

Pentecost!  
June 2019

# Magnificat



Dear Friends,

It seems odd to be writing the 'house letter' from a different house! Our transition is proceeding, and I am no longer the resident at Mary's House. I have moved, along with dog and birds, to our old neighborhood beside the railroad tracks in Titusville. Here I have what we call the Little House, and I've just about settled in with the menagerie, next door to the Tracks House, our first home in Birmingham, where Jim has been writing and studying all along. Although we're no longer watching for trains carrying nuclear warheads, the trains remain a constant presence in life over here. Justice the African Grey has gotten used to the rumbles and crashes, and especially the horns which are required by law to sound just in front of our houses, as the trains approach a crossing down the street.

Meanwhile, Mary's House has been thoroughly stripped and cleaned, and then freshly painted indoors. The outside has also been cleaned and the ratty porch roof has been scraped and painted, something we'd never managed. The Guadelupan Sisters are now the "residents", each sister taking a week in turn to be responsible for the house and staying there. This will be the system when there are guests again, and now the sisters are getting to know the house and the neighborhood in preparation for that time. Meanwhile, they are sorting the numerous icons, pictures, and what-not around the house, organizing things in preparation for the opening. It's all very exciting and also a bit stressful as we work out communication lines and decision-making.



Just to be clear: Mary's House remains a Catholic Worker house of hospitality, and we are working out a blending of charisms, CW and Guadelupan Missionary Sisters. The Mary's House board will continue to hold the property and to make major financial decisions and guide our direction. The sisters will be providing hospitality, largely to Latinx women and kids, with us as back-up and advisors. Jim will continue to balance the check-book, I will continue to take care of the mail and the newsletter. (We hope that the sisters will eventually feel comfortable writing for it, but we are going slowly for now.) Our retreats will continue - we're especially excited about our Advent retreat in December, and we



think the Lenten one will also be great. See the flyer for December details, and keep watching for word about Lent.

It seems appropriate that we celebrate Pentecost as this transition happens. We hope that we are listening to the promptings of the Spirit, and remaining open and faithful to the vision we are sharing together. In the process of moving I've been going through old letters and papers and files. I find myself amazed at what has been accomplished at Mary's House so far, really not through our doing at all. What we did was hold the space, for the Spirit and for you, our community, to work



with the folks who came to stay with us. It's all the work of the Spirit, but the Spirit needs an opening, a focal point, to work through, and that has been Mary's House. In most cases it has simply meant a family safely housed for a while, fed and clothed and enabled to go back out with some hope in their hearts. In a few cases it has meant almost miraculous changes - with Laura, for example, who was healed of soul and died in

peace in what's now "Laura's Room".

All of this work and change was enabled by you, our community. You paid the bills and prayed the prayers. You came to the work parties and the Masses, brought food for the potlucks and gave money at our only fund-raiser (thanks, Beat Lads!). You found diapers and formula when needed, bought school uniforms, funded house repairs, mowed the lawn, spent time talking with guests, and generally made things work. We thank you all. Thanks to those who give regularly and those who give when they can; thanks to the parishes that donate money and food and baby supplies - St. Peter's, St Mark's, St Paul's Cathedral, St. Elias. Prince of Peace, Holy Family, St. Mary's, Queen of the Universe, Sacred Heart, St Andrew's Episcopal, Trinity House of Prayer - and more. Thank you. Without you we could not have come this far, and we're counting on you to help us go still further on this road.

You are still welcome to come for coffee or tea and a tour, but it will take a bit more organization now since the sisters are at La Casita, their center, during the day. I will be happy to meet you at the house. Leave a message at the Mary's House number, 205 780 2020 or email me at [shelleymdouglass@gmail.com](mailto:shelleymdouglass@gmail.com).

God's peace,  
Shelley D.



