

CATHOLIC WORKER



The Waddington 6. Left to right: Keith Hebden, Chris Cole, Martin Newell, Penny Walker, Susan Clarkson, Henrietta Cullinan Photo: Maya Evans

“Dutiful people” sentenced for drones action

On October 7th the Waddington 6, with members from both London and Oxford Catholic Worker, were found guilty to criminal damage to the RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire, home of Britain’s first unmanned drones base. But the judge said that it was with a “heavy heart” that he announced the verdict and described the activists as “dutiful people”. The action had taken place June 3rd this year when the group cut their way through a fence to display news articles about drone civilian victims and plant a peace garden.

This had also caused the base to enter “shut down” until the situation was resolved which, the group argued, was necessary to stop a greater crime from taking place, the loss of innocent lives.

The six included Dr Rev. Keith Hebden, grandmother Penny Walker, drones researcher Chris Cole, Susan Clarkson of Oxford Catholic Worker

(cont. on pg. 2)

**A Time To Wait?
A Reflection On Advent**

As we enter this season of Advent I’ve been thinking a lot about waiting. I recently had a friend tell me that I just needed to wait, wait for change. She was trying to comfort me as I was distraught and feeling helpless about the situation in Syria. Having just watched a documentary about the bombing of al-Bara, all I could think about was how much I felt responsible and how little I felt I could do. I had this sense of urgency, this need to find a way to escape the “filthy, rotten system” that I know is responsible for the atrocities that are committed all over the world. A system not just of the west, but a global system based on greed, self interest, vengeance, and the never-ending cycle of violence. My friend however, was telling me that the time wasn’t right, that someday, she hoped soon, people would see how things were and want them to be different. She was trying to make me feel better and be optimistic, telling me that I was doing as much as could be asked of me, and that if I were patient, someday when the world was ready, things

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CHRISTMAS 1954 + + + FRITZ EICHENBERG

Fritz Eichenberg

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Giuseppe Conlon House offers hospitality to destitute refugees. We also run the Urban Table Soup Kitchen. We organise regular non-violent resistance, and produce this newsletter.

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The Farmhouse offers hospitality to destitute women. We vigil regularly at the nearby Northwood Joint Forces Military HQ. We also grow organic vegetables and have a poustinia.

Maryhouse also offers a home to four destitute women with children.

Urban Table Soup Kitchen:

Open Sun. 2.30pm-4.30pm
The Old School Rooms, The Round
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The Urban Table is an attempt to imitate Jesus' practice of sharing his table with all comers.

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this newsletter, please pass it
on for others to read!*

“Dutiful People” (cont. from p1)

along with teacher Henrietta Cullinan and Father Martin Newell, both London Catholic Worker. They pleaded ‘not guilty’ and argued that their actions were reasonable in the circumstances, while questioning the legality and morality of drones and highlighting the current MoD secrecy which shrouds the deaths of hundreds of civilians.

The Judge Stobart upheld defendant Dr Keith Hebden’s argument that drone base RAF Waddington is making Britain a war zone, he said: “I knew I was entering a war zone, the presence of the base on British soil makes this country a war zone and in terms of domestic terrorism it is increasing the risk.” When the prosecution objected to Dr Hebden’s argument, who was representing himself, the Judge stated: “It’s clearly a zone from which war is clearly being perpetrated from.”

Tears were shed in the viewing gallery as defendant Susan Clarkson described taking part in a peace delegation to Kabul and meeting civilians who have lost innocent loved ones in drone strikes, she said: “After I returned from Afghanistan I took part in an anti-war stall at Corn Market in Oxford, I thought about the impact of a drone strike in Oxford there and then.” She also broke down in tears when describing her sadness over the loss of innocent lives. She went on to describe how she had entered the base to speak with drone pilots with the intention of persuading them that what they were doing was wrong.

The court also heard from Dr Keith Hebden who talked about exhausting all other forms of protest including lobbying his MP, peaceful protests and petitions, he said: “If Parliament won’t take the lead of stopping drones, it’s up to the people.”

Regarding the use of drones, he said: “People cannot surrender to drones, drones cannot check to see if those left behind are dead or slowly dying, drones lack reality and humanity and yet are used in arenas that previ-

ously required human beings to be involved.”

Grandmother Penny Walker said: “Drone warfare is chilling and terrifying to live with in Afghanistan, never knowing when you or your neighbour will be attacked. Children are living in relentless fear. Since this is being done in my name I have a responsibility to do all I can to stop it.”

She added: “With drones, the huge distance between the people making the decision to kill and the people being killed can protect the killers from the reality of their deed. While I was there I wanted to communicate the reality of a drone strike on Afghan families and what it is like for them to live in fear.”

London Catholic Worker Martin Newell went on to say “Drone warfare is the ultimate in low/intensity asymmetric warfare, allowing the UK to engage in war with no risk of casualties for ‘our’ side. This sounds good, but it means governments and military are able to go to war with an absolute minimum, or even total absence, of moral and ethical debate and concern, whereas the decision to go to war and continue war should be the most serious moral and ethical decision a country makes, since this decision will define the lives of a great many people, both civilian and combatant, men, women, and children, old and young, healthy and sick, in the most drastic of ways. The use of drones allows our government to engage in war with most of us hardly noticing, only seeing it ‘out of the corner of our eye’. It is hidden and marginal to our existence. Unlike past wars, modern wars can destroy many lives of the ‘other’, the ‘foreigner’, while we continue to go about our daily business, our normal lives entirely uninterrupted.”

