

The Hartford Catholic Worker



St. Martin De Porres House
St. Brigid House

"You shall love strangers as yourself" -Leviticus 19:34



Brian M. Kavanagh

Christ has Died.

Christ will come again.

Christ is Risen.

Lent and Easter 2016

The Hartford Catholic Worker

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The Hartford Catholic Worker is usually published bimonthly by the St. Martin De Porres Catholic Worker community. We are a lay community of Catholics and like minded friends, living in the north end of Hartford, working and praying for an end to violence and poverty. We are a 501c3 tax exempt organization. We do not seek or accept state or federal funding. Our ability to house the homeless, feed the hungry, and work with the children depends on contributions from our readers. We can be reached at: 18 Clark St., Hartford CT 06120; (860) 724-7066, purplehousecw@gmail.com and www.hartfordcatholicworker.org We are: Brian Kavanagh, Baby Beth Donovan, Dwight Teal Jr., Khari Hamblin, Jacqueline, Christopher, and Ammon Allen-Douçot.

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Sincerely,
 Enaijha im 9
 years old

turn to back →



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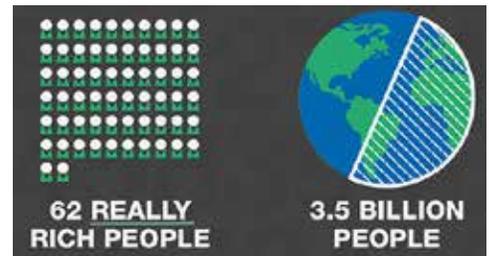
Please consider supporting our work with a gift of time, talent, or treasure. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities please write to us at purplehousecw@gmail.com. If you are interested in making a donation please send a check to The Hartford Catholic Worker, 18 Clark St. Hartford 06120 and consider scheduling a regular monthly donation through your bank. We will remember you in our prayers. Be well, Do good.

A Case for Utopia

Peter Maurin

The world would be better off if people tried to become better, and people would become better if they stopped trying to be better off. For when everyone tries to become better off nobody is better off.

But when everyone tries to become better everybody is better off. Everyone would be rich if nobody tried to become richer, and nobody would be poor if everyone tried to be the poorest. And everybody would be what they ought to be if everybody tried to be what they want the other person to be. Ω



Circling in Gratitude and for Wisdom

Christopher J. Douçot

On June 23, 1982 Red Sox third baseman, and reigning American league batting champion, Carney Lansford hit a 400 foot shot into the triangle of Fenway Park's centerfield. As he headed to third base he looked over his shoulder and decided to go for an inside-the-park-homerun, an exceedingly rare feat. As he headed home Tiger's catcher Lance Parrish was waiting with the ball. Lansford hit the dirt and slid into Parrish; he might as well have slid into the Great Wall of China. Lansford mangled an ankle and numbered his remaining days playing for the Sox. In his place stepped rookie Wade Boggs who would become one of the greatest hitters in the history of baseball.

Before Boggs became infamous in Boston for [riding a police horse](#) around that house of ill repute in the Bronx clad in pitiful pinstripes after the Yankees won the 1996 World Series, folks were as intrigued with his pregame rituals as they were in awe of his ability to hit a rawhide sphere. Boggs was known as the "Chicken Man" because he ate chicken before every game. He also took batting practice at 5:17 PM, ran wind sprints at 7:17PM, and he drew the Hebrew word Chai, "life" in the dirt with his bat before staring down the man on the mound. Boggs quipped that his rituals, and these were only a few of them, made him "relax and get into a frame of mind that [he] need[ed] to be in." I wonder if Carney Lansford wishes he had drawn Thor's Hammer (the Norse symbol of protection), or Hermes winged foot before he tried to claim a homerun on a hit that didn't leave Updike's ["lyric little bandbox."](#)

Critics were quick to ridicule

Boggs, but the truth is [social science has proven](#) that rituals have the ability to reduce anxiety, build confidence and [alleviate grief](#). While the chicken eating of a man-boy may have helped him



Christmas Circle at Voluntown

perform better in a game, the Green House Circle, our central ritual, is helping our kids cope with grief and deal with trauma while transforming our world with the wisdom that percolates from the varied voices of the many souls who hold hands at our place every day. Anthropologists argue that rituals are a universal expression of humanity found in all cultures past and present. They argue that participation in rituals facilitate social cohesiveness and form group identity; simply put they build community and remind us of who we are. In this regard they are not referring to the individual superstitions of Chicken Man but collective practices. For Catholics our most obvious and enduring ritual is the Mass.