## Does Pentecost Give Us Hope? Does Anything?



The middle of May this year was really hot in Birmingham - in the mid 90s (F) although not humid, so not as miserable as July and August. Still, it was hot. In India and Japan the temperatures spiked at over 120 F. People died from the heat. There are already wildfires burning in California and in Canada, and massive flooding continues to devastate the Midwestern US. Amid estimates of wide spread extinction of animal species come reports that the world's second-largest colony of emperor penguins has been wiped out by changing sea ice conditions, losing virtually all their chicks for three years in a row. Unprecedented warm temperatures in Alaska have disrupted life for people (and animals) there...

I am a local weather freak - I admit it. I follow the predictions for rain, sun, and temperature because I usually have a garden going. I walk the dog when the day is coolest (or warmest, in winter). I hang wash out to dry and open windows to cool the house. Weather is important to me. I don't try to track climate, and climate change, but I do follow the news. Lately that has been the news.

In the news, as it filters through to my computer, there are isolated weather events like soaring temperatures and huge fires and storms and floods. There are people events like refugee caravans and boats sinking in the Mediterranean, overloaded with the desperate. There are droughts and floods in Africa and Europe, and every couple of days it seems there is a report that the "last of" some kind of animal has died. A kind of rhino, or a kind of big cat, or...

If I stand back from my computer and its piecemeal news items - if I place myself in a satellite orbiting the earth and look down on all that beauty - I can see to my dismay that all these sound bites are interrelated. This is a global convulsion of pain, the possible death of our world. Not the American Empire, not the capitalist system, not patriarchy or racism. The world. The planet we live on, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the innumerable ecosystems and creatures with whom we share this planet, and upon whom we depend for life.... That world is dying.

There is a new report from the Breakthrough National Centre for Climate Restoration in Australia. It warns of a world uninhabitable by 2050. This report comes from a government entity, is created by business and military people, and it warns that most of the climate science that gets released greatly downplays the



danger we face. It recommends massive global action as the only possible way to avert destruction, and it warns of massive global disruption - more wars, millions of refugees, uncountable deaths - as the alternative.

Meanwhile in the United States the current administration forbids the sharing of climate science and denies the existence of climate change, while the DNC has just told WA governor Jay Inslee that climate change will not be a topic of the Democratic debates.

I'm a glass-half-full kind of person. I've taken over a page of my space here with the bad news. I read the psalms in the morning with a sense of grief, especially when they rejoice in nature and declare confidence in God's protection. I mourn that humans are in control here, or think they are.

And today is Pentecost. This is the day when those tongues of flame appeared over the heads of Jesus' followers, and they were suddenly emboldened to speak the truth in all languages, so that everyone could understand. If we go by the accounts of Acts, those first communities were loving and caring, sharing and inclusive. They refused military service and they shared what they had with those in need. "See these Christians, how they love each other", people said.

I was wondering today during the sermon if the Spirit still speaks, and if so, does it speak to our condition?

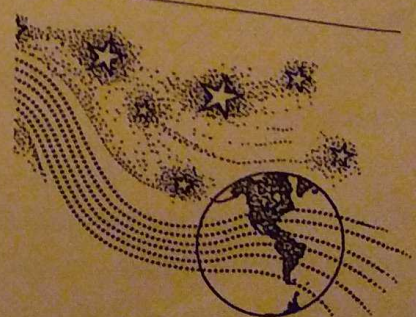
The Breakthrough Centre report holds out one hope - a massive global mobilization like the one during the Second World War. This mobilization would be toward reduction of carbon emissions, immediately, drastically. Could that happen? The knowledge is there, or is being developed. The communications are there. Is the will there? Is it possible that these massive fires and winds can become Pentecost winds, moving us to conversion?

I've always brought big issues home - small steps taken by many people make change. In this case, the small steps need to be supplemented by societal steps. If we are hoping for a world of peace and justice, we need to have a world. Small steps call us to consciousness: students striking to call for changes; Necessity Valve Turners being arrested for stopping the flow of tar sands oil through Minnesota pipelines; Kings Bay Plowshares standing against nuclear omnicide; the willingness of indigenous peoples to share their wisdom with activists..... if we are listening perhaps we can hear the spirit of life calling.

And - it turns out that some of the emperor penguins moved to join a larger flock on better ice. And were accepted.