By Arvid Skagerlid

From the Bottom of the Rankings

I come from Sweden, a country often considered to be one of the best in the world to live in. When Swedish papers report of another international survey on the quality of life or happiness in different countries they can "once again" tell their readers that Sweden placed in the top five or top ten. This is not the case for the Republic of Congo, a country I stayed in for four months between november 2012 and february 2013 as a volunteer in the church Eglise Evangelique du Congo.

During my time in Brazzaville, the capital of Congo, I came across another one of these surveys on a Swedish newssite and it showed that Sweden had seized third place while the Republic of Congo placed second to last.. These rankings have never been a problem for me, at most it's been a pleasant

reminder that I and basically everyone I know have had the luck to be born into one of the safest and most comfortable environments in the world. It's one thing to look at these surveys and notice that your country is in the top, it's another one to once again see that your country has been judged to be one of the worst countries to live in. Me and my friends have always been aware that our country is one of the best to live in, but we've seldom or never reflected on what it means for people in our own age to grow up with the knowledge that their country is on the lower end of that list. But that was what the people I met and the friends I made in Brazzaville had done. They didn't refer to specific studies but the notion that their native country was worse to live in than mine was ever present in my encounters with them. I had to realise that the people I talked with, worked with, lived with, danced with and shared bus with knew that they lived in a substandard country. That when they looked at the world they saw all these people, places and countries that were "up there at the top" far away from where they were. That they lived with this perspective that I had never really realised existed.

To give an example, it was very common that people my own age would ask me how they could get into a European university and if I could help them in any way. They were in no way unaware of the fact that the universities of Europe were considered to be of higher standard than the one in Brazzaville and that a European degree would open more doors when applying for jobs. So the logic that is exemplified in these rankings tells them that they should do what they can to get into one of them. Furthermore, many people had a romantic idea of Europe and USA which manifested itself in questions such as



Picture depicting a street in Brazzaville. Photo: Arvid Skagerlid

"Life is good over there, right?" and "Bring me with you when you go back, would you?" (even though the last one wasn't made that serious) at the same time as delays of the bus due to muddy roads after yesterdays heavy rain was commented to me with "Welcome to Africa".

One of the most surprising discoveries I made in Congo was that the family I lived with watched Disney Channel, something I never ever would have guessed. Forgive me, but I never thought people in Congo would sit and watch white, American Hanna Montana dubbed in French. A lot of American music and movies were well known and my friends were talking about Rihanna, Sylvester Stallone and The Matrix. And that's one of the most important insights I bring with me from Congo: how unaware the rich are of the poor and how aware the poor are of the rich. Just think of how often you see Denis Sassou-Nguesso or any other African president in the news. Meanwhile Barack Obama och Francois Hollande are household names in Congo and mentioned in TV and papers at least every week. People usually have their eyes set upwards in the ranking, the opposite is very rare to encounter.

Here in London, at Giuseppe Conlon House, I meet people who have made the journey from countries similar to Congo, countries that rank very low on these lists on quality of life, to England which is up there in the top with Sweden. Based on those facts, and the romantized mental image of some of my congolese friends, their lives should improve in quality. But that, as you may have guessed, is not the case. When they leave their countries it is seldom with the romantized image of Europe in mind but rather due to pressing

(cont. on pg. 5) 3

Sudan, the UN and Giuseppe Conlon House

I was inspired to write this article for two main reasons.

Firstly, when I read the latest newsletter of the Catholic Worker house in London and saw how much effort they exerted in editing, publishing and distributing it, I felt obliged to write an article at least to contribute my thoughts on something that may be of interest to our respected readers.

Secondly, since I have been accommodated in this house from the end of last April, many conflicting thoughts have been going through my mind. I have begun to reflect on the similarity between this little community I live in, which resembles a mini United Nations complex, and my big home society. In both cases, the leaders face similar problems associated with organizing a diverse society: the need for fairness and finding a way in which justice and equality can be applied.

I will start by giving you a brief description of the London Catholic Worker's house. It is a night shelter, mainly for failed asylum seekers who are homeless and destitute. The group I live with at the moment consists of asylum seekers from a wide spectrum of countries: Africans, Asians, Americans, Europeans and Arabs. They speak many different languages, with different dialects and accents, and of course they have different religious beliefs. Their ages range from early twenties to over fifties.

The shelter is run by a group of people who are very good at dealing with destitute asylum seekers who have a wide range of problems, mainly psychological and medical. Fairly strict rules are applied to maintain order and discipline and no distinctions or exemptions are made for anybody, whoever he is.

The moment you step inside you are very well looked after, treated with dignity and respect. After a few days you find your morale is going up and ultimately you start thinking correctly and positively about how you are going to tackle your case and life in general.

I remember my first night at the shelter. To be frank, since I left my home country I have not feared death, but I have feared that if I were to stand in front of the mighty God on the Day of Judgment I would not be able to answer him as to why I did not do enough to spare the precious life he had given me. I have always believed that the precious lives God has given us are the wings of the earth which keep it cruising to its final destination, which is the Day of Judgment.