Unfortunately the potency of a ritual diminishes over time if those participating lose understanding

of its meaning and their participation becomes autonomic. A similar process of symbolic silencing called semantic satiation, happens to words when they are repetitively over-used. I think ritualistic satiation has crept into many aspects of our lives whereby we do things and we're not even sure why we do them.

Why do we say "God bless you" when someone sneezes? take kids *Trick or Treatin'*? have quinceañeras, and stag parties??? This mindlessness, explicitly reinforced by Madison Avenue campaigns that ask us: "[Why ask Why?](#)" and tell us to: "[Just Do It!](#)", runs counter to the innate curiousness we all possessed as little kids who always asked why. To live life on autopilot atrophies our humanity. It is a tacit surrender to the world as it is.

When asked how he was doing an old friend of mine who spent years living on the streets would exhale in resignation "*ex...is...tin.*" Rocks, dry bones, and tumbleweeds exist, and in so being they are helplessly subjected to the furies and fancies of this world: blown by the wind, drowned by wave or just kicked down the street by a bored kid. To live is to participate in the struggle to re-create the world as it could be with our minds, eyes and hearts wide open.

At the Hartford Catholic Worker the Circle is performed before every meal and during every after school session. When we do Circle everyone holds hands and then we go around proclaiming our name and sharing one thing we are thankful for. At times there are 75 people in a Circle that can span seven decades of living. In our circle we have rich kids holding hands with poor kids,

(Please See: [Circle p4](#))

The Circle cont.

black hands holding white hands holding brown hands holding boy hands holding girl hands holding straight hands holding gay hands. We've had Jewish hands holding Palestinian hands, and once we had a veteran's hand holding what was left of the hand of a little Iraqi boy wounded by an American missile. Around the dinner table at home four year old Lilly has appointed herself keeper of the Circle insisting that we have circle even if only Jackie, Lilly and I are present. We've never explicitly explained to Lilly the meaning of the Circle but she obviously is nourished by this ritual. Like all of us she is eager to tell the world who she is and she always has something, usually someone, to be thankful for.

We do Circle because we want to be explicit about what we are grateful for. Every day someone gives thanks for: friends, for Jackie, for Baby Beth, for moms, dads and best friends, for the sun and the rain. I'm on top of the world when Lilly says she is thankful for "Pop." Last week a nine year old girl was "thankful for the roof over my head." We do Circle to introduce and reintroduce ourselves to each other; to innocently hold onto one another, and thus build a community of love and trust. We do Circle because we want the kids from this neighborhood who are silenced by the marginalizing forces of poverty and racism to have their voices heard by the folks in the circle who are not from this neighborhood.

Our Circle is a moment of intentional mindfulness about the fundamental importance of community in a healthy society. When we

have Circle nobody is in the center: not men, not white people, not the rich, not any one person. Our Circle begins the work of undermining privileged constructions of morality that tend to blame the oppressed for their oppression.

[Mary Elizabeth Hobgood](#) writes, "[capitalist culture creates isolated consumers who persist in believing the myth of the individual and who live in communities segregated by class and race. White, affluent, capitalist people by and large are preoccupied with their personal consumption levels, not the condition of the larger community. Therefore, morality is viewed as relating well to others who more often than not share a similar social location.](#)" Moral behavior is not simply polite



and kind behavior toward those around you. Moral behavior scrutinizes our society and seeks to root out systems of oppression. To be moral agents we must surrender the center and head to the margins of society because morality is a right relationship with our God and a right relationship God is not possible absent a right relationship with

the poor, the persecuted, the forgotten or the despised. 4

Through the Circle we are creating a space where "it is possible to think black... or poor, or woman." Possible because we share a common humanity and can learn to move beyond identity toward mutuality. At the same time we can realize that it is impossible, literally to enter into the life of another person or group completely. Mutuality means that one shares consciousness and trust, not that one becomes identical with another person." (from [Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective- A Theology](#) by [Letty Russell](#)). To share in consciousness with poor and persecuted others produces wisdom that liberates and sacred relationships that are actually sacred partnerships engaged in salvation.

