

THE Round Table

Fall 2009

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --Peter Maurin

everyday

a prophet is one who feels fiercely

is in communion with

is inspired

is enlightened

someone who is able to make God audible, visible

someone who is

unbelievably

day in day out day in day out day in day out

uncommonly

Why This Issue?

One of our community members at Karen House teaches at a local Catholic high school. She instructs first-year students in Old Testament Theology. My favorite part of her semester is when she is lesson planning for her section on "Prophets". We always seem to perk our ears when she tells stories about her students naming people who may or may not be prophets. She invites the students to discuss what makes these people prophetic and to write about them. The textbook the students read tells them that there are some distinctive signs that demonstrate that people are prophets: prophets speak truth to power, the lifestyle of a prophet is not glamorous, and prophets are often unpopular in their times.

The Roundtable is delighted to be discussing everyday prophets, because so often prophets are seen as role models only in retrospect. Many people who have been involved in different Catholic Worker houses have considered themselves blessed to know modern prophets. We have been lucky to know people who have spent their lives speaking truth to power, living in full accordance with their values. These people have been less than popular due to the ways their lives challenge others. It is these prophetic people who remind us daily what it means to try to be good and to love fully.

This May we lost a beloved prophet, Lorenzo Rosebaugh. Lorenzo showed us how to love - his desire to love the poor and the outcast led him to Brazil, Guatemala and Catholic Worker Houses in the United States. Carolyn writes about this "bright light" for justice that the world has lost, and about how his love carries on. Jenny shares the life of Ruth Heaney with us, a woman whose life was filled with many roles. In every one of them, she kept struggling for justice, never hardening her heart. Steve from Silk Hope Catholic Worker tells us about one of his closest friends Chuck Trapkus, whose beautiful joyful simplicity is truly missed. Ellen tells us about Ann Manganaro's journey, describing her as "full of desire to do good, to do God's will." We hear from Annjie about Teka Childress and her life that shows all who enter Karen House that love is truly the measure. Roberta Thurstin-Timmerman and Don Timmerman share their life adventure and thirst for justice with us. Annjie shares from her experiences living in community with Tim Pekarek over the last seventeen years. Tim's humble, holy and good life has been a witness to so many here in St. Louis. Teka shares stories about Rachel Rogers, a faith-filled mother and prophet. We also hear from Colleen in the Catholic Worker Thought and Action column, TC gives an update from Karen House and Mike Baldwin shares his story from Little House.

Many of the writers in this issue have a deep love and respect for the prophets about whom they wrote. These prophetic people have been the role models whom we hope to emulate. It is this love that envelops this Roundtable issue. We hope these witnesses encourage us all in speaking truth to power, living in full accordance with our values and not fearing criticism.



- Megan Heaney

Karen House Update:

Thank you so much for your responses to our emergency appeal letter! Please see the back page for an update on the Karen House finances.

Cover: Genevieve Cassani, SSND
Centerfold: James Meinert

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Love in Abundance: The Witness of Ann Manganaro

by Ellen Rehg

"The lost sheep – the lost coin – the lost child – I go to the gospel looking for challenge for demands – and they are there a plenty – but this chapter of Luke is about welcoming, and rejoicing, and comfort, and love abundant, love overflowing – that is the gospel too.

Chapter 14 holds such stark demands 'if a person comes to me without hating father mother husband wife children brothers sisters yes and their own life too they cannot be my disciple'; 'none of you can be my disciple unless you give up all your possessions'...

And here in chapter 15 – a few sentences beyond –mercy within mercy, within mercy, poured out in abundance for that one small act of repentance – of being lost and turning to be found –so let us give praise for God's abundant love and accept that love with joy nor play the part against ourselves of older brother pouting on the threshold; the gospel is so much harder on us, yet so much kinder to us, than we (I at least) could ever be with ourselves –

And so this is a day for thanksgiving..."

This is the opening entry of a journal kept by Ann Manganaro. The date in the top right corner of the page is January 19, 1975. The passage, in a nutshell, contains much of what made Ann a person of faith and love.

In the first sentence, she says, *"I go to the gospel..."*. These words express the heart of Ann's faith and her approach to her faith. In the journal itself, Ann reflects each day on a passage from one of the gospels, weaving it through the events and relationships of her life. It is interesting that her opening words are about the lost. She was just coming out of a time when she had felt somewhat lost, I believe. But, by the time of this journal entry she was living on Waterman Avenue in a small community with two friends who taught with her at the Neighborhood School, an elementary school

which they had started themselves a few years back. During this time, Ann would begin her friendship with John Kavanaugh, a Jesuit priest. Her friendship with John would be one of the deepest relationships of her life. By the end of the journal, she is deciding to go to medical school, and is beginning to talk with her fellow Sister of Loretto community member, Mary Ann McGivern, about moving together to a newly forming Catholic Worker community on Hogan Street in the Near North Side of St. Louis.

"I go to the gospel..." is what Ann did when she had to make a decision about whether or not to take her final vows as a Sister of Loretto. She told me once that she felt that she had to confront that decision in a very

deliberate way rather than just drift into it as the automatic course of her life. She had entered the Sisters of Loretto right out of high school, at the age of 18. When she entered, in 1964, she entered an order of nuns who were still a pre-Vatican II order. She wore the postulant's habit, and followed the strict rules that governed orders at that time, the times of "Great Silence" when no one could talk with each other, the times of required prayer, the obedience to a Mother Superior. But now she was eleven years older than she had been when she entered;

between the years 1964 to 1975 much had happened both in her personal life and in the institutional life of the Church, as well as in the culture of the United States.

"Chapter 14 holds such stark demands..." She wasn't sure she really wanted to be celibate, although she did want to honor her religious vocation. She had no problem with the fact that following Jesus meant caring for the poor and working for social justice. Why should she stay in a religious community, with its celibacy, its middle-class financial security, and take final vows? She



Photo of Ann by John Kavanaugh

Ellen Rehg still misses Ann.



told me that she walked to the park – I’m assuming it was Forest Park – and sat by one of the ponds. She took out her Bible and read through one of the gospels, and prayed. After she was finished she thought to herself, *yes, I believe this. I want to live this way.* Ann took these demands to heart; for her, following the gospel completely meant that she couldn’t ‘possess’ her relationships any more than she could possess things. She also came to realize that one of the things that she loved about John was his commitment to his vocation as a Jesuit priest.

“If either one of us had felt differently about the other,” John told me, “It could have been a different story.” He meant that despite their feelings for each other, neither one of them wanted the other to leave their order for the relationship. Both treasured the commitment that they each had made to their religious vocations as much as they treasured their love for each other.

Consequently, in her final vow ceremony, Ann said, “Making final vows means to me that my decision to follow the gospel is entire and irrevocable. I am choosing to share fully in the life of this community in all its richness, with all its great gifts and with all its human frailties...I will remain celibate, not so much because that is my charism, but because it is a necessary condition of life in this community. I will try to live poorly, precariously, placing the kingdom always first, cherishing and using of the earth’s goods only what I need to sustain life simply...”

Hence, ultimately, after Ann completed medical school and residency while living at Karen House, she would go to El Salvador to work in a conflicted zone as a doctor, even though John would remain in St. Louis. Her friends knew how hard that was for her; for both of them.

“And here in chapter 15 – a few sentences beyond –mercy within mercy, within mercy...” She had turned to the gospel looking for challenges, but had found abundant love. That is the gospel, *too*, she had written; the “too” emphasizing the message of God’s love, which is sometimes submerged below dogma and rules. Yet this love is what saves everything – it separates total religious commitment from religious fanaticism, and it saves complete devotion from being a blind following of rules and

authority. “If you’re going to be an extremist,” Martin Luther King wrote, “be an extremist for love.” “Love is the measure,” Dorothy Day also wrote. Ann lived these words.

True to her nature as a ‘one’ on the Enneagram (we, her friends, surmise; she herself never read about it), she was extremely conscientious and principled. Yet, what she was conscientious and principled about was loving other people. Her love for others came across in small daily actions and attitudes. These actions and attitudes were the result of conscious decisions she made to choose the loving response. One day Ann and I were in the hallway on the second floor reflecting about a recent upheaval in the community. We had lost some people and gained a few new others; Tom Angert was one of the new members. The conversation could have gone in any direction; we might have talked about how hard the turnover was, because I know that’s what we were feeling. But suddenly Ann said, “They’re all good people,” and began to smile broadly, “I can be open to them!” she said enthusiastically. Just then, a smiling Tom Angert emerged from the community room; we hadn’t known he was there. I’ll never forget the look of joy and appreciation on his face as he regarded Ann.

In El Salvador, Ann’s heart would break and her faith would be tested to the point where, after five years, she nearly gave up. She went through a long and profound depression. The toll of caring for people in the midst of war, of seeing too much death and destruction, of getting too little rest, almost prompted her one day, when she was at the beach, to walk into the water and keep walking. The only thing that stopped her then was the thought of how her action would affect other people. Later, her depression lifted and she began to feel connected once again to God’s grace. In September of 1992, on her final retreat before she returned to the U.S., to die of a reoccurrence of breast cancer in June 1993, she reflected on her years as a Sister of Loretto.

“28 years! And after all the joys and struggles of all those years, and all the ways I’ve certainly changed, I still feel at the heart of me that ardent earnest seeker after love and truth, full of desire to do good, to do God’s will.”

