

The Hartford Catholic Worker

St. Martin De Porres House
St. Brigid House



"Those who cannot see Christ in the poor are atheists indeed." -Dorothy Day



Jacqueline Allen-Dougot

Foxglove: Digitalis purpurea.

pour
out
your
love
on
every
nation
open
the
hearts
of
all
people...
psalm 79

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Alternate Reality, or, A Narrow Opening

*Instead of a grandmother kicked in her face:
a thousand orchids blooming from each swinging foot,
the stems and petals forming a fragrant facemask wrapped around
every face -
hers, and yours.*

*Instead of a man and his child stabbed in
the face,
the knives turned to pens,
sentences flowing like blood as the story of
their lives filled the body of flag after flag,
embracing the wind from every direction.*

*Instead of acid poured onto a woman,
we asked one another what our parents
drank when they lost what meant the most to
them,
the lines on their faces a worn map to the
unbearable,
so they can find it even when they die.*

*Instead of a nurse being dragged from a
train, we all grow wings.
There is no net big enough, no handle long
enough.*

*Instead of a rock through a store window,
there are no stores.
We have everything we need and nothing
more.*

*Instead of fearing for my mother and
father, they are hunched over sewing machines,
the stitches even as the needles dip up and down,
the thread tight on the margins or it all falls apart.
They sew masks, they save your life, and so
there is no need for me to keep screaming how they saved mine.*

*Instead of you chinks brought the virus here,
there is a chorus in a language no one understood but translated as
beauty,
so loud you were shaken,*

*and you learned the limitations of dancing how you've always been
taught to dance.*

*Instead of you people need to stop eating bats and rats,
American history books fell off of shelves and burst into flames and we
cooked our dinners for one another,
burnt in some places and raw in the other.
In the dark our families backs are hunched with all they can carry,
dodging the spotlight eyes of soldiers, the bark of their guns off leash.
They always escape the men with guns.*

We never forget.

*Instead of deportation, our bodies become
boats.*

*The ocean is impossible to border,
the flags sink to a place where there is no
light to see the sigils.*

We are all water, so we be like water.

*Here, mothers don't need dead sons or
daughters before they are heard.*

*The doctors and nurses don't need to stand
in front of trucks as if they were tanks.*

*We don't need to celebrate a day that a child
isn't shot at school because that is every day.*

The drones drop only bread.

*The combat boots float meaninglessly over
the necks of our fathers.*

*The bigots are too busy with therapy to pay
us any mind.*

The police bullets all miss.

The hottest flame is in your kitchen.

*Lovers are never the chameleon color of
bruises.*

*You could lean down close to the face of the
dying person whom you love,
say goodbye to their very last breath.*

It's not science but rather science fiction that

the landmines are not landmines, but seeds.

*And like flowers bursting from the soil after the winter, you are an
explosion in bloom.*

*And our elders look at their grandchildren the way a person looks at
the rainbow*

*after a tornado has taken their home,
bit by bit,*

away into the very same sky. — Bao Phi



Kreg Yingst

Christopher J. Douçot

The clock on the old Corn Exchange Building in Bristol, England has two minute hands- the red hand shows Greenwich Mean Time, while the black hand shows Bristol time- which is GMT minus ten minutes. Bristol time is left over from before time was standardized for the benefit of reliable train scheduling. Until the middle of the 19th Century local time was determined by declaring noon to be when the sun was done rising, and so while Londoners were counting down to the New Year, Bristolians (Bristol-ites?) had time for another beer.

Time is on my mind. During the first months of the pandemic when many of us isolated in our homes it felt like time stood still. And during the last few years many of us have been caught up in a wave of ill-informed nostalgia that idealized a time in our history when things were improving, especially for white Americans. The “[Great Compression](#)” during the mid-20th Century was a time of diminishing inequality in the United States. With a robustly progressive income tax, 91% for the wealthiest during the 1950’s as opposed to 37% today, funding public good like higher education, Americans could graduate from a state college without debt. The average amount of debt owed by American college students in 2020 was nearly \$38,000! The Great Compression also saw a steady rise in union membership with nearly 35% of American workers benefitting from collective bargains, as opposed to 11% today. An organized workforce bolsters wages for all workers, which is why middle-class families could thrive on one income during the Great Compression while today they struggle to survive on two or more incomes. Unions were also the driving force behind defined-benefit pensions which secured a middle-class standard of living for the retired. In the early ‘80’s 60% of private sector workers had a defined benefit pension, today only 4% do. Instead, if you are lucky enough to have a workplace retirement plan it is likely a 401k at

the mercy of the stock market. When the Great Recession hit 401k plans lost \$2.4 trillion! Workers lost 25% or more of their retirement funds.

