

# CATHOLIC AGITATOR

## THE FRIEZE OF PROPHETS



*"At the Fire" Graphic by Rufo Noriega*

PROPHETIC PEOPLE WHO HAVE INSPIRED US

**THE FRIEZE  
OF PROPHETS**

*Prophets are not just people who did good things or who modeled a way of being kind or compassionate. They are people who committed their lives to embodying the vision of God through their values, words, and actions.*

**IN SEARCH OF PROPHETS**

By MATT HARPER

**F**rom the moment the sacred chrism of baptism kisses our foreheads, Catholics are called to a powerful witness: priest, prophet, and king. This anointing oil welcomes us into the Mystical Body of Christ, but comes with a sacred responsibility.

Despite the unconscionably gendered nature of our Church and the biological hangup so prevalent in our spaces, there is no gendered or biological predisposition towards propheticism. It is not a unique vocation only some are called to. It is a promise we make, a northern star we orient ourselves by, a grace that comes not simply from the Spirit, but from intention, commitment, and practice. To refuse it is to fall short of our holy, ancestral order; to deny it is to doubt the mandate of our Creator.

Prophets are not just people who did good things or who modeled a way of being kind or compassionate. They are people who committed their lives to embodying the vision of God through their values, words, and actions.

From whatever position or social locations we occupy, we are called to be people who recognize the presence of injustice, yes, but more importantly, we are called to be a people so discontented with the current social order that we are compelled to action. We are called to labor unrelentingly to excavate the roots of all injustice, to refuse to tolerate the deception and violence of the world around us, to make it our work both to speak discomforting truths, and to demand a societal conversion. We are called to be holy fools who dream of the greatness we are capable of; to en flesh God's hopes for our world and for our very lives.

The current state of the world makes it clear that we are not doing enough to honor our baptismal call.

The Catholic Worker movement has produced and celebrated a wide range of prophets and fools over the years. I have long been inspired by the story of a wall Dorothy Day adorned with prophets from a variety of faith traditions (and none) at Maryhouse. From the national to the local level, many names have become



common sources of inspiration, reminders of what we are capable of. We imagine you could name a few...

However, this list must not stay static. To seek constant inspiration, to be shaped daily by the insights of others is to open ourselves to the possibility of our own transformation, our own growth, our own incarnation. Who might be included in your compendium of prophets? Who would adorn your frieze? Regardless of whether we know their names or whether they know the impact they have had on us, let us name those who have inspired and moved us, not to fall into the trappings of idolatry, but because calling things by their rightful name affirms their power and place.

But more than simply recognizing these individuals and communities, we want to learn from them and examine our own practices in light of theirs. We want them to inspire us to become new in such a way that not only impacts how we live our individual lives but also how we join in the needed work to build a new world in the shell of the old. By centering the wisdom, guidance, creativity, and vision of our modern-day prophets, we hope to become purified, like gold tested in fire, and grow our collective capacity to struggle for the world where the dignity of all people is reflected in our structures, values... everywhere. How can we be people our future descendents will look upon with gratitude and for inspiration?

Though this issue hardly honored our hope to name our own panoply of prophets, we offer a few and hope you will help us finish the endeavor. Whose prophetic truths inspire you? How have you sought to model even a small piece of your life after theirs? What can you do to take one more step into the sacred responsibility to speak hard truths; to confront structures of evil that make it harder for people to be good, to survive, to become that which God created them to be? May this be our year of record-breaking prophets and prophetic actions. Ω

*Matt Harper is a Los Angeles Catholic Worker community member and co-editor of the Agitator.*

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**WE ARE CALLED TO BE A PEOPLE SO DISCONTENTED WITH THE CURRENT SOCIAL ORDER THAT WE ARE COMPELLED TO ACTION**



## INDEPENDENCE DAY REFLECTION

By JOSHUA FLAUGHER

In February 1993, I read the book, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings And Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* It was a momentous occasion because it prompted my journey on learning about Gandhi's philosophy and method of nonviolence, coupled with Dr. King's melding of Gandhian non-violence with the Christian witness. I quickly became convinced, as Dr. King did in the 1950s, that only by embracing the philosophy and method of Gandhian nonviolence could we change the fate of our nation and begin the process of transforming the United States into an actual democracy with liberty, equality, and justice for all people.

Two hundred and seventeen years earlier, in 1776, the leaders within this nation's thirteen colonies signed their names to a guiding principle that represented the culmination of what they believed was both the finest religious wisdom of the human race and the finest philosophical wisdom of the human race: "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights and among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

That statement grew out of the formation of a radical new philosophy in a world that was largely dominated by top-down rulers like kings, queens, monarchs, feudal lords, and emperors. It was a world that was largely dominated by the oppression of poor people, women, and indigenous peoples. It was a world dominated by the notion that ordinary people did not actually matter and should not have a role in choosing their own destinies.

Although this document certainly did not grant equal autonomy to all, but it laid a new foundation towards that ideal.

Most U.S. citizens are unaware of the fact that this guiding principle was the product of religious and philosophical wisdom dating back six millennia. It had been worked on and debated by philosophers for nearly a hundred years (1685-1775) and shaped into the most revolutionary moment in human history because it declared we are not a people formed by creation for the purposes of tyranny and oppression. Rather, we are endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights, and we, the ordinary people of the world, have the capacity to govern ourselves. We have the capacity and the common sense to be able to shape and form a society where there is real access for everyone.

As a result of that one hundred years of debate came a brilliant idea: We should form a new nation where there is equality, liberty, and justice for all. A new kind of empire composed of willing members in which every baby born has equal access to the things necessary for life. A new kind of government where every person, regardless of background, will be provided with the socio-political echo space that will allow them to tap into and experience the gift of life to its fullest and to contribute, not only to their own personal well-being but to the well-being of all.

Of course, the problem was (and still is) that most Americans did not understand their own guiding principles—and worse, did not accept them. The American people did

not (and still do not) understand or accept their own stated principles because our history over (at least) the past 500 years has been a history where dark forces of ill intent have helped shape our minds, hearts, and attitudes. These dark forces are specifically racism, sexism, violence, and plantation capitalism. All four of these demonic forces diminish the dignity of the human person, and permit structures of oppression to emerge that deprive millions of people, even today, of their right to equality, liberty, and justice.

It must be understood that there is no way we can exorcise the demonic forces of racism from our land if we do not exorcise the demonic force of sexism as well. There is no way that we can exorcise the demonic forces of violence and injustice from our land if we do not exorcise the demonic force of plantation capitalism and transform our economy into one of genuine opportunity for every man, woman, and child in our nation. Furthermore, there is no way we can exorcise any of these evils without adopting and implementing Gandhi's philosophy and method of nonviolence as a devoted lifestyle.

The nonviolent philosophy has a simple first step—which squares well with the principles of democracy—it encourages ordinary people to assume their inherent authority to change their world. This is the meaning behind Martin Luther King, Jr.'s and Fannie Lou Hamer's conviction that ordinary people have the power and authority to forge a society, and a world, that has the common good as its foundation. The only way this can happen is through nonviolent struggle against the forces of racism, sexism, violence, and plantation capitalism.

I am not speaking of nonviolence as "anti-violence." I am not speaking of nonviolence as "violence prevention"—although that also is important. I am talking about the fact that our nation, the United States of America, is a nation embedded with, trapped in, and addicted to violence.