And so, this is a day for thanksgiving. +

Insufficient Submissiveness and Infinite Compassion: Lorenzo Rosebaugh

by Carolyn Griffeth

On May 18th of 2009, Fr. Larry (Lorenzo) Rosebaugh and five other Oblate priests were stopped by masked gunmen on their way to a meeting north of Guatemala City where Lorenzo once served as a parish priest. After robbing the car the bandits opened fire, wounding a Congolese priest and killing Lorenzo. Thus, in the words of Mary Jo Burke, who knew Lorenzo from the Casa Maria Catholic Worker, "the world has lost one of its brightest lights." (1)

Since the day of his tragic murder, I have found myself struggling to describe who Lorenzo was and what his friendship and life's witness means to me, something it seems no words can describe. It has been a consolation to read the words of so many of his friends as posted on a memorial website titled Non-violent Cow.(2) Here are just a few of the comments made: "He was a very holy, humble man," "completely without guile," "a beautiful soul," "a cross between John the Baptist and St. Francis of Assisi," "an absolute saint," "the truest disciples of Jesus I have ever known." I agree with all these sentiments yet realize these words only hold meaning for those who know the story of Lorenzo's life.

To give an overview of the life of Lorenzo, one runs the risk of conjuring up a rebel-hero image reminiscent of Che Geuvera in the film *Motorcycle Diaries*—although Lorenzo rode from El Salvador to the U.S. border on a clunky old bike, not a clunker motorcycle, as Che did. Yet this risk of romanticizing Lorenzo's life, or separating his courageous acts from the deep wellspring of faith and suffering they sprang from has already been countered by Lorenzo himself in his 2006 autobiography, To Wisdom Through Failure: A Journey of Compassion, Resistance, and Hope.

The meaning behind his chosen title is rooted in his early life. Although Larry describes his home life as remarkably happy, Larry's academic career was marked by struggle. Following his older brother, who had greater academic gifts, Larry entered a prestigious Jesuit high

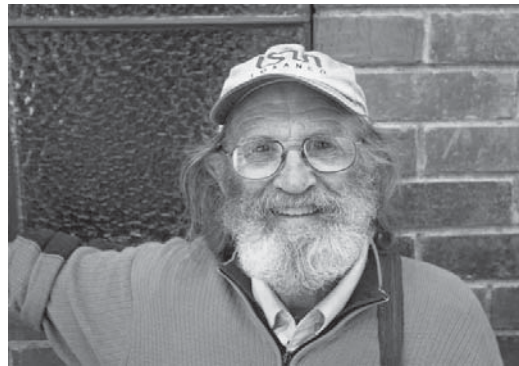
school, St. Louis University High School, where "his brain couldn't absorb the studies," and where he suffered "acute humiliation" on the football field. After two years, Larry was allowed to transfer to a Diocesan high school but he later wrote, "Much damage had already been done. I now lacked confidence...fear of failing had become ingrained in me." (p.23) Nonetheless, Larry managed to excel in baseball which nearly landed him a spot on the Cardinals baseball team. Yet his athletic feats were not

enough to bolster his self-confidence, crushed once again when he failed three out of five classes his first semester at Washington University. "Never again would I set foot in a classroom," Larry vowed (p.25). It is likely he would have kept this vow had he not soon felt called to the priesthood.

In 1955, at the age of nineteen, Larry entered the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, located outside his hometown St. Louis. For over six years of seminary life he played sports intensely and repaired the seminary's boats to "escape from his feelings of inferiority in the academic world" (p.34). He also had his first encounter with radical thought (Dorothy Day and Phil Berrigan) and civil, or rather clerical, disobedience:

stashing beer so he and his friends could have a party (for which he faced enormous consequences - two years of punishment and delayed ordination).

In March 1963, Larry was ordained and vowed "to serve the poorest and most oppressed in all that this might mean" (p.39). To this end, he asked to be sent to Laos, the Philippines, or Brazil. But due to his "insufficient submissiveness" he was instead asked to serve a stint in parishes and high schools. Although extremely disappointed, Larry made the most of teaching theology by taking his students from Duluth, Minnesota to Mississippi where they participated in voter registration and were practically run over by the Ku Klux Klan. This encounter with the Civil Rights Movement gave Lorenzo his first taste of nonviolent direct



"I have always trusted that the Spirit would enlighten us when we were trying to live out a nonviolent lifestyle and lead us in the best way to -say no to these injustices." - Lorenzo Rosebaugh

Carolyn Griffeth is enjoying the tide of youth culture, creativity, and innovation on Monroe Street, most particularly the institution of the "dance party." When has the CW been this much fun?

action; the Vietnam War would spur him toward his second.

The first big break of Larry's life came in 1968, when at thirty-three he was allowed to leave parish life and move into the Milwaukee Catholic Worker in order to fulfill the charism of Eugene de Mazenod (the Oblates' founder) to identify with the most abandoned and oppressed and to be a voice for the voiceless. Shortly thereafter, Larry attended a talk by Dan Berrigan, who asked his audience what they were doing, *personally*, to end the war on Vietnam. This question led Larry and thirteen others (known today as the Milwaukee 14) to envision a nonviolent action to awaken the conscience of Americans and compel an end to the war in Vietnam. Although Larry had just been granted his heart's desire, permission to live amongst the poor, the atrocities of the war compelled him to risk even this. "It came down to this: if I did not act now, my conscience would accuse me for having refused" (p.63).

The imagery of the Milwaukee 14 draft card burning is now legendary: Larry and thirteen others, arm in arm, in front of the federal building burning thousands of A-1 draft cards with homemade napalm. Decades later, Fr. Ron Rolheiser would ask Lorenzo about the faith that inspired this prophetic action: "Before I first went to prison for civil disobedience, I did a retreat with Dan Berrigan. He told us: 'If you can't do this without growing angry and bitter--then don't do it!' I prayed the whole night before my first arrest; both because I was scared and because I knew I needed God's help not to grow angry and bitter!" (4)

Apparently God answered Larry's prayer. This act of civil disobedience landed him in prison for two years, much of which was spent in solitary confinement for his refusal to cooperate in the prison-slave labor system. Yet his spirit remained one of compassion and enthusiasm. In 1975, when he was finally allowed to work in Brazil, he set out on foot from St. Louis, without money or knowledge of Portuguese or Spanish. Hitch-hiking through Latin America, Larry writes, "was a faith journey for me," and helped conscientize him to the realities of the poor (p.107).

In Brazil, Lorenzo would literally fulfill the calling of all Oblates "to speak the language of the poor." Having failed miserably to learn Portuguese at language school, Lorenzo learned Portuguese instead from the children at the railroad track squatter-camp, where he began his priestly service. Although Lorenzo's street-Portuguese certainly did much to inculturate the Eucharist amongst the poor, he often faced ridicule when speaking to a more educated audience.

Amazingly, even while serving this barrio which he described as "extremely poor," Lorenzo harbored the prayer that he would be called not only to serve, but to totally give himself to the poorest of the poor. This prayer was answered when the Bishop of Recife, Dom Helder Camara, personally asked Lorenzo to minister to the men, women, and children living on the streets. The next five years Lorenzo spent on the streets of Recife, often sleeping between a faith-filled prostitute and deaf man, his constant

companion whose name he never knew. Together they would beg for vegetables and bones for soup and care for the injured or dying. Of this time Lorenzo wrote: "I have never in my life felt a deeper sense of community than I did while sharing soup, or when eight or ten of us lying on our cardboard mats before going to sleep were sharing our lives as if none of us had a care in the world. It was at moments like these that I came to realize the beauty of the human person as never before in my life." (p.128)

Inevitably, his life amongst the homeless aroused the suspicions of the Brazilian military regime and at one point Lorenzo and a friend were arrested, beaten, and psychologically tortured by the Brazilian police. Still, without anger or bitterness, Lorenzo returned to life on streets until a near-deadly bout of hepatitis forced him to return to the U.S.

Although Lorenzo intended to return to Brazil, his prayer to totally give himself to the poorest of the poor would be answered in other ways: in the calling to civil disobedience (helping to initiate the movement to close the School of Americas, and protesting against nuclear weapons and war), and in the calling to serve the victims of war and oppression in El Salvador and Guatemala. Lorenzo's life continued to oscillate between times of intense engagement in the life of the poor (usually in Latin America and occasionally at a Catholic Worker house), and times of resistance to exploitive economic and

military power. This pattern was punctuated by times of retreat, many of which were in prison! Lorenzo writes that this "can all be summed up as an attempt to follow the Spirit in the daily happenings of my life" (p.130).

After writing his autobiography, which was truly a labor of love for this man of action more than words, I asked Lorenzo, at 71 years old, what would be the last, unwritten, chapter of his life. Lorenzo responded that he longed to return to Guatemala. He spent the next three years ministering to people with AIDS and bathing the elderly poor there. He planned to return to the U.S. soon and to live at Kabat House, as his conscience compelled him to continue to challenge empire, and if needed, the Church he served. It is a great loss to us and to the world that his life was cut short; yet even in this, he has given a voice to the voiceless - the victims of violence and war that he loved so dearly throughout Latin America.



Burning Draft Cards: The Milwaukee 14

Notes:

- 1,2: nonviolentworm.org/Milwaukee14Today/MemorialToLorenzoRosebaugh
3. All page numbers: Rosebaugh, Larry, OMI. To Wisdom Through Failure: A Journey of Compassion, Resistance and Hope. Washington DC: EPICA Books, 2006.
4. nonviolentworm.org/Milwaukee14Today/LosingAPropheByRonaldRolheiser

Inspired by Faith: Rachel Rogers

by Teka Childress

Several images come to mind when I think of Rachel Rogers, our friend, neighbor and Karen House volunteer. The most familiar one is of the back of her head as she leans over the kitchen sink washing the dishes left by our neighbors who come for lunch, and ignoring me as I tell her that she's done more than enough. Another image I have of her is from the day I took a kindergärtner to Jefferson School on her first day. I felt like one myself until I saw Rachel, who was there with her daughter. She took me, the child with me, and many others under her wing and showed us what to do and where to go. The other vivid image I have of her is from a day when she was on a week-long fast and people were happily eating all around her, offering her goodies. She could not be tempted to end her fast early. She knew what she wanted.

