

# CATHOLIC AGITATOR

THE BELOVED COMMUNITY  
IS WAITING FOR YOU



Graphic by Becky McIntyre

MAPPING THE CATHOLIC LEFT IN LOS ANGELES

THE BELOVED COMMUNITY  
IS WAITING FOR YOU

*The Catholic Worker is not and has never been the lone beacon in our church: not in our pews, not in our parishes, and not even always in the places of power and prominence.*

CATHOLIC JUSTICE WORK  
IN LOS ANGELES

By MATT HARPER

Every December, our home is flooded with mail. These responses to our yearly appeal come bearing gifts: Caesar's coins for God's works and words of profound gratitude and affirmation for the place of the Worker in our world.

Seeing things from the inside, at times I am concerned that your perception of us looms far above reality. We, too, struggle to live out the call of Christ to love our neighbor.

Much of these things are inevitable. Not only will we all fall short of the standards modeled for us by the man from Galilee, but also our rough edges appear smoother from a little distance.

Though we deserve as much mercy for our imperfection (and credit for our faithfulness) as anyone else, naming this gap is important. The responsibility to measure the realities of our world against the standards of the gospels and then name the distance between them is sacred. It is, I believe, an act of love to hold up a mirror to people and institutions so that they can see themselves more clearly.

At times I have been concerned that the Catholic Worker's existence lessens the responsibility taken up by other Catholics, as if the demands of the social gospels had been outsourced to the Worker.

There is a shared obligation to live into the prophetic dimension of our baptismal anointing. Though we have different gifts and vocations, the work to en flesh the priorities of the gospels is not a charism of some, but a requirement for all. It is not enough to have a separate office or group that handles "justice work." It must be communal work, a shared pillar of all our endeavors.

But as many of you have written to remind me, casting critique is not enough. It is an act of spiritual integrity, then, both to try and do something about that gap and to name the good. We yearn for more than judgment; we want a path forward. So, what are we to do? Where do we find that which we can cling to, replicate, and honor?

A number of months ago, Call to Action—an organization aimed at empowering Catholics to help transform the world and the Church—sought to consider this question. Their new Left Catholic community published a zine that sought to map some of the Catholic "left" worthy of being centered and remembered.

Too often, Catholic Social Teaching (CST)—a central component of our church's commitment to justice work—has been minimized as an



*As we wait for the return of our Savior, let us remember there is no one else waiting in the wings. Let us remember there has always only been a small group of imperfect people whose witness has had the power to change the world.*

institutional priority, removed from catechetical trainings, and defunded from diocesan budgets, relegated to where it will be less of a threat to the institution: glossy brochures and stories of long dead saints. Church energy and resources that should go to the poor, as Christ demanded, go instead to preserve the institution. But a look back will show us, as I have too often forgotten, a long legacy of CST in our churches.

Now, many of us have learned to be cautious when peering into our histories. Looking backward sometimes unearths unsettling truths, bringing us into contact with those in our lineages who seem to have let us down, and whose histories require our reckoning and accountability.

Yet the reality is, the Catholic Worker is not and has never been the lone beacon in our church: not in our pews, not in our parishes, and not even always in the places of power and prominence. I cannot forget our spiritual ancestors who saw the current way of doing things as insufficient. We cannot lose the witnesses (however small) of those who asked hard questions and took bold steps that, when strung together, create a thread of ancestors who have kept Christ's legacy alive in our world.

Therefore, what does the map of the Catholic "left" in Los Angeles look like?

I have been a long critic of the parish I grew up in. Situating its past and present in the larger context of systems and cultures, it has become second nature to see the faults of St. Bede the Venerable. With a club that leaves little room for nuance, though, I have swung hard and, often, indiscriminately at my childhood spiritual home.

I look at the policies and practices that produced this predominantly wealthy, white city (and thus, church) and question our complicity and participation. I remember times when someone in the parish called the sheriffs on unhoused men for little reason more than "he did not belong here." I have heard too many homilies where presiders have gaslit the gospels (distorting Christ's clear, radical messages) so as to placate this community of privilege.

These truths (and others like them) must be named and deserve redress. But a spirituality of open eyes requires that I see what I have long overlooked: there has always been a community present that has demanded better and done more. Alongside the sins and shortcomings of this

*Continued on page 2*

QUESTION THE PROMISES AND PRACTICES OF CAPITALISM, EMPIRE, IMPERIALISM, AND LIVE A LIFE THAT REFLECTS A DIFFERENT WAY.

# LARRY GUNSALUS – R.I.P.



Larry Gunsalus

By MIKE WISNIEWSKI

Larry was one of our devoted Saturday volunteers and supporters for more than 12 years. He was kind-hearted, good-natured, generous, and highly conversational.

Pre-COVID, he loved serving main dish and talking with kitchen guests, and after taking a year off at the outset of COVID, he came back and picked up where he left off being the main server of our to-go containers while joyfully greeting and conversing with our guests and other volunteers.

Larry was not only a devoted volunteer with us, he also audited classes and lectures at California State University Dominguez Hills, and was also a cherished volunteer at the Marine Mammal Care Center in San Pedro, where he took great satisfaction in

releasing rehabilitated sea lions and seals to the ocean. He also volunteered at JudiKins Rubber Stamps and formed many friendships there.

He was a voracious reader and devoted himself to learning and aiding others. Larry received his pharmacy degree from the University of Southern California and began his career in 1973, holding positions at Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital, Torrance Memorial, and South Bay Hospital. He worked for Kaiser Permanente as Deployment Lead for Kaiser's Electronic Medical Records integration before retiring in 2018.

He loved going on neighborhood walks with his partner Joyce Watanabe, especially during the holidays when they enjoyed the holiday lights in his hometown of Torrance.

Born in Lawndale on August 24, 1948, and raised in Hermosa Beach, he graduated from Redondo Union High School in 1965, after time on both the baseball and basketball teams, and he continued as a left-handed pitcher at El Camino College and Cal State Northridge.

Larry joined the Heavenly Cloud of Witnesses on December 5, and is survived by his partner Joyce, his daughter Kerry and her husband Michael, his brother Jim, nephews Jim, Zakk, and Maxx, and nieces Leslie, Betsy, Meg, Molly, and Kate; as well as close friends, co-workers, and fellow volunteers. He is and will continue to be missed.

**LARRY GUNSALUS –  
¡PRESENTE!**

# THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE SOBERING

By PHOEBE LU

When people ask me how my internship at the L.A. Catholic Worker went, I tell them it was beautiful. Beautiful, because what else could I call living under the same roof as people from different socioeconomic statuses, with different skin colors and many at least three generations removed from myself? What else could I call exchanging music recommendations with, eating meals across from, doing dishes next to, and making art with people our gentrified society warned me for twenty-one years to stay away from? The radical community envisioned and embodied by the L.A. Catholic Worker—one that does its best to honor but not remain divided by racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and generational differences alike—has been one of the closest representations of what I imagine the kingdom of God will be like. My time at the LACW was beautiful, I say.

And I could just leave it at that—beautiful—but that response would be far from complete, lending to romanticized views of what actually happens at the Worker. So I also tell people about the day to day. I tell them about waking up at ungodly hours of the morning to chop vegetables while groggily conversing with other volunteers at the Hippie Kitchen. I tell people about business

meetings where we would hole up each Tuesday afternoon to assign household chores. I tell people about the chores themselves, because they are no easy feat in a house of twenty. I tell them about the extensive grocery-buying, bread-buttering, produce-chopping, soup-stirring and line-managing that it takes to run a soup kitchen. Serving the “least of these,” I learned, was in many ways a much more tedious and less glorious affair than I had imagined.

