

THE HARTFORD CATHOLIC WORKER



ST. MARTIN DE PORRES HOUSE
ST. BRIGID HOUSE

What does God require but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly... Micah 6:8



Was there a moment, known only to God, when all the stars held their breath, when the galaxies paused in their dance for a fraction of a second, and the Word, who had called it all into being, went with all his love into the womb of a young girl, and the universe started to breathe again, and the ancient harmonies resumed their song, and the angels clapped their hands for joy?

Madeleine L'Engle

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THE HARTFORD CATHOLIC WORKER

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You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard

'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,



But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in

pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise. Ω

St. Martin's Calendar

✦ Please join us on **Tuesday, January 6, October 5 and November 2 February 3, and March 3 at 7:30 PM** for the celebration of Mass at St. Brigid House, 18 Clark St., Hartford. Refreshments and conversation follow Mass.

🌐 Our vigil for an end to war continues on **Friday's from 11:30-12:30** outside the Federal Building on Main St. in Hartford. Please bring a sign and join our call for an end to the American military occupation of Iraq.



Yolanda Lopez

WE DON'T GET NINE LIVES

Christopher J. Doucot

I anticipated that Sunday October 12th would be a little bit busy since two suburban churches were scheduled to drop off some donations and both Jackie and Brian were away, but like most days at the Catholic Worker much of that Sabbath day was spent responding to the ad hoc: unscripted moments of charity, absurdity and tragedy.

The day began quietly enough with the nine A.M. Gospel Choir mass across the street at St. Mike's. After mass our dear friend Andrea was waiting for me on the porch. Andrea is a tireless, hardworking and generous soul despite being absolutely destitute. Andrea lives in an immaculate and over priced apartment in an otherwise squalid building with her sixteen year old daughter and twenty year old son. Aside from the portrait of a pasty white Jesus on the wall and the kittens scurrying underfoot her apartment is sparse. The front door doesn't open completely because of a 2x4 nailed to the floor; at night another 2x4 is propped between it and the doorknob. Andrea had come to borrow one of our folding tables but now she needed a ride as well. Andrea is a fantastic cook. Given the opportunity she could cook for a high end restaurant. On this day she had obtained a permit from the city and was headed to Bushnell Park to sell some of her home cooking to the folks attending a Puerto Rican festival in order to make the rent. Knowing how great her cooking is I had no doubt she would make her rent and more.

By the time I returned home Sarah was making croûtons with the left over left over bread from Panera. Each week we get a wonderful delivery of this left over bread that we share with the neighborhood. Usually we are able to give it all away but when there is extra Sarah makes her incredible croûtons/butter delivery morsels.

By mid day the first church donation had

arrived. Each year the wonderful people of St. Therese Catholic Church of Granby gather linens for us to distribute to the people of the neighborhood. As with the bread we are simply the middle men/women. If we step back and think about it aren't we called to be middle men and women with all of God's wealth? making sure not to keep more than we need and sharing the rest with our sisters and brothers. After Sarah, Micah and I unloaded the sheets and blankets I returned home to read



the paper before heading over to the office to catch up on some paper work confident that the afternoon would be quiet. While I was reading Sarah welcomed the generous folks from St. Ann's in Avon who had come to donate a room full of food.

With the food unloaded and stored in the pantry Sarah headed off to yoga and then to her parents home where she got into an unexpected conversation about anarchy. Meanwhile up in the office I was preparing my lecture for my Monday class at CCSU when I got a call from an incredibly generous (and unbelievably energetic dentist/carpenter/humanitarian) friend of ours who had returned from a mission trip to Haiti the night before. Dr. Ralph had planned to spend his Sabbath practicing the biblical work (Lev. 23:22) of gleaning the fields of a squash farmer. Ralph called to make sure I would be home to accept the truck load of

butternut and acorn squash he had gleaned. "Great" he said, "I'll be right in". I'm writing on the following Friday and nearly all of the hundreds of squash Ralph dropped off have been taken by neighbors.

