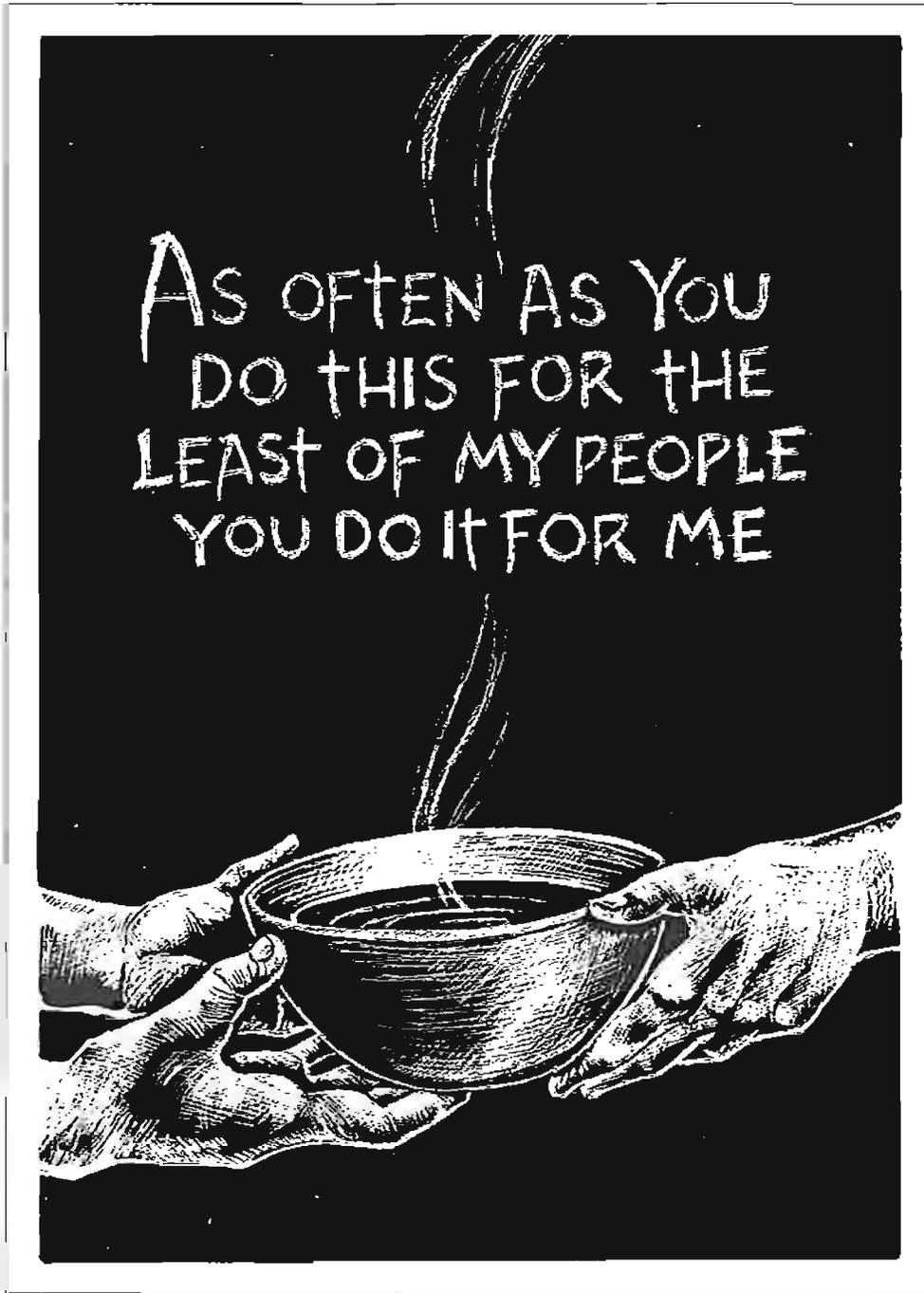


THE Round Table

Spring

1987

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



HOSPITALITY

WHY THIS ISSUE?



The Catholic Worker has a long and rich history, being founded in 1933 by Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day in New York. As a lay movement we have been involved in a plethora of ministries over these fifty-four years, and as we approach the ten year anniversary of our founding in St. Louis this summer, the same holds true for the St. Louis Worker. Members of our communities have been active in the Economic Conversion Project, the Nuclear Freeze, civil disobedience, a local land trust, women-church, and more. Throughout it all, however, the heart and soul of our communities has been the hospitality work: the housing, feeding, and clothing of the poor homeless God so graciously sends to live with us.

The English word "hospitality" is related to Latin words (*hospit*, *hospes*) meaning "the generous and cordial reception of guests." The word "hospital" is derived from the same root word for a "guest room"; and the Latin words for host and guest are related to the same root word. So hospitality has to do not only with "remembering to welcome strangers in your home" (Hebrews 13:2), but with the relationship between host and guest. It is that relationship we explore in this issue of The Round Table.

Jean Abbott leads off with a scripturally-based reflection on her experiences of hospitality both here and in Central America. Jean is co-founder of a sanctuary house for Central American political refugees, people whose lives are in danger in their native country but whose tragic plight isn't recognized due to the ideological blinders adorning the eyes of the Reagan administration.

Teka Childress offers some personal musings on the nature of hospitality, drawing on her long, devoted years of service with the guests at Karen House. Teka counsels that hospitality is more than inviting people into our homes; it calls for a profound relational dynamic as well: inviting others into our lives. While Jean and Teka broaden the spatial context of hospitality, Tom Nelson places it in a longer temporal line, examining its roots in the early church. And since hospitality has to do with relationships, we thought it important to hear from our guests as well, so we included interviews with them.

Perhaps our house articles take on added significance in this issue given the topic, but as usual, they make up the heart of the second half of the journal. And in the "Round Table Talk" Mark Scheu offers a compelling personalist argument for the full racial integration of our neighborhoods and the ending of school busing.

The Catholic Worker believes it is the spiritual dignity of each individual which is at the heart of the call to hospitality. That dignity has its origin in God, in our being created in the image and likeness of God. The Gospel of Luke closes with the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus; in the face of Christ's crucifixion they were mired in meaninglessness and despair. But it was in the form of a stranger who they invited into their lives, and shared a meal with, that hope and meaning were reborn within them. Christ's final earthly message was for us to look for him in the initial hiddenness of the stranger. As Peter Maurin so often said: "Shelter the homeless for Christ's sake."



Patrick G. Coy

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STRANGERS IN FOREIGN LANDS

by

Jean Abbott

Scripture is rich in its proclaiming hospitality as basic to our responsibility to each other, especially to the "sojourner", often defined as one who is having to flee oppression, persecution, or threat of death; one who has had to leave homeland and is "wandering" in an alien land, dependent on the benevolence of others. While reflecting on sanctuary in terms of hospitality I found myself paging through scripture looking for passages that tell of the sojourner, taken in and cared for, who when leaving, behold, turns out to be an angel of God. These stories have become poignant to me because this is, in fact, what I have experienced at Casa Arco Iris. We have just begun our ministry of sanctuary, taking in publicly refugees from Central America, and we find ourselves constantly being nourished and taught by these special "messengers" of God, these women who are in flight from oppression and threat of death. My tendency is to tell stories of how Claudia, Gloria, and others have ministered to us, but perhaps that would be talking about the rewards of offering sanctuary rather than the actual concept of sanctuary in the light of hospitality. Here are, then, a few thoughts that have been central to my call to offer sanctuary to my brothers and sisters, and the call to have "my house be their house."

