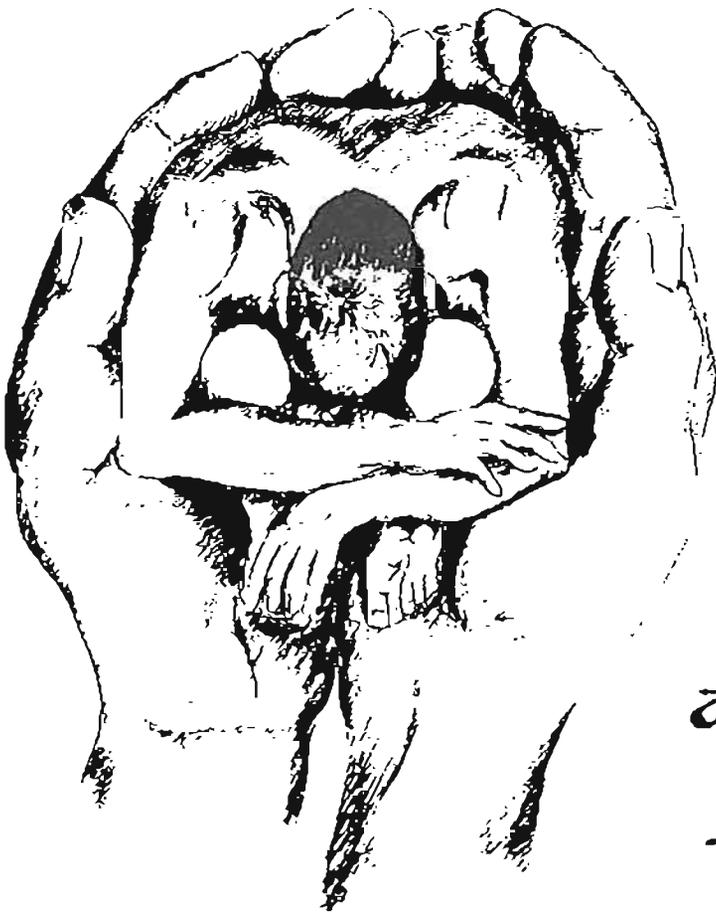


THE Round Table

Summer
1995

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



To pray
is to
descend with
the mind
into the heart
and there to stand
before the
face of
God —
ever present,
all-seeing,
within you.

Therese the Recluse

WHY THIS ISSUE?

This summer we bring you a long overdue issue on prayer. Long overdue not because (as is sometimes the case) our issue is late, but because prayer is so central to our lives that it has been too long that we have not reflected on it. Prayer is our spiritual food, as necessary to sustain us as bread.

I am struck by a theme that emerges from these articles, which is that prayer is paradoxically both an act of great intimacy with God yet also a social act. It is both private and public. It is intimate because in no other activity are we more ourselves, and more known by an Other, than when we pray. Our prayer comes from our being, from where we are at that particular moment. Even if our prayer is coming from a “false self,” as Thomas Merton warns in Mary Dutcher’s article, it is still who we are at that moment.

But prayer is not just a private act. Except for liturgy, most of my praying has been solitary. Until I read this issue, I didn’t realize what I was missing by not praying more with others. How much richer our lives in the spirit can be when we hear the prayers in the hearts of other people! The dimensions of the human heart are intimate, unique and beautiful, and in prayer we reveal these not only to God but to each other.

Mary Dutcher writes about types of prayer, noting that the “most important” type may be the one we enjoy the most. Jerry and Mary Wuller tell us about the role of prayer in Dorothy Day’s life – how she prayed and how it sustained her. Diana Oleskevich offers us her reflections on how her prayer life has developed over the years through different times in her life. Judy Cagney, RSCJ, reviews Jesuit Philip Sheldrake’s book, Spirituality and History. We include, of course, our house articles and regular features, including a jointly written Round Table Talk by Scott Stauffer and Teka Childress, in which they invite us to reflect with them on ways that we can more fully live out the Catholic Worker vision and create economic alternatives for the poor. This has been an ongoing concern voiced in these pages over the last few issues. In our From Abroad feature we are fortunate to be able to bring you a reflection from a base community member in Chiapas, Mexico.

Finally, we have an interview with two guests on prayer and a prayer written by a former guest and friend, Christine Kimble. I have been especially moved by the depth of faith expressed in these offerings of our guests. Their faith has prompted me to want to say to them, as the disciples said to Jesus, “Teach us how to pray.”



- Ellen Rehg

Cover illustration for
The Round Table
by Jeff Finnegan

the St. Louis Catholic Worker Community

*Karen House
1840 Hogan
St. Louis, MO. 63106
314-621-4052*



*Ella Dixon House
1540 N. 17th St.
St. Louis, MO. 63106
314-231-2039*

ENJOYING PRAYER

"FROM A TO C"

by Mary Dutcher

The most astounding thing about prayer that I can remember encountering in my life was the idea that it should be enjoyable. It must have been well over ten years ago that I read that, in Jesuit Anthony DeMello's book, Sadhana, and it was a revolutionary thought for me. I just looked it up again to make sure I had not distorted the idea in the intervening time. And I have not. DeMello's theory, stated on page three of the book, "is that prayer is an exercise that brings fulfillment and satisfaction and it is perfectly legitimate to seek these from prayer."

I still feel stirred deeply by these words. Perhaps it says more about my character or my images of God than it does about prayer; but before talking about types of prayer, I wanted to share with you what was for me a great insight about prayer in general. So as the various forms of prayer are being discussed below, you can be checking to see which ones sound the most enjoyable for you!

There are various ways to categorize types of prayer: public versus private, or petition/praise/thanks-giving/adoration, or mental prayer/prayer of quiet/prayer of union, to mention a few. One of the simplest ways to distinguish forms of prayer is to broadly divide between what is called "apophatic" (via negativa) and "cataphatic" (via positiva) prayer.

Apophatic prayer is contemplation in the tradition of St. John of the Cross, the idea being that anything we can say about God is by definition not God: God is beyond all our categories. Or, as St. Thomas Aquinas is reputed to have put it, roughly speaking, "The highest knowledge we can have of God is to know

that we know nothing of God." At the end of his life, he decided to stop writing and speaking altogether, entering into what must be called an apophatic silence for the last segment of his earthly existence.

I imagine that the most well-known contemporary form of apophatic prayer is the Centering Prayer made known by Cistercian monk Thomas Keating in his book Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel. It also pops up in J.D. Sallinger's Franny and Zooey as "the Jesus prayer." I enjoy this form of prayer very much, although I find myself wondering (which is classified as a distraction, of course, if undertaken during the prayer period!) how apophatic prayer is the same as or different from, say, Transcendental Meditation or other relaxation-promoting meditative exercises. For example, are there similarities or even identifications between the state of "recollection" that is recommended in many traditional spiritualities and the relaxed alertness or "mindfulness" urged by wholistic medical practitioners, such as The Relaxation Response?

This is what Thomas Keating says in response to this question: "The first thing contemplation is not, is a relaxation exercise. It may bring relaxation, but that is strictly a side effect. It is primarily relationship, hence, intentionality. It is not a technique, it is prayer." (p. 5)

On the other hand, Anthony DeMello seems to argue that relaxation or awareness exercises are indeed prayer because they serve to open us to a deeper part of ourselves where we can encounter God more directly. (pps. 24-31)

I tend to agree with DeMello, mostly because it has become increasingly difficult for me to make a

Mary Dutcher and her dad enjoy their weekly Saturday morning yoga class.

distinction between “sacred” and “profane.” God is present in the heart of all reality, including my own personal reality, I believe—panentheistically, I’d better add, in case there are any heretic hunters reading this article—so I begin to feel uncomfortable anytime reality is chopped up and some aspects are labelled holier than others. Additionally, the scriptural admonition to “pray unceasingly” seems to require a worldview in which many activities not commonly thought of as prayer can indeed constitute—or, at least, coexist with—prayer.