Being energetic and a carpenter Ralph asked to look at the major repair we had done to St. Martin House last year. The repair did not go as well as we hoped. The group we hired works with teens from this neighborhood who have dropped out of school. The students go to class part time and learn carpentry part time while we get the work done at a discount. Unfortunately, the supervision of the young people was a bit lacking; mistakes were made-carpentry and otherwise. The city has yet to approve the work and the cellar still leaks when it rains so Ralph offered to spend the rest of his Sunday fixing the repair. Unfortunately I was not in a space to spend the rest of the day doing construction since I had to prepare my lecture (and three weeks earlier I had cut off one of my fingers- though that's a story for another day). So Ralph agreed to survey the job and buy the materials needed to do it right.

By the time Ralph returned with the concrete mix and lumber Andrea was calling from Bushnell Park to be picked up so after Micah and I unloaded Ralph's truck I headed downtown. I realized poor Andrea did not have a good day when I began loading nearly full trays of chicken and rice back into the van. It turns out that even though she had the best food she was not in the best location. A spot in the midst of the action cost a thousand dollars. Andrea only had \$300 dollars she had made at an earlier event selling bottled water which she invested in the food she prepared. All told Andrea sold only \$60 worth of food which she split with her sister and niece. I was furious that she had lost \$240 after working so hard. "Chris" she said said in her heavily accented voice, stretching the "is" part of my name with

(SEE *NINE LIVES*, P4)

NINE LIVES CONT.

an extended high pitched squeal, "I don't want to be rich, you know. I just want to provide for my family. I can't complain, you know. I made \$300 selling water! So it all evens out." Micah and I feasted on Andrea's cooking all week.

It was now dark and I had given up on writing my lecture. The Patriots were playing the late game so I cracked one of my homebrews and watched them get beat like the team they were when I was a kid and they had a tissue paper quarterback named Eason. Downstairs Micah and Bubba played video games connected with kids from around the world by the magic of the Internet. With curfew approaching Bubba left around ten. Since Monday was a holiday I let Micah continue the game while I went to bed.

At midnight I was awakened by the unique sound of a car crash. By the time I got outside Micah was already on the scene. Apparently two cars were drag racing down our street when one lost control and smashed into the telephone pole in front of St. Brigid House. Micah saw the driver of the wrecked car run off and called 911 for an ambulance. I tried to calm the driver of the other car who was understandably freaking out. There was a passenger in the metal knot; his body tangled in unnatural angles. Unconscious he gasped autonomic groans releasing his life to the still night air in five second intervals. In less than five minutes paramedics and police were on the scene. They would have arrived sooner but 911 calls placed from cell phones go to the State Police and do not provide an automatic address for the caller.

With black smoke billowing from under the hood fire hoses were readied while the jaws of life were used to extract a body now only partially inhabited by a soul. For years we tried to go through the proper channels to have speed bumps installed on our street. In the fifteen years we've been here our fence has been taken out twice, a girl has been hit, a telephone pole knocked down, a man killed

hitting another pole, a s.u.v overturned making a turn way too fast and now this. The city's response was that there were not enough accidents for there to be speed bumps. I invite you all to drive around Hartford's West End. Hartford's white, upper middle class and wealthy West End and count the speed bumps that have been installed in recent years. Are poor black children walking home from Clark School invulnerable to a speeding car? Or are middle class white children just more precious?

After the police spoke with Micah I brought



him in, hugged him and said a prayer of thanksgiving that we will not be able to afford the insurance for him to be able to drive when he turns 16 in a few months.

It was impossible to sleep. The adrenaline in our veins needed time to wear off. Watching the numbers of my clock radio advance always triggers an anxiety attack inside of me. So I got up to watch old television reruns on the computer. By 3 A.M. I was asleep.

Sarah and I were back at the Green House (aka St. Brigid House) by 9 A.M. Two of our extended community were taking ten of our older kids on a field trip to Central CT State U for the day so Sarah and I wanted to see them off and make sure they had breakfast. Whereas the ambulance sped off with the broken body and a wrecker lumbered away with the broken vehicle no one swept away the mess left behind. Outside the Green House there was a

fifty yard long debris field. The broken glass made the street shimmer as though it were a field of diamonds- fool's diamond's. Amidst the glass were the passenger's sun glasses, car parts and assorted spent medical detritus. Bubba and I began sweeping it up. Soon we were joined by Sarah, the field trip chaperons Jim and Stephen, and some of the other neighborhood kids.