An affordable education, a liv-



James Meinert

ing wage, a home you own, a secure retirement made America great for those who could access the mechanisms that secured them: a good job, membership in a union, and access to credit. Unfortunately, these mechanisms were largely unavailable to you if you were not a white man. Even after civil rights legislation ended legally sanctioned the damage was done- the fallout is ongoing. In many ways America wasn’t great if you were Black, brown, Asian, Native American, LGBTQ, or a woman. We need to be weary of nostalgia- “*it is not reality but someone else’s sentimentality*”- the fond memory of days gone distorted by rewrite of history conjured by the powerful wearing rose colored glasses. It is what Ta NaHesi Coates is referring to in his hallmark essay [The Case For Reparations](#) when he writes: “*To celebrate freedom and democracy while forgetting America’s origins in a slavery economy is patriotism à la carte.*”

Sure, we need to look to the past to understand the present- but justice demands that our look back isn’t selective. Nostalgia is backward looking, lazy and dishonest. It demands nothing of the empowered while overlooking the struggles of the marginalized.

Justice is forward looking, and incumbent upon right relationships and healthy imaginations. Nostalgia is a lazy drug that delivers waning satisfaction, before leaving us unfulfilled.

Nostalgic people cling to Bristol time when ought to be reaching for the time to come. “*To live justly*” is to be informed by the past as we become the people we are called to be by “*loving kindness and walking humbly*” with our God who dwells in strangers, enemies, and neighbors.

To seek justice requires imagination- a withering faculty these days. In [The Prophetic Imagination](#) Walter Bruggemann wrote: “*Our consumer culture is organized against history. There is a depreciation of memory and a ridicule of hope, which means everything must be held in the now, either an urgent now or an eternal now.*” This depreciation of memory takes the form of alternative narratives that seek to explain the present without

accounting for the past. An alternative reality founded upon lies, myths, and conspiracy theories has taken hold of tens of millions of our neighbors, a feat more easily accomplished by the withering of another essential human faculty: critical thinking. (As a first year student at Holy Cross I cursed Pr. Richard Matlack and his required class Critical Reading and Writing. How could he expect me to write 5 pages on *An Ode to a Grecian Urn*? In hindsight that class was the most important class offered.)

Justice seekers must engage in prophetic imagination if we are to “*create a new society within the shell of the old*”. Of the prophetic imagination Bruggemann writes:

“*The prophet engages in futuring fantasy. The prophet does not ask if the vision can be implemented, for questions of implementation are of no consequence until the vision can be imagined. The imagination must come before the implementation. Our culture is competent to implement almost anything and to imagine almost nothing. The same royal consciousness that make it possible to implement anything and everything is the one that shrinks imagination*

(Please see: [Moving](#), p4)

because imagination is a danger. Thus every totalitarian regime is frightened of the artist. It is the vocation of the prophet to keep alive the ministry of imagination, to keep on conjuring and proposing futures alternative to the single one the king wants to urge as the only thinkable one."

I love that Bruggemann notes the power of the artist whose ability to imagine alternative futures is a threat to the powers that be, but I wonder if it is a "royal consciousness" that infects our cultures and not a consumer consciousness that needs to be resisting? Our consumer culture centers our identity on the stuff we have, the stuff we seek, and the stuff others have and which we covet. Consumer culture privatizes and commodifies public goods. Human needs like health care and education become commodities with futures exchanged for profit on Wall St., futures exchanged at the expense of those struggling in the present. In a consumer culture imagination is reduced to pondering how to acquire new gadgets that mesmerize us into complacency or trick us into rage. A prophetic imagination doesn't give a wit about the latest app or I-Phone. It does not pacify or mollify- it ignites passion, will, resistance. It demands a world centered not on profits and plastic junk, but on our sisters and brothers who have been shunted to the margins.

