

THE Round Table

Summer/Fall
1997

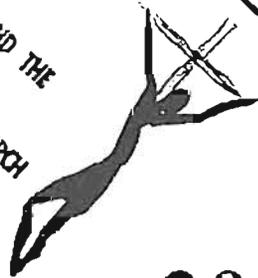
"...a path from where we are to where we should be." -- Peter Maurin

THE Round Table



"Let The Little Children
Come To Me..."

WOMEN
AND THE
CHURCH



SHOUTING OUT AND
DIGGING IN

Summer 1991

THE Round Table

Hospitality



is the
Age
of Grace

THE Round Table



THE Round Table

Gospel
Response in Times of Social
Collapse



the Round Table

SUMMER
1983

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

THE Round Table



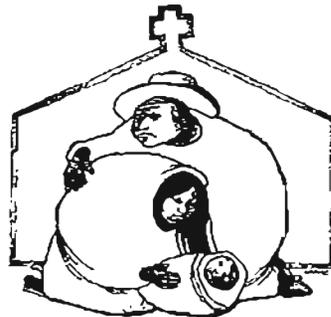
MERCY AND JUSTICE SHALL MEET

THE Round Table

V
I
E
T
N
A
M



INSTANT AMNESTIA



VOICES FROM CENTRAL AMERICA

WHY THIS ISSUE?

In honor of Karen House's twentieth anniversary and the celebration of one hundred years since Dorothy Day's birth, we decided to put out a commemorative issue. It is a sampling of *Round Table* articles over the years. It should not be mistaken for a "*Round Table* Greatest Hits" although we do hope we have some of our better articles reprinted here. Our purpose, rather, was to present articles by some of our most frequent authors that tell the story of our history and the issues that have been central to us.

We begin, in a sense, with the beginning. In the first article, Sue Lauritsen tells the history of the Catholic Worker in St. Louis (in its most recent incarnation) which she initiated. Following Sue's piece we have articles about each of the houses that hopefully give some sense of them and the life in them. These are by Pat Coy, longtime community member at Karen House and central person on *The Round Table* for years; Carol Donahue, C.P.P.S., who helped keep Cass House vital for its ten years; Mary Ann McGivern, S.L., our most prolific writer, who was at Karen House in the beginning and who has been the anchor at the Little House its whole history; Lee Carter, who ran a restaurant and was a most beloved community member at Karen House; and finally Teka Childress, who basically gets an article in here because she has stuck it out at the Worker a long time and thus accumulated a number of articles. After the "house" articles we have some interviews with guests, one with a woman at Karen House, by Bill Ramsey, former community member and faithful rabble rouser, and one with a child, by Ellen Rehg, former community member and lover of children.

After the articles about our houses and guests, we move into presenting some of the issues dear to our hearts over the twenty years. John Kavanaugh, S.J., outstanding teacher and writer and our dear friend, writes on Community; Mark Scheu, community member for a decade and keen social critic, writes on *The State and the Follower of Christ*; Mary Dutcher, another former community member who performs her usual skill of raising numerous critical issues and showing their relation to one another writes on "Feminism, Peace, and Incidentally, the Church"; Virginia Druhe, another formidable *Round Table* presence, who lived in Central America (with Mary), writes about Central America; Tim Pekarek, one of the few remaining current community members, writes from the fairly recent issue on Homosexuality. So that you don't think we only ponder serious things and have no sense of humor, our last two articles are from our humor issue, the first a "review" of the Bible, by Ellen Rehg, and the second, letters to Miss Ann Arch--all right, I'll let it out of the bag--by Virginia Druhe. Our Centerfold is dedicated to Ann Manganaro, S.L., one of the cofounders of Karen House, and Mev Puleo, a photojournalist, and a companion to both those at Karen House and Cass House. These two are our beloved friends whose lives still inspire us and whose deaths we still mourn. We include testimonies to them by Martha Crawley, S.L., and Angie O'Gorman.

We hope that you enjoy rereading some of these articles and that they offer encouragement. Thanks for everything these past twenty years. We could never have done it without you. ✦

- Teka Childress

Photos by Joe Angert unless otherwise noted.

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

A DREAM REVISITED

by Sue Lauritsen

-from Spring, 1983

When I was approached several weeks ago to write some of my reflections about the St. Louis Catholic Worker, I was filled with gratitude and humility. It just so happens that in the last few months I've done little else but reflect and reminisce about the impact of the Catholic Worker Movement both on me and the hundreds of people it has touched—and let touch it—in the St. Louis area .

I am appreciative of the opportunity to revisit a dream of mine that had its roots in Omaha, where I first became involved in the Catholic Worker Movement. I spent two growth-filled years at a Catholic Worker House in Omaha, at which time I decided to put out some feelers in the St. Louis area concerning a Catholic Worker House here.

In 1977 I moved to St. Louis with a dream of seeing a Catholic Worker House filled with the spirits of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin; and now in 1983 there are three St. Louis Catholic Worker Houses, two of which I was involved directly with in the beginning. When I first thought of a Catholic Worker House in St. Louis, I had thought it would probably involve overnight hospitality for men and a soup line because that's what I was familiar with in Omaha. Needless to say, that wasn't the way the Spirit was moving the people I came in contact with in St. Louis—thus Karen House, a house of hospitality for women and children. The Catholic Worker dream in St. Louis expanded with the opening of Cass Catholic Worker House in 1979. Cass House began operating with a soup line, added overnight hospitality for men and, finally, extended its hospitality in 1980 to temporary shelter for women and children.

In 1977 I never imagined how many hundreds of people in St. Louis would be touched by the Catholic

Worker Movement. Some of us actually live in the houses, and a larger group volunteers the houses some of their time and energy on a regular basis in carrying out the tasks that need to be done. This is an important part of Catholic Worker philosophy that Peter Maurin talked about, "bringing those who have to meet those who don't have."

Catholic Worker in St. Louis continues to touch people in all professions, religions, economic classes and political persuasions. The people in St. Louis were so ripe for the Catholic Worker Movement that all I did was act as a catalyst for a chain of events that hasn't stopped since 1977. For many in St. Louis, Catholic Worker has become the instrument they can use in order to touch the downtrodden in our city in a real way.



Sue Lauritsen -- photo by Myrrah Rehg

I've been with the Catholic Worker Movement for nine years, and it has become more a part of me than most people will ever realize. I have learned through

Sue Lauritsen is a neighborhood entrepreneur in Forest Park South East.

some of my experiences that, as one who struggles to be caring, it is all too easy to strip people of their dignity by taking over the responsibility of making their decisions for them. I have realized it takes much more patience to keep affirming people's ability to take charge of their own life. It is so much more difficult to love people in their brokenness, whether it be those we share community with or our guests; and yet that is what the New Testament continues to call us to. I have come to understand that because of my limitations and brokenness my judgments are at times very limiting when it comes to being more tolerant of our guests and idealistic live-in members.

When I think back on Karen House and Cass House many people enter the picture; many are our guests who touched my life in a special way. I'll never think of Karen House without thinking about Hazel and how she tries everyone's patience—and yet there is something so wise about her. I think also of Eleanor Barki and Nora Bell, God Rest Their Souls, who loved the Catholic Worker as much as we loved them. Although I've met many economically poor people through the Catholic Worker, they have been rich in spirit. Poverty began to take on a face with people like Paula,

Jackie, Julius, Sam, Alice B., Zelma and Alice F. It is only when poverty is personalized and embraced that one will feel compelled to do anything about it. . . .

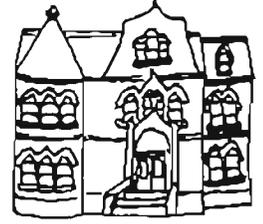
I want to thank all those people who have shared their lives with me and who have let me share mine with them. . . . Although there are a lot of people I could thank, I want to take this opportunity to voice my gratitude to three people I met through the Catholic Worker here in St. Louis. They have touched my life in a very profound way and continue to be witnesses of the Good News: Anne and Bolen Carter and F. Leo Weber, S.J.

Someone asked me the other day if I thought the Catholic Worker in the United States would die out. After giving it some thought, I responded by saying that I felt the Catholic Worker Movement wouldn't die out even though the two founders are dead. It seems to me the Catholic Worker Movement is founded on living out in a tangible way the Works of Mercy, and a movement founded on the Good News of the gospel will live in the hearts of Christians for years to come. Catholic Worker Houses may come and go, but the spirit of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin will live on.



Group photo from Catholic Worker Community 20th anniversary reunion. Martha Donovan travelled from California. Ann Rick from Massachusetts. Jim Halliday from New York, Mike and Janet and their children Kate, Annie, and Liam from Chicago -- Kris Denis also travelled from Illinois.

FROM KAREN HOUSE



by Pat Coy

-from Summer, 1990

The old convent was built in 1904. Few costs were spared in the construction. It looks tired now, but still stately. Beautiful woodwork abounds. There are 78 windows, including one large and magnificent stained glass window in the main stairway. Another stained glass window graces the transom above the front door. Below it, carved into the stone, is the welcoming message, "Pax Intranibus."

Next door sits St. Liborius Church, good enough of a building to make it onto the National Register of Historic Buildings. The architectural symmetry between the two is striking. Perfectly even. It can stop you in your tracks if you approach the house and church from the west on N. Market Street. I often go that way just to get stopped. The love and care and pride these German immigrants poured into their buildings is little short of humbling to us Catholic Workers with our shoestring operation. But it is good to be humbled. And to be reminded of the mystery of work, the sanctity of craftsmanship, and the power inherent in love of church.

This house with thirteen bedrooms on one floor was home to a long succession of nuns, many of them German-speaking. They maintained an educational ministry to the immigrant families in the neighborhood, walking hand in hand into cultural assimilation. The house still serves the neighborhood, albeit in different ways. Lay people have taken the nuns' place, offering shelter to homeless women and children for the last thirteen years.

For roughly ten of those thirteen years we've been hosting about 25 guests at a time for a base period of two months. Our first guest lent the house her name. Somewhere between 2000 and 3000 others have called this house home since Karen moved on.

Some stay for a week and then return to an abusive mate. Others stay their two months and move

on to another shelter, or, in the warm months, to the street. These are likely to call Karen House home another time. Perhaps when the monthly check runs out. Perhaps when they wear out a welcome yet another time with a family member. Still others may stay four or six months, patiently saving for their own place. When they succeed, the halls here explode with squeals of delight. Congratulations are shared all around. A dream close to so many hearts is fulfilled; a human right is realized.

Many of the guests stay in touch with the house and the community after they move out. Some volunteer to cook, clean, or do maintenance. Some send thank you cards, and others, especially if they have made a friend among the community members, call somewhat regularly. They ask for news of the house and community and fill us in on their own lives.

After having stayed with us for a few months twice in the last year, Donna recently moved into her own home with her three children and new husband. We were tickled when the two youngest boys, Willie and Donnell, called the other day. They wanted to let us know how much they liked their new home and school and to say they missed us as well.

It is a special joy when the children call after having moved out. Perhaps we suspect the children will forget us more quickly, and who among us does not want to be enjoyed by the little ones? In any event, this interconnectedness is the web of grace that is weaved at a Catholic Worker house as people share their lives in the ordinary business of trying to build the beloved community. The apostle Paul called it the Mystical Body of Christ. It is indeed a holy wonder.

