

January 2026
Ordinary Time

Magnificat



Dear Friends,

Here in Birmingham we are having see-saw weather - moderate temps for half the week and then sudden descents into the frigid (for us) low twenties. It's hard to navigate. My azaleas have begun to bud again, after a false start in December. The birds are enjoying the food we put out for them, and I am appreciating the folks who are out in the cold, holding signs on the overpasses, standing in front of Congressional offices, rallying against the insanity going on right now all over the country. That is food of another sort, for people needing some hope.

Mary's House is again undergoing some changes. Eddie, our caretaker for the last year and a half, has moved on. He has an apartment not far away and says he'll keep in touch. We are VERY grateful to him for living at the house, keeping an eye on things, chatting with our guests, and especially for all the help with computer issues and tech for our retreats. Many blessings on his life and his future path!

So we are now looking again for a caretaker or a hospitaller. The caretaker lives at the house, takes out trash, brings in mail, and visits with the guests. A hospitaller would do those things but also be more involved with the guests, helping to guide and encourage. Both are volunteer positions, with free room and wifi, and of course the possibility of working their own job. If you know anyone who might fit one of these spots, please put us in touch with each other!

Meanwhile life goes on - we are still supporting our last guest of 2025 who has now interviewed for a Section 8 voucher and is hopeful that she'll qualify. Children's Hospital has been amazing in caring for her little girl and helping the Mom understand what's going on. I hope that all these services don't disappear with the coming funding cuts.

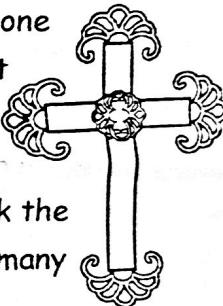
Our Advent retreat with Martha Hennessy was very fruitful for the group of around 35 folks who gathered. Not only did we learn more about Dorothy Day, but we also were able to understand better how to live our own lives as she did, with discipline to work for the good. Thank you, Martha!

We could have no better sequel to Martha than Brian Terrell, who will be guiding our Lenten retreat, March 6-7. Brian is a life-long Catholic Worker farmer and activist, an old friend, a great story-teller. This will be a lively and thoughtful retreat - see the flyer!



We continue our twice-weekly vigils for peace and justice on Wednesday morning and Saturday evening. They have occasionally swelled a bit in size in response to the illegal actions of the current regime. We are happy for everyone who comes, and also happy for the rallies and other actions that are being organized. Our witness is a quiet one, but it has lasted now for around 25 years so people have come to count on it. We have far more positive than negative responses now of course. Our biggest sign reads "War is terrorism". We've been using it again lately even though it's a bit unwieldy in windy weather.

The Sunday meal is a highlight of my week. We have around 30 people who wait for us by the Fountain at Five Points South each Sunday, sometimes more, sometimes less. We always have a hot meal and a sack lunch for later. Depending on how many servers we have, there are also toiletries, wipes, socks, underwear, and lightly used clothing. Our serving time is usually the warmest time of day, and it's amazing and wonderful to see people sitting around the fountain, eating their fill, relaxing for a little while. Another wonderful thing is how the folks who come regularly take ownership, helping to unload our tables and set things up and then load back up again. Several people who are working give us a couple of bucks now and then to help, (you might be surprised at how many are working), and one young man gave me a lovely little filigree cross a couple of weeks ago. Something about sharing food together builds community. We know each other in the breaking of the bread.



The Catholic Worker is not a charity - it's a way of life. It's an attempt to walk the Way that the early church walked in following Jesus, and that has been rediscovered many times since. Dorothy rediscovered it through Peter Maurin and saints like Francis of Assisi and Therese of Lisieux. The same truths come to light in other faith traditions as well. It's really very simply stated, but it's very hard to do. Love your neighbor and love your enemy. Share the goods of the earth, do not hoard them. No killing. Live simply. No killing. Share. No killing. Respect the humanity of each person. No killing. Build community and the common good. No killing. Dorothy Day may eventually be formally declared a saint by the Catholic Church. (Recognizing the obvious.) I hope that we will always focus on the Way that she walked, not the person herself. We're all called to walk as she did.

And we hope that you'll join us for a vigil, a Mass, at the street meal, or call us for a visit to Mary's House itself.

God's peace,
Shelley D.

For those who've asked, Jim's new book, *Martyrs to the Unspeakable: the Assassinations of JFK, Malcolm, Martin, and RFK*, is finished and available from Orbis Books or your bookstore. People who walked the walk.

RESISTANCE AS HOPE: A LENTEN RETREAT WITH BRIAN TERRELL

7 pm Friday March 6 - 8:30 pm Saturday March 7

As the first year of the current regime draws to a close, people of faith and conscience are challenged: how do we find hope, and how do we resist the hatred and violence that's being spewed all over this country? We are excited to announce our Lenten retreat, which will focus on those questions under the guidance of our friend Brian Terrell.



