

THE Round Table

Autumn
1984

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



INTIMACY AND SOLIDARITY

WHY THIS ISSUE?



Intimacy and solidarity. At first glance they can seem to define the opposite ends of a continuum. Intimacy brings to mind family gatherings, quiet moments with a close friend, experiences of closeness, tenderness, and warmth: very immediate, personal experiences. Solidarity calls to mind the contrary: perhaps a large march or protest rally, work on behalf of people far away or quite different from ourselves, organized opposition to government policy, large numbers of people, intellectual analysis and commitment to an ideal.

Long or deep experience with either intimacy or solidarity teaches us that one leads to another, as certainly as the river to the ocean; in fact, that each requires the other. Each experience of profound closeness to another reveals to us that we are all one in some unimaginably real way, that we are all bound to each other, that there is finally only one life, which we all share together. So intimacy teaches us the solidarity of all humanity.

Similarly, if we follow faithfully the call to solidarity with all of humanity we find that, as Thomas Merton says, "It all comes down to a few relationships." We find in the Catholic Worker experience that solidarity with the poor finally means finding the poor across the breakfast table from us. Or as Joan Uhlen and Rachel Pinal tell us in their letter from Nicaragua, solidarity with the victims of militarism leads as far as listening with them to the bombs falling and attending their funerals.

In the title article of this issue, Henri Nouwen explores carefully the ligaments that bind intimacy and solidarity. In the center spread a photo essay by Mev Puleo captures for us the clear sight of moments of intimate solidarity. Jackie Haessly does us the favor of surveying the same landscape from the opposite viewpoint and explores how we can celebrate the intimacies of our lives in a way that opens us to others rather than closing us off from them. Ellen Rehg reflects on one application of solidarity as she examines the many facets of gift-giving at Christmastime. The house articles, as ever, are their unpredictable blend of intimacy in solidarity, experiments of solidarity in intimacy. All in all, the hope is that in these varying perspectives on the relationship of intimacy to solidarity, you may find something to trigger growth in your own experiments. Joyfully offered for your consideration.

Virginia Druhe

Cover photo by Mev Puleo.

WE ARE NOT TAX EXEMPT

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Gifts to our work are not tax-deductible. As a community, we have never sought tax-exempt status since we are convinced that justice and the works of mercy should be acts of conscience which come at a personal sacrifice, without governmental approval, regulation or reward. We believe it would be a misuse of our limited resources of time and personnel (as well as a violation of our understanding of the meaning of community) to create the organizational structure required, and to maintain the paper-work necessary for obtaining tax-deductible status. Also, since much of what we do might be considered "political," in the sense that we strive to question, challenge and confront our present society and many of its structures and values, some would deem us technically ineligible for tax-deductible, charitable status.

INTIMACY AND SOLIDARITY

by

Henri J.M. Nouwen

The words we most need to hear during these turbulent days are: "Do not be afraid." Zechariah heard them when the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in the temple and told him that Elizabeth would bear him a son. Mary heard them when Gabriel entered her house in Nazareth to announce that she would conceive and have a child. The shepherds heard them when a heavenly choir came to them in the fields and proclaimed the birth of Jesus. The two Mary's heard them when they came to the tomb and noticed that the stone was rolled away. "Do not be afraid." These are the first words spoken by God's messengers. These also are the words spoken by Jesus when he approaches his frightened disciples on the lake and when he appears to the women after his resurrection.

We need to hear these words again, because we are no less frightened than Zechariah, Mary, the shepherds, the disciples or the women at the tomb. In fact we have become so deeply affected by fear that we no longer know how a life without fear would feel. The more I reflect on the condition of our world, the more I become aware of the fear that dominates every bit of our being. We think fearful, we talk fearful, we act and react fearful. Often that fear has entered so deeply into our interiority, that it controls, whether we are aware of it or not, most of our choices and decisions.

Fear victimizes and controls us in many ways. Fear can make us upset and angry but also can drive us to deep depression and despair. Fear can surround us with darkness and make us feel close to destruction and death. Fear can become so painful and intolerable that we are willing to do anything to be relieved from it, even killing ourselves. Fear not seldom appears as a cruel tyrant who takes possession of us and forces us to live in his house. Many of us Western people of the 20th

Century live in the house of fear. Precisely because fear is such a pervasive and omnipresent reality we take it for granted that fear is indeed an acceptable force in our daily life and a realistic basis for many of our decisions.

Is it still possible to live in the house of love and to listen there to the questions raised by the Lord of love? Maybe we are so unused to life without fear that we have become unable to hear the voice of love? Still the invitation is there loud and clear: "Do not be afraid ...come and follow me...see where I live ...go out and preach the good news...the Reign of God is close at hand...there are many rooms in my Father's house...come... take for your heritage the Reign prepared for you since the foundation of the world." It is the invitation to leave the house of fear and live in the house of love.

The house of love is not simply a place in the afterlife - a place in heaven - a place beyond this world. Jesus offers us this house right in the midst of an anxious world. Therefore it is important to describe as well as possible what living in the house of love looks like. It seems to me that we need to know the signs by which we can recognize the true house.

One day these signs were given to me by Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche, a worldwide network of communities of mentally handicapped people. Jean Vanier, who has lived now for twenty years with mentally handicapped people, came to see that intimacy, fecundity and ecstasy are the three qualities of a life together in the house of love. When Jean Vanier first told me this I did not fully grasp the full implication of what he said, but when I read Jesus' farewell address to his disciples my eyes were opened and I realized that Jesus himself described the life in the house of love as a life in which intimacy, fecundity and ecstasy are being nurtured and celebrated. I would now like to explore the meaning of one of these three qualities of life in the house of love, that of intimacy, and to reflect on how intimacy is interconnected with solidarity.

Henri Nouwen, a Dutch priest and well known spiritual theologian is currently teaching at Harvard Divinity School. The above is excerpted from an unpublished manuscript and is used with Henri's permission.