Yet this latter reflection should not deter those curious from participating in such work themselves. This detailed picture of life at the Worker merely supports Jesus’ call to discipleship: “Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether [you have] enough to complete it?” Jesus knew we had a knack for romanticizing, a penchant to centralize the fruit of labor while peripheralizing the labor itself. So He recommends that we take off our rose-colored glasses to see that His road of discipleship leads to a cross before it arrives at resurrection. Following Him is not just a beautiful affair. It is also a costly one. And so we follow Him with our knees on a bathroom floor, scrubbing the fourth toilet in the house, just as we follow Him into a rich conversation. We

*Continued on page 6*

## HARPER cont'd from page 1

church are priests and nuns, lay believers, and those of “little faith” who have labored to better understand God’s calls and tried to ensure the Church put the last first.

Looking out at an entirely white parish in 1963, knowing the backlash that was likely to follow, Fr. William DuBay not only told the parishioners of St. Bede that there was a serious racial problem, but that they must “shoulder your own responsibilities in working for fair housing” because “the only Christian response to this problem is to work for integration.”

In 1975, Mavis, Rob, and many other parishioners supported a local, ecumenical effort to care for the many needs of Vietnamese political refugees resettling in the area. In the 1980s and ‘90s, some parishioners participated in civil disobedience at arms manufacturing companies, the Nevada Nuclear Test Site, and the School of the Americas at Ft. Benning.

In 1999, Linda petitioned the church to redirect their \$10 million capital campaign (with the reminder from Pope John Paul II that we cannot call ourselves Christian if we are not involved with the poor and oppressed) while her husband, Jack, tried to get the community to turn their then vacant convent into a shelter for poor women and children.

Following September 11, 2001, the parish hosted interfaith forums aimed at giving parishioners and the larger community a chance to consider the simplistic racial and religious stereotypes our nation used to justify war as well as to understand the dangers of the PATRIOT Act.

And even today, as the new pastor joins the lamentation of parents whose children have “embraced ‘wokeness’ that was spoon fed to them in college,” many have reached out and pushed back on the conservative ideology that the anti-racism work of today is uncritical group think.

This is just one set of examples from one parish of faithful resistance to church actions that betray the call of Christ. Fortunately, the witness to the gospels transcends any singular person or parish in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. So, who are some of our Catholic people, parishes, and organizations that have taken responsibility to listen to the needs of their communities and work for the return of the Church to its roots of a justice-minded orientation?

I think about the labors of so many Catholics in so many parishes that worked tirelessly to try and abolish the death penalty in California in 2012 and 2016.

I think about the work of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary who showed our diocese how to move with prayer, discernment, and integrity in assessing their role in the church and their responsibility to form consciences.

I think about all the parish projects that have been committed to serving the homeless, from Brother’s Helpers, Matthew 25, Good Samaritan food pantries, Safe Park programs, rotating winter shelters, to the complex

(and often unofficial) mutual aid projects that cut out bureaucracy to bring support directly to those in need.

I think about the work of the Archdiocese and many Catholics in supporting the unionizing efforts of hotel workers, food service employees, janitors, and nurses. I think about the faith leaders who were arrested with housekeepers for blocking streets (2006), or for chaining themselves to the Federal building (1980s-90s), or for trying to stop the \$193 million Cathedral campaign (1990s).

I think about times the diocesan hierarchy stood with striking nurses and got a hospital administration to resolve the labor dispute and when parish priests stood with their parishioners at the Chateau Marmont, at Pomona College, and elsewhere in the struggle for basic dignity and a fair contract.

I think about the work done by Homeboy Industries, Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative, Partnership for Re-Entry Program. Get on the Bus, and by Healing Hearts, Restoring Hope, each of which seeks not only to honor the complex needs of our brothers and sisters navigating gangs or the criminal justice system,

but, sometimes, to shift our cultural tendencies away from punishment and disposability to love, inclusion, opportunity, and healing.

I think about the folks who were moved by global supply chain injustice to commit to fair economy work, starting Fair Trade L.A., and opening a 10,000 Villages in Manhattan Beach.

I think about the trainings, workshops, and projects that have committed to growing the analysis of our faith community. I think of the powerful work of national organizations like Pax Christi all the way to the little individual parish groups like Justice and Peace. I think about the extensive and numerous JustFaith modules that provide consistent and immersive experiences for a reorienting of spiritual and political values for so many parishes. I think about the Master Catechist diocesan program, which put faith formation leaders walking the streets, recognizing, “If there is anyone who knows God, it is the poor.”

I think of all the people who were so moved by these experiences that they not only made new opportunities available for parishioners but sought creative ways to invite them in, using the parish bulletin, Sunday coffee and donuts time, tabling after masses, direct asks, and more.

I think about the larger organizing efforts of Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice as well as that of L.A. Voice that have sought to mobilize Catholics and other communities of faith to grow relationships, build power, and struggle for systemic change.

I think about the public policy breakfasts coordinated by the Archdiocese that sought, among other things, to get the debt of developing nations canceled. I think of their lobby days, where Catholics fought for greater social safety nets, stood for affirmative action, and struggled

*Continued on page 6*

**CATHOLIC** FEBRUARY 2023 Vol. 53 No. 1  
**AGITATOR**

**Publisher:** Catherine Morris  
**Editors:** Mike Wisniewski and Matt Harper  
**Editors Emeritus:** Jeff Dietrich and Martha Lewis  
**Managing Editor:** Donald Nollar

**Staff:** Rev. Elizabeth Griswold, Susan Dietrich and Becky McIntyre (Graphic Artist)  
The *Catholic Agitator* (ISSN-0045-5970) is published bi-monthly February, April, June, August, October, and December for \$1 per year by the Los Angeles Catholic Worker, 632 N. Britannia St., Los Angeles, CA 90033-1722

Periodical Postage paid at Los Angeles, CA  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:  
The *Catholic Agitator*, 632 N. Britannia St., Los Angeles, CA 90033-1722  
The LACW is not a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and donations to the LACW are not tax-exempt. Editorial communications, new subscriptions, and address changes to:  
632 N. Britannia St., Los Angeles, CA 90033-1722  
323-267-8789 • <https://lacatholicworker.org> • [info@lacatholicworker.org](mailto:info@lacatholicworker.org)

## MAPPING THE CATHOLIC LEFT IN LOS ANGELES

*He is simply living the gospel, following Jesus. He is living by and with unconditional love, having compassion toward and accepting those whom society (particularly law enforcement and the courts) endlessly attack, reprove, and condemn. He is incessantly alert for signs of God's presence.*

# KIN-DOM BUILDERS

By MIKE WISNIEWSKI

While I was considering the varied progressive Catholic advocates for justice and peace in Los Angeles to write about for this *Agitator* issue, three prominent names immediately came to my mind: Alice Callaghan (although Episcopalian, she was a Catholic nun), Fr. Chris Ponnet, and Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ. All three have played and continue to play a leading role in the struggle for justice and peace in Los Angeles—and beyond. Below are their stories.

### Alice Callaghan

Although Alice Callaghan has been a vital and influential advocate for the impoverished Skid Row community for decades, she regretfully declined an interview; but I would be remiss if I did not at least mention her because of her profound willingness to stand on the side of the voiceless, and for her dedication in the struggle for justice and upholding the dignity and rights of the Skid Row poor.

### Greg Boyle, S.J.

It would also seem somewhat curious why I would include Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ, in this article, who is world renown. With numerous interviews, articles, and books already written about him and his work, what more can be said?