As we cleaned I noticed a plastic shopping bag with a note on it in the front yard. At some point between the accident and the morning someone had placed the bag in the yard. The note read: "Can you do a favor. Please Buried my little cat. I Dont have money To buried it. God Will Bless you. Thank very much. A friend."

This was weird, sad, touching and funny all at once. I was cleaning up the scene of an awful accident that probably took a life and yet I was chuckling... out loud. It's awful. I shouldn't have laughed. But I couldn't help myself. Maybe it was nervous laughter. Maybe that's a rationalization to make myself feel a bit less shallow.

Of course I buried the cat in our front yard after saying a little prayer for the cat's owner and for the boy who ten yards away and ten hours earlier was dancing with death. It's what we do. We feed the hungry. We house the homeless. We instruct the ignorant. We bury the dead and we pray (and fight) for the living.

As I went to shovel up the last pile of glass I noticed a red, white and blue American flag laden Band-Aid on top of it all. It was as if it were purposefully placed there when I wasn't looking. My friends, the crisis in our nation is not on Wall St. It is on Clark St. and every street like ours around the nation. The wreck visible to the nation may be on the tip of Manhattan but the victims of our economy have been struggling in our cities for generations. A band aid bailout for the bankers and speculators is about as meaningful and helpful to our neighbors as the Band-Aid in our garbage barrel was to the boy in the twisted remnant of the car chocked around the phone pole.Ω

PRAISING AND WORKING IN GUATEMALA

Jacqueline Allen-Doucot

Over a year ago Ammon and I were invited by Fr. Tom Goekler to visit his Catholic Worker community in Guatemala City. Fr. Tom is a Maryknoll priest who was co-pastor of our parish, St. Michael's, when we moved to Hartford. Also considering the trip was our good friend Mark Colville from the New Haven Catholic Worker and his 12 year old son Justin.

Chris and I thought it was a wonderful idea. Ammon was 13 at the time- about the same age Micah was when he went to Darfur with Chris. Ammon had been wanting to travel, and because we want our kids to consider themselves members of a global community we agreed. Teenage years are challenging, as any of you who have raised children well know. In order to assert themselves as young adults and to separate from the child they once were they often view parents as obstacles to independence. If I had a nickel for every rolled eye or "whatever" I have endured over the last 12 months, I could pay off the mortgage in Voluntown. Sometimes it feels like helping a teenager find a sense of discipleship or view themselves as part of the One Mystical Body of Christ is at total odds with their need to assert their individuality and uniqueness. We viewed this trip as a way to bridge this gap. We hoped it would allow Ammon to do something that required both maturity and adult sacrifice and yet be uniquely his own. We also prayed fervently that it would improve his crappy Spanish grade.

It took us over a year to save the money. When Mark called in August with great ticket prices, the community was broke from summer camp and living off the credit card and Chris' small teaching salary. We wrote begging letters to a number of our supportive parishes to keep the ministry afloat and bought the tickets. The trip came upon us fast. It seemed like summer camp was just ending and now we were figuring what to pack. My sister Teri made us some First

Aid kits to bring and Ammon gathered up some balls (do you remember Pinky's) and candy to give to the kids we would meet. The four of us spent a day at Mercy Center, along with Herb a friend and volunteer at the New Haven CW, to discuss the trip and pray for guidance. We agreed that the boys would read I, Rigoberto by indigenous human rights activist and Nobel Laureate Rigoberto Menchu. They also agreed to leave their I-Pods in their luggage for the duration of the trip. Ammon received a 5 day excused absence from school, a backpack full of homework, and a directive to give a presentation to his Civics



class.

