

HOSPITALITY

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Providing hospitality to the homeless and to those in prison, through Christ's love.

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November 2001

God Bless America

By Ed Loring



God Bless America

God Bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above
From the mountains to the prairies
To the oceans white with foam
God Bless America, my home sweet home.
God Bless America, my home sweet home.

And, Or, But:

This Land is Your Land

This land is your land, this land is my land,
From California to the New York Island
From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters
This land was made for you and me
[White and Black, Afghan and Briton]

As I went walking, I saw a sign there
On the sign it said, "No Trespassing"
But on the other side it didn't say nothing
That side was made for you and me
[Homeless and Housed, gay and straight]

In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people
By the relief office, I seen my people
As they stood there hungry I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?
[Yes, tis!! The hungry and the full, the weak and the strong]

-Woody Guthrie

The Way of the Cross

Ed Weir of New Hope House came to visit me recently while I was making an extended retreat at Dayspring. As we talked about the times and the signs thereof, brother Weir helped me see something I had not seen before.

In first century Palestine the cross was not only an instrument of state execution by the Romans and sometimes on behalf of the Temple elites, it was **Bless**, continued on page 8

Even After All This

The Open Door Community is a "Protestant Catholic Worker" community and we hold dear our relationship with other Catholic Worker communities in this country and other parts of the world. In late September in a retreat near Santa Barbara, California with fourteen "sisterhouses," we agreed on the following statement as our shared response to the devastating events of September 11.

Even after all this...

We are Catholic Workers and we are still pacifists. We too are heartbroken over the events of September 11, 2001. We too grieve the horrific and untimely loss of thousands of lives. In further response, we turn to the non-violent roots of our founders, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. We remind ourselves of their (and our) commitment to the Christ of Peace and to the creation of a new social order within the shell of the old. An order accomplished, not with bombs, but with mercy; not with massive counter-attacks, but with restorative justice.

We are Catholic Workers and we are still pacifists. Our grief will not be short-circuited with cries of vengeance nor with acts of retribution. We will not cooperate with incitements to levels of grief, acknowledging the woundedness inflicted upon us and the woundedness that our nation has inflicted upon others.

We are Catholic Workers and we are still pacifists. We will dare to ask the difficult questions: How is it that the United States was the focus of such an unspeakable attack? Could

it be possible that most of us, as Americans, are ignorant of the injustices done to other nations in our name? Will we ever openly repent of misdeeds done to the people of our own land: Native Americans, African Americans, Japanese Americans, other immigrants, the homeless and the poor? Can we acknowledge the suffering and death we have imposed upon those who live in other lands: The citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the poor of Central and South America, the people of Iraq? And how many others?

We are Catholic Workers and we are still pacifists. We too are afraid of the possibility of more terrorist actions in our own cities. We too are afraid for our children and their futures. We too have helped to bury the dead - the impoverished on our streets who die in obscurity, unloved and unremembered by society. We continue therefore, even in the wake

of our own fears and grief, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and the imprisoned. We hope for the day when our nation provides adequate funding for these, the forgotten in our midst, rather than use our money for the proliferation of more and more weapons of mass destruction on our earth and even in the heavens.

We are Catholic Workers and we are still pacifists. We dream impossible dreams, see unbelievable visions. We conjure up such hopeful images as U.S. planes dropping, not bombs, but food

bundles and messages of hope to the long-suffering people of Afghanistan. We view this paradoxical moment in history as a pause wherein we - every one of us - can desire and work for the well being of all. We pray for hearts to change: The hearts of our leadership, the hearts of our opponents, even our own hearts when we are tempted to incline toward self-righteousness.

We invite you to participate with us in all of our wildest dreams and visions for peace. For now we sadly know that our affluence, our power, our weapons, our possessions

cannot serve as protection from harm. We invite you to clamber off the wheel of violence. It is the only worthy legacy we can offer to those who have died. We invite you to join us as we re-examine our consciences, our spiritual paths, our concepts of God, our commitment to a better world.

We are Catholic Workers and we still believe ...the only solution is love.

Peace,

Los Angeles Catholic Worker, Las Vegas Catholic Worker, Orange County Catholic Worker, San Pedro Catholic Worker, High Desert Catholic Worker, Beatitude House Catholic Worker, San Bruno Catholic Worker, Fresno Catholic Worker, Peralta Catholic Worker, Magdalene House Catholic Worker, House of Grace Catholic Worker, Norfolk Catholic Worker, Open Door Community, Vera Cruz, Mexico Catholic Worker



Choose This Day: Whom Shall You Serve?

By Sye Pressley, a.k.a. "Preacher"

It is a hard question to answer today, tomorrow, or yesterday. Perhaps the answer is too difficult to say.

When confronted with this question — *whom do you serve this day?* — the choice of your God will indicate your answer.

Let's just take a look at the choices with which one is faced. The god of this world seems to have so much to offer. It offers you a choice of becoming rich and famous. You could even become president of these United States (if you are white, that is) or Vice President. If, on the other hand, you are Black, the god of this world has a place for you. You could become Mayor, Senator, Congressperson, or maybe even Governor.

But always keep this in mind: even though the choice is yours, if you serve the god of this world, the price that you will have to pay is very, very high. You must become blind, deaf, selfish, and greedy. Your blindness will cause you not to see the condition of the poor, the hungry, or, yes, even the homeless. You will not see the suffering of the elderly as health care is cut again and again. And as the elderly on fixed incomes have a harder time obtaining medications, how do you feel? Oh, excuse me, I forgot: you can't see. I know it's hard to see when all you can hear is the laughter of the rich as another deal is finalized. The cries of the poor go unheard. Their cries of despair, pain, agony and defeat fall upon your deaf ears. Or are there degrees of your deafness? You can hear the voices of the big corporations in their greed for more, more, more — but not the cry of the poor, poor, poor. Ah, what a mighty god you

choose to serve. Is the name of your god Almighty Dollars? If that is your choice, someday might you be just one more deal, one more check from becoming homeless and broke yourself?



RITA CORBIN

Now we come to the true, living, merciful, righteous God of justice, the God of those who only seek to do God's will. But to serve (Yahweh-Elohim) our God, there too is a price to be paid. You must be willing to pick up the cross and follow our Beloved Brother Christ. It is easy for me to explain this. By picking up that cross, you must be ready to die. Yes, die. Die to your self. You must die to that old way of thinking, that old way of acting toward others and one's self.

At times your cross will become heavy. "Why?" you ask. I'm deeply pleased that you do. On that cross will be nailed racism, classism, and sexism. Then you will receive new eyes, new ears, and a new way of speaking. No longer will you be blind to hunger and despair, or to unjust treatment of the poor and elderly. You will live the full meaning of Matthew 25: 'When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink?' 'I tell you, whenever you did this for the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!'

To die for Christ's sake is to rise (spiritually) in the newness of Christ. As we say in our prayer: Christ has died, Christ has risen, and believe you me, Christ shall come again. Come again he will! The choice that you make will enable you to live as Christ has intended for you to live: for God's Glory, not humans'. The choice is yours. Choose now, this day. Sye Pressley is a resident of the Open Door Community.



AT MY BACK DOOR



Writings from Hospitality

ED LORING

The Open Door Community, Atlanta

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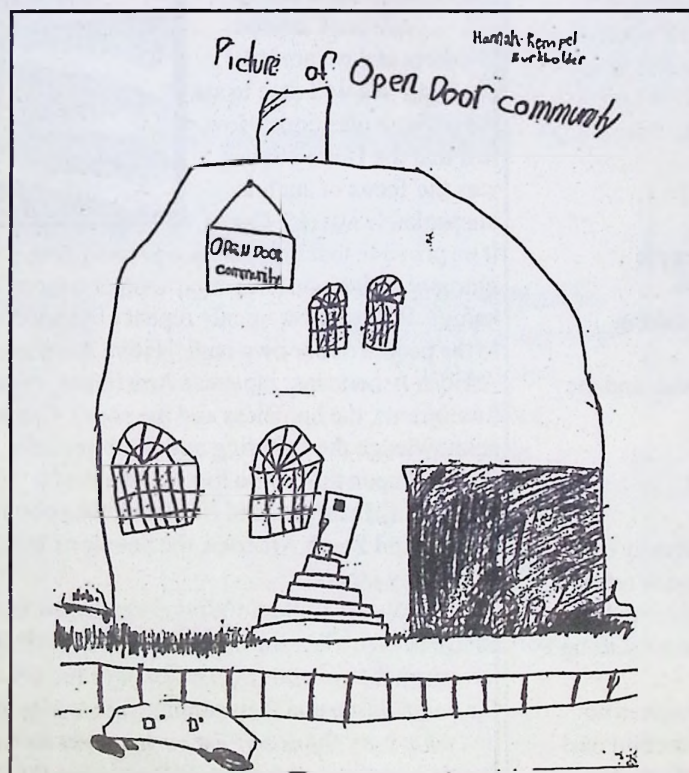
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HOSPITALITY

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Reflecting on Advent 2001:

Herod and Mary

By Brian Terrell

In Advent, these weeks before the celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas, themes of Jesus' conception, birth and infancy, as related in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, will be told and retold but usually only in part. There will be incessant church and Sunday school pageants, television specials, hymns and carols, Christmas cards and displays of the manger prominent at churches, shopping malls and places of business, public and private. The good news of the birth of a savior, as it is commonly abridged, presents Christmas as a time of wonder and magic, a time of joy, comfort and celebration for rich and poor alike, wherein earthly struggles and conflicts have no part and are set aside and forgotten.