This is a convenient point, speaking of God’s presence at the heart of all reality, to discuss cataphatic prayer, which sees creation as God’s Self-revelation, full of symbols that can reveal God to us. Cataphatic prayer values human imagination, thinking and judging. Rather than seeking to still these activities, the cataphetic approach incorporates them into prayer.

Whether it be participating in liturgy, or reading, mulling over, and repeating a particularly meaningful word or phrase from a Scripture passage (Benedictine *Lectio Divina*), or imagining oneself in a Gospel story (Jesuit Ignation prayer), or forming resolutions as a result of my intellectual reflection on a reading from the Bible (meditation as I was taught it pre-Vatican II), created reality and human faculties are understood as ways of putting oneself in touch with God.

Just as I had questions about the relationship between apophatic contemplation and relaxation exercises above, I wonder about the relationship between the Ignation imaginative prayer and the Jungian psychoanalytic method of active imagination. I know that Jung studied and wrote about St. Ignatius of Loyola;

and, as I recall, he called him the first psychologist in the West. In a course I took about the foundations of contemporary spirituality, I learned that Ignatius made a theological contribution, innovative in his time, when he suggested that we can find God within our human experience; and not until John Paul II did this idea receive explicit formulation and approval from the magisterium.

Jung thought that using imagination to involve oneself with stories or dreams might be the equivalent for Western consciousness of what yoga is for Eastern consciousness, capable of unlocking profound inner capacities. Seeing the great popular response in recent years to Joseph Campbell’s work on the importance of myth makes me think that Jung might have been onto something. When I record my dreams and use active imagination in an attempt to deepen my interior life, is that prayer? Or is it prayer only if I use my imagination in connection with Scripture?

Jung did not believe that yoga was appropriate for Western consciousness—rather similar, in my mind, to Thomas Merton’s argument against religious or denominational conversion: that faith tradition is like language, and one can never express oneself as profoundly as one could in one’s native tongue. Jung may have believed that Western consciousness is more naturally cataphatic, while Eastern consciousness is more naturally apophatic (and I could go on, Eastern being feminine/passive/dark/intuitive and Western being masculine/active/light/rational...you get the idea). I have a distrust of these neatly packaged dualistic comparisons, however; and I also wonder whether Jung was aware of St. John



of the Cross, that most "Eastern" of saints.

St. John of the Cross, besides being probably the most famous proponent of the apophatic approach in the West, was also the author of some of the most beautiful poetry in the Spanish language—poetry being definitely a cataphatic phenomenon. That this is the case also serves to remind that categories of prayer, even ones as seemingly foundational as apophatic and cataphatic are not absolute and can even flow over into one another. For example, the poetry of John of the Cross, I suspect, was the fruit or expression of his prayer—or was it prayer itself?

Or, for a more contemporary example, we can refer again to Thomas Merton: monk, contemplative, author, poet, calligrapher, photographer, and even social justice activist. Prayer in Merton's view has been described as "a consciousness of one's union with God" or "an awareness of one's inner self." (Higgins, Thomas Merton on Prayer, p.19.)

For Merton, the spiritual journey is a progressive movement from the illusory, superficial, false self toward the true self hidden in the depths of our being. In his Introduction to Merton's Contemplative Prayer, Douglas Steere uses a wonderful image from old-fashioned theaters, where there were often "three or four fire curtains with lively scenes painted on them. At intervals before the play began, these painted curtains were lifted one after another." (p.9) As in our efforts to encounter our inner selves, it was difficult to determine whether there was yet another curtain to lift or whether the very play itself was there before one.

I would love to hear a conversation between Thomas Merton and Anthony DeMello about whether it is indeed appropriate to expect to enjoy prayer. Merton seems to believe that the lifting of the curtains can sometimes be quite painful:

Far from establishing one in unassailable narcissistic security, the way of prayer brings us face to face with the sham and indignity of the false self that seeks to live for itself alone and to enjoy the "consolation of prayer" for its own sake. This "self" is pure illusion and ultimately [the one] who lives for and by such an illusion must end either in disgust or in madness. (p.24)

Perhaps this is why so many spiritual traditions insist on the importance of consulting a guide, director, or companion who can help us see when we are confusing the curtain for the play or otherwise kidding ourselves.

It may well be that the simplest way to resolve all the questions, contradictions and categories is to remember that prayer is most essentially about love. It may be that just as I can perform the same outward behavior, (for example, mowing grass), either lovingly

or unlovingly, the same activity can constitute or not constitute prayer depending on the attitude with which I do it. And by that I do not mean that I should be falsifying my emotions by "ordering up" appropriately pious sentiments so that certain of my activities can thereby "qualify" as prayer.

Rather, it may be that as more and more of the curtains are lifted, I am more easily aware of a deep peace and love that surrounds and sustains me, even when I am feeling rushed or irritated; it reminds me to slow down and calm myself. I may discover that, in fact, I am feeling rushed or irritated less often the more I find ways that enable me to be in touch with the deeper peace and love. And the further I go in the process, the more I realize how I am not in charge of things in this deeper reality, (or even what thoughts I think, feelings I experience, or gifts or talents I have been given—or, more ultimately, the fact that I exist); rather, I become aware of how everything is gift.

In this view, whatever enables me to heighten my awareness of this deeper reality would be prayer.

I do not wish to disregard Merton's warnings about narcissistically seeking a false "consolation of prayer," but I guess I do want to hold up next to them Etty Hillesum, who in her An Interrupted Life describes a spiritual journey that enabled her to volunteer to live in a concentration camp and to be a source of joy to those around her there. Her last words were written on a post card dropped out of the cattle car transferring her to Auschwitz: "We left the camp singing."

One of the passages I remember most vividly from Etty's reflections is how we cannot hold God responsible for the evil we humans do. In another passage, she is feeling sorry for a young Nazi soldier because of his immaturity and lack of self-insight. Her true self seemed to be one of great compassion.

So while I agree with Merton that complacency, indifference and selfishness can be great obstacles in our prayer life, I also believe that the greater danger for most people in our frenetic culture is not taking time to experience the "consolation of prayer" in any form, narcissistic or not. It may well be that only the consolation of prayer can give us the courage we need to face and transform our complacency, indifference or selfishness. In my own experience, that courage comes from a peaceful conviction that God loves me and wants me to love myself enough so that I am not overcome by fear or despair.

In the end, our prayer and our life, to be sustainable, must be based on faith, hope and love. As to the particular type or form this might imply, I am reminded of the old adage attributed to a French abbot: "Pray as you can, not as you can't."



DOROTHY DAY'S SPIRITUALITY: A MYSTIC AT WORK

by Mary and Jerry Wuller

We have been greatly inspired by Dorothy Day (1897-1980). A copy of the icon "Dorothy Day of New York," painted by Robert Lentz, hangs in our dining area as a daily invitation to prayer and social justice work. In this article we focus on Dorothy's prayer from 1933 to the 1970's, her years with the Catholic Worker Movement. During that time, communication with God sustained her amid many difficulties, giving her vision and courage.

Dorothy Day was a woman of prayer. Prayer was at the center of her life. "We can do nothing without prayer," she wrote. "We must pray as regularly as we eat in order to grow. We must pray with humility and confidence. Ask and *you shall receive*. That is a condition laid down by God. God does not lie. Ask for love. Ask for grace. Even at moments of sin. God answers always."

In 1927, after choosing Catholic baptism for her daughter Tamar, Dorothy Day became a Catholic. She developed a keen interest in prayer and a deep appreciation of its role in Christian life. The central prayer of the Catholic Church is the Eucharistic meal commonly called the Mass. When possible, Dorothy attended Mass daily in local parish churches. In 1962 she wrote: "It is joy that brought me to the faith, joy at the birth of my child, thirty five years ago, and that joy is constantly renewed as I daily receive Our Lord at Mass." She often stated that the Mass and the Eucharist gave her the strength to continue her work. Dorothy found common characteristics in the Eucharist and Catholic Worker community meals. Each signified God's presence among us and our need for unity with others. "God is incarnate

today in the poor, in the bread we break together. We know Him and each other in the breaking of bread."