We were greeted at the airport in Guatemala by Fr. Tom and a large welcoming committee; Sr. Magda and 8 young people welcomed us in English and Spanish. With lots of laughing and hand signals we took off in the big van for pizza at the Maryknoll Center House. Fr. Tom made quick work of orienting us: "do not drink any water not from a bottle" and off we went.

During the next 10 days we met an amazing array of people including Maryknoll lay missionaries and high school students. We painted murals on cars, houses and schools. We were blessed to get to know Mario, Carlos and Danillo, three young men that had left their homes and families in Honduras to join Fr. Tom's community. Because of his success in Honduras helping young people leave gangs

while also teaching them how to build houses Fr. Tom had been asked by Maryknoll to replicate his program in Guatemala. These 4 young men have their work cut out for them.

In many ways Guatemala is very similar to the U.S. There is great apartheid between rich and poor- though in Guatemala the gated communities are circled with concertina wire and men with M-16's. Like the US the descendants of the conquering empire have little regard or use for the native peoples whose land has been vanquished. As in the U.S the only thing needed to break down barriers between young people of extremely different backgrounds is the opportunity to work and play and build relationships together. By the time we left we felt great love and community with the young people we worked beside.

Since the 50's when the CIA overthrew the democratically elected president Guatemala has been wracked by civil war. The country has been working hard to rebuild and heal since the 1996 UN brokered peace agreement. From our first day spent at the World Social Forum we understood that whatever peace comes will spring from the blood of many martyrs. Priests, bishops, nuns, union organizers, teachers, farmers, mothers and fathers paid with their lives to resist a government that according to the Archbishop's Office of Human Rights was responsible for 80% of the 200,000+ civilian deaths between 1956 and 1996. The UN reports that the government was responsible for 93% of the killings!

This is not ancient history. Part of our trip included a visit to the church and rectory where Bishop Gerardi was assassinated in 1996- two days after his Commission released a 4 book series documenting government sponsored massacres. In Antiqua we visited the convent where Ursuline nun Sr. Diana Ortiz was kidnapped from. During her captivity Sr. Ortiz

(PLEASE SEE: GUATEMALA P7)

SUMMER IN PALESTINE

Sam Digel

If you asked me today to put my finger on the exact moment I had the realization I'm not quite sure I could point to a single memory or experience. Perhaps it was the day trip to the Dead Sea, and the look of longing on our Palestinian bus driver and guide's faces as they were told they could not feel the mud of their native soil between their toes by the gently lapping shore. Perhaps it was the border guard and his look of cold fury when I told him I was studying Arabic and he asked why I wouldn't study a real language of a legitimate people, like Hebrew. Or perhaps it was something as mundane as staring at an elderly man thumb his well-worn prayer beads and mumble the afternoon incantations before suddenly being snapped back to the reality of two soldiers frisking him before he was allowed through the third security checkpoint and into the mosque, thankful for admittance yet late once again for the call to prayer.

Yet as I reflect back upon my time spent in the West Bank the whole experience remains a pile of scrap cloth waiting to be sewn together into a tidy geometric quilt, something that I can take out and show people so that they can simply look at it and understand. When I first came back home I thought that I could pick up various pieces of memory and wave them in people's faces. After all, with the sheer enormity and strength of my newfound conviction they would just have to succumb to the deluge of facts and experiences. Yet to my dismay, as I moved from person to person it seemed that the light of recognition in their eyes that I yearned so much for just never went off. How do you convey to someone who has lived their whole life taking not just creature comforts, such as reliable running water and electricity for granted, but seemingly intrinsic rights such as freedom of movement and the hope for advancement in life as well. It was not until after I had quelled my internal rage that I began to realize that the people who were bearing the brunt of my frustration could very

well have been myself just a month and a half before. Seizing upon my revelation, I began to retrace my journey chronologically to see where I had ceased to be that person, and had become conscious of just how radically different my life could have been were it not due to the geographic location of my birth.