When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do her wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be as the native among you, and you shall love her as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Leviticus 19:33)

Of course, Biblically this passage refers to the time of Jewish enslavement in Egypt and their searching for a homeland. But for me it is important because I remember my time of being a stranger in a foreign land, unprepared for the experience of dependency that this "sojourning" brings. A couple of years back I went to Nicaragua to work for a year. I left the U.S. without Spanish and with very little to prepare me for the cultural differences I would experience. I remember feeling lost inside of myself at times, especially when I would see the effects of the war and felt I represented the hostile force that was funding and promoting this war. I experienced warmth and welcome from the people of Nicaragua. I was received lovingly into people's homes where I was given the best of what little they had and always felt respected. People went out of their way to help and encourage me in communicating. I remember once being given the only bed in the house -- and the bed was given with joy. More than once I was

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told by Nicaraguans that if because of my work with Witness for Peace I felt in danger from my own country, I had a home with them. In Guatemala, where I journeyed for six months the following year, I received the same generous offers. When members of the Peace Brigades International team, including myself, received orders of deportation, I thought that perhaps for their safety I should keep a distance from some of my friends. They would have none of this. I received a constant flow of invitations to stay in their houses, or offers of protection should I feel in danger. I cannot talk of my giving hospitality or of anything I would have to offer in terms of comfort, nourishment, caring, or protection without remembering how vulnerable I felt not so long ago, in a foreign land, and how freely I was offered all and more than I needed. I was once a sojourner.

My time of being an "alien in an alien land" was nothing in comparison to what refugees from Central America experience. People fleeing from the war in El Salvador and the persecution in Guatemala have come to the U.S. with nothing but the desperate hope of a peaceful future, and memories of their families that they had to leave behind and of the suffering that forced them to leave their homeland. Some have family connections here, but most are at the mercy of an alien society. Many know that if they are discovered they are most likely to be arrested, put in a detention center, and then deported back to their homeland, to possible death but certainly to the same situation that forced them to flee. Often these people, with very few skills that would enable them to survive in the U.S., try to stay hidden, marginalized. They are often victimized by crimes and fearful of even asking for the rights that our laws do grant them. These are God's people, truly without refuge or any place of solace. They are outlaws here and persecuted in their own homeland. Where can they go? To South America where conditions are similar, or to Canada which is closing its doors to Central Americans because of international pressure?

There is no limit to extending our services to our neighbors across State-made frontiers. God never made those frontiers.
—Gandhi



"As long as you did it to the least of mine (or didn't do it) you did it to me."

Surely Jesus, who had no place to call his own and who eventually was killed in exile because of his beliefs, lives most profoundly in these exiled children of Central America. As individuals and members of the community of faith, should not our most natural response be to rush out to bring these refugees into our homes and do all in our power to change the situation that is causing such suffering? Instead we find it much easier to analyze and discuss while we let others make a decision for us. We will still be responsible for these decisions, unless we are so bold as to make our own moral decisions using such guidelines as the Gospel when the powers of the earth succeed in muddling the issue. Compassionate response to others, especially to those alienated by the law, will cost something, but the "payback" is considerable.

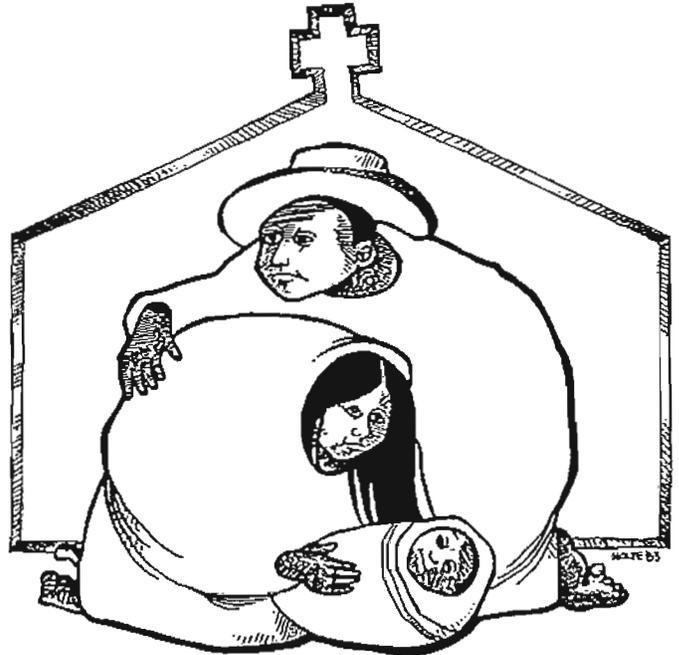
I am hoping that Claudia and Gloria are feeling very much at home and very loved. For this I may have given up some privacy and quite a bit of control over the circumstances of my life (more if we are ever arrested), but in return I now share in the lives of a whole new family, their joys and sorrows and their hopes. My life has been changed at its foundation. For example, instead of worrying about getting promised articles done on time I now spend nights, or at least a part of nights, trying to figure out how to get Claudia's child up here, or upset that Gloria's family hasn't written -- I need Gloria to get a letter from her family. It certainly makes it easier to do unto others as I would have them do unto me when I am feeling like it is me.

Sanctuary is the turning over of a place to God. It is the dedication of a place to God's purposes, or God's hospitality, where someone needing solace can come freely. It is the dedication of a place to God's law, the law of compassion. It is not just the Central American women who are seeking refuge here, but is is we North Americans also, who have decided to live in accordance to God's law at whatever risk, even in opposition to the current law of the land. We are all taking risks, however unequal they may be, in order to declare more broadly the love of God. This is God's place now, and however unholy I may feel, this place is holy. If anyone visits Casa Arco Iris they may be able to see in action what I am talking about. All of us share responsibility, not only for political activities, nor just for house-keeping responsibilities, but also for supporting each other emotionally and spiritually in our very human needs.

I also have a very profound experience of The Transcendent Loving One when I think of the people and groups who are supporting us -- all of us -- giving money and time, and also the promise that if any of us faces arrest, we would have support. I know the focus is on our sisters and brothers from Central America, but I also know that should anything happen to Pat, Angie, or myself, there would be all the saints of earth and heaven to contend with. That gives rise to many subjective reflections, but I realize that I have given over my personal well-being to others, the broader family of God. I have complete confidence in the love and goodness of my brothers and sisters, the family of our dearest God.