A less familiar form of Catholic prayer is the "Divine Office," lengthy prayers including many Psalms. Monks and clergy recite these prayers at various times of the day. The Catholic liturgical movement invited everyone to join in this "prayer of the Church." Dorothy prayed parts of the Office or the Psalms herself daily, drawing from them strength and support. "Always I have loved the Psalms, and my morning and evening prayers, alone or in common, are made up of them." She encouraged recitation of Compline, the night prayer, by Catholic Worker communities. "When we are united together in the community room in this evening prayer, we are conscious of a Christian solidarity. As members of the Church we are united to the whole Church. We are united with Christ Himself."

Dorothy considered community prayer vitally important for achieving and expressing solidarity. However, getting people to pray together was not easy! Most Catholic Worker guests were not interested in community prayer. Dorothy saw the irony of the situation. She commented that the guests were "displaced people, all of whom want community, but at the same time want privacy...to seek for sanctity in their own way. This kind of sanctity of course has for most of us as little validity as the sense of well-being of the drug addict." Nevertheless, she valued freedom more than conformity, so guests were not required to join community prayer.

Another tradition of the Church is the recitation of the Rosary, a repetitive prayer of praise and petition directed to God and the Virgin Mary as mother of God

Mary and Jerry are faithful Tuesday night liturgy participants at Karen House.

and spiritual mother of all. Dorothy prayed the Rosary even before she became a Catholic. During her life, this prayer was a great source of comfort and peace. For years she recited the Rosary at noon with others in the Catholic Worker house. The simple format made it a favorite prayer on her journeys. (She found the Rosary as companionable as her cup of coffee and pack of cigarettes.)

Older Catholics may remember that unguided Bible reading was once thought unsuitable for the ordinary person. Official encouragement for Bible reading did not come until Pope Pius XII (1943) and Vatican Council II (1965). However, Dorothy had become acquainted with the Bible long before her conversion to Catholicism. She simply continued reading the Bible and opening her heart to its messages. She frequently quoted or referred to verses which supported her views, most often taken from the Gospels and the Psalms. In the early 1940's she became enthusiastic about a Biblical Retreat movement. She found strength and consolation in its uncompromising identification of Christian life with the life of Jesus.

Dorothy's lifelong habit of reading enriched her personal prayer. She read the best of contemporary writings on prayer. Traditional classics were also important to her, especially the Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis, which stresses the inner life of the individual and recommends meditation on the life of Christ. She was well acquainted with the writings of the Spanish mystic St. Teresa of Avila. St. Teresa discusses personal prayer at length, and provides a robust model of female sanctity. Dorothy kept at her bedside the optimistic book of the English female mystic Julian of Norwich, whose key message was the compassion of God. God cares, God loves, and through the continuing and final action of God, "All will be well." Another important influence was the autobiography of the French St. Therese of Lisieux, whose path to saintliness was doing the ordinary tasks of life as lovingly as possible. Like St. Therese, Dorothy did not sharply separate work and prayer. Indeed, she was confident that work with a

loving intention is prayer. "I believe some people--lots of people--pray through the witness of their lives, through the work they do, the friendships they have, the love they offer people and receive from people."

Dorothy was delighted with the concept of the Mystical Body of Christ, taken from the Pauline metaphor that all Christians form one body, with Christ as the head. Dorothy thought of herself as a member of the Mystical Body, participating in the life and work of Christ, "to be Christ, to bring Christ to others." "Now, not we live, but Christ in us, as St. Paul says." Considering the Incarnation of Jesus as a union with all creation, she expanded the Mystical Body concept: Christ

is present in every person; it is Christ who is served through the daily works of mercy. This idea unites the spiritual and the physical, prayer and good works.

Dorothy thought of the poor as Christ's poor. "I feel I have been looking on the face of Christ in the Negro in the South and the Mexican in the Southwest; in the man on the skid row.... Everywhere I saw Christ in the faces of the old and suffering; in the face of fear and hatred and love and joy." But this vision of Christ in the poor was not always clear. At another time Dorothy explained: "This consciousness that there is in every person that which is of God comes and goes in a rhythm

like that of the sea. The Spirit blows where it listeth, and we travel through deserts and much darkness and doubt. We can only make that act of faith, 'Lord, I believe because I want to believe.'"

Dorothy Day had a strong, realistic love for ordinary people, and an optimistic attitude towards their spiritual lives. She understood that the spiritual is always breaking through to unite human life with God in Christ. As mentioned earlier, she did not require anyone to participate in community prayer. She did not include evangelism among her works of mercy, because she knew that God is already present within everyone. This union with the divine, she believed, gives each person a special character and potential. "The longer I live, the more I see God at work in people who don't have the slightest interest in religion."



For Dorothy, the primary reason to pray is to promote total union with Christ, which may be called holiness or sanctity. "The purpose of prayer is to ask for grace, to let Christ grow in us.... We pray to bring the life of Christ into our own life, into our own time.... If you keep on praying you will become a saint." She often remarked that the spiritual life is the greatest adventure in the world. She felt the warm affinity with both saints and sinners which Catholic tradition encourages. She was able to accept her own limitations as strong evidence of need for prayer and reliance on God.

Dorothy had "an immense gratitude to God for life." Therefore, thanksgiving was another important motive for her prayer. She once wrote: "A mystic may be called a {person} who is in love with God." The central fact of her life was being in love with God. Yet Dorothy did at times find prayer difficult. "Prayer is an effect of love. If you love you pray. Prayer is not a short mumbling of words. It must be an effort to contact God. We may find it hard, dry or cold, but the effort must be there."

Day could and did pray for what she wanted, believing that her prayers would be answered. Although many coworkers and guests were impressed by her joy and sense of humor, sometimes Dorothy was brought low by weariness and depression. Prayer restored her. "Pouring rain today. I stayed in, resting—feeling exhausted. Sorrow, grief, exhaust one. Then tonight the prayers I've been saying were answered. And the feeling that prayers are indeed answered when we cry out for help was a comfort in itself. I had the assurance that they were answered tho it might not be now... suffering drives us to prayer and we are comforted. Or at least strengthened to continue in faith, and hope, and love."

Dorothy was an outstanding example of a mystic at work, a dynamic combination of prayer and action. She was fond of saying that the spiritual and the physical all go together. She had the ability to experience the beauty of the present place and moment as a reflection of the divine, and indeed it was beauty that led her to God. She had the ability to communicate attentively and sympathetically with the person present, no matter how outrageous in character. She advised her readers that the more one hopes to accomplish, the more time needs to be set aside for prayer. Since there is not enough time, we must give away time. We must spend more time in prayer, so we can accomplish more. In a world which makes ever-increasing demands, Dorothy models joyful purpose in her life of prayer.

Dorothy's ideas on prayer always reflected the perennial best of Catholicism. Almost forty years after she entered the Catholic Church the Second Vatican Council occurred (1962-1965), a strong force for church renewal. The Council emphasized the dignity of the



ordinary Christian and the call of every person to holiness. Dorothy had lived and promoted these insights all along. The Council also emphasized participation of the faithful in community prayer. When it reshaped the Mass to allow the congregation a larger role, Dorothy was jubilant: "Thank God the laymen are now participating actively in worship, joining with the priest in dialogue around the altar."

What have we learned from Dorothy Day's life of prayer? First, we need to take time for prayer. Second, it is important to strive for balance and variety in prayer. In this rootless and fractured society, the value of community prayer needs emphasis. Opportunities to join with others in prayer range from family and small Christian community activities to church services and interfaith celebrations. Third, spiritual reading, especially Bible reading, encourages and enlivens prayer. Many excellent books on prayer are available. Finally, Dorothy's Day's example encourages us to keep at it. Growth happens slowly. Prayer gradually changes us, bringing a greater commitment to social justice and a deeper realization of our union with God and others. "We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more."