Our Circle is an act of resistance to the hyper self-absorption and self-centeredness of our time; what Pope Francis calls "[anthropocentrism](#)" in his encyclical *Laudato Si*. Francis warns that placing humanity at the center of the universe and the oft accompanying placing of ourselves at the center of that center is at the root of violence, poverty and environmental degradation because doing so disregards our dependence on each other and the planet we share.

The ritual that epitomizes this anthropocentrism is the "selfie", a profane practice that places oneself in the center and usually displaces others from view. This displacement of others shoves to the margins of our consciousness the God who exists in all of us and lives in our loving relationships. By gathering for Circle we participate in a transcendent experience that gives meaning to our joys and our sufferings.

In the end, the delusion of unrestrained individualism succumbs to our need for others; not just when we are ill, old or impoverished but

(Please See: Circle p7)

Water Wars in Bloomfield

By Val Rossetti

Every day we drink it, we wash in it, we use it to grow our crops and prepare our foods. It runs through our blood vessels, bathes our cells and makes up 60% of our adult bodies. We can go without food for days, but dehydration kills quickly. The survival of our ecosystem- plants, animals, the planet itself- utterly depends upon it. But is water a basic [human right](#) or a commodity to be sold for profit? [Who owns it](#), who controls it, and is it unknowingly being taken from us?

[Water wars](#) have recently come to the Hartford area. In a scenario played out across the country- from California to Florida to Michigan to Maine, for-profit water bottlers have quietly partnered with economic developers to reap profits off municipal water systems and community aquifers. Once water utilities grant the bottlers permits, they have unfettered access to large quantities of water, drought or no drought, community approval or not.

Usually these “water rights” have no

First they came for the land and I said nothing because I wanted a plot even if everyone wouldn't get one. Now they come for the water and I say nothing because clean water still flows from my tap. When they come for the air will only the wealthy be able to live comfortably, drink safely and breathe healthily? To “do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God” is to protect the earth, the sky and the seas for the benefit of all God's children.

-Christopher J. Doucot



1/3
OF WHAT THE WORLD SPENDS ON BOTTLED WATER PER YEAR WOULD PAY TO PROVIDE WATER TO EVERYONE IN NEED.

expiration date, are immune from reversal and can supersede those of local landowners. Aquifers and streams can be sucked dry as water bottlers ship local water out of state.

Niagara Bottling, the largest “family-owned” water bottling company in the country, and second only to Nestle in sales, has recently come knocking on CT's door. Seeking a northeastern hub for its water export business, Niagara aims to add to the 19 plants it owns across the US. Having been recently driven from Kingston, NY by citizens alarmed at its attempt to control 25% of their water capacity, Niagara is hoping to find a home in Bloomfield, CT. It needs cheap and plentiful water while Bloomfield has been lured by the promise of jobs and an increased tax base.

What is proposed? Access to 1.8 million gallons of MDC (Metropolitan District Commission) water/day, in addition to water from undisclosed springs throughout the state. A highly mechanized robotic factory with up to 4 bottling lines, operating non-stop 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, 363 days/year; each line capable of churning out 110,000 single-use

plastic water bottles an hour (or 2.6 million per day/per line); thirty-eight to 75 mostly low wage shift jobs with seasonal fluctuation.; a new \$8M citizen-financed water main extension to carry the water to its site; up to 200 large diesel trucks/day heading out to the highways of the northeast.

How did this happen? Disturbingly, and in a recurrent pattern, the hasty approval process for Niagara lacked transparency and citizen input. Developers applied for wetlands and zoning permits in third party names, never mentioning “Niagara”. A \$4.1M tax abatement was presented and voted upon the same night, without public input, by a town council eager to approve. That same day, in MDC boardrooms, ordinances were changed to provide “large industrial super-users” both a water and sewer rate discount.

What's wrong with this picture? A CT state water plan is even now being drawn up to make balanced decisions over where our waters should be allocated and how they should be protected. Due out in Jan, 2017, it challenges the concept that regional water utilities can autonomously control public water. MDC capacity numbers- the amount of water we theoretically have to use, hold or sell- have not been updated in decades. Climate change makes

(Please See: Water Wars P7)

by Alex Mikulich, PhD.

Pope Francis' [historic address](#) to a Joint Session of the U.S. Congress on September 24, 2015, addressed three fundamental crises.