However, G (as he is known by all the homies he works with) is a longtime friend of the LACW, whose relationship with us dates back to his time as a student at Loyola High School, when he volunteered at our soup kitchen.

He is a person whom I personally have worked with, hold in high regard, and venerate. He also was, for a short time, my Pastor at Dolores Mission Church before he was transferred.

He also was a periodic celebrant at our weekly in-house liturgies and for special events.

In fact, he is one of a select handful of individuals whom I (and others) consider a modern-day prophet (although he certainly would personally shy away from such an inference).

When I posed a few questions to him for this article, I loosely used the word "activist" to describe those whom I would like to include in this article. When he answered, he immediately indicated, "I never apply the word 'activist' to myself...feels unseemly. I am no judge of such things."

Being a bit puzzled by that comment, and before reading further, I began thinking about it for a while wondering what he meant. Then I realized: Greg is not frequently out protesting, not occupying offices of politicians, not being militant, not intentionally getting arrested. On the contrary, he is simply living the gospel, following Jesus. He is living by and with unconditional love, having compassion toward and accepting those whom society (particularly law enforcement and the courts) endlessly attack, reprove, and condemn. He is incessantly alert for signs of God's presence.

Fr. Greg is not out to change the system—although that certainly is the desire—but simply to accept people where they are and love them and provide hope to the individuals caught up in gang life who deserve far more love than they have received,

not been properly understood, and as a result, have long lost hope.

When asked how and why he chose the path he has traveled, he answered: "I joined the Jesuits because I found them hilarious and prophetic. I think the mark of authentic Christians, in the end, is joy and fearlessness."

He continued, "I entered the Society of Jesus, in part, because of Daniel Berrigan. I remember seeing the *Trial of the Catonsville 9* at the Mark Taper Forum and it galvanized some urging in me. I saw Blase Bonpane, Jane Fonda, and Tom Hayden speak at an anti-war rally when I was in high school and it stirred me to follow some vague similar path. All three became friends. I was arrested with Blase several times, argued with Tom endlessly and was with him before he died, and Jane is on my board at Homeboy Industries."

He further explained, "Jesus didn't take the right stand on issues...He, rather, stood in the right place...with the poor, powerless and voiceless. Further, he stood with the easily despised, the readily left out, those whose burdens were more than they could bear, and he stood with those whose dignity had been denied. He stood with the demonized so that the demonizing would stop. And he stood with the disposable, so that the day would come when we stopped throwing people away. He didn't take the right stand on issues...he just stood in the right place."

I'll have what he's having.

Does that make Jesus (or anyone) an activist? Unseemly.

Joy and fearlessness...that is what you hold out for."

We at the LACW, and myself personally, are truly blessed and exceedingly grateful to know G and be able to share in his story and witness and he with ours. And I am absolutely certain that the countless young women and men whom he has helped over the decades through the most successful gang intervention program in this nation, and perhaps the world, also share the same sentiment.

Literally, only God knows how many lives he has saved, and how he is still alive today considering the numerous gun battles he intervened in and stopped over the decades—truly amazing, truly miraculous, truly prophetic.

### Fr. Chris Ponnet

Lastly, but certainly not in the least, is another longtime friend of the LACW, and longtime advocate for justice and peace, and comforter of the sick and dying and their loved ones as head chaplain at County-USC Hospital, and Pastor of St. Camillus Church, Fr. Chris Ponnet.

I first met Chris in the 1980s when he was an associate pastor at a parish in the San Fernando Valley where then LACW community member Sandi Huckaby and her husband Pat attended. It was Sandi who introduced him to the LACW. I also was associated with him when he became Director of Pax Christi Southern California, part of the International Catholic Peace Movement. Fr. Chris has, over the years, been an inspiration and someone I hold in high esteem.

In Chris' words, "Over the years, many people have inspired me. When in grammar school, my brother Frank

was in the seminary, and with Sr. Stella Goodpasture, OP, began the Catholic Peace Coalition. Beginning in 1971, and for the next 20 years, they both were very committed to social justice issues and eliminating nuclear weapons. Frank also was involved with an attempt to form a union at Catholic cemeteries. He and his colleagues were part of a sit-in at the L.A. Archdiocese office. I was inspired by his commitment and willingness to speak and act."

Chris continues, "Since 1971 I have worked in a booth dedicated to justice and peace issues and related material at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress. The folks who have visited the booth seeking resources for teaching young people about peace and justice always inspired me. Their enthusiasm encouraged me to also want to help educate, which prompted me to read all I could about working for justice and nonviolent peaceful options."

Further explaining, Chris adds, "When I was first ordained in 1983, I was serving at a parish in Canoga Park. One day five women came to the rectory asking for the Pastor, but I was the only priest present. These amazing women from various religious backgrounds were asking what I was going to do to implement the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 1983 Peace Pastoral Letter.

In conversation, they invited me to their weekly vigil at Rocketdyne-Rockwell Corp. protesting against the MX Missile's fourth stage that was being built there. I was so taken by the vigil that I continued attending. However, the awkwardness of some parishioners from my new parish working there was a real struggle.

The women then invited me to the August 6 demonstration (commemorating the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945) at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site north of Las Vegas. I was very inspired by the folks in attendance, particularly parents who were crossing the line and getting arrested, so much so that I returned on the feast of St. Francis on October 4, and was arrested while protesting against nuclear weapons testing. This led to many more visits and arrests there.

Each time I attended planned events at the Test Site, I was inspired by Catholic Workers, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Rev. George Regas (All Saints Church in Pasadena), Rabbi Leonard Berman (Leo Baeck Temple in Los Angeles), and many others who gave inspiring talks."

Explaining his spiritual motivation, Chris articulated, "I am constantly inspired and challenged to live the words in Matthew 5 (Sermon on the Mount) and Matthew 25:31-46. I am challenged by how to make these words real in my personal life, ministry team at St. Camillus, and in the world."

I continue to make the social justice links between our patients at County-USC Hospital and social injustices against the homeless, with racism, immigration etc.

I came to St. Camillus following Fr. Don Kribbs, who was a mentor as a diocesan priest, and who was arrested at protests and very outspoken on social justice issues.

As the U.S. war in the Persian Gulf

began raging, I was moved to help lead two interfaith groups—Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace, which was preceded by the Interfaith Coalition Against War in the Persian Gulf. All the various Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and fellow Christians involved were deeply inspiring and moved me to further acts of civil disobedience, and really helped reclaim my spiritual culture of chanting and nonviolence. These years and actions were deeply inspiring and helped me to not only practice nonviolence in radical situations, but also to make this commitment real in my daily living.

In 1985, LAPD Detective Tom Williams was killed in front of his 6-year-old son on Halloween. The shooter was facing the death penalty if convicted of first-degree murder. That tragedy led me on a journey against the death penalty and joining Death Penalty Focus. Actor Mike Farrell and many lawyers who journey for years with folks who society has written off has continued to inspire me to reflection and action."

In closing, Chris adds, "I am so inspired by Jesus' words and the people who have crossed my life—who have kept me dedicated to the sick and dying while also working against injustices and the power of some people over others—that I will not be silent! For 40 years I have daily worn sandals to keep me focused against war and nuclear weapons. I am also a vegetarian to deepen my commitment to nonviolence, and to inspire my heart, mind and stimulate daily conversation. I am blessed and deeply committed to working for justice and peace for life."

I wholeheartedly thank all three of these amazing Kin-dom-building co-workers who are devoted to living the gospel message and who openly display what compassion and unconditional love look like in action. Like Jesus, they liberate captives and encourage each of us to join the struggle for justice and peace.