We seem to believe that through violence we can become the people God wants us to be; that violence will somehow produce the kinds of changes we want to see in the world; that violence is the way to make people and the world better. Our national love affair with guns is merely a symptom of this pathological disease. The fruits of this addiction are devastating.

To illustrate my point, look at the situation between Israel and Palestine. Israel and Palestine have been

*Continued on page 6*

## THE RISK OF THE CROSS

Book Review

*The Risk of the Cross: Living Gospel Nonviolence in the Nuclear Age*  
By Arthur Laffin  
Twenty-Third Publications, 2020,  
130 pages, \$16.95

By MIKE WISNIEWSKI

As a follow up to my article in the April *Catholic Agitator* (Nuclear Weapons: God's of Metal), I offer a review of this notable and momentous book on nuclear weapons, their threat to all life on the planet, and resistance with gospel nonviolence, by longtime Catholic Worker, activist, and author Arthur Laffin.

Art Laffin is a member of Dorothy Day House Catholic Worker in Washington, DC. He has facilitated retreats, participated in and organized numerous protests and vigils at the Pentagon, White House, and other locations nationwide against nuclear weapons, wars, capital punishment, and other injustices within the institutional church and in society. He was a participant in past "Plowshares" actions, and has served a fair amount of jail/prison time for his resistance efforts.

*The Risk of the Cross* is a revised and updated edition of a book first published in 1981, *The Risk of the Cross: Christian Discipleship in the Nuclear Age*, which was co-authored by Christopher Grannis, Arthur Laffin, and Elin Schade. This superb revised edition contains the original Forward written by renowned spiritual leader and theologian Henri Nouwen, and a splendid and thought-provoking new Forward by longtime advocate and mentor of gospel nonviolence, John Dear. It also provides the original Introduction to the first edition, and a stimulating new Introduction that provides in-depth analysis of Christian discipleship today.

This book is written for either personal or group study. It contains five stimulating sessions with five related informative and inspirational appendix sections that coincide with each session, and eleven resource pages to assist the reader in further study, reflection, contacts, and ways to act. Each session contains an excellent reflective opening prayer, a gospel reading from Mark, a reflection article followed by discussion questions, and a closing meditation, each pertinent to our discipleship journey in the

nuclear age in the midst of empire.

Laffin's reflections are influenced by various authors, particularly Ched Myers' books *Binding The Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, and *Who Will Roll Away the Stone? Discipleship Queries for First World Christians*. Other influential authors include Wes Howard Brook, Phil and Dan Berrigan, John Dear, Dorothy Day, James Cone, MLK, and William Stringfellow, among others.

Laffin, in the Introduction, states that "Today, as in 1981, there is a great need for Christians, in light of their faith, to address the nuclear threat that imperils all life and to actively become Jesus' peace and justice makers. Today, in this time of perpetual war, there is also an equally important need to address and act on the related threat of climate and environmental devastation, which endangers all of creation" (6). Further, he reminds us that two central themes in Mark's gospel are "repentance" and "resistance." This repentance implies not only conversion of heart but turning away from empire. Jesus then calls his disciples to follow him, to proclaim the reign of God, and to nonviolently resist the forces of evil and death. Living in the U.S., an empire responsible for so much needless death and suffering in our world today, we need to heed Jesus' proclamation now more than ever" (8).

This entire book helps the reader to better understand the call to repentance, resistance, and how to more faithfully follow the person known as the Prince of Peace in the midst of empire and its nuclear madness. Laffin affirms that "The central question of faith is: In whom do I trust? Not: What do I believe" (12). He later asks: "On what authority—divine or human—do we rely on nuclear weapons for our freedom and security?" Adding, "Any trust that we put in nuclear weapons is trust displaced from God" (33).

He instructively provides vital information on nuclear weapons history; testimonies from someone who worked in the nuclear weapons industry and resigned because of faith convictions; Christian pacifism and church teachings; personal statements on peace and nuclear disarmament; the human, economic, and environmental costs of nuclear weapons; and how we, as church, must accept our cross and respond to and resist nuclear weapons by living gospel nonviolence. It is now, more than ever, a moral imperative that we no longer live in denial of this crisis' catastrophic reality, but rather fully trust in God's power to heal and free us.

*The Risk of the Cross* is an essential and valuable contribution to the discussion and implementation of gospel nonviolence in resistance, specifically related to the most diabolical weapons made in human history. It also helps us put into action Jesus' message and example in our own life while living in the midst of empire. It is a MUST read in these perilous times. Ω

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## PROPHETIC PEOPLE WHO HAVE INSPIRED US

*How many of us truly understand the ways that city hall, law enforcement, and our criminal courts work together to harm our community?*

# UNTIL WE ALL GET OVER THE MOUNTAINTOP

By MATT HARPER

*"All I have is a voice to undo the folded lie,  
The romantic lie in the brain  
Of the sensual man-in-the-street  
And the lie of Authority  
Whose buildings grope the sky:  
There is no such thing as the State  
And no one exists alone;  
Hunger allows no choice...  
We must love one another or die."  
- W.H. Auden "September 1, 1939"*

Recently I interviewed General Dogon from the Los Angeles Community Action Network, who was raised on the same Skid Row streets he now defends. As a man who has waded through the waters of an addiction fueled by poverty, racism, and a culture of disposability, it did not take long for him to become a victim of our structural sins: mass incarceration and the "War on Drugs."

Despite the unrelenting obstacles put in his way and the countless opportunities stripped from his neighborhoods, or maybe because of them, Dogon grew into a prophet of justice, a teller of hard truths. Unlike the prophets of old like Job, who sewed sackcloth on his skin and laid his horn low in the dust (16:15), Dogon has chosen a clipboard and bullhorn as his tools. His story and wisdom offer profound insights, both about the complex systems around us, and the betrayal of people and institutions tasked with taking care of our communities. More importantly, his story and wisdom model what we, also, are capable of.

Our earliest formations do not set most of us up for success. Too many of us maneuver our lives without a true sense of who we are or where we come from. Racist histories, stolen lineages, toxic anesthetics become the offerings of power and its many systems. This loss of rootedness and knowledge is the foundation upon which Dogon and many of us are deceived into the trappings, values, and escapes of empire.

This grand deception has one intention: an exploitation that concentrates resources and power into the hands of a few. The Thirteenth Amendment did not change who reaped the benefits of slavery. As a ward of the state, Dogon's care was never prioritized over the profit that could be made from him.

It is no surprise then that Dogon rebelled nor that his "disobedience" was deemed to be "in need of correction." After one conflict during one particular prison sentence, Dogon was sentenced to five years in the hole at Corcoran's Security Housing Unit. His life changed forever amidst that community of political prisoners.

Sometimes we are not ready to change. When another prisoner offered Dogon a book about Black history rather than a "shitkicker Western," Dogon got mad. Boredom led him to crack the cover; a perusing of the pictures led him to dive into the text. Seeds planted deep and long ago bloomed in that new soil: "I didn't know what or where that road would go, but something told me to follow it."

When we finally see the need for a new lens through which to view the

world, we get to decide how we will respond. Dogon reeducated himself, voraciously consuming books, even skipping out on yard time to dive deeper into things he had never considered: "I was just dogmatically into it, I couldn't stop, it was like I had a new birth" he reflected.