When Jesus says, "Make your home in me as I make mine in you," he offers us an intimate place that we can truly call "home". In this world there are millions of homeless people, homeless because of their inner anguish or homeless because of being driven from their own towns and countries. In prisons, mental hospitals, refugee camps, in hidden-away city apartments, in nursing homes, overnight shelters and many places where drug addicts, alcoholics and bag ladies gather, we get a glimpse of the homelessness of the people of our century. There probably is no better word to summarize the suffering of our time than the word homeless. It reveals one of our deepest and most painful conditions, the condition of not having a sense of belonging, of not having a place where we can feel safe, cared for, protected and loved. Home is that place or space where we do not have to be afraid, but can let go from our defenses and be free, free from worries, free from tensions, free from pressures. Home is where we can laugh and cry, embrace and dance, sleep long and dream quietly, eat, read, play, watch the fire, listen to music, and be with a friend. Home is where we can rest and be healed. The word "home" gathers a wide range of feelings and emotions up into one image, the image of a house where it is good to be. It is the house of love.

The first and most obvious quality of a home is its intimacy. When we use the word intimacy in our daily life we easily associate it with privacy, smallness, coziness and a certain exclusivity. When someone refers to a conversation or a party as intimate we tend to think about a few people, a small space, or a confidential subject matter. Calling something intimate usually suggests the opposite of being open to the public or approachable for everyone.

But here our spiritual experience might show us something very new. Those who have entered deeply into their heart and have found the intimate home where they encounter their Lord, come to the mysterious discovery that solidarity is the other side of intimacy. They come to the awareness that the intimacy of God's house does not exclude anyone but includes everyone. They start to see that the home they have found in their innermost being is as wide as the whole of humanity. Just as distance and closeness are no longer valid distinctions within God's home, so intimacy and soli-

darity are no longer valid distinctions either. It is of great importance to see the inner connectedness between intimacy and solidarity. If we do not recognize this connection our spirituality either becomes privatistic or activist and no longer reflects the full beauty of living in God's home.

The best way to see the interconnectedness of intimacy and solidarity is to reflect on the words of St. John: "The Word was made flesh and pitched his tent among us." These words express the mystery that God in whom all has been created became part of that same creation; it also is the mystery that God who made us, humans, in God's own image, appeared among us in the image of that same humanity; it finally is the mystery that God who has been rejected by the sins of humanity became sin to reunite humanity with the divine. In Jesus Christ all humanity has been gathered and led towards God's home. The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is the lifting of all human flesh into God's own divine intimacy. There is no human being in past, present or future, in East, West, North or South, who has not been embraced by God in and through the becoming flesh of the Word. This intimate and full divine embrace became manifest to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. He lived our lives, died our deaths, and lifted all of us up into his glory. When we encounter the Lord in the intimate space of our heart, we encounter in him all humanity because through his life, death and resurrection he has made all of humanity his own. There is no human suffering that has not been suffered in the agony of Jesus on the cross. There is no human joy that is not celebrated by Jesus in his resurrection to new life. There is no human death that Jesus has not died; there is no human life that Jesus has not lived. In him through whom all has been created, all has been restored to the glory of God.

What has this to do with solidarity? It reveals that finding the heart of God in our own heart means finding the heart of humanity, since all humanity is hidden in God through Jesus the incarnate word. It reveals that in the house of God where we find the intimacy we have searched for we also find all human beings gathered and recognize them as our brothers and sisters. It reveals that what is most intimate is most global, what is most private is most public, what is most hidden is most visible, and what is most human is most divine.

Thus intimacy with the Word who became flesh becomes solidarity with all people and thus the home where we can be with him alone becomes the place where all people of time and place can gather into one body.

It really is not possible to meet the true Christ without meeting true humanity. Because a Christ in whom not all people are collected is not the true Christ. When we belong to Christ we belong to all of humanity. That is why Jesus prayed for his disciples with the words, "Father, they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth." (John 17.16-19) We cannot live in intimate communion with Jesus without being sent out to our brothers and sisters who belong to the same humanity that Jesus has accepted as his own. Thus intimacy manifests itself as solidarity and solidarity as intimacy.

In our contemporary world solidarity in the body of Christ is of unique importance. Wherever we look we see the devastating fear of people for each other. Fear among races, religions, nations, continents. Fear between rich and poor, North and South, East and West. Wherever this fear rules there is division, leading to hatred, violence, destruction and war. It certainly is not obvious that we human beings are brothers and sisters belonging to the same family and living in the same home. It seems that everything we read in the papers,



Mev Puleo



Mev Puleo

hear on the radio and see on television about the condition of the world confirms the saying, "Homo homini lupus:" Humankind is wolf to humankind. And since our human intelligence is inventing ever more ingenious instruments of destruction, humanity comes every day closer to its own annihilation. Not solidarity but fragmentation is the most visible quality of the way humans relate to each other. Indeed we need new eyes to see and new ears to hear in order to rediscover the truth of our unity. This unity cannot be perceived by our broken, sinful, anxious hearts. Only a heart with perfect love can perceive the unity of humanity. This requires indeed a divine perception. God sees people as one, as belonging to the same family and living in the same home. It is this divine perception God wants to share with us. God wanted to open our eyes by sending the only beloved son to live and die for us all so that through this perfect love, that embraces all people in time and place, we would come to see that indeed we belong together.

