is more inclined to retribution than toward understanding the needs of those who need our help." I agree! It is too bad that we kill people who kill people to show that killing people is wrong.

(Some ideas were taken from Fr. Syl Bauer, a priest in the Jefferson City Diocese, and from Rev. Norm Dake, Lutheran chaplain at the St. Louis County Jail)

+



*you walk among your thoughts
like a dark room
and you are drowned
by a tear*

PASTORING ON DEATH ROW

by
Rev. Hugh Behan

I gave up watching "cops and robbers" which I used to enjoy on TV programs a long time ago--now it's mild-mannered "Murder She Wrote" or nothing! It is getting more and more difficult to read newspapers or listen to news reports of murders and violent crimes in Missouri.

I have come to know the men on death row as human beings, to know something of their background. The old saying "do not judge someone until you walk a mile in their moccasins" has become a favorite quote; as has the older quote "there but for the grace of God go I." Responsibility for our actions is a cornerstone of our civilization. But, how responsible are we when the pattern that is shown to us is violence, abuse, neglect, juvenile crime, and drug activity that would make Fagin's pickpockets in "Oliver Twist" look like choirboys? Then there is the unexplained rage, a form of mental illness, which results in what the state says is a crime punishable by death. But can we make that decision if we do not know how the mind works and what makes it explode?

Added to that is the fact that only poor, minorities, the under-educated or those whose skills were never developed and those whose skills were never developed and those with low-paying jobs end up on death row. Millionaires commit murder but they do not get on death row. The under-funded public defender system of the state does a great job in defending these least of society's members.

Several men are on death row for crimes they committed while in prison. With over-crowding and the whole sociology of incarceration, I often wonder how free someone is who commits murder in prison.

Many people say to me, "How can you do that, I could not." Well, I could not teach grade school children all day long, neither could I do surgery or be a nurse in surgery. It took a while to get over the strong feelings about seeing these men in 1982,



knowing that Missouri was to execute most of them within the decade. The execution of George "Tiny" Mercer on January 6, 1989 was very difficult for me because "Tiny" and his wife Christy, whom he married after his sentence, had become good friends. He and she were both good Christians. As I told the media the night of his death, the man we executed is not the man who was sentenced for the crime. That is

Rev. Hugh Behan, editor of the Catholic Missourian, newspaper of the diocese of Jefferson City, MO. has worked as a volunteer chaplain in corrections, including the men who are sentenced to death at the MO. State Penitentiary for Men in Jefferson City, since 1982.

true for so many of the men---they are older, wiser, more mature, many more genuinely religious. Some are still angry and bitter, but I would be too if I had walked in their shoes since childhood---and I believe that there is still hope.



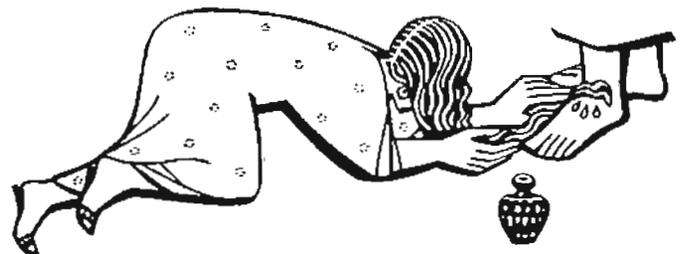
I have seen genuine friendships they have developed among themselves, and the network that they and their families have formed. It is most consoling for me to see them develop trust in my ministry. A stark contrast from the first time when even some of those who were raised in the Catholic tradition would not even admit to me that they were Catholic. Today, they telephone me, write letters, send me Easter and Christmas cards, get their attorneys to talk to me, recommend me to their buddies, and quiet down some of the men who get angry when I try to visit their cells.

I and people like me who oppose the death penalty are often accused of not caring about the victims of crime. Yet we do. I regularly pray for the victims of crime in my prison services in the other two prisons where I serve, and I did when I began prison ministry with the women who were then at Renz CC, serving 50 years without parole for capital murder. Some of the men talk about their feelings about the victims and their families. I feel sorry for people who wait for the satisfaction of the death of the man accused of their loved one's murder. That is revenge and it does not take away any of the pain, although it might give some momentary relief.

I am often asked about what to do about murderers. I would keep some of them in a structured environment, several in a medical facility. The overcrowding and under-funding in the system means that many people are not kept as securely as they should be. Some could function well in a structured atmosphere---some could be "perfect gentlemen" if kept away from alcohol and drugs. I am convinced that some, with a proper treatment program for which we are not currently equipped (since they are in fact under sentence of death), could be rehabilitated and released. The mistakes that are made in the probation and parole system are well-publicized, but the success rate is taken for granted. No one ever tells how many planes landed safely that day; but if one crashes, it's on the top of the news.