Phil Berrigan said: *"the poor tell us who we are, the prophet who we could be, that's why we hide the poor and kill the prophets"*. In this sense the artist is prophetic when art makes visible what the powerful try to hide. We don't want to know the poor because we can't accept what knowing them would tell us about ourselves. Instead, we are like the Queen from Snow White, we hide the poor to deny the ugly reality some of us have created, few of us have benefitted from, and most of us have resigned to.

Unless we're engaged in the work of justice, how could we feel good about ourselves? How could we sleep at night if we saw hungry children,

homeless, in cages, or separated from their families and did nothing? How could we enjoy a ballgame if we knew the details of how mass incarceration and the war on drugs has permanently impoverished millions of Black and brown people? Who could swallow a bite at a restaurant if the police didn't aggressively remove the beggar outside the window and push the protestor down the block? We can't go about whistling [Dixie](#) and we can't "look away, look away, look away" while "dreaming of the old

CONSUMER



CULTURE

ways" because the old ways are lethal. It's time we looked into the mirror by looking into the eyes of the people we have thrown away. To do so is to look into the eyes of God.

C. Wright Mills observed that *"Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both."* This "sociological imagination" takes note that each of our biographies has, and will, intersect with history differently. We may have a common history but the impact of that history on us as individuals, families, and communities varies with our race, class, gender, religion, sexuality, generation, and nationality.

Consider the history of the FHA. When it was created in the 1930's it enabled Americans to become homeowners. Between 1934 and 1962 the FHA backed \$120 billion dollars' worth of mortgages. Americans who bought homes with an FHA guarantee built wealth as the value of their homes steadily rose. They became the

middle class. Their wealth was, and still is, passed on to subsequent generations via graduation, Confirmation and Bar/t Mitvah, wedding, baby shower, and housewarming gifts. These inheritances have helped buy cars, pay for college, purchase a home, and build even more wealth. During those initial 28 years 98% of the people who benefitted from the FHA were white, so if your family was not white it intersected with that history in a very different way. Your family lost out on 28 years of appreciating real estate value. So even without the de facto discrimina-

tion that continues in lending and housing, nonwhite Americans have much less wealth to pass on. The [racial wealth gap](#) fluctuates with the real estate and stock markets, but the median wealth of white Americans is typically 10 to 20 times more than the median wealth of nonwhite Americans! The same history intersecting with our communities in different ways produces different realities in the present.

Attempts to understand these times, or any time, without engaging our sociological imagination is guilty of an implicit "all things being equal" bias. That is, the perspectives resulting from the lived experiences of the dominant groups (white people in a racist society, men in a patriarchy, the wealthy...) assume that the history they, and their families, have experienced was experienced similarly by: women, nonwhites, the poor and working class in a similar fashion. This bias facilitates victim blaming and overlooks the impact unjust social systems have on subordinated groups.

The gains of the Great Compression have largely withered. Attempts to understand the struggles of the middle class today fall short without engaging our sociological imaginations. I think the situation is even worse. With the Great Recession coinciding with the election of our first Black president I think many white Americans (consciously or subconsciously) have attributed their financial struggles to the incorrect assumption that a Black president must have made things better for Black

Americans at the expense of white Americans. This is very far from reality. Black Americans suffered more, and have regained less, from the Great Recession than whites. This disparity has happened again in the wake of the Pandemic.

This “zero sum” misunderstanding of our common fate is explored in [The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together](#) by Heather McGhee (look for a review in a future issue). McGhee shows how in the wake of civil rights legislation our society pulled back support for public goods if the public had to include nonwhite people. She provides multiple examples, but one of the most visible ones is the complete turnaround on public swimming pools. When municipalities could legally restrict access to whites only there was a race to build larger, more elaborate and enticing pools, but when Black people could no longer be kept out funds were cut, pools fell into disrepair, and many were filled in and paved over. This gave rise to the proliferation of backyard pools in the 70’s and 80’s for those who had a yard and could afford the expense. Most Black people, and very many white people lost out.