Just as many have come and gone here as guests, so too have many come and gone as community members. Maybe not so many as one would expect since Catholic Worker communities are notoriously tran-

Pat Coy just defended his doctoral dissertation and is a professor of Peace Studies at Kent State University.

sitory, with people frequently joining for a year or two and moving quickly on. But this community is perhaps more intentional than most, and consequently more stable. Some of our founders are still with us thirteen years later, and even though I have been here seven years only three of our eleven community members came after I.

This is an awfully tough group to leave. A common vision may have brought us together, but I think it is the experiment in learning to love each other that holds us in its grasp the longest. It is perhaps the most painful but also the richest element of life at the

St. Louis Catholic Worker.

As we learn to love we learn to both challenge and affirm. This has seemed no easy balancing act. It means accepting one another as we are while calling one another to become the better person each is capable of being. This loving each other in community is a delicate dance, and once it is even partly learned, one wants the music to continue all night. I've only managed to learn to step smartly on the easiest of tunes; most I just shuffle along. But my partners have been so good it hasn't seemed to matter much.



FROM CASS HOUSE



by Carol Donahue, C.P.P.S.

-from Fall, 1984

Many exciting things have been happening since the last time you heard from us. As usual the house was closed for the month of August for cleaning and repair and for our "recouping." We are now back in full swing and looking forward to ministering and being ministered to by all who come to our home.

One of the more exciting events is that in January of last year several of us from both houses got together with some people from our neighborhood and incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation and began purchasing buildings in our neighborhood. We have started a Land Trust Corporation for the purpose of saving at least 50 units in our area for people who have lived in the neighborhood and given it the flavor we value. The area is slated for redevelopment and we hope creatively to bring together the "new" residents with those who have been a part of the area for the last fifteen to twenty years. As with most new undertakings, our progress has been slow, but as of now, we are the proud owners of three buildings, which insures that at least five economically disadvantaged families will not be forced from our area. Presently all of the people

living in the units are rental tenants, but at the end of one year they will be offered the option of becoming owners of their units. The By-Laws of the Land Trust guarantee that the land will be held in trust, and that only capital investment, together with improvement expenditures, may be charged when any unit is sold back to the trust. Any tenants who choose to buy their homes will continue to lease the land from the Land Trust. If they choose to continue as rental tenants, they may do so and the Land Trust Corporation will continue to hold both the land and the buildings in these particular situations. If anyone is interested in learning more about this venture, please talk with Teka, Virginia, or Sr. Carol.

Visiting and working with us this year will hold a few surprises, especially for old friends. Kathy, Sr. Carol, Joy and Terri are continuing on as community members in an extended fashion, for all are sharing in the ministry of the house as non-residents. Hopefully, others in the community will take advantage of the options offered by having Barb's house, Kathy, Joy and Terri's apartment and the Convent as getaway opportu-

Carol Donahue, C.P.P.S. works with homeless youth in Bolivia.

nities when the need arises. None of us is so far away that we can't be on hand when needed, and it is hoped that this new arrangement will provide a new surge of energy for all of us.

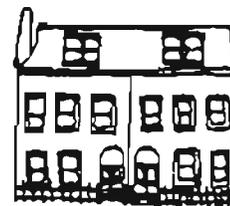
We have some other exciting surprises to share as well. Tommy Askew, a rather recent volunteer, has agreed to become a part of the decision-making phase of our community with all of the responsibilities that are entailed. Tommy adds a gentle, caring and compassionate ear, especially for the men who come to live with us. Frank Combs has decided to come and spend some time with us as a live-in volunteer for a couple of months, and Tim will be coming from Joplin, Missouri to share the ministry of hospitality with us, too. To both Frank and Tim we say, welcome.

Now that we have shared our surprises with you, we come sharing our needs as well. We find ourselves needing silverware — especially forks and spoons — soup bowls, dinner plates and large serving spoons. We are also getting many requests for furniture from former guests.

Lastly, we want to take this opportunity to publicly express our gratitude to all of you who continue to come to help us offer a Home that is hospitable and gently personable for all who live with us. Without your generosity the work of this House would not be possible. We pray for you often and ask that you continue to ask God's blessing on us. We also want to offer a warm welcome to all who will be coming to share in our mission for the first time. Again, many, many thanks to you all!



FROM LITTLE HOUSE



by Mary Ann McGivern, S.L.

-from Spring, 1996

Because the Little House is so small, I don't write about what goes on here very often. Describing events in the lives of those who live here puts their privacy at risk. But it has been a very long time since I've used this column to tell about the house.

When Father Marty Manion was here at St. Laborius in 1980, he suggested to Ella Dickson that, since she couldn't find a buyer for her four-flat and she wanted to move to Our Lady of the Snows, she should just give the building to me! I had said several times that while I loved the life and work of the Catholic Worker, Karen House was too big for me. So when Ella offered me the house, I accepted gratefully.

I moved in in January of 1981 with two of the guests, Sharon, who is a single mom and has worked for the past five years at a nursing home, and BJ, who has her own home now and works at Southwestern Bell. Paul, then a homeless fifteen-year-old, was hospitalized

in April; and when he was released he came to live with us. His younger brother, Elijah, soon moved into a group home and I became his guardian, too. Paul and Elijah still call me Mom and their children call me Grandma. I keep a box of toys in one corner of my living room for them.

Sharon, BJ, Paul, and Elijah all put in a lot of hours with me rehabbing the house. The two flats we moved into had been uninhabited for twelve years; and we all tuckpointed, plastered, sanded, painted, and polyurethaned for years.

Virginia and Charlie Nesmith and their children, Elizabeth and Ken, moved into Ella's apartment. Charlie worked for months to finish the attic, install hot water (it was a cold water flat), design the smallest shower in the world, and remove the lead paint; it's the apartment I'm in now. Bill Miller, Virginia Druhe, Stanley Hackney, Ellen and Myrrah Rehg, Mark Scheu,

Mary Ann McGivern, S.L., organized the 20th anniversary gathering of the St. Louis Catholic Worker.

Pat Coy and Karen Tanquist all lived at the Little House at various times and in various apartments. A schizophrenic woman named Jackie died of cancer here. A man with AIDS and women with mental illness, lupus, and some who were striving to recover from crack and alcohol addictions all lived here, too, over the years.

Essentially, the Little House has been home for some of the Karen House Community and for a few men and women and children who couldn't make it by themselves—although most people receive a disability or welfare check and pay a proportionate rent. But in the last two years it has become a home for a couple of poor families who were not carrying enormous troubles besides poverty. As the economic conversion work has grown larger and I have grown older, I have not been able to cope very well with the unrelenting crises and demands that come with mental and physical illness and addiction. I've made some peace with my own



Mary Ann McGivern, S.L.

limitations and been content to offer a simpler form of hospitality.

Your Worker donations still subsidize the Little House, helping to cover the cost of major repairs like the new roof we put on last spring. All the tenants, including me, pay some rent. One pays in in-kind services like painting and repair of the back steps. I leave my key with the neighbors when I go out of town and they take care of my cat, Morris. The two and three-year olds who live next door greet me every spring and summer day with a request for a flower. Their baby lips say "daffodil" and "hyacinth" and "vose." It is a low-key and comfortable life, ordinary. Still,

I couldn't do it without the long-term love and support of the larger Worker community. Thank you. ✦

EVERY DAY IS DIFFERENT

by Lee Carter

-from Spring, 1984

Tuesday may be just another day to most people, but to a Catholic Worker every day is different.

I got up at seven, had my usual coffee, and awakened the guests at eight-thirty. They all got up right away, except one. I always get the impression that she expects to be served coffee in bed.

A short time later a lady called needing clothes. I asked her size. She didn't know—just kind of wide and pretty tall. We had several calls from persons needing shelter, which we couldn't offer as we have a full house.

Sometimes you get calls that can make you very angry. Like the young mother with three small children. She called seeking shelter. You could hear the despair in her voice. The United States can spend millions and millions of dollars for bombs and war machinery, but there's never enough money for housing to let the poor live with dignity. Do you realize how many houses

could be bought for the poor—so they wouldn't have to beg for a bed—for what is spent on one bomb?

We can get very attached to some of our guests. And it's like losing your own child when they leave. Most of the time it's for the best. But at other times you feel they are making a mistake. The only thing you can do is pray for them—and hope.

Seems like when you need a car, that's the time they refuse to start. Oh, well, the footpaths aren't crowded. Maybe the good Lord will answer our prayers and send us one that works all the time—even in cold weather. Anyhow, Clare enjoyed her walk to the grocery store in zero weather.

And there's Kane, our sixty-five pound mascot. He loves everybody. You may be a total wreck when Kane shows you his love, but you know it's genuine puppy love. Lots of people could take a few lessons from our Kane. ✦

Lee Carter turns 80 on September 26 (and runs a shelter for homeless animals in south St. Louis).

FROM KAREN HOUSE

by Teka Childress

-from Fall, 1990

"What's to live for?" A young woman kept repeating these words to me as we sat in the back yard of Karen House. She had been telling me about her life, describing the pain and losses she had experienced. The question she spoke aloud is one that we all must face and answer for ourselves; and yet, she was asking it of me as well. She wanted a response from me.

How does one answer such a question? How does one ever answer the suffering of another, particularly if the person suffering experiences it as overwhelming or meaningless?

I was wrestling with this dilemma around Pentecost. I had been eagerly awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit. I had been thinking about many of the women who stay with us and of the struggles they live with: the separations from family, often their own children, drug addictions, the loss of loved ones through violence, the lack of a home or even the prospect of one, and mental illness (the loss of control over something as personal as one's own thoughts).

This Pentecost I was particularly wondering what the Spirit's coming would mean for those feeling despair. Shortly after that time I picked up Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.

I was struck by the challenge posed by Ivan as he spoke with his younger brother Aloysha. Aloysha, a faith-filled novice, had wanted to know if Ivan believed in God. Ivan answered, "It's not that I don't accept God, you must understand. It's the world created by God I don't and cannot accept."

He particularly could not accept the suffering of an innocent child who had been cruelly tortured. He believed the harmony of the universe was not worth the agony of that one child.

I found his statement tremendously compelling. There is some way in which we should never accept the suffering of another. Ivan felt most keenly for the innocent child because in that case it seemed so senseless, yet in every case I think suffering should call forth compassion. This is not to say that suffering cannot allow for transformation or be an opportunity for grace. It's not to say that we can always do something to stop

it. It's just that we should always desire to ease the suffering of another or feel sorrow with them in the face of it. We should never be complacent about it. Never. And, whenever appropriate and possible we should do everything within our means to end it. This reality of senseless suffering led Ivan himself to struggle with despair.

Another character in the book also wonders about faith and meaning. Madame Holokov asks the holy monk, Father Zossima, "What if I've been believing all my life, and when I come to die there's nothing but weeds growing on my grave? . . . How can I get back my faith? How can I prove it?" He answers her, "There's no proving it, though you can become convinced of it."

"How?"

"By the experience of active love. Strive to love your neighbor actively and constantly. In so far as you advance in love, you will grow surer of the reality of God and of the immortality of your soul."