Living in the intimacy of God's home we can come to see that the God who loves us with a perfect love includes all human beings in that love without in any way diminishing the unique quality of this love for each individual person. Being invited into the household of God's love we can see the fragmentation of humanity with the eyes of God and hear its agony with the ears of God. Thus our intimate communion with the God of perfect love becomes an

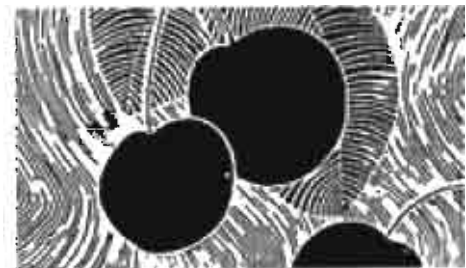
Mey Puleo



intimate communion with all human beings who are suffering in the world. It is that worldwide intimate communion that reveals that God's home has no excluding walls nor narrow doors. "I am the door," Jesus says, "Anyone who enters through me will be safe." (John 10.9) The fuller we enter into the home of love the clearer we see that we are there together with all our brothers and sisters of humanity and the deeper we understand that in and through Christ we are part of one family. In the home of God we are consecrated to the truth, that is to the betrothal with God and with all God's people. This is the spiritual basis of solidarity. This also is the ground of all Christian action. As prayer leads us into the house of God and God's people, so action leads us back into the world to work there for reconciliation, unity and peace. Once we have come to know the truth we want to act truthfully and reveal to the world its true nature. All Christian action, whether it is visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, or working for a more just and peaceful society, is a manifestation of the human solidarity revealed to us in the house of God. It is not an anxious human effort to create a better world. It is a confident expression of the truth that in Christ death, evil and destruction have been overcome. It is not a fearful attempt to restore a broken order. It is a joyful manifestation that all order has already been restored. It is not a nervous struggle to bring divided people together, but a celebration of an already established unity. Thus action is not activism. An activist wants to heal, restore, redeem and recreate, but those acting within the home of God point through their action to the healing, restoring, redeeming and recreating presence of God.

Jean Vanier has understood this very well. When one sees the many small homes for the handicapped, one wonders if Jean and his coworkers could not use their time and energy a lot better. While the needs of the world are so urgent and pressing, hundreds of capable and very intelligent men and women spend their time, often all their time, to feed very broken people, to help them walk, to just be with them and to give them the small comfort of a loving word, a gentle touch, or an encouraging smile. For anyone trying to make it in our society, built on efficiency and control, these people are wasting their time. What they do is highly inefficient, useless and unsuccessful. Why give so much effort to people who never will be able to make it on their own, while the world is crying for people who will take on the burning issues of our time? Jean Vanier knows that in this useless work for the poor the truth is being revealed. It is the truth of God's perfect love for all people. Those who dedicate themselves to these "little ones" are manifesting to the world that all people are gathered in the home of God into a divine solidarity. By living and working with them they move beyond the false distinction between handicapped and normal, poor and rich, inefficient and efficient, and witness to the unity of all who live in the home of God. Thus their "irrelevant" lives acquire a divine relevancy, the relevancy of the God who is revealed to us in the weakness of a small child, an itinerant preacher and a crucified outcast.

The intimacy of the house of love always leads to solidarity with the weak. The closer we come to the heart of the One who loves us with an unconditional love, the freer we are to let the small people come close to us and celebrate their redeemed humanity with us.



CELEBRATION: GIFT and PROMISE

by

Jacqueline Haessly

Joyous moments, happy events, times of special rewards, all are cause for celebration. Local, regional and national holidays and religious holydays add other rich occasions for celebration. Even the pain of struggle, of separation, and in death, the pain of dying, find expression through their own forms of celebration. Celebrations in our life recall the specialness of a time, a place, a memory sacred to ourselves, our family, our community, or our people.

The ability to celebrate is first of all a gift, one passed down from parent to child throughout the ages of human history. Celebration affirms in a most unique way our humanness, our ability to mark those occasions of significance to us as individuals, as families, as communities, and as nations. Our spirits need celebration to sustain us through the long moments of sameness and even tiredness in our daily lives. Celebration keeps our spirits going--growing--throughout the long journeys of our individual and collective lives.

We have only to recall the anticipation and joy of those moments of celebration from our own childhood to recognize that this is so. Births, baptisms, marriages, ordinations, religious vows, and the anniversaries of these events took their place right alongside Christmas, Easter and Halloween as occasions for joyous partying. How we looked forward to each new event, each anniversary of past events with happy expectation!

As adults we continue the search for reasons to celebrate. New friendships, new jobs, secular and religious, local and national holidays, even deaths and funerals all find expression in the ritual of our adult celebrations. And the celebration of these events or others like them is common to members of the human family all around the globe. Only the ritual is different.

Ritual is a significant aspect of all celebration. Music, song, dance, shared food and companionship, and at times gifts, each form important ingredients to our celebrations. And these ingredients are common to most, perhaps even all, cultures of the world. Peoples from the small towns and villages that dot our universe, as well as those of us who reside in the cities and megalopolises of our world, all find creative ways to express ourselves in ritual during those moments which call for celebration.

However, for most of us there are significant differences between the ways that we and the ways that peoples of most other cultures celebrate. For most of us who live out our daily lives within the context and values of a middle class American culture, celebration has lost much of its simplicity and spontaneity. Often families, school and community groups, civic organizations and at times even religious institutions have forgotten how to respond with their own creativity to the significant celebrative moments in their lives.

Too often families and others have allowed Madison Avenue and its counterparts across the nation to replace "CELEBRATION" with its own brand of "SELL-ABRATION", complete with well-planned and well-advertised events generated by the card, flower, liquor and other consumer goods industries of our country. Buy! Buy! Buy! becomes the common chant of the vendor. Moments of celebration become instead moments and even months of slick advertising and increased sales. Play and ritual become the well-planned and well-prepared events of those who reap the profits.

In our consumer-oriented society, gift-giving of PRESENTS replaces the long-established tradition of the giving of PRESENCE. In some families hand-crafted items or gifts of time from either an adult or a child are thought to have less value, and indeed are sometimes even scorned as meaningful gift-ideas by both the giver and the receiver. The centuries-old practice of sharing the fruits of our harvest, or

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in another season, the labors of love from our kitchens and workbenches, are replaced with elaborate catering or party clubs from all the fast-food chains.

Frequently, too, the foods we share and the gifts we give contribute in their own way to the increasing brokenness of our weary world. Highly processed and packaged foods are channeled to those with abundance, often leaving the poor without adequate nourishment to sustain life. Gifts from that endless array of consumer products that line our toy shops, discount markets and department stores frequently find their origins in the limited natural resources of our world.