Society lost out as well. When public commons became private privileges opportunities for people of different racial and class backgrounds to form relationships diminishes. White folks who believe their current losses are the result of the supposed gains of Black people can hold to that untrue version of reality only because they don’t have any close friends (not acquaintances or colleagues, but intimate [not sexual] friends) who are Black. Absent these relationships, grievances roil, and resentment builds- not toward the wealthy few whose fortunes grew in the wake of the Great Recession and the pandemic, but towards their Black and brown neighbors. This resentment is fueled by the anxiety of white people who fear what will come when we are no longer in the majority, and fanned by the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, 3%ers, and other present day Klan wannabes who yearn for a return of Dixie Land.

Back in October on the pages of

The Atlantic George Packer declared [“America’s Plastic Hour Is Upon Us”](#), by which he means the conditions are ripe for our society to engage in reforms on the scale of the New Deal. From the nexus of people doing democracy in the struggles for racial justice and for the environment, and the existential threats of the pandemic and climate change could



[Solidarity](#)

Ben Heine

emerge the collective will to end this era of a second Gilded Age and a New Jim Crow. To do so Americans will need to move beyond the image of ourselves as rugged individualists to one of neighbors in solidarity with one another. Rugged individuals cannot overcome the pandemic, save the planet from climate change, or achieve racial justice. These issues demand organized, coordinated responses as well as commitments by individuals to “be the change [we] seek”. We will also need to avoid the trap of despair. Despair incapacitates, hope compels. Despair isolates, hope brings us together- but it doesn’t do so by magic; we need to create opportunities and occasions that bring us together. Be it bowling, praying, marching, knitting circles, or attending weekly meetings of the Royal

order of Water Buffalo with Fred Flinstone, coming together can spark a virtuous cycle of compassion and action that will create a better society.

Consumer culture, climate change, racism, refugee crises, concentrated wealth and widespread poverty are the poison fruits of corporate culture.

Corporations are antithetical to the Beloved Community. The fiction of their “personhood” is an affront to the humanity of the people they reduce to raw materials in the quest for profit. The rise of multinational corporations, unbound to the laws of any state, is a threat to humanity itself. Corporate bodies are soulless rendering them vulnerable to the soul-force that is the Beloved Community. Marshal McLuhan, of “[the media is the message](#)” fame, argued that technology is an extension of our bodies; that is, eyeglasses extend our eyes, microphones our voices et cetera. It seems to me that the Eucharist is an extension of our souls. When we receive each other in love, and the bit of the divine in me encounters the bit of the divine in you the spark generated- *hope*- has revolutionary potential. Extending our souls extends our humanity, leads to solidarity, and generates the soul force required to create “a new society within the shell of the old”. Whereas the greed of corporations is zero sum, the soul force of love in action is infinite.

I spoke at St. Tim’s in West Hartford last week seeking support for our summer programming. It was the Feast of Corpus Christi which got me thinking, again, about the Body of Christ. While the priest lamented in his homily that during the pandemic we were denied the opportunity to receive the Eucharist I found myself disagreeing. We were only denied the Eucharist if we deny that each of us is a “*temple of the Holy Spirit*” and that together we are the Mystical Body of Christ. Whenever we meet someone with love- not with syrupy sentimentality but with food, or drink, or shelter, or compassion, or guidance, we are receiving Christ, we are acting in memory of Him, we are remembering Him by consecrating each other. Ω

Bud, Fullness, Fall: A Prayer Service to Honor the 100th Anniversary of Daniel Berrigan, SJ

(Environment for Prayer: *A symbol of Dan, a photograph or one of his books; a rose; a glass of wine or grape juice for each participant*)

Invitation to Prayer:

On May 9, 1921 was born, as he said of himself, “a midge in a frozen landscape.” Daniel Joseph Berrigan, the fourth of six sons born to Thomas Berrigan and Frieda Fromhart Berrigan. Let’s begin this time of prayer with a moment of silence. What does the life of Daniel Berrigan mean to you? Close friend, mentor, public figure, someone whose voice you know only from his books? Let feelings of gratitude for this life rise up in you.

Pause for silent prayer

Reading 1: *Credentials*, a poem by Daniel Berrigan, SJ

I would it were possible to state in so few words my errand in the world: quite simply forestalling all inquiry, the oak offers his leaves large handedly. And in winter his integral magnificent order decrees, says solemnly who he is in the great thrusting limbs that are all finally one: a return, a permanent river and sea.