And thus transformation calls all of us to live in our world anew. When Dogon finally returned to the general population years later, he moved as a different person. No longer interested in simply passing time or wasting energy fighting the wrong purveyors of violence, he committed to a new regimen: purging that which no longer served him for that which serves everyone.

Dogon began educating others around him. As a member of the Black Guerilla Family, he committed to taking people under his wing and motivating them to be a positive force by getting involved, joining community organizations, and supporting others. In addition to the mentoring and relationship work, Dogon also grew his capacity to challenge institutions. He studied the California Department of Corrections handbook and learned how to write complaints. He read law books and started documenting violations of prison infrastructure, practices, and guard behavior. He sent these to the warden, to the director of corrections, even to Human Rights Watch. The more Dogon pushed, the more he was threatened to be sent back to the hole.

"I don't care where you send me," Dogon told the guards. "I am going to speak out and tell the truth and I don't care if you like it or not. I am not here to tell you what you want to hear; the truth is that you have human rights violations in this prison."

Dogon continued to represent the interests of the incarcerated during his 12 years in prison. But trying to advocate for the rights of the people without getting lost in the politics of prison was a difficult task: "Sometimes we would sit down at the table with the administration to iron out problems, but often I wanted to be like Jesus and kick the whole table over."

His early release could have tempted Dogon into prioritizing his own stability, but seventy days into his parole at the Harbor Lights rehab facility on Skid Row showed Dogon that his sobriety, though deeply important, could not become the sole focus of his life.

Dogon chose the uncertainty of the streets instead, despite knowing our society had never built the structures to honor the full needs of people like him. And as he navigated downtown L.A., he came into conflict with the priorities, tactics, and inhumanity of the Central City Association's Business Improvement Districts. Facing their calculated efforts to wipe away the old community so as to make a new downtown for a new gentry and for capitalism, oppression bred resistance for Dogon.

However, one does not simply have to be at the knuckle's end of our systems' fists to cultivate an ethos of solidarity or to foster a practice of resistance. A person's ability to speak truth to power and sustain himself and build momentum in their prophetic witness alongside the discarded

"grows out of the fight," Dogon assured me. "Out of our everyday struggle. It grows out of seeing people that are fighting with you fall dead trying to get over the mountaintop."

As the witness of prophets like St. Oscar Romero makes clear, the more time we stay in intimate relationships with disposed people—the more we hear their stories, witness their struggles, and allow our hearts to break with theirs—the more we will see the connections to our own lives. The more we see our bound interests, the more boldly we will resist and the less we will tolerate the violent antics and misguided self-interest of politicians, businesses, church leaders, and property owners. The more we learn what pushing on these broken structures and corrupted people can do, the longer we will remain committed to this shared struggle. And rest assured, the longer we stand with the most outcast people in our world, the more we will understand which paths will get all people free.

When I watch the coroner picking up the bodies of our unhoused neighbors, five a day because of the violence that has been forced upon them, the failed nature of our policies becomes real, Dogon assured me. When I watch the criminalization of poverty and the ballooning numbers of new homeless, nothing else makes sense but prophetic honesty. The obstacles are not diverse political affiliations but lies and obscured priorities.

There is only one theologically appropriate response to a City Council that creates motions that criminalize poverty so that business can run "as usual." We claim our power and use our voice. We "refuse to accept anything that will cause more deaths of my friends, our neighbors," Dogon asserted. "If you don't say anything, what will happen? Nothing will change."

Since we are going to mow the lawn, Dogon added, "I believe in fully cutting the grass. We cannot accept half truths or leave a problem half solved. When you chop it all down you don't have to come back later because you already did it, it is already done." Seeing how our elected leaders love to wheel and deal for major donors and those with powerful rolodexes, we can't leave our community to be sold down the river when greed gets its hands on our interests. There is no room for bargaining when five people die a day. "Which side are you on?" Dogon posed. And more so, "All that shit that you leave undone is what may come back and take you out."

Whether through the lived experience of being the primary target of these systems, or because we have cast our lot with the dispossessed, we must expand our ability to see with clearer vision. If there is one thing shared by prophets it is their uncanny ability to see complicated realities and decipher the deepest truths there. Every day we must resist simplistic answers and deepen our political analysis. We must move with skepticism of those who hold an unequal amount of power and resources not because they are not reflections of the Beloved, but because unequal power and resources are the result of sinfulness.

Tragedies like houselessness do not come out of nowhere, nor are they the fault of any one individual or single structure. The deeper we understand the factors and players that lead to it, the intentional structures and intersecting forces that make it inevitable, and what is gained from its presence, the more we will understand how to end it. The systemic responsibility for this problem far exceeds that of individual actions; the counter-narrative wastes our time and keeps us from our most effective, comprehensive solutions.

How many of us truly understand the ways that city hall, law enforcement, and our criminal courts work together to harm our community? How many of us are committed to really seeing how the business interests of Los Angeles are the primary cause dictating the direction of the policies that get written, enforced, and weaponized against our communities? When developers fund the war chests of politicians, how can we believe that our collective wellbeing will be prioritized? When private property becomes more protected than individual human survival, how can any of us stay silent?

Prophets like General Dogon know that it is a misguided analysis that refuses to draw the connection between others and ourselves. It is foolish to believe our house can be in order while our neighbors' fall into disarray. It is arrogant not to see how the chaos of others' lives is directly linked to the flood of resources and opportunities stolen for ours.

When Philip Alston, the U.N. Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, visited Dogon and the rest of the Los Angeles Community Action Network, his assessment was clear: the only thing keeping the unhoused of resource-rich L.A. in squalor is political will. "That's it," Dogon remembers him saying. "It's not an issue of resources, it's political will. All you have to do is do it." Dogon walked in the front door of LA CAN almost twenty years ago, but his commitment transcends employment. He has made it his daily mission to practice what he preaches: to walk with people, to hear their stories, to stand with them as they face the violence of city departments and business interests. He bangs on city hall's doors and confronts the hypocrisy of politicians.

Too many have learned that conflict is disrespectful and un-generative, that there is a "proper time and channel" for redress. Those who have had to be the primary victims of these systems know there is no time like now, no more proper channel than truth telling, and no one but us.

Had Dogon been convicted 27 days later in the early 90's, he would have fallen victim to the three strikes law and we would never have seen him again. Instead of hunkering down, he straps up his boots each day to en-flesh Gospels he does not religiously subscribe to. If he can, why won't we? Will we love one another or will we die? Ω

*Matt Harper is a Los Angeles Catholic Worker community member and co-editor of the Agitator.*



The core values held by this growing group influenced our local church, St. Cronan. Parishioners required church leaders and each other to actively address current issues in our society. A fellowship of lay preachers would rotate doing the homilies, always challenging the congregation to examine their lives and the world we moved through.

# NEIGHBORHOOD PROPHETS

By MEGAN RAMSEY

My introduction to Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker was not originally through *The Long Loneliness* or Peter Maurin's *Easy Essays*. Instead, the movement's philosophy was passed down to me, second-hand and well-worn by the people who made up my world growing up.