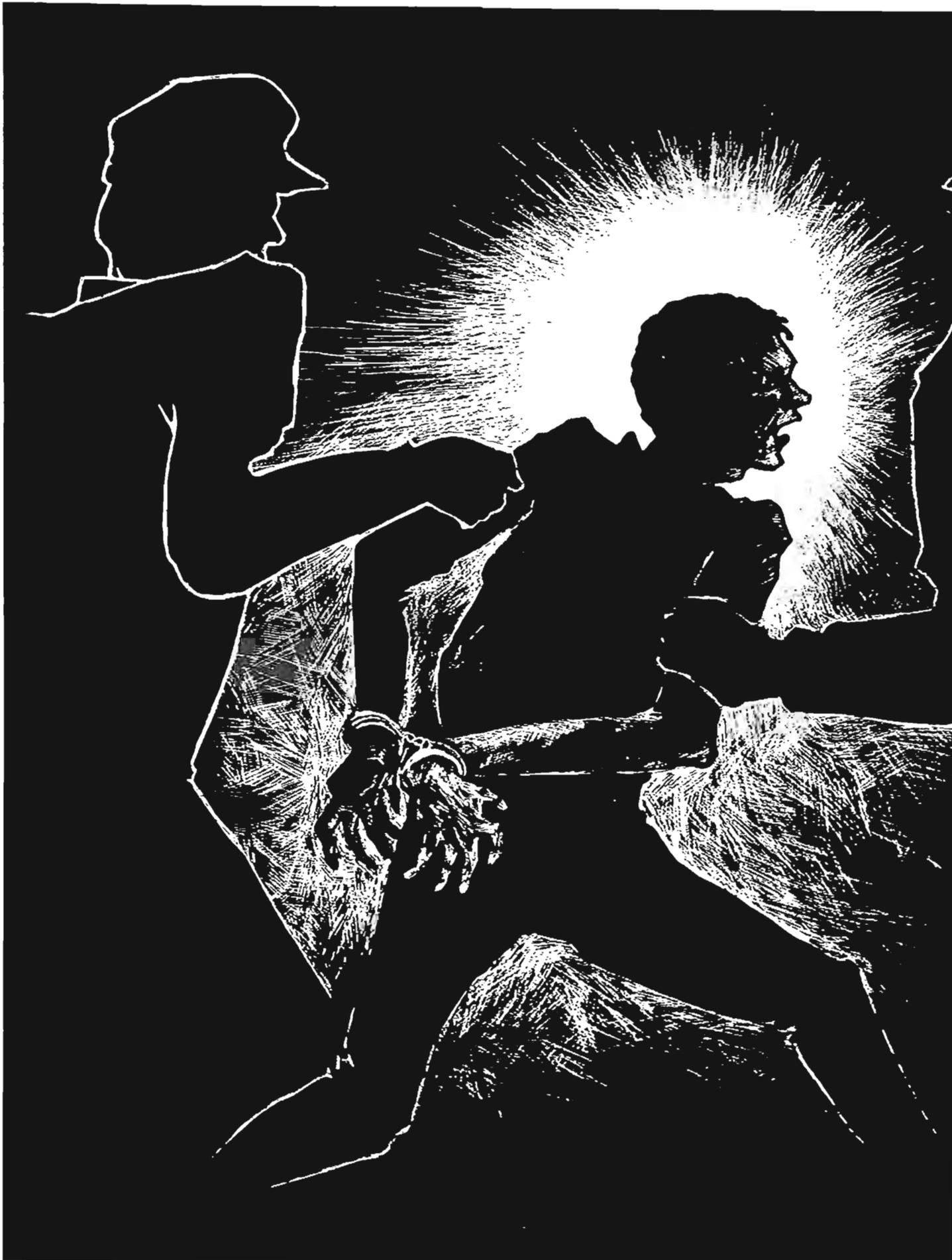
I see my ministry as carrying out the command of Jesus in Matthew 25---to serve those who hurt. I also see myself as an agent for the consistent ethic of life which I think is the teaching of Jesus and is our Church's current understanding. I deny the state's right to take life for murder or for any other offense, because it is not necessary as a means of defending the common good in an age of improved medication for the mentally ill and of sophisticated electronic gadgetry for securing those who need to be kept in a structured environment.