They have made the church and society a better place by their witness and example for others, specifically younger generations, to follow, which provides hope for a better future. All three faithfully live by the radical proclamation of Pope Paul VI: "If you want peace work for justice." Ω

Mike Wisniewski is a Los Angeles Catholic Worker community member, and co-editor of the *Agitator*



### JESSICA REZNICEK AND RUBY MONTOYA NEWS

We request that you please write to Jessica Reznicek, who is serving an eight-year sentence for damaging the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2017, and her codefendant, Ruby Montoya, who is serving six years.

Jessica Reznicek #19293-030  
FCI Waseca, P.O. Box 1731  
Waseca, MN 56093

Ruby K. Montoya #25915-508  
FMC Carswell, P.O. Box 27137  
Fort Worth, TX 76127

*Our vision has become simplified. If the government rests on the consent of the governed, we withdraw our consent. If status, security, and salary in our society depend on burning incense to Caesar, we will throw water on the fire and do without. We are learning—slowly—to find the roots of Trident. Pogo knew it long ago: “We have met the enemy and (he) is us.”*

# YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON

The following article is reprinted from the Catholic Agitator, January 1977, Volume 7 Number 1

By SHELLY DOUGLASS

The Roman Empire accused the early Christian Church of blasphemy and atheism, charges based on the Christian refusal to burn incense before the image of Caesar. The Caesars were the god-symbols of the Roman state; the public order depended upon the willingness of the population to accept allegiance to the state as equal to the worship of other gods.

The early Christians saw this Caesar-worship as a form of idolatry and refused to burn the requisite pinch of incense. It was impossible for them to separate “religion” as a personal faith from their political life.

They saw quite clearly that Caesar was an idol and that once the first idol-worshipping steps were taken, logic led to further and further involvement in idolatry.

Citizens of the white U.S. Empire nowadays find themselves in a position analogous to that of the early Christians. Caesar has grown more subtle but no less deadly. I believe that we who live in a time directly out of the book of Revelation can take an important lesson from the early Christians’ refusal to burn that symbolic pinch of incense to the god/Caesar. That refusal indicates a clear understanding on the part of the church that the personal and political are one, they melt inextricably into each other.

Once Caesar is equated with God, we have lost our objectivity and no longer have any hope for independence from the state. In grasping our allegiance to God who is Truth and Love, a living, growing, nurturing life force, we stand independently of the state and find the courage to resist its negation of life. In refusing to serve the state we remain free to serve the one God and follow her way.

I have written the first paragraphs of this article in Christian terms because as a Christian that symbolology holds most meaning for me and comes most readily to my mind. Many people in the Pacific Life Community (PLC) come from other backgrounds and symbolologies. They would not use the same terms to express themselves, but we have found that all of us, growing from different soils as we do, share a common insight: the personal and the political are one.

We no longer believe in a revolution that uses the methods of the oppressor to take power. We no longer believe in a peace movement that leaves human wreckage behind it. We no longer understand how to be radicals changing the system while working for Lockheed, buying from Safeway, banking at Bank of America.

Our vision has become simplified. If the government rests on the consent of the governed, we withdraw our consent. If status, security, and salary in our society depend on burning incense to Caesar, we will throw water on the fire and do without. We are learning—slowly—to find the roots of Trident. Pogo knew it long ago: “We

have met the enemy and (he) is us.”

We believe that our own consumerism creates the world system of exploitation which necessitates Trident. Our use of rubber, oil, synthetics, and food means that third world nations must remain subjugated suppliers and Soviet consumerism must be warned away from our suppliers with nuclear weapons. It is not figurative speech when we talk of eating the bread of the poor. We do it every day. Our most personal acts have profound political implications.

This shared insight into the nature of the personal/political has been incorporated—we hope—into the fabric of Pacific Life Community. Our plan is to try simultaneously to experiment in a nonviolent political campaign to stop the Trident system and in a nonviolent personal campaign to root out the Tridents within our lives.

We are only beginning to understand what that means. There are obvious aspects: giving up security, money, careers, eating simply, dressing from the Salvation Army or Goodwill, living communally and sharing property.

We find that these only scratch the surface. If we move another layer down, there are the human relations Tridents in our lives—racism, sexism, manipulation of our friends, power-tripping on our children. Underlying all our other Tridents we find, simply speaking, egotism. We all need to fight the desire to be first, best, to have our every wish and need fulfilled. We all tend to manipulate the community to fulfill our own selfish needs, to feed our egos, to shield us from taking responsibility for ourselves.

We have learned to confront each other, though it is painful. We have learned our need for silence. We have learned to hang on through the rough spots for the sake of our friends, to suffer pain without blunting critical truth.

We have had the joy of affirming growth in each other, watching ego shrink, seeing criticism acted upon. It is a joy to watch uncovered talents bloom, to dance, sing, giggle, share honesty, and be at home. It is a joy to leave time for silence, to see the place of dreams and meditation in organizing. It is a joy to learn compassion; to learn to trust intuition and sharpen logic.

We believe that every moment of life is of earthshaking importance; every moment is the revolution. There is no division between personal and political. The paradox of nonviolence is the belief that opposites ultimately are one. In saving our lives we lose them; in losing them we are saved. Ω

*Shelley Douglass is one of the founding members of the Pacific Life Community, and currently is co-founder, along with her husband Jim, of Mary’s House Catholic Worker in Birmingham, Alabama. This piece was written while Shelly was incarcerated in Seattle County Jail for a civil disobedience action at Bangor Naval Trident Submarine Base in Poulsbo, WA, in August 1976.*

## RESISTANCE MEANS EXPERIENCING A DAILY CELEBRATION OF LIFE

The following article is reprinted from the Catholic Agitator, August 1985, Volume 15 Number 7

By HELEN WOODSON

In the 1950’s, there was a fair amount of anti-German sentiment floating about. My parents knew people who would not listen to Mozart or fly over German airspace, because “those dreadful people had allowed that terrible thing to happen.” Thus did we condemn the “good Germans” and thus did we absolve the “good Americans,” ignoring the fact that they allowed the massacre of Native Americans, the enslavement of Blacks, the bombing of Dresden and, of course, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Perhaps human brutality is limited only by technology. Add a little Cyclon-B to Wounded Knee, and you have Auschwitz. Add a little fusion and fission to Auschwitz, and you have the end of the world.

The end of the world now waits in missile silos in the cornfields of Missouri and other areas. Are we not the “good Germans” who allow that terrible thing to happen?

To explain this phenomenon, psychiatrist Robert Lifton has posited the theory of psychic numbing. That which is too horrible to be incorporated into the human spirit is blocked; that which is too dreadful to be contemplated remains “unknown” to the conscious mind. The “good German” syndrome and psychic numbing are sound theories, widely accepted and popularly discussed, yet they remain uselessly abstract unless they can be translated into something that actually impacts upon our lives.

It may be helpful to relate these phenomena to personal situations. Woman chooses not to “know” her terminal cancer and spends her final days enjoying loved ones and pleasant pursuits. Far better this than that she be overwhelmed by hopelessness and die in spirit prematurely. When a problem is insurmountable, psychic numbing is an entirely reasonable approach.

A father is deeply distressed by the messiness of his teenager’s room, but he makes mental calculations of the time and energy required to effect change and decided he is unwilling to make the necessary commitment. Therefore, he simply shuts the door and lives as if the mess did not exist. When the price of correcting a problem is unacceptably high, psychic numbing can be seen as a relatively healthy response under certain circumstances.