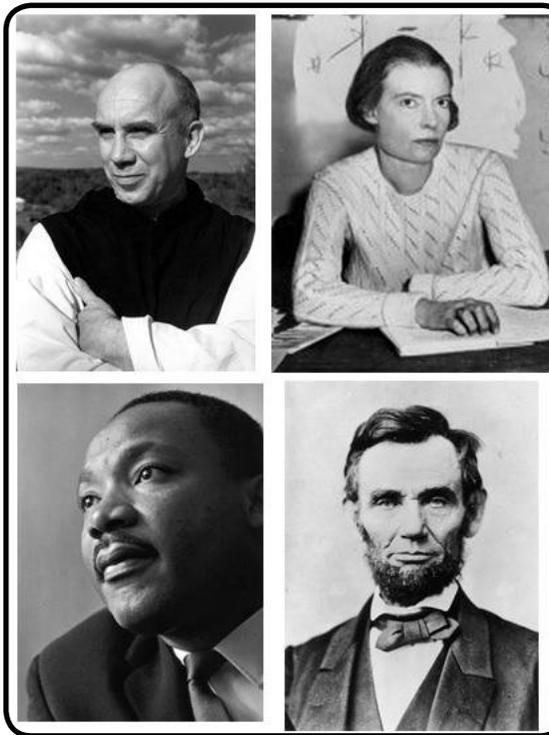
First, he addresses an ecological crisis in which the very life of the planet is threatened. Then, he presents a socio-economic crisis in which the benefits of society tend to flow to the top while the poorest and most vulnerable among us bear ever-increasing and death-dealing burdens. Finally, he poses a spiritual-cultural crisis in which disconnections between persons and nature, between the self and others, and between the self and authentic human and ecological development, that is, the fullest potential of one and all, block transformation necessary for the future.

These crises demand a theological vision rooted in spiritual practice equal to the task, that is, a strategy that offers a way out of the social, political, economic, and ecological impasses that endanger "our common home." Pope Francis boldly offers, I suggest, a strategic American political theology and spirituality for our time.

His address is provocative, not because he reiterates the major principles of Catholic social teaching well (he does), but for the way he frames his invitation to dialogue about the great crises of our time around four great Americans: Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton.

It is striking that in a major address to Congress emphasizing faithful political leadership and citizenship for the common good, the Pope cites only one American—Abraham Lincoln—who devoted his life to formal public office. In contrast, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton

each devoted themselves, in their unique ways, to the "least of these" (MT 25:40). As Pope Francis invites in the Joy of the Gospel ([Evangelii Gaudium](#), #48), "I prefer a Church that is bruised, hurting, and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church that is unhealthy by being confined



and clinging to its own security." King, Day, and Merton each risked, indeed sacrificed, their whole lives for the most vulnerable members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Pope Francis begins by quoting one of the classic statements of American democracy, President Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*. This frames the Pope's "political" approach, not as narrowly partisan but as the shared pursuit of a people to enjoy the fruits of freedom for one and all. Pope Francis recalls Lincoln's immortal call "to have a new birth of freedom." A "new birth of freedom" Lincoln affirmed, depends upon "us, the living...to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced." Pope Francis calls

us to the unfinished work of caring for the most vulnerable creatures among us, human and non-human, in our one and common home, the earth.

Yet liberty is not enough. If freedom is real and authentic—that is human—it must be equitable. Pope Francis recalls "the march Martin Luther King led from Selma to Montgomery 50 years ago as part of the campaign to fulfill his 'dream' of full civil and political rights for African Americans. That dream continues to inspire us all." The Pope re-awakens us to the way dreams touch "the deepest and truest in the life of the people."

Such a re-awakening demands that we too march with the most vulnerable among us across the symbolic and practical bridges that have yet to be built for true freedom and equality. Pope Francis re-awakens us to remember how many of our ancestors were once migrants seeking freedom and that we must "educate new generations not to turn their backs on our 'neighbors' and everything around us." The Pope reminds us that "the first contacts were often turbulent and violent" and that "we must not repeat the sins and errors of the past."

Pope Francis turns our attention to two Catholic Americans, Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton. "In these times when social concerns are so important," says Pope Francis, "I cannot fail to mention the Servant of God Dorothy Day who founded the Catholic Worker movement. Her social activism, her passion for justice and for the cause of the oppressed, were inspired by the Gospel, her faith, and the example of the saints."