So the rose is its own credential, a certain unattainable effortless form: wearing its heart visibly, it gives us heart too: bud, fullness and fall.

Psalm Response: *Psalm 31, Daniel Berrigan, SJ*

How great is your goodness, Lord, poured out on the one who loves you. Face to face with iniquity the trusting heart shall prevail.

Far from intrigue, far from malice, I run to your presence, take sanctuary in your eyes. Hands aloft, you encompass a holy tent, a refuge. How great...

The war of tongues, a babble, a rout rages, goes nowhere. I would dwell tongue stilled, mind subdued in your holy temple. How great...

Come, make me your temple, deep founded, touching high heaven.

All you who fear the Lord, exult, take courage, come shelter in him.

Reading 2: *From Tulips in a Prison Yard*, p. 11

Daniel told me of a recurring dream. He stands in a bare landscape



before a tall building. A mother and child appear and slowly approach. They are singing a strange song. The words are not in any language he knows, the rhythms alien. They pass by and begin to climb the stories of the building, each one a homage to the architecture of different ages and cultures. Soon their song is beyond his scale and they disappear. Then an old man walks from the horizon of the dream and approaches him. “Did you hear them singing?” he asks with wonder. “Yes.” “And did you understand their song?” With regret he answers, “No.” The old man smiles and says, “Good. You must learn to sing of the things that are not yet.”

Response to the Reading: a section of *Zen Poem*, by Daniel Berrigan, SJ

Do you seek miracles?

listen- go

draw water, hew wood

break stones-

how miraculous!

Listen; blessed is the one who walks the earth 5 year, 50 years, 80 years and deceives no one and curses no one and kills no one

On such a one the angels whisper in wonder, behold the irresistible power of natural powers- of height, of joy, of soul, of non belittling!

You dry stick- in the crude soil of this world spring, root, leaf, flower!

trace

around and around

and around-

an inch, a mile, the world’s green extent,-

a liberated zone of paradise!

Reflection/Sharing

(If this prayer is done in a group there can be a period of reflection in silence and then a period of sharing.)

Dan’s friend, artist Corita Kent, would give her students a weekend homework assignment to produce 100 works of art. Smiling at their panic, Corita believed

that such an assignment would break through ordinary perspective and produce something new. So, in honor of Dan’s 100th birthday, come up with 100 acts of resistance in his honor. Here are a few to start with. You only have 96 to go...

1. Take a nap, an act of resistance to our culture that measures personal value from productivity.

2. Become a War Tax [Resister](#)

3. Like Sister Ardeth Platte, drop in on your mayor, your town council, your pastor, your PTA, your local police precinct, and drop off a copy of the United Nations Treaty on the [Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#)

4. Make a vow never to pour a bottle of dangerous chemicals into

your drain, your toilet, your lawn.
5-100???

Intercessions

Response: *God of Life, hear our prayer.*

-For Dan's family of origin, Thomas Berrigan, Frieda Fromhart Berrigan, brothers James, John, Thomas, Philip and Jerome; united, healed and whole in the heart of God, we pray...

-For Dan's extended family, his brothers' spouses and dearly loved nieces and nephews, and the special bond he shared with his brother Philip and his wife Elizabeth McAlister and their family, his brother Jerome, his wife Carol and their family – for love given and received, we pray...

-For the Society of Jesus, especially the Jesuits with whom Dan live in his dearly loved 98th St. community and for all who shared Jesuit life with Dan, we pray...

-In thanksgiving for Dan's extraordinary gift for friendships, stronger than battleships, for those in whose company he enjoyed affection, esteem, and laughter, we pray...

-For the flourishing of the life of children for which Dan had a special passion; for the students and other young people for whom he was a generous mentor, we pray...

-In thanksgiving for the Catonsville 9, those burners of paper rather than children, Philip Berrigan, Daniel Berrigan, David Darst, John Hogan, Tom Lewis, Marjorie Melville, Thomas Melville, George Mische, Mary Moylan. May the fires of Catonsville be fed and fed by the lovers of life, we pray...

-For an end to the nuclear terrorism by which the American Empire threatens the world, for Plowshares activists, for all who pay the price for peace, we pray...