"So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but brothers and sisters, sojourners together, fellow citizens with all the saints and members of the household of God." (Eph. 2:19)

Sanctuary is not our house of hospitality, but God's house, a refuge for all her children, and a protection from the



political manipulations of the powers of this earth. This protection is a strong moral force coming from the spirit of the family of God on this earth. It is not my house, it is our house; and it is not I who am holy, it is God who is holy, and this is her holy place.

Sanctuary is a haven, a temporary haven. But the goal of sanctuary is broader. The sojourner now will not always be a sojourner. All people are to have a home on God's earth. So the ultimate goal of sanctuary is to create a space where people can work to change political practices of governments that are forcing people into exile. To achieve this goal we must first influence U.S. policy that presently discriminates against Central American refugees. The Central Americans

Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place."

Henri J. M. Nouwen

living in our house long to go home one day. But until it is safe they need to be given asylum, as does any person fleeing persecution or possible death in a war zone. Sanctuary is working to see that U.S. refugee laws are applied to Central Americans. Second, sanctuary is a part of the whole nonviolent movement to change U.S. policy towards Central America from one of control through the use of arms and force to one of peace and negotiation. As Claudia says, "If the U.S. would send



food, medicines, and other types of assistance, I would be able to survive in my country; instead it sends arms to keep the war going, so that in order to survive, I have to flee." Our national policy toward other nations is a major cause of the displacement of thousands of people. The change of this policy is a major goal for those who believe that all people have a right to a home on God's earth.

I do realize that this is a lot to ask of the kingdom of earth, but I do not think it is too much to ask of the Church, the people of God. Casa Arco Iris speaks about itself as a resistance community, a community whose hope is to contribute to

Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy."

Henri J. M. Nouwen

the larger justice community in the creation of a society within a society, one that lives clearly the values of its Creator. This may often put us at odds with a society -- a very powerful society -- that puts power and materialism over the well-being of humans. Because this means at times persecution from the present powers of earth, we need to be creative in our search for loving and strong ways of supporting and encouraging each other. We are hoping that Casa Arco Iris can become a center for creative reflection and mutual support, not only to energize each other but also to invite others to join us in a way of life that is sometimes a bit taxing, but with deep rewards -- the kind not found in any shopping plaza.

For that purpose we are rehabing our "tavern" to make it comfortable and inviting, so we, the justice community, can have "our" place, where we can think together, love each other, plan together, and walk with each other as we try to articulate to the larger society what the law of our God and love of our neighbor actually means in daily life. So once again Casa Arco Iris sees itself not only offering sanctuary to Central Americans, but to North Americans who need some space for reflection.

To see the tavern right now may arouse doubts about our hope; but we invite interested people to come and see us -- and bring your paint brushes; God can draw good out of all things.

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Casa Arco Iris Sanctuary House is in need of volunteers and supporters. Help is requested to staff the house and rehab the tavern, and money is needed for the overall operation of the sanctuary. To become involved in this hospitality ministry, call (314) 535-7856.

OUR GUESTS SPEAK

M.J. was a guest at Karen House for three months. She put her artistic abilities to work by making gifts for guests and community members. Ellen Rehg interviewed her for The Round Table.

I'm not proud of everything that's happened in my life, but I'm not ashamed of it. Everything happens for a reason, I believe.

RT: Interesting philosophical position.

I believe a great deal in the philosophy of St. Vincent de Paul...God does not create evil or do evil but He allows it. If He allows it it's for a good reason whether we understand or not.

RT: So what's the reason that you need shelter?

Because I was out of a job. I did not have any savings. In fact I went the limit before I came here. What few pennies I had to my name when I became jobless I spent for a motel for as long as I could. When I was totally out of funds, then, I asked my confessor, "What can I do? Help! I don't know what to do, where to turn."

I came to St. Louis from Florida a year and a half ago. My brother put me up for three months when I came back here because I would up in the hospital three times and that devastated me financially.

RT: Let's do this in chronological order. You were working in Florida. What kind of a job did you have?

I had a VCR operator's job for three years. You encode. I worked for Barnett Computing Company which was affiliated with the Barnett Banks. We did all their work.

RT: What happened that you lost that job?

I didn't lose it, they gave me a leave of absence. Because I'd been a good worker and I didn't miss much work, only when I was hospitalized. I just felt like I couldn't make it anymore in Florida. I'd left St. Louis because I wound up in the hospital every year for six weeks for a nervous breakdown.

RT: Every year?

Every single year, honey. So I wound up going down there. And I did better. I did a lot better for a long time. I had one

bad bout when I first went down there, and I thought, "I'm not gonna let it lick me, I'm gonna go back and I'm gonna do it." So I wound up staying there for ten years. About the last four years, every time I wanted to come home I wound up in the hospital, due to somebody.

RT: What do you mean, "due to somebody"?

Well they say it's voices and it's my mental condition, but that's bullshit, it's real! And I'll die saying that! It's real enough to put me in the hospital.

RT: Do you have family in St. Louis?

I have three brothers and a sister, but I don't want to impose upon them. When you love somebody so much that you can't stand to see any pain or anger in their eyes, you stay away. It's not always that you love somebody so much you go visit them. Sometimes you love them so much you stay away.

RT: It sounds like it's painful for you to visit them.

Very! Very! And I didn't let it get the best of me, because all these years I felt like they suffered my humiliation because I kept winding up in the nut house. They were very kind at first and very understanding and that...I guess they thought I was provoking it or something. I don't know.

RT: You seem to have a really strong faith.

If I do, He in His goodness gave it to me. I've always been religious. I mean I've committed my share of sins and that.

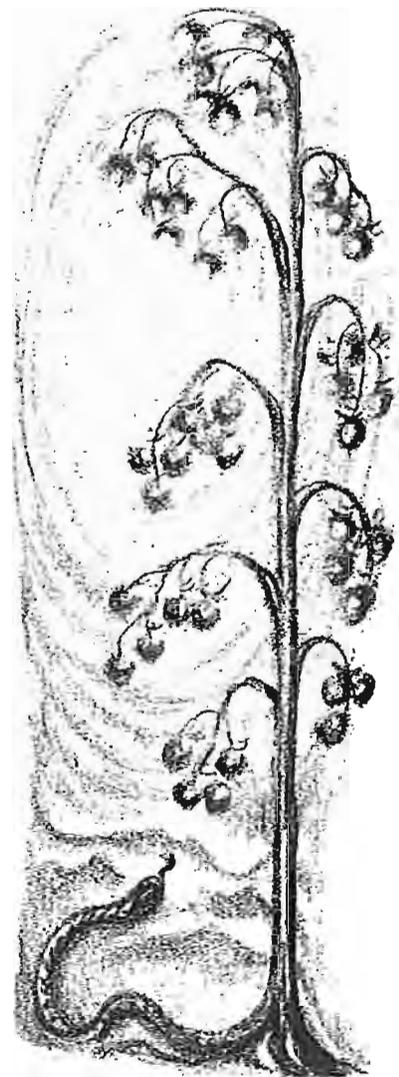
RT: You!?!

Oh yeah, many, honey. Many, many. That's where understanding comes from. The more you sin the more understanding you become!

RT: Is this the first shelter you've been in?