That night, as a result of exhaustion and being homeless for quite a while, I slept as if I was in a five star hotel! I felt that I had been treated with humanity and respect. A peace of mind started to creep into my brain, which will definitely help me to make correct decisions about how to get out of this mess in my life.

If you spend a night under the roof of this shelter which is a microcosm of the United Nations, you will definitely feel the peace and harmony which is the mark of a decent society.

This raises the question: Why can't our leaders and presidents in our home countries do the same to create peaceful harmonious societies among larger different ethnic and religious groups?

I want to talk to you about my home country, which is Sudan. Notice I refer to Sudan as one country, not two, as I do not believe in divisions. I believe in big communities and societies; unity always means strength in every aspect. It is also worth mentioning that despite the political separation between the north and the south of Sudan, many analysts believe that the separation is artificial, due to the deep social and economic bonds between the south and the north of Sudan. If the politicians came to their senses, the two countries would be unified again in one way or another.

Sudan is one of the oldest civilizations in the worlds – the kingdom of Kush, dating from the 4th century BC, is recognized by UNESCO. The capital of Sudan, Khartoum, marks the beginning of one of the longest rivers in the world, the River Nile, which for thousands of years has been critical for the economy of the country. The north is mainly desert, except for the fertile lands along the banks of the river which supply the inhabitants of that area with vegetables and citrus fruits. A big dam was built on the Nile by the town of Merowi and it provides North Sudan with its electrical power.

Until oil was discovered in the nineties, Sudan was an exporter of agricultural products like cotton, sesame, Arabic gum, the income from which supplied hard currency. Oil and gold are now the major exports of Sudan.

In Sudan's recent history, the Turks and the British have both conquered and ruled the country. The Turks started in 1821 and were overthrown by a local revolution in 1885. After a short period of independence the British conquered and ruled Sudan from 1898 until 1956. The Sudanese never stopped resisting the occupation, and



A map of the Sudan split Source: enoughproject.org

many famous uprisings happened, including in 1917 and 1924. By the mid 1940s, the intellectual Sudanese graduates formed the Sudanese Conference Alliance and started a peaceful struggle against the occupier, and succeeded in gaining independence for Sudan in 1956.

The legacy of British rule included a functional civil service and the education system, and a railway system which was geared to the export of cotton to supply the Manchester cotton mills. What they had not done was to tackle the way in which religious and ethnic differences between the Arab Muslim north and the African Christian south could be resolved.

These problems started the civil war which erupted immediately after the British left Sudan. Unfortunately it became one of the longest civil wars in the world, where more than four million lives were lost and countless numbers of people were displaced. This horrible war was finally ended by a referendum which gave the southerners the right to establish their own country in 2011.

Unlike the civil war between the north and the south of Sudan, which was mainly due to the differences in ethnic and religious beliefs, current unrest takes the form of guerrilla warfare over the allocation of scarce resources. In the Darfur region, for example, drought, desert expansion and increase in population resulted in scarcity of water and grass. Nomadic Arabic tribes (Bedouin) moved with their cattle to the Darfur region looking for the little available water and grass, which obviously raised frictions between the Sudanese African tribes and Arabic militia backed by the government in Khartoum, called Janjaweed. Casualties of this conflict are believed to exceed hundreds of thousand people killed directly by military actions or indirectly by diseases or hunger caused by the ongoing conflict. Many millions were displaced and many others sought refuge in neighbouring countries or in Europe.

After independence, power and money was monopolized by certain groups, classes or denominations of people in North Sudan. Injustice and unfairness in distributing wealth and power by the Khartoum government has resulted in ill feeling amongst the other factions of the Sudanese nation, leading to revolt. These conflicts are centred mainly in the South Kordfan region, South Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains. Even the east of Sudan has raised arms against Khartoum for some time.

We all hope that peace, justice and equality will prevail in Sudan – just as it does in our little community here – and that one day we will see a united Sudan.

By Ibn Alnilin (The Son of The Two Niles) - a guest at Giuseppe Conlon House

From the Bottom of the Rankings

(cont from pg 3)

circumstances. And after arriving they've all for different reasons ended up with us, in a refugee night shelter where they have to sleep, or at least try to sleep, in the same room as 19 other men. Where they have to stand in line to get a shower and where they are not allowed to stay during the day. How did we end up here? How did we create a world like this? A world where the country you're born in for many people is not be the best one to live in? I realise war, oppression and famine are circumstances that will likely continue to send people from their homes for a long time to come but just the suggestion that the country you grow up in is not the most suitable is a kind of oppression, don't you think? An oppression of the psyche which we should try and counter.