-For the communities that formed and welcomed and conspired with Dan, the Atlantic Life Community, the Kairos Community, Jonah House, Block Island, Kirkridge, Plowshares, that we each may find a community and be faithful to it, we pray...

-For justice and reparations for people of color, for Dan's tireless commitment to build the Beloved Community, we pray...

-For each of us, that we may, like Dan, learn to sing of the things that are not yet, we pray...

-We pray together Dan's version of

the prayer that Jesus gave us:

Our Father, Mother, who are in the world and surpass the world,

Blessed be your presence, in us, in animals and flowers, in still air and wind.

May justice and peace dwell among us, as you come to us.

Your will be our will;

You will that we be sisters and brothers, as bread is bread, water is itself,

For our hunger, for quenching of thirst.

Forgive us.

We walk crookedly in the world, are perverse, and fail of our promise.

But we would be human, if only you consent to stir up our hearts.

Amen.

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Closing Ritual

Dan wrote in a letter to Phil, "In the midst of it all, I give thanks. We survive, even on occasion lift a glass to the holiness and goodness of life." To close the prayer, lift your glass of wine/grape juice in a toast to the holiness and goodness of life; to the memory of Dan Berrigan.

Prayer service composed by [Fr. Terrence J. Moran O](#)



Kreg Yingst

To purchase artwork by Mr. Yingst visit: <https://www.etsy.com/shop/wORKINGaRTS>

Dennis Kalob, Ph.D.

For those of us who promote economic justice for all, there are many issues we can and do pursue. It may be time for us to elevate worker ownership to a top tier issue for which we fight.

Writing in his encyclical, [Rerum Novarum](#) (1891), Pope Leo XIII says,

Justice...demands that the interests of the working classes should be carefully watched over...so that they who contribute so largely to the advantage of the community may themselves share in the benefits which they create...It follows that whatever shall appear to prove conducive to the well-being of those who work should obtain favorable consideration.

Catholic social teaching eventually embraced, specifically, worker ownership. Pope John XXIII, writing in [Mater et Magistra](#) (1961), explains the issue at hand:

Experience suggests many ways in which the demands of justice can be satisfied. Not to mention other ways, it is especially desirable today that workers gradually come to share in the ownership of their company, by ways and in the manner that seem most suitable.

Worker ownership is not only embraced by the Catholic Church, it has support across the political spectrum. Senator Bernie Sanders has strongly endorsed an expansion of worker ownership. And on the other side of the spectrum, President Ronald Reagan said this back in 1987: *“I can’t help but believe that in the future we’ll see in the United States and throughout the Western World an increasing trend toward the next logical step: employee ownership. It’s a path that benefits a free people.”*

Employee ownership can take several forms, including:

- Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs)
- Employee Ownership Trusts (EOTs)
- Worker Cooperatives

ESOPs provide workers shares of stock in the company as a retirement benefit, with no need for the workers to purchase any stock with their own funds. There are substantial

tax benefits to both employees and companies for adopting ESOPs, and research indicates that these arrangements have positive impacts on both



company performance and worker satisfaction and productivity.

Today there are about 7000 of them across the country, including Publix Supermarkets, Amsted Industries, and King Arthur Flour. Most ESOPs are created through the buying out of retiring business owners. ESOPs, however, do have some risks. If the company were to fail, employees could lose both their jobs and their retirement nest egg (in the form of the stocks they own).

Another concern is that workers in an ESOP typically have little to no direct influence over day-to-day management. However, as stockholders, they have the ability to vote on major corporate decisions.

There are far fewer EOTs than there are ESOPs in this country, but in some respects their benefits to workers are more substantial. EOTs, also known as Perpetual Employee Trusts, are contrasted with ESOPs this way: EOTs preserve the business over the long term for the benefit of the employees—not just their financial benefit, but also the preservation of their jobs and ownership.

This contrasts to ESOPs, which, if faced with an acquisition offer, have a fiduciary responsibility to maximize the financial benefits to the shareholders. Furthermore, the workers share the profits annually in an EOT. In an ESOP, worker-owners

may receive dividends on the stocks that they own, but do not receive an annual distribution of the profits.

However, over 70 percent of workers in ESOPs report they have a separate cash profit sharing plan. EOTs do not have the significant tax advantages that ESOPs have, but there are lower set-up and administration costs.