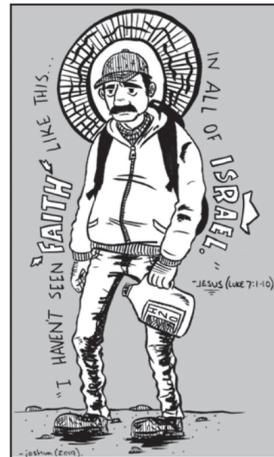
What can the resistance community offer those who see our nuclear condition as incurable? Definitely not so much by way of a guarantee. It is possible that our most stalwart



CENTRO CSO members visit the LACW



Rosemary Ochiogrosso circa 1980s



Graphic by Joshua Dease kiddashcomics.com

efforts will fall short if it is a certainty that any particular act will have but minor results. False optimism, given the magnitude of the crisis, does no one a service.

Similarly, we cannot glibly dismiss the fears of those unwilling to sacrifice. I am reminded of a young college student who responded to a list of standard proposals—circulate a petition, organize a march, sponsor a lecture series—with this anguished insight: “We all know those things will not be enough. If we really want to get rid of the bombs we will have to drop out of school, quit our jobs and stop paying taxes, lower our standard of living, and get out there and do something. We might even end up in jail. I do not want that, and neither do any of you!”

A mighty chunk of reality, and it must be responded to, not with the abstract, the ephemeral, the intellectual, but with a deep gut-level truth. Part of that truth is the moral imperative—consciousness requires responsible action—but the fact remains that people do not do things simply because they ought to. Part of that truth is the Biblical mandate, “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” (Isaiah 2:4) yet human weakness is both a given and forgiven. What we can share to accompany these truths is the experience of our lives.

I write this on a prison bunk, hav-

## DANDELION HOUSE CW

By FUMI TOSU

Dandelion House is the newest L.A. Catholic Worker sisterhouse, located in what is known today as Portland, Oregon. This new Catholic Worker community sits on the traditional lands of the Clackamas people, whose descendants are now members of the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde.

Twelve years ago, I joined the LACW as a summer intern. On the first day of our internship, veteran Catholic Worker and then-editor of the *Agitator* Jeff Dietrich reviewed the weekly schedule with us. It included days for the Hippy Kitchen, other days for the street corner oatmeal breakfast, and still other days and times for the death penalty vigil, the anti-war vigil, culture critique, Eucharist, and happy hour. As he finished showing us the calendar he remarked, “This is our liturgy of hope.”

What he meant, I believe, was that although we may not have the solution to the housing crisis, U.S. warmongering, or state violence, this, at least, was a way of pointing toward a hopeful, human way of living.

What I learned that summer was that in a world where people are discarded and told they do not matter, to create community around a delicious, nutritious meal is hopeful; in a war-addicted world, to vigil for peace is human; in a culture where shallow entertainment lulls us into unthinking acquiescence, to engage in “clarification of thought” is prophetic.

I was going through a career transition when I signed up for the internship program. I had taught Ethics and Social Justice at an all-boys Catholic high school in San Jose, CA for seven years. It was a meaningful and fulfilling time. Yet, inexplicably, I felt drawn to something else, though I did not quite know what yet.

I spent three months visiting various Catholic Worker communities in California, including Guadalupe, San Jose, Redwood City, Half Moon Bay, and San Francisco before arriving in Los Angeles. My intention was to learn what I could from the Catholic Worker movement before transitioning to whatever my next career might be.

It was during one of our silent anti-war vigils around the federal building in downtown Los Angeles when I realized I did not want to “transition” to something else. It was 2011, and the U.S. was mired in long, bloody wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet, by then, most people I knew had stopped thinking about the wars despite their enormous human and ecological costs.

The millions who had taken to the streets in early 2003 to protest the imminent invasion of Iraq were now mostly silent. Apart from those with loved ones fighting in Afghanistan or Iraq, the Catholic Worker community was the only group of people I had met who still thought daily about these wars.

I do not write this in judgment, and I include myself among those who

were only vaguely aware of the reality of the wars being waged abroad. Even when I was teaching war and peace, most days I did not think, let alone pray, about the wars, preoccupied as I was with grading, lesson planning, and other tasks of work and daily life.

That day in front of the federal building, I was struck by how important it was that there, at least, was a group of people who chose to remember. Whatever one thought of the merits of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, if our government was killing others in our name, was it not our duty to at least remember?

In the Eucharistic liturgy, the presider repeats the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: “This is my body, broken for you; this is my blood, poured out for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” If we are called to remember the Body and Blood of Jesus in the bread and wine at Mass, how much more are we tasked with remembering him in people whose actual flesh is broken, and whose life-sustaining blood is spilt by our hands?

The rhythm I learned at the LACW—chop, cook, serve, then walk, pray, protest—seemed right to me, not because it solved hunger or ended wars, but because it kept me human in the face of the absurdly inhumane. It was, indeed, hopeful.

In Japan, where I grew up, twelve years represents a full cycle of the zodiac calendar. With each “round” or “turn” of the zodiac cycle, we enter a new fullness of life. This year of the rabbit, twelve years after my first experiment with the Catholic Worker, I find myself in Portland, Oregon, at the newly formed Dandelion House Catholic Worker.

I chose the name Dandelion House for the beautiful yellow flower that most of us think of as a weed. This plant is resilient, like the people relegated to the margins in Portland with whom we work. The entire plant—from flower, to leaves, to roots—can be taken as food and medicine, as I learned from a dear one versed in herbal medicine. And, of course, we wish upon dandelion seeds, entrusting them with our dreams. It is a flower of hope.

At this budding Catholic Worker, we house individuals and families in need, one, two, or three at a time. Our first guests are two incredibly strong young people fighting for their lives against trauma and addiction. We do our best to offer emotional and physical safety, spiritual grounding, and love. Once a week we offer a hot, nutritious meal to the local community that gathers under one of Portland’s many bridges. We pray.

Little by little we experiment with what our own liturgy of hope looks like. What does hope look like today, in the heart of an empire that spends more than \$800 billion a year on war and preparations for war instead of on protecting forests, restoring watersheds, or caring for the least among us? We don’t fully know, but we are trying to figure it out.

Please visit [dandelionhouse.org](http://dandelionhouse.org) to learn more and to support our work.

*Fumi Tosu is the founder of the Dandelion House.*

## A POEM FROM HOME

By ALBERTO OROPEZA

Paramedics bring their red lights

Into the house,

They check for signs of distress

In Mr. Rudy’s room,

We wait—

From the hands of Catherine

A candle hatching light on the altar

Brings calm, prayers

In this moment

Of corporal turmoil

For Rudolph’s heart.

Paramedics turn off

Their lights, leave.

He is ok,

The candle remains.

A glow of *Lux Aeterna*. Ω

*Alberto Oropeza is a friend of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker.*

## PRIESTHOOD(S) OF ALL CHRISTIANS

By DAVID BOYLE

The ordained priest,—  
“ministerial,”—chants God  
down into swirling wine,  
sitting bread.

But non-ordained priests,  
—the masses who don’t officiate  
Masses—, can stand and pass  
out bread, to children, or the  
homeless/hungering;  
sweating through the swirl of  
work, bleeding like wine-drops  
when scraped by the wood of  
food crates, or nicked by bread  
knives.

Every believer gets to priest  
 (“priest” could work as verb),  
as long as working the bread or  
passionswirling with sweatwine-  
blood, work work work without  
which faith’s the dearest of dead  
doomed dogs.

No Catholics without work/  
workers; but multifold millions  
do work, manually, majestically.