The whole story, however, cannot be represented as a "Precious Moments™" figurine, nor does it offer much comfort or reason to celebrate for the rich and powerful. Unexpurgated, Matthew (2:1-18) and Luke (1:26-2:38) rescue Christmas from a morass of sentimentality and roots the story of our salvation and of Jesus' birth square in the mess of human history, breaking into our tangled webs of political, economic and personal relationships.

Luke tells how the birth of Jesus was greeted with joy by shepherds who were among the poorest and most marginalized in Judean society. There is no news that is good news for everybody and Matthew reports that when King Herod heard from traveling wise men of the birth of the king of the Jews, he was "greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." So troubled was Herod that in his fury and fear he ordered the slaughter of all the baby boys in Bethlehem in hopes of killing the promised one.

The massacre of the innocents of Bethlehem, essential as it is to the story, is rarely portrayed on Christmas cards and few crèche scenes include Herod's soldiers sharpening their knives in the shadows. The Catholic Church regards these murdered babies as martyrs and, although few Catholics know it, remembers December 28 as Holy Innocents Day.

Not many Christmas sermons question why some people were not happy to hear of the savior's birth. Some that do take this on seem to try to exonerate Herod, as though his murderous rage were all an unfortunate misunderstanding. Herod, this reasoning goes, mistook the spiritual reign of the promised messiah for a political one that would rival his own; if only Herod had realized that Jesus came only to save souls he would have joined the wise men in worshipping him. "Why are you afraid, Herod, when you hear of the birth of a king?" asks an ancient sermon that is part of the Holy Innocents Day liturgy, "He does not come to drive you out, but to conquer the devil."

In the gospel of Luke we read of Mary, a woman of a despised race dealing with a problem pregnancy while living under a brutal military occupation that should have crushed any hope that a young parent might have entertained for an expected child. She believed the promises given her by God rather than the more reasonable forecasts for her child of more poverty, humiliation and slavery. "My spirit rejoices in God my savior," Mary sang in expectation

of the child to be born, "God has scattered the arrogant of heart and mind. God has thrown down rulers from their thrones but lifted the lowly. The hungry God has filled with good things; the rich have been sent away empty."

Whether or not Mary could have read what the prophets had foretold about the coming of the messiah, she knew in the depths of her soul the promise that the poor would be judged with justice, the land returned to those who work it and swords turned to plowshares – and so did Herod.

Mary and Herod shared an understanding and expectation of this new born child. The only difference between them was their perspective. The greatest hope that a pregnant peasant woman heard in the promises of God was at the same time the direst fear of a king in his palace. The same promise seen from different points of view inspired one to rejoice and drove the other to murder. Unlike many of us, neither Herod nor Mary could afford to spiritualize the birth of Jesus, and if Herod was wrong about the mission of Jesus, so was Mary.

As citizens or clients of a super power

empire, one that grasps and drains the resources and wealth of its colonies and its own poor to itself, our perspective may be more that of Herod "and all Jerusalem with him" than it is that of Mary and the shepherds of Bethlehem. Certainly, we live under a state that is as ready as Herod was to sacrifice children for the sake of national security. The position and wealth of the United States in the world is no less dependent than was Herod's on a willingness to starve, threaten and to kill even the innocent. When Madeleine Albright, speaking as US ambassador to the United Nations, explained that the deaths of more than 500,000 Iraqi children due to sanctions was "worth the price" to promote US policy goals in the Middle East, she was articulating ethics of Herod. In a culture that is more Herodian than it is Christian, Jesus, God incarnate as one poor and helpless, is still regarded by the rich and powerful as a nuisance to be isolated and destroyed, despite all the Christmas trees, Santa Clauses and tinsel-festooned corporate headquarters.

Herod and Mary, continued on page 10

The Gods of the Millennium

By Dan Berrigan

The god of expectations made money like mad, made money like butter in a churn, poured it out like butter over popcorn, on the deserving and covetous alike. For this, the god of expectations was blessed and applauded.

And that was a good year.

The god of approximations made the kingdom almost come. Granted, there were brush wars, small wars, minor contusions on the world map. There were bombings and sanctions against expendable children. And at home, a general mood of discontent and "Get the bastards."

But still. By and large the sanctuaries were full and the preachers preached and the collections came in and the authorities sat straight in the front pews of the national cathedral. The president entered the bully pulpit to intone an infallible irrefutable doctrine of bloody tit for tat.

And that was a good year.

The god of contemplation made humans spin like spinning prayer wheels. Seated on a bed of gold, like a lotus in its native element, he intoned: "You think therefore you are. Think, think." So they thought and thought and they were and were.

And that was a good year.

The god of Christians staggered up a hill, dragging a plank of wood heavy as a plowshare. Like a plowshare the plank made a furrow; from the furrow sprang armed warriors, redundant lives, talking skulls, disconsolate dragons, teeth on edge. These were followed by a multitude of martyrs, clothed in their blood. And a girl named Cassandra brought up the rear, raving into the wind.

That procession? It was of small moment and went all but unnoticed.

Except for this; with regard to money, bully pulpits, prayer wheels, armed warriors – that was a very bad year.

Daniel Berrigan, S.J. is a long-time priest-activist, theologian, poet and teacher. He has published countless volumes of poetry, Biblical reflection, and theology, and he is a faithful friend and constant encouragement to us at the Open Door Community. Dan recited this poem at a prayer vigil in New York after the September 11 catastrophe.

Want to talk to a friend in prison? Check your wallet first.

By Mike Casey

Reach out and touch someone. Get connected. Phone home.

These are just some of the slogans that telephone companies use. Their primary goal is, of course, to get folks to use the phone. If more people make more calls, the thinking goes, more phone companies make more money.

But telephone companies also engage in a bidding war of sorts to acquire customers. Many evening suppers have been interrupted by aggressive marketers calling to offer the latest service or, more often, the lowest rate. These direct advertisements offer cash rebates for switching phone companies, free hook-ups, discounts on elaborate services or even free ice cream (God be praised!).

However, when some people answer the telephone, they hear a very different message: "This is MCI Worldcom with a collect call from a correctional facility in Georgia." This notification is not followed by an offer for free ice cream or cash bonuses. In fact, people who hear this message have no choice but to accept the very high connection charges and per minute rates. They have no chance to switch to a competitor or seek an alternate phone company. Folks who receive calls beginning "This is MCI Worldcom with a collect call from a correctional facility in Georgia," must either submit to the abusive pricing system of the prison phone monopoly or lose all day-to-day live contact with their loved one in prison.

MCI's (and other phone companies with contracts for prisons) primary goal – making money – means that the phone company squeezes the most money possible from people. Families of prisoners are captive to the phone company.

It's been a long time since the telephone company was called "Ma Bell." That monopoly was split apart in the 1980's in order to allow for open competition throughout the telephone market. Now advertisers call prospective customers directly to hawk their current discount or sign-up bonus. Switching long-distance telephone carriers is a regular event for many households.

However, for people in prisons, switching phone companies is impossible. Telephones in prisons generally allow for only collect calls. The incarceration complex (for most people in prison in Georgia, that's the Georgia Department of Corrections) decides who provides the long-distance telephone service. And the prisoner has no choice but to use that monopoly to make her or his collect calls.

Now, our government, which broke up one phone company monopoly, supports another one in the prison system.

The people who receive collect calls from inmates pay a connection fee of \$3.95, and then \$.69 per minute. For collect calls made from the same distance, outside of prison, MCI WorldCom charges only \$.32 per minute (on nights and weekends). In addition, MCI suggests a free 1-800 number to any of its customers, outside of prison, who receive lots of collect calls. By using this service, customers pay the lowest per minute rate and no connection fee.

A ten-minute MCI call would normally cost as



Dear Hospitality,

Recently the Georgia Prison System changed the telephone system that is the only means of voice communication that the inmates are allowed to use to contact their loved ones, lawyers, and support organizations. Prior to the change, the inmate telephone service was provided by Harris Telecom. It cost approximately \$2.56 for the first minute and \$.26 per minute Monday through Friday. We received a break on the weekends; the connection rate was the same, but the per minute rate was \$.23 for most of the weekend. Now, the current system is provided by MCI Inmate Services. The quality of the telephone calls has decreased and the charges have more than doubled. If you want to talk to an inmate now, you must be willing and able to pay a \$3.95 connection charge and \$.69 per minute.

Yes, the people on the inside are there because they have been convicted of crimes against our society, and some people on the outside don't understand why their loved ones want to continue to have contact with the inmate. However, in my case, I've loved my husband for 34 years and you just can't cut that off because he made a mistake that has ruined our lives. He has an 85-year-old stepmother who cannot make the three-hour trip to sit in uncomfortable chairs for six hours to see him. Talking to him provides her comfort. She knows that she will more than likely never be able to see him again; she cherishes the time that she can talk with him. Now, she, as well as all of us who

provide monetary, emotional, and moral support to the inmates, are subjected to such exorbitantly high telephone rates that the number of times and/or the number of minutes that we can talk must be reduced unless we can get the rates reduced. These high rates are hurting many elderly relatives who are on fixed incomes and relatives with low incomes who cannot make the trip to see their inmate.