Many of the quotations above may be found in By Little and By Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day, edited by Robert Ellsberg.



GUESTS' REFLECTIONS ON PRAYER

edited by Ellen Rehg

The following are excerpts from interviews that Ellen Rehg conducted with guests at Karen House.

RT: I'm talking to Preston Smith. Preston how old are you?
PS: Eight.
RT: Do you ever pray?
PS: Sometimes. Last night I did.
RT: Do you mind if I ask you what you prayed for?
PS: Mmmmm...for the world to be much nicer.
RT: How would you like it to be?
PS: Everybody'd be real nice, nobody'd be bad guys and rob people.
RT: Do you feel like God hears your prayers?
PS: (Shakes his head yes.) Sometimes I say it outside.
RT: Is there any special reason why you say it outside?
PS: Uh-uh, no. I say it always for the same reason.
RT: What's that?
PS: For goodness. Sometimes I don't be praying, I just be saying I wish everybody'd be in a better world, because if the devil wasn't made, bad guys wouldn't be bad guys, they'd be good guys.
RT: What do you think God is like?
PS: Um. Like, uh, I don't know what color he is, but I been thinking that he was black and that he made the sun and the cold, the rain and the rainbow. And I know he made people.
RT: Are you sure he's a man?

PS: (Smiles and shakes his head yes.)
RT: You are!
PS: I can spell his name backwards, too.
RT: D-O-G
PS: Dog.
RT: I can't think of anything else to ask you. Do you have anything else to say?
PS: Umm, I love God!
RT: Do ya? How come?
PS: Because, I be telling people, God is all our daddies, so we're everybody's brother and sister. People be killing their sisters, and their sisters be killing their brothers.
RT: How did you learn all this stuff? You're pretty smart.
PS: I just be guessing that stuff.
RT: Well, you're guessing pretty good, seems to me.
PS: Some of them kids say, "God ain't my daddy, my daddy is," and they say whatever their daddy's name is. So they got two daddies and a whole bunch of sisters and brothers. Even the white people are our sisters and brothers.
RT: Even the white people, huh? You know, I think Jesus called God "Daddy."
PS: Jesus' daddy is all up there. So if you want to see God, and if God ain't up there, and you want him, just ask the first person you see. Like, if there's some angels up there, ask them where God is and they'll probably tell you.
RT: Okay.

Ellen Rehg, her husband Bill Miller, and daughter Myrrah are expecting a new addition to the family.



RT: I'm talking to Nyanna Travis. I just want to ask you what you think about prayer? Do you pray very often, do you think it does any good?

NT: Yes, I see prayer as a supplication, of something that's a need – a need we have to stay in touch with our higher power. God says, we have not because we ask not. He already know what we need before we need it. He says, "Ask and you shall receive."

RT: Why do you think it's important to ask if God already knows what we need?

NT: Because he wants that relationship with us. He wants to know that we have that communication with our higher power and we can come to him as closer than a friend or a brother or a mother and talk with him. Because God is a jealous God. He wants us individually, he wants our time to be spent with him.

RT: Do you pray very often?

NT: Not very often. I'm trying to get back into a closer relationship with my higher power. Due to the program I'm in I'm working on Steps 8 and 9; and Step 9 is to make a list, and, working with that is causing me to come closer to my higher power, because it's only by the grace of God that we can come to take our inventory to find out where the problem really lies.

RT: It sounds like prayer and God have really helped you get to where you are today.

NT: Truly, it has; it was only by the grace of God that I got blessed to be in this particular place. God is really showing me that he is going to do for me what I can't do for myself, and that's

causing me to want him, and to know more and more and get back close to him. 'Cause I used to be in church for ten years, and I ended up getting away from the Lord, it's been about four years.

It's hard to get that relationship back because it seems like the flesh and the spirit is warring against one another. I know what I want, and I know that God is not going to let things go on until I get back closer to him. Like, I got to get out of his way and not allow anyone else to be so close to me that I'm depending on them. God wants to do some things in my life right now, I know that.

RT: So if you're in a Twelve-Step program I assume you're struggling with an addiction.

NT: Right, coming from the addiction of cocaine. God is really helping me a lot because it was like being insane, and God is showing me how to have a sound mind. He's really brought me a long way because I couldn't do it without him. I was trying to do it without him; I had good intentions on top of good intentions and would be praying while I was out there doing it, but it wasn't going to work.

RT: How was your prayer before you started the program? Was it different then?

NT: Mm-hmm. I knew that I was in a battle. Having a relationship with the Lord for ten years, you done walked the walk, you talked the talk, you've seen hands laid on people and seen the crippled walk and just seen all the miracles. And then you get off into the things of the world, so

now you know the difference between that and the straight and narrow road. You don't straddle the fence. And then you start trying to understand why you're doing what you're doing, and then you recognize there's a force greater than yourself. It's a spiritual battle, and you cannot fight a spiritual war without your spiritual weapons.

RT: So, being on the street you were engaged in...

NT: Demonic forces. With the Twelve-Step program it really teaches us that 15% of it was the drugs and 85% of it was our old behaviors. I'm still having a battle with my old behaviors.

RT: This may sound like an odd question, but, you know when you take drugs you feel an effect right away from that. But when you pray you don't necessarily feel anything different. How does prayer really help to battle an addiction?

NT: To me it's an inward peace, it's an inward feeling that you know when you pray and get close to God. It's an immediate effect just to know that you're in the presence of him, praying before him. It's just like a high if you're really sincere with it.

RT: But it can't be like a high with a drug, I wouldn't think.

NT: To me it is, once you're really with a close relationship with God. If you're not really close to God and you haven't got caught up in the realm of the spirit, it isn't. But I've been caught up in the realm of the spirit with the Lord before and it's beautiful. A cold chill come over you, and I remember that rush feeling I used to get when I would get high. God can be all things to us, but that's only if we be willing and obedient.

RT: Do you think you might have times that are dry times, when even your relationship with God isn't all that exciting?

NT: It's kind of strange that you ask me that because at this particular time, that's where I'm at right now. I want this relationship with God so bad. I want it to be the way that it used to be, but I know it takes work and it takes time. You're going to only get about as much out of a relationship as you put into it, and I know I'm wanting more than I'm giving God; but I know God said he will never leave nor forsake me. When I pray sometimes I feel like my prayers don't go no farther than the ceiling and come back. Sometimes I feel so alone, I feel like, "God, did you really hear what I asked you about?" He's been showing me things, but there's still more that I got to do, as far as a total renewing of the mind, diligently going to bible

class, not just going to the treatment center.

And I recognize that, because even when I did get into the relationship, I was lonely. I thought maybe if I got somebody, that would replace my loneliness. It didn't replace it. With him giving me money I thought, well if he gives me a lot of money, I'll probably be a little happy. He gave me money; I still wasn't happy. I said, "Maybe if I get a lot of clothes and be a little more content, my life will be going a little better." I'm getting everything I want and God is still showing me, it's not those things. I'm still missing something. And it's the communication with him. And I want it, and that's why I've given up everything now. Everything. I have nothing else and I'm ready to let God do whatever he wants to do with me.



The Half-way House

Love I was shewn upon the mountain-side
And bid to catch him ere the drop of day.
See, Love I creep and Thou on wings dost ride:
Love, it is evening now and Thou away;
Love, it grows darker here and Thou art above;
Love, come down to me if Thy name be Love.

My national old Egyptian reed gave way;
I took of vine a cross-barred rod or road.
Then next I hungered: Love, when here, they say,
or once or never took Love's proper food;
But I must yield the chase, or rest and eat.
Peace and food cheered me where four rough ways meet.