Meantime, I am a pastor on death row. My views on the death penalty are irrelevant as I seek to



She will be forgiven much because she has loved much (Luke 7:47)

offer Jesus' message of forgiveness, love, and hope. I encourage people to acknowledge their sinfulness and ask for forgiveness and mercy for their victims' families, for one another, for the legal system that has condemned them, for their guards and corrections officials, and for the 80 percent of Missourians who want them put to death even before their appeals are exhausted. ✦





HANGING
DROWNING
GUILLOTINE
ELETROCUTION
GASSING
FIRING SQUAD
BURNING^{AT} STAKE
TORTURE
DISAPPEARANCE
CRUCIFIXION

BLESSED ARE
THE MERCIFUL

Allowing for the fact that Catholic teaching has accepted the principle that the state has the right to take the life of a person guilty of an extremely serious crime, and that the state may take appropriate measures to protect itself and its citizens from grave harm, nevertheless, the question for judgement and decision today is whether capital punishment is justifiable under present circumstances. Punishment, since it involves the deliberate infliction of evil on another, is always in need of justification...

U.S. Bishops' Statement

NOT AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY KILLER

- >Since 1930, 54% of 3921 people executed in the U.S. have been Black or other minority groups.
- >Of the 455 executed for rape since 1930, 405 were Black.
- >Of the 106 executed since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976, 59% were whites and 41% Blacks. Only 11% of victims were Black. In no case was a White defendant executed for the death of a nonwhite victim.
- >From 1900 to 1985, at least 350 people were erroneously convicted of capital crimes; of whom 139 were sentenced to death and 23 actually executed.
- >The cost of litigating a typical N.Y. capital case through just 3 levels (judicial review is actually available at 11 levels) would be 1.8 million dollars.
- >The cost of 40 years in prison is \$602,000.
- >Currently, of the residents on death row in the U.S., 40.7% are Black, 51.88% are White, 5.72% are Hispanic, 2.33% other.
- >62% of persons sentenced to death from 1972 to 1976 were unskilled, service, or domestic workers. 60% were unemployed at the time their offense was committed.
- >90% of those currently on death row couldn't afford a lawyer.

..... We believe that in the conditions of contemporary American society, the legitimate purposes of punishment do not justify the imposition of the death penalty. Furthermore, we believe that there are serious considerations which should prompt Christians and all Americans to support the abolition of capital punishment. Some of these reasons have to do with evils that are present in the practice of capital punishment itself, while others involve important values that would be prompted by abolition of this practice.....

U.S. Bishops' Statement

..... We urge our brothers and sisters in Christ to remember the teaching of Jesus who called us to be reconciled with those who have injured us (Matthew 5:43-45) and to pray for forgiveness for our sins "as we forgive those who have sinned against us." (Matthew 6:12) We call on you to contemplate the crucified Christ who set us the supreme example of forgiveness and of the triumph of compassionate love.

U.S. Bishops' Statement

FROM KAREN HOUSE

by Jim Plato



Hello again! Much to the chagrin of some and the delight of others, we've had to dig out from under a foot of snow over the last few days. The warmer weather is most welcome and Mark is coordinating the removal of our homemade storm windows. They are being used for the last time as we are having permanent storm windows installed this spring, which should make the house a little warmer come next winter.

There are several comings and goings here at Karen House. Several guests have found full-time employment which will afford them more stability in their lives. Among the community, Teka recently spent a week in El Salvador as part of a small delegation that went in response to an emergency in which the Salvadoran military had threatened Guajilia, where Ann lives. Virginia is also down in El Salvador for a couple of weeks with a Witness for Peace delegation. Mary is back in Nicaragua doing rural development after a visit here over Christmas and New Year's. Pat hopes to travel to Libya on a trip of reconciliation with a small FOR delegation at the

request of the Libyan U.N. ambassador. Myrrah celebrated her sixth birthday at the end of February while Ellen continues work on her doctorate. It seems Joe and Clare's son Isaac is growing bigger each time they drop by for a visit. All is going well as Katrina and I continue to make our wedding plans. We hope to go backpacking in the northwest and Canadian Rockies for our honeymoon.

Sometime this spring we hope the flower garden in our newly replanted back yard will blossom so the area can become a pleasant place for guests to spend time. Lee Carter, who moved into her own house late last summer, has settled into her home and has quickly become the neighborhood St. Francis with the care and attention she gives to the sick and homeless animals. Finally, as I finish this letter, I'm preparing to facilitate a group of SLU students traveling to Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm in Malloy Iowa for a week to learn about alternative lifestyles and values.

Once again - many thanks to all for their support!

Jim Plato, Karen House Community member, is putting the finishing touches on his wedding plans with Katrina Campbell.

The Works of Mercy



Giving shelter
to stranger
and homeless



Serving meals
to the hungry



Giving drink
to the thirsty



Making and
giving clothes
to those in need

FROM LITTLE HOUSE

by Mary Ann McGivern, S.L.