I think Father Zossima's response not only answers Madame Holokov's question, but Ivan's dilemma. Our response to those who suffer is to love them, actively and constantly. Then, not only will we become convinced ourselves of the reality of God, but so will they, as they experience God's love as it is expressed, even through the likes of us.

When the young woman asked me, "What's to live for?" I'm convinced she was asking me to actively love her, to ease her burden by listening to her, by sharing her sorrow and by helping her.

The greatest miracle of this life is that love does exist in the world, that it has become incarnate, that we often can love one another as frail as we are, that we can experience love in the midst of suffering ourselves, and in this joyful realization, desire to share it with others. This is the what that there is to live for, and others will be convinced of it, not only by our words of love, but by our acts of love.



Teka Childress

Teka Childress is not apprehensive about her 40th birthday in November.

TALKING WITH JEANNIE

Interview by Bill Ramsey

-from Spring, 1981

(This conversation with Jeannie Brown, one of our recent guests at Karen House, is an attempt to let those affected by the poverty of our city speak for themselves. As the interview proceeded, I found myself enlivened by the insight and hope--and almost poetic beauty--that surrounded Jeannie's words. Jeannie has moved on. Her new apartment finally came through. I'm sure that the insight and hope that we read here will serve Jeannie and her children well.)

BR-You were saying earlier that you were looking for an apartment. What kind of problems have you found in locating one?

JB-They turn me down with children. . . They say they don't want children. . . the different real estates and people who own their own property. I have four children and one on the way. They say it might be twins.

BR-Where did you live before you came here, to Karen House?

JB-I had two rooms. . . just like a kitchen. I had no tub in there - - no face bowl, either. At first the children were washing up in the sink. I bought them a little tub. It was cold in there, too. There was no space heater, either. I was scared to put a space heater in there with the kids, because they would mess with it.

BR-You were telling me earlier about a washing machine. Did you have that at the old apartment?

JB-Yeah, I'd be pinching out a little money each month to save to get that washing machine. I paid \$65 for it. You know, because I wasn't able to go out and wash like other people because I had so many children. So I would just be pinching each month, saving up to get that washing machine. It's over at my foster mother's house. I have a coffee table. I have some twin beds, too. All I have to move into my new house is a coffee table, twin beds and that washing machine and the children's clothes.

I have to scarp to get the rest of the stuff. I'm going to sleep on the floor until I'm able to get a box springs and mattress. But I don't have that yet. . . .

BR-Do you have an apartment yet?

JB-I don't have one yet. I put a deposit down on a section 8 apartment (public housing) , and she said that they'd be calling me before this Monday. I called back today (Thursday) and asked her. You know, I said, "When I put that deposit down I thought maybe I'd get an apartment kind of quick." But she said that they had to wait until something became empty for me. I called back today, and she said they were going to be calling people this weekend. I said, "Alright. . . ."

BR-How much did you put down on the apartment?

JB-Ninety-two dollars. When I got my check I went down there that very day. I had Joe (a worker) take me down there to put the deposit on it, because when they say it's for rent, I don't want to be without the money. So I told her, "I will have some money Tuesday and soon as I get the money I'll come down and put the deposit on it." And I went down there and put the deposit on it, and she said, "I'll be calling you soon" And I said, "Okay." It took so long and long. I kept calling and calling. I said, "I know you're getting tired of me calling and calling you, but I really want a place to stay with the children."

BR-What was it like in December living in that two

room apartment without heat? How did you sleep?

JB-I had some blankets and stuff. The man across the hall gave me some blankets for the children. It was kind of cold there.

BR-Did you have a stove to cook on?

JB-Yeah, I had to heat the house with that stove and that ran the gas bill up so high, that they talked about cutting the gas off. What has got me tied down right now is this pregnancy. I want to work. I love to work. I want to work . . . get me a job. I don't like welfare. I used to work in an office, a factory, and stuff like that. I worked in day care centers. I can do a lot of work. I've had a lot of jobs. I'm just tied down with all these children. I want to work. I want a house before I get 30. But I can't live on this welfare, waiting on a house to come before I'm 30. I want to get me a job. But right now I just can't do better than to just get what's coming to me and be satisfied until I can do better for myself. I do think there is a better chance for me in life. I use to not think that.

BR-So your best hope now is to get into public housing?

JB-Those section 8 apartments are good places for children to live. Hope I can get me a place to stay. It's hard to get a place. . . . turning people down with children. They were children before. They had places. The list is so long. There are a thousand people waiting for a place to stay. They are living in shelters and living in old cold houses with rats running around. Then the social worker comes around and finds out they are living like that and takes their children. That's the only way they can survive.

Babies are coming into the world every day without a place to stay. I don't like for anybody to get an abortion, but what is the use of bringing a little child into the world when it's going to come here and suffer? Most people can't take birth control pills. Then there comes the baby, and the baby has to come into the world and suffer. I looked at a whole list of apartments last week. I called every last one of them. They say, "How many children do you have?" I say, "Four." They say, "That's too many." I feel so hurt. It hurts me when I call a lot of places and they turn down my children. I don't look at it as me; it's the children. They know nothing about themselves in the world and come live like this. They think it's us doing them like that. A child turns 8 or 9, and they realize they are drifting. They think it's Mama, but it's not Mama. She is doing all she can to help. It's rough. It is.

BR-Do you find a lot of your friends and relatives in the same situation?

J B-Everywhere young mothers are trying themselves to take care of their children by getting the little money that they can make from welfare. It's not enough to live off. The social workers are coming and taking those people's children. And they have been abused not really by their mothers, but by how this living is. You can't

*And they have been
abused not really by
their mothers, but by
how this living is.*

really rely on that welfare. It doesn't take care of you like people think it does. If you have got five or six children. . . those shoes. . . look at all those shoes and coats and stuff. Those coats are high. Sometimes I have to go without a coat for my children. If you have three or four children, you have to buy a child's coat each month until you get all your children coats. And then they been abused by not having a place to stay that is decent. The social worker comes and takes your child. It hurts the mother worse that it hurts the child. Because the child don't understand why it has to go through this thing. If Reagan cuts the welfare off, there will be a lot of hungry children. They'll be a lot of stuff. People will go to stealing. They'll go to killing.

BR-Do your children ever talk with you about all this?

JB-My children sit down and talk to me and say, "Mama, why do you run around so much? We want a place to stay." Even my little girl gets on her knees and asks God, "God, give Mama a place to stay for us." My little girl is six years old. My little boy is four, and he says, "Me, too." They don't like living like this. They think it's me treating them like that. They look at me like they are saying, "Why did you bring me into this world?" I say, "It just happened to get like this when you came. I'm trying to hold on to you. I'm doing the best I can."

BR-President Reagan is planning to cut back on welfare payments and even the WIC program that provides young mothers with milk supplements. What will happen if he does that?

JB-I hope Reagan doesn't do that. He will hurt the babies who don't even know they are in the world and have come here and have to live like this. If he cuts off the WIC, the milk that you get free for the baby, I couldn't afford to take care of this baby. I've been trying to hold on to them as long as I can. But see, times are really bad. If he does that and I am fixing to move and I don't have that rent money, they will sit me outside right on that day.

If he cuts that money off, when I just began to get it, and he comes and cuts it off, I couldn't live.

They'd be a lot of hungry children. I couldn't take care of my children, if he did that. If he cuts the welfare and the different things that mothers get to help themselves, I couldn't live. This is all I can get right now to help myself until I get up on my feet. If he does that, I couldn't live. I would have to put my kids in foster care. Because if I didn't, they would come and take them, all because they are not eating and don't have proper food and clothes they need. I would just have to let them go. I hope he doesn't do that.

+

INTERVIEWING DIONE

Interview by Ellen Rehg

-from Spring, 1985

RT-How old are you, Dione?

D-Eleven.

RT-Eleven years old?

D-Mmm hmm.

RT-What school do you go to?

D-Jackson.

RT-Are you in fifth grade there?

D-Third. I'm in Crystal's room.

RT-Do you think it's easier to be a child or to be an adult?

D-A child, because you can learn more, like when you

go to school you can learn more than being an adult.

RT-What kinds of things do you learn?

D-Math, English, and spelling.

RT-What is the difference between being a child and being an adult?

D-Like, you get to stay here when your mama go out and stuff.

RT-What is something that an adult can do that you wish you could do?

D-Go a lot of places, like go to the show and stuff. Go cash a check and do all that.

Ellen Rehg teaches Philosophy at St. Louis University.

RT-What is one thing you would do if you could that you can't do now?

D-Go stay with my Grandmas for the weekend. It's fun playing with my cousins and my brother. . . I went over to my other cousin house and I was fighting over there. See, when I was coming down the steps and my other little cousin was standing by the steps and I didn't know he was down there and I had knocked him down the steps, then he kicked me and I pulled him down the steps. And then when we got upstairs my other cousin jumped in and both of them tried to fight me. So that's why.

RT-Is it hard for you living at Karen House with your family?

D-Uh-uh. . . Uh-uh, it ain't hard. You get to go outside and play and when you go to school you get to do your homework and you have fun at school, do your work and stuff.

RT-What do you think adults should know about children that you don't think they do know?

D-They shouldn't leave their kids in the house by themselves because the house could catch on fire or a man could break in and try to rape they kids and they wouldn't even know, they be gone. They shouldn't do that, they should leave somebody with us or take us to the babysitter house.

RT-Do you know anybody that happened to? Kids that were left alone and got hurt like that?

D-My cousin got raped by this man. . . he took a rake and bust the window out and she was in her brother's house. Her brother was asleep, she was the only one awake and the man had got in there and tried to rape her and he did and then she called her mama and they told her and they moved over to Glasgow with they Granddaddy. And my mama left us in the house one time by ourself. That time we called my cousin's house and said I be scared and then, see, we got this broken back door, but we be thinking that the dog could get the man and they be falling off the porch. . . the dog could make the man fall. . . . Everytime at night-time when I ain't got nobody to talk to I wake up my sister and to tell her I be scared to stay by myself. I be crying in the middle of the night, then I be falling asleep.

I don't like to stay by myself. That's why I tell my mama, "Take me with you. " And she say, "No." Then I say, "Take me over to my cousin's house, then." And she takes me over there. If we got a ride.

And that's why people be getting raped and stuff, they leave their kids in the house. They say it on the news. And do you know what, the furnace might catch on fire. I be scared to stay in that house we staying in. I be scared. The lights went out one time and we had to sleep in the dark.

RT-That was the last house you stayed in?

D-Umm-hmm.

RT-How come you had to leave that house?

D-They was fixing to redem [sic] the house?

RT-Condemn it?

D-Umm-hmm. That's why my mama said she wanted to move out.

RT-Do you know why the house was condemned?

D-Cause they wouldn't come out and fix the furnace, the bath tub was stopped up and we used the face bowl. We used to take a bath in cold water.

RT-So you didn't have any hot water?

D-No, we didn't have no hot water. I used to be scared to take a bath. I don't like cold water. And the back window by our bedroom—it used to be cold back there.

RT-The window was broken?

D-Umm-hmm. They come out and fixed the window, but they didn't fix the furnace.

RT-Did you have heat?

D-Umm-hmm. We had heat. But we didn't have no hot water.

RT-Have you lived in a lot of different houses?