Hear yet my paradox; Love when all is given,
To see Thee I must see Thee, too love, Love;
I must o'er take Thee at once and under heaven
If I shall overtake Thee at last above.
You have your wish; enter these walls, one said:
He is with you in the breaking of the bread.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

My prayers must meet a brazen heaven
And fall or scatter all away.
Unclean and seeming forgiven
My prayers I scarcely call to pray.
I cannot buoy my heart above;
Above it cannot entrance win.
I reckon precedent of love,
But feel the long success of sin.

My heaven is brass and iron my earth:
Yea iron is mingled with my clay,
So hardened is it in this dearth
Which praying fails to do away.
Nor tears, nor tears this clay uncouth
Could mould if any tears there were.
A warfare of my lips in truth,
Battling God, is now my prayer.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

SEASONS OF PRAYER

by Diana Oleskevich

I remember as a little girl when my Mother taught me the "right" way to make the Sign of the Cross. It was my first formal lesson in prayer. I learned that there was a proper form, correct words to say; and by their role model, Mom and Dad taught me not to smile or laugh when doing "holy" things. There were other lessons caught too--before every meal we stopped the chatter, closed our eyes and looked down while my Father prayed and garbled, "Blessus O Lord and these Thy gifts..." I learned that prayer was to be solemn (ever see a priest smile during the Latin Mass?) as I read along in my old English Missal until High School when we did the Vatican II mandated, then-radical change into the "Vernacular" talk. Prayer was separate from the rest of my life and God was "Our Father who art in Heaven." (Today I'm more likely to say "Our Mother/Father, who's right here among us and not far away in heaven.)

Then I fell in love! Something about this relationship was holy, even if I couldn't articulate it back then. One creative way to see the love-of-my-life on a Catholic college campus in the 60's was to get the dorm housemother to unlock the doors for me to go "out" to early Mass with Jim. Looking back, there's no doubt I was much more aware of Jim than I was of the prayers being said up on the altar--but it was years in coming before I began to realize that God was smiling at our young love.

Prayer is about being in love, and about being loved. I prayed at first because I was supposed to, because that's what was expected of "good little Catho-

lic girls" on Sunday mornings and before meals or going to bed. But prayer is about growing up, learning, and changing. And someday when I grow up and I'm done learning--well, I hope you cry at my funeral because I want to be 6-feet under when I "stop"!

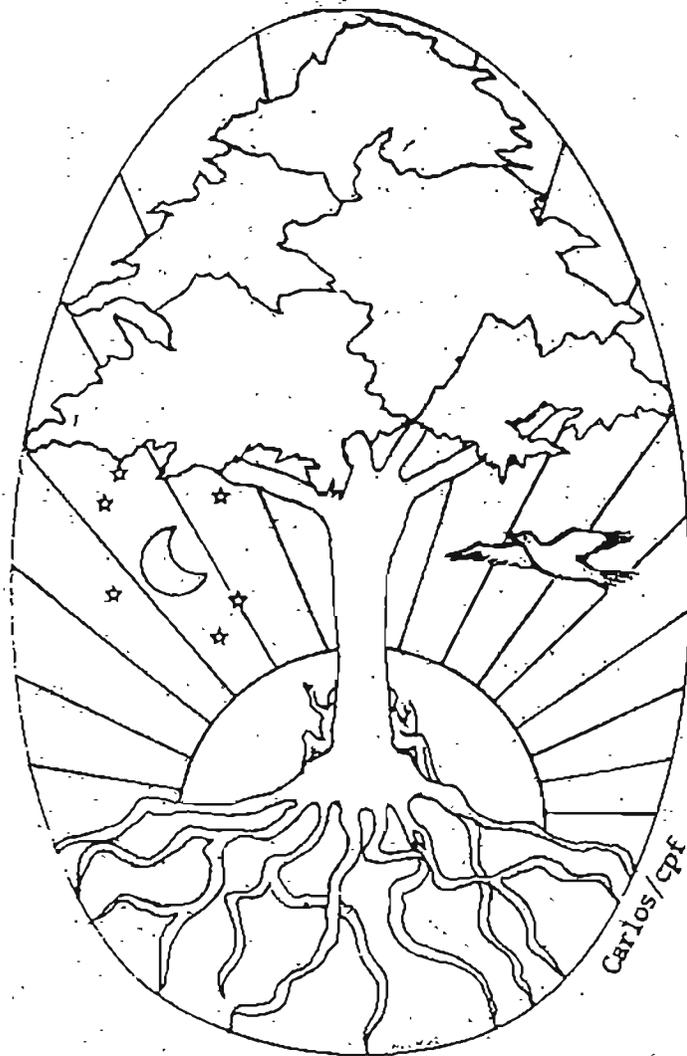
Prayer is about awareness, about seeing God everywhere. Good ole' St. Paul is probably right on this one: "Pray always, without ceasing..." (Phil. 4:6) The journey of my prayer-life is unique, up and down, and crazy! Yours is, too. Seldom is life progressive, orderly or ordinary. That's the wonder of our God--full of surprises, if only we look with eyes open to seeing! Jesus is an upside-down God: who else but a real "nut" would love the poor, dine with prostitutes, and speak in parables that make no sense to Corporate America?

There is an incredible richness to our Catholic Tradition, and to many other Traditions as well. Humans have always sought the Divine Mystery--around the globe and through the ages. There are books, tapes and now, even videos on "how to pray, find meaning, know yourself, seek holiness" and on...and on...but yours (and mine) is a special, unique journey, in the company of other saints--full of beauty and pain, terrible and wonderful! I encourage you to check out the banquet of prayer traditions, and choose what nourishes your spirit.

Part of my prayer life began with the Roman Monastic Tradition--full of discipline and asceticism, retreats and Mass. I invite you to look at the "touchstones" in your past so that they can become the rich soil of future growth in prayer.

I first began to set aside time to be alone with

Diana Oleskevich studies for her Masters Degree in both Gerontology and Social Work at St. Louis University School of Social Services when she's not praying.



God when the chaos of being a mother to three children under age five forced me to realize how important it was to be alone with my husband, Jim. Relationships need time to nurture. I learned much from my Baptist neighbor who knew more Scripture than I've learned in twenty years. She said I needed to go "on a date" with Jim every week. She also said that what I needed to use for prayer was an egg-timer and a washing machine. As soon as the children were down for a nap, I put in a load of wash so that I wouldn't think of the time as being "wasted." I set the egg timer for ten minutes, sat in a chair (what, not kneel?) and listened to God.

Twenty years later, this morning, I went upstairs to a little corner. I can't spend an hour between shower and catching breakfast and get out "on time." The timer still frees me and it's worth getting up ten or twenty or

thirty minutes earlier for prayer. Today I set the timer for twenty minutes, carefully and with holy awareness lit a match to a candle, blew out the match and began to breathe slowly, gently, and deeply. I eased my body down and began by reading from a little daily meditation guide, then closed my eyes and said, "Good Morning, God." The time and place for my prayer routine seldom changes when I'm at home. What I read or use as a "starter" has varied over the years. When I first started a prayer time it felt awkward and I didn't know many other people who prayed. Certainly, it was foreign to my Catholic experience. I tried to "fit in" prayer, but now I pray first and fit in the rest of the day. It's all prayer: cleaning, cooking, walking, crying, or laughing—but a special time is also special prayer. Rarely do I miss prayer time; my day is missing something or out of sync when I am too rushed, forget, or oversleep. I need to be centered, focused and still with my God—just as I need to spend time with Jim or any good friend: listening, sharing and being with them amidst the "stuff" of our lives.

Over the years, I've tried dozens of prayer methods and most of them have worked for a while. There are seasons of prayer, times to grow and times to be dormant. Sometimes Jim and I pray together, mostly not. We are madly in love and recognize our different styles. His prayer time is in the red chair in our living room before breakfast—I need to be more awake. The point is that any method will work for you. Just do it. And be open, flexible to changing tomorrow or next year. It's not about doing it the "right way"—prayer is more about being than doing, more about loving and knowing how much you are loved (even when you feel like scum).