I can't really see myself growing up or live longterm in any other country than my own and I've always assumed that had to with the fact that it's my native country and culture, not with the economy or governance of the nation. So why do we let so many people, so many children, grow up and know they would probably be safer or better educated or live longer if they only lived in another country? This doesn't mean that they want to move there, we should never underestimate the bond between the individual and their family and culture, but this shows the deep inequality of our world and the disinterest people in rich countries show people in poorer countries. A disinterest I since coming back from Congo have tried to get rid of. I try to bear my congolese friends and their thoughts in mind even though I now walk the streets of Sweden or London, to incorporate their perspectives in my own. I think even small reflections like what's different in how Brazzaville and London look can help. And the people I now share a meal with every evening is a reminder to me from whose viewpoint I should strive to understand and see British society. I think we as Christians and Catholic Workers are called to see society from the perspective of the poor and oppressed that we serve. To see our world from the bottom of the quality of life rankings, to imagine what it would feel like to look at the powerful people of the world and see how different they look from you. And I pray that one day we will be able to journey past this part of history, to rid this world of the oppression of the country rankings. So that we may look into each others eyes and know that we've got the same value. That everyone lives in the country with the highest quality of life for them.

By Arvid Skagerlid

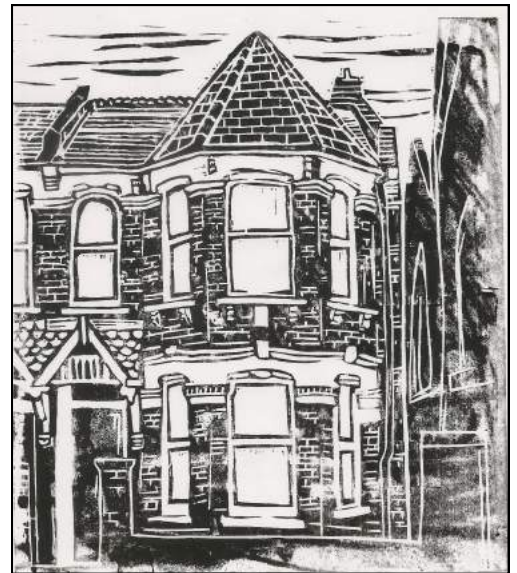
LCW NEWS . . . NEWS . . . NEWS

We want to say a big THANK YOU to Ed and Frank who have donated their time and been working tirelessly to install a new heating system in the Hall side of our home. We are very grateful for this improvement which will bring more effective and affordable heating to our guests and volunteers, especially as we now head into the colder months.

We also want to thank all those who donated to and helped coordinate this years Harvest Festival Collection. We rely on this donation every year and feel very blessed to continue to receive such wonderful support from the greater community.

Yet another thank you goes to Carmen Trotta from New York Catholic Worker who visited our community and hosted a small retreat on the CW movements' past, present and future. It's always rewarding to have friends from the larger movement with us and we thank Carmen for his time and his thoughts.

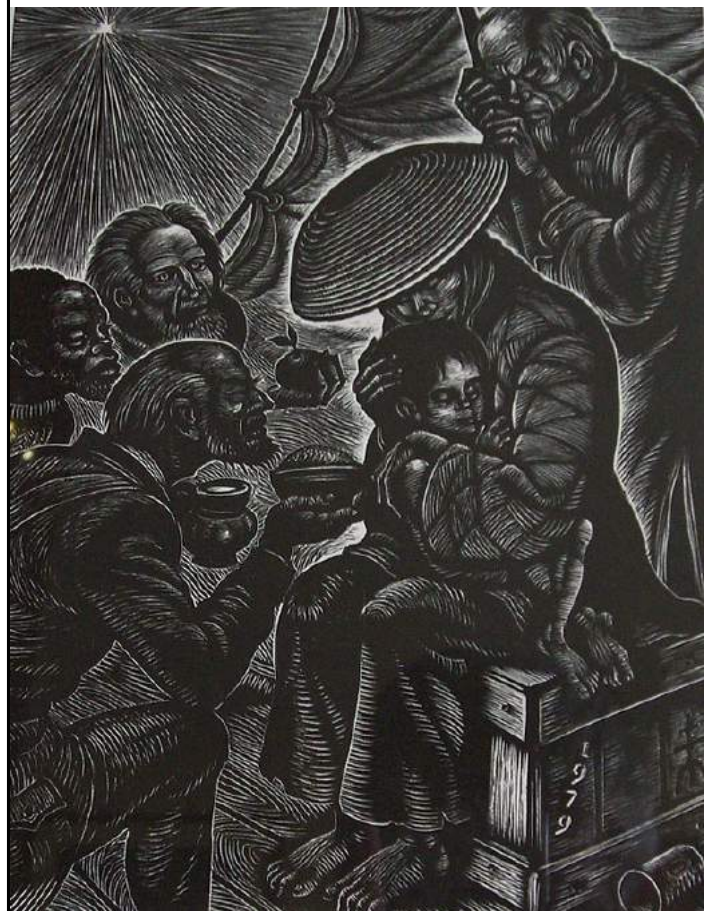
Lastly, our community is happy to welcome three new community members! Arvid Skagerlid from Sweden and Sarah Magno from the US Catholic Worker will both be living and working with us into the Spring. Johannes Maertens, from the Belgium Catholic Worker, is joining us as a permanent member of our community. They are all wonderful additions to the Giuseppe Conlon House and we hope you all will get to know them in the coming months.