“God must love priests, he made  
so many of them.” Ω

*David Boyle is a lawyer and  
writer in Long Beach, CA.*

**BETTER KNOW A VOLUNTEER**  
**ROSEMARY OCCHIOGROSSO**



Megan and Rosemary Occhiogrosso  
 By MEGAN RAMSEY

In the past couple years, Rosemary Occhiogrosso has become a regular, welcome presence at our Wednesday evening liturgies. Her lively, mocha-fueled personality has been an added joy to our home; but this Brooklyn-raised, Italian grandma brings so much more to the table.

Being a lifelong lover of cooking, she has taken our weekly potluck dinners to the next level. Preferring to skip the meat, Rosemary creates a hearty main dish for the evening. Even though we are predominantly a carnivorous household, you will not hear anyone grumbling as Rosemary serves her lentil “meat” balls over homemade pasta with a side of pesto fresh from her garden.

I often have the pleasure of being Rosemary’s sous chef, helping her find the right pot or tool in our abundantly stocked kitchen, although Rosemary is no novice to cooking for crowds in Hennacy House.

Rosemary was an LACW community member in the ‘70s and early ‘80s, back when the community enjoyed 20 members who were drawn to the Catholic Worker lifestyle.

Fresh out of nursing school, Rosemary first came to California to work with the United Farm Workers in their clinic in Delano. “The nurses there did everything. They diagnosed, worked in the ER, we learned to do sutures, take x-rays, and put casts on. I learned a lot about being a nurse practitioner even though I was just a nurse.”

It was there she met Catherine Bax who told her about the LACW Hospitality Free Clinic. She took a pay cut to move to L.A. and work in the clinic.

**HARPER cont’d from p.2**

to ensure documentation status could not be used to deny anyone health-care, education, and social services.

I think about the hostility Catholics United for Racial Equality received from the Los Angeles Archdiocese in the 1960s only to have our California bishops go from hosting their Stations of the Cross: Overcoming Racism in 2020 to supporting policies protecting garment workers to committing themselves to specific diocese-led anti-racism efforts in 2021. In L.A., there will be a full-time, paid staff member whose sole job will be to coordinate and grow anti-racism projects in our schools, parishes, and presbyterium.

The church has occasionally even been a committed participant in the struggles for migrant justice. Without overlooking his role in the horrible sex abuse violence in Los Angeles, I think about Cardinal Roger Mahoney giving an Ash Wednesday sermon calling on clergy to defy a federal law

“How could you go from \$5 a week to \$3 a week?” my father would say, but overall, they were supportive.

Rosemary’s younger sisters, Julia and Christa, came out to visit for a summer and ended up joining the Worker instead of returning to college. Their cousin, Greg, also came to be a part of the community.

Rosemary’s education continued as she ran the free clinic, working alongside great volunteer doctors. One of the doctors was Dr. Vince Carter, who gave Rosemary money to attend midwifery school.

While attending school, the man she had been dating, Stephen Fischer, joined the community. Stephen and Rosemary later married and had their first son, Damien while living at the LACW.

Rosemary still thinks back fondly of the fun times they had back then. “We had the best parties!” They threw a big formal Italian dinner in the soup kitchen, put on a fake wedding, and had a “Dress As Your Favorite Catholic Worker” costume party. Rosemary went as Tony Trafecanty, with an airline pilot badge dusted with flour, a homage to his starting the Justice Bakery.

In the mid ‘80s, the LACW had grown too large with many people having differing opinions and with a variety of different projects, the community was over-extended. Rosemary, Stephen, and Damien were among the mass exodus of that time.

Rosemary went on to have another son, Jesse, and delivered many more babies as a midwife at Los Angeles County General Hospital.

After raising her family, Rosemary sought out ways to bring her cooking to others. She began preparing meals, including homemade biscotti, or fresh baked sourdough bread, for a variety of charities.

She and Jesse have become competitive in their bread making, and we have reaped the benefits.

Soon after our in-person home liturgies reconvened, she was offering to help make the meal. But really, with her unlimited skills, I just stand by, lend a hand where I can, and hope to glean a tip or two from this Italian grandma from Brooklyn.

Now just a reminder that anyone living locally or visiting Los Angeles is welcome to our Wednesday evening liturgy (at 6 pm) for a taste of Rosemary’s next dish! Ω

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

that would criminalize serving undocumented immigrants.

I think about people like Frs. Luis Olivares, C.F.M., and Mike Kennedy, S.J. along with the Church of La Placita and others who boldly created spaces of sanctuary as Central American refugees fled the U.S.-supported violence there. I think about churches like Dolores Mission who opened their sanctuary to unhoused refugee families and who now, 35 years later, with the help of Proyecto Pastoral, continue to use their church building as a nightly shelter for the unhoused.

I think about Our Lady of Assumption parishioners who wanted to be a part of migrant justice work and were able to get their pastor to provide space and resources to inspire the rest of the congregation. For more than two years, they brought in refugees and held teach-ins, hosted fundraisers, collected bail money to support those committing civil disobedience, coordinated house parties, and brought in priests to

give homilies to try and get the full community committed to becoming a sanctuary church.

Sometimes, it has been the clergy who—recognizing gospel mandates and hearing the needs of their communities—helped push their congregations to pull the sacred capacities out of their community for justice-work. Though none of these is perfect, I think of the continued efforts of Monsignors Barry, Torgerson and Dyer, along with Frs. Ponnet, Boyle, and so many others.

More often than not, though, it has been pastors wise enough to get out of the way of their flock, or better yet, ones committed to creating on-ramps for the groundswell of parish energies, that have led to the most faithful, sustained endeavors.

When pastors know there is a risk of (or even experience) backlash from parishioners and reprisals from diocesan hierarchy but continue to value the efforts of and trust in their community leaders, they show what it is like to model Pope Francis’ call to smell like their sheep.

Our church is littered with individuals who, seeing no communal path available, have committed themselves to the personal faithfulness the gospels demand. Andres was an integral part of the Check the Sheriff coalition, which worked to uplift the voices of and pursue justice for the families surviving the violence of the L.A. Sheriff’s department. Barbara donates money to justice work outside the church and drops a card in the collection basket to let the parish leadership know, “I can no longer give credence to programs and alliances of the diocese that marginalize...” Ann welcomed Cookie, an unhoused woman, into the spare room of her house until Cookie passed away years later. Victor recognized the absence of Catholics in justice work and was trained to be a movement chaplain.

With all the individual and informal acts of care we have shown ourselves capable of, I cannot help but believe that if the five million Catholics in the Los Angeles Archdiocese wanted to change L.A. tomorrow, we could. We have created complex networks of care before and we could build them again. We have been a part of flooding the streets and demanding change, why not today, too?

I love the image of heaven where St. Peter’s only question is, “What happened to the others?” Where we will be reminded that our only responsibility has always been to the wellbeing of the whole community.

But embedded in that question is also the recognition that we cannot focus exclusively on our personal purity alone. I have attended too many protests and found myself the lone Catholic, and become the Pharisee wielding judgment and self-righteousness, beating my chest and saying, “I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else...” What am I doing to bring more people in? We are, after all, “sacred body” people.

Whether we do this work because we know intimately the crushing violence of systems and states or because we see the inner workings and values of our world, let us cast our lot with the discarded because it is in all of our personal interests to have a more just world.

Let us make a commitment deeper than just occasional kind acts. Let us seek to expand our analyses by questioning the promises and practices of capitalism, empire, and imperialism, and by living a life that reflects a different way. Let us be more than just proximal to the disposed, let us bind our lives together.

And though this article aimed to

map the Catholic “left” in L.A., let us look for an understanding of our responsibilities that is deeper than political affiliation; that does not simplify our faith into an activity that celebrates one political faction over another. The truth of God transcends political affiliation and calls all to task. We in Los Angeles should know this intimately. It is God who we are called to orient ourselves towards, not governments nor groups.