Amen

Shelley D.

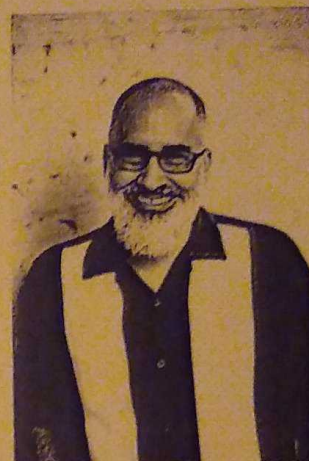




## LOVE CROSSES BORDERS

### AN ADVENT RETREAT WITH ANTON FLORES

FRIDAY DECEMBER 6 – SUNDAY DECEMBER 8, 2019



Advent is a time of holy impatience. The forces of injustice and oppression are relentless, yet we hold onto hope that another world is possible. This retreat is a reminder that God is Love and love is unstoppable.

Anton Flores-Maisonet will guide us on our Advent retreat. He has been witness to a love that crosses borders. As co-founder of Alterna, rooted in intentional community with Latinx immigrants for 13 years, he was on the front lines of Georgia's holy impatient struggle for immigrant justice. He is also co-founder of El Rufugio, a hospitality house outside Stewart Detention Center, and of Georgia Detention Watch. Over the years Alterna was a worshipping community, a hospitality house, and a housing cooperative, with four immigrant families currently paying no-interest mortgages on their first homes. Anton's own loving border crossings include partnering with a sister community in Huehuetenango, Guatemala. He's also been arrested a few times for crossing the line (a political border) at Stewart Detention Center, one of the US' largest detention centers. Anton has recently begun a two-year residency at the Atlanta Friends Meeting (Quaker), while his marriage partner of 25 years, Charlotte, is teaching English language learners and their son Jairo is in his third year of university.

This retreat will focus on more than immigration. Anton loves theology and during our time together he will explore the theological significance of solidarity and community. Additionally, Anton will invite us to explore the disciplines that sustain holy impatience. In 2016 Anton and the Alterna community suffered a double tragedy, the death of co-founder Norma, and of Anton's 14 year old son Eli. Deaths, especially premature deaths, are borders where we question where love is. If love is anything, it is gracious and vulnerable. This retreat is designed to foster an atmosphere of grace and vulnerability where we can not only plumb the depths of our lament of our social condition but also where we can find light, even in the darkest crevice of our own soul.

Join us for this weekend of deepening: 7 pm December 6 to noon on December 8<sup>th</sup>, at the Rush Center in Midfield AL. Cost, \$65 for overnight, \$60 for days only. Plentiful Scholarships

To register, call or write Mary's House 2107 Ave G, Birmingham 35218; 205 780 2020 or email [shelleymdouglass@gmail.com](mailto:shelleymdouglass@gmail.com).



## Unas Palabras de las Hermanas



Queremos presentarnos por este medio, somos las hermanas Rosy, Juve, Martha E, y Gaby, Misioneras Guadalupanas del Espiritu Santo que trabajamos para Caridades Católicas en la Diócesis de Birmingham y proveemos servicios sociales mayormente a la comunidad inmigrante hispana en nuestra agencia conocida como "La Casita". Estamos muy felices de poder extender nuestros servicios ahora en Casa Maria, pues parte de nuestro carisma es la promoción de la dignidad humana y lo queremos hacer con las mujeres hispanas migrantes y sus hijos que necesitan un lugar donde vivir. Les compartimos con gran alegría que desde hace un mes estamos tomando ya turnos por semana para vivir en Casa Maria y con ayuda de voluntarios, estamos preparando la casa para empezar a recibir ahí a mujeres y niños sin hogar a partir del mes de Agosto. Pedimos su oraciones para que en esta transición sepamos descubrir a Cristo en cada persona que llegue a visitar y a vivir en Casa Maria. Esperamos seguir contando con su apoyo y sus oraciones. Unidos en el servicio a Cristo en los más pobres y necesitados,

Hnas. Misioneras Guadalupanas del Espiritu Santo.