PETER MAURIN'S EASY ESSAYS

WHEN CHRIST IS KING

**When the Sermon on the Mount
is the standard of values
then Christ is the Leader.
When Christ is the Leader
the priest is the mediator.
When Christ is the Leader
the educator
trains the minds of the pupils
so that they may understand
the message of the priest.
When Christ is the Leader
the politician
assures law and order
according to the priest's teachings.
When Christ is the Leader
the technician
devises ways and means
for the economical production
and distribution of goods.
When Christ is the Leader
the administrator administrates
according to the directions
from the technicians.
When Christ is the Leader
we have a functional,
not an acquisitive society.**



Fritz Eichenberg

A Time To Wait? *(cont. from pg.1)*

would change. Despite her kind intentions, all I could think while she was talking was that children in Syria couldn't wait.

She was not the first person to tell me that I simply had to wait. It seems a growing sentiment in the "liberal" mind set. In his song *Waiting on the World to Change* John Mayer writes, "Now we see everything that's going wrong, With the world and those who lead it, We just feel like we don't have the means, To rise above and beat it. So we keep waiting, waiting on the world to change." Many of my friends are disgusted with the inequities they see in our country and the violence around the world being perpetrated in their name, but they just accept it as the way things are. They believe that it is all out of their hands. People hope that one day there will be a revolution or that the system will crumble, but right now all we can do is wait, because we are not there yet.

Yet I have to ask, how will we ever get there if we are all always waiting? Later in his song Mayer writes, "It's hard to beat the system, When we're standing at a distance" In this maybe he has finally struck truth. If we all stand back waiting nothing will change. We have to be that change and that change has to start now.

We must start with ourselves: changing our lifestyles to ones of simplicity, doing all we can to resist empire, committing ourselves to nonviolence, opening our lives and homes to those in need, dedicating ourselves to love, trying to bring about a Revolution of the Heart. While we could wait for a political revolution that sweeps in like wildfire to bring a "new" system of power, the only thing that can defeat the system is a revolution of the hearts of all humankind. That kind of revolution takes time. It is a long journey to convert the world to love. But that is all the more reason we must be urgent about it. We cannot wait. The need for love in our world is so immediate that we must start now, with ourselves, this very instant.

After coming to this realization, I then found myself perplexed about how to enter Advent, the waiting season. To be sure, there is something to be said for having a spiritual time of waiting for God. In a world that in so many other ways is instant, with one second downloads, text messaging and Facebook messaging, home cooked style meals ready in three minuets, a consumerist culture so prevalent that in the United States Christmas shopping now starts the day before Thanksgiving, people no longer even willing to wait to Black Friday to gorge themselves on sales, perhaps we do need a time to slow down and truly wait. But what are we waiting for?

Advent is the waiting time for the birth of Christ. We are waiting for a birth. In this I find an understanding of what Advent should really be. I think of what people do when they are waiting for the birth of their own child. It is not a solemn, quiet time of patient reflection; rather there are millions of things to do. Expecting families are always busy, telling family members and friends, learning all they can about how to be good parents, taking birthing classes, childproofing their homes, setting up nurseries. They are preparing their world to welcome a child.



Fritz Eichenberg

So should we too be preparing during Advent. Of course there is already an element of preparation in our current Advent rituals. We prepare ourselves spiritually, we decorate our homes to celebrate Christmas, we come together as a community in our churches to joyfully await Christ. Yet it seems to me that the same urgency I found during that conversation with a friend is even more impetrate during this time of Advent.

During Advent we are waiting, but it cannot be passive waiting. We must be working will all our hearts to prepare the whole world for the birth of Christ. This means change. This means a revolution of the heart now. Do we really want to welcome Christ into this world of greed and violence?

Two thousand years ago Jesus was born in a manger, because there was no room at the inn. In our current world Christ is born everyday in the rubble of bombings, in the arms of starving mothers dying of famine. Christ is born every day in refugee camps set up for victims fleeing war and unnatural disasters caused by climate change. Christ is born every day in the ghettos of our own urban ghost towns where slums reek of the poverty we have left our brother and sisters in.

Christ is being born everyday, because God is in each child we welcome to this earth. This world is what we have to offer our children, and in so doing it's what we offer up to God. We must welcome the children of the world with something more than we have now. Yes, Advent is a time of waiting, but we are not waiting for the world to change. We must change the world now, so when the waiting ends, and the Christ child is born, we can say, "Welcome! Welcome to a world of love"

On this spread You can read the thoughts and reflections of two of our volunteers, one who's right at the beginning of her journey and one who is a bit further down on hers. Michelle Simons volunteered with us from June to September this year before going back to university studies. We thank her for her help and great energy and wish her Gods blessing in the continuation of her journey. Sarah Noceda is one of our kitchen volunteers who cook food for the shelter guests every other week, together with her husband Matt. They have become good friends of ours and we deeply enjoy their company every time they come.

The Vision of a Just and Compassionate World

Six months ago I was sitting in my Cor II class, Cor being short for coradcor loquitur or Latin for heart speaks to heart, at Edgewood College in Madison Wisconsin, a Dominican Institution. At the end of the course I was urged to ask myself the following: "Who am I? What can I become? What are the needs of the world? What is my role in building a more just and compassionate world?" These questions cannot be answered lightly; and, as I have learned, the answer to these questions will never be quite the same twice. The world is always changing, along with the people in it.

When I answered these questions then, I did not understand the latter of the two questions, on the level they deserve.