Yes, thank God. I hope it's the last too. The most wonderful thing is Tuesday night Mass. I guess the best thing is the lesson I learned about what I need to work on myself, spiritually. The hardest thing about living in a shelter? Being aware that there's really people who don't give a shit.

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Margita Rimm

Peter's idea of hospices seemed a simple and logical one to me, hospices such as they had in the Middle Ages are certainly very much needed today. But I liked even better his talks about personal responsibility. He quoted St. Jerome, that every house should have a "Christ's room" for our brother or sister who was in need. That "the coat which hangs in one's closet belongs to the poor." Living in tenements as I had for years I had found many of the poorest practicing these teachings.

—Dorothy Day

HOSPITALITY IN THE EARLY CHURCH

by Tom Nelson

In his satire on the death of Peregrinus, Lucian (d. 180CE), writing in the second century, gives us an important piece of evidence on the attitude of pagans toward Christianity. Having noted that Peregrinus joined the Christians and rose rapidly in the hierarchy, Lucian describes how the Christians treated their leader once he was arrested for confessing their faith:

...Once he was behind bars, the Christians, who considered this a catastrophe, moved heaven and earth to get him free. When this proved to be impossible, they went all out to do everything else they could for him. From the crack of dawn on you could see gray-haired widows and orphan children hanging around the prison, and the bigwigs of the sect used to bribe the jailers so they could spend the night with him inside. Full-course dinners were brought to him, their holy scriptures were read to him, and our excellent Peregrinus...was hailed as a latter-day Socrates. From as far away as Asia Minor, Christian communities sent to help him with advice and consolation.

The efficiency the Christians show whenever matters of community interest like this happen is unbelievable; they literally spare nothing. And so, because Peregrinus was in jail, money poured in from them; he picked up a very nice income this way. You see, for one thing, the poor devils have convinced themselves they're all going to be immortal and live forever, which makes most of them take death lightly and voluntarily give themselves up to it. For another, that first lawgiver of *theirs* persuaded them that they're all brothers (and sisters) the minute they deny the greek gods (thereby breaking our law) and take to worshipping him, the crucified sophist himself, and to



living their lives according to his rules. They scorn all possessions without distinction and treat them as common property; doctrines like this they accept strictly on faith. Consequently, if a professional sharper who knows how to capitalize on a situation gets among them, he makes himself a millionaire overnight, laughing up his sleeve at the simpletons.

Hospitality and Charity

From a hostile witness this testimony is remarkable and indicates that to an outsider the most obvious mark of the Christians was their concern to care for one another. Of course, we must not romanticize this quality. Clearly heresy and schism had the effect of limiting the integrity of the community, as did the

Tom Nelson is a Vincentian priest who teaches at Cardinal Glennon Seminary. He is a kindred soul to our community.

And hospitality is to be done with one's own hands (Homily on 1 Timothy 14).

A variety of motives are given for practicing hospitality. It is a way of imitating Abraham and Lot (Homily on Romans 21). And, as they received their reward, so the Christian will receive theirs. For "the cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7) the reward is multiplied. The Christian realizes their indebtedness to the poor who receive their charity. "They are the healers of your wounds, their hands are medicinal to you. That is, when the poor receive a Christian's hospitality, the poor person enables the Christian's sins to be forgiven" (Homily on 1 Timothy 14).

In his homiletic treatment of hospitality, John Chrysostom is consistent with the tradition of Clement of Rome.

Perhaps the most notable characteristic of the fourth century development is the institutionalization of Christian hospitality. We learn from Eusebius that Constantine helped establish Christian hospitals and hospices. And the fact that John Chrysostom has to argue with his congregation that the private exercise of hospitality is not supplanted by its institutionalization is an argument for the success of the Christian's undertaking (Homily on 1 Timothy 14; Acts 45).

Another slightly earlier witness to the same effect is the Emperor Julian. In his attempt to restore paganism on a solid footing, he writes to the high priest of Galatia regarding practical measures that are to be taken to compete with the "Galileans." The success of Christianity is primarily due to "philanthropy toward strangers, care for the burial of the dead, and a simplicity in life style" (Letter 84). The high priest is consequently instructed to establish in every city "numerous hospices, so that strangers may enjoy our philanthropy, not only those of our persuasion, but also others who need it."

The proliferation of Christian hospitals and hospices in the fourth and fifth centuries can be seen as the continuation of attitudes evident in Alexandria in the third century and in a variety of stories of how Christian bishops averted disaster in plague and famine by their charitable acts.

The Church undertook an obligation to care for the hungry and poor, the sick and the traveler. Even before its full insti-



tutional flowering in the period following Constantine, this development was largely responsible for the creation of the Church as a Kingdom within the kingdom. During the anarchy of the third century the Church often provided hospitality when the government could not. These social functions provided by the Church were later integrated into the social system under Constantine.

All of the ambiguities that are integral to the revolution in the Church's place in society equally apply to the process of institutionalized charity. It is for this reason that the Catholic Worker, whose hallmark is hospitality, resists anything institutional that threatens the dignity of the individual persons involved in the mutual evangelization that takes place in the presence of hospitality.

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The two angels reached Sodom in the evening, as Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he got up to greet them; and bowing down with his face to the ground, said, "Please, gentle men, come aside into your servant's house for the night, and bathe your feet; you can get up early to continue your journey." But they replied, "No, we shall pass the night in the town square." He urged them so strongly, however, that they turned aside to his place and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking cakes without leaven, and they dined.

Genesis 19:1-3

They said to him, "Rabbi (which means teacher), where do you stay?" "Come and see," he answered. So they went to see where he was lodged, and stayed with him that day.

Jn 1:38b-39

Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place."

Henri J. M. Nouwen

People who are in need
and are not afraid to beg
give to people not in need
the occasion to do good
for goodness' sake.
Modern society calls the beggar
bum and panhandler
and gives them the bum's rush.
But the Greeks used to say
that people in need
are the ambassadors of the gods.
Although you may be called
bums and panhandlers
you are in fact the Ambassadors of God.
As God's Ambassadors
you should be given food,
clothing and shelter
by those who are able to give it.

--Peter Maurin

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The world
and dwell
and we have s
John



FRITZ EICHENBERG © 1952

THE CHRIST OF THE

When you give, give freely and not with ill will; for Yahweh, your God, will bless you for this in all your works and undertakings. The needy will never be lacking in the land; that is why I command you to open your land to your poor and needy kinsfolk

Dt 15:10-11

same flesh
among us,
God's glory.

18



We emphasize always the necessity of smallness. The ideal, of course, would be that each Christian, conscious of one's duty in the lay apostolate, should take in one of the homeless as an honored guest, remembering Christ's words:

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

The poor are more conscious of this obligation than those who are comfortably off. I know of any number of cases where families already overburdened and crowded, have taken in orphaned children, homeless aged, poor who were not members of their families but who were akin to them because they were fellow sufferers in this disordered world.

--Dorothy Day

After Lydia and her household had been baptized, she extended us an invitation: "If you are convinced that I believe in the Lord, come and stay at my house." She managed to prevail on us.