Some have referred to me as a second-generation Catholic Worker. In St. Louis, my parents both spent a short time at a Catholic Worker before they chose to move into a neighborhood along with a number of other young families who had previously lived either at the Catholic Worker or at another intentional community. Their goal was to hold onto some aspects of communal living but with their own independent households.

We shared harvests from gardens, power tools, meals, conversation, and childcare. New families were drawn to the neighborhood and the community grew. We were surrounded by people who chose to live faithfully to their values, to raise children to do so as well, by modeling an example in real life.



All the adults in my life seemed to have careers centered around the service of others. There were social workers and nurses who worked with the poor and mentally disabled. Many were educators, including a woman who spearheaded creating a Montessori program for our underserved area, and a number of high school and college teachers who empowered students to question what they were told, to think for themselves, and to impart change in the world.

Whether professionally or recreationally, the residents of our neighborhood were all philosophers and activists. From community dinners to impromptu sidewalk chats, there was rarely a dull conversation. To name each individual and how they have impacted me, and others, would take several pages of this issue, and would not begin to do them justice.

I studied the works of mercy by observing the ways these folks lived out their lives. I never questioned why the family down the street made a space in their home for a houseless man. As a child, I wish I knew Spanish to be able to play and make friends with the refugee children staying in an old tavern my community converted to give sanctuary to families moving into our country.



Through numerous role models, I learned how to interact with others.

I remember regularly witnessing one father (who worked as a judge) patiently listen to each side of a fight before asking the involved parties to negotiate their own solution to the problem—my first taste of conflict resolution!

Life interconnected with scores of people of every age, and I came to acknowledge how much effort and care meaningful relationships require. Along with the work that goes into nurturing these bonds, I also understood the importance of gathering together in celebration with this extended family crammed into homes for Halloween, the winter solstice, an annual Beatles party, and more.

The core values held by this growing group influenced our local church, St. Cronan. Parishioners required church leaders and each other to actively address current issues in our society. A fellowship of lay preachers would rotate doing the homilies, always challenging the congregation to examine their lives and the world we moved through.

St. Cronan's drew people in from across the city that were seeking out this (sadly) unique focus. When threatened to be closed by the diocese, the community fought back and was spared; the church became the designated "social justice" parish of St. Louis. Politically on the fringe, this parish is fondly considered to be a gateway church: it is either the first church people try out as they consider entering (or returning to) the Catholic faith or the last one some Catholics attend before they believe the Church is no longer the place that reflects the love and justice God calls us to.



When we speak of prophets, what may first come to mind is the image of those fervently rousing crowds, calling out the powers and principalities. But societal change also requires prophets who lead by example, who show us how to bring to life the seemingly impossible calls of the Gospels.

Social transformation will require a collective effort, people to lay the foundation of an alternative way of life. It takes individuals willing to put in the work to create the environment where some may find it easier to join in "to be good."

Having spent the first half of my life in a small version of that society, I now see that community as idyllic and rare, but not entirely out of reach. I found myself craving something similar as I established my life in Los Angeles. Seeking out the Catholic Worker was naturally my move.

I will never forget one of my first times volunteering at the Hippie

Continued on page 6

## THE BOXER

By JEFF DIETRICH

He rose abruptly, cracking the empty bottle of Thunderbird on the side of the curb. Waving his jagged-edged weapon he crossed the street towards our soup line. Aubury Robinson, a former lightweight contender, was ready for action. I knew from past experiences of his bloody rages that I had to intervene. He took a drunken swipe at me with his broken bottle, I grabbed him and pushed. He fell to the ground and I rammed my knee into his stomach with the full force of gravity. He was subdued.

It was the only time in my 50 years of defusing Skid Row brawls in or around our Catholic Worker soup kitchen that I have ever "laid hands" on one of our guests, much less deliberately intended to hurt them. I am a pacifist by vocation and a non-combatant by natural inclination, but I knew that Aubury "Jack" Robinson was going to attack one of our guests, and as Gandhi said: "It is better to use violence to oppose evil than to do nothing."

When I first came to Skid Row in September 1970, it was much like it had been for 100 years before: a "hoboemia." Not unlike the Bowery in New York, Madison Street in Chicago, the Tenderloin in San Francisco, it was a classic Skid Row with bars, single room occupancy hotels, all night porn theaters, "flop houses," and evangelical missions serving the mostly white, mostly older, mostly alcoholic inhabitants.

The old Central Station located at 5th St. and Central Ave, the heart of Skid Row, was demolished in 1956. But the Greyhound bus station was still located at 7th and Los Angeles Streets and its facilities attracted drug dealers and derelicts and low-cost "economy" travelers. The convergence of these transportation centers constitutes what most urban planners concede as necessary prerequisites for the creation of Skid Rows. And in the early 1970's that was still true, as we experienced an influx to our population with the winter months as workers returned from harvesting crops, working oil rigs, and various other seasonal work.

At that time, the Catholic Worker was a completely new entity on Skid Row, I was a recent draft resister, anti-war protester, newly minted radical and I had just read Saul Alinsky's *Reveille for Radicals*. I did not want to save souls as the Evangelical Missions did, I wanted to transform the social environment as Saul Alinsky did. I wanted to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable" as our co-founder Dorothy Day did.

We had just recently organized the Blood Strike, a boycott of the Skid Row blood banks. We formed the Blood Donors Union, which demanded higher payment for donated blood and better health care for donors.

We slept in the basement of the old kitchen with the strikers and every morning we arose and picketed a targeted blood bank, sending prospective donors across the street to its com-



Catherine and Jeff



Seder Participants



Good Friday Stations of the Missionary Cross

petitor. We received many threats of firebombing and violence.

Unfortunately, that project only ended up adding fuel to the efforts of the legislature to ban the sale of whole blood in the State of California and the eventual closing of all Skid Row blood banks. But it also led to my being appointed by newly elected mayor Tom Bradley to the Citizens Advisory Board of the Community Redevelopment Agency (over the vigorous objections of Councilman Gil Lindsey, who had called me "a little monkey" in response to my organizing efforts).

Needless to say, as a community organizer and activist, I was vastly skeptical of sitting down with a bunch of businessmen and corporate types to give "advice" on downtown redevelopment. At the time, the operational plan for the "redevelopment" of Skid Row was the "Silver Book" which called for the wholesale destruc-

tion of the entire area and the erection of a library, a U.S.C. extension, creation of businesses and luxury hotels.

During a recess of the City Council hearing on Downtown Redevelopment the "Blue Book" somehow "appeared" on each councilperson's desk; detailing an alternative plan to the "Silver Book," one that aimed at saving Skid Row housing and creating parks and jobs and a Skid Row Development Corporation. The "Blue Book" plan was created by the Catholic Worker with the expert help of Jim Bonner, director of an advocacy group, the Community Design Center. It was, after months of deliberation and negotiations with the business community, eventually formalized with the unfortunate designation of a "containment plan" for Skid Row development.

The "containment plan" came into being with the initial recognition by



St. Paul High School Walk For Hunger



Megan, Ken, Matt at Chateau Marmont Protest

the business community that Skid Row was not going to move; it was just too big to relocate. And therefore it was decided to concentrate all social services within the boundaries of Skid Row, rehab existing hotels, create a non-profit to operate them along with in-house social services, and re-locate the largest evangelical mission, the Union Rescue Mission, from Main Street to the center of Skid Row at 6th St. and San Pedro.