The vacant lot on the corner is finally beginning to look like a garden. We've built a baker's dozen beds, planted sixteen fruit trees, some four years old now. Crocuses are blooming. Daffodils and tulips and surprise lilies are all showing the first tips of green. Ruby and Sharon and Elijah and I plan a garden party for this week — plant peas, spinach, and lettuce seeds; transplant autumn olive, aromatic sumac and laspidistra trees; rake the mulch from the strawberries and put in a new bed of fifty plants; haul rocks; plant canna lily bulbs. Then we'll barbecue hamburgers and sit in the sun, pleasuring in the surprise March warmth.

Last spring a group planted a grove of walnuts and hazelnuts and pecans across the street, but the drought did them all in. Five years ago six of us dug three-foot deep holes for the fruit trees, replacing bricks and clay with mulch and topsoil.

Peter Maurin advocated gardening on principle. He said the land is there for cultivation, that it is good for us to be independent from the marketplace, and that the work is good. But Peter didn't explain much about how the work is good, how it can change us.

I've been digging in our corner lot for six years now. Last year's was the first harvest worth getting excited about; but the work itself has been a joy to me. I attend to what I'm doing in the garden. If I'm weeding or turning the compost pile or pruning a tree, that's what I think about. My mind's focused in the present, not jumping to writing deadlines and phone calls and unpaid bills. When I look at the leaves on the rose bushes, I see them. I see the

smartweed and don't often absentmindedly pull up a bean bush by mistake. This quality of focused attention is, I think, some of what we strive for in prayer. It is all that we can bring to the task of meeting God and meeting each other--and I've learned to do it better, be more present to you, be more present to whatever I'm doing, because I know the difference, I know what it feels like to be fully engaged in the present moment and not distracted by past events and future possibilities.

The garden, of course, gives me wondrous gifts. Worms, for instance. The rubble I began to work six years ago, running out to guard it from city



Mary Ann McGivern, S.L., has a new silk blouse to wear to the many corporate shareholder meetings she is attending around the country this spring.

employees who sprayed everything green with weed killer, grew more bricks and broken glass than weeds; and worms and ladybugs and bees were alien. Now we feed cardinals and work around huge yellow spiders in the tomato plants and even the unworked paths feel spongy with mulch. Last year a pair of mockingbirds nested briefly in our fir tree (that once had been a Christmas tree at Karen House) until they learned about Morris the cat and moved out. I planted three apple trees and one, the red delicious that pollinates golden delicious and granny smith, died. So when the other two blossomed last year, I wished for the time to gather pollen from Eckart's or the Botanical Gardens in an envelope and brush it by hand onto my apple blossoms, but because I was busy I figured the trees' desire to bear fruit would have to go unrequited for a season. But both trees bore fruit! As best I can guess, birds or wind carried pollen from across the river or from the south side of the city or from west county. Kids stole the apples when they were the size of ping-pong balls; but that apples grew at all left me gidy with delight at the surprise.

That I have eyes to see these gifts is gift itself. The experience of wonder is not of my making and I can only name it prayer, grace, participation in the life of God. I lose myself in my garden in contemplation of an iris bulb or stalk of brussel sprouts. I wonder at these stunted cabbages that grow in the armpits of huge leaves and my wonder goes beyond the source of brussel sprouts, beyond the source of my own being, to God. I'm not caught up in ecstasy, mind you. My hands plant and harvest while my mind attends fully to the task. That's all.

I write with some hesitation. This is my maiden foray into the language of prayer. And I have caveats. Gardening isn't enough. I do sit still every day and call that prayer; I do go to mass; I do sometimes say prayers. And I meet God most directly, in no uncertain terms, by the grace of other people. A conversation I had with Ruby is an excellent case in point.

I went to Emerson Electric's shareholder meeting February 7 and was met with real rudeness and deceit and trickery. They were obnoxious. So I came home and Ruby said, "How was your meeting?" I said, "It was terrible. The chief executive officer was rude, he promised to let Sister Barbara Barbato speak and he cut her off. And he violated Security and Exchange rules." Ruby asked, "How

could he do those things? How could he not be nice to you?" And I responded rather roughly "He did it. He didn't care who I was."

Ruby said, "Well, you know, Jesus faced persecution and people reviled him. You went there this morning because you are trying to follow Jesus and get rid of weapons and you should rejoice because you are being treated like him. You are like him, doing such good, and you should remember him and take courage."

And I realized what I wanted was someone to complain with, to grouse with, but that Ruby was talking to my best self, calling me to live with Jesus right there in that moment. That was gardening prayer too, an uprooting of self I might have missed if I hadn't ben listening, been present to Ruby. I'm willing to risk writing about prayer because I know for certain from my own experience that being present to the moment is being present to God. The rest is for God to do. †



FROM LATIN AMERICA

by Teka Childress



As I write this article it's early March. I look back to a month ago and see I had no immediate plans for a trip to El Salvador, and yet in that month I've gone there and come back. It all happened so fast. I would think that I had had a dream except that I was so affected by the trip.