My time with the London

Catholic Worker has turned my whole understanding of, "What are the needs of the world?" and "What is my role in building a more just and compassionate world?" completely upside down. To understand what 'the needs of the world' are people need to live in it, and be open to it. Too often we build a wall blocking out the pain and injustices of the world. When we do this to those who suffer, the change needed cannot be seen and they are forgotten.

While being at the London Catholic Worker I was forced to step outside this comfort zone of being isolated from the injustice and pain of the world. Every evening the members of the community sit down with our guests and eat a cooked dinner with them. Having this time with the guests has become an important part of my day as this is the time when we can truly see the needs of the world. How can anyone be immune to the injustice of the world when the evidence of it can be seen sitting right next to me at the kitchen table?

Another important part of my awakening, is our daily prayer time. Each morning we gather as a community to read about a different saint of day, two readings from the bible, and 15 minutes of silence. For me this is my time to look at how Jesus and his disciples

through the ages have interpreted the needs of the world. Furthermore, I get a better understanding of not only what the needs of the world are, but also how I might address them. The lives of the saints and the reading of the scriptures show me how I can choose to live my life in a way that can make the world I live in a little more just and compassionate.

The Catholic Worker has given me a real taste of what can actually be done to make the world a more just and compassionate place. I see this in the daily life as a Catholic Worker. We form a community from the

members of the Catholic Worker, to the guest that we house, and more importantly, the effort to maintain this sense of community through cleaning, cooking,

and active discussion. We engage in vigils for peace and social justice and try to educate our surrounding communities on social issues from Chelsea Manning to the war threatening to break out in Syria. Our presence in the community does not stop there. We help prepare a meal for the homeless twice a month at the Urban Table, and engage local businesses in helping us meet the needs of our community.

Being at the London Catholic Workers has given me a vision of what it actually means to understand the needs of the world and even a clearer vision of what roles are needed in order to make this world a more just and compassionate world. The life that a Catholic Worker chooses to live is not a simple life. Rather it is a life that continues to challenge and change the person who pursues it and, in turn, brings the world one step closer to become a more just and compassionate place. Knowing that there are people that can make a more just and compassionate world possible is the greatest gift I could ask for on my trip abroad and my opportunity to be part of it is something truly amazing.

THE WORKS OF MERCY FEET
THE HUNGRY • CLOTHE THE
NAKED • GIVE DRINK TO THE
THIRSTY • VISIT THE
IMPRISONED • CARE
FOR THE SICK • BURY
THE DEAD.



THE WORKS OF WAR
DESTROY CROPS AND
LAND • SEIZE FOOD SUBSIES
DESTROY HOMES • SCATTER
FAMILIES • CONTAMINATE
WATER • IMPRISON DISSENTERS
INFLECT WOUNDS • BURNS • KILL
THE LIVING

By Michelle Simons

Not the End, Just the Beginning

A formidable person on my faith journey is a woman who has no last name I can remember. I had been studying Byzantine history, theology and art in Athens, Greece during my second year at University. I knew I would have to have a plan for the summer. What to do? I didn't want to go home to live and work with my parents over the summer, that much I knew. I loved my freedom and didn't relish the idea of being told when to go to bed, when to come home, and having my nose stud criticized. I didn't want to live at University over the summer either. A college town in the summer is a ghost town and all my friends were home and not there anyway. I always liked volunteering and I needed a place to live so I applied for AmeriCorps - an in-service volunteer training program - which could fulfill both of my needs while also looking great on my CV. I was accepted to a program in St. Louis, Missouri that placed volunteers in a number of programs throughout the city. The first few days we were introduced to the various agencies and what they did. We were told that each of us would be placed with the agency that our coordinator thought would be the best fit for both parties. The assignment I wanted was working in an office that placed unemployed and underemployed people with limited job skills in gainful employment. It sounded great and I burned to be placed there. But it ended up going to another girl and I was sent to North St. Louis at the un-air conditioned "Karen House". "Karen House" was a Catholic Worker House on Hogan Street. It was an old church and convent with a sagging roof and an insect problem. But it offered a free place for dispossessed women and children to live while they were helped to get back on their feet. "Karen House" also gave out food to the poor of the neighborhood and ran a clothing bank.

Her name was Teka and she had come to Hogan Street in 1979 at the age of 22 and had never left. The Catholic Worker ideology asks that anyone who works for them live in communion with the poor they care for. They eat the same food, wear the same clothes from the clothing bank, and suffer the same privations. All bills are paid through a common fund and Teka spent her days writing appeals and grant proposals, soliciting donations to put food on the table and to be able to give out bus passes for people to get to job interviews. She was quiet and had a peaceful spirit and gentle smile. But she was as tough as nails when she had to be. Everyone at the house had to do their part to maintain the house and the grounds. There was counseling available for those who required it and residents could choose to attend or not when they held Mass in an upstairs room. The house was dirty always in spite of our efforts to keep it clean with too many people going in and out. There were always rounds of grocery stores to be made to pick up food that was about to go bad and be thrown away to be made later into nutritious and (hopefully) tasty meals. There were errands to run for the residents and with the residents to clinics, hospitals, schools. They made me do things like organize storage rooms full of canned goods (guaranteed to be full of spiders) and sort donations of bags full of not-so-nice clothes. It was exhausting and at the end of the day I would always be

grouchy, dirty, and oftentimes second-guessing why I had come. There were children of all ages underfoot with their smiles and laughter and tears always just under the surface. The residents were sometimes joyful, sometimes surly, difficult sometimes and other times convivial. Teka treated them all like they were her own family and her patience with them was truly a marvel.