The tradeoff was that police would be allowed to ticket panhandlers when they migrated into the business center, thus diminishing the deleterious effect of the Skid Row poor, it was. But it allowed the business center to flourish, and it allowed Skid Row to grow as an Ellis Island reception center to L.A.'s prodigiously expanding homeless population.

Sometime around the mid 1980's Skid Row began to experience a rapidly expanding population of younger African Americans, whose drug of choice was crack cocaine. Not coincidentally, the first Skid Row homeless encampment sprang up in the vacant lot next to the Catholic Worker soup kitchen. As this population expanded we began to focus on essential services to the growing sidewalk encampments.

Our first campaign was to provide porta-potties to a community of people who were doing their personal business on the streets, between parked cars and behind dumpsters. We were arrested numerous times for sitting in at the mayor's office, blockading city council members' bathrooms and disrupting meetings of Skid Row businessmen. We were finally successful when Mayor Riordan, after years of campaigning, finally allowed 30 porta-potties to be installed in Skid Row.

Continued on page 6

## ON A MISSION

By TOM HOFFARTH

I find myself on a mission. It has to do with separating truths from tall tales about the California mission system in general, and Mission San Gabriel in particular. Because things just got complicated. I am thankful for that.

About 20 years ago, my then-4th-grade daughter had the mandatory elementary school project to learn about how and why the California mission system was created. We picked the nearby Mission San Gabriel. Convenient, accessible holy ground.

Drove over, soaked it all in, read up on its history—established in 1771—report done.

It was a warm and fuzzy reminder how I did the same kind of thing growing up in Southern California. In the late 1960s, my report was on Mission San Juan Capistrano—that fun, touristy place with the song about the swallows returning. Now, the whole thing is hard to swallow.

Back at Mission San Gabriel for the latest incarnation of the Good Friday journey on the L.A. Catholic Worker's Via Crucis, the exercise shook my reference points and challenged my naivety. It was a jolt to the soul.

On an intellectual level, this was not new news. Back in 2015, we saved a *New York Times* opinion piece focused on the pre-canonized Rev. Junipero Serra with the headline "California's Saint, and a Church's Sins."

The well researched essay referenced a website created by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles—it seems to no longer exist—in which Fr. Serra's method of using Native Americans in the creation of the missions was justified by the logic: If the Spanish colonists had not moved in to claim the region, even with all the secular terror it was to exert in getting it done, other countries such as England, Russia, "or another imperial power" would have done it. Either way, the Indigenous tribes could have suffered a far worse fate. They were converted to Catholicism and made citizens of Spain. They got a better deal.

So peace be with their souls. In the summer of 2020, an assignment for *Angelus News* sent me back to this topic. I reported on how the Ventura City Council debated the future a nine-foot bronze Serra statue that had to be hidden away from vandals. What was causing this? Outrage over not having history acknowledged and addressed.

The church found a compromise. It could be rehoused at Mission San Buenaventura (founded by Serra in 1782), in part because that site was conveniently elevated by Pope Francis to the rank of minor basilica. It was now a safer haven on the church's private property. No more public nuisance.

L.A. Archbishop Gomez said at the time he was pleased the city conducted a "thoughtful and respectful public discourse" on the matter. He also said those "attacking St. Junipero's good name and vandalizing his mem-

orials do not know his true character or the actual historical record."

Actually, all we had to do was hear the pain and sorrow in the voices by those part of the Ventura council public forums. One had to be empathetic to hear the grief as they explained how that statue had been a trigger for them based on how their ancestors were treated.

At the meeting, Ventura Council member Lorrie Brown asked: What would Junipero Serra do in this situation?

"I will use the words of another speaker who quoted Serra as saying, 'Ever forward, never back.' If we're going to move forward this deliberation about placement of the statues," she concluded.

It does not feel quite that simple. Going forward for decades, we have told our schoolchildren a convenient, quasi-authentic account that feels more like a paint-by-number kit found in a mission parish gift store. There is a grave need to go back and fact check.

On this new L.A. Catholic Worker pilgrimage, we walked a road of tears. It was a physical challenge to go station to station—San Gabriel City Hall, the millrace facility, a former monastery for Dominican sisters across from the Grape Vine Arbor, the homestead of property owner Don Juan Lopez.

In the context of Jesus Christ's procession to his human death, we asked for forgiveness.

The fourth station in front of the modest mission cemetery was not just profoundly moving, but something that made us move toward more than some perfunctory action.

At this traffic-busy confluence next to Mission Road and Junipero Serra Drive, we wanted to be part of the resurrection.

The mission itself sat behind a fenced gate because of a recent act of arson—add that to its history of floods, epidemics and earthquakes. A statue of Serra had been tucked away for years, last seen splattered in red paint and nearly decapitated.

Fr. John Molyneux, pastor at Mission San Gabriel, said at the time of that statue vandalism: "The California Catholic Conference of Bishops reminds us that the historical truth is that St. Serra repeatedly pressed the Spanish authorities for better treatment of the Native American community. We recognize and understand that for some, he has become a symbol of the dehumanization of the Native American community. We at Mission San Gabriel are committed to continuing dialogue with our Native American representatives in order to achieve a peaceful and just partnership."

It seems like an honorable way to start a thoughtful and respectful public discourse, as Archbishop Gomez once asked. But when and where? Why does it still seem that we are giving more disingenuous lip service to Indigenous victims?

Someday, I will bring my daughter back to visit Mission San Gabriel. Older and wiser. Her children may get a better understanding of what

Continued on page 6

Photos by Mike Wisniewski

Chateau Marmont Protest Photo by Hannah Peterson

Illustrations by Megan Ramsey



## PROPHETIC PEOPLE WHO HAVE INSPIRED US

### Book Review

*Detox! The Spiritual Path of Jesus for 21st Century Men*  
By Craig S. Pesti-Strobel  
Resource Publications, 2021, 252 pages, \$28.00

By DAVE BELLEFEUILLE-RICE

Author Craig Pesti-Strobel is a veteran United Methodist pastor. Weaving together his experiences of marriage, family, metanoia, prayer, and forgiveness with well-informed spiritual, psychological, and sociological scholarship, he offers us a quite readable book of Gospel-inspired stories to serve as one guide along our journey.

He describes a spiritual awakening at a high school church camp when he clearly "heard" Jesus ask, "Who do you think you're fooling?" That awakening remains a force in his life.

*Detox!* offers the reader insights into how our personal being can be enmeshed ominously with interpersonal and social systems. Rather than simply offering an assortment

of discussion questions, this book suggests additional individual and group work for the readers, presented in a variety of creative forms.

As for his focus on masculinity, Pesti-Strobel noticed that in the gospels, Jesus spends a lot of time working with his group of males, who had their own first-century systems to contend with. He finds in those gospel narratives and teachings a male spirituality. As the oldest of eight boys, son of a beloved father (and mother!), and a father himself, he does not presume to be able to offer a spirituality to anyone but men.

The author begins in naming one crisis before us: a world-wide, multi-pronged violent emergency in which men play a dominant, destructive role. He quickly moves into engaging male readers about injustice, violence against women, nonviolence, and disentangling from the Domination System. He writes about these things as if they are ordinary, church pew-friendly, Jesus-loving concerns, not leftist-only passions. Isn't that refreshing!? Isn't that true!?