D-We stayed on Allenbank, Briar Grove, Walton. That's cause my grandma's house caught on fire. . . My cousin's got out. . . My other cousin had jumped out the window . . . and this man next door named Butch kicked the door in and he got all of them out. The only person on the news was my cousin named Tiny. Because the newspeople had come and she was on the news.

RT-If you had one wish what would you wish for?

D-I wish I was staying with Michael Jackson. . . When we were staying on Palm and we used to stay by ourself and these white ladies used to come out there and this white lady came up there and opened the door and we got in trouble cause. . . They took us to a foster home and we stayed in there for a long time. We got out. My mama had to go to court.

RT-Did you all stay together?

D-Just me and my sister got to stay together. My brother had to stay with this other lady. . . I don't like babysitters. . . We stayed with my auntie on Cabanne and my mama had left me in the house with this boy named Keri—he 17 years old. And guess what he be doing with a whole bunch of kids? He be hittin' 'em with belts top of their head real hard and then my mama come back and we tell my mama he be hittin' us. One time he popped me upside my head and he tried to burn me with a skillet. He put the skillet on the stove [and] tried to burn me with it. I got a burn on my leg. I had to go to the doctor. He hit me over the head with a belt real hard.

RT-Why did he do that?

D-Because. . . umm. . . he called my mama a B-I-T-C-H. And that's why none of us like him.

RT-What do you think you'd like to be when you grow up?

D-A teacher. It's fun to be a teacher. You could learn more. You could graduate, get out of night school. And then you could get you a job, and you could do anything you'd want to do. You could. . . teach class, be like a grown-up. I don't wanna be no police.

RT-Why not ?

D-Police get killed too much. They was supposed to catch this man that chop that girl's head off and they caught the man, but they ain't found the head. That was over by my cousin house. The girl, she used to stay right over there by my cousin house. The man had raped her.

RT-Your cousin knew that girl?

D-Umm-hmm. There's a girl missing over there? I don't know her name and they killed this boy and raped this boy. They killed this other boy. They killed a six-year-old girl, a eight-year-old boy, they killed a whole bunch of people. . .

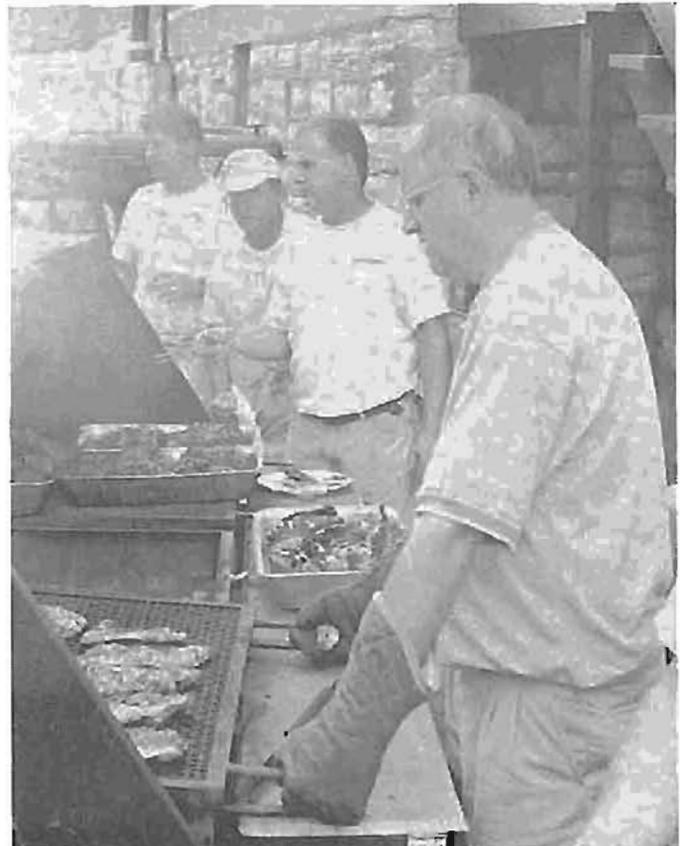
At first, when I was going to Cote Brilliant school, all this stuff wasn't happening. But I understand

now.I understand a lot because people used to get raped at Cote Brilliant school. That's why I don't go to that school.

I don't understand because at first when I be moving on that street, there wasn't nothing happenin'. But at night time people always get raped and stuff.



Ellen Relig with son Gabriel



The 20th anniversary barbeque was catered by the Men's Commission of St. Norbert's Parish. Every year Jack Hutson (second from the right at the grill) organizes a big barbeque for the neighborhood.

COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

by John Kavanaugh, S.J.

-from Summer, 1993

A fact often forgotten is that Dorothy Day's favorite "harsh and dreadful love" passage from Dostoevski's *Brothers Karamazov* has a lot to say about community.

The context, of course, is prayer and faith. Madame Hohlakov has gone to old Zossima for advice. She's afraid she is losing her faith, especially her faith in the afterlife. The monk tells her that love, not faith, is the real issue. And she immediately agrees. She has a problem with love.

Our problem is not the grand sweep of love, not the love of millions or of humanity itself, not even the love of the downtrodden who may come to our doors or accost us on the street. At our best, we can manage them with a smile, especially if the encounter is not too long, and there are not too many "follow-up" expectations.

The real problem is the person I must live and labor with. The person at hand. The person in my community, my family, my circle of friends.

Zossima remembered a humanitarian Doctor who complained:

I am incapable of living in the same room with anyone for two days. I know from experience. As soon as people get near me, their personalities disturb me and restrict my freedom. In twenty-four hours I begin to hate the best of persons: one because she's too long over her dinner, another because he has a cold and keeps blowing his nose. I become hostile to people the moment they come close to me.

Dorothy Day knew that the meaning of the "harsh and dreadful love" was the powerful relationship

between our noble religious ideals, our social consciousness and our daily struggles with each other. There is a spirituality of politics. There is a politics in our personal relationships. And the sins of the social order are mirrored in our own private disorders. Thus, her journals and writings are as much haunted by self-critique as they are critiques of society.

It is one thing to ask governments to lay down their arms. It is quite another (and often more difficult) to disarm ourselves before the enemy with a neighbor's face. Jean Vanier, the founder of the L'Arche communities, notes our love for the "handicapped" sometimes seems so much easier than the love we are called to give our "non-handicapped" collaborators. Mother Teresa admits that greater asceticisms are demanded of us by each other than by the most spartan of dress and the plainest of foods.

As a young Jesuit once said to me: "It's not the work. I love the work. It's just that *!@#*@# I have to work with."

Community tests out all theories, be they social, spiritual or psychological. For community is a union of persons at greater closeness and intensity than of nation, class or convenience. It is relationship in depth "intimo", as the Latin would have it with intimacy. Thus, true friendship, close solidarity, traditional congregations, and family itself are opportunities for profound experiences of community. Community is where we are found out, where we are known and named for who we are, where our pretenses are unmasked and our vulnerability is made open.

Only in those places where we are known in depth, "intimo", can we be loved in truth. And only there can we be truly hurt.

We have tremendous natural impulses to avoid community. We are tempted to hold ourselves in, to

John Kavanaugh, S. J. teaches Philosophy at St. Louis University.

Slips of Roses

-from Spring, 1994

By Martha Crawley, S.L., in honor of Ann Manganaro, S.L. (1946-1993)

You saved a woman's life one night.
I held tools and handed you instruments.
I waited while you helped with complicated births.
I held a light while you sewed the wounds of revolution.
I listened as you taught the young ones how to prevent disease,
how to bind wounds, how to immunize and medicate.

It was a gift to know life and death with you in El Salvador,
to walk the long and difficult roads,
to go with you in the middle of the night to tend a sick child,
to rest in the hammock,
to talk and talk,
to be still by candlelight
to enjoy the deliciously monotonous food,
to walk the beach hand in hand sharing over and over the joys and sorrows
of our hearts.

We laughed and cried.
We prayed together
We knew that this was a place where friends could die together.
You didn't seem to be afraid.
I was afraid.
I couldn't stay.
You helped me leave.
You suggested that, perhaps, I had gleaned what was to be gleaned
and now it was my time to leave.
You lifted what burdened me as much as any friend could.
When I said maybe I could send another friend to be with you,
you laughed and said,
"I don't want another friend. I want you.

You loved me simply, unconditionally and particularly.
You loved me.
You taught me something - an elementary yet forgotten thing -
love has no replacement, no reason.
It is to be shared as commonly as bread
and its beauty is as special as a wild rose.

Our last Good Friday we spent most of the day cutting slips from your roses.
You surprised yourself with your agility at cutting and rooting rose after rose.
We got our hands refreshingly dirty and our arms scratched by thorns.
You had learned how to regenerate roses and watch their sturdy progeny.

You are like the rose, my friend.
Cuttings of you have rooted in our souls.
You will go on and on to the extent that we offer our hearts for cuttings—
slips of soul to be taken again and again.

May we surprise you with our cutting and rooting.

Reflection at Mev's Funeral

-from Winter, 1996

by Angie O'Gorman

Can you picture it? Mev, resting in God's arms. No more tumor, no more pain, no more suffering.

And how long do you think it will take before she rests her hands on God's shoulders, leans in close to God's ear and says, "Listen to women in the church and the poor of Haiti"? Certainly we do not expect Mev to be any less persistent with God than she was with the Pope.

Mev's struggle is over. Ours is not. Even as we are grateful that her suffering has ended, our grief at losing her is immense. Such grief and loss raise up questions in us about "Why?" Why a brain tumor? Why Mev? Why now? And sometimes there is another question, one that we are almost too afraid to ask out loud. Why did God let this happen?

Why did God let this happen? We come back to this question time and again when faced with such unspeakably painful mystery.

We ask it, at least in part, because our faith has been formed in what Mev and others call the first world; the world of might and power and control. In our first world perspective we believe God to be most truly God in victory; in overcoming that which we believe should be overcome.

But that was not Mev's understanding of God. Mev long ago realized that God does not protect us from what life in this limited, physical, and often unjust world can bring, because it is precisely in this context that we are given the opportunity to learn how to love and be loved. In what she and others call the third world—the world of poverty, oppression, and powerlessness, the world Mev knew in Brazil and Haiti and impoverished communities throughout St. Louis—Mev learned that our God does not protect us from this learning. Rather, our God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Esther and Ruth and Mary, the God of Jesus—our God participates with us, accompanies us, at the heart of the very struggles life brings. Even in illness. Even in dying.

Who of us who had the privilege of being with Mev and Mark since they moved back to St. Louis last summer can doubt the presence of God even in the midst of Mev's advancing illness? Are we not more gentle, more compassionate people for having accompanied them through these months? Were we not changed in our very capacity to love as we watched Mark and Mev care for each other? Didn't we gaze in awe at Mev's integrity as her own spirit built up and nourished a community around her, even as her physical body was dying? Have we not begun to comprehend more profoundly Mev's own passion for meeting God through a relationship of solidarity with those who suffer?

We have seen the holy in the human at its best.

Yes, our hearts are breaking, but the great grace of how God is with us in our pain is that the breaking need not be a breaking apart. It can be a breaking open open to the poor who Mev's photographs allow us to see, open TO the reality of injustice that creates and sustains such poverty, open to responding in relationship with those who are suffering.

