

Eastertide
May 2025

Magnificat



Dear Friends,

Spring is well underway in Alabama these days, bringing plenty of stormy weather and some beautiful days as well. We're doing our best to navigate the stormy weather and the political upheaval happening now. We've already seen lost employment, cut funding for universities, closing of DEI programs, and now the likelihood of slashed SNAP and Medicaid. Alabama is a staunch red state, and now suffers under the administration it supports so fervently.

Meanwhile, we've been quite busy. We had our limit of 50 people join us for our Lenten retreat with Alan Storey. We reflected together on Dr. King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech, which was prophetic in both senses. We have not addressed the evils he names, and thus we do indeed keep needing to address violence at home and abroad. You can access video of the retreat talks at Mary's House Lenten Retreat with Alan Storey on youtube. They're well worth your time.

We continue to offer hospitality at the house. Stephanie has been with us for a month or two, and she has been a real home maker, keeping things spiffy and always being a welcoming presence while waiting to find her own place. We're expecting to house some young people involved in the Totus Tuus program for the Diocese as they go through their week of training, and then we expect a young mother to move in with her medically challenged toddler while she looks for more permanent housing.

The street meal on Sunday afternoons continues to be popular. The number of people needing to eat keeps growing. We offer a hot meal on the spot, sack lunches for later, and an assortment of travel size toiletries, underwear, and socks. When we have gently used clothing we share that as well. The meal reminds us every week that there is no such thing as The Poor. There is Joe and Mark and April and Angela and a host of other people who have stories and hopes and dreams, each made in the image of God.



The twice weekly vigils for peace and justice go on as they have since 9/11. We join the larger rallies and marches as we can, but at least a few of us show up on Wednesday mornings and Saturday afternoons to maintain that regular presence. We stand quietly holding our signs, talk with passers-by or each other, or just pray for peace on earth.

First Friday Masses are a source of strength and community (and good food) that we rely on. We're very grateful to the priests who take time from their busy schedules to join us. If you're local come and join us - everyone is welcome and there's a playroom to keep the kids happy.

God's peace,
Shelley D

CATHOLIC WORKER ROOTS

During a good part of the early history of the Catholic Worker, the United States government supplied manpower (literally) to the armed forces by means of a draft. Young men were legally required to register when they turned 18, and then to spend time in one of the branches of the military. Catholic Workers and other people of conscience had to decide whether to sign up or refuse, whether to cooperate with the militarization of young people, or not. In the April-May 1959 issue of *The Catholic Worker*, Charles Butterworth (who was too old to be drafted) reflected on his own refusal to turn in a young man who had left the army without permission. I've only used excerpts here. They raise very pertinent issues for our times, and I'd encourage you to read the articles in *A Penny a Copy*, (Cornell, Ellsberg, & Forest, eds, Orbis, 1995) and read the whole story, pp 109-112.

"Don is a deserter from the army," said Agent McKeon and showed me Don's picture. "You'll have to talk to Bob," I said, and went to look for Bob. (In looking for Bob, Charles ran into Don and warned him that agents were in the office looking for him. Don grabbed his coat and left. Because of this warning, Charles himself faced charges that he did "unlawfully, willfully and knowingly receive, relieve, comfort and assist the offender in order to hinder and prevent his apprehension, trial, and punishment".)

This is Charles' own statement in part:

"I believe that modern atomic war is contrary to God's will and that God is calling many people to refuse military life. The best position a person can take is to openly refuse cooperation and accept the punishment due. It requires time and understanding to reach this position. Meanwhile it is not my duty to help the government force a person concerning a decision on military life. Instead I would try to help a person reach his own decision and would tell him if he was in danger of forceful return to the military."

As Butterworth faces trial, he comments, "I am not sorry, but grateful that I acted as I did. It gives me the chance to make a concrete choice for a nonviolent society as opposed to a military one. Therefore I shall plead guilty and accept the punishment due. I shall try not to back down on my choice to live now as we shall all live when God's peace comes."

When his hearing convened, Butterworth agreed that he had probably broken the law. "But I want to draw your attention to something else. This law is part of the war system. It is part of the old way of trying to get peace by arms... at the Catholic Worker we reject the old way to peace. There is a new way which the world must learn, that Gandhi used in freeing India. It is called pacifism or nonviolence. You can learn about it from *The Catholic Worker* or from the Quakers or you can learn it as I did from studying the life and teachings of Gandhi."



ADVENT RETREAT WITH MARTHA HENNESSEY

7PM FRIDAY DECEMBER 5TH -
8PM SATURDAY DECEMBER 6TH

In these times of upheaval it's important to meet together to reflect on our lives and our response to the issues we confront. How shall we live in these times?



It's always an appropriate question, perhaps more so now as we expect the situation to become more challenging.

We've invited our friend Martha Hennessey to come for our Advent reflection time and share her wisdom and her questions with us. Martha is a member of the New York City Catholic Worker community, where she can be found working at Mary House. She is also wife, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. She's an activist for peace and disarmament who has served time in prison for resistance to nuclear omnicide and other warmaking. And she's a granddaughter of Dorothy Day. She's spent years studying and meditating on the life of her granny.