Brian has been a peace activist since 1975, when he joined the Catholic Worker movement in New York City. There he worked and prayed with Dorothy Day and the CW community, helping to edit the Catholic Worker newspaper and keep the communal work going. Since 1986, Brian and his wife Betsy Keenan have lived at Strangers and Guests CW Farm in Maloy, IA, where they raised their children and where they support themselves by small-scale agriculture and hand crafts.

Brian has participated in anti-war work all over the world. From 2010 to 2019 he was a coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, and made annual visits to Afghanistan. He has spent more than 2 years in jails and prisons in the US and abroad. Brian is currently a coordinator for the Nevada Desert Experience.

As we've talked about plans for this next retreat, it's become clear that life is changing rapidly and it's hard to predict what will be happening in March. As Brian said, "In this remarkable time when human history is unfolding at breakneck speed, a title for a Lenten retreat in March seems like a moving target." It is clear to us, though, that we will still need hope, and we'll still need to resist.

Brian will be our guide as we reflect on our lives, sharing stories, providing input, and helping us build community. We hope you'll join us.

March 6, 7 pm, to March 7, 8:30 pm

At Holy Family Cristo Rey High School, 1832 Center Way South, Bham 35205

Cost \$65 for the weekend; plentiful scholarships available

To register contact shelleymdouglass@gmail.com or phone 629 278 3124 and leave a message.

A GLIMMER OF HOPE

For regular readers of this newsletter, it's not difficult to observe that hope seems to be in short supply in our current climate. I can't count the times I've told myself that I need to back away from news and social media due to the toxic nature and polarizing effects they have on me and my outlook on life. And yet, like the proverbial moth to a flame I return, only to be hardened and disappointed once again at the seeming disappearance of our common humanity.

Those of us who have any familiarity with Christian mysticism know that darkness is not the last word, but it *is* a necessary precursor for any type of resurrecting hope. That's where the glimmer of hope I've experienced recently comes in.

Many of you are familiar with the Buddhist peace walkers making their way from Texas to Washington D.C. What started out as something small and insignificant has blossomed into what is hopefully a sign of things to come. I'd like to share a few observations I've had while watching clips of the monks on their journey.

When the emotional music and commentary is stripped away from many of the clips, what stands out to me the most is the visible manifestation of inner peace that the monks seem to have. This was most clearly demonstrated when a Christian fundamentalist street preacher confronted the monks on their walk. He was telling the monks that their peace is not of Jesus and that he loves them so much that he must warn them of the eternal fires of hell unless they repent and believe in Jesus. When I see that, I feel anger welling up inside of me. The amazing thing is that the monks are not phased at all by this encounter. There is an acknowledgment of the humanity of the preacher, a few necessary words of love of the opponent, and then the monks are on their way. The look of peace on the faces of the monks during the episode can only come from a deep, abiding understanding of who they are and who they are dealing with. Humanity touching humanity, regardless of the outcome.

Another observation I've had that goes along well with the Catholic Worker emphasis on Personalism is the attention the monks give to the many people lining the roadside on their journey. Accepting gifts from countless people, stopping to touch disabled children, giving verbal blessings to people whose pain seems so visible. All these point to the primacy of the person over the daily schedule and physical discomforts of the monks. I'm reminded of my own dismissive nature when dealing with people that come to our Sunday street meal. It's so easy to want to get people fed and move on to the next part of the day instead of trying to at least identify with some part of their pain, even if an immediate solution is not possible.

It's also interesting to observe the sheer diversity of the people who are drawn to the peace walkers. Rural farmers, law enforcement officers, urbanites, and more. Young and old alike showing up to glimpse what we all should be striving for...peace. There seems to be a place for everyone at the table of peace, and isn't that what Jesus taught by his unlikely choice of disciples to be a part of his ministry? I know I can do better at including those that think differently than me on our journey towards peace.

It would be easy to idolize the monks and turn them into celebrities. No doubt, that's what some have tried to do. And I imagine it's not easy to stay on the mission of peace with all the attention being received. But I am glad to be reminded that peace is possible. I also know that this peace doesn't come naturally for any of us, and that's the part I struggle with the most. I know that kind of peace has to be intentionally developed by a practice of silence/meditation/prayer. A stripping of the ego requires time and determination, things that our culture so fights against. The alternative, however, is despair, and we don't have time for more of that. So, will we decide to do what's necessary to cultivate the inner peace that can literally transform humanity? Will we commit to a discipline that requires less media and entertainment to foster that inner stillness that can bridge the divide between "us" and "them"? May it be so. Peace be with us all.

-Lee Bean

CATHOLIC WORKER ROOTS

THE WORKS OF MERCY
FEED THE HUNGRY.
GIVE DRINK TO THE
THIRSTY. CLOTHE
THE NAKED. VISIT
THE SICK. SHELTER
THE HOMELESS. TO
VISIT THE PRISON-
ERS. TO BURY THE
DEAD. PRAY FOR THE
LIVING AND THE DEAD.



THE WORKS OF WAR
DESTROY CROPS AND
LAND. SEIZE FOOD
SUPPLIES. DESTROY
HOMES. VILLAGES.
SCATTER FAMILIES.
CONTAMINATE
WATER. IMPRISON
DISSENTERS. INFECT
WOUNDS AND BURNS.
KILL THE LIVING.