It was Teka who introduced me to the Catholic Worker Movement. To Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day and the Berrigan Brothers. To Christian anarchy and Christian socialism, Liberation Theology and Mysticism. She got me to listen to NPR while I prepared lunches and I learned about the injustices of our legal system against the poor and minority and mentally ill while waiting patiently at her door while she finished up phone conversations and conferences. Over my own lunch I began to read Dostoyevsky and Kropotkin and identify with their struggles between the world they lived in and the world they wanted to live in. I would talk with the other volunteers while I worked about their reasons for being at the house long term. Why would anyone want to live in a 100 year old falling-down house with bugs and no air-conditioning at the height of a St. Louis summer? And all they got was their room and board! No one was paid to work there. Their answers surprised me in their simplicity. They were varied but all of them reflected the famous Peter Maurin quote, they wanted, "To make a world where it will be easier for people to be good."

I was too young and I couldn't handle it emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually. It was too hard to see so much poverty, so much deprivation, so much depression. I hated the heat, the bugs, the stickiness, the smells. I hated how some of the people treated Teka and the volunteers. I was too young and I couldn't fully grasp what they were doing. One day, near the end of the term and a week or so before the program ended, I just started sobbing. I had been giving out food and we used to give out sleeves of meat and cheese sandwiches. We ran out of cheese and there were still people at the door. I cried and cried for a lack of cheese to give these people. The other volunteers, the ones who had done this longer, finished up and let me cry it out. They had seen this kind of breakdown before. I was sad and furious and frustrated. I was so spent and felt so helpless in the midst of all this suffering. I wanted to get away and forget it all. I looked in the faces of the children and all I could see was a future of poverty stretched out before them with no alleviation from their sufferings. I was mad at us for our lack of resources, mad at the world for its inhumanity, and mad at God for "letting" it all happen. I went back to university with issues of *The Catholic Worker* ticked into my carry-on bag. I thought my summer at *The Catholic Worker* was over. Now, 14 years later volunteering at *The Catholic Worker* here in London, I realize what I thought was the end, was just the beginning.

By Sarah Noceda

The Catholic Worker “The 12 Days of Christmas”

As a special Christmas treat from us at Giuseppe Conlon House we want to offer our dear readers the extraordinary, officially approved and massively acclaimed Catholic Worker version of the classic Christmas carol “The 12 Days of Christmas”. This version depicts the “hardships” a catholic worker may face when going home for the holidays. We hope this little song may brighten your Christmas celebrations.

*On my first visit home my parents said to me:
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

*On my second visit home my parents said to me:
What's a Catholic Worker?
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

*On my third visit home my parents said to me:
Who are all those people?
What's a Catholic Worker?
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

*On my fourth visit home my parents said to me:
You're eating out of dumpsters.
Who are all those people?
What's a Catholic Worker?
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

*On my fifth visit home my parents said to me:
GET A REAL JOB!
You're eating out of dumpsters.
Who are all those people?
Do you need some money?
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

*On my sixth visit home my parents said to me:
Don't get arrested.
GET A REAL JOB!
You're eating out of dumpsters.
Who are all those people?
What's a Catholic Worker?
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

*On my seventh visit home my parents said to me:
Your brother bought a condo
Don't get arrested.
GET A REAL JOB!
You're eating out of dumpsters.
Who are all those people?
What's a Catholic Worker?
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

*On my eighth visit home my parents said to me:
Do you need some money?
Your brother bought a condo
Don't get arrested.
GET A REAL JOB!*

*You're eating out of dumpsters.
Who are all those people?
What's a Catholic Worker?
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

*On my ninth visit home my parents said to me:
Can I park my car there?
Do you need some money?
Your brother bought a condo
Don't get arrested.
GET A REAL JOB!
You're eating out of dumpsters.
Who are all those people?
What's a Catholic Worker?
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

*On my tenth visit home my parents said to me:
For this I paid for college.
Can I park my car there?
Do you need some money?
Your brother bought a condo
Don't get arrested.
GET A REAL JOB!
You're eating out of dumpsters.
Who are all those people?
What's a Catholic Worker?
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

*On my eleventh visit home my parents said to me:
Now that you have children.
For this I paid for college.
Can I park my car there?
Do you need some money?
Your brother bought a condo
Don't get arrested.
GET A REAL JOB!
You're eating out of dumpsters.
Who are all those people?
What's a Catholic Worker?
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

*On my twelfth visit home my parents said to me:
Whatever makes you happy...
Now that you have children.
For this I paid for college.
Can I park my car there?
Do you need some money?
Your brother bought a condo
Don't get arrested.
GET A REAL JOB!
You're eating out of dumpsters.
Who are all those people?
What's a Catholic Worker?
You don't have any nice clothes to wear.*

We wish you all a very merry Christmas!