Massive amounts of energy are consumed in their production, often with low or even subsistence wages paid to the laborers. Many of the items, hastily made, or from materials of low quality, break easily, often even during the first day of use. Thus they become part of the growing waste piles of our over-polluted world. Celebrations should be times of happiness, contributing to the joy in our world. No one, and no portion of the earth we each call home, should be harmed just because another individual or group celebrates.

How can we relearn ways of celebration that contribute to the building up, not the tearing down of the earth and its people? We could learn much from peoples from tribal villages and impoverished countries or cultures around the world, who, lacking in many of the material comforts we would call civilization, have much to teach us about the meaning of celebration and how to celebrate.

Through celebration we affirm

our trust in the present

and our hope for the future

Even in our own country groups like the United Farm Workers and our ethnic poor of many cultures and geographical locations bring a simplicity and a spontaneity to their celebrations. If we watch carefully and listen attentively to what these people have to say to us, we can receive from them the gift of rediscovering the joys which flow from simplicity in our celebrations.

We need to retain the ritual. We need music, song, dance, for our spirits. We need a sharing of memories which recall what this event, this occasion is all about. We need food and drink to nourish our bodies and we need companionship to make all this worthwhile. And yes, at times we even need to share gifts, those tokens of our love and esteem which say in simple yet effective ways, "I love you and you are important to me!"

For those of us who struggle to bring about justice and peace in a broken world, celebration helps us to bring our vision of global wholeness closer to reality. That our world is indeed a global village is fact. The challenge which faces us as PEACEMAKERS is to help make that fact a felt reality in the hearts and minds of all peoples. This is a difficult and sometimes even risky and dangerous task. On our lengthy journey toward healing this broken world, we ourselves need to pause to celebrate, for celebration strengthens us in the long struggle for justice when our spirits become weary with the foreverness of the movement.

Through celebration we affirm our trust in the present and our hope for the future. For why else celebrate?

The importance of play in the ritual of celebration needs special emphasis for those of us who call ourselves peacemakers. For too long and too often have I attended lengthy meetings, workshops, and even week-long conferences which allowed time for program reports, financial reports, films, worship, lectures, more lectures and even more lectures and sometimes nary a moment for play. My spirit cries at such abuse. Surely the words of Jesus, "Unless you become as little children..." referred to their ability to take time to run and dance and sing and play!

Through the patterns we choose for our celebrations we can enable ourselves, our families, our friends to make a significant contribution toward wholeness in our global village. We can make our own gifts or choose from that rich assortment of quality hand-crafted items made by ethnic groups around the world. We can include

rituals and traditions from cultures different from our own. We can taste the foods and enjoy the music of ethnic groups from across the street or around the globe. In the process of changing or modifying our patterns of celebration, together we can simplify our life styles, discover the richness of traditions different from our own, and thus share in the efforts to build a more just and peaceful world.

The gift of celebration, holding dear those moments precious in our personal and collective lives, is also a promise for our future. This is the promise which celebration holds for each of us, that together with our sisters and brothers, all members of the one family of God, we can celebrate with song and dance, play and praise, the building up of the Peaceable Garden for all who live with us on this planet earth we each call home.



"As a tangible sign of our need and desire to do penance we, for the cause of peace, commit ourselves to fast and abstinence on each Friday of the year. We call upon our people voluntarily to do penance on Friday by eating less food and by abstaining from meat. This return to a traditional practice of penance, once well observed in the U.S. Church, should be accompanied by works of charity and service toward our neighbors. Every Friday should be a day significantly devoted to prayer, penance and almsgiving for peace."

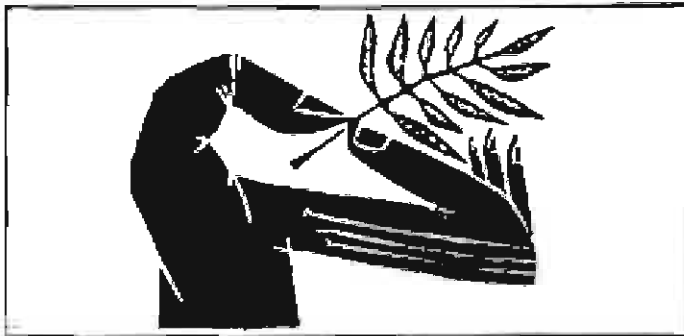
Bishops' Pastoral Letter on War and Peace

LIFE IS A GIFT

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS WAS TRULY COUNTER-CULTURAL

by ELLEN REHG

One way to live in greater solidarity with the reality of an impoverished world is to explore alternate forms of celebrating Christmas. Many people have long been dissatisfied with the way in which this holiday is observed in our culture. Santa Claus fits in nicely with the capitalist creed of material consumption. Indeed, Santa personifies the free-enterprise Christmas: under a veneer of generosity he urges us all to buy for others and to expect to be bought for. This hard economic fact is cloaked with the outward trappings of religious and secular good will in order to lend enthusiastic appro-



val to an annual frenzy of material consumption. Santa's greatest gift is the boon that the observance of Christmas brings to the economy.

Maybe this isn't bad, but maybe this isn't Christmas either. The first Christmas was truly counter-cultural: the infant Jesus represented the antithesis of King Herod and all worldly power. Nowadays Santa, the capitalist christ, walks hand-in-hand with the 'kings' of our culture. Thus Santa preserves a facsimile of Christ's generosity, but strips him of his radical meaning.

To celebrate Christmas radically one must uncover and reclaim its root meaning. But what is the meaning of Christmas? One can answer in many ways: that God became human, vulnerable, weak, that the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled and salvation incar-

nate, that a little child leads us. To me, above all, Christmas teaches us that life is a gift. Our life, all life, is given to us unconditionally and unbidden. There was no exchange between humanity and God, no bargaining or mutual reimbursement, as the form of a capitalist Christmas reproduces, that resulted in our life. God gives us not only our lives, but our life, Christ. There can be no price tag on all that God is which is given to us.