Perhaps the decision makers did not stop to realize that their revenues could be decreased due to the inability of people on the outside to pay the excessive rates. Will the morale of the inmates be affected when they cannot talk with their loved ones? The events in New York and Washington on September 11 are having far reaching effects on our economy; is communication with inmates going to be affected too?

I am requesting that we band together to request a rate decrease. Please call MCI Inmate Services at 1-800-231-0193 during normal working hours to register a complaint about the horrible rate increase. I was also told by an operator at that number, who was talking with her supervisor, to put my complaint in writing by sending a FAX to the attention of MCI Georgia DOC Services, at the toll free number, 1-877-899-8312. The rate being charged to us is one of the highest in the nation's prison systems; the Georgia Department of Corrections is receiving a kickback of approximately 40% on these charges.

Signed,
Disgusted in Georgia

little as \$3.20 [that's \$.32 x 10 minutes]. The same call received from a person in prison would cost \$10.85 [\$.69 x 10 minutes + \$3.95 connection fee] – over three times as much.

This initial charge of \$3.95 per prisoner call takes on greater significance in light of this fact: Calls from prisons automatically terminate after ten minutes. If ten minutes is not enough to connect with a loved one (and is it ever?), a second collect call will again incur the connection fee.

As a part of the contract between MCI and the state, there is some sharing of income. The telephone company keeps sixty-five percent of the earnings. The other thirty-five percent of the revenue from prisoner collect calls goes back to Georgia. It is in Georgia's best interest to have the phone company charge friends and family of prisoners so much for calls. The more MCI gets, the more the state gets.

But who, exactly, is getting these surplus profits, three times over the standard rate? According to a recent *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article, one company with which the Georgia Department of

Corrections contracts for phone service, MCI WorldCom, subcontracts with other companies, including CresTech. CresTech has been "modernizing" the telephone system at facilities under the control of the Georgia Department of Corrections. CresTech will receive at least \$751,000 in salaries and an additional \$150,000 through time-based incentive bonuses. Charles Walker Jr., the son of Senate majority leader, Charles Walker, owns a part of CresTech. Even if CresTech's connections did not play a role in the company's winning of that MCI subcontract, a single family (the Walkers, father and son) is gaining professionally on both ends of the monopoly. The high cost of phone calls helps to expand the state treasury. In turn, the tremendous earnings of a private subcontractor, partly owned by the son, help to create these high costs.

In this kickback network, family and friends of people who are incarcerated pay the real price.

Mike Casey is a resident volunteer at the Open Door.

Inch by Inch

a column by Murphy Davis

Years ago Ed Loring, our lawyer friend Jack Boger, and I were taking a lunch break between visits on Georgia's death row and discussing the use of the death penalty. Jack said, "It's as if we believed that we're on a ship and we can just keep throwing people overboard without realizing that we're all tied together at the waist. Eventually the rope will pull us all down."

It was an image of human solidarity and connectedness that has stuck with me over the years and surely comes back to me in these days as we continue to grapple for how to respond to the horror of the events of September 11, 2001. Our communal heart is gripped by undulating waves of fear, grief, horror, rage, anxiety, uncertainty, revenge, and, at times, numbness. The loss of life in the crash of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon is staggering. We're still searching for ways to get our minds and hearts around the enormity of what has happened and how much has changed in our world. We're still only speculating about how many people died.

Because the magnitude of these events leaves us off-balance, these are important and dangerous times. It is a time that we can reflect deeply and explore the big questions of who we are together—how we're tied together at the waist—and how, out of the ashes, we might build community and mutual understanding. But it is also a time in which we are easily manipulated and vulnerable to snap solutions of violence and revenge, and to hastily sacrificing basic human rights and civil liberties for the ephemeral sensation of safety and security.

There have been many moving public rituals. Altars and shrines have sprung up on street corners and fences and walls all over lower Manhattan. Pictures of missing loved ones and poems about the dead are interspersed with candles and flowers. The violence that has obliterated the personhood of thousands is publicly challenged by the rituals of memory and telling the stories of those who have died.

The formal public rituals and worship—at least those that have been sent out over the corporate

media—have tended more to hoist the flag, join in a hearty "God Bless America," and move quickly to the promised panacea of orgies of violent retribution, crusades against terror, and even a "war to root out evil!" These public rituals seek to pull us together in a unified war mode. Indeed, as we go to press, the bombs are falling.

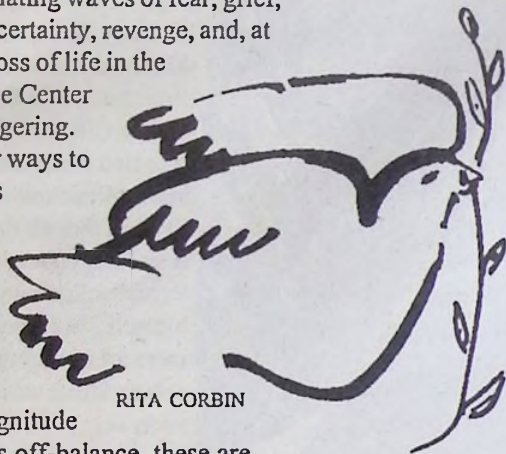
What does it mean for us in the midst of all this to deepen our faith in the Nonviolent God? To continue to follow the God of Hope? How do we stand more firmly for the way of peace and love and mercy? How do we speak of and act for peace as the mind and heart of the nation moves toward war and retaliation? How can we deepen our trust that God is strong enough to hold us with all of our grief, rage, depression, and fear? How can we meditate on the holiness of the life of all people—including the Afghani people and all of our sisters and brothers throughout the Arab world?

These are dangerous times. Strong voices would pull us toward the cheap unity that comes when we rally to fight a "just war." The voice of the national media proclaims that there is little dissent from the war consensus.

But people of faith and conviction are standing up all around this land to witness for the nonviolent way. We know that this is a narrow gate and a hard road. It requires us to seek to understand the roots of violence and hatred. It requires us to stand with those who are victimized by the violence against Americans in New York and with the victims of American violence against the people of Iraq. It requires us to disarm the nations and to disarm our own hearts. It requires us to trust not in our weaponry and technology of death but in the God of Life who invites us, again and again, to change, to unclench our fists, to grow, to lay down our weapons, to become the Beloved Community on earth, even as it is in Heaven.

We are tied together at the waist. We will begin to be safe in this world we share when we find the love in our hearts to care about the life and health and well-being of every child of God.

Murphy Davis is a partner at the Open Door.



RITA CORBIN

From Rabbi Michael Lerner

...It is true, but not enough, to say that the current violence is a reflection of our estrangement from God. More precisely, it is the way we fail to respond to each other as embodiments of the sacred. We may tell ourselves that the current violence has "nothing to do" with the way that we've learned to close our ears when told that one out of every three people on this planet does not have enough food, and that one billion are literally starving. We may reassure ourselves that the hoarding of the world's resources by the richest society in world history, and our frantic attempts to accelerate globalization with its attendant inequalities of wealth, has nothing to do with the resentment that others feel toward us. We may tell ourselves that the suffering of refugees and the oppressed have nothing to do with us—that that's a different story that is going on somewhere else. But we live in one world, increasingly interconnected with everyone, and the forces that lead people to feel outrage, anger and desperation eventually impact on our own daily lives.

When people have learned to de-sanctify each other, to treat each other as means to our own ends, to not feel the pain of those who are suffering, we end up creating a world in which these kinds of terrible acts of violence become more common. No one should use this as an excuse for these terrible acts of violence—the absolute quintessence of de-sanctification. I categorically reject any notion that violence is ever justified. It is always an act of de-sanctification, of not being able to see the divine in the other.

We should pray for the victims and the families of those who have been hurt or murdered in these crazy acts. Yet we should also pray that America does not return to "business as usual," but rather turns to a period of repentance and atonement, a turn in direction of our society at every level, a return to the most basic Biblical ideal: that every human life is sacred, that "the bottom line" should be the creation of a world of love and caring, and that the best way to prevent these kinds of acts is not to turn ourselves into a police state, but turn ourselves into a society in which social justice, love, and compassion are so prevalent that violence becomes only a distant memory.

Rabbi Lerner is editor of *TIKKUN Magazine* and rabbi of *Beyt Tikkun Synagogue* in San Francisco. He is the author of *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing* and other books.

...With the psalmist, we acknowledge the full range of our emotions – fear, anger, hatred, anguish, vengeance, abandonment, despair – and bring all of them to God. We trust that God is present with us in our confusion, shock, and sorrow.

But vulnerability can also be our teacher, bringing us out of isolation into an awareness of our interdependence. We are called to remember those within our city who have been vulnerable in the midst of prosperity, those who have not yet known the justice we affirm in pledge and patriotic song, those who are most likely to be left behind as our city begins to rebuild. We are called to see the faces of millions in our world who have long known the vulnerability we feel for the first time: those whose homes have been destroyed by warfare, those who have lived their lifetimes as refugees, those for whom terrorist attacks are a daily threat, those who suffer due to blockades of essential food and medicine, those ground into the dust by poverty and hunger. This shared vulnerability must replace our nation's illusion of invincibility. Our security cannot reside in the arrogance of building missile shields and breaking international treaties. There is no security without recognizing the vulnerability we share with all people on this fragile planet. We plead for justice and restraint.