Acts 16:15

ADLINES

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deaconess of the Church of Cenchreae. Please welcome her in the Lord, as saints should. If she needs help in anything, give it to her, for she herself has been of help to many, including myself.

Romans 16:1

Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy."

Henri J. M. Nouwen

Above all, let your love for one another be constant, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be mutually hospitable without complaining. As generous distributors of God's manifold grace, put your gifts at the service of one another, each in the measure you have received.

Jose Hernandez

Did I give you a sandwich; did I shun you?
Nobody killed you, nobody outright killed you.
They were ordinary people going to work,
They had a job to do, but rushing on their way,
one of them struck you down
and five more cars drove over your body before
the sickening thud of tire crushing bone was
recognized.

But is it that simple? Did five or only one person or
one million deny you another tomorrow?
I still don't know if I was on your side or against you --
please tell me --
did I see you hungry, naked at the Winter Shelter?
I helped you Jose; we tried to locate your family,
but was my motive simply a reeking, one-week old corpse
in the city morgue, or true sorrow and pity?

Why did you go out onto the Highway?
Didn't you know the odds were against you?
But then why would that stop you?
After a life of dodging subtle forms of oppression and
brutality that could stop any car.
And what did you do when you saw that car coming -- I am sure
you saw it coming; few have experienced death's grip more than you.
Had your daily encounters with death and alcohol numbed you
to the possibility of death as that car approached;
or did you experience fear,
and look upward in surrender to your Maker?

Where is the sorrow? That you were brutally disfigured, that
you had no immediate family, are doomed to public disposal?

No. It was a life with more suffering than the terrible pain
induced by five cars at 55 m.p.h. The sorrow is the years of
alienation, deprivation and internal decay that draws
God's eternal tear!

Jose Hernandez, you had a name and a place in society.
But your place was reserved for numbers, not names.
And so Jose, the beauty that sounds from your name
is now a burden for the morgue,
a cost to the taxpayer,
a number.
Did I give you a sandwich; did I shun you?

You probably didn't even feel the pain,
but the pain, the loss and abandonment
reverberates across the land,
across time, memory and space.
It is those reverberations
that strike the chord of our self-conviction.

*Tim Dooley, Saint Louis University student, has coordinated S.L.U.
volunteers at the Winter Shelter for the past two years.*

OUR GUESTS SPEAK

Interview by Janet with J.M., a two month guest at Cass House who kept her three children in the same Catholic school and did office work there to make up part of the tuition.

RT: What was it like for you, spending a day here at first?

It was really great, even at first, everybody was treating me nice. I didn't know what to expect. I never was in a shelter before. The first day I went to the day shelter and they sent us out here without telling the staff, and it was bad because they didn't have enough beds. But it was 5:00 p.m. and they moved two beds in and let us stay.

RT: What was a typical day like?

Frustrating! Every night I'd say "another bad day" and hope the next day would be better. But most nights it was the same. Sometimes I just wanted to stay up in my room and cry, but the tears wouldn't come. Mostly I didn't because of the kids. They didn't know it was so bad for us!

RT: How did you start your day?

When I woke up about 6:30 -- Nicki had an alarm clock and I asked her to knock on my door, but she'd kept forgetting and my girl woke up first -- we'd start flying around. I didn't want to oversleep. I'd be thinking of everything I had to do, and to get the kids to school by bus. Then I'd work at the school till noon, go to my mother's and start making all the phone calls until it was time to come back here for supper.

RT: Who were all the phone calls to?

S.L.A.T.E. (St. Louis Agency for Training and Employment) and St. Pat's Employment Place. I went through all the classes they offer at first. Also jobs and apartments -- whatever the staff told me to do, I did it -- so I could have a chance at getting a place. I know St. Pat's got tired of hearing from me, but I didn't care!

RT: Why did you keep the kids in a private school? Wouldn't it have been better to send them close by?

They were doing real good. Lamont even got a lot of "A's" and they could go over to my mother's until supper, and things

Karen House Catholic Worker 314.621.4052

seemed o.k. to them! I was raised Catholic, my mother and grandmother too. I was married Catholic too. My husband is a real good man. He'll help anybody what don't even ask, for nothing, just because -- when he was sober. I been divorced two and a half years -- I and the kids just couldn't take it no more! But he never hit us. Just go wild and tear up things. Then we lost the apartment, and the next house they condemned.



RT: Do the other guests in the house help you to cope, or make it harder?

Some of them help me a lot, even giving me addresses and phone numbers for apartments -- because they couldn't afford them. We all help each other mostly. Some of them is real scary. You have no lock on your door. You got no way to keep people from going through your stuff. But we help each other.

RT: So, J., what is happening now?

I'm scared to death this place will fall through too. It's happened over and over six or seven times. And my extensions (to stay at Cass House) are up long ago. The staff has really been good to us. And we've been praying, me and this lady, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the Father God, who she said didn't want His son, or mine, to be homeless; and finally to St. Jude -- the saint of the impossible. We said the same prayers every morning.





WITH AN OPEN HEART

by Teka Childress

Webster's Dictionary defines hospitality as "the practice of entertaining visitors with kindness." Dorothy Day began this practice fifty-four years ago in New York City. She saw that to offer hospitality to its fullest extent we must not only open the doors to our homes, but must receive a guest into our lives. As we let someone into our homes and lives we cannot but respond to their needs. Thus hospitality involves all the works of mercy.

Recently when I was thinking about this article I came across a reading from Isaiah (58:7-8):

Thus says Yahweh:

Share your bread with the hungry
Shelter the oppressed and the homeless;
Clothe the naked when you see them,
and do not turn your back on your own.
Then your light shall break forth like
the dawn

and your wound shall quickly be healed.
I was particularly struck by the last line — that our wound would be healed if we would do these works of mercy. The healing of wounds brings first to mind the wound of isolation we experience when we believe and act as if others' lives are not integral to our own. We are not truly happy when we live apart from the rest of humankind. All the analogies and symbols that we have for our connectedness to God

and our neighbor occur to me. We are branches and we die unless we are part of the vine. We are members of the Body of Christ and our separation from the Body would leave us like a hand cut off, lifeless and meaningless.

Thus we realize that another's needs are in a sense our own. To meet someone's need is to meet our own corporate need and to heal our own corporate wound.

I've had some sense of the Body of Christ all my life but my experience of it has grown tremendously since taking part in the hospitality of Karen House. There are frustrations, but certainly, above all, living at Karen House has healed me and given me life. Images of many guests come to mind.

One of my early memories is of Lela Sherman. Several of us, particularly Virginia, stayed in touch with her until she died a few years ago. Helen Sutton arrived at our house many years ago with six children, whose ages ranged from eight to fifteen and now range from eighteen to twenty-five. She was back with us recently and we still see several of her children. In fact, Elijah plans to move in with Mary Ann and Virginia at the Little House this summer. In the early days there was a woman named Pat who believed the King of Sweden was her brother. I was only twenty and I must confess I believed her. I almost tried to help her call him in the middle of the night (the hour she said would be appropriate to call according to Swedish time.) I went with Pat to the hospital the night her son Alex was born.