This ordained Christian is not much interested in systematic theology. He wants men to walk the path of Jesus, the road that leads us into seemingly unanswerable questions and deeply murky waters. He invites us to pursue the way of living that can feel like dying. To him, what counts is not so much what we know as how we live. Whatever path you are attempting, does not that make sense? And don't we all need encouragement and company to practice living any path of integrity?

The beating heart of the book is Pesti-Strobel's marriage story, told memorably in just a few paragraphs. He is on his third hyphenated last name. After entering adulthood determined to devote himself to healthy, egalitarian, happy family life—for family's sake—and to set an example of sanity for his congregations, he is now twice divorced. Bewilderment and sorrow forced him to ask himself what one does when determination just does not cut it.

To his credit, this author does not reveal (for the price of a book) a success recipe he has gleaned from

his mistakes and from the Bible. Don't we all know down deep that even when a good recipe can help, it is not enough to sustain us when we are lost in the mire?

Rather, Pesti-Strobel urges the path of Jesus, a path he has been attempting since his high school awakening. He has found this path endlessly fruitful. In facing his questions, though, he has seen that he must go deeper, though it seems he is not quite sure where that will take him. The challenge to go deeper accompanies everything he writes about.

Taking my cue from him, I urge men to consider reading this book, although I imagine anyone else who delves into it might find useful wisdom. Most of us human beings have witnessed the crumbling of some of our dreams, dreams we had been determined to realize. Most of us have then been tempted to put our faith in a recipe for success, or maybe an anti-recipe. Pesti-Strobel asks us, instead, what about going deeper? Ω

*Dave Bellefeuille-Rice is a long-time friend of the L.A. Catholic Worker.*

### FLAUGHER cont'd from p.2

engaged in violent struggle for 75 years. For three-quarters of a century the Israelis and the Palestinians have thought that violence could help them become what God wants them to be. When you have tried violence and hatred and division for nearly a hundred years, when billions of dollars from Europe and the United States have poured in to fuel that violence and you have not been able to end hostilities or improve the well-being of your own people, when do you stop and ask the question, "Is there something we are not doing that is essential to bringing about change and lasting peace?"

Racism, sexism, violence, and plantation capitalism do not lead to peace, justice, and the beloved community. On the contrary, they are diametrically opposed to it.

Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence says that the greatest force in the universe is the life force that exists inside each person. The force of life that is within each person is living energy—it is love, truth, and beauty. Nonviolence uses that life force for personal and social change. By living nonviolence you tap into what Gandhi called "A force more powerful" against which the forces of evil (present in everyone) cannot prevail.

The problems have not been resolved nor has healing taken place. Moreover, we are not even close to tapping our full human potential.

In the twenty-first century, we need direct action campaigns and massive protest movements motivated by love and compassion—as Gandhi said, "Nonviolence is love. Nonviolence is Truth. Nonviolence is soul force." Right now we need worldwide campaigns and movements based on nonviolence. Our nation, and our world, must be changed if our species is going to survive. Nonviolence is how we effect personal, social, economic, and political change that will be inclusive and holistic.

In all our strivings, we must understand that no matter how much witnessing we may do or how many good works we may perform, if real equality, liberty, and justice for all are to emerge in our nation, each of us must learn to embrace Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence. We, as a nation, must come to understand that nonviolence is not the end we seek in some distant future, but the

means by which we arrive at that end. This means that we must come together with family, friends, neighbors, and community organizations and study the philosophy of nonviolence, its effectiveness in political struggles and campaigns to overcome evil, and help change our national inclinations towards violence and oppression. Consider this: If the hundreds of billions of dollars in technology and resources that our nation has put into violent struggles over the last 50 years were dedicated to feeding the world's poor, think what a vastly superior, and nobler, nation we would be.

As a person living in this nation, it is okay to appreciate the country we live in. However, it is possible—and possibly a prerequisite—to also honestly acknowledge the terrible and horrifying pathologies that have plagued our national history—pathologies that have metastasized into a cancer that is literally killing this country. To improve it and make it into the nation that was declared in its founding documents is the duty of every person who considers herself or himself patriotic.

With this in mind, should we not devote our lives to Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and method of nonviolence to help create a nation (and world) that has yet to exist? Only by embracing the power of Gandhian nonviolence can the United States exist with true equality, liberty, and justice for all. Ω

*Joshua Flaughner is a Los Angeles Catholic Worker community member.*

### RAMSEY cont'd from p.4

Kitchen, the community gathered around the chopping block at the end of the day to debrief serving that day and to discuss a potential upcoming action. "Either we protest tomorrow, or Obama will be bombing the sh!t out of Syria by the end of the week," Jeff Dietrich earnestly shouted at us all. I had found my people and felt compelled to continue the effort of developing community, to bring more into the fold of this alternative way of being. Ω

*Megan Ramsey is a Los Angeles Catholic Worker community member.*

### DIETRICH cont'd from p.5

We followed that success with our shopping cart campaign, in which

we bought 100 black shopping carts to be distributed to the homeless. We held a press conference and a shopping cart parade at LAPD Central Division in which we publicly exposed illegal police actions. They would first write out a ticket to any homeless person on Skid Row pushing a shopping cart, saying that: this cart has been stolen from Ralph's (or wherever). Then the officer would push the cart into the middle of the street, dump out the contents, often recyclables as well as personal property (sleeping bag, tent, personal identification, prescriptions and medications). Then a skip loader would scoop up the cart and its contents and crush them.

We once wondered to a friend, "Why is it illegal for a homeless person to push a shopping cart and it is NOT illegal for a police officer to crush that very same shopping cart?" Our friend responded: "Someone should buy homeless people shopping carts."

The only people we knew who would be crazy enough to buy shopping carts for homeless people was us, the Catholic Worker. Since that first distribution of shopping carts in front of the Police Department we have given away over 100,000 shopping carts to homeless people on Skid Row.

One could easily dismiss our shopping cart project as insane. But from a street-level perspective, it meets the needs of homeless people where they are actually situated in real life. Shopping carts meet the real needs of homeless who require among other things: income, mobility, and shelter. I have seen people turn our carts over, put a tarp on top and sleep inside. And when the homeless are harassed and told to "move on," they need to be able to move their meager possessions to the next location. Many folks also use our carts for recycling to earn essential cash income.

As Skid Row continued to evolve from one homeless encampment into squalid Beirut and Baghdad style refugee encampments, we have taken our fight to the courts. Along with help from civil rights attorney Carol Sobel, we guaranteed the constitutional right of homeless people to "security in their property and possessions." We also won the constitutional right of homeless people to be free from the "cruel and unusual punishment" of police harassment and jail time for the "crime" of sleeping on the sidewalks until such

time as the city provides enough shelters or low-cost housing for them.

As multiple areas of our city, indeed our entire country, begin to look like the tent cities of Skid Row, we must realize that the expanding U.S. economy has left behind and abandoned a significant population to the status of unhoused refugees.

Shopping carts, Blood Strikes, porta-potties. These are but a handful of efforts over the years that represent the spirit of the Catholic Worker community working to impact the social environment of Skid Row. However, the core of our work has always been the soup kitchen, feeding hungry people, creating a sense of welcome, conviviality, dignity, and listening to their stories in our beautiful dining-garden.