I've found it's good to have a prayer partner, spiritual companion or "director" to talk to about prayer. One of my best times in my week is with Rich (a holy friend that I've been jogging with on Saturday mornings for fifteen years.) We do "theological reflection on the hoof"—laughing, noticing spring green or winter's cold. Both are metaphors for life with God. Eating, sleeping, holy married sex, changing diapers or studying: all this is the fodder to bring to prayer. And there's probably someone who's written a book on it, too. But I finally figured out that reading about prayer isn't the same as praying. Neither is going to a lecture or retreat (though these can be helpful). There are as many ways to pray as there are people, all are wonderful and holy and crazy.

I hope and pray that you are discovering Prayer is Life is Adventure is Mystery is Journey is Relationship is Hunger is Communication is Fun is Holy is Joyful is Prayer. Where does one end, and the other merge into beginnings for you? ✦

BOOK REVIEW

by Judy Cagney, RSCJ

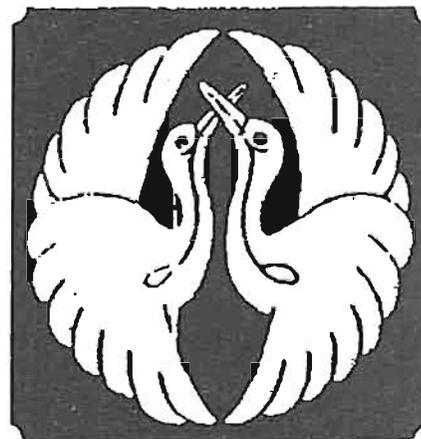
Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method, by Philip Sheldrake, SJ

Philip Sheldrake set out to write a general introduction to contemporary spirituality and ended up writing an invaluable guide to understanding the intertwining of history and spirituality. This change of focus was motivated by personal experience of his students' need for a critical approach to the reading of spiritual classics and the history of Christian spirituality. At the same time, this work is a timely response to the popularization of mysticism and spirituality among the general public, including those who are unchurched or inclined to a fundamentalist approach.

Sheldrake begins with a cogent critique of the selectivity of history. He challenges the assumptions of traditional historical method, points out the frequently unrecognized bias in words used to name historical events, and stresses the importance of getting at the "underside" of history, those little-known but very significant facts and movements that create an alternative perspective to history as we know it.

His careful exploration of the nature of history sets the context for uncovering the history of spirituality and avoiding the pitfalls that can trap the unsuspecting. By spirituality Sheldrake means "the conscious human response to God that is both personal and ecclesial." (p.37) This use of the term "spirituality" differs in significant respects from former usages and requires the reader of history to look beyond the words "spiritual" or "spirituality" to find that personal and ecclesial response to God.

Because the history of spirituality is subject to the same methodological problems as history in general, Sheldrake offers a critique of traditional approaches to the history of spirituality, preconceptions that controlled the reporting of the development of spirituality. This treatment was often a-historical (in the sense that it prescinded from recognizing historical conditions as relevant), transcultural, and polemical, intent upon establishing "what must have been the case" to validate "orthodox" theological positions.



The middle section of Sheldrake's book demonstrates through the use of two fascinating case studies how the bias of history has marginalized groups by its selectivity and limited common awareness of the rich spirituality of ordinary Christians. He points out how the identity and life of lay Christians and Eastern traditions of religious life were eclipsed by the dominant

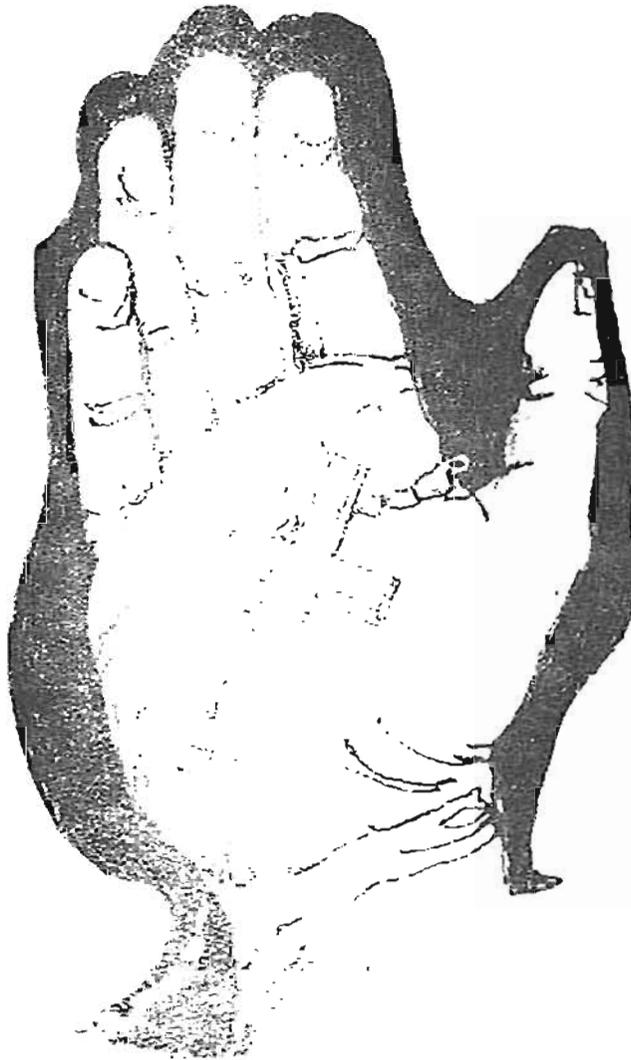
Judy Cagney, RSCJ, is provincial treasurer for the Society of the Sacred Heart in the United States and a member of St. Cronan's parish.

treatment given to religious life in the Western tradition as if it were "the" locus of spirituality in the Church. Similarly he shows that the rich apostolic life of the Beguines, a spiritual movement of lay women that emerged in Northern Europe in the late 12th Century, has nearly been lost because of its lack of a corporate framework within the institutional church and the consequent lack of recognition by those who had the power to write history.

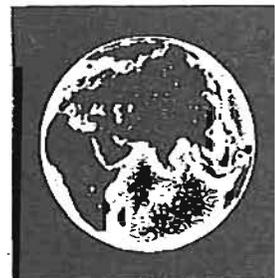
The final section of the book provides a practical guide to the reading of classical spiritual texts. Sheldrake argues that it is first necessary to recognize the characteristics of a true spiritual classic, understand its historical context and the tradition which has augmented its interpretation, and then to enter into a critical dialogue with the text, bringing both technique and the power of imagination to bear on it. The fruit of such a "discipline of spirituality" can lead to new insight and

deepen one's response to God personally and ecclesially.

In the writing of this book, Sheldrake has done a wonderful service for any serious Christian who wishes to grow in the life of the Spirit. He has provided a solid framework for understanding spirituality in its own right and done so in a way that is both intellectually satisfying and eminently readable. For those who are interested in furthering their own study, he has provided an extensive bibliography and careful footnotes. For those who wish to read the spiritual classics for personal nourishment, he has offered an approach that avoids naivete and presents tools for critical interpretation. For those who are concerned about the marginalization of various groups through the selectivity of history and the history of spirituality, he has challenged his readers to critique the assumptions of historians and to re-read the history of spirituality from the underside. ✦



FROM ABROAD



"If the enemy advances, go back; if the enemy stops, scourge; if the enemy hesitates, attack; if the enemy runs away, persecute." These rules written by Sun Tzu in the classic work of Chinese literature, The Art of War, are the same age as Socrates' sentence, "Know your enemy and know yourself in order that you may not be in danger in one hundred battles."

We never even suspected that we would have the chance to prove the philosophy of this military strategy in Mexico. In the first minutes of January 1994, the armed insurrection of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) was definitely endowed with a different leadership than the other Latin American guerilla movements of this century.