Martha will reflect with us on her granny's commitment to the little way of St Therese of Lisieux, on her own experiences, and on ways to live the Gospel of peace in an age of violence. We expect this to be a time of deepening commitment and faith for all of us. Mark your calendar, and watch the next newsletter for more information.



Part Of The System

Thanks to Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker has always been aware that we are part of a system, that the system is sinful, and that it could change. We use different names for social sin: the war system, unbridled capitalism, systemic racism, misogyny, classism. Each names a way in which humans make others into the Other and thereby justify poverty, oppression, war, and genocide because the Other is not human, no account. Naming the varieties of social sin is sometimes depressing and frustrating, yet it's also a sign of hope: we have to recognize the evil before we can change it. As long as we breathe it in, unaware, we are instruments perpetuating it. Aware of it, we can begin to change.

At this moment, in this country, the current regime is giving free rein to all the worst human instincts. Cruelty, greed, venality, dishonesty, violence, sycophancy, (and more) are rewarded. Protections for human life, animals, the planet - protections that have taken years of struggle to build - are being jettisoned at lightning speed. People and planet are suffering and will suffer more. Halting progress seems to have become pell-mell regress.

I am struck by Charles Butterworth's statement in our CW Roots piece:
" (This) gives me the chance to make a concrete choice for a nonviolent society as opposed to a military one." In these days we are given more and more chances, concrete choices to choose a nonviolent society instead of one based on oppression and repression. Noncooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good. (Said by both Gandhi and Dr King) It behooves us to think carefully about the choices in our lives these days, especially the choices that we don't really think about making.

One crucially important choice that we're making mostly unconsciously: our attitude toward those on the other side. I have to keep reminding myself that the folks who supported (and still support) the current regime are not going anywhere. The just and peaceful world we work to create has to include them too. I somehow have to cultivate an open heart and mind, a readiness to listen to their stories, respect their insights and welcome their gifts if/when they're willing to share them. I also have to be willing to step away from my own mental bulwarks and admit that I too misunderstand, am misinformed, misjudge people and situations. It's a very big ask for people to admit that they've been wrong and need to change. It won't work unless we can do the same thing: admit that our 'enemy' has a piece of the truth and incorporate both truths into a new and stronger one. Condescension isn't going to cut it. We have to choose humility.

I find that choice an extremely challenging one, but if we're not to live in a divided country, at war with itself, we need to meet that challenge.

Shelley D



Lessons from a Vacuum

A year after Lewis, our beloved Boxer, had to be put down, our family was finally ready to allow another dog into our lives. This past February we welcomed Auggie, a one-year-old rescue mix, into our home. It's good to share our lives with a furry companion again. It didn't take long, however, to realize that there was a big difference between Lewis and Auggie. Auggie sheds... a LOT!!

So to celebrate our 29th wedding anniversary, Londi and I invested in one of those fancy vacuum cleaners that do a great job of picking up pet hair. (Note that Londi requested this gift. I'm not foolish enough to buy a vacuum for an anniversary gift unless it's requested first!)



The first time I used the new vacuum, I couldn't believe how much hair was on our floor and in our rugs, invisible to the naked eye. It made me start thinking about how true this is of my own life, especially in the past few months.

I commute to work, 40 miles each way, daily. I listen to public radio on most of those drives. I find that by the time I get to my office, my blood pressure seems high and I'm short with people. I scroll headlines during the day - same thing happens. I listen to the radio going home. You guessed it - same thing.

The effect of this over time should have been obvious, but (like the dog hair) it wasn't. When I interact with someone, I immediately wonder what kind of beliefs, what politics, that person holds. Without any evidence I assume that I know what they think, or how they voted.

I have a hunch that this happens to a lot of us, given the constant barrage of negative commentary placed in front of us. That "information" really only serves one purpose: to divide us. It makes us feel separate from the people we meet daily. In his retreat with us Alan Storey emphasized the lie of separation. The lie of separation really does color how we see and interact with other people.

Those of us who are journeying towards the peace that Jesus lived and taught should know better. When I try to clean out the dirt in my separation thinking, two examples come to mind.

First, Thomas Merton's epiphany on the corner of 4th and Walnut in Louisville, KY. Merton was given a very brief glimpse of how God sees all people - walking around shining like the sun. Second, the constant deep optimism of my friend Jim Douglass. It's not a shallow emotional optimism, but one that flows from believing that what Merton saw is true - for ALL PEOPLE. True of our enemies. True of warmongers. True of peddling politicians. I'll never forget a statement Jim made at Mary's House one day. He said if we can't bow to the Buddha in our current president, we can't bow to the Buddha in anyone. It was an uncomfortable moment for sure, because of the invisible dirt and hair of my own childish ego.