Painful as it is, we need to examine our own complicity in the ongoing spiral of violence: making and selling most of the world's weapons, supporting some of the world's most oppressive regimes, consuming far more than our share of the world's resources while ignoring worldwide impoverishment and hunger. Jesus commands us to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. As we seek to hold others accountable, we must also ask ourselves: where is God calling us to repent?

-Excerpts from a statement by students and faculty of Union Theological Seminary in New York

Wake Up Call!

A Sermon on Luke 16:19-31

By Z. Holler

Jesus had an unusual attitude toward money, compared to the "common sense" attitudes we take for granted these days. For example, common sense tells us that we should always try to get a good return on our investments.

But not Jesus.

He says, When you give a dinner or a banquet, don't invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or your rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed [that is, happy], because they can't repay you.

I say that's unusual.

Another example: we've been taught from an early age that we need to save and invest because the more we save, the more we will have when a rainy day or old age comes—right?

But Jesus says, Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give, will be the measure you get back. Give to everyone who begs from you and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

Do you get the picture?

Our society teaches us that money is to be desired, trusted, accumulated and guarded as the source of our security and power in this competitive world. But Jesus believed that God is to be trusted as the source of our security and power; whereas money is to be shared, given away, and enjoyed in the care of others—especially the poor.

We are told in this 16th chapter of Luke, that when the Pharisees, who loved money, heard Jesus talking this way about money, they ridiculed him. They believed what the Bible plainly says in a number of places, that one's wealth is a sign of God's blessing. They wrongly concluded that poverty is therefore a sign of God's judgment, on a person—or a nation, for that matter.

So Jesus told them this story of the rich man and Lazarus. I think it is his good natured, half humorous "wake up call" for folks like those Pharisees and us American Christians who have gotten mixed up about the meaning and intended use of money.

Now the basis of this story is the world we know very well, where some are very rich and others are very poor. It's clear not only here but throughout Jesus' teaching, that he viewed the terrible disparities between rich and poor with great sadness. Again and again he expresses deep compassion for the suffering poor, who are trapped and despised because of their poverty, and he repeatedly tries to awaken the rich to the dangers of the wealth they prize and accumulate and cling to at the expense of others. This particular story is one of his numerous efforts to wake up the wealthy to the dangers of their situation.

It begins by introducing us to a rich man who loved being rich and exploited his riches to the hilt for his own pleasure. He was always dressing up in the finest clothes available and partying lavishly inside his

palatial, gated estate—a genuine high roller.

Next we meet a poor man named Lazarus. He is the kind of person who in the eyes of the world is nameless. But in Jesus' story he has a name; in fact he's the only character in Jesus' parables who is given a name! His name means one whom God helps; and it clearly affirms this beggar's worth in Jesus' eyes. Lazarus is covered—clothed, you might say—with the kind of sores that people who are



DAVID KLEIN

malnourished and dirty develop. He is homeless, been "dumped" at the estate, where he begs, of bread which the rich used as napkins and Evidently he depends on these scraps for his subsistence. Denied human companionship because of his loathsome condition, he shares his dying misery with the street dogs who lick his sores, perhaps out of canine compassion, easing his pain.

So here's an ugly, but all too familiar picture: the rich inside, partying; the poor outside, dying before their time.

Or in contemporary terms: overfed, pleasure seeking Americans within borders that until recently seemed secure; and beyond those borders, the starving, dying masses of the Third World, longing for some crumbs from our overloaded tables. A report in Harper's Magazine (October, 1997) stated that since 1986, the United States has reduced its food aid worldwide by 29%, and it is estimated that 240,183

people could be fed for one year with the food that the U.S. population wastes in one day.

What a terrible commentary on the wealthiest nation in history—and at an earlier time, one of the most generous. It makes you want to cry.

But back to the story. The plot thickens.

Lazarus, the one whom God helps, dies, mercifully, and is carried by God's angels into the awaiting arms of father Abraham. Poor and sick, loathsome and despised and left to the dogs, this Jewish beggar is nevertheless loved by God and received as a son of Abraham and a child of God. Beautiful!

Ah, but then the rich man dies too, as even the rich must. And he is buried in a manner befitting his station in life, I'm sure. But then, he who had lived as though there were no tomorrow is suddenly faced with the tomorrow that he had unknowingly fashioned for himself. In Hades, he suffers flaming torment, along with the further torment of seeing father Abraham, now very far away.

What's more: there in Abraham's bosom is—of all people—the beggar Lazarus, whom he recognizes; whom he even knows by name! You see, he had known about Lazarus all along. He may even have sent the servants out from time to time with crumbs for the poor fellow; else why would Lazarus have chosen to be dumped at his gate? And his crumbs were rich crumbs, I'm sure. Perhaps the rich man had even acknowledged and spoken to this ever-present beggar as he passed in and out the gate to his estate. Maybe he even thought of Lazarus as a sort of friend—the way you or I might think of a familiar street person as a sort of friend—a part of our familiar world, yet not a real part.

In any case, the rich man is now in torment.

Why? What was his crime?

Being rich?

Surely not. Abraham, according to the Bible, was rich, and yet he was the generous father of the faithful. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, the orthodox view was that wealth was a sign of God's blessing.

No, being rich was not this man's crime; being rich, the story hints, was his opportunity. His crime, it seems, was that he had been so wrapped up in his elegant, high-flying life style that he had really failed to see Lazarus as a human being like himself, and had failed to use his resources to help him to live a decent life.

Even so, he does recognize him now (having suffered a sudden change in his perspective—from the top looking down, to the bottom, looking up). But still in the spirit of the old perspective, he sees Lazarus as someone who can make him more comfortable—the goal to which he had regularly devoted his wealth in his earthly life. "Father Abraham," he cries out,

continued on next page

"Have mercy on me and send Lazarus [he thinks of Lazarus as a servant, you see]—send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames."

Now this is an interesting development: this fellow turns out to be a much more assertive beggar than poor, sick Lazarus had been. And that's instructive for us in our nation's present situation.

Since the Gulf War, we and our national media have largely sat silent and insensitive to the half million innocent Iraqi children who have died as a result of our continued bombing and our sanctions against their nation. We are like this rich man in the story who, in the midst of his business and his pleasures, apparently failed to notice the depth of the poor beggar's mortal pain. But when he found himself in pain, he became quite vocal and assertive, as we have become in the grips of our pain caused by the slaughter of our own innocent neighbors on September 11.

Beloved, do you see that this is a story about the real world, about the way we humans do; and that it has much to teach us right now?

In the story Abraham responds to the former rich man, saying gently: "Child, remember, during your lifetime you received good things in the same way Lazarus received evil things; but now he is comforted here and you are in agony."

Of course this was not news to the rich man, but it was important for him to remember what had happened earlier, when he was still in control of his situation. In the same way, it is important for us to remember that innocent people, millions of poor people in the Middle East and Asia and Latin America and Africa and the Balkans, have suffered during recent decades at the hands of our military and our business interests; and that's the plain, incontrovertible truth. And so, as we mourn for loved ones, and for heroic police and rescue workers and soldiers and sailors who daily risk and too often sacrifice their lives for our safety at home and in protection of American interests abroad, we must remember the dark side of our history. Otherwise, we can never understand and respond sanely, much less compassionately, to the hatred and terrorism that threaten now to plunge us and the world into the hell of an unthinkable war.

But back to our story. Abraham doesn't stop with asking the rich man to remember his history. Abraham reminds him: "Besides, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so." Abraham is talking here about the abyss dividing this man's new situation from Lazarus' new situation.

The irony here is that this abyss serves the same purpose that the wall around the rich man's home served in his earlier situation: it keeps Lazarus out of his world—keeps Lazarus from cooling his pain.

And notice this: this brother in pain presumes that Lazarus would be willing to help him. In the same way, our leaders presume that all the world should be willing to help us now, even the starving folk in Afghanistan, whom our leaders have threatened to bomb any minute. Are our leaders, and we who support them, not being a bit presumptuous?

Be that as it may, the rich brother in Jesus' story now finds himself stuck on the wrong side of an unbridgeable abyss. And this raises a question: How did this unbridgeable abyss get here?

The story doesn't say, but it does help us to guess.

The abyss would seem to be the post-mortem form of the wall that surrounded the rich man's house during his life on earth. Or, if we dare to relate it to our own situation, it would seem to be the post-mortem form of all the barriers that the rich and comfortable erect and hide behind in this life to avoid a real engagement with the poor and all their troubles.

It's the final, impenetrable form of the walls and fences and locked doors and alarm systems and guarded gates that keep the poor away from us and all our stuff. It's the post mortem form of the police and



zoning regulations and border patrols and military forces that keep the poor in their place here at home and abroad. It's also the final resting place of the economic theories and political ideologies and religious justifications by which we excuse our public and private neglect of the poor and powerless. It is a final, unbridgeable form of all the barriers in society, and above all, in our hearts, that daily keep us from reaching out, and giving of ourselves and our wealth to make the world more friendly for its suffering, dying masses.