How do we manifest this divine act of love in our Christmas observance? A better question might be, within a materialistic context, how can we possibly represent the truth? I think we must change the context and celebrate Christmas counterculturally, as befits the life of the one whose birth we remember. This entails that we observe Christmas primarily as a spiritual feast day, not as a climax to the shopping season. To do so may require that we remain counter-cultural every other day of the year, for we can't pluck one day from 364 others and expect it to differ from the predominant fabric of our lives. In opposition to a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption we may adopt a carefully nurtured simplicity or a commitment to voluntary poverty.

Having said all of this, I do not want to strip Christmas entirely of gift-giving, but rather expand the notion of giving, saving the gift from the emptiness of a mere purchase. For giving itself is central to the idea of Christmas, but our giving and our celebration needn't be narrowly focused on the exchange of material objects. A gift can be an incarnation of the love which is present in our lives, as the gift of Christ is a manifestation of God's love for us. How we en-flesh the meaning and love which informs our life is the way in which we give the best of ourselves to one another.

Ellen Rehg is a community member at Karen House. She is working on an M.A. in philosophy at St. Louis University. Her favorite color is white.



EVERY HOME SHOULD

HAVE A CHRIST ROOM

by Dorothy Day

But when we talk of the works of mercy, we usually think of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and sheltering the homeless. We have had to do them all, even to burying the dead. One does not necessarily have to establish, run, or live in a House of Hospitality, as Peter named the hospices we have been running around the country, in order to practice the works of mercy. The early Fathers of the Church said that every house should have a Christ's room. But it is generally only the poorest who are hospitable. A young college graduate hitchhiking across the country during the depression (he was trying to make up his mind about his vocations) said that the only place that he found hospitality was among the Negroes and the Mexicans. Certainly priests' housekeepers did not extend any. He met so much misery and starvation even, that when he reached Los Angeles, he finally started a House of Hospitality there, and in that house he met with so many impossible cases that he turned more and more to the spiritual weapons, and now he is a priest, with the most powerful weapons of all in his hand.

Every house should have a Christ's room. The coat which hangs in your closet belongs to the poor. If your brother comes to you hungry and you say, Go be thou filled, what kind of hospitality is that? It is no use turning people away to an agency, to the city or the state or the Catholic Charities. It is you yourself who must perform the works of mercy. Often you can only give the price of a meal, or a bed on the Bowery. Often you can only hope that it will be spent for that. Often you can literally take off a garment if it only be a scarf and warm some shivering brother. But personally, at a personal sacrifice, these were the ways, Peter used to insist, to combat the growing tendency on the part of the State to take over. The great danger was the State taking over the job which our Lord Himself gave us to do, "Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me."

Of course husbands must be considered, and wives must be considered, and children. One must look after one's own family, it is true. But Fr. Coady said once, "We can all do ten times as much as we think we can do."



Excerpted from The Catholic Worker, May 1947.

"Our intimate communion with the Lord becomes an intimate communion with all human beings who are suffering."



"... Intimacy that allows us to transcend..."



"What is most intimate is most global... what is most human is most divine."



Mev Puleo, a contributor to the Catholic Worker, is a freelance photojournalist of Spanish, Latin American, and African Studies and lives in St. Louis, Missouri.

y Mev Puleo

J.M. Nouwen



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God's home has no excluding doors or narrow walls."

United States citizens will spend \$20 billion this holiday season for gifts for family and friends who have no or little need of them. But there are alternatives which are in harmony with the solidarity demands of the Christian gospel. Please consider for your spouse, community, friends, etc.

ALTERNATIVE RESOURCES

The Alternative Celebrations Catalogue edited by Milo Shannon-Thornberry. A selection of the best resources from the first four Alternatives Catalogues. It includes a discussion of major religious and secular holidays, a compendium of celebration suggestions that are considerate of all peoples, detailed plans for gift-making and gift-giving, a guide to ways of living that are characterized by new forms of cooperation among people, and a look forward at the issues facing those in the movement toward responsible living. This volume is designed to encourage interest in living and celebrating responsibly. Pilgrim Press, 1982, \$8.95.

Peacemaking: Family Activities for Justice and Peace, by Jacqueline Haessly. Both theoretical and practical, this book offers insight, information and activity suggestions to help families learn to become peacemakers. Included is a chapter on alternative celebrations. Paulist Press, 1980. \$2.45.

Alternative Celebrations Catalogue, 4th Edition. A resource for material on "celebration of life" as well as ideas for making holidays and celebrations more nurturing of human growth, and more supportive of global justice and peace. Alternatives, 1978, 248pp. \$5.00.

Order from Alternatives, PO Box 429, 5263 Bouldercrest Rd., Ellenwood, GA 30049

Parenting for Peace and Justice, by James and Kathleen McGinnis, Orbis Press. \$7.25 from Institute for Peace and Justice, 4144 Lindell, St. Louis, MO 63108.

Gift subscriptions are a year-round remembrance. Some suggestions:

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THE ROUND TABLE, quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Donations accepted. Write to: Mark Scheu, Karen House, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO 63106.

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SOLIDARITY IN NICARAGUA

Iglesia San Jose
Ocotal, Dept. of Nuevo
Segovia
Nicaragua
June 5, 1984

Dear Family, Sisters and friends,

Friday, June 1st, is a day that will not soon be forgotten by any of us here in Ocotal. Early that morning, at about 4:45 AM, we were awakened by the sound of gun fire and then explosions. It seemed very close to our house. There were four of us together here: both of us along with Pastora, the Nica lay pastoral worker who lives with us and Mary Agnes Curran, a Franciscan sister who had just recently arrived in Nicaragua and was up here visiting Ocotal. Immediately we all gathered in the hallway of the house which is the safest place since it is between two double walls. We threw ourselves on the floor and waited together as the sounds of battle seemed to come closer. As time went on we could hear the sounds of shouting and explosives coming nearer the house. Our tense waiting seemed endless, and our bodies cramped as we counted over 50 major explosions. At about 6:15 or so, there seemed to be a lull and Rachel immediately crawled to the phone and called our Maryknoll Sisters in Leon to inform them of what was happening. Thank God the phones here were still working, although the electricity was out. We then turned on Radio Segovia but found it was silent.