Ironically enough my mind finally came to rest on the 3rd of July while we were driving to the ancient city of Hebron. Yearning for a temporary respite from our surroundings, one



of my American friend and I had convinced two of his co-workers to help us secure some camel meat for our 4th of July celebration. Not merely content to drive us there and back, our hosts insisted that we stop for dinner and some coffee at their favorite restaurant on the way home. As the sun settled in behind the hills and the mercifully cool evening air began to swirl around, our conversation meandered from the result of the earlier Soccer match to the best way to BBQ the meat the next day. I will never forget laughing with Ahmed at Jamaal, who taught himself English by reading Shakespeare, when he "bequeathed us to spread thoust coals widely". It just all seemed so American to me, right down to the Beatles music playing softly in the background. Cramming ourselves back

into the beat up old Toyota I tried to impart upon Ahmed the joy I had felt upon taking my first spin as driver when I was 16. As I knew we were roughly of the same age, I expected him to come back with a similar experience of the simultaneous terror and thrill that one experiences with the new responsibilities of being able to drive and finally getting around by yourself. I knew instinctively by his mumbled response that something was wrong. Mentally scolding myself for upsetting my new friend I wondered what could be bothering him, I mean wasn't that something that every teenage guy can relate to regardless of his nationality? Nothing could have prepared me for his explanation, as he gazed at me with suddenly blank eyes and rubbed his coiled hand unconsciously over and over the side of his cheek. He coldly recounted that when he was 16 some of his friends had been caught throwing rocks at an Israeli tank as it rumbled through their village. Although he himself had not been involved a few nights later Israeli soldiers burst into his living room and dragged him away, leaving his home, sobbing siblings, and childhood behind. When he emerged three and a half years later, he began to try and pick up his life where it had roughly been torn off. Yet everywhere he looked was a constant reminder of those years he had lost. Sure he had caught up in school, but his detention means that he will never be able to leave the West Bank to be able to practice his skills. He hauntingly remarked that he had simple traded in his prison cell for a bigger one. After an evening of drawing parallels between my life and his, I realized that we could never be the same person. While I had gone to my first prom, won the conference title in cross country, and been accepted into college he had sat in a cell for a crime he didn't commit, eagerly anticipating every six month when his family could visit him.

PALESTINE CONT.

There, perhaps this was it. The moment when the buzzer went off in my mind and I realized that the conflict goes far deeper than boundaries, water rights, and holy sites. It has permeated the life of every Palestinian, dehumanizing in every form of its manifestation. Without having come and seen it first hand there's simply no way I could have ever begun to grasp at the amorphous truth of what is happening. It was not the look in Ahmed's eyes that day that sticks with me, but the fact that I saw it in everyone's. While at this stage in my life I most closely related to him, I knew that for every point in time for every Palestinian there was the chance for humiliation at the hands of the occupying forces. Perhaps at age 28 it would have been getting engaged in secret due to the 24 hour a day curfew. Perhaps at age 40 it would have been not being able to send my child to the only hospital

that could give him care because I was not authorized to go the 6 miles between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Perhaps at age 60 it would have been losing my ancestral land and



family home to an illegal settlement, despite having deeds dating back to the Ottoman Empire. The fact of the matter is it could have been any one of those stories that struck home

the injustice of the entire situation to me. Yet ultimately as I close the narrative of my brief time in Palestine it was the shared humanity that stuck with me. The idea that I had come to the West Bank viewing things through the lens of black and white as well as us and them was now an alien concept to me. While Ahmed's story deeply affected me, its potency was derived not from the gross injustice of the whole affair. Rather it was the ease with which I could relate to him, despite the drastically different paths our lives had followed. Simply put, despite the barriers between us I could see myself in his shoes if I had simply been born to a different mother. It was this common human spirit that my mind often drifts to as the overblown rhetoric of politics fans the flames of the region. While it is now near impossible to peel away the multitude of layers in the conflict, at the core lies a group of remarkably ordinary human beings being asked to deal with the extraordinary circumstances of their daily surroundings. Ω

GUATEMELA CONT.

was tortured under the supervision of an American official. Since her escape she has been witnessing against torture all over the world. (See, *The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth* by Sr. Ortiz, Orbis 2004)