We have learned to accept such defenses against the defenseless as though they were ordained by God, eternal and unchangeable.

The truth is, they are not; at least, not yet.

But in this story—Jesus' wake up call for folks like us—there is a strong suggestion that one day they could become impenetrable and unbridgeable; and we could end up like the brother in the story, on the wrong side of the abyss and the hell that we've created.

Jesus is saying to all who will hear, "Wake up! The time for compassion, generosity, and justice is now!"

Ah, but that's not quite the end of Jesus' story. The rich brother who now sees life from his new perspective, suddenly remembers his five brothers. What a great development! He does have a heart; he can think of others. Admittedly, his thought is for his own family, as though the lives of the others out there are less precious than the lives of his kind. That's where the generous impulse often gets stuck—far short of God's desire that none should perish. Still, to think and care for the people we know best is a good start! Thinking, *if only I had realized what I realize now*, the rich man begs father Abraham to send Lazarus to warn the brothers against what they are doing to themselves, lest they too end up in torment.

Abraham replies, "They have Moses and the prophets—they should listen to them."

But the rich man insists: "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." This man thinks he knows his brothers; they are high rollers like him, and it will take a big time approach to reach them, he figures.

But then comes the final punch line.

"If they don't pay attention to Moses and the prophets," says Abraham, "neither will they be convinced if someone goes to them from the dead."

What's Jesus trying to do in telling us this half humorous, half serious story of a rich man and a poor man?

First, he's not trying to teach us that wealth is evil. Far from it; he wants us to see that our wealth affords us an opportunity for compassion and generosity—an opportunity to befriend the poor—which must not be squandered in foolish, heartless

consumption. He wants us to wake up and get on with the urgent tasks to which our Bibles clearly direct us, and which our risen Lord is calling us to do.

Second, he's not giving us a proof text for an eternal burning hell or for an after life scenario that would have pious Christians shouting across the eternal abyss at worldly, tormented neighbors, saying, "We told you so!" To use the dramatic machinery of Jesus' story that way—in a spirit that contradicts everything he lived and died for—is an atrocity.

Finally, for those practical minded folk who require miraculous proof from God before they will repent and share what they have with suffering, dying neighbors, there is a reminder here that even the most stupendous miracle of all will not penetrate hearts that are closed to the eloquent testimony of the scriptures and the desperately needy world around us. The miracle that matters is the discovery that it's in giving that we live.

Yesterday we saw a TV interview of a Scottish lady who has spent the last ten years educating the impoverished people of Afghanistan. She was helping distribute food and other supplies at the time of the interview, and the interviewer asked, "Do you ever get homesick?" The woman looked startled, but then she laughed and said, "Certainly not! I love the Afghan people; they are so good to me. It's horrible to think of going back to Britain and a nine to five job!"

As she spoke, her face was absolutely radiant with the joy of giving and with delight at what was being given to her in return.

Z. Holler is a retired Presbyterian pastor and friend of the poor in Greensboro, North Carolina. He is the founder of the Beloved Community Center and agitates there for racial and economic justice and for the abolition of the death penalty and other prison cruelty.

VOLUNTEER NEEDS

- Groups to make sandwiches for Soup Kitchen
- People to cook or bring supper for the Community on occasional Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays
- People to answer the phone and door various mornings or afternoons during the week (9 a.m.-noon, 2-6 p.m., training provided)

For more information, call Phil Leonard at 404-874-4906 or e-mail him at pleon2000@mindspring.com

Bless, continued from page 1
also an instrument of terror and social control. The Romans killed thousands of rebels, slaves, and terrorists by the cross. Barabbas, for instance was a Jewish terrorist sentenced to death for his covert activities. When the people had a choice to kill just one—Jesus the Prince of Peace or Barabbas the violent strong man opposed to Roman occupation—they choose to kill the Peacemaker. Nonviolent transformation of the Roman Superpower machine was a threat to the powers and status quo. So death lived and life died.

The Empire's cross was also an instrument of terror. Empty crosses were left along the roadside to ominously remind travelers what lay ahead for those who resisted the Empire's machine and control. Sometimes the crosses had half eaten bodies rotting on them. Often only the blood stains and rags were left. When Jesus taught the peaceful and nonviolent alternative to war and revenge, he chose the harshest and most visible symbol he could find on the landscape to reveal the inner structure of the Empire and its domination by violence and death. Then the powers and principalities nailed him to one.

My friend Ed Weir told me that only two groups in America know the cross as a symbol and instrument of terror: the Ku Klux Klan who use it like the Romans, and African Americans who experience it like the resisters of the Roman Empire and those who refused to subscribe to the myth of "redemptive violence." Of course, the KKK has used the cross against Jews, Catholics, and Homosexuals from time to time as well.

Today when Billy Graham and other "God Bless America" preachers stand beneath a cross and ask their God to bring victory and blessings, they speak from pulpits and spew forth theology that belongs to the domination system of the American Empire. They do not know what they are talking about, or know the meaning of the cross they use beside the American flag to further the aims and purposes of the war machine. The cross is a symbol of death and power, of domination and Empire. The cross is a sign of terror and doom. The cross is not a symbol of victory. Jesus the Jewish Messiah was a victim of the death penalty. He worked and gave his life to end violence and the use of the cross, or bombs, or needles, or missiles as a wicked means to a just end. Jesus the Prince of Peace and faithful Jew wanted to make Palestine a place of love and community with Samaritans, Gentiles and other Palestinians. The cross is the message that God's blessings have been

rejected and pushed out of the world that would love and follow Jesus. Jesus teaches that we must practice an alternative way: a non-violent, patient, healing, loving and long haul.

Today three Palestinians were killed by Israelis. One young Jewish soldier was beaten to death by Palestinians. Violence does not work for the healing of the nations or for our personal lives. Violence hurts, harms, and kills. We have been using violence to resolve our problems for millions of years. Let us give Jesus, Gandhi, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s way a chance. Thank you Ed Weir.

2

Three weeks ago Murphy and I were in California with folk from twelve

Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown. He rode out as a conqueror to conquer. (Rev. 6:1-2)

Jesus rode into Jerusalem to destroy the Temple on a donkey. He had no crown at the time, though later his head was pierced and bled from the mockery of those who fear love and nonviolence and pressed into his skull a crown of thorns. As we enter Afghanistan we need to come as a servant to serve, not as a "conqueror to conquer."

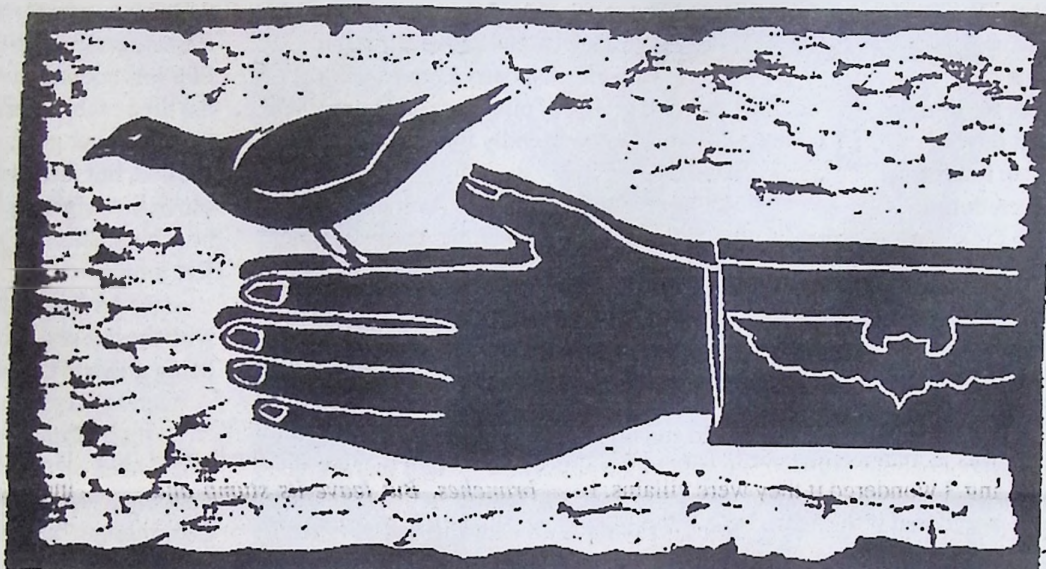
On War

Then the Lamb broke open the second seal; and I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" Another horse came out, a red one. Its rider was given the power to

creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there was a black horse. Its rider held a pair of scales in his hand. I heard what sounded like a voice coming from among the four living creatures, which said, "A litre of wheat for a day's wages, and three litres of barley for a day's wages. But do not damage the olive trees and the vineyards!" (Rev. 6:5-6)

The stock market has fallen and the economy is in recession. The pair of scales in the hands of Mammon knows no mercy. The wages are not living wages. The humiliation is this: even with wheat and barley, if we cannot get to the olive trees we cannot make bread. If we cannot get to the vineyard, we cannot drink wine.