The actual historic context partially defines the Zapatista insurrection. On the one hand, as Carlos Fuentes notes, the EZLN emerged right after the collapse of the socialist block. This occurrence then, disproves the hypothesis that all the guerilla movements were sponsored by communists.

On the other hand, it appeared exactly as NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) was starting, proving false the image of Mexico painted abroad by Carlos Salinas de Gortari. The way in which the EZLN became known, therefore, in Mexico and abroad helped it achieve the popular approval of the Mexican people.



The main weapon of the EZLN is and has been the WORD. The way it gives its ideas to the Mexican people has not been to use demagogical revolutionary

speech, nor to use Marxist analysis nor Leninist, Trotskyite or Marxist values.

The confrontation of the Mexican Army and the EZLN was only twelve days in duration. From January 13, 1994, until today, both sides have pursued the war through propaganda. And with this procedure, the Zapatist insurrection has given the definitive attack.

The communications of "insurgent subcommander Marcos" have surprised everybody not only for the quality of their rhetoric, their ideological clearness and their political vision, but also for their literary skill. By their way of expressing things, they convince, they disturb and they prick people's consciences. Marcos' word has become power and it has made it possible for the EZLN to build a wide social base in the countryside and in the cities. The number of those who are sympathetic with the Zapatistas grows in proportion with the decrease in credibility of the State government.

"To conquer the enemy without fighting," as Sun Tzu said, seems to be the main strategy of the Zapatistas. Therefore, the art of war, in the war of the EZLN, has been the art of convincing others of the wisdom of its movement, and the art of creating a strong support in the civil society. The aim of its activities has been to stop the State government military purposes.

Even Marcos' fictitious unmasking, which tried to bring a radical end to the Zapatista movement, did not end the insurrection. This guerilla movement, composed almost completely of indigenous people, is different from others. The struggle has touched the consciences of many Mexicans who have made a cause of the Zapatistas, and Marcos, their new leader. The EZLN's art of war is different from what is taught at The School of the Americas because it is based on justice and the faith of the Mexican people. The EZLN must continue confronting the government.



The author of this piece is a member of a base community in Chiapas, Mexico.

FROM KAREN HOUSE



by Tim Pekarek

I am writing this piece for Karen House' contribution to the Round Table, even though I've been away from there for almost two weeks. After almost five years at the house, I have left to take a long break from there. For quite a while now I have had the feeling that if I were to remain at Karen House much longer I would be at risk of becoming a serious burn-out case.

There has been one recent event in my life that prompted me to leave the house, and St. Louis, now rather than lingering for months. That is the recent death of my friend, Gary Rose. About a year ago, I met Gary through the Buddy Program of Effort for AIDS, an AIDS service organization in St. Louis. During this time I was able to spend a lot of time with Gary and his partner, Tim, and their dogs, friends, and other family members.

Obviously there were times when Gary was very sick, even hospitalized for weeks; but there were other times, between infections and illness, that Gary was doing fine. I often had to stop and remind myself that Gary had lived more than three years with various AIDS symptoms coming and going; and until the end was near, I never really had the sense that he was slipping away.

One thing that I really loved Gary for was that shortly before I met him, he had kicked his habit of drugs and booze. Gary had a habit since he was a kid, probably by the time he was twelve years old. Perhaps that his partner Tim was there for support might have helped him stay sober, but it was Gary who had made up his mind.

I had pretty much made up my mind to be around for Gary, however much time he had, knowing that it could even be years. On January 17th, Gary did pass away. His last moments were peaceful and both of his Tims were with him. At the time of his death Gary was 27 years old. I had a sense of relief and release when Gary was gone, and that helped me to accept that

it was my own time to move on.

My plans for the next several months are—I will be in the Midwest through May and into early July, visiting friends and relatives. In mid-July I will head to the Northwest to spend a couple of months with Jim and Katrina Plato and their kids on the farm at Cheballis, WA. I also plan to try to make a trip down to the Bay Area to see some friends, and to attend the first international Lesbian and Gay Catholic Worker gathering and retreat in mid-September.

Much of the time in the past week, I have been thinking of the people of Oklahoma City after the bombing there. It is overwhelming and quite distressing when an event like this occurs. We can see so clearly how acts of violence cycle through all of our lives. It has been said that the bombing in O.K.C. may have been a reaction to the federal assault on the Branch Davidians at Waco, Texas two years ago. If Timothy McVeigh, or anyone else, is convicted of this mass killing, they will most likely be prosecuted for the death penalty.

The federal government recently spent about \$300,000 to build an addition to the prison in Terre Haute, Indiana, to house the death chamber where federal executions take place. Christopher Hitchens, writing in "The Nation" (5-8-95), described touring that room recently. He describes seeing the gurney with two extendable arm pieces, for I.V. injections, "with those, out-thrust, the thing had an oddly cruciform look."

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Tim Pekarek is sorely missed by all; the house is no longer regularly adorned with flowers.

FROM LITTLE HOUSE



by Mary Ann McGivern, S.L.

Last summer my garden nemesis was hedge bindweed—*convulcullus sepium*—a simple climbing or twining vine in the morning glory family with alternate heart-shaped leaves and small white flowers, a calix and five sepals or small bristles.

While my back was turned, bindweed twined itself around my roses, lilac, tomatoes, evergreen, and a pear tree. Strictly speaking, my back wasn't turned. The vine spread through the lilac and pear tree branches under my delighted eye. I thought the rich green was lilac and pear leaves and that the growth was handsome. Then I left town for three weeks. When I returned, there were seedpods everywhere, two to three inches long, smooth—bright green pods nestled among the deep August dark green foliage.

I was ruthless. I spent a weekend tearing out the vines. I dug deep with my pitchfork to get at thin roots that stretched down into compact clay soil. I unwrapped vines from rose thorns and pine needles and almost ripe pears. I yanked and unwound and, in desperation, cut into tangles at the centers and tops of my trees and bushes. I clutched at seedpods, tore them from the vines, and obsessively thrust every one of them, together with the roots, into the trash.

In August these seedpods are compact cases, soft, shaped a little like tiny bananas, holding undeveloped green seeds, maybe a hundred to a pod, each attached by a thin cord to the top of the pod. The roots are white strings without any hairlike tendrils to give them substance or help break up the hardpan soil. I compost virtually everything—but not bindweed roots and seedpods.

Late Sunday afternoon, I sat back on my heels and sighed with relief. The bindweed was gone, all of it. That was August. Although I thought I kept a vigilant watch, in November, when the leaves fell, I saw a string of seedpods across the top of my apricot tree, another running down the goldenrod, and more hardening on the

fences. Again I grabbed them off the dying vines, pitching them into the dumpster. By now the pods were brown, still soft tight packages, but beginning to form a bumpy crust and inside, turning white as they dried.

Then, in January, deep in my Nanking cherry bushes and out in the open on my back shed, hanging on the telephone wire and, despite my vengeance, draped on the lilac, were dried hedge bindweed pods, their withered shells looking like elongated walnuts. The casings had a crisp crackle to them, but they were still flexible, resilient, designed to keep seed safe till spring. Again, I tore them off their supports and threw them away. But this time I paused first to admire their shape and the line of their drapery. I brought one inside to open at my desk.

*Late Sunday afternoon, I sat back
on my heels and sighed with relief.
The bindweed was gone, all of it.*

The inside of the ripe pod is a creamy mother-of-pearl, shaped like a candle flame. The seeds are brown, and almost flat, like bits of pencil shavings—but each one with a shining white down parachute, like dandelion fluff but sturdier, an aerodynamic design to propagate the seed, floating it far and wide from the mother pod. The seeds are packed tight in the mother-of-pearl lining. I turned it over on my desk and probed with my pencil to count 84 seeds. They scattered as I counted and spread their silky stands of angel hair, propelled by a breath of draft to the soil of the jade plant on my desk and the begonia by the window. No doubt some rested in the windowsill crack and, when I raised the storms, blew back out into the garden on the April breeze.