We will honor Mev best not by our grieving—although we will grieve for a long time to come—nor with tributes and awards, although she will receive many. We will honor Mev best by taking her life seriously and allowing her passion for justice and her commitment to the God who struggles with us to become our own.

protect ourselves with impregnable defenses, to assure our personal security. We entertain the illusion that, if we do not let ourselves be known, we will never be vulnerable, unguarded and open to attack.

And we reproduce in our communities, in our families, the very patterns of defense and aggression, of injustice and denial, that rules the age and the rulers of the age.

If, however, we enter the truth of relationship, if we live in community, we must be willing to face our egoisms and fears, we must be willing to take off the armor of isolation and toughness. And we may indeed be shamed, like Madam Hohlakov, before the gate of someone who knows us.

But we shall also experience the power of our truth. We can be loved for who and what we are. We need not fake it through life. And we, though sinners, can experience what it is to be mightily graced with our own irreplaceable gift of love which we are allowed to bestow on each other.

Authentic community, to be sure, is a rare phenomenon in contemporary culture, where relationship and intimacy seem to be avoided at all costs. Most of our energies are directed to behaviors which lead us afar from relationship. Competition inhabits our work, homes and schools. Hidden and unquestioned imperatives that we must work more and more to acquire more and more are part of our cultural mythos. The media rarely present any images of men and women capable of enduring commitment or of any intimacy other than random sexual encounter. Civic virtues and neighborliness seem almost utopian qualities of a distant past. We may even feel at times that community is an illusion, that commitment is an impossibility and that covenant is a dream of another world.

Thus, the lives we build together as friends, as community, as family, are something quite more than

personal needs and interpersonal comforts. They are strategic choices we make as social and political beings not only to test out the reality of our commitment to justice or the genuineness of our "spiritual" lives, but as leaven in a culture desperately in need of human community.

Perhaps our communities, the willingness of Catholic Workers and their supporting friends to labor at the "harsh and dreadful love" of relationship, could be the best gifts and challenges we make to our country.

It was Lee Atwater, after all not your basic Catholic Worker type, who spoke of this need just weeks before he died of brain cancer. Here, the man who won presidential campaigns, who invented Willie Horton and "kicking but", the man who surely "made it" in terms of our culture, was asking for a rebirth of community:

The '80's were about acquiring wealth, power, prestige. I know. I acquired more wealth, power and prestige than most. But you can acquire all you want and still feel empty. What power wouldn't I pay for a little more time with my family. What price wouldn't I pay for an evening with friends. It took a deadly illness to put me eye to eye with that truth, but it is a truth that the country, caught up in its ruthless ambitions and moral decays, can learn on my dime. I don't know who will lead us through the '90's, but they must be made to speak to this spiritual vacuum at the heart of American society, this tumor of the soul. —Lee Atwater's Last Campaign, *LIFE*, February, 1991. ✦



Janet Gray McKenais with Liam



Bill Ramsey

THE STATE AND THE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST

by Mark Scheu

-from Spring, 1990

Most people lack a sense of history and fail to realize that the present social and political arrangement is not permanent but evolved over time. Most people falter in imagination and fail to realize that things need not be as they are; there are alternatives and paths that lead to them.

It rarely occurs to people of the first world that the modern nation-state is not the only way to order their relations to each other and to other peoples. It is assumed, indeed instilled from youth, that the modern state is the most just and benevolent way to order our civic affairs. This is an essential component of our unspoken ideology, to which any real alternative is dismissed as spurious, if not ludicrous. Hence any principled rejection of state authority is popularly held as a violent and nihilistic philosophy offering nothing but chaos in return for the destruction of the present order.

A objective overview of the last century alone, stripped of the prevailing norms of the ideological system (see Noam Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology*), demonstrates that nothing could be further from the truth. The twentieth century presents a horrific panoply of organized murder and mayhem, such as the exploitation of colonial peoples, the First World War, the Second World War, the Holocaust, the Cold War, the war in Southeast Asia (an extended colonial war), and the nuclear arms race. These are but the "highlights." All of this legalized murder has been conducted in the name of the sovereign state. Randolph Bourne wrote aptly, "War is the health of the state."

The question ineluctably arises: does the state

exist for the sake of the people, or in time do people exist to serve the state? Clearly the state takes on a life of its own, but that life is sustained only through death and domination. In Vietnam, even when it became clear to all that further combat would serve no purpose, the United States continued to offer up the lives of servicemen in order to salvage our "national honor"

—those killed could not be allowed to die "in vain." Or as a further example, how would a nuclear war serve and protect the citizens of our nation? Yet this nation is prepared to incinerate the world in a struggle for world domination between vying nations. Should not these common and undeniable contradictions cause one to question the utility, if not the very moral basis, of the state?

There is nothing more destructive in human affairs than war, and war is entrenched in the state system. War is organized violence by military forces fought by and on behalf of states in a system of competing states (see Brian Martin, *Uprooting War*). War will only cease when people abandon their allegiance to this invisible entity which we unquestionably allow to play so dominant a role in our lives.

The state owes its very existence to violence. No state could survive without resort to the power of death over people. If it cannot kill its enemies, it cannot exist. Order is maintained in the state by law; the law secures obedience by the application of force—when need be even death. The threat to punish by death is the ultimate means by which the state maintains the dominant order. Thus the state's decidedly immoral basis is unmasked. As Gandhi stated:

Mark Scheu is a librarian at The University of Missouri St. Louis and a dedicated family man.

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

Gandhi's position should not surprise us. His ultimate goal was not simply to free India from British rule, but to establish for the people true self-rule with the abolishment of the state.

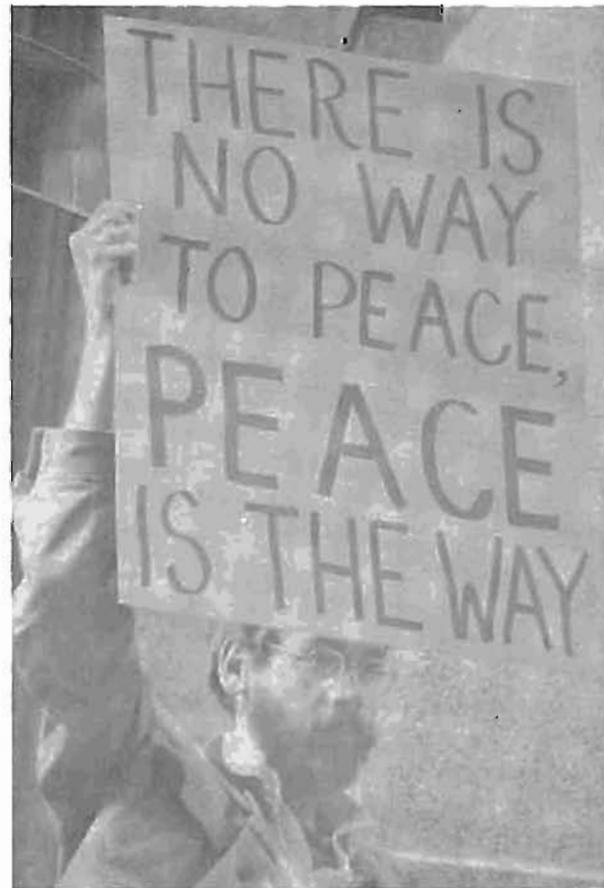
Violence, from which we must indeed liberate ourselves, is the very basis of all state government. The only way is to remove ourselves from all solidarity with the state itself, now.

Violence being the state's guarantor, a nonviolent stance is a subversive threat to all states, for such faith throws into question its reason for existence. As the Roman-Jewish state executed Jesus under the pretext that he was an insurrectionist, so the modern state must condemn nonviolent activists as violent terrorists, to obscure the real threat which underlies this false charge. Anyone who seeks to live a life of nonviolence must sooner or later come to grips with this irrevocable antagonism, as stated by Simone Weil:

Whether the mask is labeled Fascism, Democracy, or Dictatorship of the Proletariat, our great adversary remains the Apparatus: the bureaucracy, the police, the military [the state].

Even conceding the above, some will argue that one can hardly manage without the state, in view of all the good it also performs. What of the welfare system and social security? What of all the benevolent purposes to which some of our federal taxes go? Although one must applaud any undertaking of the state which genuinely enhances the lives of its citizens, the benefits are far outweighed by the cost which the state extracts in the form of allegiance to a system of competing states given to organized violence.

More to the point, these same services can be provided more effectively and wholesomely outside the aegis of the state. People and communities surrender power over their lives in hope that there will be a compensatory return at the national level. We pay taxes and set up bureaucratic structures to dole out the means of existence to those who qualify. In so doing we are deprived of any direct role in service to our neighbor. Those in need, however, are judged and ruled over by a bureaucratic class which invariably develops more interest in self-perpetuation than service. To relinquish control and responsibility for the care of our neighbor to



Mark Scheu

absentee professionals, bureaucracies, and politicians is to betray our own moral calling. Previously people did not have social security or insurance, as they relied on family and community to provide in times of need. Now social support systems of the extended family and the local community are displaced by the centralized and impersonal provision of services by the state. Yet relying on the state for the solution of social problems is counterproductive, as this expansion of state power only reduces local control and allows for manipulation by elites, thereby reinforcing the structural basis which gave rise to the problem (see Brian Martin, "Uprooting War"). Those faced with loss of employment due to the closing of local factories controlled by distant managers, such as at the Chrysler plant in Fenton, Missouri, and as portrayed in the film *Roger & Me*, are experiencing this in a most bitter way.

Given that war is the health of the state; that the state's existence is based on violence; and that state alleviation of social problems is counterproductive, what alternative is there?

The only proposal which meets these contradictions is social anarchy. Anarchy is more than the rejection of coercive authority. Freedom cannot exist without equality, which will only result with an end to economic monopoly and the coercive institutions of

political power which enshrine hierarchy, patriarchy, and domination. The guiding principle of social relations must instead be mutual aid, voluntary association, consensus decision-making and direct democracy. Local communities organize their own activities through cooperation, not competition or coercion. The collective, the neighborhood, the affinity group, the community, these are the building blocks for social anarchy. There is no place for hierarchy or class rule: "Anarchy is order, government is civil war." At most, in place of the present state organization, a federation of free communities could form, arranging their affairs by mutual agreement and free contract.

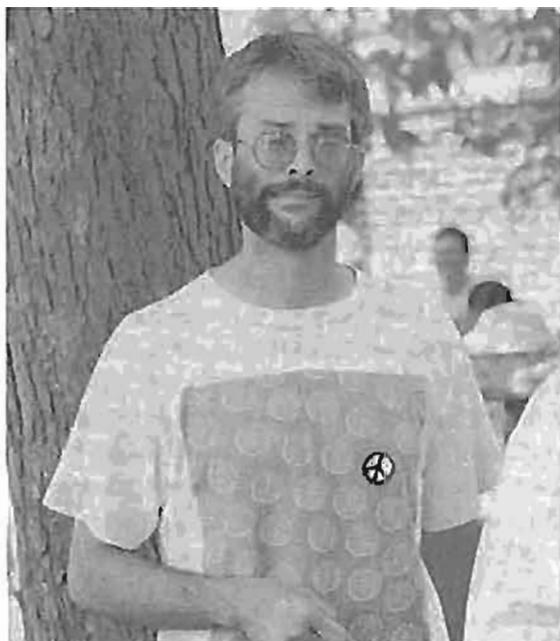
The path to this more humane order is simple, yet demanding: reject the state's authority by refusing to cooperate with it; form new social organizations and patterns of behavior by experiments of communal living. As Peter Maurin said, build a new society in the shell of the old. Any intentional Catholic Worker community, any base community in Latin America, is an experiment in social anarchy. The revolution is the organized actions of the people. Such a mode of existence does not depend on laws and the violence of the state to compel people to act justly. Rather, as Ammon Hennacy said, having faith in the innate goodness of everyone, it seeks to establish the Golden Rule by working from within the conscience of the individual: "a revolution of the heart." Thus the ultimate political act is the creation of nonviolent community.