In early February the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of St. Louis received a communique from one of the Repopulated Communities in Chalatenango. The Repopulated Communities are made up of people who had lived in the Department of Chalatenango and were forced to flee as refugees to Honduras during the early 1980's. Many had fled because their villages were bombed by the Salvadoran Armed Forces with bombs paid for by the United States. These people have only recently been able to return to their places of origin with the support of the United Nations' High Commissioner on Refugees and the Catholic Church. Yet, again these people are suffering at the hands of the military. The communique received in February listed acts of violence leveled against these civilians. It requested that a delegation come to visit from the United States. Thus, Mary Jane Schutzius and I from St. Louis, and three others from other states went to El Salvador with the hope of visiting the people of Guarjila, San Jose las Flores, Las Vueltas, and San Antonio Los Ranchos. We were able, as it turns out, to visit Guarjila and Los Ranchos, and were able to meet people from the other two villages.

It was quite a week for me, so much so that I

find it difficult to sum it up or pull themes from my experience.

While we were there, the popular movement UNTS offices were bombed in San Salvador, a Mexican doctor, working at an FMLN field hospital was raped and murdered; a young German was detained for participating in demonstrations; and Salvadorans accompanying a caravan of badly needed food and supplies to Las Vueltas were threatened with assassination and only one of the seven trucks was allowed to go through. There was certainly fear and tension in the air. The price of working for change in that country is so high. Even to take part in a union, one usually runs a great risk. The price of simply living there can be great, such as for the Salvadorans who have chosen to return to and rebuild their homelands in Chalatenango. And yet one of the many contradictions in that country of polarities is that amidst the danger and fear many people were acting with such grace and courage.

Love and hatred, life and death, courage and paralyzing fear---all these things were so present and often undisguised. There was great ambiguity in that these things were present in real human beings. I think I expected the people in the army to all seem clearly evil. Yet, as we spent hours waiting in military compounds to receive our permissions to travel in Chalatenango, I saw soldiers working or playing around, looking like everyone else I've ever met. To think that any of these young men could have been among those who raped the Mexican doctor is appall-

Teka Childress, Karen House Community member, is excited about our community's softball team.

ing. But it is also terrible to think of them killing young teenagers (boys and girls) who are now filling the ranks of the FMLN, and it's just as awful to think of those young boys and girls killing these young soldiers. I found it all very distressing. The fact that on both sides many of those fighting either believe in what they're doing, or are doing it in the belief that it's their only means of survival, makes it only slightly less terrible. The loss of life and the loss of innocence among those so young is a tragedy of tremendous proportion.

These painful images of El Salvador must be

tempered by those in which people demonstrated great love. Images of life are vivid as well. Guarjila was teeming with children playing joyfully, often under the water taps St. Louisans helped to provide. There is much hope in El Salvador still. I came back with an even greater desire to see the war end. It is clear that we can do things that can help bring that about, principally withdrawing U.S. support for the war.

And so, even though I was there and back in the blink of an eye, I will not soon forget El Salvador, and so it should be. ✦



CORRECTION:

We regret that in the our winter issue one line was inadvertently dropped from Joe Vogler's article, "Interior Woodworking." The second paragraph should end: "Because of this my work is a great teacher and at time a great frustration."

BOOK REVIEW:

"A REVOLUTION OF THE HEART"

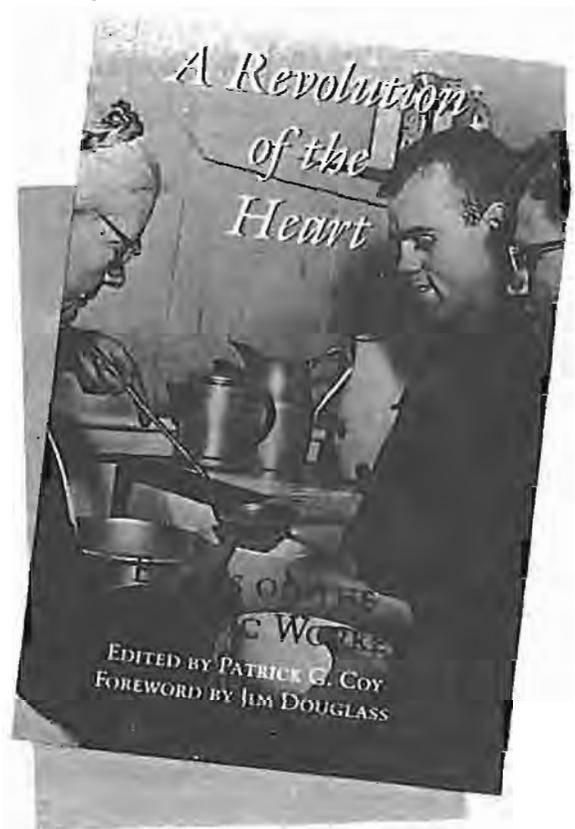
by
Harry James Cargas

A Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker.
Edited by Patrick G. Coy, Temple University Press, 1988,
388p., \$29.95 (royalties to St. Louis Catholic Worker).