Skid Row is my anchor to the suffering world. It keeps me in contact with authentic reality when I become too complacent, too comfortable in my own bed with a roof over my head and hot food on my plate. It is my own personal Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam. It is my own personal war zone. It is my own personal refugee camp that keeps me honest when plagued with personal and ideological delusions.

I have a picture, hanging over my writing desk, of Arbury "Jack" Robinson, cut from the *L.A. Times*, warming his hands over a trash can fire during a long ago cold spell. I think of him often and fondly.

Despite his unruly behavior, I think of him as an icon of Skid Row. He was a "boxer and a fighter by his trade, and he carries the reminder of every glove that laid him down and cut him till he cried out in his anger and his shame, I am leaving, I am leaving, but the fighter still remains" (The Boxer, Simon and Garfunkel).

I hope I have been a fighter, too, who remained anchored to my own personal war zone and refugee camp fighting for Jack Robinson and all the Boxers of Skid Row. Ω

*Jeff Dietrich is the Catholic Agitator founding editor.*

### HOFFARTH cont'd from p.5

really happened in the name of Catholicism, and reparations can work for healing and moving forward in a dignified way. Ω

*Tom Hoffarth is a native Southern California journalist and a member of American Martyrs Catholic Church.*



# ON THE LINE

## ROBERT C. ALDRIDGE - R.I.P.

Renowned peace and justice maker, friend to many in the Catholic Worker community, and co-founder of the original Pacific Life Community, Bob Aldridge, 96, joined the Heavenly Cloud of Witnesses on April 29. He died peacefully surrounded by his family in Santa Clara, California.

Bob worked sixteen years as an aerospace engineer for Lockheed Missiles and Space Company. He was the group leader responsible for design on the MK 500 MaRV (Maneuvering Re-entry Vehicle), a type of missile with multiple warheads that has extreme accuracy with first-strike capability. On January 2, 1973, Bob resigned from his position for reasons of conscience.

Bob possessed a tireless commitment to educating the public about the dangers of the Trident program, nuclear weapons, and U.S. nuclear policy, and the urgent need for all people of faith and goodwill to work for nonviolent social transformation.

Bob was an advisor/consultant/sponsor/activist in many groups and organizations including Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, British-American Security Information Council, Institute for Law and Peace, Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Pacific Life Community, Veterans for Peace, and Nonviolent Peaceforce, to name a few.

He authored several books and articles that appeared in various publications. His latest book, *The Goodness Field*, is a culmination of his lifetime

work and offers direction to achieve peace and nonviolence through a proactive global Satyagraha movement (passive resistance practiced by M. K. Gandhi and his followers).

He was, and will continue to be, a powerful guiding light of courage, truth, and hope for countless people. **BOB ALDRIDGE - ¡PRESENTE!**

## JESSICA REZNICEK UPDATE

Oral arguments for a federal appeal in the high profile case of environmental activist Jessica Reznicek were heard by the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals on May 13. In a defining moment for the climate justice movement, and for all civil rights, the court will decide whether or not to uphold a “domestic terrorist enhancement” that an Iowa court applied to Reznicek’s prison sentence. Reznicek argued that the terrorism enhancement was both illegally and unjustly applied.

The domestic terrorism enhancement to Jessica’s sentence doubled her prison term to eight years, followed by three years’ supervised probation.

The appeal is supported by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), National Lawyers Guild, Water Protectors Legal Collective, and the Climate Defense Project. “If Jessica Reznicek’s acts can be punished as terrorism,” says an amicus brief filed by CCR, “the United States will have moved so far past the international consensus as to be operating in a completely different realm.”

A court decision is forthcoming.

To learn more visit:

[supportjessicareznicek.com](http://supportjessicareznicek.com)

## INSTIGATING NUCLEAR WAR

As the Biden regime continues to escalate its proxy war against Russia, it is now instigating yet another war against another nuclear power, and the world’s most populous country with the second-largest economy—China.

On May 21, President Joe Biden signed a bill authorizing \$40 billion in spending, mainly for weapons and other assistance to Ukraine. One month ago U.S. military assistance to Ukraine totaled \$4 billion. Now Biden has expanded the U.S. commitment to the conflict tenfold.

But that is not all. On May 23, U.S. War Secretary Lloyd Austin announced that the U.S. would also provide Ukraine with Harpoon anti-ship missiles via an intermediary, Denmark. The Harpoon is the standard anti-ship armament of the U.S. Navy capable of sinking large warships, which will be used in a purported plan to “unblock the ports” in the Black Sea.

Also on May 23, speaking at a press conference in Japan, Biden was asked, “Are you willing to get involved militarily to defend Taiwan if it comes to that?” Biden replied, “Yes... That’s the commitment we made.”

The U.S.-provoked war against Russia in Ukraine has already killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions. The threatened war against China would turn the entire Asia-Pacific region, the world’s most populous area, into a war zone, with devastating and incalculable consequences.

USA! USA! USA! —[wsws.org](http://wsws.org)

## U.S.-FORCED STARVATION

On February 11, President Biden signed an executive order allocating the funds of the Afghanistan central bank that are frozen in the United States. The money—approximately \$7 billion—was seized by the U.S. government when the Taliban took over Afghanistan in August 2021, and is currently held at the New York Federal Reserve Bank.

In the past several months, the people of Afghanistan have been facing what may be the worst humanitarian disaster in the world: 23 million people—over half the population—endure conditions of extreme hunger, and a million children under five are at risk of death by starvation. The proximate cause of the devastation is a crop failure, but that would not have caused nearly as much harm without the total collapse of Afghanistan’s economy, which was caused by the U.S. seizure of its government’s funds and the restrictions Washington placed on foreign aid to the country.

Yet another act of love and compassion by the U.S. Empire.

—[commonwealmagazine.org](http://commonwealmagazine.org)

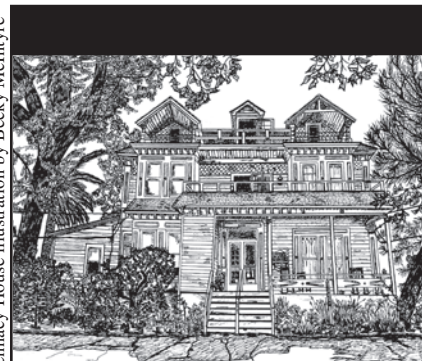
## INTERESTING FACT

Percentage of U.S. citizens who strongly consider themselves vigilantes: 20

—*Harpers Index June 2022*

*On The Line* is compiled and edited by Mike Wisniewski.

Hennacy House illustration by Becky McIntyre



## THE HOUSE JOURNAL

Finally, spring has arrived! And I feel hopeful and renewed, mostly because we were able to get together for our (usually) annual Seder celebration, which was previously canceled due to COVID.

It was a joyful celebration of life and liberation with lots of singing, dancing, story-telling, and of course, sharing food and drink together.

During the fog of COVID I did not realize how much I missed our larger community, so our Seder was like a

homecoming for me, and I believe, for many others who attended as well.