Finally, there are worker cooperatives, which may be what most people think of as real “worker-owned companies.” And indeed, this type of employee ownership is the most egalitarian and democratic. As Dr. Joseph Blasi, a leading scholar on worker owned businesses explained to me in a recent interview:

Typically, they emerge as startups and use worker savings or philanthropic contributions as seed capital. Thus, they are often appropriate for less capital intensive industries, although increasingly they can be used to buy out retiring business owners with similar tax incentives as ESOPs.

Worker cooperatives are owned and controlled by the workers themselves. Profits are shared and workers control the management of the enterprise. There are low set-up costs and some tax advantages. They are also more efficient and productive than conventional businesses. There are hundreds of worker cooperatives in the U.S. today, including Equal Exchange and Isthmus Engineering and Manufacturing.

The most famous cooperatives in the world can be found in Mondragon, Spain. Begun in the 1950s in the Basque region of Spain, the Mondragon group is now a network of 96 separate self-governing cooperatives across the sectors of finance, industry, retail, and knowledge. They collectively employ more than 81,000 people and have operations in other parts of the world. Mondragon was started by Fr. José María Arizmendi

Gospel and Church values of egalitarianism, the promotion of the common good, and the dignity of work motivated Fr. Arizmendi and sustain this amazing project that represents for us a model of economic justice.

Fr. Arizmendi died in 1976. Shortly before his passing he seemed to sum up the project he birthed some two decades earlier in this way: *“Hand in hand, of one mind, renewed, united in work, through work, in our small land we shall create a more human environment for everyone.”*

Worker-owned enterprises, particularly the most democratic ones, have demonstrated one way we can pursue economic justice. To be sure, these enterprises have had their difficulties,

as all business ventures do within our rough capitalist world.

They also are not a panacea for all our economic problems. They do provide us, however, with a viable roadmap to a society where the common good can be honored and pursued.

Six years ago, Pope Francis spoke before the Confederation of Italian Cooperatives. He told the gathering of their importance and value and urged the continued development and growth of the cooperative sector.

Near the end of his talk, he shared these words, *“We must have courage and imagination to build the right road to integrate, in the world, development, justice, and peace.”*

(Author’s Note: I would like to thank Dr. Joseph Blasi, Director of the Institute for the Study of Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing at Rutgers University, for inspiring and reviewing this article.)

(This essay first appeared in the Spring 2021 Issue of [JustSouth Quarterly](#)) Ω

Notes, cont.

It is great to have Ammon back with us at the Worker, his sense of humor is a breath of fresh air. Throughout Covid everyone has helped with deliveries, Ammon, Sasean, Dwight, Josh, Jackie, Cullen, Chris, Brian, and myself. Whether it be furniture, food or art supplies. We are a community and can't do this work by ourselves.

Dwight is working with BiCiCo Community workshop for the summer. He's definitely in his environment and working hard. He also built a computer for our guest Josh and a little free library for the front of the Green House. Dwight is now on a well deserved sabbatical from his responsibilities at the Green House.

Although our after school and Saturday programs along with our food pantry have been closed this past year we have been blessed to be able to feed our community. Each week Rev. Bob and Priscilla Hooper from St. James Episcopal Church, and the Trinity College Office of Community Services in collaboration with Chartwell Dining Services, the Trinity College office of Religious and Spiritual Life, Moral Mondays and CT Black Women have been making meals for our families. The families looked forward to Monday and Thursdays each week, from meatloaf to tacos they enjoyed every last bit of it. The food pantry was handled differently this year. When our friends from St. James, St. Tim's and St. Peter Claver, and others dropped off bags of food they were already pre-made and all we had to do was hang the bags on the fence. Every Tuesday and Thursday we picked up food from Chrysalis- fresh produce and bread on their last legs (and, well, occasionally some that was ready for the compost heap) which was welcomed by our neighborhood community Margie and Bob H. have been bringing fresh eggs each week. I suggest you try them because they make the best egg salad sandwiches!

Jen O'Neil and her youth group from St. John Fisher put together snack bags

for the neighborhood kids. Mary P. from East Catholic and her senior class took up a collection of chalk, bubbles, hula hoops, footballs and toiletries for the families. Every once in a while as we sit on our front porch we will see a lingering bubble come our way from across the street. The kids next door draw beautiful flowers on the sidewalk and hopscotch. I may do a hop here and there!