Over a quarter of a century ago at the Catholic Worker house in New York, I asked Dorothy Day, co-founder of the movement with Peter Maurin, if she thought that what she had begun could survive her. So much of the success of that group depended on her was what my question implied. At times, Dorothy's responses could be terse, even brusque. This was one of those times: "If God wants it to continue, it will," was all that she had to say.

Dorothy Day died in 1981 and my question is answered. The Catholic Worker is a strong spiritual force in this country. Based on the Christian gospels, members are committed to nonviolence, personalism (which "regards the freedom and dignity of each person as the basis, focus and goal of all metaphysics and morals"), bonding with the land, works of mercy, manual labor and voluntary poverty. A new book, *A Revolution of the Heart*, edited by Patrick Coy (a member of St. Louis' Karen Catholic Worker House Community) and published by Temple University Press, illustrates the vitality of the movement.

This volume has three divisions. The first contains two chapters each on Maurin and Day, the originators and guiding mentors of the Catholic Worker. An essay on Ammon Hennacy also appears. Marc Ellis compares Maurin to Martin Buber and Gandhi---Maurin who developed houses of hospitality for the indigent, round table discussions for intellectual growth and farming communes to encourage



a general return to the land. Maurin's pacifism and thought in general are rooted in a personalism that is itself rooted in a true respect for the individual as Geoffrey Gneuchs points out in his contribution.

Eileen Egan writes about her long time friend Dorothy Day's pacifism and its Catholic context. Ms. Day as editor and journalist is the focus of Nancy Roberts' chapter. Day's one cent newspaper, *The Catholic Worker*, was and remains the influential printed messenger of the group's thought and activities.

Patrick Coy has a piece on Ammon Hennacy, one of the most committed of the New York house members and clearly the most controversial. Hennacy's advocacy, personal sacrifice and courage are beyond question. But to those of us who knew him, even slightly, his self-advertisement was a trial. I

Harry James Cargas, Professor of Religion at Webster University, is the author of 23 books, and is an internationally renowned scholar on the Holocaust. He is also a long time supporter of our work in St. Louis.

recall his telling us that abandonment of his daughters at their very formative ages had no adverse impact on them whatsoever, an idea that we as new parents could not accept--then or now. Coy, to his credit, gives us Hennacy, warts and all.