Drawing upon Day's passionate and integrated care for the poor and the earth, Pope Francis stresses that

(Please See: Strategic P9)

The Circle cont.

when we are joyful as well. If it doesn't our glee will be fleeting and our suffering compounded by the despondency of loneliness.

Early each semester I find my students worrying about what good my class will do them when they go looking for a job. I suggest to them that their lives are more than their work and their work is more than their jobs. I tell them that we are gathered to seek wisdom which is more than knowledge which is more than information. Information becomes knowledge when we acknowl-

edge the way in which our lived experiences shape our understanding- information becomes knowledge through the prism of our lives. Wisdom, though, is only revealed when we gather as a community to share our knowledge and our consciousness. I tell them that maybe remembering information will help them with a job and that knowledge will assist them with their work, but only wisdom will prepare them for a meaningful life. In a world that is increasingly focused on disjointed data sets and individual performance the Green House is a community seeking wisdom. Our search begins

in our Circle.

7

I was spurred to reflect on the Circle by what nobody was thankful for during Circle at our Christmas party, and by what three kids under ten were grateful for. Not one child said they were thankful for toys or Santa Claus. Meanwhile three siblings who had witnessed their father's murder by gunfire a few months back said they were thankful for "life", "life" and "dad".

Spiraling out of our Christmas Circle was a bit of comfort for those kids and a lot of wisdom for the rest of us, and for that I am thankful.Ω

Water Wars cont.

these figures even more uncertain. And hydrologic source data is currently being withheld from public view as part of classified Homeland Security data. The CT State Drought Plan, drawn up in 2003, does not prioritize the public over private industry. All are treated equally. In a true Drought Emergency with 50 days or less of water available, the DPH (Dept of Public Health) can mandate 25% water restrictions on residents, but trucks can still be rolling out of CT with bottled water headed north. While ordinary citizens do their best to conserve water, this mega-user will instead be incentivized by lower rates to use more.

Meanwhile, sixty percent or more of the billions of plastic water bottles manufactured in Bloomfield

will never find their way to a recycling center. They will litter landfills, beaches and oceans. By 2050, our oceans will contain more plastic than fish, and each plastic bottle will live on for 450 years. As we've seen in Flint, Michigan, or in disaster zones, bottled water is sometimes necessary. But the vast majority of bottled water is simply repackaged tap water, with an exponentially higher price tag. Re-usable water bottles, free of dangerous BPA or other chemicals which can leach into stored water, provide an economical and environmental alternative.

What's next in this citizen struggle? Bloomfield citizens have banded together to block the Niagara plant. Follow them on Facebook at "BloomfieldCitizens.org".



Speak out in your MDC-served community (Hartford, West Hartford, Wethersfield, Windsor, Newington, Bloomfield, Rocky Hill, and portions of East Granby, Farmington, Glastonbury, and South Windsor). It's your water too. Support upcoming state legislation to remove water and sewer discounts for large users, to insist on transparency in developers' permit applications, and to prioritize residents in the case of water shortage. Let's keep our water local and our environment clean.

(Val Rossetti is a concerned Bloomfield resident.) Ω



"The commons is a new way to express a very old idea—that some forms of wealth belong to all of us, and that these community resources must be actively protected and managed for the good of all.

The commons are the things that we inherit and create jointly, and that will (hopefully) last for generations to come. The commons consists of gifts of nature such as air, oceans and wildlife as well as shared social creations such as libraries, public spaces, scientific research and creative works."

-From [On The Commons](#)

To plunder the Commons for private profit is piracy. Don't be a pirate.

their couch with folks in need....and that made me want to keep a place in my heart for hospitality. In these pre-election days there is such a spirit of cruelty and selfishness especially among those who call themselves Christian that I worry about the soul of the nation as a whole.

Food may be one of the biggest works of mercy we handle! Aside from the food pantry we are serving lunch 5 days a week. On Saturdays we have as many as 70 people at the community table. Beth and I make runs to Restaurant Depot to buy items in bulk. Lots of cheese, chips, cream cheese and pepperoni get added to meals. We have been trying to get the kids to try strange things like guacamole. They will literally eat every piece of fresh fruit we can get to them. We are so grateful to the groups and individuals that come on Saturdays to help make lunch. We are grateful to St. Tim's, St. Helena's, St. James Episcopal and St Ann's who keep our food pantry running! Ms. Edna, Jen O, UConn Husky Sport, Princess Di, Jane and Judy are our regular Saturday cooks- let us know if you are interested in cooking once in a while.