Jesus teaches the economy of



MEG CROCKER-BIRMINGHAM

The huge error of our ways is this: we misinterpret God's blessing. Most of what we mouth when we sing "God Bless America" are God's curses, not blessings. We are so blind that we cannot behold the biblical blessings that surround us.

other Catholic Worker Houses. We went on a retreat and Bible study outside Santa Barbara. Ched Myers, a servant of the Living Lord for a dying world, led us into the fires of the Word and Deeds of Yahweh-Elohim. The blessings we discovered in the Scriptures were opposed to nationalism, militarism, empire, and peace by means of war. In fact, the God who would bless America by might and violence is no Biblical God at all. It is rather the wakeful restlessness of the flesh devourer who is known by faith as Beelzebub-the-Beast. The God who leads the Israelis into war is not the God of Judaism. Hitler's means smell good to many Israelis and Arab Palestinians alike. War does not work. Violence only begets violence and on an upward spiral at that.

Ched told us how Jesus and John on the island of Patmos see the aims and purposes of Empire, be it Roman or American:

On Empire

Then I saw the Lamb [i.e. Jesus] break open the first of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice that sounded like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there was a white horse.

bring war on the earth, so that people should kill each other. He was given a large sword. (Rev. 6:3-4)

Ah, here we come to the aims and purposes of the power and idol named War. "...so that people should kill each other." War really does not care whether we are Jew, Muslim, Christian, without a faith perspective, hard working or so beaten down that we are bereft of care and concern. War just wants us to kill each other. Just war theory, no war theory, right or wrong; all the bombs want to do is to explode on human flesh and kill. Then the gods of war have fulfilled their purpose.

Jesus the rebel and resister to Empire and War teaches us to love and live together toward reconciliation. This is hard. Nor do we forget or minimize the pain and suffering of all. The road to peace is hard and the door is narrow. Revenge and an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, is natural. I feel it; don't you? Yet, through discipline and hard work, we walk and talk another Way, another Truth, and another vision of Life.

On the Economy

Then the Lamb broke open the third seal; and I heard the third living

the Beloved Community by making bread abundant to all who are hungry and there are leftovers. He turns water into wine. He carries no scales and limits even the Sabbath law so people can enter the olive orchards and vineyards. With the love of our nonviolent God and the practice of the discipleship community there are no scales to weigh who will eat and who will not. That is the work of the Sadducees and Scribes.

On Death as Ruler

Then the Lamb broke open the fourth seal; and I heard the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there was a pale-colored horse. Its rider was named Death, and Hades followed close behind. They were given authority over a quarter of the earth, to kill by means of war, famine, disease, and wild animals. (Rev. 6:7-8)

Whether on a pale-colored horse or the latest jet fighter with infrared eyes, Death stalks the land to undo creation. Death's primary means are the works of war: famine, disease, and wild animals filling the zoos and chambers of commerce.

Jesus has higher hopes: love your enemy; bless them that curse and **Bless, continued on page 10**

Change Is Good: A Confession

By Miyk Qadar

Earlier this year, I met up with some friends at the El Azteca Restaurant, located down the street from the Open Door. We met to brainstorm and formulate a project to enter into this year's Slamdance Film Competition. Little did I know this meeting was the start of a journey of faith taking me from my artist life, to the streets, and into the Open Door Community itself.

I had written a screenplay tentatively titled 'What Price Paradise.' It was the story of a young girl riding on the subway. As she rode, she watched an angry homeless man committing a murder. From long distance their eyes met. Throughout the ride, the young girl felt more and more disturbed. After each train stop, it became more clear that the incident gave her a kind of 'immaculate conception.' She eventually gave birth to a child on the lonely train, and he grew up to be a dark hologram of the killer, her biggest fear.

As a struggling artist, without formal film education, I felt that this vision would be noteworthy, if done as an artsy movie short. I gathered with the people who were interested in making a contribution to our culture: Mandy, Durty, and Naz. Until this point, I was only entering screenwriting competitions in the blind. Mandy and Durty went to UCLA and NYU film school, respectively. These two, however, hold down corporate jobs, and have stopped chasing their dreams of being full-time filmmakers. Naz has been doing guerilla cinematography for years, and aims to create the next "Blair Witch Project." We sat outside on the patio at El Azteca Restaurant. This was my first gathering among filmmakers of this caliber. In my head, I felt that this would be the genesis to a new life, new career, my new friends/family circle, and new challenges. In my heart, fifteen pages of paper, photocopied four different times, solidified my dreams and hopes.

Other than seeing homeless people around town, maybe buying one a lunch on some occasions, and cringing when one would get comfortable and close on a busy train ride, I never dealt with any. I just saw a homeless person as someone who didn't want to play by the rules of society. I saw murder as the highest defiance of the rule, and this idea inspired my screenplay.

Across the street from our idyllic spot at El Azteca, a crowd of angry people had gathered. One man power-walked away. Another man tracked him down and overtook him while the crowd followed. The harmo-

nies of the poor, the oppressed, and the homeless were blaring loudly in this rather upwardly moving neighborhood. I started to pay more attention to their screams than to my meeting at El Azteca.

Meanwhile, Naz's tequila shots and Mandy's busy cellular phone were clear premonitions that my film project wouldn't go anywhere. I watched the verbal and body language of the crowd across the street.

After the meeting, I walked down Ponce de Leon Avenue, heading toward an underground acid-jazz/hip-hop show, at a nightclub. I saw people out in front of the stone steps of some building, and some were settling down to sleep on the property's front lawn. I started to wonder about their names and their experiences. I wondered if my character in my screenplay was as real as the people I was watching. I wondered if they were villains. I wondered if they cared about the 'trends' and current events that mattered to me.

Life is such a feisty twist of

fate. Within a five-week period my life really started to change. I had never envisioned myself becoming one of them, asking for a cardboard to sleep on, asking for a meal, asking to take a shower, asking for a change of clothes.

At El Azteca, I didn't realize my wonderment would become my life. The people that I had seen across the street had names like Jack, Half-Fare, and Randy. I would be sleeping next to them, outside on the front lawn of a Christian sanctuary, the Open Door.

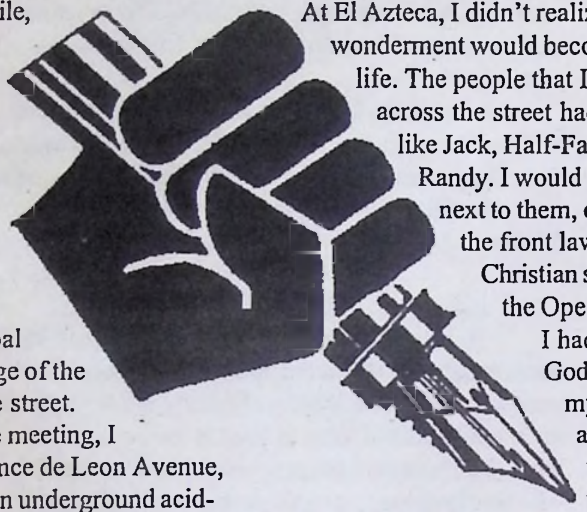
I had asked God to solidify my hopes and dreams with paper, via my

writings and dollars, and it was done with a testing of my spirit. I am living out a life lesson like King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:14-17: *Cut down the tree and chop off its branches, strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from beneath it and the birds from its branches. But leave its stump and roots in the ground, with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field. Let him be bathed in the dew of heaven, and let his lot be with*

the animals in the field in the grass of the Earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a human and let the mind of an animal be given to him. And let seven times pass over him. The sentence is rendered by decree of the watchers, the decision is given by orders of the Holy ones, in order that all who live may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals; he gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of human beings (NRSV). All that I was doing and all that I was came to an end.

In the days before that night at El Azteca I placed a price tag on hopes and dreams, on people; I prioritized things by their financial value. Now this struggling artist pays back his debt with spiritual money, one penny after another. I pay God back with humility. I pay God back with acknowledging my faith. Before I was on the streets, I had a romantic view of what faith meant to me. I'm learning now that faith is more than just confidence in your talents and aspirations. It's more than the monetary value of what they may bring. Faith is letting go, falling, knowing there is a trampoline to bounce me back with inertia. I'm still learning these lessons, and still changing.

Miyk Qadar is a resident of the Open Door Community.



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Bless, continued from page 8

accuse you; do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

On the Alternative

Then the Lamb broke open the fifth seal. I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been killed because they had proclaimed God's word and had been faithful in their witnessing. They shouted in a loud voice, "Almighty Lord, holy and true! How long will it be until you judge the people on earth and punish them for killing us?" Each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to rest a little while longer, until the complete number of their fellow-servants and fellow-Christians had been killed, as they had been. (Rev. 6:9-11)

Dorothy Day teaches us to move along the hard road toward peace and justice, both by disarming our hearts and the arsenals of the mighty militaries of the various Empires. She says go "little by little." Gods' punishments are harsh and dreadful. Yahweh-Elohim is likely to punish Billy Graham by sitting him at the feet of Dietrich Bonhoeffer—the most fated and agonized Christian Pacifist of the twentieth century. God will probably send Jerry Falwell as a homosexual Plowshares activist to Afghanistan to preach like Jonah. She, no doubt, will send me to Israel to caddy for the Temple Priests.