Mary Ann McGivern, SL is still a gardener. She was delighted to see a picture in Mev's book of Rubem Alves' jaboticaba fruit tree.

THE WORD SAYS, AND THE BLOOD DOES

by Christine Kimble

Here I am, HOLY SPIRIT, come. Walk with me. Help me hear what the Lord is saying.

I'm inviting you, God, to come and enable me to walk with you throughout the day.

Holy Spirit, help me receive what I'm asking for and what I need, through the power of Jesus Christ.

I believe the power of the blood of Jesus Christ. God, allow your Holy Spirit to come into me through the day and forever.

With the blood of Jesus Christ grant me protection, access, forgiveness, security in God's Grace, sanctification, dwelling in God's presence and victory.

Lord, let nothing come into my heart and mind, but what is of you. Now, satan, you cannot touch me, the blood is covering me. The power is in Jesus Christ.

All things are possible through prayer. I pray that I may be open to receive God's blessing. I pray that I may be willing to relinquish my hold on material things and receive them back from God.

Thank you, Lord, for reaching down and holding me. Cleanse me anew and wash me again. Lord, forgive me of my sins, help me, Lord, not to sin.

Lord Jesus, I confess with my mouth, and believe in my heart that God was raised from the dead.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of his grace.

The blood has washed my past and I am free. I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

God, I've been living my life my own way. Now I want to live it your way. I need you and I am now willing for you to take control of my life. I receive your son Jesus Christ as my personal savior and Lord. I believe he died for my sins and has risen from the dead. I surrender to him as Lord. Come, Lord Jesus, and occupy the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person you want me to be. Only God can move mountains, but faith and prayer move God.



LORD, I COME BY THE BLOOD

by Scott Stauffer & Teka Childress

Over the last several months, Scott and Teka have discussed questions they have about life at Karen House and their vision for the house. They thought they would share some of their thinking with you.

Scott

Being new to Karen House, I am learning that Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin founded the Catholic Worker movement with the hopes of creating a new social order based upon "the expressed and implied teachings of Jesus Christ." They wanted to make it easier for people to be good; easier for people to be clothed, fed and sheltered; easier for people to provide for their personal well-being and the well-being of their families. Add to this vision the practices of personalism, nonviolence, and voluntary poverty in a faith-based community, such as a Catholic Worker house, and the product is a radical, new way of viewing other people and the world. I think this comes close to how Jesus saw people and the world, and how we can choose to do the same.

Since joining the community at Karen House, I find myself looking at other people, communities and institutions in new and different ways. I worry less and less about what I am going to do five years from now, and more and more about what the women and children we live with are going to do five years from now. I also worry about the men and women who come for sandwiches everyday. What are they going to be doing five years from now? While it is clear to me that my life and my social order are radically changing, it is not clear to me that the social order of these women, men and children is changing. How can we, as a Catholic Worker community, respond to this situation? How can we ask tough questions about what we do, and how we do it, without applying conventional business-sense to what we do? How can we re-examine the ways our community is creating a new society, while still embracing the sometimes untangible or unmeasurable works of faith that so much embody the Catholic Worker movement? Is providing hospitality enough, or can we use our community talents and resources to provide more fair and just

economic and social alternatives for our guests (and for ourselves)?

It might be a bit early for me to ask these questions, with less than one year at Karen House; but I like asking questions, especially questions that challenge my thinking and daily life. After all, these are the kinds of questions that brought me to Karen House. I have read somewhere that Peter Maurin said the Catholic Worker is not an organization, but an organism. I don't want Karen House to become another social service agency, but I do want us to have a physical check-up. We would like to invite you to join us in prayer and perhaps a Round Table discussion or two as the community begins to explore these questions in the coming months.



Teka

I have also been pondering about whether there is something more we might do to live out the radical vision of the Catholic Worker. I have particularly been wondering how we can offer our guests a more meaningful role, both in our house, and in our society. In a

Teka Childress & Scott Stauffer need continued prayers during their summer fitness campaign.

country where those living in poverty have little power in either the economic or political realm, how can we at the Catholic Worker empower the women who stay with us and share power with them? How can we ask something of them and yet not just expect them to accept their lousy place in this "filthy rotten system," as Dorothy Day put it? I have been truly concerned about the options our guests face when they leave. As Scott expressed, the community may be experiencing a new social order, but to a large extent, our guests are not. When they leave they still face the unavailability of decent jobs, and decent and safe neighborhoods.

As I wrote in a recent Round Table Talk, Dorothy Day certainly envisioned the need for us to work for a new economic order by creating such things as cooperatives. Her support for unions and workers' rights was another way she worked for economic justice and change. Peter Maurin saw the need to create "a new society within the shell of the old." Part of his vision included the agronomic universities, Catholic Worker farms. His vision of personalism inspires us to work so that each person is given the freedom to become what God calls them to be.

How can we create this new society? In terms of our house, it demands that we find ways to share some of the control over what and how things happen in the house. In terms of the society, it demands that we work seriously to create economic alternatives for those living in poverty.

I have imagined our work for economic change taking a variety of possible directions. We could focus our energies on organizing efforts. This could be done by working for change on a global scale, by resisting elements of the new economic order, such as those that take away workers' rights; or it could be done by working for change on a local scale by organizing to create jobs in our community, perhaps, for youth as an alternative to gangs and drugs. Already, members of our community have been involved with a group that's doing housing development in our neighborhood. That group is looking into becoming involved in economic development as well. Alternatively, we could focus our energies toward starting a cooperative enterprise, owned and run by our guests and neighbors. We could do many things to better create a new social order, both in our house and outside of it. It is because of the great privilege we have of living with those who come to stay with us that we so greatly yearn for this new order. We welcome your ideas and your help.

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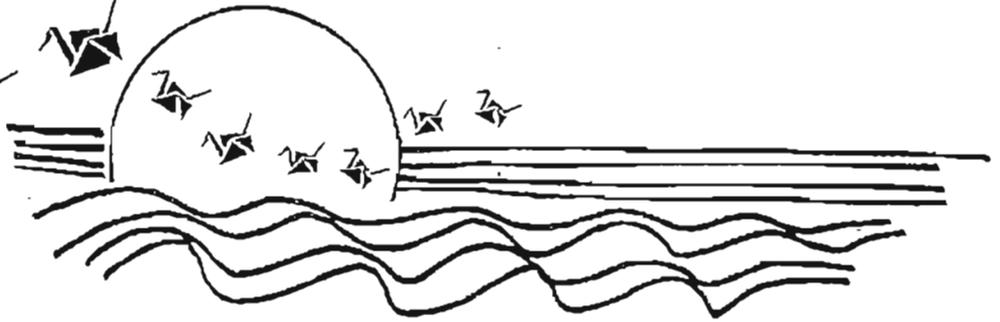




Come to the River to Remember

WE GATHER TO REDEDICATE OURSELVES TO NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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OF THE BOMBINGS
OF HIROSHIMA
AND NAGASAKI



Sunday, August 6, 1995 7:30 pm Luther Ely Smith Park

(East of Old
Court House)

Summer Reading

Praying with Dorothy Day

Jim Allaire, of the Dan Corcoran House community in Winona MN., and Rosemary Broughton, recently authored Praying with Dorothy Day, a book focusing on her spirituality through meditations on her life and words.

Saint Mary's Press (457-7900; 800-533-8095)

House needs:

- ♦ House takers
- ♦ Money
- ♦ Silverware (spoons)
- ♦ Kitchen utensils
- ♦ Fans
- ♦ Pampers

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, Teka Childress, Kris Dennis, Mary Dutcher, Mitch McGee, Bill Müller, Ellen Rehg, Mark Scheu, and Annjie Schiefelbein. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

The Round Table

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