I pray you have your own local examples to celebrate and uplift. I hope you are a model to other Catholics (or other people of goodwill) struggling with how to put flesh on the bones of our faith. I hope you have seen more than institutional dialogue across differences, but a real deep commitment to peacemaking. And I encourage you to share your stories and memories with us.

As we wait for the return of our Savior, let us remember there is no one else waiting in the wings. Let us remember there has always only been a small group of imperfect people whose witness has had the power to change the world. So let us be the stuff of a next testament, the rich stories that could bookend the lives of the prophets and the witness of the king of peace. All that we have ever needed is here beside us, around us, within us. The beloved community is waiting for you. Ω

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

**LU cont’d from p.2**

follow Him out to the laundry line, just as we follow Him into a jubilant picnic. We follow Him into cooking pots of beans at 4am, just as we follow Him into feasting with our neighbors on bowls of hot soup.

Whatever corner of society you occupy in this New Year, I invite you to join me in considering again the cost of following our Lord. As we do, may He remind us how worthy He is of being pursued. Ω

*Phoebe Lu was a 2022 Los Angeles Catholic Worker summer intern.*

**WOODSON cont’d from p.5**

to offer a vital alternative to psychic numbing, and it can make of us something more than the final generation of “good Germans.”

The question put to Jesus, “Where do you live?” was not primarily a query about physical locale. It probed much deeper into the spirit and meaning, the quality and purpose of the life in question, and the answer was, “Come, and see.” It is perhaps the only question we need ask ourselves and others, and the answer of the resistance community, from the New England submarine yards to the Missouri missile silos to the west coast laboratories, in and out of prison, may stir the anesthetized spirit toward something truly joyful and alive. Ω

*At the time this was written, Helen Woodson was serving an 18-year prison sentence for a “Plowshares” action on November 12, 1984, in Missouri.*

*She and three others used picks and a jackhammer to damage a missile silo. She writes that she hopes “people respond to the truth of our action, if they find truth in it, by taking nonviolent action of their own.”*

# ON THE LINE

## MARY LOU KOWNACKI - R.I.P.

Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB, one of the most influential and foundational leaders of Pax Christi USA over the past 50 years, joined the Heavenly Cloud of Witnesses on January 6, in Erie, PA after a long illness. Mary Lou was relentless in witnessing to a world deeply in need of nonviolence and compassion.

Her involvement with Pax Christi USA stretched back to 1973. She became the national coordinator in late 1984. Mary Lou moved the office to Erie, PA where it enjoyed the support of the Erie Benedictines, achieved financial stability, initiated major publishing efforts, grew the staff to 15 members, and doubled our national membership. More than 300 local groups were active when Mary Lou finished her second term as national coordinator in 1991 and a functioning regional network had been put into place to serve the membership. She will be deeply missed.

**MARY LOU KOWNACKI -  
;PRESENTE!**

## RESISTANCE UPDATE

Germany has jailed a U.S. peace activist for protest of U.S. nuclear weapons based there. Amidst heightened nuclear tension between NATO and Russia in Europe, U.S. peace activist John LaForge entered a German prison on January 10, 2023, to serve a 50-day sentence for protests against

U.S. nuclear weapons stockpiled at Germany's Büchel Air Force Base.

LaForge entered JVA Billwerder in Hamburg as the first U.S. citizen ever imprisoned for a nuclear weapons protest in Germany.

The 66-year-old Minnesota native and co-director of Nukewatch, the Wisconsin-based anti-nuclear advocacy and action group, was convicted of trespass in 2018. One of the actions involved entering the base and climbing atop a bunker that purportedly housed some of the approximately twenty U.S. B61 thermonuclear gravity bombs stationed there.

Germany's Regional Court in Koblenz affirmed his conviction and lowered the penalty to \$619. LaForge has refused to pay and has appealed the convictions to Germany's Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, the country's highest, which has not yet ruled in the case.

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

## U.S. CAPITALIST-IMPERIALISM DEEPENS

Despite hundreds of BILLIONS of dollars slated for the Pentagon every year, military families across the country struggle to pay for housing, food, and basic healthcare.

Over the past two decades, \$7.35 TRILLION has gone directly from taxpayers to weapons contractors like Raytheon and Lockheed Martin.

The House of Representatives is gearing up to freeze government spending, pulling as much as \$100

BILLION back from the Pentagon. The problem? Many want to prioritize weapons contractor profits yet again, and cut crucial funding for social programs, particularly Social Security and Medicare, among others, instead.

We must ask when is enough enough?  
—[winwithoutwar.org](http://winwithoutwar.org)

## SHAMEFUL - IMMORAL

- More than 550,000 unhoused people in the U.S.
  - 1 in 10 adults in "significant" medical debt.
  - \$195 billion in medical debt held by individuals.
  - 16.9 % child poverty rate.
  - 63% of people in the U.S. living paycheck to paycheck.
  - 65% of our discretionary dollars go to the militarized budget.
- While their constituents live paycheck to paycheck and drown in debt, Washington politicians will award the Pentagon \$847 billion, over half of which will go to private companies.

—[codepink.org](http://codepink.org)

## LIES, LIES, AND MORE LIES

A Pentagon document reveals the U.S. lied about Afghan civilians killed in a 2021 drone strike. U.S. military officials knew that an August 29, 2021 drone strike in Kabul killed ten Afghan civilians (all members of the Ahmadi family) including seven children, but lied about it, a recent report revealed.

The strike took place during the final days of the U.S. ground war in Afghanistan, just three days after a bombing that killed at least 182 people, including 13 U.S. troops, at Kabul's international airport.

Zamarai Ahmadi, a 43-year-old aid worker for California-based nonprofit Nutrition and Education International, was carrying water containers that were mistaken for explosives when his Toyota Corolla was bombed by a Lockheed-Martin Hellfire missile fired from a General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper drone.

—[scheerpost.com](http://scheerpost.com)

## CORPORATE THEFT

From 2018-2021, just 23 corporations received an estimated \$50 BILLION in tax breaks. Trump-era "accelerated depreciation" provisions helped corporations reduce their effective tax rates to single digits.

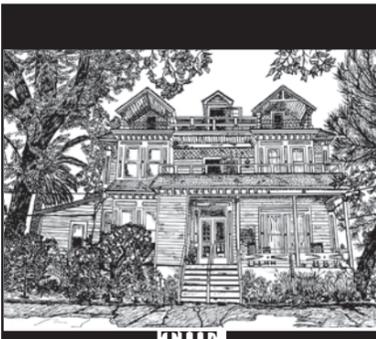
—[inequality.org](http://inequality.org)

## INTERESTING FACTS

- Portion of people in the U.S. who believe the media prioritizes profits over public interest: 3/4
  - Chances that a U.S. college graduate with a journalism degree regrets this choice: 9 in 10
  - Median age to which Americans expect to live: 82
- [Harpers Index February 2023](http://Harpers Index February 2023)

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

Hennacy House illustration by Becky McIntyre



## THE HOUSE JOURNAL

We closed out 2022 with a number of joyful celebrations. We were thrilled that we did not seem to lose our skills in hospitality during the pandemic. For the first time since 2019, we brought vanloads of our friends from Skid Row to our home on Thanksgiving Day. We carried all the living room furniture out to our yard where we had not only NFL football on for folks to watch under the clothesline, but a crowd also gathered around a second TV on the lawn to watch the World Cup under the shade of our towering palm tree. Our guests stepped away from their games just long enough to partake in a delicious feast of no less than eight turkeys!