The Four Horsemen will be around for a while. Few are dying today for proclaiming the Gospel of peace and nonviolence and love for our terrorists brothers and sisters. Few are assassinated or burned or executed for witnessing to the Beloved Community on the margins of the well-centralized Empire. Yet, Jeff Dietrich, Phil Berrigan, Steve Kelly, Susan Crane, and many others sit in jails and prisons for proclaiming the Gospel of peace and making visible their faithful witnessing as they have turned swords into plowshares. In fact, Phil Berrigan was put in the hole on September 11th for "protection." He is a known peacemaker and the Feds were afraid that with such a reputation some guard or prisoner might go for his blood. Liz McAlister, Phil's sweetheart, went to work immediately and got him out of the hole in a day or two. Phil's brother Dan prayed (and prays) without ceasing.

So we, like our cloud of witnesses, wait for the coming of the Beloved Community/Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. They wait with white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb—because they practiced another and nonviolent way. They must "rest a little longer" while we put on the armor of faith, and fight the Four Horsemen until the cross is recognized as an instrument of death and a symbol of terror—or until our time comes to be stuffed under the altar.

3

William Stringfellow teaches us to read America biblically rather than to read the Bible Americanly. That is what Ed Weir and Ched Myers are doing. The huge error of our ways is this: we misinterpret God's blessings. Most of what we mouth when we sing "God Bless America" are God's curses, not blessings.

God's blessings are very simple and are good news. Sight for the blind; forgiveness and reconciliation, housing for the homeless; clean hearts and continual conversion toward a higher righteousness and deeper solidarity with the poor; liberty to captives; non-violence; the knowledge of who we are and where we are going; interest in the lives of the saints. Bread and roses.

God's curses are palpable. Empire instead of neighborhood. Military power and economic affluence which are killing the earth. Being number One. Being the unique Nation and people on earth. Having nuclear weapons. Gated Communities with big bad dogs who love us when we come home too tired for children and human friends. The private automobile. All-we-can-eat buffets. Liposuction for weight reduction. Hating our enemies. Pews in our churches with no Christ's room to welcome the stranger. Exploding with revenge. Special Corps who can kill silently day or night. Theologians and preachers who use Jesus and the Jews to sanction violence, war, the death penalty and the American Way of Life.

We are so blind that we cannot behold the biblical blessings that surround us. So we follow the Four Horsemen and claim we are following Jesus the Jew. We fill our lives with curses and believe we are blessed.

On Resistance

It is the vocation of all human beings to be homemakers and from the home and household to be peace makers. The Works of Mercy are the ways to undo the Works of War, at least at the base of our lives. So let us visit the prisoner and remember those who live in caves. Let us visit those in the hospital and remember our young troops who are losing legs and lives believing they are doing the will of Billy Graham's God by killing the Afghani people. Let us feed the hungry at our tables as we attempt to understand the bombs and the bread we are dropping on those we name Evil. The stranger—most particularly non-European strangers—let us profile them in the image of God and find in them the light and the Christ who dwells in all. As we did with Ronnie Rude recently, let us bury the dead and pray for the living as we listen to the horrible hoofs of the pale colored horse flying overhead and we wonder: where will it fall?

4

Let us follow the one who rides a donkey and not a white stallion, who goes out to serve not to conquer. Let us, like him who comes in the name of the LORD, walk. We need no red horse and large sword to serve the idols of war. Rather than the black horse and the harsh scales and low wages of an economy of domination, let us share all we have and give away our lives to each other. The pale horse with Hades at its heels is the way of the Empire. Death is the final power—the bottom line. Let us follow the one who arose on the third day and sends us back into the world to try again and practice again the way of non-violent love.

Ed Loring is a partner at the Open Door.

Herod and Mary, continued from page 3

The celebration of Advent and Christmas can be for us a time of binge consuming and spending or it can be a time of deliberate striving and discipline to change our perspective from that of Herod, client king of the Empire, to that of Mary, mother of Jesus.

The gospel is called "good news to the poor" (Matthew 11:5). It is only from the perspective of the poor and dispossessed that the gospel of the kin-dom of God's justice and equality can be truly welcomed as good news. It is only from this perspective that the birth of Jesus born in a stable can be celebrated without scandal and without shame.

I write these reflections in a time of great fear and uncertainty. When Christmas comes, I wonder if we will mark the day as Herod did, with a massive slaughter of the innocent, or if we will celebrate and rejoice with Mary and with the shepherds over the angelic proclamation, "Peace on Earth!"

Brian Terrell is, with his wife Betsy Keenan, founder of the Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm in Maloy, Iowa. This reflection is based on a teaching he delivered while visiting our community last July.

Dear Friends,

I am spending my first year out of college living in Philadelphia and working at *The Other Side* magazine. At *The Other Side*, we advance a healing Christian vision that's biblical and compassionate, appreciative of the creative arts, and committed to the intimate intertwining of personal spirituality and social transformation. I am learning so much and I am surrounded by people who have committed their lives to working for justice and peace.

I would like to encourage you to subscribe to *The Other Side*. In order to continue our work, we are in need of financial support, and subscribing is an easy way to help (plus you get something out of the deal). Give me a call at 1-800-700-9280 and I will sign you up for a year of great reading and artwork!

Thanks to you all for your support and love.

In Peace,
Hannah Loring-Davis

**THE OTHER
Side**
Strength for the journey

Dear Hospitality Readers,

Used Postage stamps, ordinarily thrown away, can be sold to raise money to feed the hungry in the U.S. and abroad. Large commemoratives (like Olympics, Black Heritage, Lighthouse, etc.) and all foreign stamps are wanted, along with unused U.S. and any collections (no standard issues such as Flags, Love, etc.) They are sorted and sold to dealers. All proceeds go to ministries like the Open Door, Bread for the World, Heifer Project, and Church World Service, where they are used in the name of Christ to feed the hungry or help the hungry feed themselves. Approximately \$500 a month is now being raised this way.

**POSTAGE
STAMPS**

Send stamps to:
Arthur M. Field
2124 Highway 280 West
Plains, GA 31780

Dear Murphy,

I was very impressed with the article that you wrote in *Hospitality* (vol. 20 no. 5, May 2001) in which you pointed out the slippery slope of government subsidies for faith based work. I felt I wanted to put the article in the hands of one of President Bush's aides. I prayed a prayer to go with it. The letter I sent with it was not as thoughtful as I would have liked it to be. But I wanted to get the deed done and the article on the way. I appreciate the work you do and your commitment to the cause of justice. It is enriching for me to know you and be a small part of the prison ministry.

Fondly,
Lenicia Bruce
Atlanta, GA

That was a beautiful tribute to Ronnie (vol. 20 no. 8, September 2001). I remember him from St. Francis Table.

Adrien Wilde
Atlanta, GA

Hi,

I just got back from the compo (country). I'm learning to like mud. It's like skating without ice.

Here in Mexico, we've been getting pretty good coverage of what is going on in the U.S. as far as the attack and the response goes. But I hear the U.S. hasn't gotten good coverage. (Often biased). For example, in Canada on television they showed a very sullen Arafat saddened by the suicide attack. And also they covered Jihad Islam denouncing the attack. Whereas in the U.S., Palestinians rejoicing in the streets of Hebron was televised, something that did not happen. (It was probably taken from another event). The CPT team in Hebron said it took them 2 hours to walk 200 yards because everyone in the neighborhood wanted to tell them how sorry they were, and ask if anyone they knew was hurt or killed. This stirring up of vengeance by the media is the kind of bull-snook that kills people. Of course, the media doesn't bother to tell how 5000 children (only counting children, because they are all some people care about) die every month because of the sanctions and destruction of Iraq. When asked about the deaths of these children Madeline Albright responded, "It is worth the price." But the U.S. seems more concerned about the economy and the stockmarket and the Joneses than about the fact that people that are real are suffering because of U.S. policy. John Paul II has denounced U.S. policy of profits over people. But here in Mexico it is not hard to see that this is U.S. policy when the campesino (rural small time farmer) next to you is condemning NAFTA because he can't make half of what he used to, and his family is suffering from it.

I am not saying that justice should be ignored. Heck yes I want the minds behind this attack behind bars. No I don't think we should just sit and say, "Oh, I forgive you." I don't want it to happen again. But I want justice, not vengeance, which will only serve to sow the seeds of hatred. And justice includes examining ourselves. How can we as a society know what justice is when we have a plank in our eye? When we are willing to look the other way as we bomb, kill, oppress, and exploit others? What penance can we perform? What do we need to fast forever from?

How can we hold on to privilege if it is stolen from others? Why should we live easily while others struggle? Or why should we live while others die? Aren't we all brothers and sisters under God? It is this that condemns us. When we are willing to share privilege with our neighbors, near and far, then there will be justice. And when we are willing to see the suffering of others, and take our share of it, only then can we call ourselves sons and daughters of God, and only then will suffering diminish. And every person is called to follow Christ's example in this way, to die to the self, that we may be born into eternal life, which is greater than the self.

May the justice of Christ prevail,
Keith Young
Chiapas, Mexico

(Keith Young is a former Resident Volunteer at the Open Door and is currently serving with the Christian Peacemaker Team in Chiapas, Mexico. Christian Peacemaker Teams is a faith-based organization that supports violence reduction efforts around the world.)

Dear Murphy,

I received *Hospitality* yesterday and was very sad to read about Ronnie's death (vol. 20 no. 8, September 2001). He made a big impression on me in the few days that I was at the Open Door [in March 2001]. He remembered my name and made sure that I was wearing a name tag and was very hospitable. He had a big heart and it is sad to lose him.