Somewhere along the way, I began to realize what an amazing woman she was. Recently, upon learning more about her life, I became even more amazed. Rachel, who is now twenty-nine years old, spent most of her life growing up in foster care. Describing her life when she was younger she said, "I was like a dead woman walking. I didn't care because nobody cared." She described having a terrible childhood mostly fending for herself. Her life changed radically when she began to take her faith seriously. This happened nine years ago when she gave birth to her daughter, Rachel. "I had to make a change for my daughter. When I had her she changed me. . . I was a full-time mom. I quit drinking and smoking-I let it all go." In hearing this I was struck by the

similarity between Rachel and Dorothy Day, who began to experience a fullness of life once her daughter was born. I asked Rachel if she liked her daughter and she smiled and laughed and, of course, said she did. Rachel has been a great mother and her daughter has learned from her. Like her mother, she is respectful and kind to those she meets.

A lot of Rachel's decisions still center around caring for little Rachel and most recently she has been seeking better housing. She has been living near Karen House and has feared for her daughter growing up in a complex that has a fair amount of drug activity and crime. She has taken steps to find better housing and hopes something may come of her efforts. This is a challenge, however, when one has a limited income. Even in the midst of these difficulties, she has faith.

Six years ago Rachel joined the Mount Zion Baptist Church with her daughter and they were both baptized there. I asked Rachel about her faith and she told me, "Without my faith I have no hope. I wouldn't be able to make it considering my struggles." When I asked her about her fast she told me that she did it to give thanks to God. She said that only God knew what she needed. When I asked her what she hopes for the future she said, "To see everybody happy." Once again, I was struck by how inspiring one's life can become when inspired by faith.



Photo of Rachel and "Little Rachel" by Jenny Truax



Teka Childress has been contemplating strategies to help people move using only her bicycle.

Gifts of Love: Chuck Trapkus

by Steve Woodward

You can learn a lot about someone when you chase a flock of sheep together. Chuck and I had arrived in Lincoln, Illinois early to set up for the Fiber Arts Festival. Chuck's right-before-your-eyes demonstration, which began with flax that he had grown in our garden and ended with spun linen, was the main event. He liked to point out that not many generations ago, every ten-year-old had the skills to do this. Chuck had taught himself to do it in this generation when no one else knew how, and he did it with equipment he had hand built for himself.

Another demonstrator had dropped off six sheep in a temporary pen and headed off. She was gone about eight minutes when the sheep broke out to explore. Uncomfortable around farm animals, I had no idea how I could help (even if I had wanted to). Unlike Chuck, who moved immediately to herd them back into the pen, I tried to convince myself this was someone else's responsibility. Chuck gave me a look that made it clear that I was literally to rise to the occasion and help. Reluctantly, I joined him.

But the sheep had a plan of their own. Roaming further from the pen, they picked up speed to a trot. Soon Chuck and I were tearing through backyards while barely closing the gap. I thought about people looking up to catch the flock charging past, and then the two of us desperately following after. As we both kept chasing, we began laughing at the ridiculous spectacle this made. Finally, the sheep themselves called off the adventure by coming to a stop together and then graciously allowing us to herd them. Part way back we met the owner, and got them into her truck.

I tell this story because it illustrates so much of who Chuck was. He got people to do things they didn't think they could do, things they otherwise would not have done. And along the way people realized they were actually having fun doing those things. He made people better. He made me better.

Few people in this culture are lucky enough to have had a mentor from whom so much could be learned. I'm told Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin played a similar role for many in the Catholic Worker movement. But having joined this movement after both had passed away, their writings were but a shadow influence on me when compared to the living example I had in Chuck. I lived with Chuck Trapkus at the Rock Island Catholic Worker for nearly five years. I learned from him every day and I continued to learn from him when Lenore and I moved closer to our families to found our own Catholic Worker. Chuck's influ-

ence far surpasses anything that I could ever tell here.

To say that Chuck was gifted is like saying Bill Gates has money. Talent exploded from Chuck in a way that seemed sickeningly unfair. He was a brilliant intellect, an amazing illustrator, and skillful hand tool woodworker. He was also a wonderful musician, and a formidable debater. In most of these areas, he was also self-taught. He was good looking, a great cook (oh, the falafel lunches), and he had a wonderful sense of humor. Picture him planing wood in his small garage workshop for a loom he was hand building, in order to weave that flax he had spun (on the spinning wheel he had made) into fabric for clothing that he would sew while simultaneously listening to books on tape, which he reviewed for an audio-books publication.

Chuck did not differentiate the work of artist from the work of craftspeople or housekeepers. All was performed with the same care and intent. The beauty manifested by his "making well what needs to be made" was evident in nearly every facet of his life. Nearly every project he touched dazzled beyond expectations. Professional potters

we knew looked in envious disbelief at the fine quality pieces he turned in his first month of trying their craft. There is a set in my dining room that he gave us as a wedding gift, plus a few more plates I sneaked from the trash can where he tossed them because he felt they had warped a little too much during firing.

Unfortunately, it was too easy for people to dismiss Chuck by putting him on a pedestal as the Wonder Boy, a dismissal which allowed the rest of us - so doomed to ordinariness - to not bother making our own beauty. Sadly, this was not the only form of dismissal Chuck experienced.

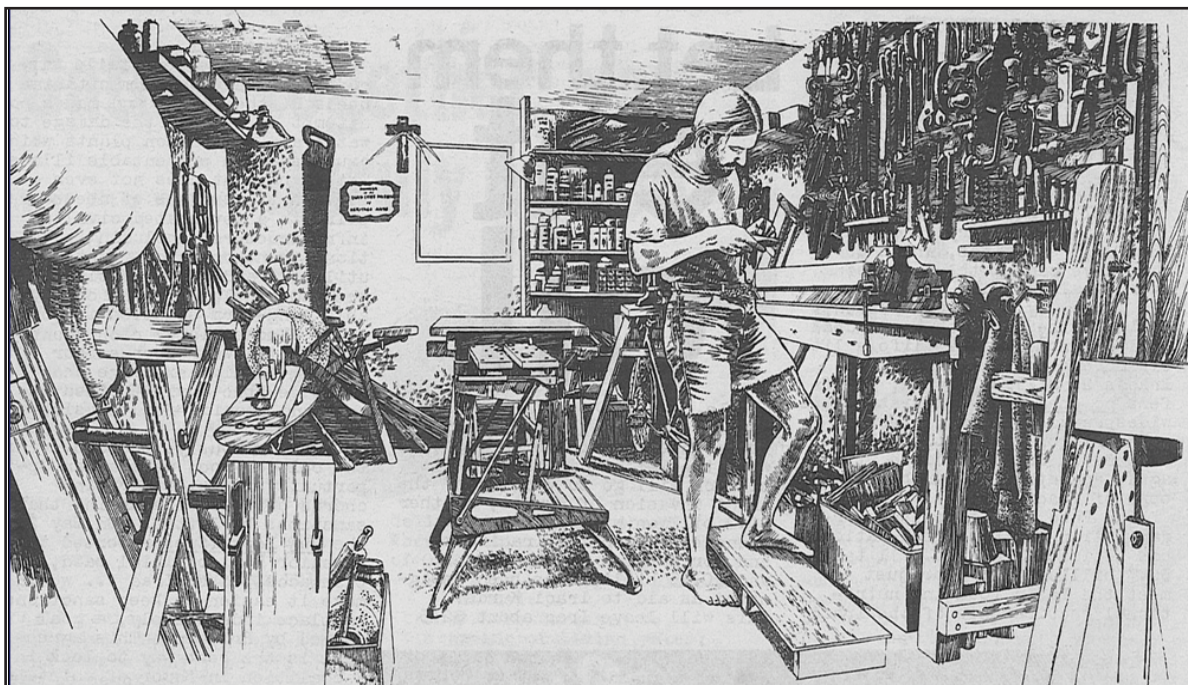
Chuck openly criticized much that is wrong with our society. He condemned the evils of racism, war-making, and poverty, in a deep way that pointed out the average person's varying levels of complicity in these evils. This raises discomfort for most of us for whom living justly requires constant changes, even to one's whole lifestyle and profession. Furthermore, Chuck exposed the darker side of the modern technology, including computers, on which our culture ever-increasingly depends. This would lead to absurd dismissals of the "if-you-really-believed-that-you'd-live-in-a-cave" variety. These dismissive rationalizations failed to appreciate all that Chuck had to offer to a society desperately in need of a more just, sustainable, and communal way to live.

In addition to his creativity, Chuck modeled a beautiful, joyful simplicity. Many thought that his abstinence from al-



Photo of Chuck by Mary Farrell

Steve Woodward and his spouse Lenore Yarger live at Silk Hope Catholic Worker in rural North Carolina, and staff the Quaker-sponsored GI Rights Hotline.



Self Portrait by Chuck Trapkus

of these things, and while my distance was closer, it was still there. Consequently, Chuck knew the loneliness, the long loneliness that came from so many dismissals, from being so different, from others' need to maintain a safe distance. Still, he risked rejection again and again, continuing to be open and honest about matters of conscience and continuing to enter generously into relationships where he would likely be misunderstood.

cohol, sugar, and white flour was excessive. Those of us who tasted his pies with mulberries picked from the sweetest local trees knew that he enjoyed rich abundance in his simplicity.