We had members of the local activist group **Centro CSO** over to our home to meet and greet and build deeper relationships with the amazing people who are fighting the good fight in our own neighborhood.

It was Christmas time before we knew it. Friends from the kitchen: **Ben**

**Borden, Linda Lopez, Chris and Efrén** joined our household in decorating our tree and home for Christmas. We also had a few folks join us virtually as we broadcasted on Zoom to hear us sing carols and watch us sip on cocoa and cider.

On the shortest day of the year we joined **LA CAN, BLMLA, Stop LAPD Spying, and Union de Vecinos** for a Posada beginning at city council member **Kevin de Leon's** office. As is the tradition, we traveled, like the holy family, from one place to another seeking shelter but facing rejection until finally finding a place that welcomed us in—an apartment complex with organized and powerful tenants.

The morning before Christmas, taking into consideration the several additional events and giveaways happening on Skid Row for the holidays, we figured our typical beans and rice would have trouble enticing people when there were feasts being offered in the streets. Instead, we opened our dining garden as usual for a Saturday morning; there several of our regular patrons and a bunch of volunteers sat down together to snack on homemade Christmas cookies and hot chocolate! Celebrations continued into the evening with our annual Christmas Eve feast by housemate, **Maria Lopez**. Feasting continued the next evening with friends **Ben Sullivan** and **Soomi Lee** joining us for dinner.

Being a small core community these days, we had to make a concerted effort to make sure that those of us who had the need to spend time away with family for the holiday could do so. **Matt Harper** skipped town the week before the busy holidays to celebrate Christmas early with his family. With **Megan Ramsey** and **Josh Flaugh** taking the holidays off, there was a real concern if we had enough com-

munity to keep the kitchen open as well as care for our home. But it all worked out, by the grace of God and extended community.

Our Irish snowbird, **Benny McCobb**, flew in to help take house shifts and be an attentive ear in the Hippie Kitchen garden. Former community member, **Mark Vinzani** also came back to spend Christmas with his LACW family. **Jeff Dietrich** has kindly returned from his "retirement" to do a share of the housework. We learned that (though it may not be ideal) we can, with creativity and help, get by on low numbers, if it means making the work more sustainable for us in the long term.

The January rains have definitely mixed up our routine. We spend our kitchen days trying to provide dry spots for our guests to eat under canopies, serving hot tea—hoping to warm folks up after many have slept out in the downpours, and push-brooming out the small lake that persistently forms in the middle of our dining serving area. We are privileged being able to go home at the end of the day, change into dry clothes and have a cup of tea in the one heated room of the house.

We are very fortunate that we were able to have all the construction work done on our home last year. Lifting the drooping second floor, replacing the windows, and sealing leaks in our roof has kept the interior of our home completely dry in these winter storms. The office addition continues to be the coldest room of the house so **Catherine Morris** has set up a temporary workspace in her bedroom where she diligently logs and responds to the countless contributions and keeps up with correspondences.

Family and friends from around the country have been asking us how we are managing in all this rain they have

been hearing about. As hard as it is for our community to live in this rain, the lives of our unhoused friends get drenched and never really dry out before the next deluge. As I write, the more disastrous weather is North of us.

Our friends **Calia Kammer** and **David DeCosse**, of the new Bread and Roses Catholic Worker in Santa Cruz, reported to us about how hard the community they serve has been hit. In early December, a group of people who had established a safe encampment site were forced out by police sweeps. They rebuilt along a river where it was colder. With the first rains their possessions were soaked through, and as the river swelled, many of their homes were flooded, filled with sand, or washed away. No deaths are known, but not everyone who lived there has been accounted for at this time, as they've been forced to relocate abruptly.

Our thoughts are with those who are struggling just to meet each basic human need. This past week, we closed out our day serving at the kitchen with a quote from **Elie Wiesel**, "In the face of suffering, one has no right to turn away, not to see. In the face of injustice, one may not look the other way. When someone suffers, and it is not you, they come first. Their suffering gives them priority... To watch over another who grieves is a more urgent duty than to think of God." I hope we each can make steps to further live by this quote in this New Year, to look long and hard at the suffering around us, then to take action to extend a hand and help our sisters and brothers who find themselves in distress.

May each and all enjoy a safe, blessed, and grace-filled New Year.

*House Journal* is written by Megan Ramsey.

## GOOD FRIDAY STATIONS OF THE CROSS

April 7, 2023 - 3pm • Location to be determined.

Check our website or email us for further info.

*If you would rather join us virtually on Zoom, email us for the link*

## SEDER OF LIBERATION

SUNDAY APRIL 16, from 3 to 8pm

• ST. BEDE THE VENERABLE CHURCH HALL •

215 Foothill Blvd., La Cañada Flintridge, 91011 • *Parking enter on Crown Ave.*

*Please call 323.267.8789 to reserve a seat and sign up to bring either a salad or dessert.*

*Also, please bring a bottle of wine or grape juice for your consumption during the Seder meal.*

## 👉 SPECIAL NEEDS 👈

We are in need of 10 X 12 TARPS. Inexpensive disposable RAIN PONCHOS. CANES—gently used or new, metal or wood. NEW reading glasses 250 strength. Two-blade razors. Men's large crew or tube white socks. Thank you. Many blessings.

## RE-UP FOR A BUCK!

For only \$1 you can renew your valued subscription to the one and only *Catholic Agitator*, and give a friend or relative a subscription for free!

*(NOTE: Any donation during the year automatically renews your subscription.)*

In these dreadful and trying times, where else can one get the Word and nourishment the *Catholic Agitator* offers? Today, more than ever, we need all the nourishment we can get.

Please do not hesitate! **Sign up NOW!**

YES! \_\_\_\_\_ I want myself, my family, and my friends to get the *Agitator*!

Enclosed are the names and addresses, along with a buck.

**Keep Agitating! Thank you!**

**ALSO:** If you are planning to move or have recently moved, **PLEASE** send us your new address. We are spending a great deal of money for returned postage that could otherwise be used for other purposes related to our work.

## CATHOLIC AGITATOR

FEBRUARY 2023 Vol. 53/No. 1

### 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://lvcw.org>

#### ISAIAH HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY

316 S. Cypress Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92701  
(714) 835-6304 <https://occatholicworker.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://sbew.org> – [lizaOSB@aol.com](mailto:lizaOSB@aol.com)

#### CASA COLIBRÌ CATHOLIC WORKER

Ocampo #2 Hostotipaquillo, Jalisco Mexico C.P. 46440  
<http://casacolibricw.com>

011-52 - 386 - 744-5063 – [casacolibricw@gmail.com](mailto:casacolibricw@gmail.com)

#### AMANI HOUSE - NAIROBI, KENYA, AFRICA

[mdavidomondi@gmail.com](mailto:mdavidomondi@gmail.com)

#### NEW JERSEY CATHOLIC WORKER

P.O. Box 2203, Elizabeth, NJ 07207  
NJCW@riseup.net – (323) 704-9960

#### NEW ORLEANS CATHOLIC WORKER

1910 Constance St., New Orleans, LA 70130  
(504) 457-8062 – [nocw@yahoo.com](mailto:nocw@yahoo.com)

<https://neworleanscatholicworker.weebly.com>

#### VENICE CATHOLIC WORKER

<https://venicecatholicworker.org>

#### DANDELION HOUSE CATHOLIC WORKER

13319 SE Linden Lane, Portland, OR 97222  
(408) 910-7074 - <https://dandelionhouse.org>

[fumi@dandelionhouse.org](mailto:fumi@dandelionhouse.org)