While I was reading, I thought about the times of reflection around the table in your dining room. There must be a lot of that going on now. Being with close friends and caring people is really important at a time like this...

With love,
Carol Williams
Cotati, California

Dear Murphy Davis,

I received *Hospitality* this week and cried over the article, "Ronnie—In the Embrace of God" (vol. 20 no. 8, September 2001). I am reminded how we all need succor and nurture. As you did for him, so others gave their lives and energy to rescue the vulnerable and wounded at the WTC. I met you when you came to NYC 1980/1981 for a death penalty conference held at Riverside Church and sponsored by my Amnesty International Group 21, long gone now. Your daughter was in a stroller, and the Open Door was just under way. I talked once with you in 1983 when I went to Milledgeville to see a woman on death row.

Your presence means much in these days of fear and uncertainty. St. Michael's Episcopal Church, where Fr. George Brandt (formerly of Atlanta) is now the rector, has been feeding the homeless once a week since 1983. I made the sandwiches this morning for Saturday's meal.

May God bless you and the work done in Christ's name to help whoever suffers or is in pain.

Love to all of you,
Charlotte G. Patton
New York, NY

To the Community of the Open Door—

Thanks for your newspaper, which is an anchor in my Christian journey. Please add my brother and sister-in-law to your mailing list. They are joining a ministry to the homeless in Ft. Worth, TX. The enclosed check is a portion of my tax rebate—wish the government had kept it for universal health care or other truly compassionate concerns. But if they won't use it, I know you will. All God's blessings to you and yours.

Grace and Peace,
Katie Hays
W. Islip, NY

Mary,

Just writing to let you know how moving and amazing I have found the Open Door publication, of which I've received two now. It's very provocative on all sorts of levels. The eulogy for Ronnie just made me weep. Joy, sadness. Great layout, too, girl!

Love,
Julie Byrne
Ft. Worth, TX

Dear Mr. President:

Your tax cut idea was not a good idea. Now that Congress is allocating \$40 billion for terrorist recovery and military buildup, I bet you wish you had that tax cut back.

Well, you can't have my \$300 back. I'm donating my tax cut to Southern Prison Ministry which works to abolish the death penalty and ministers to those persons on death row as well as their families.

Peace to you,
Rev. Houston Wheeler
Atlanta, GA

Dear Murphy and Ed,

First of all let me express my deep regret about the horrible event that happened to your country a week ago. I hope you, all your friends and family are all safe and healthy and that nothing like that will happen in Atlanta. Everybody in my small country is very sorry and we are ready to help you in any possible way.

My wife Zorka and I were in India for a two-month trip mostly to the Himalayan Mountains. It was really wonderful. We spent a month and a half in a small Buddhist state in the North of India, close to the borders of Pakistan. We spent one week in a Buddhist monastery where we took part in everyday life of the monks, helping them in the kitchen, teaching young novices the English language and spending a lot of time in their temple sharing prayers. No, I didn't become a Buddhist, but I thought very much about Christianity and about the Open Door, too. I still think my stay at the Open Door was one of the best periods of my life. We also went for a long trekking trip to the high mountains and worked as volunteers in a local farm, helping with picking apricots, making apricot oil, harvesting grass etc. — at the altitude of more than 10,000 feet. It was so beautiful there.

I am eager to hear anything about how life is going with you. As I read the new *Hospitality* I found out that your ministry has been cut. You seem to serve breakfasts only twice a week. Do you lack volunteers? Or money? I wish I could help you in some way. What can I do for you?

By October I will be working in a hospital in Liberec, a town 120 kilometers away from Prague. My life is changing a lot these days. In June I passed my two last state exams and on July 2nd, I finally graduated from the University. I now have my Diploma and title: MUDr. Zdenek Rossmann (Medicinae Universalis Doctorus). How strange! The idea of becoming a doctor came to my mind very shortly after I came back from the U.S.A. seven years ago. I am sure it was a result of my resident volunteering at the Open Door. I felt being a doctor is a good way for me to help the ones who need help. I got a job in a good hospital, in its Children's Clinic, in Liberec which lies in the mountains on the northern border of the Czech Republic. I'll start working there on October 15th. Next spring we would like to buy a small house near Liberec and settle down.

With much love,
Zdenek Rossmann
Prague, Czech Republic

(Zdenek was a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door in 1993-94.)

Ms. Davis,

I am in receipt of your September 2001 issue and I am writing to ask that my name be removed from your mailing list.

I am outraged over your story "The Power of a Pen." In light of recent events that have rocked our country to its very core, how dare you resort to sensational journalism to undermine our President? I do realize that this paper must have gone to press before last Tuesday's tragic attack on America. But what purpose does it serve at any point in time to print what the Webster's dictionary would clearly define as gossip?

If I wanted to read someone's "version" of a story that had been "recounted by multiple sources" about a topic that a group reportedly overheard, I would buy the *National Enquirer*. Fortunately for me, my inquiring mind is superceded by my desire to read the truth.

I appreciate your immediate attention to my request so that I do not receive even one more edition of your paper.

Sincerely,
Edie Conaway
Jacksonville, FL

(Correction: We reprinted "The Power of a Pen" in our last issue of *Hospitality*, which we read in several reputable sources. We have since learned that this was lifted from a longer satirical piece based on an actual incident. We regret and apologize to our readers for presenting this as factual.)

Open Door Community Ministries

Soup Kitchen: Wednesday – Thursday, 11 a.m. – noon

Weekday Breakfast: Monday – Tuesday, 6:45 a.m.

Showers: Wednesday and Thursday, 8 a.m.

Use of Phone: Monday – Tuesday, 6:45 a.m. – 7:45 a.m.,

Wednesday – Thursday, 9 a.m. – noon

Harriet Tubman Free Medical Clinic and Soul Foot Care Clinic: Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.

Clarification Meetings: Selected Tuesdays, 7:30 – 9 p.m.

Weekend Retreats: Four times each year (for our household, volunteers and supporters); next retreat is our Advent Retreat November 30-December 2.

We are open...

Monday through Saturday: We answer telephones from 9:00 a.m. until noon, from 2:00 until 6:00 p.m. The building is open from 9:00 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. those days. (We do not answer phone and door during our noon prayers and lunch break from 12:30 until 2:00). Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. **On Sunday we invite you to worship with us at 5 p.m. and join us, following worship, for a delicious supper.**

Our Hospitality Ministries include visitation and letter writing to prisoners, anti-death penalty advocacy, advocacy for the homeless, daily worship and weekly Eucharist.

Come Worship With Us!

We will gather for worship and Eucharist at 5 p.m. followed by supper together.

Sunday, October 21

Sunday, October 28

Sunday, November 4

Sunday, November 11

Sunday, November 18

Worship at 910 (Nibs Stroupe preaching)

Worship at 910 (John Cole Vodicka preaching)

Worship at 910 (Brian McAdams preaching)

Worship at 910 (Tamara Puffer preaching)

No Worship at 910

We will travel to Columbus, GA to join in the worship and action calling to close The School of the Americas

Worship at 910

Sunday, November

Friday, November 30-

Sunday, December 2

No worship at 910

Advent Retreat at Dayspring Farm

Advent Worship at 910 (Stacy Rector preaching)

Advent Worship at 910

Advent Worship at 910

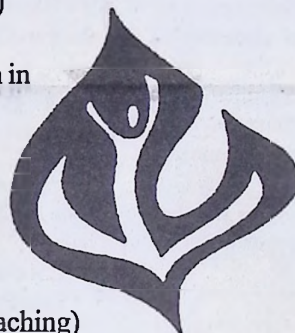
Service of Lessons and Carols

We will celebrate the Eucharist after a 6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve dinner

Monday, December 24

Sunday, December 30

Worship at 910



Clarification Meetings at the Open Door

Plan to join us on selected Tuesday evenings for presentations and discussions of topics relevant to the justice struggle. Call us for dates and times. 404-874-9652

Medical Supplies

(for our Thursday Evening Harriet Tubman Free Medical Clinic)

Can you help with the medicine cabinet?

aspirin
Tylenol
bandages and band-aids
antibiotic cream or ointment
ibuprofen
antifungal cream
cold medicine (alcohol free)
cough drops
foot powder

Open Door Community Needs

JEANS
T-Shirts
Men's Work Shirts
Quick Grits
Cheese
Coffee
Multi-Vitamins
MARTA Tokens
Postage Stamps
Underwear for Men
Men's Shoes (all sizes)

Meat for the soup in our Soup Kitchen

Sandwiches
Table Lamps
Floor Lamps
Vacuum Cleaners
Twin Beds
Alarm Clocks
BLANKETS
Eye Glasses

Box Spring and Mattress for Double Bed

Disposable Razors
Women's Underwear

Toothbrushes
Deodorant
Vaseline
Towels
Socks
Shampoo
Men's Belts
Washcloths

Our sisters and brothers are cold and hungry. Can you help us with blankets and socks to give out and turkeys for the stew pot?



LEO McGUIRE

From 11am 'til 1:30pm, Wednesday and Thursday, our attention is focused on serving the soup kitchen and household lunch. As much as we appreciate your coming, this is a difficult time for us to receive donations. When you can come before 11 or after 1:30, it would be helpful. THANK YOU!