Conversations with people who didn't know Chuck well caused me to fear that he was too often written off as a party-pooping critic rather than recognized as the generous, loving person I saw on a daily basis. Chuck could be pumping away on his treadle sewing machine assembling professional-looking pannier bags for his bicycle, when all it took was the simplest question - he would drop everything to eagerly assist, encourage, or loan tools (unless of course this was a weekend when his two sons from his previous marriage were visiting, in which case he would drop you and everything else to give *them* his undivided love and attention).

I think of saintliness as a way of living that the rest of us can be sure brings one closer to God. I believe Chuck's saintliness came not from his extraordinary gifts and talents, but instead, from the choices an ordinary, flawed human being made to use both his extraordinary and ordinary self to bring goodness into the world. Some of the most meaningful lessons I learned from him, like the lesson that it is a healthy and natural thing for men to cry, had nothing to do with his special talents.

Anyone who has lived with a saintly person for five years will acknowledge that even saintly people can be hard to live with, as are the rest of us. Living with someone like Chuck, who in ways seemed a little too perfect or pure, I became aware of my own and other people's tendency to focus a little harder on such a person's imperfections. We seem to need a constant reminder that they, too, are human. Another tendency is to unfairly expect such people to have all the answers and to figure out things for us that we really need to figure out ourselves. This expectation can keep us from recognizing their humanity. Chuck was well liked, but often from a safe distance. I am guilty of all

When newcomers to our Catholic Worker house refer to our toddler the way my family does, as Quinn, his slightly older sister enjoys correcting them-- "It's Charles Quinn." And yet neither of them will meet the person for whom he is named. On Winter Solstice of 2000, Chuck who at age 41 bicycled almost everywhere, died when the car he was riding in lost control on a patch of ice and collided with an eighteen wheeler. We who knew him were devastated. As I think of what an unbelievable loss this is, I am also reminded of what an unbelievable blessing he was. Both tears and laughter spill out as I write this remembrance.

Chuck never visited our Catholic Worker house here in Silk Hope, and yet he is here everywhere. He is in our gardens and our cabinets of canned tomatoes and the handmade, plastic bag drying rack in our kitchen. He is in the crafts we make and the newspaper we publish. His artwork is on our walls. He is present in the absence of appliances and televisions we easily live without. He lives on in the way that we parent and homeschool our children. He exists in our weekly vigil and our peace and justice work and our hospitality and even in the way we make decisions about our lives.

More than anything else, I learned from Chuck's life and death that our mission is to lighten up and relax while we reach out to the broken world around us -- the homeless family, the elderly neighbor, the fellow prisoner -- with all the gifts and love that we have to offer. We should dare to do it now, in the present moment, because we may not get another chance. It's a lesson taught by many sages in history. It is a lesson I have yet to master. I don't think Chuck had perfected it either, yet he did a good enough job to show us that it was possible, and that this really is the only thing worthy of our pursuit.



Follow the Children: Tim Pekarek

by Annjie Schiefelbein

You will never read about Tim Pekarek in a book like Lives of the Saints. In fact, you will probably never read anything about him in any book. Even if you've visited Karen House, you may not have seen, or talked to him. He is what you'd call an "under-the-radar" kind of guy. But talk to someone who spent any part of their childhood at Karen House, and Tim will be the first person they mention. He is the person they will remember best

and most fondly. To say that Tim has a way with kids is like saying that Peter Maurin had a way with words. Kids are invariably drawn to Tim, no matter who else is around. I can't explain why; I doubt Tim could either. But I've seen it so many times: a child enters a room, scans the faces, and gravitates to Tim. And while I can't explain it, I won't say I don't understand it. I am drawn to Tim in much the same fashion. Perhaps it's because Tim doesn't try as hard as the rest of us, he is just a calm presence. Maybe kids can just sense that they will be listened to, wholly, by Tim. He doesn't seem to make much distinction between adults and kids, respecting each equally, and talking to them in much the same way. And so they seek him out, fervently, long after they have changed from kids to adults, moved out of Karen House and left the neighborhood. Tim is in close

contact with kids of kids who moved out of Karen House 20 years ago, and those "second-generation kids" react to Tim in the same way their parents did.

But I didn't jump at the chance to write this article because of Tim's awe-inspiring effect on kids. When I heard the phrase "everyday prophets" as the title of this

issue, I said (actually, I think I screamed), "TIM PEKAREK!" The frustrating thing in writing this article is that it took me years to see Tim for the prophet that he is, and it is a hard thing to describe. Like his effect on kids, his lifestyle is under the radar. He doesn't talk about the things he does very much, he just does the right thing. He doesn't discuss the philosophy behind his choices, but when you see his choices it is clear that he is living out the Catholic

Worker philosophy: ploddingly, daily, and without fanfare.

He often gets himself into situations that, to the outside observer, require assistance. His best friends are extroverted, bossy women who often try to problem-solve these situations (well, at least I do). He is maddeningly un-helpable, however. But just as I get frustrated, I realize that I am reacting to him in perhaps much the same way as people reacted to Peter Maurin: "*Why does he have to sleep on the street,*" they would ask, "*Things would be so much easier for him if he would just...*" In much the same way, we who love Tim would like things to be easier for him, but he never said that he wanted things easy. Still, we try to save him from the pain of these things, though they are often the right things, and he chooses them ceaselessly and freely. I finally realized I needed to

stop trying to save him, and support him in these choices. He is, after all, living one of the most simple and radical lives I know. My desire to 'save him' comes from my own discomfort at the depth of his voluntary poverty and the intensity of purity in his difficult, daily choices.

So what does he do, you're asking. What is it that is so



Photo of Tim by Christine O'Rourke

Annjie Schiefelbein was recently spotted on the trail at Castlewood State Park with her new puppy Obi.



Tim and fellow hikers on an Inner City Outings trip

amazing about this guy? To list his daily works would seem to cheapen them. It is his consistent, daily, faithfulness in doing not only the right thing, but the best thing. It's the fact that he does the opposite of calling attention to himself in doing these things. You may not know that he once took house eight days in a row, covering for different community members, unless you happened to see him every day (he recently said to a newer community member, "What, you've never taken 3 house shifts in a row?"). You may also not know that his small three-room apartment has been home to multiple former guests of Karen House, including families. And all of those kids from Karen House who remember Tim so fondly? It is Tim's apartment that has been sought by so many teenagers who are on the dangerous precipice between independence and danger. And whichever side they fall on, it is Tim they continue to seek for support and Tim who continues to love them unconditionally, listening to them in the same way he did when they first knew him as kids. The mothers of these kids pray in thanksgiving for Tim because they know and trust him, and know their kids are infinitely better off for having Tim in their lives. These same moms call Tim for parenting advice. He doesn't give advice, and often just shrugs his shoulders if asked for a direct opinion, but the knowledge that he will listen keeps us all coming back. His prophet-status also includes things like keeping the ice trays full every day, the love he puts into his cooking, and his hand-watering of three neighborhood gardens twice a day. One could also consider his eco-footprint (which would be next to nothing for many, many decades), or his love of all plants.

I asked some former community members for their thoughts on why Tim is an everyday prophet. From the

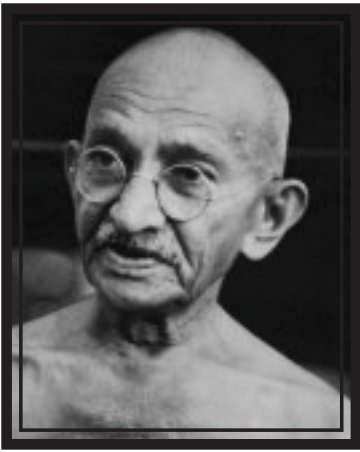
depth of responses I got, it is clear that Tim's life is a light for many of us. Most pointed out his maddeningly quiet way of faithfulness and righteousness. Mitch McGee pointed out his often dry sense of humor. As it is often pointed *at* me, I am hesitant to include it (he may be a prophet but he's also one of the most sarcastic people I know, and often a pain in the butt). Mitch also calls Tim the best-read person he knows. I agree with this, although I have accused Tim of showing off by constantly asking me, "have you read..." or "have you heard..." even though my answer is almost always no.

About Tim, Pat Coy writes, "The Catholic Worker has been a home to a litany of everyday prophets over the years. Some seek out the prophet role,

drawing attention to their difficult choices and costly actions on behalf of peace, people and creation. Ammon Hennacy was like that. Tim Pekarek is of quite another type altogether, but no less prophetic in living a values-based life. Those values always seemed to me to have to do primarily with humility, service, compassion, dignity, and a remarkable ability to find meaning and purpose in small, daily choices..."

It has been a privilege and revelation in the past years to realize the holiness of Tim's life, and I am so excited to share a glimpse of it with you, because you truly would never know otherwise. But it's worth knowing. When you get to know it, his quiet life screams from the minarets. It says what he does not- that we are called to be good, to be lowly and humble, and to love well. But I don't have to convince you, just look to the children-you'll find them following Tim.





Kenneth (Biggie) is pushed by everyday prophet Rob to try his hardest at school.