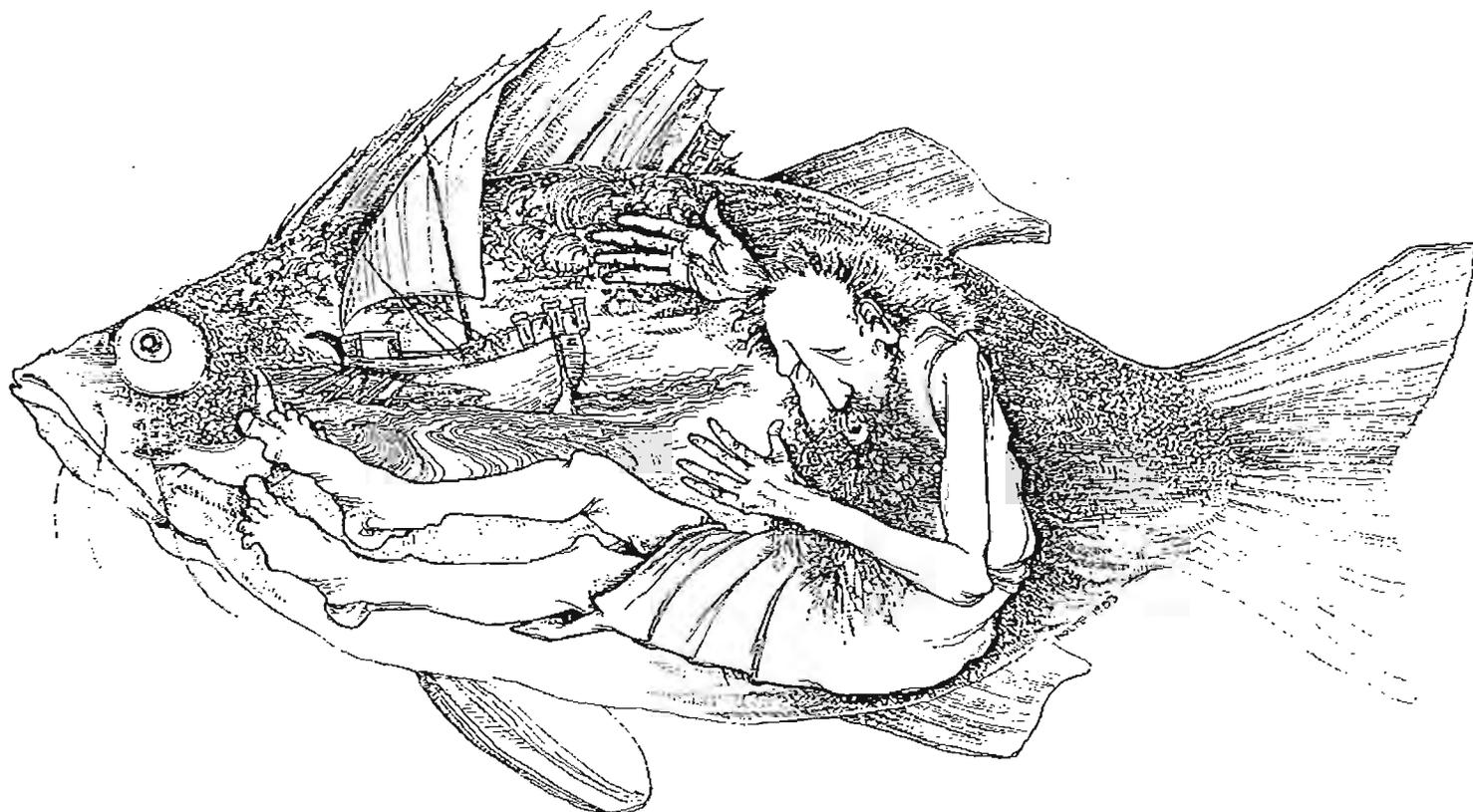
The center of this volume explores the Worker's radical Christianity and the prophetic spirituality of the movement. This latter "exists in the realm of concrete lives and deeds," writes Daniel DiDomizio, as well as in the ideas of the movement's participants. We read in his words and those of others about nonviolence having to begin within--that peace starts when one reorganizes oneself. And on this principle is based the foundation of Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, which are a pilgrimage into nonviolence as Angie O'Gorman and Coy write. The question is not does nonviolence work, as Marie Fraser has observed, but rather, is nonviolence true.

Anne Klejment presents an analysis of the Catonsville Nine draft board raid and Catholic Worker pacifism. The Catonsville incident took place on May 17, 1968, in a Maryland Selective Service office where the two priest-brothers, Philip and Daniel Berrigan, with seven others, burned draft records with home-made napalm to protest the na-

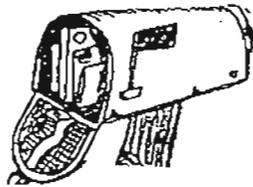
palming of human beings in the Vietnam war. Dorothy Day, we learn, supported forms of ultra resistance but not the unwillingness of the defendants at the trial to accept guilty verdicts and consequent punishment. Such acceptance is at the heart of the nonviolent positions of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, even Henry David Thoreau.

Closing this volume are histories of the St. Louis and Chicago Catholic Worker by Janice Brandon-Falcone and Francis Sicius, respectively. These are stories of beginnings, where miracles did not result in houses of spirituality but where hard work, risk, peace and love in the houses of spirituality fostered miracles. The story is the same today in every Catholic Worker site in America. Day to day living with some whom society has rejected, risking physical safety in run down neighborhoods, accepting rebukes from un-understanding family and friends, residing in true poverty, being scorned when asking for contributions to feed, clothe and house the unfortunate: all of this is a part of Catholic Worker living.

Pat Coy's book helps us to be grateful to those who do not buy charity, the way most of us do, but who live charity in the example of Jesus. +



From Our Mail Bag



Dear Friends,

Would you please take me off your mailing list. I believe the living conditions in our society are improving, when considering our 200 year history as a society have in fact never been better, and that your collectivist approach to problem solving (ie, the "struggle" Mary Ann McGivern cannot resist referring to over and over again) is simply wrong. Society is composed of a wider universe of persons than those assumed to inhabit our entire world---the dispossessed, the mentally ill, the abandoned mothers, the victims of devious corporations, and in general women everywhere. It puzzles me who or what there would be left for you to resist, protest, "struggle" against and antagonize of it weren't for the existence of those very institutions that have enabled us to progress, albeit more slowly than you would like, as a society. Working for change within society, truly understanding what pressures and pleasures* exist beyond the intellectual contemplation of what is wrong and needs to be changed in it, surpasses work from a constant approach of being outside society.