We thank all who helped make our Seder great. Also, it would not be an LACW Seder without our fabulous band/choir; thanks to **Pat Huckabee, Donald Nollar, Martha Lewis, Clare Bellefeuille-Rice, and Matt Harper**. We would also like to thank our Master of Ceremonies, **David Lumia**. He regaled us with stories of how the LACW began to celebrate the Passover Seder. And thanks to our illustrious readers at the head table: **Alan Pulnar, Hannah Peterson, and Ron Kaye** for guiding us through the Seder story with passion.

Good Friday found us at the Mission of San Gabriel walking the Stations of the Missionary Cross. As the Archdiocese declares this a Year of Jubilee for Mission San Gabriel, we at the LACW continue to call our Church to reckon with the injustice and abuse that Native Americans endured at the California missions. If you were unable to attend, I encourage you to visit our website and check out the excellent script of the Stations of the Missionary Cross, composed by **Matt**.

Another event that COVID robbed from us is the Annual **St. Paul High School Walk for Hunger**, but like the Seder it rose from the ashes on April

10, when 150 students from St. Paul walked from Salazar Park in East L.A. all the way to Santa Monica (26 miles), to raise awareness and needed funds for our work with the poor and unhoused of Skid Row. A big shout out to all the students, faculty, parents, and alumni who made this happen. Thank you for all your love, concern, time, and effort.

**Catherine** was elated with a lovely outdoor party for her 88th Birthday, compliments of a group of former community members who lived in the LACW community in the 1980s. There was a plethora of pizza, soda, and a homemade carrot cake made by **Dolores Carlos**. It was great to gather with **Dolores, Bob and Cathy Jacobs, Rick and Lourdes Erhard, Mary Meade, Maggie Smith, and Brett Terrell**. A good time was had by all.

Also in April, **Teresa Grady** came to California from the East Coast to visit with family and spend some time with us. Teresa is a great conversationalist and full of energy. She invited a few of us to go salsa dancing on a Friday night, but I declined the invitation. However, when I heard about the evening the next day, I definitely regretted not going. A lively and fun night it was.

We were also treated to a visit from community member **Mark Vinzani’s** aunt and uncle, **Victoria and Jeff**, along with cousins **Michael and**

**Jack**, and their friend **Ethan**. They worked with us at the kitchen, and treated us to a delicious dinner of Chinese food. We enjoyed meeting them and hope they visit us again.

Another birthday in April was **Mike Wisniewski’s** wife **Bonnie**, followed 18 days later, on May 2, by Mike’s birthday. They celebrated with a family reunion on Mother’s Day.

On May 1, we were blessed by the arrival of **Grace Wilson**, from Salt Lake City, who is here to live and work with us for a while. When she is not working at the kitchen, most often she can be found at the sewing machine mending our clothes or making aprons. She is a delightful person to have around.

On a heartbreaking note, former community member **Rick Erhard**, who is listed above as one of the participants in Catherine’s birthday celebration, finally succumbed, on May 10, to the cancer he battled for years. His periodic presence and wonderful conversations at Wednesday evening liturgies and at gatherings for special occasions will be missed. May he rest in peace.

We thank each and all who read this newspaper and in various ways support our work. Without you we could not continue. Many blessings.

*House Journal* is written by Susan Dietrich.

## STATEMENT ON THE EXISTENTIAL THREAT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND ON THE TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The power to initiate a global apocalypse lies in the hands of the leaders of the nine nuclear nations. As 122 nations of the world indicated when they adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in July, 2017, this is unacceptable.

As concerns about the threat of nuclear weapons re-enter the public consciousness, it is important to know that humankind is not without an answer to the nuclear threat. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force on January 22, 2021, provides a clear pathway to the elimination of the nuclear threat.

We call on all nuclear armed states to take immediate steps to: engage the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, attend the First Meeting of States Parties, and sign, ratify, and implement the Treaty.

We also call on the U.S. media to recognize the existence of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to include the Treaty in discussions, articles, and editorials regarding the nuclear threat and methods available to address it. Thus far they have refused to do so. The Nuclear Ban Treaty Collaborative will release this statement and list of endorsers to the U.S. media on June 7. You can sign on to this statement at: [nuclearbantreaty.org/statement-on-the-nuclear-threat/](http://nuclearbantreaty.org/statement-on-the-nuclear-threat/)

## SPECIAL NEEDS

NEW reading glasses 250 and higher strength.  
CANES—either adjustable metal or wood, gently used or new.  
Also, men's large crew or tube white socks.  
Thank you. Many blessing

## WILL YOU HELP PLANT SEEDS?

The *Catholic Agitator*, like many publications, for a variety of reasons continues to experience a declining readership. If you believe this newspaper is prophetic, thought-provoking, and valuable, we need, and would greatly appreciate, your assistance scattering seeds of faith that these works of mercy might carry on no matter what crises sweep the world. Please help us keep growing by sharing this issue with someone, or e-mail [info@lacatholicworker.org](mailto:info@lacatholicworker.org) if you do not yet receive this newspaper or if you need extra copies to hand out. Thank you.

## SHARE YOUR EXCESS BACKYARD FRUIT

If you have fruit trees, specifically citrus fruits, on your property and have an excess, our kitchen guests would certainly appreciate whatever you will not use, especially during this pandemic.  
Citrus fruits help strengthen the immune system.  
Please consider donating. Thank you. Many blessings.

## CATHOLIC WORKER



The Los Angeles Catholic Worker, founded in 1970, is part of the international Catholic Worker movement founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. We are a resistance community that operates a free soup kitchen on Skid Row, a house of hospitality in Boyle Heights for some of our unhoused friends from the Row, and publishes this bi-monthly newspaper – the *Catholic Agitator*. Visit our website - <https://lacatholicworker.org> and Los Angeles Catholic Worker on Facebook.

CHRISTIAN



ANARCHISM

# CATHOLIC AGITATOR

JUNE 2022 Vol. 52/No. 3

## SISTER HOUSE NETWORK:

LOS ANGELES CATHOLIC WORKER:  
<https://lacatholicworker.org>

1. Ammon Hennacy House of Hospitality  
632 N. Britannia St., Los Angeles, CA 90033-1722  
(323) 267-8789
2. Hospitality Kitchen (aka Hippie Kitchen)  
821 E. 6th St., Los Angeles, CA 90021  
(213) 614-9615

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY  
500 W. VanBuren Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89106  
(702) 647-0728 <https://lvchw.org>

ISAIAH HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY  
316 S. Cypress Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92701  
(714) 835-6304 <https://occcatholicworker.org>

SADAKO SASAKI HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY  
1321 W. 38th St., Norfolk, VA 23508  
(757) 423-5420

HOUSE OF GRACE CATHOLIC WORKER  
1826 E. Lehigh Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19125  
(215) 426-0364

KIERAN PRATHER HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY  
672 2nd Ave., San Bruno, CA 94066  
(650) 827-0706  
<https://catholicworkerhospitalityhouse.org>

BEATITUDE HOUSE  
267 Campodonico Ave., Guadalupe, CA 93434-1501  
(805) 343-6322

ST. BENEDICT HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY  
4022 N. Cheryl Ave., Fresno, CA 93705  
(559) 229-6410 <http://sbeww.org> - [lizaOSB@aol.com](mailto:lizaOSB@aol.com)

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<https://neworleanscatholicworker.weebly.com>

VENICE CATHOLIC WORKER  
<https://venicecatholicworker.org>