It becomes apparent that unlike capitalism, which is intrinsically godless, anarchy has a given moral basis. Remarkably, this basis has much in common with a

social order based on the example and teachings of Jesus. It is no accident that both Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin were avowed anarchists. Le Chartier went so far as to say "The true founder of anarchy was Jesus Christ and the first anarchist society was that of the apostles."

The basic political entity is community, which exists in the world but is not of it (see William Durland, *God or Nations*). Such a community models love—its very purpose is to guarantee true freedom through mutual aid. Nonviolence is at the heart of such community, and as such contests the state's reign of death in history. The state can put to death, but death does not have the final word. There is to be no hierarchy in community—all participate equally in service and responsibility. Accordingly, Jesus taught against the exercise of authority: "It shall not be so among you; whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever will be first must be slave of all." As the Sermon on the Mount suggests, an anarchist society is organized on the basis of morality, not legality. Nothing so characterizes Jesus' life in the political sphere as does anarchy.

Christian communities are to be built on love and service. State institutions are built on violence. They are born of fear and distrust and pander to our worst instincts, to that which is fallen. In the desert at the third temptation Jesus rejected such political power as demonic. So must we. The follower of Christ is called to withdraw from the enthrallment of the state and build community under the inspiration of the Spirit. Thus shall the kingdoms of this world pass away and the Reign of God come.



Mitch McGee



Bill Miller

FEMINISM, PEACE AND-- INCIDENTALLY--THE CHURCH

by Mary Dutcher

-from Summer, 1981

Two things struck me most vividly about the General Dynamics' annual shareholders meeting (May 7, Clayton, MO), as a small group of us knelt throughout it. We were there to raise our resolution that General Dynamics "Repent the Trident—feed the hungry instead" and to once again ask the corporate management folks to meet with us. Since we were the last item on the agenda—under "other business"—I had plenty of time to collect impressions as I knelt and fingered my rosary.

The first thing that struck me were all the white, male faces of the members of the board of directors, as well as all the male voices expressing approval of General Dynamics' various weapons during the movie. (Showing a short film about the company's products seems to be a ritual at corporate annual meetings, analogous perhaps to the way we Catholics read from the Gospel in our liturgies.) All of the male/militariness of the situation reminded me of some lines from *Lysistrata*, a Greek play written by Aristophanes in 413 B.C.

It should not prejudice my voice
that I'm not born a man
If I say something advantageous
to the present situation.
For I'm taxed too, and as a toll
provide men for the nation
While, miserable graybeards, you,
It is true
Contribute nothing of any impor-
tance whatever to our needs;
But the treasure raised against
the Medes,
You've squandered, and do nothing
in return

Save that you make
Our lives and persons hazardous by
some imbecile mistake.
What can you answer?

The second thing that struck me also concerned the movie. I had shut my eyes and was trying to center myself and pray when an amplified voice suddenly boomed forth, "G.D.'s world"! My eyes flew open and I saw a picture of the world taken from outer space. It was a moment of acute cognitive dissonance for me because one of our group of Trident repenters was a rabbi, and he had reminded me that some people in the Old Testament tradition, out of reverence, do not pronounce the word "God." Rather, the vowel is dropped, and the resulting word is "G.D." So I experienced sharp mental confusion as I heard the words "G.D.'s world" and understood them to refer to the world's largest weapons producer. A crazy kind of sanity soon returned to my mind, however, as I remembered that the Navy had "christened" (oops—there it goes again!) its newest General Dynamics nuclear submarine the "Corpus Christi." (Named after the city in Texas, you understand, no connection with the historical character.) Well, at least consistency if not sanity.

I thought to myself, "Maybe there are, in fact, two separate "G.D.'s worlds." I remembered my friend Bernard Lee (who had heard it from his friend Bernard Loomer) talking about how there are two kinds of power: linear power and relational power. Linear power is hierarchical and coercive: you do what I tell you because I have the power to force you. Linear power is probably best typified in military organization and reflects what has traditionally been considered a masculine type of power. Relational power, on the other hand,

Mary Dutcher is Program Coordinator with the Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America.

Karen House Catholic Worker 314.621.4052 www.karenhousecw.org 1840 Hogan St. Louis, MO 63106

is decentralized and consensual: you choose to do what I ask you or we talk about it because we are related. Mutual submission, it is called in the New Testament. Women seem to have more expertise at relational power—or at least it is denigrated often enough as being “sissy”- or “feminine.” But I think women do in fact have more experience using relational power, if only because we’ve effectively been denied access to much exercise of linear power.



Photo of Mary Dutcher

But then the realization struck me with sickening force that there are not two separate worlds. We are all one interdependent whole. If those folks who rely on linear power for their security end up pushing the nuclear button (and that is the logical last step in the linear power process), there will be no immunity (at least physical) for women, babies or other believers in relational power. We will go to destruction together, believers and non-believers alike. This means to me that an especially intense invitation is issued to those practitioners of relational power to give witness for the faith that is in them. “lest those who are our executioners today may at some future time be our accusers for the suppression of truth.” (*The Prison Meditations of Fr. Alfred Delp*, who was executed by the Nazis in 1945.)

I think feminism is of critical import today, then, because it strikes me as a race between learning to value things traditionally considered feminine (and therefore devalued, e.g. nurturance, gentleness) and a nuclear holocaust. As Martin Luther King put it, “The choice today is not between violence and nonviolence. It is between non-violence and non-existence.” I, along with Jim Douglass, consider Gandhi and King (and presently, the feminist movement) special gifts from God for this century, graces to help us nurture and care for God’s beautiful creation . . . to choose life.

Then I realized it was time to pay attention. I heard Tom Kegelman of our group being called “naive” (another word associated with women) for suggesting that we stop making the Trident. I heard Rabbi Bruce

Diamond introduce our resolution to repent the Trident. I heard Al Sprehe refute management’s allegation that it had met with us. More painfully, I heard him mocked for using the word, “chairperson.” And I heard Bill Ramsey of our group begin to list the times the company had refused to meet. I thanked God for these gentle men. Emma and I agreed with our eyes that the moment had come to display our banner, “Repent the Trident—feed the hungry instead.” I heard Emma reply to David Lewis’ assertion that the company bore no responsibility for making the Trident because it was the government’s decision. She said, “The blood is on your hands,” and we poured blood on each other. Bill Ramsey suggested that we pray in order to give management an opportunity to consider whether to meet with us. But he was immediately dragged out and arrested, while David Lewis quickly adjourned the meeting.

I think it was the blood. “Pardon us, friends, our breach of good order, but so help us, we could not do otherwise. . .” Maybe, just maybe, it was the sight of two women acting strongly, that threw the place into such disarray. But I doubt it.

Persistence. . .our by now somewhat exhausted group seized on a statement by David Lewis that management might meet with us. Minus Bill, we proceeded to the corporate headquarters of General Dynamics with two films in hand, one about the Jewish holocaust and one about the nuclear holocaust (*War Without Winners*). Persistence. . .we said we would stay as long as necessary to show the films. We were arrested.

Perhaps persistence is for relational power what brute force is for linear power. I’m not sure. An appreciation for beauty and a strong sense—an unquenchable sense—of hope seem equally important (so that we do not fall asleep or let our lives dribble away). So that we stay alive and pert and perky. And able to appreciate such moments as when the singing of the group outside the meeting (“And into plowshares turn their swords”) became so clearly audible inside the meeting in almost perfect syncopation with the reading of the profit statement. Or the remark of the police officer as we collected our belongings and left county jail the next morning, “Let me know when your next demonstration is. I want to be there.”

I had finished all fifteen decades of the rosary by this time. . .they were good enough to let me keep it in jail. It is a prayer given to us a by a woman and recommended to be prayed for peace. . .this woman said, “God fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich empty away.” I’m pretty sure she was a feminist: “God brings down the mighty from their throne and raises up the lowly.” It was her labor that brought “corpus Christi” into “G.D.’s world.”



FROM CENTRAL AMERICA



by Virginia Druhe

-from Winter, 1990

I write these words in November, the week after San Salvador's neighborhoods have been bombed by its own Air Force and six Jesuits and two women have been brutally assassinated. I was in El Salvador in October with a group of church people from St. Louis—but everything we knew then has been transformed by this past week, quite literally. Three of the neighborhoods we visited have been heavily bombed. Churches we visited are now destroyed or filled with hundreds of refugees. The lives of the people we met have been changed forever by this week. They are homeless or wounded, or have lost a loved one, received death threats, been killed, been beaten, gone into hiding.

Central America faces political and military crises of immense proportions. By the time you read these words in January or February, other unimaginable transformations will have occurred in Salvador and the rest of Central America. Nicaragua will have had its elections. Our fifth "covert" plan to overthrow General Noriega in Panama may well have been carried out. Increasing torture in Guatemala may have become dramatically visible in the U.S.

So what can one say now about Central America that will have any meaning in two months? We can be sure that in these two months several hundred civilian lives will be lost. Seven hundred civilians have been killed in Nicaragua alone since April, when Congress renewed "humanitarian" aid to the contra. We can know that these deaths are inflicted almost entirely by armed forces funded and trained by the U.S. government under a policy that is ironically named "low intensity conflict." We can know that until U.S. policy changes the killing will continue.

The crisis in Salvador is immense, but we here in the U.S. face a moral and spiritual crisis of equal

proportions. As much as I pray for the people of Salvador in these days, I pray more for my own people. The public rush of our government to resupply an Air Force that has spent its supply of 500 lb. bombs on its own population is a most stark revelation of who we have become in our passivity. To the extent that we have, as a people and especially as a church, been shaken from passivity and comfort into active response, we are a people that has learned repentance, learned to love in word and deed.

Perhaps, too, I pray more for us because with awe I have recognized that, in a crucial way, it is our response that makes the suffering of Central Americans redemptive—or not. If we let it touch us and change us and move us to action, we give meaning to their suffering, make it a source of new life, participate in the creation of life from death.

I have seen our small promises to act and speak-out bring life into the eyes of mothers of the disappeared whose faces were filled with death and suffering. It seems absurd that the people of North America would be signs of redemption and resurrection for the people of Central America, yet I know that is the case. These dear people who have given so many of us priceless gifts of faith and hope and joy, who have shown us what it is to live and how to die, now wait with patience and love for us to return their gift of life.

We will either let this senseless and innocent suffering touch us - or not. We will either finally, as a people, admit that these events reveal our governments foreign policy routinely and deliberately makes use of torture, repression, and makes military targets of civilians - or we will not, and we will create our own judgment against ourselves. We will either allow ourselves to be shaken from our passivity and comfort into

Virginia Druhe works at American Friends Service Committee and is awaiting the arrival of her friend, Juan Luis, from Cuba.

action for justice, or we will not.