Aside from our food ministries we have also welcomed in a new guest. Deshawn came to us after a fire in the building he was living in. He is currently working overnights from 2 to 11, and afternoons from 4 to 8 with a nap in between. He's an awfully affable kid all things considered!

We have received grants this year from Sisters of Mercy and the Hartford Foundation to help folks with rent, utilities, funeral expenses, and money for the commissary accounts of incarcerated loved ones. Throughout this summer we will continue to purchase supermarket

gift cards for our Beloved Community. Folks have been so grateful, but since we are just the middlemen and women the thanks should go to you! Here are some of the thanks we've received:

“Oh My! Thank you so much. I am so happy and grateful. May the Lord continue to bless all of you”, “Thank you! I can jump for joy!”, “Amen, Amen, Thank you Ms. Baby you are a blessing in our lives. You make a way for us just when I think all else has failed. May God bless you all and keep you safe”, “Thank you, I know you guys always have us in mind and I am grateful!”, “Thank you guys for all you do! We REALLY appreciate you”

In May, Christian from Levo International and Father Mike from St. Patrick St./Anthony's delivered Bokits: hydroponic containers that we were able to distribute to our neighbors. We had a few families stop by and about 15 buckets were delivered. These kits allow our families to have fresh greens grown right in their homes.

There are over 34,000 children in the Greater Hartford and Tolland counties that suffer from food insecurities. Levo International travels to many organizations raising awareness of sustainability and preventing food insecurities. They have traveled to Haiti to show them how to build hydroponic housing. You can follow Christian's journey by logging onto www.levointernational.org.

You will be happy to hear that we will be meeting in person in September for Mass on the first Tuesday of the month. I can't wait to hug everyone and enjoy everyone's company around the dinner table once again. The kids' programs will start up again with the new school year if everything goes well over the summer. Meanwhile, we are in the process of painting, cleaning and getting the house ready. When the kids return they will be welcomed by two new community members. Walker, who will be a PhD student at Uconn, and Sasha who will be on a gap year, will be arriving in August. We will welcome them, and soon you too, with open arms!Ω



Notes From De Porres House

Bethanne (Baby) Donovan

Here we are now 15 months of mask wearing, no large gatherings of friends and family, no hugging and no going out to restaurants. Mask wearing is coming to an end and we are able to gather now because so many people have been getting vaccinated. I am happy to say that all of us at the Worker are fully vaccinated and ready to start going out once in a while for a community dinner. Brian is almost ready to go sit at the local watering hole and chat it up with the locals about his many adventures. I did have to let him know that one of his favorite spots to watch soccer, the Half Door, had to close both halves of its door. Hopefully they will find a new location this summer to reopen and make Brian a happy camper. Brian also had a visit from his brothers from Massachusetts. It was great seeing them sitting on the porch with a cold one catching up. Sasean was very amused at how much they all looked alike- all freckles, wrinkles, and red hair.

It's been a long hard year for many of our friends and family and prayers go out to everyone who has lost a loved one. I have been blessed to have my son Cullen home to help keep me somewhat grounded. He does have me eating healthier- no meat for me! It would have been a different year for me if he was not home.



I know I am driving the guys crazy because my brain doesn't shut off when it comes to making sure our families have their food and gift cards each week and keeping the house clean and organized. They are ready for me to start taking trips to the beach once again.

Each week Jackie continues to check in on our friend Kim who lost her daughter and grandchild in utero to Covid. She brings her clothes and food that people have been generously sending. Please keep her family in your prayers. During the pandemic Jackie has been making a lot of art; a couple of pieces have been accepted into juried shows! She has also been selling some of her work. If you are ever in Niantic there is a cute little shop called The Red Salt Box on Main St. and you can see her works there from note cards to mirrors.

Chris had been teaching on zoom all semester and is very happy to be going back into a classroom in the Fall. He has also been giving talks and working with Sedrick and Andrea. Please pray for Andrea, her cancer has returned and she told Chris that she is dying. Right now as I am writing this he is out on the boat fishing with Micah. They would be out there 24/7 if they could be.

(Please see: Notes, p9)