RITA CORBIN

Walking

I too have been following the amazing peace walk of the Buddhist monks across the Deep South. I marvel at the joy and hope their walk has aroused in places where I would have expected misunderstanding, even hostility. I'm sure that Aloka the peace dog is part of that, but the simple commitment to walking in silence seems to be the hook that draws people in, allowing them also to listen to the Dharma talks about inner peace and mindfulness.

At the same time I'm following more amazing walks from all over the world, walks calling for peace and justice in international affairs. And walks all over the United States challenging the racism and xenophobia that are hallmarks of this regime. Those walks aren't usually silent. They are spirited and loud. The most moving walks I've seen are the ones in Minneapolis. Minneapolis has street parties going on, and sled competitions, and dancing. Besides their watchful presence they are resisting with joy and great courage. The street choir is so simple, so profound: hundreds of people walking through the streets, singing together to those who are afraid to leave their homes, waving, sharing solidarity. "Hold on," they sing, "Hold on my dear ones until the dawn." I'm not sure I have the words right, but I have the loving spirit.

The time is coming for all of us when civil disobedience won't be a choice any longer. That time has already arrived in Minneapolis, Portland, Chicago, and other cities. It will come here too, whether we consider ourselves ready or not. Unless there's a major change in our political landscape many of our daily rituals - vigiling, sharing food, marching - will be illegal, or at least arrestable. Already some religious leaders are recognizing the dangers. Episcopal Bishop Robert Hirschfeld has asked his clergy to make their wills and get their affairs in order. Archbishop Timothy Broglio, who oversees all Catholic chaplains, has said that it would be "morally justified" for troops to refuse orders to invade Greenland. The people in the streets have been living this reality for months now, facing pepper spray, flash-bangs, physical brutality, and death.

Courage consists in being afraid, facing our fear, and acting for what's right. The discipline of the Dharma talks and the discipline of being ready for death are allied. We are all going to die. The goal is to face our fears and live our lives mindfully and consciously, ready to give what is asked of us.

Shelley D





WE ALWAYS HAVE NEEDS!

We need patience and courage and openness to next steps, so please pray for us!
We need money too, for bills and meal supplies and toiletries and motels.

In-kind gifts are also welcome:

Paper goods for the house - toilet tissue, paper towels, paper napkins

Supplies for the street meal:

Boxes of snack-size chips; individual servings of fruit (applesauce, peaches, fruit cocktail, etc.); sweet treats like packaged cupcakes, honeybuns, cookies; 20 oz bottles of water.

Gently used warm clothing; blankets; mittens, hats, scarves, socks.

Men's and women's underwear, sizes M and L - new, please. Socks, new or gently used.

Shoes are always welcome, sneakers, boots, etc.

Toiletries: TRAVEL SIZE soaps, shampoo & conditioner, lotion, deodorant, chapstick, disposable razors, Tylenol or similar, antacids, antibiotic ointment and bandaids.

Baby wipes, especially Parents Choice 50 wipe packs.

AND WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

Thanks to our regular donors - we rely on you to keep the doors open.

Thanks to those who give when they can - your gifts are always timely and much appreciated.

Thanks for the food drives, the clothing donations, and the toiletries.

Thanks to St Mary's for the collections of supplies. Thanks to Holy Family KPC and Young Adult Bible Study group. Thanks to St. Peter's for food and other supplies.

Thanks to all those who signed up to make sandwiches for the Sunday meal, and to Carmen for organizing it. Thanks to those who come to help serve and share.

Thanks to those who fold and stuff and fold and stamp to get this newsletter out.

Thanks to St Peter's and to St Mark's and to the Diocese for their financial help.

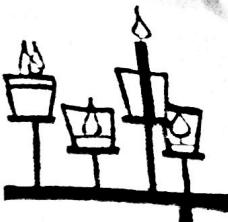
Thanks to the priests who give of their time to celebrate Mass with us on First Fridays.

Thanks to Holy Family/Cristo Rey High School for sharing their space with us.

Thanks to all those who join us for vigils on the street.

Mary's House is a community effort. Without your help and presence we could do very little. Thank you for being our community.





COME AND JOIN US IN PRAYER AND ACTION!

First Friday Mass on Friday, February 6, celebrant Fr Hugo Esparza CP, 6:30 pm.
Join us for Mass in our living room followed by a potluck and conversation. Kids welcome!
Bring a dish, or just yourself.

No Mass on March 6, join us instead for our Lenten retreat with Brian Terrell - see inside
for more information.
April 3 is Good Friday, hence no Mass.

Join us to vigil for peace at Five Points South on Wednesdays from 7:30 to 8:30 am
and on Saturdays from 5 to 6 pm. We have signs, or bring your own. We follow a
nonviolent discipline.

If an execution is scheduled we will vigil in Birmingham at the intersection of Arrington
and Woods N from 4:30 - 6 pm on the day. Please join us for as much time as you can. We
have signs, or bring your own.