Surely you have been well-educated, and share in the Blessings our society offers if only you could recognize them. The people in the city I come from are loving and generous.

With radical changes come radical displacement. You know radical displacement. You see it all the time. Yet, you seem to want radical changes of another kind while ignoring the inevitable displacement those changes would bring. Would you then resist, protest, struggle against and antagonize that societal structure?

Uh, uh. Count me out.

Sincerely,
Joe Delmore
St. Louis, MO.

*Yes, pleasures. Do you know what this word means?

Round

People die. I knew that. My grandfather and grandmother were dead. My mother had cancer when I was young, and I had feared her possible death. I had also volunteered for two years in a hospice for dying adults. I was not aware, however, until I started working as a nurse in a children's hospital, that children could get so very ill or that children died with such regularity.

We die. That is what we have in common with all living things. From that perspective death can be a holy and healthy experience. I learned quickly in the pediatric intensive care unit that it is harder to understand and accept death when it is a child who is dying. It is very hard to find, in an intensive care unit, a holy death.

The distinction between life and death in this setting can become blurred. There are times when I do not "know" if a child is alive or dead. A child can be dead --- specifically termed "brain dead" --- but if supported by a machine that breathes for her, her heart will still beat and thus she will "appear" alive, although her eyes do not and she does not move. Not until the breathing machine is turned off will her heart muscle stop working and death become visible to us.

State laws and hospital policies have provided strict procedures to follow to determine death in such children. These procedures and tests can take hours, even days to "determine" death. But I wonder, at what moment did the child "die?" Was it during the shift I cared for her, watching for any sign of life besides the beating heart? Can you imagine that time as a parent? Your child is lying so still, you hear the "beeps" of her heart beat, and see those around her treat her as if she is alive. When the test results are returned, the doctors can finally pronounce her dead and the machines be turned off. Death is made visible at long last.

Table

Talk

by Karin Tanquist



The moment of death --- the sacred moment of passing from this life to the next --- has already come and gone. It was masked by technology. Technology has become the final arbiter between life and death, replacing the human experience.

This kind of dying is not easy to experience, much less explain to grieving families. We (nurses, pastoral care chaplains, doctors) struggle to provide consolation, and understanding, and hope in an attempt to create a more healthy death experience for the family.

More difficult for me are the infrequent situations where the child is not brain dead but is very

much alive, perhaps looking around with wide eyes. But she is alive only through more advanced technology: machines that breath for her lungs and beat for her heart. These machines are not cures; the best they can do is buy time for the small bodies to heal from surgery or accidental injuries. Sometimes the time bought is too short and there is no healing.

Eventually the machines must be turned off, knowing that the child will die without the artificial life support system. How do you turn off such a machine with children's eyes looking at you and small hands grasping yours? The nurses are constantly at the bedside throughout this long dying process. We give pain medications, we help parents hold their child as much as all the tubes will allow, and slowly, with shared tears, we turn down the machines and watch death come.

The journey to death, even without technology, is never easy. Each death calls to awareness my own mortality and my own attempts to deny that mortality. Each death of a child brings a sharp reminder of the unfairness and impartiality of death.

In a hospital where all actions are geared towards preserving and maintaining life, an attitude of accepting death is hard to find. As we develop more and more possible cures and the machines to implement them, it is increasingly difficult to determine when to stop trying to elude death with technology, and when to accept it with grace and the hope we are promised as children of a just God.

Most hospitals now have ethics committees to help guide them through the tension between scientific advances and our human hearts. All of us however need to be aware of the advances technology and science are making and begin to understand how these advances will affect us spiritually and physically. I am afraid we have a lot of ethical catching up to do.



Karin Tanquist, has recently dropped down to part-time status at Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital so she can spend more time birding and fishing.

A ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

"Reflections on Bangladesh & India"

by Rich Howard-Willms

Rich Howard-Willms, director of Plowsharing Crafts, recently toured India and Bangladesh, visiting the craft and labor cooperatives that supply the Plowsharing Crafts store and others like it. Rich will present a slide show and lead a discussion based on his experiences.

Friday, June 2 —7:30pm, Karen House

Things we need:

- Canned Goods
- Regular supply of sandwiches to distribute at the door to men in the neighborhood.
- People to cook meals at the house for our guests.
- Picnic Table

Thank You! Thank You!

As we celebrate our 12 year anniversary, we thank you for your unflinching generosity in helping this work to continue.

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to The Round Table, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO. 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work with the poor. People working on this issue include: Joe Angert, Margaret Boyer, Katrina Campbell, Pat Coy, Virginia Druhe, Barb Prosser, Ellen Rehg, and Mark Scheu. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

THE ROUND TABLE

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