It is we, far more than the people of Central America, who need prayer. I can only pray that we will learn from the example they provide us at such a high cost and know that in their generosity, the churches of Central America pray with us and for us.

In October we had the privilege of meeting at the University of Central America with Jesuit Fr. John Cortina. He is a theologian and engineer who studied at St. Louis University in the 1950's. He is man of joy and humor and great love of the poor. He is one of two surviving members of the Jesuit community at the university.



Virginia Druhe

After a long conversation, I said to Fr. Cortina that I am always struck by the contrast between the poor of Central America who are so dignified and articulate and committed to each other in the struggle to create a just society, and the poor of the United States (in which I include the vast majority of us) who are so scattered and hopeless and convinced of our own powerlessness. I asked him what he thought was the basic conversion that the people he knew had experienced that empowered them, and that we still needed. He answered very simply, "I think that through the base communities of the church many people here have heard and accepted the basic call of the Gospel to live our lives for others."

I have thought often about those simple words. How accurately they diagnose our sickness. We are so often imprisoned in our sense of individual identity. We often do not even recognize the Gospel call to common life, the joy of living a life that has been given to others - to our community, family, our people. That is the life and joy that awaits us if we hear and respond to the call of the Gospel, which the people of Central America incarnate for us in their crucifixion

On that trip we also had the pleasure of meeting Bishop Alas of the northern diocese of Chalatenango. He spoke to us of conditions in that poor and war-torn area. He told us of the work of the diocese in health care, education and job training. He went on to say, "Of course, this is not the normal work of the church. We respond because of the urgency of need. It makes it very easy for us to incarnate the Word; we are not without joy." And indeed, there was a smile of great joy and peace on his face as he spoke. Then he added, "We are called subversives and are repressed for our commitment to our people. We are in a privileged place."

I think his words have meaning for us and the conversion we are called to in the church of the United States. I believe it can be said of us: Direct political action is not the normal work of the church. We respond because of the urgency of need. Because that makes it very easy for us to incarnate the Word, we will not be without joy. We may be called subversives and even be persecuted for our action. We will be in a privileged place.



SHOWING A KINDER FACE

by Tim Pekarek

-from Fall, 1995

Recently the Vatican sent the message to the bishops, cardinals, and other clergy, that they should oppose efforts to establish or preserve civil rights for homosexuals. This maneuver certainly drew applause from the far right-wing Christian Coalition in this country. This directive came near the time of the 1993 Oregon and Colorado ballot measures, which, if passed, would have prohibited lesbian and gay civil rights in those states. During that season at least three lesbians and gay men in Oregon, and another gay man in Colorado, were murdered.

Obviously the Roman Catholic Church is a very long way from offering a message of affirmation to lesbian or gay Catholics, who are likely to feel discarded by the Church. In a world that seems to be lurching toward violence and fascism, this and other Vatican statements on lesbian and gay morality and identity amount to an inferred threat. At other times the Church has been more overt, as with the removal of Dignity liturgies from Church properties around the country in recent years. There is a fear among lesbian and gay Catholics that groups such as Dignity will be declared schismatic, or that they will be excommunicated en masse, as with the recent treatment of Catholics who have provided or assisted women in obtaining abortions. In this atmosphere there would seem to be no reason for any lesbian or gay person to remain in the Catholic Church

The Catholic Worker movement, in our history, has been able to show a kinder face of the Church to people disenfranchised from the Church. We do this by offering hospitality to women and children, the poor, racial and ethnic minorities and others. Another part of our history is that the sins of heterosexism and ho-

mophobia that are rampant in society have been common enough in many Catholic Worker communities to the extent that lesbians and gays are outcasts. I recall a conversation that I had with a friend who has been a Catholic Worker since the 60's or 70's, in New York and in the Midwest, who has known many lesbian and gays who did not find acceptance at the Worker, and fled. My friend and I both thought that it is absurd. But it would seem that the current Pentagon policy of "Don't Ask—Don't Tell" would apply at many Catholic Worker communities .

Fortunately, I have never felt this to be the case with the Karen House community. During the period that I've lived with the Karen House community, I came out as a gay man to them and other friends and family members. There were times in this process that I was left feeling abused by some people; and if I had not felt safe in our community, I know that I would have left.

The diversity that exists in our household at Karen House is what we all cherish, and we strive to make lesbians and gay men feel as welcome as everyone else.



Tim, Pekarek and Becky Hassler

Tim Pekarek is an award-winning city gardener who helped found the St. Louis Sierra Club Inner City Outings Program.

INQUIRIES INTO THE ART OF LIVING

by Ann-Arch

-from Winter, 1993

Dear Ann-Arch,

I live at a Catholic Worker shelter and we consider hospitality one of the most important virtues, yet I am often in a quandary as to the most hospitable way to proceed in these less than regular circumstances.

For example, somehow we often come up short on one or other of the vital utensils for serving meals. If we run out of coffee cups, for instance, is it best to resort to a sugar bowl? Or perhaps a cereal bowl? Or a plastic glass? I would hate to feel I was doing the wrong thing.

Concerned

Dear Person,

The solution to your problem will require some quick thinking and value judgements each time this situation arises. That is unfortunate but graciousness is not automatic.

What you must do in each case is determine what is most important to the comfort of your guest. With regard to coffee cups, for instance, the highest value is a brim that will prevent dribbling. A sugar bowl that has a lip where its cover can rest will not be appropriate. There was a time in the 1950's version of modernism when sugar bowls were quite streamlined, and many of these will suit your purpose well, though they do tend to be painted some unnatural color on the inside.

The other vital factor in coffee cups is protection to prevent burning one's fingertips. On this matter there are two options: handles on the utensil, or failing that, one may wrap the cup in a small cocktail napkin that will insulate the visitor's touch. I suppose you will respond that you have no cocktail napkins... In which case the whole process begins again. Since the issue here remains your guest's comfort, you want something pliable, yet not so large as to be bulky. A folded paper towel or napkin will do. If you do not have these, Ann-Arch does not want to know about it.

Your last resort, if there are simply not enough substitutes, is to cheerfully inform your guests that what is available will be used in turn and properly cleaned

between uses. This is presented as something fun, a party game, in keeping with the most fundamental rule of hospitality: one provides one's best without apology.

Dear Ann-Arch,

Why do you not use titles in referring to yourself or others? Isn't this a major rupture with the great traditions of your trade?

Startled

Dear Person,

Yes, my practice of avoiding titles is a major rupture with the long history of mainstream etiquette. As an anarchist, I do not hallow from mainstream traditions. I am, nonetheless, following the centuries old tradition of our dear friends, the Quakers. (Please pardon the pun, it must be the stress of writing my first column.) In this tradition the lack of title does not indicate lack of respect, but rather emphasizes the profound equality of all persons. Respect is maintained by use of both first and last names. This, you will note, is still a far cry from the current practice of taking very little care to learn both names that identify a fellow human being. Anarchism is not sloppy.

Dear Ann-Arch,

My problem is perhaps beyond the bounds of etiquette—it is a liturgical issue with important philosophical ramifications. It has to do with roaches at Mass.

In our simple but elegant chapel, we pray sitting on the carpet. From time to time a roach will stroll out of the woodwork and make its way across the room. The comfort of others seems to require some response on my part, yet to kill a roach — and during Mass — seems quite unsettling for all involved and a violation of Gandhi's understanding of nonviolence. I am also concerned it would leave an unsightly reminder of the event crushed into the carpet.

What do we do?

Anxious

Dear Person,

Ann-Arch is hurt that you feel etiquette is somehow divorced from these deeply human liturgical and philosophical questions. Without its roots in that rich soil etiquette would be nothing more than rules wielded in an exercise of elitist power.

Obviously, crushing the roach into the carpet is not an acceptable solution for the reasons you so clearly name. The alternative that meets the delicacy of the situation is to have a tissue of some sort close at hand. When the roach appears one must pick it up with a great show of delicacy and feeling and wrap it inside the tissue. Making a show of sealing the tissue carefully will prevent the suspense of wondering when and where the roach might re-appear.

Once your hand and the tissue are out of sight and mind, you must nonetheless, crush the roach firmly and quickly. You may then discreetly put the tissue in your pocket. This may seem a violent and heartless response, but it is necessary to prevent the further and worse outcome of the roach crawling down your sleeve or up your chin. If roaches were not so small and sneaky this would not be necessary. Ann-Arch cannot change the nature of roaches.

Dear Ann-Arch,

As a good anarchist and pacifist I participate in actions of nonviolent civil disobedience from time to time. I am always careful in these situations to uphold the highest standards of etiquette.

A problem arose for me recently when the week after an action I was introduced to my arresting officer at my godchild's First Communion. We were both startled to be facing each other socially. She mumbled something inaudible and turned away fairly quickly.

What could I have done to make this situation more comfortable for both of us? Is it proper etiquette to refer to our previous acquaintance? Isn't that equivalent to talking about business at a social occasion? Yet to deny having met seems even more rude.

Obedient

Dear Person,

You are correct that the worst outcome is for two people to deny knowing each other. As soon as you noticed your partner's discomfort you should have warmly extended your hand, smiled without a trace of irony and said, "Yes, I believe we have met." Then you need to quickly and firmly change the subject so that neither of you is forced to explain where or how. If someone is so persistent as to inquire, you may smile vaguely and not answer. Or you may give an inane response that accomplishes the same purpose. "I believe

it was several weeks ago. I don't quite remember," should be obscure enough.

Dear Ann-Arch,

Your great collaborator, Miss Manners, has said that the only word that may be spoken through a bathroom door is "Fire!" I appreciate the sensitivity of that general guideline. The problem is that for some reason at our house of hospitality one often rushes in and is seated and um, occupied, before realizing there is no toilet paper. I don't know why there is so often no paper, but it happens a lot. We have tried everything to prevent the problem but we are defeated. Is it not okay then, to call through the door to ask for assistance in getting paper?

Waiting

Dear Person,

You are trying hard to win Ann-Arch's sympathy but in vain. Sympathy does not cover a multitude of sins. No, you may not call out from the bathroom short of serious illness. The solution to your problem requires a change of habit but it is not difficult. You must carry some tissue in your pocket or sleeve so that you are always prepared. Ann-Arch prefers the small pocket packs of Kleenex(R) tissues because they are easy to carry and stay clean. This solution is practiced by missionaries the world over.

Dear Ann-Arch,

I admit that I am a relative newcomer to anarchy, but I find anarchy and etiquette to be rather opposite endeavors. How do you explain your passion for both?

Confused

Dear Person,

Oh my dear!

If you think about it for just a moment your confusion will clear. Try substituting "personalism" for "anarchism." It is obvious. Both etiquette and anarchism are based on a fundamental belief in the absolute value and dignity of each human being and on the profound responsibility of each person to carry society forward as she can where she is. One wag has said that anything the Bible does not cover, etiquette does. That has been my blessed experience.

Ann-Arch lives in the heart of each of us.



Book Review:

THE BIBLE

by Ellen Rehg

-from Winter, 1993

Although the Bible has been in circulation for some time, it has never, to our knowledge, been adequately reviewed. This is perhaps due to the fact that, speaking for Catholics, it has so rarely been read. The Bible is one of those classical works of literature, like the collected works of Shakespeare, that people know certain quotes from without having actually read it all the way through. The task of a good review is to introduce the content of a book to its readers and comment upon its strengths and weaknesses. This, then, will be the focus of this review.