I remember Eleanor Barki and how glad I was that Mary, Virginia and I were able to be with her when she died. I had not been particularly close to Eleanor when she had lived at our house, but after she had moved out into a nursing home I went to visit her and we became friends. She had always been afraid of dying alone, so I prayed that I would be with her when she died. It is amazing to me that this woman, who had a long life before she met me, and I, who came from a very different back-

Do not neglect to show hospitality, for by that means some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Hebrews 13:2

Teka Childress, member of the Karen House community, is one of our most dedicated visitors of the sick and imprisoned.

ound, could become very important to
ch other.

There are two other people I must
mention: Hazel Tullock and Steve Sutton.
They are very dear to me. Hazel came to
our house years ago and we've been in
touch ever since. Steve came when he was
eleve or thirteen. He's now twentytwo. I
love deeply for him and will always stay
in touch with him no matter where he goes.
My life is now bound up with his and
Hazel's.

That my life would become so interwoven
with theirs is not what I expected when I
came to the Catholic Worker. I wanted to
do things for people. I wanted them to
have what they needed. I did not expect to
be so touched by their lives, so drawn
to their lives. This has been a great
blessing for me. I offered them love, think-
ing I had everything to give and they had

only to receive. Yet I have been healed by
my life becoming bound to theirs. I have
found myself a part of the Body of Christ.

Hospitality is not peculiar to Karen
House or to Catholic Workers. It can be
found in all who receive visitors with an
open heart, who let others into their
lives and homes. It is found in the guests
at our house who may not have homes to
share but who have certainly received us
into their lives.

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Rita Corbin



FROM CASS HOUSE

by Mitch Mcgee

It has been almost two years since I
first walked into Cass House. Much has
happened in two years: community members
have come and gone, lots of guests have
come through the door, and my role in the
house has grown. But one thing remains
constant -- I love this place!

That love is also a constant challenge
to try and explain -- but then can anyone
explain love? No one understands how on a
rainy, bleak day, when I'm tired, frustrat-
ed from school and in a depressed state, I
can walk in here and be revived. After
several hours of working my tail off I
leave the house with renewed purpose and
an infinitely better disposition.

This is a mystery I've pondered on many
occasions. I have no single clear cut
explanation, but have realized that my
source of energy is people -- the people
here in particular.

First of all, the guests. Cass House
guests come in a wide variety of packages,
all in their unique way a treasure that
teaches me the value of human life. This
is brought home most clearly in the
children, especially small babies. One of
the women in the house recently gave birth
and the excitement about a new "Cass House
baby" was palpable. Wanting the world to
be a better place for that baby and all of
our Cass House kids gives me hope and
energy to work for that dream.

The community members energize me. I've
always been thankful that those who
"trained" me were folks who were willing
to share their love of the House and what
it stands for. I first saw the house
through the eyes of such people as Janet,
Tim, Tommy and Zack. Jeanne is presently a
person who forever amazes me with her
dedication. She is selfless to a fault.

*Mitch Mcgee is a Holy Family seminarian who easily succumbed to the charms of
Cass House.*

Leahanna and Bernard pitch in and help me on all those occasions that can be overwhelming. Throughout we all share in the fun, work, laughter, tears, and love. For all the staff that make my house shifts a delight, no matter what the circumstances, I can't say enough.

Especially important are the volunteers, without whom there would be no Cass House. Blessings abound from each and every one of them. We had some big, unusual food deliveries this winter, and volunteers saved the day every time. Recently a new group had signed on to cook and serve supper (no small feat in itself). When they walked in the door, I was literally up to my arm pits in donated produce that needed sorting, preparing and storing. They rolled up their sleeves and worked until late, freezing the food. When we ran out of space here, they packed up the rest to store for us. They left that night with the store room in presentable condition — and with a special place in my heart. Believe it or not, with that as a first shift, they came back for more!

Most of the volunteers who come in on my house shifts are long term regulars that I look forward to seeing every month.

I love it when they come in with such enthusiasm, saying "What can I do?" Most come with the expectation of simply fixing a meal (if simple can be used in conjunction with one of our meals) but generally leave doing much more — be it helping with a food delivery, cleaning, playing with the kids, or even just sharing of themselves with us and having a laugh or two.

In and among all these people God is present to me. I seem to sense this presence best when I'm with others, and probably at no place more than at Cass. I guess maybe that's my answer to the mystery!

No Cass House article would be complete without some of the "business" news. Workers are busily trying to get the house "up to code." Work on the front of the house is scheduled. Altogether, maintenance of this house is a challenge (as are the heating bills). But we manage through God's grace and the help of our supporters to feed all who come to the door and shelter as many as we can. With your help and prayers we hope to continue to do so.

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FROM KAREN HOUSE



by Angie Davisson

Spring is in the air. We knew spring had arrived at Karen House when Mark took down all the plastic frames from the windows. The cleaning zest of Clair coming to wax floors, Ann cleaning the chapel, and Lee scrubbing the food storage room are all signs too. Talk of a grand spring cleaning has filtered into the community. Many of our supporters must be doing their own spring cleaning as evidenced by a surge of clothing donations keeping Virginia busy in the clothing room. The beautiful weather prompted one of our volunteers, Katrina, to take several guests kite flying and to the zoo. The beauty of the daffodils and forsythias, the warmth of the sun on our faces, and the sound of the birds returning keep us agog over the wonder of God in our midst. Driving in the country, one can't help but notice the diligence of the farmers out at all hours of the day. Here in the neighborhood the streets are once again noisy with the sounds of children playing and folks yelling across the street to one another. At Karen House plans for a flower and possible herb garden in the backyard are being bandied about. Yes, spring has arrived.

Tempering the exuberance of spring is the reality of the despair of some of our guests. I was made abruptly aware of this when one of our guests attempted suicide. As I thank God for the gift of her life, I am also keenly aware of the brokenness that is a part of my life too. We are such fragile creatures. Other guests despair of

obtaining decent, inexpensive housing or jobs that would actually pay enough to afford rent and groceries. Still others wonder if their husbands or male friends will continue their physical or emotional abuse, or if they'll even be around to visit when they leave Karen House. The strength, the unwillingness to bend to the despair amazes me much more than the brokenness. Truly, God is here.