Some Words from the Sisters (In Shelley's amateur translation)

We want to introduce ourselves in this way. We are sisters Rosy, Juve, Martha E, and Gaby, Guadalupe Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit. We work for Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Birmingham and provide social services mostly to the immigrant Hispanic community through our agency known as "La Casita". We are very happy to be able to extend our services now through Mary's House, because part of our charism is the promotion of human dignity and we want to work with Hispanic migrant women and their children who need a place to live. So it's with great joy that for a month we have been taking turns each week to live in Mary's House and with the help of volunteers, we are preparing the house to begin receiving women and children without homes by the month of August. We ask your prayers that in this transition we will find Christ in every person who comes to visit or live at Mary's House. We hope to continue with your help and your prayers. United in the service of Christ in the poorest and neediest,

The Guadalupe Missionary Sisters

## CATHOLIC WORKER ROOTS

Dorothy Day, writing in the January 1948 issue of *The Catholic Worker*:

We are convinced that the world can be saved only by a return to these ideas: voluntary poverty, manual labor, works of mercy, hospitality. They are fundamental. They are more important than getting out a paper, than lecturing, than writing books. And yet we have to do those things because we must give a reason, as St. Peter says, for the faith that is in us.

Peter Maurin emphasized the primacy of the spiritual, the correlation of the spiritual and the material, translating these ideas into actual living today, whether in the city or the country, in shop, office, field, factory, or workshop.

With these war years we have come to emphasize more our opposition to the use of force, the necessity of sanctity, or aiming at perfection, at a spiritual renewal while undertaking the making of a new social order.

From *All the Way to Heaven; the Selected Letters of Dorothy Day*, edited by Robert Ellsberg, Marquette University, 2010



## WE STILL HAVE NEEDS...

Although we're in transition, we still have needs at Mary's House. We need your prayers for this process, for clarity and for grace; we need money - we have just painted the inside of the house (it's a big house), we need to replace the washing machine, and one of the window ac units needs replacing. Also June is the month when our insurance comes due - that's our biggest single-payment expense. So yes, we need help with all of that! Plus, if you want to help

with "in kind" gifts, we can use

Paper goods - towels, napkins, and especially toilet tissue

Cleaning supplies

Laundry supplies - detergent, bleach, non-chlorine bleach

Books and other amusements in Spanish, for adults & kids - no violent toys please

Elbow grease, especially for the yard and garden!

You can mail checks made out to "Mary's House" to 2107 Ave G, Birmingham Al

35218, or if you want to come by, call or email to let us know you're coming. (205

780 2020, shelleymdouglass@gmail.com) Be sure to give us some notice so we can

be sure that someone will be home!



THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

## JOIN US TO STAND FOR PEACE

Vigil for peace at Five Points South:

Wednesday from 7:30 to 8:30 am, in front of the fountain



Saturday from 5 to 6 pm in front of Waffle House across the street

Come and stand with us, converse with passers-by, and join us afterward (most Saturdays) for good cheap food at New China Town restaurant, down the block from the vigil.



## PRAY WITH US

FIRST FRIDAY MASSES, 6:30pm at Mary's House

Friday, July 5, 6:30 pm, celebrant Fr. Alex Steinmiller  
CP

Friday, August 2, 6:30 pm, celebrant Fr. Tom Ackerman

Each Mass is followed by a potluck (bring a dish if you can) and time for fellowship.  
Come and join us!

### ADVENT RETREAT:

Our Advent Retreat this year will be led by Anton Flores, co-founder of Alterna Community in Georgia. We are looking forward to deepening together in our understanding that "Love Crosses Borders". Dates - Friday December 6, 7 pm to Sunday December 8, noon. See flyer inside for more information.

NOTE: at this writing we have no more executions scheduled, but if that happens, we will vigil on the day from 11:30 am to 1 pm at the corner of Arrington & Woods, N, in downtown Birmingham.

Mary's House  
2107 Ave G  
Birmingham AL 35218