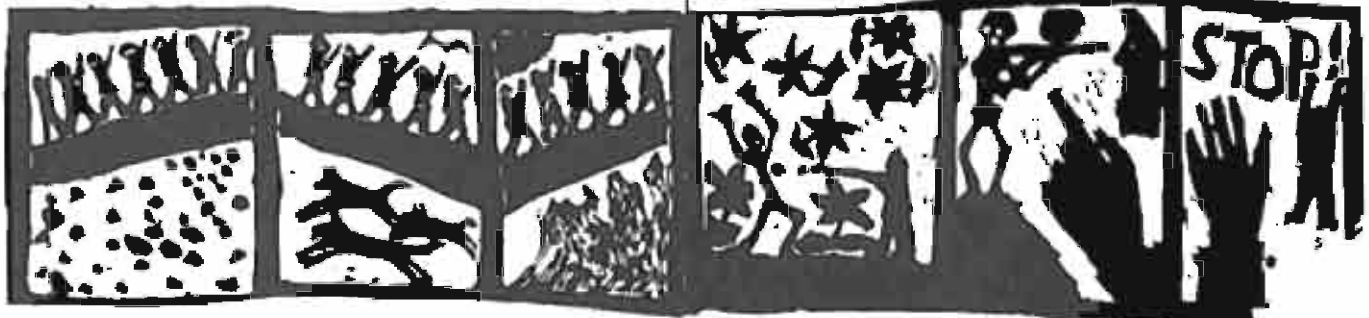
At about 7:30 AM, there was another longer lull in the fighting. We all grabbed our emergency suitcases we keep on hand and quickly got something to eat. We prepared some food and water supplies. We both went out briefly to find out what was hap-

pening and what we could do. Pastora went to report to the Child Care Center where she works. In our travels we discovered that the attacks had been targeted on several places that were vital to the economic well-being of our people: the grain storage silos, the lumber yard, the coffee processing plant, the electric plant, and the radio station.

At about 9:00 AM, when Mary Agnes and both of us were back at the house together the fighting started again. We quickly pulled a table into the hallway, put mattresses over the top and sat underneath for protection. This was an old trick Joanie had learned during the insurrection. The sound of the mortar fire was quite close again. Every now and then the impact caused some plaster to fall from our ceiling. At one point we heard shots and the splintering of wood. There we sat, sweating from the heat and fear, and praying.

At about 10:00 AM a plane began flying overhead, but we didn't know whose plane it was and the fear of aerial bombardment became quite real. Shortly after that, the fighting calmed down again and it seemed to us that the shouting and explosions were more in the distance. We found out that the plane was Nicaraguan and was later joined by two helicopters as they chased the contra forces into the hills.

On the streets, the Red Cross was out taking care of the wounded and dead. We packed up our emergency belongings and carried them to the house of a neighbor. (Joan also carried her ukulele with her since she cannot imagine how she would ever get along without it). We wanted to be closer to the people in the event of more attacks, and the family was waiting



Sister Joan Uhlen is a Maryknoll Sister who has worked in Nicaragua since 1972. Sr. Rachel Pinal is a Presentations Sister and Maryknoll Associate. Both sisters have been serving in Ocotal since 1980 doing education and pastoral work.

for us. People began gathering slowly on the street; many appeared stunned. When they saw us with our belongings some asked us if we were leaving Ocotal. We assured them we were staying.

After leaving our things with our neigh-



bors, we spent the day visiting those who were recovering their dead, trying to comfort, to be of use in some small ways. We also spent time trying to make contact with our Bishop and our sisters in Managua who were getting information out to our congregations and families. This was a challenge, to say the least, with the phone system the way it was! And is!

About 3:00 in the afternoon, there was a call to go to the Plaza to participate in an act of homage to the dead and an act of repudiation of the aggression. We went down, and there the political leaders of the zone gave us information about all that had happened: 12 dead, 34 wounded in Ocotal, and we saw also bodies, too, of some of the contra who had been killed. We then went by the radio station which was burned and gutted out. We also saw hundreds of bullet holes in the surrounding houses. People said that two people had been killed there; one young man was burned alive. We returned wearily to our neighbor's house and tried to rest that night after taking coffee down to the people who were doing night watch.

How hard it was to rest, thinking of the heartbreaking suffering of those who were waking their loved ones, attentive to every sound that might mean a new attack...

The next day, Peg Healy, our Maryknoll Coordinator, came up with the people from CEPAD, the Evangelical Development Agency, the Witness for Peace and the Red Cross. They, along with members of WFP who came

in from Jalapa, arrived in time for the funeral mass and procession to the cemetery for 6 of those from Ocotal who had been killed. (Some of the others who had been killed were militia from other towns). We walked in the long funeral procession to the cemetery where Victor Tirado Lopez, one of the members of the National Directorate of the FSLN who had come from Managua, paid homage to the dead and called on the U.S. again to stop this senseless policy of intervention which was causing so much suffering. He repeated Nicaragua's willingness to dialogue and to negotiate.

At the cemetery, our ears were filled with the sobs and cries of family members who were burying their loved ones. We went from grave to grave, family to family, to hug and pray and console. The fact that we were North Americans solicited no rejection from them. They understand deeply how much people in the U.S. feel and vigil with them.

Mary Agnes returned to Managua with the people from CEPAD. Peggy and 4 of the folks from WFP stayed. So we were 8 with Pastora. Peggy and our friends quickly took over the phones and doorbells and meals and sent us

"This is what Yahweh asks of you: only this - to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

to bed because we were exhausted. They were all a blessing.

The next day, Sunday, we started off after sharing the Word of God together. We wanted to visit the places that had been attacked in order to collect information and to grasp what had been the results of all the mortars and shooting we had heard.

We began at the lumber yard; it was bleak and shocking. At the sight of it, physical pain clutched at Rachel's stomach. Words can begin to describe the horror of

each place we visited, but they cannot tell the whole story. The pain in peoples' eyes tells more of that story, that what was done here was not an attack against military powers. It was an attack against PEOPLE: men, women, and, most sadly, children. As we stood in front of the charred and still burning beans and corn from the silos which were attacked, it was impossible for us to imagine how anyone could think they were achieving anything by burning our food supplies. These people have worked so very hard in their fields for the so very little that they have... "Fruit of the vine - the sweat, the toil - the work of human hands."