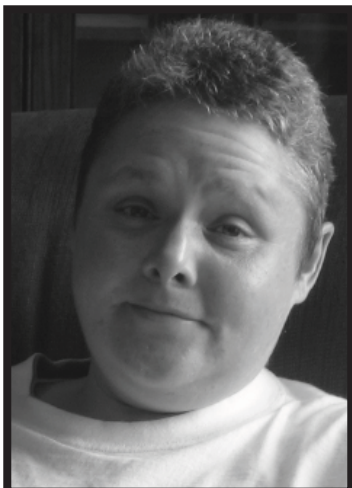


These are our Pro

Dorothy Day said of one of her prophets Mohandas that, "In him we have a new intercessor with Christ; a modern Francis, a pacifist martyr."



Jennifer says that Barbara is her personal prophet because she stuck with her and believed in her even when nobody else did.





Colleen commonly refers to her everyday prophet, Andrew Wimmer as "Obi-Wim" in reference to his Jedi Master-like ability to challenge others to think in new ways, and his witness to simple living



Angela says that her prophet is her fiance Jimmy who, next to God, has taught her more about love than anybody else.



Jorj says of his prophet, Eric Anglada, that he is a magical person that has saved more lives than anyone can even imagine.



own Everyday phets

Marie is inspired by the Obama family and how they support each other with love. She is happy she is alive to see a black president.



Catholic Worker Lifestyle Across a Lifetime:

Roberta Thurstin-Timmerman & Don Timmerman

by Roberta Thurstin-Timmerman

Editors' Note

Recently I had the pleasure of getting to know Roberta Thurstin-Timmerman while on trial together for trespassing at Blackwater/Xe training facility in northern Illinois. I was quite taken with this great grandmother and deeply touched by the stories she shared about her husband, Don, including how he used to tuck some of the guests into bed during their years at the Casa Maria Catholic Worker. Our conversation left me yearning to learn more about this remarkable couple who shared such a deep love for one another, and who have led steadfast lives of service (including near thirty years at Casa Maria). About this couple, my friend Lee Jankowski says, "My time at Casa was about five years of seeing Don and Roberta work at a pace that seemed unimaginable. Their lives and their work have become for me a present-day 'Sermon on the Mount' kind of love that starts with the two of them, and seems to have no end." I talked to several individuals who have known Don and Roberta about writing an article about their lives, but none thought they could do it justice! Luckily, Roberta offered to write the following reflection for us. I hope her words serve to inspire you, as the Timmermans have me, to continue to ask difficult questions in pursuit of the narrow path toward peace and happiness. -Carolyn Griffeth

"When we first came to Casa Maria, a Catholic Worker house in Milwaukee Wisconsin, we knew that the house gave shelter to the homeless. What we did not realize is that it required us to live a lifestyle totally different from the one we had been living. It was a lifestyle that led to living in poverty and standing up to the powerful and wealthy around us. It was a lifestyle which demanded that we treat all equally without bias

or discrimination. It taught us to put more trust in God and less in human institutions. If we could sum up the lifestyle in a word, it would be the word love. It is movement of love toward friend and foe, rich and poor alike." - Don and Roberta

Don came to Casa Maria in May, 1973 after spending seven years in Tanzania. He went there as a Salvatorian scholastic after completing his philosophy studies at Marquette University. After completing his theology studies in Tanzania, working with Mother Theresa at a nearby hospice, getting ordained and serving as a parish priest, he left Africa and came upon Casa Maria where he stayed for the next 27 years. Don and I met at one of the meetings held by the local Pledge of Resistance groups. We were arrested many times together in acts of nonviolent civil disobedience. This was a time when the U. S. was supporting the contras in Nicaragua who were massacring the people in hopes of overturning the government. Some basic ideals taught to me while taking, and then giving, nonviolence training sessions have guided my actions. First, the power of truth: when spoken or acted out, truth releases a great power for good. I also learned that people's hearts and minds can be transformed when they see others suffer injustice. Underlying these two ideals is a deep belief in a Creator that wills good for all beings, and that when one person suffers we all suffer, and our Creator weeps.

Through my involvement in peace and justice issues relating to Central America, I began to know about the Catholic Worker movement. It was an enlightening experience. Once I was part of a group of peace activists who were on trial for a Midwest action against a Psychological Operations military base in Illinois. At the time my car was in for repairs, and Don offered us the Catholic Worker vehicle to use. Sharing things in common was a new and freeing concept to me. At Casa Maria, volunteering without pay, having consensus in meetings (which prompted

Roberta Thurstin-Timmerman and Don Timmerman live in a cabin just outside Park Falls Wisconsin. They have 4 children, 10 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild.



Roberta and Don in 2007

clarifications in my thought process), living in community (which allowed one to participate more fully in helping those in need and participating in peace and justice activities), and setting rules within the hospitality house (which would make it easier for guests and workers to be good - a precept of Peter Maurin that I grow more in awe of every day), were all new concepts to me.

Don and I became very close and were married in 1989. We had four children and now have ten grandchildren and one great-grandchild. We lived at the Casa Maria community until 2000 when Don was attacked and left for dead in the middle of a street near the house. The injuries sustained made it impossible for him to continue at the pace to which he was accustomed. The doctors suggested a more quiet environment for him. We were not sure what we would do, since we practice voluntary poverty due to our refusal to pay for war. We were very fortunate to find a small cottage near a lake where the rent was small, and now this is our home.

We've found that we can live the Catholic Worker lifestyle here in Park Falls as well as in Milwaukee. We volunteer at the local Christian Mission Thrift Shop where people buy items that are donated, the proceeds going to help the needy both locally and abroad. We converted part of the church into a homeless shelter, started an Amnesty International group, started a ride board to help those without transportation to get to their appointments, helped start a community garden, and worked with Kids Against Hunger.

We also continue with our work at a local food pantry, the weekly peace vigil which we started in 2001 prior to the Iraqi war, and our monthly newsletter called *The Sparrow Sings*. Don was accepted as a priest in the Episcopal Diocese of Eau Claire and serves two parishes when needed. It was difficult for us not being in a community of like-minded people in our new home, but we have grown. We have come to know good and generous people, even though their and our thinking is very different. Once you have chosen to live a Catholic Worker lifestyle most people around you think you are crazy, unpatriotic commies who always want to change everything. When we

first became involved in the Christian Mission store it was difficult for us to get the others in the group to give money made at the store to outside groups like Oxfam and Doctors Without Borders because they wanted the money to only help those in the immediate community. Now, it is a given that at least half, if not more, of the money will be given to others around the world - wherever there is the greatest need. Since we live very simply we have to select carefully the activities and events in which we participate. We have to factor in the cost in money and to the environment.

It was very difficult for Don and me to leave Casa Maria and we may return someday. We found the younger people there do some things differently, but very well, when they are empowered. In hindsight, it was good that we left when we did because, as in many other Catholic Worker communities, those who have been around for a long time unconsciously tend to control what happens in the community. When we left, the young people took control and attracted other young people to the movement. We have to learn to strike a balance between sharing our experiences and allowing others to take the lead in running the house or an event.

We have learned that one cannot be materially rich and be for peace at the same time. One cannot be materially rich and be a Christian. If you are Christian, you will give away whatever it is over and above your basic needs. If you allow the government to have your money, it will use much of it to destroy the lives of others with weapons and war at the expense of the poor.

The sexist language in religion still upsets me. The patriarchal and generational bias at events and demonstrations is troublesome. I hope and pray for change. In the end, we need to speak or act out the truth as best we can, and the power released will change the world for the better. We try to continue to live out the Catholic Worker lifestyle. We have found it to be the means toward true happiness and peace.



Daily Decisions and Living the Gospel: Ruth Heaney

by Jenny Truax

"When we came out to the farm, we said there probably weren't fifty people in America who understood what we were doing. There probably weren't twenty-five." -Ruth Heaney, reflecting on her participation in the first-ever Catholic Worker farm.

When we look at other peoples' lives, it's easy to imagine dramatic things. For example, volunteers and groups often ask community members at Karen House, "What made you decide to live here?" It's easy for them to imagine some dramatic decision, perhaps a movie-moment of conversion that suddenly and spectacularly altered our course towards Karen House. That does happen sometimes, I suppose, but I think people mostly decide with the smaller streams of their daily choices, which then flow into larger rivers. Eventually, we may make a radical or life-changing decision; but this is really nothing more than choosing to follow the natural flow of our smaller decisions.

I think that Ruth Heaney's life was no different. Throughout her long life, she intentionally chose to live the Gospel, and this choice took on a myriad of forms. She often picked the difficult stream; many of her life choices seem outlandish and awe-inspiring. These decisions gently created an inspirational life; the life of a prophet. Ruth's roles were many: social worker, wife, mother, Catholic Worker, farmer, widow, prison minister, Catholic nun, and grandmother (wheh!). She was full of life and love, commitment and laughter. Dorothy Day commented about her, "I remember how shocked everyone was when they saw Larry and Ruth living up to the ideas that Peter Maurin was always talking about..."

Ruth was raised on a Nebraska farm, and graduated from St. Mary's College in South Bend, Indiana. During college, she was inspired by a lecture given by Peter

Maurin, and after graduation she met Catholic Worker (CW) folks from both Chicago and Milwaukee. She took a social work job in Milwaukee where she met Larry Heaney, house manager of Milwaukee's Holy Family CW House. The two fell in love and got married about six months later. Larry Heaney was known in the Milwaukee house as a "Catholic Worker saint" because of his personalist, patient, and loving interactions with guests.

As newlyweds, the Heaneys made the decision to move to Maryfarm in Pennsylvania, to the first-ever Catholic Worker farm. The year was 1940. The creation of Maryfarm led the way for the Catholic Worker movement as a whole to begin integrating rural farm life with urban hospitality. The importance of these family and communal farms (there are now roughly twenty in the U.S.) within the vision of the Catholic Worker cannot be overstated.