I don't think there has really ever been a time in all these years when we have not had some children living with us. Right now we have a 13 year old that we hope to be community for until school gets out in June. This week he will likely be put under the custody of DCF... and we will have no say in his next steps but we pray that he knows he will always be a part of our community. In November we stepped in when his mother kicked him out. It was going to be a temporary situation but as time went by it became clear that it would be a long haul. I am so grateful that every adult in our community stepped forward to help with the care and love of this young man. Since he has been with us he has regained all the weight he lost when he lived on the streets, he finally has the meds he needed to help him do well at school and he has been making great choices to stay drug and gang free and focus on future. We REALLY want him to be a counselor this sum-

mer at Camp Ahimsa, and he really wants to become a fisherman! Becoming community to James (not his real name) has meant everyone taking turns going to meetings with DCF- his mom, school and therapist. We have been getting him bus passes, driving and picking him up from school and organizing his tutoring and weekend activities. Khari has been doing a great job of mentoring and bringing him to worship services. Baby Beth takes him out to dinner. Our volunteers Denise and Jane



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several friends. If you can join them there may be live music. Last week a car pulled up and handed them all fresh hot coffees!

Beth sends out a weekly (mostly) email blast that lets folks know what is going on at the Green House, (if you are interested send us your address) and we can add you on, and works with the fundraising committee. On March 3 we will be hosting a showing of interviews of Dorothy Day with reflections by Tom Condon at Holy Family Monastery. And Chris tries to pull together four issues of the Hartford Catholic Worker newsletter each year in between teaching, giving public talks and doing the administrative stuff.

Last month Chris and I went to Goshen College in Indiana where our son Ammon will be graduating from in April. We were able to share with over 200 students at Convocation about our ministry at the Worker. It was a shameless effort of recruiting and it seemed to work. It looks like next year we might have four or five new interns living and working in community. I will not have to feel so bad about taking off for my sabbatical come September. Thanks be to God!

As Easter approaches I offer a beautiful poem by theologian Dorothy Soëlle

Dream me

*It's not you who should solve my problems, God,
But I yours, God of the asylum-seekers.
It's not you who should feed the hungry,
But I who should protect your children
From the terror of the banks and armies,
It's not you who should make room for the refugees,
But I who should receive you,
Hardly hidden God of the desolate
You dreamed me, God,
Practicing walking upright
And learning to kneel down
More beautiful than I am now,
Happier than I dare to be
Freer than our country allows.*

*Don't stop dreaming me, God.
I don't want to stop remembering
That I am your tree,
Planted by the streams
of living water.Ω*

Run

And they all left him and fled. Now a young man followed him wearing nothing but a linen cloth about his body. They seized him, but he left the cloth behind and ran off naked.

-Mark 14:50-52

Twisting like a furious child out of its mother's arms, he trips, almost falls, one hand briefly pressing the dirt to push his body away.

Was there laughter?

All that instruction to abandon fear was for nothing. Worse. Nothing but fear.

Imagining the torturers, the grate over the stone pit. That was the starting gun.

Or it was heaven's dog, loosed for the first rabid and silent, tied to the runner's shadow.

Later, in another place, a linen rag will be left behind in a grave that someone ran from.

But here do we have the Greek messenger from the battlefield who finds no finish line but death?

Or is this Adam, naked again? Sinless. Free.

*Stephen Vincent Kobasa
Palm Sunday, 2015*



Silence, love⁹

your door is so open, transparent

walking through it I find

a bright windswept tunnel

smooth as an empty tomb

I could stay an eternity

*Eileen R. Kinch
from [Gathering the Silence](#)*

*In the rising day
You keep fading away
Don't I know that you're always around
I can reach you if I try
Lily of the midnight sky*

*Nobody else could be you
If only I could see you
I should be able to touch you somehow
I can reach you if I try
Lily of the midnight sky
-excerpts from [Lily of the Midnight Sky](#)
Bruce Cockburn*

Strategic American Theology, cont.

the “great effort” today is the “creation and distribution of wealth.”