A first warning to the prospective reader: the Bible is actually two works, or "testaments": the original story and the sequel, which we might retitle, respectively, "God" and "Son of God." These works are sufficiently distinct from one another to warrant separate comment.

The first testament suffers from many problems that will prove a trial to the reader, not the least of which is, as Woody Allen said, "a totally unbelievable main character." Secondly, the very nature of the work is in doubt. Is it fiction, non-fiction, science-fiction, or yet another of the plethora of how-to manuals that are presently flooding the market? Perhaps this kind of confusion is inevitable when a series of authors puts together a work, which seems to have been the case here. At any rate, the main author or editor has never surfaced, leaving these questions to the discretion of the reader.

Unfortunately, the title of the entire opus provides no clue as to its nature. "Bible" is Greek for "Book." Imagine a movie entitled "Movie" or a play called "Play." The authors either suffered from a deplorable lack of imagination or an equally deplorable sense of pretentiousness.

The general theme of the first testament is the struggle for recognition by the main character, God.

This character has many nicknames, "Yahweh," "I Am," "Wonder Counselor," "Prince of Peace," etc. It may be that his various appellations contribute to the confusion surrounding his identity. Actually, even the gender of this character changes periodically, as when God is given a female nickname. It is no wonder then that the other characters in the book have trouble recognizing this God-person.

This disability in being recognized seems to stem from a unique disability of God's. In an interesting twist on the theme of blindness, it is not that God cannot see, but that God cannot be seen by others except in some metaphorical form. The tribal family she approaches and attempts to build a relationship with sometimes experiences her as a voice, sometimes a cloud or at other times as a burning bush. She makes a great effort to communicate with others despite her visibility disability. Indeed the reader comes to have great sympathy for God in her often futile attempts to be recognized and loved.

Of course, the way God keeps switching the type of relationship he/she seems to desire of the clan, it is no wonder that they are confused. At times God acts very parental, other times God expresses her jealousy like a wounded lover. The possibility of a romance between God and her people is hinted at--then God comes on like a social worker, (or should I say, Catholic Worker) promising to care for all the poor and outcast of the community. This God character never misses a trick, and is consequently very hard to keep up with. But all along, he laments that all he really wants is to be loved. God's hopes for a meaningful relationship are usually dashed, however, as his prospective lovers forget the promises they made to God when they needed his help and begin to stray as soon as they no longer seem to need that help. Another obstacle standing in the way of a relationship is the mortality of God's lovers.

God keeps outliving them. (I believe this may be why, in the sequel, God finally wises up and finds a lover with the ability to live as long as God does.)

This general theme is developed unevenly through a complex narrative involving, as Cecil B. DeMille's films used to say, "a cast of thousands." The first mortal characters, Adam and Eve, are introduced in some detail in the first few pages. A beginning is made in developing their characters. Their fatal flaw is a lack of integrity--they tend to blame others for their own faults. This foreshadows problems in their marriage which bear fruit in a domestic tragedy in which one son murders the other. This "Dynasty"-like story line is abruptly dropped, however, and Adam and Eve's family is literally washed away in an all-to-convenient literary device that wipes all traces of them from the story.

The story line that follows bears a slight resemblance to the Wizard of Oz, in that it consists of repeated attempts on the part of the nomadic family to return home. Their home is a piece of real estate bordering the Mediterranean Sea which God has asked the people to move to. Incredibly, God often fails to provide accurate directions to this land. Furthermore, the land in question is mostly arid and desert-like despite God's portrayal of it as "flowing with milk and honey." It is apparently such poor land that they are constantly experiencing droughts and famines. Here God comes across like one of those salespeople who try to sell you lake front property in Florida that actually lies in the middle of a swamp. This could explain why the people inevitably leave the area again several generations after they have torturously made their way

there.

Part I ends with the clan defending their land against foreign invaders and bemoaning "the way we were" in their relationship with God. The sequel focuses much more specifically on one character, Jesus, who claims to be the son of God. Jesus is fully versed in the trials of God's relationship with the clan but nevertheless also attempts to build a relationship with them. Needless to say, he is no more successful than his parent. Today we might diagnose Jesus and God as suffering from a kind of co-dependency. They seem to choose the wrong people to get involved with. By the end of Part II, Jesus widens the field of his prospective lovers and friends from the members of a single clan to include the entire human race. Whether or not this maneuver will be successful remains to be seen.

In closing, I can readily recommend this work, although I advise the reader to skim the battle scenes in the chapter entitled Joshua, since they become tedious. I might also point out that for some reason, Part II contains four accounts of roughly the same story, the life of Jesus. It can reasonably be inferred that there is meant to be, however, only one and not four separate characters named Jesus. Presenting Jesus' life from four perspectives gives the second part a kind of post-modern flavor, like those French novels that play around with perspective. If you really enjoy this work and are sorry to turn the last page, do not despair. The last few pages set the stage for yet another sequel, "Return of God." Apparently all the loose ends of the story will be wrapped up by then. †



Martha Donovan and Michelle Russell



Ann Rick and Judy Callagher

-from Summer, 1989

END OF NOVEMBER 1988

Her face is lined with loss and the custom of
loss,
With the leaving too often of one more
Loved one, of whom how many have been,
Or will be, destroyed in this deadly place.
How many times, from the midst of tears, will
she dare
Turn toward her children to begin again
The dailiness that is their bread the corn
To grind, the wood to find for fire, goats
To tend, clothes to mend, to wash, to hang
In the burning sun? And what fire will burn
Away her pain, as that other fire eats
Alive her son, sister, lover? Long
Years of this life's death endured have worn
Her slender hopes to the bone. Yet still hope
rises
In her deep eyes, in a love beyond all losses.

--Ann Manganaro, S.L.



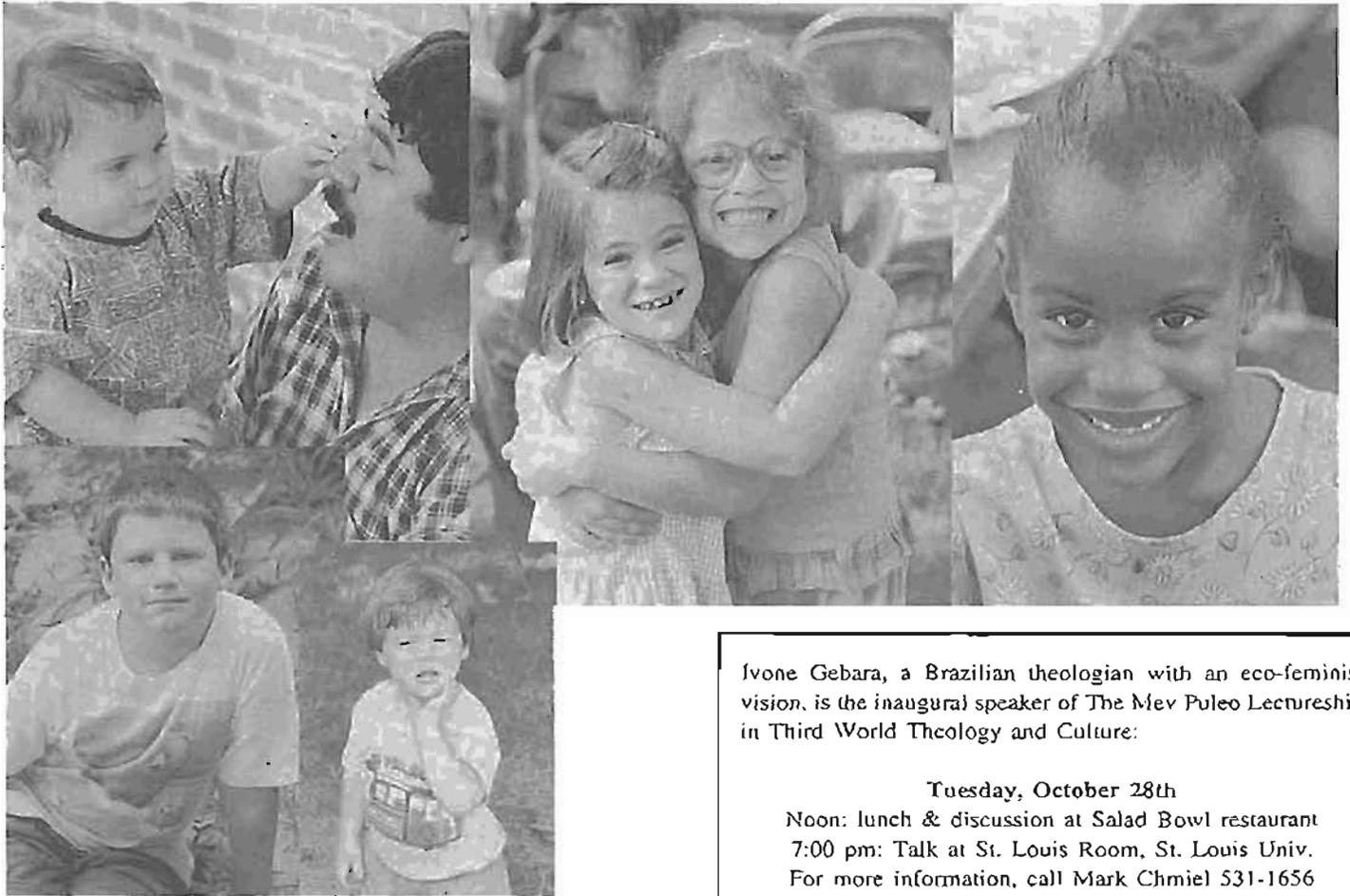
Ann Manganaro, S.L.

Original goals for Karen House, March 1977

We hope to develop an atmosphere of prayer so that our actions will be a reflection of the radical Gospel message:

- To share a sense of joy in life with others.
- To develop an affirming atmosphere for each individual.
- To strive to build a community that provides an alternative to our present day capitalistic system.
- To challenge one another to respond justly to ourselves and all creation through non-violence, the works of mercy, voluntary poverty and simplicity.

Some Future Catholic Workers:



Ivone Gebara, a Brazilian theologian with an eco-feminist vision, is the inaugural speaker of The Mev Puleo Lectureship in Third World Theology and Culture:

Tuesday, October 28th

Noon: lunch & discussion at Salad Bowl restaurant

7:00 pm: Talk at St. Louis Room, St. Louis Univ.

For more information, call Mark Chmiel 531-1656

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, Teka Childress, Mark Chmiel, Mary Dutcher, Carol Giles, Mitch McGee, Bill Miller, Ellen Rehg, Mark Scheu, and Andrew Wimmer. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits. We want to extend two big thank yous: one to Mary-Ann McGivern for organizing the 20th anniversary gathering, one to Andrew Wimmer for all his technical and material support for this issue of *The Round Table*.

The Round Table

Karen Catholic Worker House

1840 Hogan ■ St. Louis, MO. 63106



Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Louis, MO
Permit No. 3087



Forwarding and Return Postage Guaranteed

Address Correction Requested

Karen House Catholic Worker 314.621.4052 www.karenhousecw.org 1840 Hogan St. Louis, MO 63106