Ruth recalled their time at Maryfarm fondly: "We were very, very happy. And I suppose there were people who smiled at the newlyweds, you know." The Heaneys, a few other families, and a few single Workers raised small crops, reared livestock, and did craftwork at Maryfarm. Life there was difficult – most of the Workers had little farming experience, and many inter-community conflicts arose. Dorothy Day commented, "As farmers, perhaps we were ridiculous, but Maryfarm was a happy home that summer and for many summers after."

After Leaving Maryfarm, the Heaneys decided to continue the experiment with Peter Maurin's "Green Revolution," by opening a new Catholic Worker farm. They intentionally bought land that was close to a church and a school for their children. Just before the birth of their fifth child in 1947, they moved to Starkenburg, Missouri (two hours west of St. Louis) and opened Holy Family Farm with Marty and Gertrude Paul. Life on the farm was hard – not



Photo of Ruth by Chrissy Kirchhoefer

Jenny Truax has made the Karen House guests and community very happy this summer with her home-made ice cream (peanut butter seems to be the favorite flavor).



the glamorous “back to the land” romantic life that many of us urbanites imagine. Dorothy Day, who visited the farm several times, wrote, “There were no washing machines, no electricity, no bath and toilet, no kitchen sink; no radio, no coal since they burned wood — every non-essential was put to one side, was cut out of their lives.”

Two years after opening the farm, as Ruth was in the hospital bearing their sixth child, Larry Heaney died of pneumonia. In the midst of this horrible tragedy, Ruth made the decision to stay on the farm, determining that rural life fit well with raising children. She said later, “I thought it was easier to be poor in the country where you’ve got some control over things then it would be to be poor in the city...Anyone’s going to be poor with all these children. I just felt that it was easier to be poor there.” The Paul family remained on the farm with Ruth and her children for eight more years until they were forced to move for health reasons. Ruth rented out the farmland, and continued to raise her children there.

Reflecting on her decision to raise children on a Catholic Worker farm, Ruth commented, “We stayed on the farm ‘til the children got all through high school. We never knew whether that was a mistake or not. I don’t know. Still don’t. They didn’t want to move, but now I know that children never want to move. Oh, I was comfortable there. I was able to work hard...and not be lonely. Think and pray and work. I’m okay doing that.”

Life often turns out differently than we expect. While Holy Family CW Farm never became a full-scale communal farm, it did provide a base for many families seeking to incorporate community with rural life. “We were never,” Marty Paul said, “a real community in the sense of what we wanted—you know, a Catholic Worker community, a communal farm, because we had to make a living. I drove a school bus for a while.... But we managed to survive, I guess.” These families light the way for Catholic Workers seeking a balance between living out ideals, paying bills, raising children, and participating in community life.

After her children were older, Ruth decided to volun-

teer with the Benedictine Sisters in Columbia, Missouri. She formally joined the order in 1975. Past middle age, Ruth discovered a new passion — prison ministry. She wrote to hundreds of men and women incarcerated in Missouri. She visited with prisoners, wrote letters for them, and taught Alternatives to Violence classes. She worked determinedly to improve prison conditions, including the practices of chaining prisoners to beds for days at a time and sensory deprivation. Speaking out sometimes put her at odds with prison authorities; her visitation rights were suspended four times. Real prophets are often at odds with authorities. Ruth also articulated the connections between poverty and prison: “The system is merciless — it’s never finished. Our prisons are a final vendetta against the poor.”

Tom Hereford, who is rehabbing a house in the Karen House neighborhood to be named “Ruth House,” described her: “When people like Sr. Ruth come into the prison week after week, year after year, people get to know and respect them. She was highly respected and loved by the folks who were locked up. So, to honor her work, and hopefully continue it, I decided on the name Ruth House.”

It’s tempting to say that Ruth Heaney lived four lives. It seems more true to say that she had a foundational desire to live the Gospel, to create a better world, and to be with the poor. This desire took many forms in her life— working on a radical Catholic Worker farm, raising children, joining a religious community, and forming relationships with prisoners. One small decision leads to bigger ones, and pretty soon, you’re living a life you never thought possible— look at the amazing life this social worker from Nebraska lived!

Her young friend Chrissy Kirchhoffer reflected on Ruth’s life: “Sr. Ruth was the nearest incarnation of God for me. She had the most radiant presence, an innocent wonder and awe— of the world, people and God/creation. She...was so deeply compassionate towards the people suffering throughout the world. Yet she had a fierce sense of outrage at the injustice done to people. Her heart never hardened.” We pray that the daily decisions that make up our lives can be inspired by Ruth’s life: centered around the poor, and focused on the Gospels.



Love is the Measure: Teka Childress

by Annjie Schiefelbein

We've all had the experience of listening to someone give a talk about their life, parts of which are very inspiring. We wonder what quality that person has (that we don't) that enables them to do such amazing things. It took me years to realize that some people view Catholic Workers this way. So I make sure to assure people who visit Karen House that there is little difference between me and them; no special genetics or holiness or inborn ability. I am the same as them and decided to do this. How, then, do I write about Teka Childress? Because what I know to be true is this: there is a difference between Teka and every other person I've met. I don't know about genetics, but she has a holiness that transcends the experience I, and most others, have had of anyone. It is one of the greatest gifts of my life to share community and friendship with this woman, and an incredible honor to share her with you.

The story begins simply enough; Teka was the younger child of an intellectual couple living in south St. Louis. Her mother was the Chair of the Philosophy Department at St. Louis University (SLU), and her father the Dean of the Law School there. Her rearing was common to any child growing up in St. Louis at that time - parochial school, parish functions, and family events. The people to whom she was exposed were more uncommon. Teka's parents were part of the Civil Rights Movement, did work promoting the Equal Rights Amendment, and supported the reforms of Vatican II. From an early age, she was exposed to people who were different from her, and she believes this made all the difference. Teka remembers from early on how well she was loved by her mother, and that she wanted very badly to be holy. She relates a key moment at age four, when her grandmother, responding to a knock on her door,

reminded Teka that Christ is always at the door. That moment helped her realize there was no difference between people, that we are all one, not divided or apart, but one. This realization continues to be her frame of reference.

Teka began organizing with the Farm Workers in St. Louis, which led her to Virginia Druhe, a founding member of Karen House. Teka attended some of the early planning meetings for a Catholic Worker in North St. Louis, but didn't contemplate staying in St. Louis until the death of her father in 1977, the same year Karen

House opened. Teka postponed other plans, staying in St. Louis, and volunteered at Karen House for a year before moving to New York to do organizing work. She enjoyed organizing (and still does,) and her time in New York led to a pivotal moment when she met a man while canvassing in a low-income neighborhood. As she tells it, "He just wanted me to come in and talk with him. That day it became clear to me that I always wanted to abide with people like him, and not just organize them. That wouldn't be enough for me. And I've always kept that part of wanting to work for social change in the context of living with people."

Teka realized that for her, the works of mercy and the works of justice were intertwined.

And so Teka came back to Karen House, never imagining she could be as happy anywhere else. She lived at Karen House for 23 years (apart from one year after New York to finish her degree at SLU), and remains part of the community now into her 32nd year. She has seen innumerable communities come and go. It would be easy to imagine that even in a consensus-based community, Teka would wield a significant amount of power. Amazingly, the opposite is true. Teka continually points away from herself. She believes in Dorothy Day's ideal that "love is the measure," and that actions and words can show the way to that.



Teka with one of her godchildren, "Little Teka"

Annjie Schiefelbein recently regaled her fellow community members with the tale of her high school crush on a history teacher.

We are a more loving, personalist, gentle community because of her part. It's not always easy for anyone, Teka included, to defer and let go, but she does so with grace. Her faith has truly been the compass for her life.

The number of guests Teka has lived with and helped must be in the thousands. The number of those same guests she is still in regular contact with is staggering. It was those relationships that led her to desire longer-term options and more balanced community with former guests. For years she dreamt of a co-housing community that in 2000 finally came to life. For five years the Dorothy Day Co-Housing Community encountered more life, love, and pain than the group starting it could have imagined. It was an amazing experiment which ended in 2005 as families began to move on. Even four years after Co-Housing's conclusion, these families continue to be a part of Teka's daily life.

Teka is a wonderful embodiment of personalism, loving guests and community beyond measure. The person in front of her is the most important person in her life, no matter who it is (although the person standing in front of her is most often the neediest person we could imagine). In a Roundtable from 2002, our former guest, friend, and Co-Housing member Tracie Fantroy told her life story. Tracie's story (she passed away in 2006) included many of the harsh elements you would expect from the suffering that accompanies poverty, violence, and addiction. The story is punctuated by crisis after crisis for Tracie's family, each one faced with faith as well as confidence that Teka would be there. Every time, Tracie's confidence was not misplaced. Tracie wrote, "I called Teka because I felt comfortable with her and knew she wouldn't look down on me. She didn't criticize me; she just offered her help once again."

Each day for Teka is filled with people seeking her in love, and each long day is filled with Teka finding love for them. It is not one-sided. Teka likes to say that when she was young she understood there to be a line between those people who "had it together" and those who did not. As she got older she realized that the line is a delusion- that we are all on a spectrum of wholeness and brokenness. She is the first to point out her wounds; her places of need. I learned from her that our ability to judge anyone else is severely hampered when you are gently aware of your own sins and limitations. To a fault, she defers on any hint of accolade (in fact I grimaced while writing this because I know how difficult it will be for her to read).