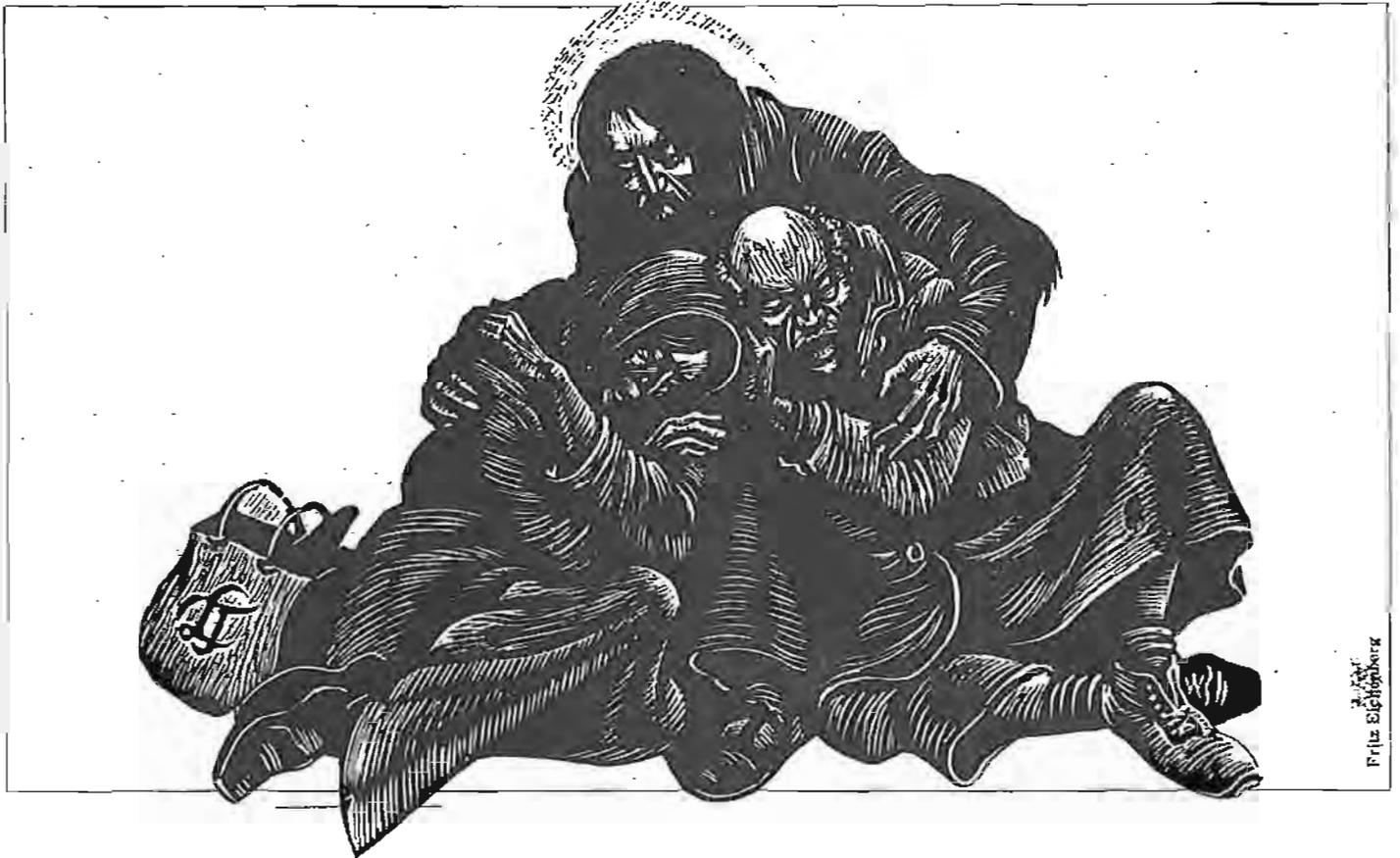
The air of quiet and prayer enveloping Lent seems to be nourishing many of us. As we go about our own types of prayer, fasting and alms-giving, the focusing and struggling we do appears to be cultivating our own inner strengths. As a community, we are praying together more frequently. Mary's plan to paint the chapel is appreciated. One of our guests, Peggy, has been leading folks in an occasional rosary in the dining room. For me, my first Lent at Karen House is giving me new insights into the reality of the person, Jesus. I feel much more attuned to His despair and the



incredible difficulties of His life, as well as His message of hope amidst it all. What strength there is in faith.

Contacts we have managed to maintain with former guests indicate a myriad of circumstances. We continue to pray for Steve and Juanita, both victims of our

Angie Davisson, the newest member of the Karen House community, is an R.N. and claims to like working overnight, twelve-hour shifts.



penal system, who are in prison. Ruby is doing well living in an apartment by herself. Denesia and her family are doing okay says her son Victor during his occasional visits, and Hazel is living in a nursing home. More frequently, however, we see former guests back for return stays.

Among the community folks are busy with a variety of endeavors. Mary is working on legal protection of political refugees. Pat and Jim have recently returned from Mexico and Arizona respectively after facilitating St. Louis University spring break trips. Both were profoundly moved by their experiences of other cultures. Teka is busy with her work for Central America as well as visiting former guests. Ann continues her work at Cardinal Glennon. Ellen is getting closer and closer to completing her thesis (go Ellen!). Sharon has fixed her car and is already busy helping take guests here and there. Delores continues to intervene for elderly folks in need of assistance. Since going part time at work, Mark pitches in even more at the house; he and Jim have magnanimously picked up the slack on garbage detail. Virginia keeps herself occupied with jobs at the house as well as numerous speaking engagements about Nicaragua. Lee is constantly active in the food storage

room producing one new delight after the other. Harriette is working on several projects and graciously helps coordinate our joint community meetings with Cass House.

As we enjoy spring and Lent and our guests, we realize Easter is quickly approaching. That hope strengthens and encourages us. And so we continue, day by day.

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We emphasize always the necessity of smallness. The ideal, of course, would be that each Christian, conscious of one's duty in the lay apostolate, should take in one of the homeless as an honored guest, remembering Christ's words:

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

The poor are more conscious of this obligation than those who are comfortably off. I know of any number of cases where families already overburdened and crowded, have taken in orphaned children, homeless aged, poor who were not members of their families but who were akin to them because they were fellow sufferers in this disordered world.

--Dorothy Day

FROM LITTLE HOUSE



by Mary Ann McGivern, S.L.

Volunteers came to plant trees across the street the first Sunday in March. The Little House is certainly a monument to donations of labor, money, and materials.

Two groups in particular have been like guardian angels, watching over the communities in all our foolishness: St. Vincent de Paul and the Secular Franciscans.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society, especially at Our Lady of the Pillar, gave us great help the first few years. The first weekend we moved in at Karen House they came by with a stove and chairs, assessed our limitations, and went out and got us a saw and hammer and a pound of nails. They delivered so many beds at one time that a neighbor thought we were setting up a brothel. They supplied electricity and heat. They also supplied two guests, Connie and her baby. Since we've been on our feet, as it were, the Society has turned its attention to other places.

The second group is the Secular Franciscans, based at St. Francis of Assisi parish in south county. I met one of their number, Joan Schlueter, when I was still living at Karen House. I answered the door one day and she said, "Who are you"?

I told her my name and she said, "Do you live here?" I said yes. She said, "Are you in charge?" Joan knows none of us is in charge. She just wishes one of us would say, just one time, that the buck stops here.

Anyway, I finally asked who she was, took in the food she was bringing for the house, and gave her a tour. On the way out she said, "Is there anything you need?" Well, a good Catholic Worker always answers that question. I said, "Toilet

paper, pampers, and altar wine." One week later Joan was on the front steps of Karen House with a case of each. That's the beginning of my acquaintance with the Secular Franciscans.