Christmas by Dorothy Day

This reflection on Christmas is taken from Dorothy Day's column in the original "Catholic Worker" paper in New York and was first published for Christmas 1934

Christmas is coming and Teresa and Freddy are drawing pictures of the Nativity. Freddy tells the story, as they work industriously at the kitchen table, of the big boss Herod and how he heard about the little Christ baby being born, and how scared he was that his temporal power was tottering. Freddy's father, a Sicilian, is one of those people against whom the Protestant accusation is leveled that Catholics never read the Bible. Freddy's father doesn't, it is true, but he listens attentively to the Gospels and Epistles and he comes home and tells them at meal times to his little family. He tells them with reverent love, feeling intensely that the Good God sent His Son here to be with us. When Freddy's father hears Christ's words in the church he lays them to his heart and ponders over them as Joseph did. Probably Joseph didn't do much reading either, but listened a lot.



Fritz Eichenberg

"And the cow breathed on the little baby Jesus and kept it warm," Teresa says delightedly. "Cows are very warm animals, I know. Father McKenna's place down in Staten Island has cows and I leaned against them while the brother was milking them. They didn't mind at all. I was a very little girl then. I'm sure the little baby Jesus didn't mind being in the stable at all. Probably there were chickens, too. And maybe the shepherds brought their littlest lambs to show them to Him."

When I hear Freddy and Teresa tell the story to each other, each filling in the gaps, it comes fresh and clear to my mind.

Christ came to live with the poor and the homeless and the dispossessed of this world, I pointed out to them, and he loved them so much that he showed himself to the workers--the poor shepherds--first of all. It wasn't till afterward that he received the Kings of this earth. So let us keep poor-- poor as possible--"In a stable with cows and chickens," Teresa finished joyfully. "And then it will be easier for me to have God in my heart."

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

Please fill in the form in **BLOCK LETTERS**. Filling out this form enables us to set up a monthly standing order with your bank. It can be stopped at any time by informing your bank.

I wish to pay London Catholic Worker £10 / £20 / £40 / other amount per month / other

Payments to be made monthly / other First payment to be made on: ... / ... / 14 and monthly thereafter.

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49 Mattison Road, London N4 1BG

Tel: 020 8348 8212

E: londoncatholicworker@yahoo.co.uk

Website: www.londoncatholicworker.org

I want to receive the London CW Newsletter. [I enclose stamps/donation / cheque payable to "London Catholic Worker"]

NAME

ADDRESS:.....

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Giuseppe Conlon House, and Urban Table Needs

FOOD:

- Instant coffee, fruit juice and tea bags
- Rice, tuna & corned beef
- Sugar & herbs & spices
- Tinned tomatoes & canned foods
- Milk, cheese & eggs
- Breakfast cereals, peanut butter, jam, honey

OTHER

- Handyman / woman with DIY skills
- Plumber, electrician
- Shampoo, deodorants, shaving gel/foam & razors
- Cleaning materials & equipment
- Volunteer drivers with car / van.

OFFICE:

- IT help & printing

HOUSEHOLD GOODS:

- Bike locks, bike lights & bike pumps
- Single sheets and single duvet covers

MONEY! - see p11 for standing order form

- **New full time community members, volunteers and participants in vigils etc!**
- **A new kitchen for our guests!**

"Prayer - without this, all the rest is useless"

CW FARMHOUSE NEEDS:

- Food, esp. juice, milk, cheese, butter, cooking oil
- Toilet paper, nappies, baby wipes
- New members & help with gardening, cleaning, cooking, DIY
- People to take part in vigils & round table discussions
- Visitors to use our poustinia (for a donation)
- **MONEY! -and of course your prayers.**

OTHER CATHOLIC WORKERS IN THE UK:

OXFORD : St Francis CW House, 227 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 Tel: 01865 248 288 - and see their page on our website.

GLASGOW: A new group just started. They do not have a house, but have been to meet, pray and study, and have just published their first newsletter. To find out more, or join

SUPPORT OUR WORK

The London CW is part of the radical, pacifist Catholic Worker movement started in 1933 New York & inspired by the Gospel vision and practice of our founders, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. There are now over 150 CW houses and communities in the US and about 10 other countries. Check out the US-based CW website www.catholicworker.com, and come visit us!

CW houses and our finances are independent. There is no 'headquarters' or central organisation. We in London are a network, not an organisation.

To donate to Dorothy Day or Giuseppe Conlon House make a cheque to "London Catholic Worker".

To donate to the Farmhouse, make a cheque to "Catholic Worker Farmhouse".

We are not paid for this work: it is a gift of the heart. We receive nothing from the government. For reasons including our political witness, we are not a registered charity. Between us in London, we now have 3 houses hosting 35 destitute refugees not allowed to work or receive social security benefits - among the most disenfranchised in our society. We also run a drop in soup kitchen. So we continue to rely on our supporters and readers donations, to pay our rent on houses and other costs. Our accounts are available on request. Please make out a Standing Order and give generously to support our work with the crucified of today's world. You will have your reward. (Luke 16:39)

Standing Order form overleaf.

CATHOLIC WORKER IN YOUR AREA?

START YOUR OWN! We can offer some help and advice, and / or see the main Catholic Worker website, www.catholicworker.org, for more information.