In 2000, as much to her surprise as anyone else's, Teka fell in love with Mike Baldwin, who had recently become our neighbor. Their 2003 wedding was attended by 500 people because Teka said she could not bear the thought of anyone not being there (in fact, in the weeks before her wedding, she feverishly invited everyone she met, because the thought of anyone being left out was so devastating for her. It became the job of her friends to explain to the



Mike, Ghana, Tylor, Teka and Tish

dumbstruck invitees who had just seconds ago met Teka that yes, she really did want them to come to her wedding!)

Around the same time Teka decided to work part time with BJC Behavioral Health, doing outreach, going to the shelters and streets to seek out people with mental illness who have not received the help they deserve. Between 30 years at Karen House and now her work with BJC, there isn't a person who is homeless in the city of St. Louis who will not ask you if you know Teka (and truth be told, exhibit disappointment that you are not her).

Teka does not divide her life into neat divisions of work, home, and Karen House. An anarchist believing in personal responsibility, she extends that responsibility to include *all* people whose needs are unmet. A very powerful example is the Winter Outreach group. When it became clear that the city was not meeting the needs of the homeless during the winter, Teka helped start Winter Outreach, a program of volunteers that offers help to people sleeping outside in freezing weather. The group is in its fifth winter of operation.

I don't know what Teka will do next. She has been thinking a lot about the environment and the greening of Karen House. She is thinking of giving up her car (which is almost exclusively used to transport and move homeless people and their things). She continues to exhibit her willingness to do exhausting amounts of manual labor (putting community members 20 years younger to shame at how hard she works and how strong she is). She is never content with what she has done, but always lovingly tries to do better – maybe this is the source of her goodness. It's amazing to watch, because she is already good beyond measure.

This is the difficulty of writing this article. Despite the amazing things she's done and the phenomenal relationships she's had, that's not what I want you to know about Teka. What do I want you to know? In 1993, I saw her spend two hours with a woman whose mental illness made her nearly incoherent, but the woman badly needed someone to listen to her. Teka did. I want to tell you that last week, I saw the same thing again. I want to tell you that I've seen that same thing over and over again for the last 17 years I've known her. I want you to know that even though she doesn't live at Karen House, it's still her that the guests seek out; it's Teka they want to talk to. When everyone else is at their wits end with a guest, be it a cranky teenager or a

visitor to our sandwich line with mental illness, it's Teka who keeps going back. When a former guest spent the last of her money on a seedy hotel room after work by Teka over years to get her into adequate housing, it was Teka who reaffirmed their friendship (while telling her she was probably done helping her try to move). It is Teka who tells me (and everyone else) that I'm perfect, and it's Teka I almost believe when she says it. It is Teka that doesn't make you feel insignificant or inadequate because of her overwhelming ability to love, but makes you want to be better, and believe that you *can* be better.

Teka will think this entire article is hyperbole (and granted, I tend toward exaggeration if it helps make my point).

The truth, however, is that this article is understated. Teka helps me love better by her example. I live the life of a Catholic Worker as best as I can, and at times, that life has brought me to desperation in my failed attempts to love people. That life leads me into situations again and again where I am faced with my own limitations and woundedness. And when I feel done, when I am filled with hate, when I can't find my way out, when the despair is overwhelming, and when I can't imagine how to bring love into a situation, I ask myself what Teka would do, and how she would do it. And then I try to do it, because I know it's the right and loving thing. It sounds so trite on paper, but it has been a source of inspiration beyond measure.

There are two quotes that sum it up quite nicely. The first is from John Kavanaugh, S.J., a lifelong friend of Karen House and Teka. "She has always accepted me with all my faults, my falling short of the Gospels. She has very high aspirations in faith that I know I have not met; and yet she is so keenly aware of her own faults (which are negligible) that she does not judge. Her prophetism is not of words, but of her life. When I see her life next to mine, I do not feel judged, but called to integrity. She is a great laborer, a great spouse to Mike, a great lover of her community, a great heart. Who of the Hebrew Scripture's prophets can compare?" The second quote is from a Roundtable in 1994: Teka is "not perfect, she is just really good and inspires me to love more and at the same time, helps me forgive myself for not being all I want to be." Those words were written by Teka herself, to describe another prophet, Ann Manganaro. Teka will recoil at the comparison, but when I hear people speak of Ann, including Teka, it is with a deserving reverence and awe at the way she loved and the wisdom she had. I did not know Ann, but I know Teka, and I know that her holiness is uncommon. That we get to be a part of it, of both her humanity and divinity, is an incomparable gift.



Some Karen House community members at a recent retreat

*I try to think back; I try to remember this life
that God gave me.*

*The other day I wrote down the words
'a life remembered' and I was going to try
to make a summary for myself, write what
mattered most - but I couldn't do it.*

*I just sat there and thought of Christ's visit
to us all those centuries ago,
and I said to myself
that my great luck was to have had
Him on my mind for so long in my life!*

-Dorothy Day



From Little House

by Mike Baldwin

This is the second time that I have been asked to write the piece, *From Little House*. Each time I think, what do I have to say? It is the people we share our lives with who have compelling stories and much to say to us mostly comfortable and affluent writers and readers of the Roundtable. Maybe next time I will pass the buck to someone who lives with us at Little House or who works with the Downtown Teens. But for now, I will tell a little of my story.

Pope Benedict XVI recently issued a new encyclical entitled “*Caritas In Veritate*” (“Love in Truth”). Among other things, it brought to my mind two of the essential tenets of social justice: solidarity and subsidiarity. Please be careful of the knee jerk to the word subsidiarity and I will try to explain. I liberally borrow a favorite phrase from my friend, Miguel, who always says, “I moved to Honduras to live and pray *with* the poor.” After a two-year retreat of sorts learning to live simply in rural Maryland, I decided it was time for me to move back to the Midwest to live and work and pray *with* the poor. It is not enough for me to live in solidarity, but I, as I am closest to the situation, must contribute something to the lifting of the burdens others bear—subsidiarity in so far as I am able and competent. Subsidiarity is an organizing principle that states that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest, closest or least centralized competent authority. In other words, I cannot expect the government or some other distant entity to take care of what is directly in front of me if I have the means to do so. This does not mean that I don’t expect governments and other institutions to do their part. I mostly hope they don’t get in my way, and that they help me with resources to deal with the matter at hand. I already knew that with my privileged background and wealth of friends, I could never be poor in the economic sense. Because of the resources at my disposal, if I chose to live in solidarity with the poor, I was obligated to also work and pray in subsidiarity with the poor.

After a year of living in St. Louis and working for the National Farmworker Ministry, I longed for something more concrete and closer to home. The farm workers, were in California, Oregon, Washington and North Carolina. I was in St. Louis.

When the opportunity arose, I jumped from the frying pan of farm labor organizing into the fire of housing opportunity and community organizing in my neighborhood. I began working with Pruitt-Igoe Development Corporation (PIDC) for the next eight years, developing and maintaining low-income housing which is decent and affordable. During that time, we faced many challenges and tragedies from Goliath develop-

ers to the death of loved ones. One of our triumphs in the face of these hardships was the formation of a neighborhood, youth, workforce training program. Resurrected from the ashes of the death of a young man in our neighborhood named Christian, arose the PIDC-sponsored group calling themselves the Downtown Teens.

With the support of friends and numerous benefactors the Downtown Teens is in its eighth year. During those eight years, we have demolished (I prefer to say disassembled), built, painted, plastered, landscaped, and cleaned to the tune of \$153,000 in payroll for over 125 teens. We have seen our teens through high school, some in college and others in their first jobs. Our oldest “teen” is now 27 and has a house and family. Though the program has cost me much of my life savings to run, I am much richer for it. My love for each of our teens is like that for my own child. The heartaches and the pride I feel are the same as well. I feel their pain to the extent I am able—solidarity, and try to do something about it—subsidiarity.

Another opportunity presented itself five years ago. Sr. Mary Ann McGivern was moving to New York and needed someone to take over and to maintain Little House, a.k.a Ella Dixon house. Teka and I did not exactly leap at the chance, but after praying, we felt a mutual calling to continue the work of Little House. Throughout these past years, Teka has continued to ask me, “Why do you want to be involved in low-income rental housing?” My answer is always the same in one form or another: “If not us, who?” The principles of solidarity and subsidiarity are in my face again. There are so many people out there who, for various reasons, do not qualify for other housing opportunities. But let’s face it, during any given month one or more of our residents can’t pay all or sometimes any of their rent. This can create a hardship on us to pay all the bills from our very large, very old, house. It also affords us the opportunity to continue to act in the best interest of the “least of these,” who are each much more heroic than ourselves. They face obstacles I have never faced, and they overcome.

So in light of the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, who am I? Am I the Samaritan, taking from my own pocket or do I look for an institution to solve the problem? I must do both. I must both relieve the immediate problem to the extent I am able and work for systemic change to counteract the causes of suffering. But to whom am I preaching but the choir? Their stories and yours, their faith and yours, their lives and yours are truly inspirational—but thanks for listening to me anyway. Pray with and for us as we live and work and pray with the poor—who I found out is really me.



Mike Baldwin, aside from his considerable carpentry and organizing talents, is also a St. Louis diner aficionado.