They stripped wallpaper in our Little House kitchen and repaired a huge hole in the ceiling where vandals had stolen the copper pipes and water had run down through the vacant house. They plastered, built cabinets for the sink, paneled the lower half of the kitchen wall. They stripped wallpaper in the living room and plastered there. From them came donations for our storm windows and the labor that dug the holes for our fruit trees and began the repair of our front sidewalk. They stripped wallpaper in the dining room and painted it. Agnes, Barry, Joan, Genevieve, Len, Ann, Walter, and Nelda stripped a lot of wallpaper, let me tell you.

They work at Junipero House, a shelter for men out of prison. They gather presents for the poor at Christmas. They remember that the poor need food and clothes all year round. They pray together weekly. They have speakers who tell them even more of the plight of the poor.

It was one of their members who introduced me to Steve Rossel. They took him over to Cass House too. These folks don't just deliver altar wine. They deliver Workers! Steve lives at Cass House now.

Individuals have done a lot of work on this house too. Sometimes I wish we'd

Mary Ann McGivern's play about a women's shelter, Half A Loaf, will be produced at Forest Park Community College this July. We recommend it highly.

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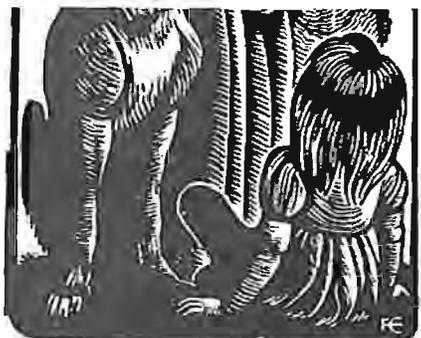
thought to keep a closet wall for every volunteer to sign in. Tom Kaczmarz was back to plant those trees Sunday, along with Harriette and Mary Beth Gallagher. We planted pecans and walnuts and filberts from the Missouri Conservation Department and promised to gather to eat the first pecan pie together.

Right now I'm looking for gardeners. I have more land cleared and ready for planting than I will be able to tend alone this summer. Anyone for summer squash? Broccoli?

I wrote a different version of this column last October for the Feast of St. Francis, but the RT didn't have room for it! Vincent and Francis both are saints for all seasons. Their labor on behalf of the poor inspires us all and we inspire one another.

Coming next issue: Rligha Sutton graduates from high school! We're having a party.

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Round

by Mark Scheu

Overcoming racial segregation through school busing has always left me dissatisfied. Busing is intended first to promote a racially integrated society and second to offer all children, regardless of race, the opportunity of a quality education. I sincerely embrace these goals, but I am not surprised that our society has chosen half-measures such as busing to meet them.

I am especially put off because busing asks little of ourselves as adults but most of our children, and because it undermines one factor which is vital for the renewal of our society -- the local neighborhood.

Busing is at the very least a hardship for the child. In addition to the ordinary pains of growing up and leaving home and learning to get along with peers, the child now must face the added strain of being shipped out of his or her own neighborhood to a strange area which is otherwise unknown to the pupil. Furthermore there is the time lost in transportation, not to mention the added risk of lengthy trips on today's hazardous roadways during rush hours.

Many say it speaks well of our society that we are willing to make these sacrifices for a worthy goal. But I ask you, if we wish to challenge the racist structures of our society and promote integration, why do we place the burden of this challenge on the children? I suggest they have to pay the price because they are the weakest members of our society, with little ability to resist their overseers. If we really want to promote racial harmony and understanding, and to develop an integrated society, there are better and more direct ways to achieve this.

If we are indeed committed to these goals, why don't we seriously challenge the real estate practices which provide that all the Whites live in one part of the metropolitan area and all the Blacks in another? Why don't we challenge the urban development which allows the middle class to flee to the suburbs while all the poor and underprivileged are left to fend

Table

Talk

for themselves in the inner city with inadequate resources? Or to bring the point home, if one is really committed to racial integration, why not go live in a mixed neighborhood oneself?

It is indeed healthy for a child to have regular contact with members of another race; but if this is good for the child, is it not good for you and me too? There is nothing more ironically amusing than middle class liberals living in



RACISM IS A HERESY SEGREGATION IS A SIN

Joseph Cardinal Ritter

dandified suburbia who then praise busing for purposes of integration. Their children are forced to sacrifice by commuting to distant schools to promote integration because their parents chose to reside in a neighborhood which would not challenge their racial fears and prejudices. We thus say to our children, "I'm willing to sacrifice you for the sake of this value, but not myself." Can this double standard teach our children anything but to be two-faced? In many instances in St. Louis the White children stay in their schools while Black students are imported from the inner city. This is the bankruptcy of liberal politics whose exponents are willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of their vaunted values -- except themselves.

The radical approach of Catholic Worker personalism says if you believe in the value of an integrated society, don't expect Holy Mother State to create it for you -- do it yourself -- go live in a racially-mixed neighborhood. Accept the challenge your'e willing to give to your child. The way to an integrated society lies in the creation of desegregated neighborhoods, not artificially-integrated schools. The way to the improvement of education is not by shipping children from school to school all about the metropolitan area. Instead funds earmarked for education should be distributed according to need. Thus siphon a handsome portion of the rich neighborhood's funds to the poor neighborhood's schools.

The Catholic Worker movement advocates a society that is decentralized and communitarian. The present bigness of government, industry, agriculture, and education only alienates and disempowers the individual, and the neighborhood. The renewal of our society lies in the development of community, by which one knows and cares for one's neighbor. The

neighborhood must once again become the basic unit of economic, political and social life.

I maintain that state intervention through forced busing of school children serves only to disintegrate what little sense of community remains in our society. I do not deny that decentralization can have tendencies toward parochialism and conformism. Thus any decentralization must be related to the larger struggle against oppression of all sorts. The problem will not be solved by handing power over to those at a higher level. The revolution to come must take place first within ourselves, by the grace of Jesus Christ. Ammon Hennacy said "an anarchist is someone who does not need a cop to make one behave." I would extrapolate from that and state that a just person in our society is one who does not need the force of law to make one lead a racially-integrated lifestyle.

Mark Scheu, the self-proclaimed (but highly contested) cribbage champion at Karen House, claims his backgammon game is even better.

ANNUAL APPEAL

The St. Louis Catholic Worker is in urgent need of financial contributions. We are entirely dependent upon you, the individual, for donations to enable us to shelter, feed, and clothe the poor and outcast. We neither solicit nor accept funds from any government body, corporation, or institution. It is for all of us, as servants of God, to see to the needs of our brothers and sisters. Thus we ask you to join in this work at some personal sacrifice by helping us to pay our bills.

New Liturgy Schedule

Tuesdays at 9:00 p.m. at Karen House
Wednesdays at 9:00 p.m. at Cass House
Fridays at 5:00 p.m. at Little House

Please Join Us!

Needs at Karen House:

tableware, dressers,
beds, picnic table...

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Although subscriptions are free, donations are gladly accepted to help us continue in this work. Please write to The Round Table, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO, 63106.

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