This great effort must attend to the “right use of natural resources and the proper application of technology and the proper harnessing of the spirit of enterprise” in a way that is both “inclusive and sustainable.” The Catholic Worker movement continues to passionately witness Day’s practices of inclusivity and sustainability. Pope Francis concludes with Merton, underscoring the need for a fundamental orientation away from our selfish human desires and toward God. Pope Francis high-

lights how Merton’s own conversion to prayer and contemplation enabled him to “challenge the certitudes of his time and opened new horizons for souls and the Church.”

It is instructive how Martin Luther King Jr. knew that he needed time in prayer and contemplation with Thomas Merton. Indeed, the historian [Albert Raboteau](#) records how at the time of his assassination “plans were underway for Martin Luther King to make a retreat with Thomas Merton at Our Lady of Gethsemane Abbey.”

While King and Merton were not able to meet, Pope Francis calls us

to root our work for liberty, equality, inclusion, and sustainability in prayerful contemplation and dialogue.

Pope Francis, I believe, offers us a rich vision and practice of a political theology and spirituality built upon four cornerstones of liberty, equality, inclusion and sustainability, and contemplation and dialogue.

May we take up this vision and practice, drawing upon the wisdom of these four great Americans so that we may yet realize our common destiny to thrive in the unity of God’s creation—our one common home. (Reprinted from [JustSouth Quarterly](#), Winter 2016) Ω

Notes From De Porres House

Jackie Allen-Douçot

For this issue I had the fantastic idea to let the young ones help me write the House news. Great idea, right? I thought it would be a fresh approach and help me get over the "I've already said anything that can be said after 23 years of house articles" blues that comes upon me when our deadline approaches (and then goes by). Last Saturday I tried to get things going as we made Valentines and then cleaned up after lunch at the Green House. It was like pulling teeth! I could not generate any enthusiasm and I could not pry anything other than one or two word answers out of children who usually will not stop talking for any reason. I made the mistake of telling them about the article...I should have just kept my mouth closed, but alas. For Lent I have been trying to give up whining, so I will stop right there.

My next bright idea is to talk a bit about all the ad hoc things that go on outside of the kids program. There always seems to be so much going on around here. To start with there are two house to take care of. Aside from the regular cleaning (on Tuesdays we close the program and clean both houses top to bottom) there is always something broken that needs fixing. Last Saturday two brothers fighting over a cookie knocked down a picture and busted the glass in the frame. In the last month an arm was broken off a rocking chair, a sink was left running while someone answered the front door resulting in flooding and the need for a wall and ceiling repair. The Eagle Scouts made us benches that tip over

if you don't sit right in the middle. Chris is usually the guy that has to fix all this stuff. WE are looking ALWAYS for a handyman to hire for small jobs and can never figure out



why no one wants to come do the work. There is always painting and yard work that needs doing. WE do a lot of "service hours" for folks trying to stay out of jail. One would think that all this work would dovetail nicely with getting those hours served, but one would be wrong...

Brian holds down the fort in the morning. If you have ever made a donation you know that he sends you a lovely thank you post card with a quick note about the latest happenings, often with one of his beautiful graphics on it. He does the bulk of the recycling and garbage handling with good cheer. Around here that alone could be a full time job. He also handles pest control...and keeping the moths and

mice out of the food pantry and the rats and cockroaches (*helpful hint- the glue that holds cardboard boxes together is cockroach candy- if you have roach issues get rid of extra boxes*)

out of the kitchen means constant vigilance. We are always accepting and sorting through boxes and bags of clothing, food, bread, toys, bikes, and small furniture items. Aside from the sorting and putting out on the giving table... things we can't use have to be found a home. When we get a big fresh food donation it often means cutting and peeling large amounts of fruit and composting the remnants. On Thursdays our dear friend Carol F. brings us food from Hartford Steam Boiler's fancy restaurant. That food has to be ziplocked and handed out. Friends from Panera bring bread and desserts. We keep the bagels for Saturday mornings and bag the rest up for the families and neighbors.

We frequently have to bribe the kids because they HATE to carry anything home. It is always fantastic to have books to give away!

We try to be present to some of the guys in the neighborhood who do the thankless job of collecting cans and bottles. When winter arrives we make sure they have hats, gloves and waterproof coats. All year long they know they can stop by for a sandwich or a bag of soup and bread to take with them. At Christmas we help Santa get them socks, underpants and clothes. I really like when the children help us feed them. I remember my Mom telling us that during the Depression when she was a little girl her parents always shared food and

(Please see: Notes, p8)