From Karen House

by TC Parsons

The other week I was at a liturgy celebrating the life of Mary of Magdalene. The homilist asked us to reflect on what Mary would tell us today. Having just recently entered the Karen House Community in April, I reflected on the life of the house, and on the difficulty that our guests have working through the complicated and (usually) insufficient support system this country and our city offers. I thought about the people in the neighborhood who come to our door with golden hearts and malnourished bodies; I thought about the countless phone calls I get from women and children seeking shelter and hospitality when I take a house shift, or even when I'm just hanging out near the office phone. I offer other phone numbers, but they've already tried those other numbers, and sometimes I just don't know what to tell them. I also pondered the criticism of some family and friends who, after hearing some heart-wrenching stories, asked why I choose to live this way and see those problems.

It was then when I knew what Mary Magdalene would say to me. I think she would say, "It's okay to walk with your community and witness to both the crucified and resurrected Christ," and that's exactly why I moved into the house. Many times, heck most times, it is just easier - even for the best and most compassionate of us - to block out the vast and urgent problems so many of our sisters and brothers face. Even before I moved into the house I was able to forget (without thinking I did,) from time to time how impossible it is for so many. It becomes easy to think that "things might not be as bad as the stats show, and heck, if they just worked a little harder maybe they wouldn't be in this mess in the first place." I recently returned from a week-long mission trip to Nicaragua with a Catholic Parish where I used to volunteer. That group had the same problem. We spent the week in a rich neighborhood in the equivalent of a gated community where every house, including the one we stayed in, had guards with automatic rifles. I was

sad (and honestly, enraged) to hear the group leaders blame those living in the city dump for their plight, and not the system for leaving these people with little choice.

I believe that living with our guests the way we do, hanging out with them, listening to them and laughing with them allows us to witness to the crucified Christ even if just a little bit. I know that I, as a white educated male, will never understand the real fear faced by those who the system rejects. I can, however, see the incredible need, and I can see so many work so hard, even though they're told that they're lazy and/or a drain on the economy. I can see the reality of unjust systems, even when that reality is hard to look at. I can also see the dignity our

guests have and deserve, and I can try my best to witness to it.

We also get to witness the Resurrected Christ at the house, even if just in little glimpses. I see it in the relationships with our guests, whether Marie is singing to Jen before she leaves for Peru, when I burn my finger and need Geraldine's supply of Sea Breeze (a painful but effective anti-burn agent), or just after an exhausting game of basketball in the August humidity. There are so many little glimpses of reality when two people can move past the things which constantly divide us like race, gender, background etc., and enter into a real relationship. That isn't to say these divisions aren't a

factor. They are, and they should be talked about. But sometimes, many little times, just for a moment here and there, people move past those and genuinely care about each other. Those glimpses of the Resurrected Christ, of the Kingdom of God, show us how we really can live, and challenge us to create that reality full time.



TC, Georgia, and Geraldine at Karen House

TC Parsons, our newest community member has wonderful relationships with our guests, a Master's Degree from Aquinas School of Theology, and a Star Trek uniform in his room - what a joy!



Catholic Worker Thought & Action

by Colleen Kelly

One of the first things that attracted me to the Catholic Worker and Karen House in particular was the connections it had to the anti-war movement. It seems silly to reflect on now, but four years ago I had no idea there was such a thing as a “nonviolent spirituality.” I knew about nonviolence and had never considered myself a violent person, but the concept that there were deeper spiritual meanings was foreign to me. Although I grew up Catholic, I went to public schools and almost none of my friends were Catholic. I was in a youth group that did a lot of service, but my PSR class never touched on Catholic Social Teaching (or if it did, I was too determined to be irritated that I had to do something on Monday nights that none of my friends did to pay any attention). I was first introduced to the idea of nonviolent spirituality by a small group of people that were helping someone discern whether to cross the line at the School of Americas. Many of the folks in that small circle had been affiliated with, and influenced by, the Catholic Worker philosophy, so much of the discussion was rooted in the Catholic Worker thought on nonviolence.

At the Catholic Worker, one of the few rules that we do have is a strict nonviolence policy, including discipline. However, the act of physical violence is a small part of what we mean when we say “nonviolence.” Karen House is surrounded by folks that give witness to the more common things we think of as nonviolent. Most powerfully, Fr. Carl Katb was recently arrested for his witness to nuclear disarmament. His commitment to the idea of a world without nuclear weapons is commendable; he consciously chooses to spend significant amounts of his life in prison to raise awareness and bear witness to his ideals. There are many folks in our community that take less visible steps towards a more peaceful vision of the world, yet are still rooted in the ways of nonviolence.

Nonviolence is more than just the lack of physical violence, it’s engaging in the world in a loving way, even when it is most difficult. It is loving your neighbor, even when she has an addiction and is demanding food at midnight at the top of her lungs. It’s staying calm and opening your heart. Nonviolence is about thought and action just as much as it is about speaking out against injustice and not engaging in physical acts. It’s about loving yourself as well as loving others.

I think when we consider the ideas of nonviolence in

the context of the Catholic Worker philosophy, the conversation often comes back to the “faithful, not effective” discussion. It is true that so many of the men and women I live with live extraordinarily faithful lives. I have found myself to be profoundly changed by the many people I have encountered within the movement that live what they believe in the most self-sacrificing, loving way. I also feel that they are very effective. So often, we have no idea what is effective; often we are applying the meaning of the word as one defined by a hierarchical, patriarchal society: that being successful means bigger and best and fastest. It is tempting to define success or “effectiveness” in this same hierarchical way.

At Karen House, we often try and reshape how people communicate and how people love one another; it *can* be a different way than it is at other shelters. If we wanted to do it the commonly-defined “effective way,” it would be

easy to resort to violence through both coercion and manipulation, which is where frustration inevitably leads. I love that our broader community in North St. Louis is focused on living in a faithful way. I love that in the last ten years our community has doubled to a whole block of Catholic Workers and keeps growing. I love that there was no mega-organizing involved, but that people are drawn to the community through example and faithfulness. Since coming to the Catholic Worker last year, I have found that the

greatest language of nonviolence is one of love and compassion. It is more than bearing witness to acts of violence and speaking out against injustice. It is the small, daily doses of care and patience that are portrayed to one another - to the guests and volunteers that come through our doors - that speak most loudly of effectiveness and commitment to nonviolence. I have been told that the Catholic Worker movement across the country has nearly doubled in the last twenty years. In my world of organizing, I’ve never been part of a movement that has doubled in its commitment to go beyond the ordinary. So when I consider, the idea of effectiveness, I consider Dorothy’s vision:

“The sense of futility is one of the greatest evils of the day... People say, ‘What can one person do? What is the sense of our small effort?’ They cannot see that we can only lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible only for the one action of the present moment. But we can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that will vitalize and transform all our individual actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes.”



Photo of neighborhood folks at the All-Star Game
by Beth Buchek

Colleen Kelly can often be found hanging out with guests on our back porch, and currently works with Instead of War and the National Farm Worker Ministry.

The Round Table

Karen Catholic Worker House

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The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to *The Round Table*, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO. 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work with the poor. People working on this issue include: Joe Angert, Jenny Truax, Teka Childress, Megan Heeney, Timmy Cosentino, Colleen Kelly, James Meinert, and Carolyn Griffeth. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

Karen House Update

Last month, our funds ran precariously low. For the first time in our memory, we did not have enough money to pay our monthly bills.

Once again we asked you for help, knowing that times are difficult now, and aware that you have been so generous in helping us repair our windows.

It has been with great humility that we have opened envelope after envelope, some with crumpled \$5 bills, and others with \$1,000 checks, many with notes thanking us for our work.

You have shown that is your work too. Karen House is dependent on you. And once again, we bow our heads, amazed by your offerings, and we say thank you.

-The Karen House Community

Karen House Needs

Donations to our main account, coffee, salad dressing, cereal, diapers, cleaning and hygiene supplies

Little House Saturday Work Days

Please join Mike, Teka and the Downtown Teens for our volunteer work days at Little House. Some projects include gardening, wall repairs, plumbing, painting, construction, tuckpointing, basement clean-out and winterizing.

Saturdays in September 12, 19, 26 9am - 1pm followed by lunch in the backyard.

All skill levels welcome, donations for materials gratefully accepted. Come by 1540 N. 17th Street or call: 974-7432, 974-2552.

Also needed: working microwave, refrigerator

Karen House Windows Update

Our window campaign raised approximately \$35,000 of the \$60,000 for which we aimed, and we are moving forward! We hope to repair and replace at least half of our windows by winter. You made these contributions during difficult economic times, and we cannot thank you enough.

Carl Kabat Nonviolent Public Resistance

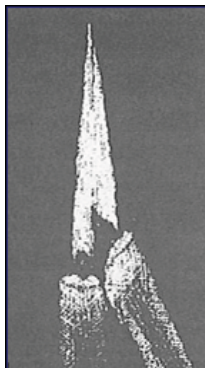
Fr. Carl Kabat, O.M.I. friend and inspiration to our community, did a nonviolent civil disobedience act at a Colorado missile silo in August, attempting to disarm the Minuteman III nuclear weapon that is on high trigger alert there. Here's an excerpt from his statement:

"I, Fr. Carl Kabat O.M.I., come to this evil place today as a Roman Catholic priest of fifty years, to show what insanity is in the ground here and at other silos in our beautiful country...The Roman Catholic Church...and the World Council of Churches have condemned nuclear bombs as a CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY...The Bible says in the words of Isaiah, 'They shall beat their spears into pruning hooks and their swords into plowshares.' May The Holy One have mercy on us for not doing so."

Carl's Address

Make sure envelope has return address!

Fr. Carl Kabat, O.M.I.
Weld County Jail
2110 O St.
Greeley, CO 80631



Check www.KarenHouseCW.org for updates on Karen House, information on the Catholic Worker, an archive of past RoundTables, and more!