At the end of our trip we stopped for a swim in the Pacific. The beach had sand black from volcanic ash. While we were having a blast being pummeled by the waves there was an earthquake. We were able to spend the last part of our visit at the Mission of San Lucas Altitan where Fr. Greg has served the indigenous community since 1956. Over the years the community has developed a coffee processing plant, a hospital, school, and woman's collective. The literacy rate leapt from 2% to 85%. To see Fr. Gerard

kneel to kiss and bless the 20 children who run to him at the end of Communion brings to my mind the biblical image of Jesus surrounded by the children. The community there is a thriving, joyful, beautiful example of the "alreadyness" of the Kingdom of God. It stands



in a stark contrast to the grinding poverty of Guatemala City and its barriers between the casas and the shanties; a clear manifestation of the "not yetness" of God's Kingdom.

All in all it was an amazing experience.

Ammon and I both returned home speaking a bit more Spanish. It was wonderful to listen to Ammon relating at our house Mass of his experiencing his "privilege" in a big way. I am hopeful that our experience deepens for both of us our commitment to our sisters and brothers to make the Kingdom more already every day. I am proud of Ammon. He was a wonderful peace ambassador and rose to the challenges of the trip. He worked, played, ate and made lots of new friends with good spirit and joy (as did Justin). Ammon came home feeling blessed by what he has and amazed at the joy of the young people he met who seemingly have so much less than him. One of his new

heroes is a little boy who lives on the dump. I can still picture this 5 year old boy doing back flips off the garbage truck to land safely in huge trash bags filled with shredded paper. I wonder if he rolls his eyes at his mother? Ω

NOTES CONT.

talked about how she was raped at an early age and fell silent for six years after the murder of her rapist, which she felt she caused by telling her brother what happened to her. She realized the power of words and the human spirit. She told us that she has been through so much in her life, anything we can imagine (other than hard drugs) she has tried, she has been through. And she said, "still I rise." No matter what we must keep on going, growing, learning, striving for our best and realizing our potential in spite of life's hardships. Just look at her. She has come so far in her life and is now one of the most influential and powerful women in the United States. She told the girls that she knows that they have a hard time, that they have seen and experienced terrible things and she also knows that they are strong and can make it through anything. There wasn't a dry eye in the room, she had touched our hearts. Even some of our toughest girls, the ones that are strong and hardly ever let their guards down were moved. As she called the youngest and smallest from the bunch

of us, Mary Pipkin to give her a kiss on the cheek, all I could think of was what an amazing experience! She seemed to know what each person needed and spoke right to that. So, thank you Kate! and thank you Dr. Angelou!

The following Wednesday Jackie and I found ourselves at 1:30 in the afternoon on a bus with a group of kids from our house, Steve Dahlem, Jim Cronin, students from Husky Sport and Clark



Elementary school headed for the Big Apple. Jennie Bruening and the students from the Husky Sports Program up at UCONN organized an outing to New York City to see the Knicks play the Bobcats in Madison Square Garden and for us to meet Emeka Okafor before the game at the NBA store in Manhattan. Okafor, once a student athlete at UCONN is now playing with the NBA's Bobcats. Last year he donated \$250,000 to the Husky Sports Program, which connects students and athletes from UCONN with children

from Hartford's northend. His donation has enabled the program to fund transportation and expand on their educational programs, which promote a healthy and active lifestyle. We have been working with them from the start and have

really enjoyed their presence with our children on Saturdays at the Green House. (Last spring we participated in a fundraiser that benefited a foundation that Okafor has set up to help stop the spread of AIDS in Africa, where his parents are originally from.) The day ended sometime around 2:00 AM, but was well worth getting to see how excited the kids were to meet an NBA player and to be in Madison Square Garden. We even saw Michael Jordan (ok he was about a thousand feet away but we saw him stand up and wave, very cool!). Thank you Jennie and Husky Sport for organizing this event!