What is so hard for us as U.S. citizens is to know that our government is financing all this death dealing. In the still-smoking rubble of the coffee plant, the lumber yard, the granery, we found the concrete evidences of our country's participation: bullet jackets from U.S. weapons, cardboard shell cases with NATO written on them, big pieces of shrapnel. The instruments of death...and suffering...and destruction, in the hands of what Mr. Reagan calls "freedom fighters". And yet, even during these days, in the midst of terror and pain, we have also witnessed so much life and courage and the will to live and endure. In the midst of the heaviest fighting, when we were pinned inside our house, we heard a young girl walking around the neighborhood with a loudspeaker asking for blood donors to report to the hospital to give blood for the wounded. And then there was the young woman in the yellow dress whom we held at the cemetery while she sobbed for her brother who had been killed. A few hours later, she was working with a volunteer brigade who was trying to save the unburned corn and rice at the grainery before the rains came. And the determination in the voice of the watchman at the lumberyard who promised that with their faith, and the help of God, they would rebuild yet again. Such hope and faith and valiant determination is a gift to us. "Blessed are the humble, for they shall inherit the earth."

We all returned home after a long day of gathering testimonies and information, tired and sad, and yet uplifted by these signs of life. Both of us had already gone to bed when the word came that we were again in a state of alert and that there was contra movement nearby. Peggy let us know, and we all got into our "crisis clothes" and got our emergency bags ready again,

"You will want to seek out the structural reasons which foster or cause the different forms of poverty in the world and in your own country, so that you can apply the proper remedies... (because) the poor of the United States and of the world are your brothers and sisters in Christ."

—John Paul II, Yankee Stadium, 1979

including our first-aid running bag. If we heard anything in the distance, we were all to move immediately to our neighbor's house. The alert was a cruel reminder that these attacks would continue. Our WFP friends were still with us, and so after getting prepared, we all sat together again and prayed: "What therefore can separate us from the love of God?" (Romans 8) and Bishop Romero's words reminded us of the joy and hope that are a part of our Gospel call, even in the midst of fear. And that forgiveness, too, is a gospel imperative. Our tiredness and nervousness turned to calm; we even sang a few songs in remarkable harmony! And then we all went to sleep, literally with our boots on. Blessedly, there was no disturbance in the night's peace.



And so here we are. We want you to know that through all of this we have never felt alone. Strangely enough, Jesus' presence is felt so strongly even through fear and tension. The people of Ocotal, our neighbors and friends, are constant companions and sources of strength. So many came to see how we were, to send bread or a nacatmala. They shared their



called from the U.S. to give the people here their solidarity.

We carry you all in our hearts and we feel stronger because of you as we face whatever comes. We've learned so much along the way and we are ever better prepared to look into the future and to find ways to continue to serve and be served by the people here. We are certain that our God will be with us and the people

very close and that God's promise of life and hope is faithful. The words of Isaiah echo our own hopes and deepest prayer:

On this mountain God will remove the mourning veil covering all peoples, the shroud enwrapping all nations, and will destroy Death forever. The Lord Yahweh will wipe away the tears from every cheek, will take away the people's shame everywhere on earth, for Yahweh has said so, That day, it will be said, "See, this is our God

in whom we hope for salvation: Yahweh is the one in whom we hoped."

Isaiah 25:7-10

Peace,

Joan Uhlen, M.M.
Rachel Pinal, P.B.V.M.

From Karen House

by TEKA CHILDRESS

At Karen House we are continually made aware of the plight of homeless women who are mentally ill. The struggle that these women go through is very much in my mind because of one particular woman whom I will call Rebecca. Rebecca lived with us for a couple of months until her time was up. We offered to extend her stay on the condition that she receive mental health care which she had been refusing up to that time. Seemingly, without a second thought, Rebecca chose to leave rather than see a psychiatrist. She claims to have somewhere to stay, but we believe she lives on the street. She comes everyday to eat at our house and twice when she has come she had been badly beaten up. The first time we suspect she had been raped and the second time she had been cut with a knife and beaten about her face. This last time she was hurt we offered to drive her to where she stayed or to let her sleep on the couch, but she declined our assistance.

Several questions arise as we get to know Rebecca and others who are mentally ill who deny it and who refuse help. If we desire to love these women how do we respond to them and to their illnesses? How long do we let these women stay with us who have no chance of making it on their own? Are we supporting their illness by letting them stay without taking steps to get well? Yet, can we watch them wandering the streets, becoming victims to those who would harm them? There are no pat answers to any of these questions. We do our best to help the women who come to us yet try not to take away their freedom or their responsibility for their lives. We have in a few instances decided to force women into Malcolm Bliss against their will when we felt they were endangering their own or others' lives and seemed unable to choose freely because of their sickness. We are currently pursuing such a course with regard to Rebecca.



We must allow ourselves to be

Involved in their lives...

Yet, along with our own personal response to Rebecca there is another issue at hand. How should society respond to her? Rebecca is one of one million people who are homeless and mentally ill, according to a recent study done by the American Psychiatric Association. The group was evaluating the trend of the homeless mentally ill. The number of mentally ill on the street has grown with the tendency the last couple of decades to release them from institutions and place them in the community. Obviously, there is a problem here. Resources need to be available in the community for them, such as group living situations. Otherwise, the mentally ill are not placed in the Community, they are just dumped out of hospitals on their own.

If we believe as Christians that we are one body then we must attend to these people. We must allow ourselves to be involved in their lives and the struggles that entails, as well as call upon society to provide the resources that these people desperately need.



Teka Childress, long-time Karen House community member, is always willing to go the extra mile, except perhaps when she is doing her daily jogging.

At a time when we are being told that "America is back," this poem of Langston Hughes represents the Round Table's only election commentary.