This kind of love of all people is really our only hope. Instead of getting angry at someone who thinks our friends on the street are worthless and lazy, I can choose love for that person. Instead of allowing myself to stew over people who think that Palestinian lives are much less valuable than Israeli lives, I can learn from Peter Maurin and do the hard work of clarification of thought. Instead of rolling my eyes at the bone-headed decisions of our leaders, I can separate the person's policies from their infinite worth as a human being.

This hard and painful task is only possible when I take personal responsibility to work on myself. After all, I am the only person I can change. There is a deep tradition of Catholic Workers past and present who show us the way. They are honest about their failures but they don't waver on the core belief: human dignity for every person.

May we continue the work of rooting out the dirt of hatred and resentment in our own lives as we continue on this journey of making deep and lasting PEACE.

And as always, thank you for your prayers and material support.

-Lee Bean



AND AS ALWAYS, THANK YOU!

We always say that Mary's House is a community effort, and that's the truth. We are very grateful for all the ways you help us. Thanks to our regular donors, who send something every month. Thanks to the occasional donors who send when they can. Thanks for the small donations that add up, and the large ones that surprise us. We have resources to share with people because you give them to us. Thank you!

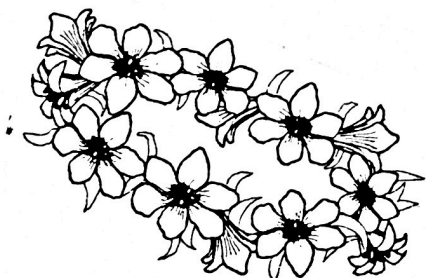
Thanks also to everyone who puts in the effort to keep things going. Thanks to Eddie who maintains a presence at the house, to Stephanie who is keeping things clean, to Jeff who shepherds our guests. Thanks to Scott for another painting job, to Estefania and family who help serve the meal, to Bea for her servant presence, to Lindsay who began the meal and lets us help. Thanks to all those who prepare the lunches-for-later, and all who donate what our friends need.

Thanks to Avondale UMC for sharing their space with our retreat, and to Eddie and Kevin for sound and photography. Thanks especially to Alan Storey for the challenging and thought-provoking retreat.

Thanks to our small but doughty crew of regular vigilers who show up rain or shine - unless there's lightning! You keep hope alive.

We are a very small community. We call ourselves "the board" but we're much less organized than that. Without you and your support we couldn't do any of this.

THANK YOU!





We Always Have Needs!



And you always kindly help us to fill them. Our first need is for prayer and loving thoughts - for our world, for all who suffer, for our guests and those we meet on the street, for ourselves to maintain hope and follow our consciences.

Yes, we do need money too. The house has bills, and sometimes repairs. The street meal is costly because we try to supply basic toiletries, socks, and underwear. When you live on the street you can't care for your possessions, so every week the same people need the same things. And sometimes we need to pay for space in a motel to meet peoples' needs.

If you'd like to help with in-kind gifts, here's what's most helpful right now: Travel-size toiletries: soap, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, lotions, razors & shaving cream, sunscreen, toothbrushes, deodorant, emergency ponchos, men's and women's socks and underwear, all sizes but especially medium and large. And snack foods like single serving fruit, pudding, crackers, cookies, etc.

Gently used t shirts, shorts, slacks, and shoes (men's and women's) are also welcome.

At the house we can use scouring powder, HE liquid laundry detergent, toilet tissue, and Pop Tarts! Yes, someone really likes PopTarts!

We'd love to have you join us:

- First Friday Mass: on the first Friday of each month we gather at 6:30pm in the Mary's House living room for Mass. Everyone is welcome. Mass is followed by a potluck which usually is a feast. Bring a dish if you can or just bring yourself.
- Vigil with us for peace, every Wednesday from 7:30 to 8:30 am and every Saturday from 5 to 6 pm. We have signs, or bring your own. Look for us at Five Points South by the fountain on Wednesday, across the street on Saturday.
- Vigil against the death penalty on any day an execution is scheduled. We vigil at the corner of Arrington and Woods N, near the county courthouse and the art museum. We have signs or bring your own. Next date: June 10th when Gregory Hunt is scheduled to be killed. (info at phadp.org)
- Join us at the Sunday meal, served at 3:30 pm, also at the Fountain. Call Shelley at 629 278 3124 for information and to coordinate.





JOIN US



First Friday Masses: always at 6:30 pm, always followed by a potluck feast.

June 6th, 6:30 pm, Fr. Frank Muscolino celebrant

Friday July 4th, Fr Joe Culotta celebrant

Friday August 1, Fr Phil Paxton CP celebrant

Friday September 5, Fr Joe Culotta Celebrant



*Vigil for peace any Wednesday from 7:30 to 8:30 am or on Saturday from 5 to 6 pm. Look for us at Five Points South!

*Vigil against the death penalty on any day when a state killing is scheduled. We vigil from 4:30 to 6 pm at the intersection of Arrington and Woods N. in Birmingham.

*We're excited that our next retreat is scheduled for December 5th and 6th, 7 pm on the 5th to 8:30 the evening of the 6th. Martha Hennessey will be leading our reflections.

See inside for more information on our activities.

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