Recently Jackie and Ammon took a ten day trip to Guatemala to work with Father Tom Goekler and his ministry with ex-gang youth. Ammon was really excited to go because it was his first time out of the country plus he got to travel with Justin Colville (who is super cool!) and skip a few days of school. Micah got to go on the last trip to Darfur with Chris so Ammon only felt it was fair that he get to go with Jackie this time. They geared up with all kinds of school supplies and toys to bring and share with the kids they met. Jackie brought her painting expertise and headed a few mural projects during her time there. While they were there they visited a community that lives in the local landfill. Ammon took some video footage of the trip and if you are willing to sit for four hours I am sure he would be happy to show whomever is interested. They came back from their immersion experience exhausted but no worse for the wear. We stayed up late listening to them tell us about their adventures and tying Mayan God bracelets on our wrists and sipping Guatemalan rum. Yum.

I am so proud of Ammon, both the boys really! They seem to be growing up so fast! I used to get embarrassed when adults would say that to me but it's



really incredible how quickly and dramatically they have changed. Ammon began his school year at a new school and joined the crew team, model Ull and even gets up to catch the 6:10AM bus (MKES!). Micah has also been involved with sports at his school and still works at the bait and tackle shop once a week impressing the customers with his fishing knowledge. Micah has decided that he wants to be a biologist somewhere where he can work outdoors and Ammon wants to be a reading teacher.

Chris seems to be enjoying his teaching gig at Central Connecticut State University where he is teaching a class on race, class and gender. I guess they have enjoyed him too because they have asked him

to return next semester as well. When he first started teaching in September he was "full of nerves" but this was quickly eclipsed with the pain of losing his index finger. He was helping Jackie frame some art work for a show in Glastonbury where she and Dwight Teal had their work on display. While cutting some spacers to size he accidentally shaved his finger down to the first knuckle! Jackie rushed him, screaming, to the hospital while Brian, Micah and I looked for the other half of the finger amongst the sawdust. We never did find it but at one point I thought I had and let out an involuntary, blood curdling, scream, which did not make Micah or Brian too happy. After two surgeries and a lot of pain later Chris's finger is healing quite nicely, although Jackie still has a hard time looking at it. And of course don't even think about cracking any finger jokes just yet...only Chris can do that. Hey has anyone ever heard about the man with nine fingers walking into a bar?...

We currently are providing hospital-

ity for two guests, a woman from Togo and a woman from Jamaica. Our guest Steve Ginsberg from the local theater troupe, the HartBeat Ensemble, moved out during the last week of October after living with us for two years. We will miss him and we wish him luck on his future endeavors, his theater work and his quest to go to Graduate School.

Brian recently returned from a month long hiatus where he traveled to Ireland's Dingle Peninsula. Every three years Brian takes this trip and each year spends his time getting to know the area, walking for hours, meeting people and having a good drink (a pint or two of Guinness). He sent us some great post cards, my favorite of which had the picture of a donkey on it and on the back he wrote that he finally found a long lost member of the Kavanagh family and here was her picture. He also got to meet up with our friends Marie and Oona Grady in Limerick as well as his brother, Dennis, and sister-in-law, Judy.

I do have some sad news though, during his last week away we learned that his mother, Gertrude "Gertie" Kavanagh, passed away. She was 93 years old and I know Brian will miss her very much. Please pray for Brian and his family during this very difficult time.

There will be a memorial service held in her honor this spring in Connecticut and we will let you know more about as the date approaches.

While we are on the subject of prayers I would like to thank everyone who has prayed for my grandfather who is currently in his home receiving hospice care. I am so very grateful for the time that I

have to spend with him and my family and we appreciate all of your prayers and well wishes.

Also keep in your hearts Jackie's brother-in-law Tom Mitchell who had surgery for cancer and for our dear friend Midge Reddin as she too is battling cancer.