LET AMERICA BE AMERICA AGAIN

by Langston Hughes

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

Say who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,
Tangled in that ancient endless chain
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!
Of work the man! Of take the pay!
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.
I am the worker sold to the machine.
I am the Negro, servant to you all.
I am the people, worried, hungry, mean—
Hungry yet today despite the dream.
Beaten yet today—O, Pioneers!
I am the man who never got ahead,
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream
In that Old World while still a serf of kings,
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
That even yet its mighty daring sings
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
That's made America the land it has become.
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas
In search of what I meant to be my home—
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,
To build a "homeland of the free."
The free?

A dream—
Still beckoning to me!

O, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
And yet must be—
The land where every man is free.
The land that's mine—
The poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME—
Who made America,
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose—
The steel of freedom does not stain.
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,
We must take back our land again,
America!

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!
An ever-living seed,
Its dream
Lies deep in the heart of me.

We, the people, must redeem
Our land, the mines, the plants, the rivers,
The mountains and the endless plain—
All, all the stretch of these great green states—
And make America again!

The writer Langston Hughes was one of the foremost representatives of the "Negro Renaissance of the 1920's," when Blacks began to express thoughts and attitudes unashamedly from their own unique perspective. Langston Hughes often used his poetic talent to oppose oppression, and in so doing spoke for all the dispossessed of this land.

From Cass House

by

W

S.



Many exciting things have been happening since the last time you heard from us. As usual the house was closed for the month of August for cleaning and repair and for our "recouping". We are now back in full swing and looking forward to ministering and being ministered to by all who come to our home.

One of the more exciting events is that in January of last year several of us from both houses got together with some people from our neighborhood and incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation and began purchasing buildings in our neighborhood. We have started a Land Trust Corporation for the purpose of saving at least 50 units in our area for people who have lived in the neighborhood and given it the flavor we value. The area is slated for redevelopment and we hope creatively to bring together the "new" residents with those who have been a part of the area for the last fifteen to twenty years. As with most new undertakings, our progress has been slow, but as of now, we are the proud owners of three buildings which insure that at least five economically disadvantaged families will not be forced from our area. Presently all of the people living in the units are rental tenants, but at the end of one year they will be offered the option of becoming owners of their units. The By-Laws of the Land Trust guarantee that the land will be held in trust, and that only capital investment, together with improvement expenditures, may be charged when any unit is sold back to the trust. Any tenants who choose to buy their homes will continue to lease the land from the Land Trust. If they choose to continue as rental tenants, they may do so—and the Land Trust Corporation will continue to hold both the land and the buildings in these particular situations. If anyone is interested in learning more about this venture, please talk with Teka, Virginia, or Sr. Carol.

Visiting and working with us this year will hold a few surprises, especially for old friends. Kathy, Sr. Carol, Joy and Terri are continuing on as community members in an extended fashion, for all are sharing in the ministry of the house as non-residents. Hopefully, others in the community will take advantage of the options offered by having Barb's house, Kathy, Joy and Terri's apartment and the Convent as getaway opportunities when the need arises. None of us is so far away that we can't be on hand when needed, and it is hoped that this new arrangement will provide a new surge of energy for all of us.




Mev Puleo

Sr. Carol's "non-residential" omnipresence at Cass House remains a matter for wonder. One of these days she's going to tell us how she does it.

We have some other exciting surprises to share as well. Tommy Askew, a rather recent volunteer has agreed to become a part of the decision-making phase of our community with all of the responsibilities that are entailed. Tommy adds a gentle, caring and compassionate ear especially for the men who come to live with us. Frank Combs has decided to come and spend some time with us as a live-in volunteer for a couple of months, and Tim will be coming from Joplin, Missouri to share the ministry of hospitality with us, too. To both Frank and Tim we say, welcome!

Now that we have shared our surprises with you, we come sharing our needs as well. We find ourselves needing silverware - especially forks and spoons - soup bowls, dinner plates and large serving spoons. We are also getting many requests for furniture from former guests.

Lastly, we want to take this opportunity to publicly express our gratitude to all of you who continue to come to help us offer a Home that is hospitable and gently personable for all who live with us. Without your generosity the work of this House would not be possible. We pray for you often and ask that you continue to ask God's blessing on us. We also want to offer a warm welcome to all who will be coming to share in our mission for the first time. Again, many, many thanks to you all! 



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The St. Louis Covenant Community of War Tax Resisters (SLCCWTR) has the following schedule of activities:

Sunday, November 11: 6:30 pm pot-luck dinner followed by a program on resisting taxes through investments

Sunday, January 27: Afternoon workshop with speakers, literature, etc.

Sunday, March 10: 6:30 pm pot luck dinner followed by program (to be announced)

Monday, April 15: Protest of some sort in combination with shared testimonies and reflections. Plans are being formulated.

The dinner/programs and workshop will be held at St. Cronan's school, 1202 S. Boyle (enter from south parking lot). Call 658-2425 (day) or 241-5008 (evenings) for more information. ALL ARE WELCOME!



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THANK YOU!!!

THANK YOU!!!

We would like to express a special thank you to our many supporters - volunteers and those who gift us with financial donations. Without your support, our work on behalf of the poor wouldn't be possible.

Our needs are ever-present. Winter will soon be upon us with its increased demands on our bank account. Any and all support you can give us will be greatly appreciated.

Karen House needs blankets

We at the Catholic Worker are eager to share our experiences, our witness, and our tradition with others. If you are part of or know of a group which would or should be interested in finding out about our work and our life, get in touch with us (621-4052: Karen House, 621-3085: Cass House) and work with us on setting up a speaking engagement.

The Round Table is now sent out to over a thousand households. Not bad, but there must surely be others who ought to be receiving this journal. Do you know any of them? If so, please send their names to Mark Scheu, c/o Karen House, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO 63106.

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to Mark Scheu, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO 63106. People working on this issue include: Bill Miller, Mike McIntyre, Pat Coy, Virginia Druhe, Merv Puleo, Mark Scheu and Harriette Lane Baggett. Letters to the editor are welcomed.

THE ROUND TABLE

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