Well, I hate to leave this on such a sad note. As I sit here writing this in my cozy pappazon chair I can't help but to feel grateful and humbled as I think back on our last few months. The Hartford Catholic Worker would not have been able to do all the work that has done over these past 15 years and is still continuing to do if it wasn't for all the thousands of moments of grace, compassion, and love (not to mention dollars), which enter our lives in the form of a child, an energetic volunteer, a flock of birds in the bird bath, a smile, the changing of the seasons a good friend and listener or even a big cuddly pit-bull / lap dog (or so he thinks). Again, I think back to our community of friends from our anniversary party and all the great support and fellowship we receive daily. Here's to all of you! Happy Anniversary Hartford Catholic Worker!Ω



Notes from De Porres House

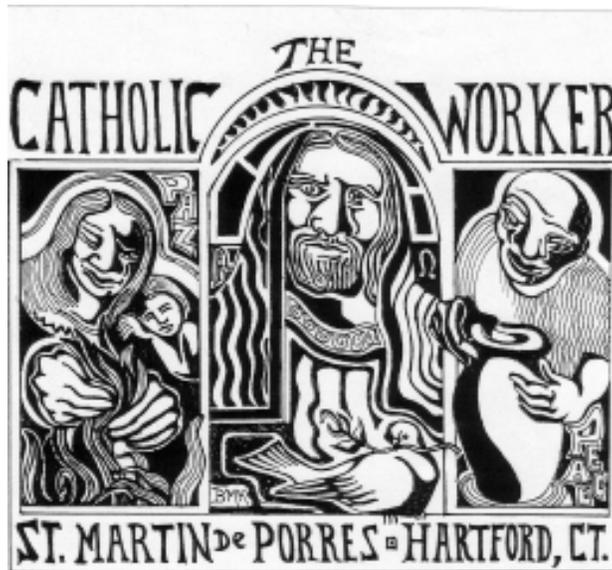
Sarah Karas

Since I first began to volunteer with the Hartford Catholic Worker in 1997 I have seen this community grow, not only physically, but in the number of people who have come and gone, built relationships and consider our community a second home. This Friday we celebrated our 15th anniversary in the hall of St. Justin's Church on Blue Hills Avenue in Hartford. As I looked around the room I couldn't help but be amazed at the many faces from over the 15 year history of this community. People who have been with us since the beginning and those who have come more recently. The room was full of music, dancing, good food and lots of visiting. I cannot think of a better way to have celebrated 15 years than amongst our friends and family who have supported our community and the work all this time. We thank all of you for coming out and making this a great night and for your contributions for the continuation of our ministries here in Hartford! We really wouldn't be here if we didn't have all of you!

The weekend before we had another fundraising event at our friends Nancy and Jory's home. The fundraiser was to celebrate my aunt Teri Allen's 50th birthday party as well as raise some

money for Camp Ahimsa 2009 and for the Maryknoll Lay Missioners program in El Salvador.

Halloween is one of my favorites days of the year, I get to dress up, be totally outrageous and of course eat tons of candy. This year at our annual Hallow-



een party the kids came dressed up to the house and we did face painting, costumes, pumpkin painting, egg-in-spoon relay races, wrap the mummy, the crawl race, and everyone went home with a goodie bag full of candy. Steve, our Saturday "head of state," was chosen to get mummified (with toilet paper), which the kids especially enjoyed and we have the pictures to prove it! Thanks Steve, you are a good sport.

Now that I think of it these kids really are spoiled, or just really loved! This week, in addition to two very successful fundraisers, there were two really cool fieldtrips; one to hear Maya Angelou speak at UCONN and the other to a New York Knicks game at Madison Square Garden.

Our friend, Kate McLaughlin, is a huge Maya Angelou fan and when she heard that she was coming to speak at the Jorgenson Theater at UCONN she did not skip a beat before she was arranging for the girls to not only hear her speak but meet her as well. Yes, I said meet her! We decided to make this one of our girls night outings and we (me, Jackie, Edna and about a dozen of our girls) joined friends at St Thomas Aquinas for a pre-show dinner and then off to meet Dr. Angelou backstage. When we got into the

room with her you could automatically feel the great power, strength and wisdom of this woman. She welcomed us making a point to shake each person's hand and asked us for our full names as she repeated them back to us. She held us for about ten minutes, longer than any of the other groups visiting her. She talked directly to the young women about her life, her joys and her great struggles. She

(SEE NOTES P.8)

18 Clark St.
Hartford, CT 06120
(860) 724-7066

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