

# SAN DIEGO CATHOLIC WORKER



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## International Meeting Catholic Workers call for church to seek end to war in Iraq

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More than 300 Catholic Workers from 61 communities meeting for four days in Panora, Iowa have called on the U.S. Catholic Church to seek an immediate end to the U.S. War in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They also pleaded with the church to be a prophetic voice, a sanctuary and a source of encouragement for people who work for peace and justice.

"It is with burning sorrow that we look around at the world in which we live at the suffering, war, torture, and killing of our brothers and sisters, and realize that the response of both ourselves and our church has been wholly inadequate," the Catholic Workers, some of whom came from Germany and the Netherlands, said in a statement issued at the conclusion of their first national meeting in 10 years, Oct. 19-22. "We cry out to be part of a church that prays and works for peace, loves our enemies, and embraces the redemptive power of forgiveness."

### Wealthiest nation

They said that although the United States has become the wealthiest nation on earth, its people have suffered the loss of their souls, and the militarization and exploitation of global resources have pushed them to accept the unacceptable.

"Pre-emptive war and the slaughter of innocents is being carried out in our names and for profit," the statement read. "A creeping apathy has allowed room for extreme abuses such as torture and the destruction of whole social fabrics.

"We are violating our own spiritual principles and civil laws to attain excessive creature comforts while others suffer from unimaginable deprivation and violence. We are living a lifestyle that demands war and distracts from our true calling of loving and caring for one another."

Reminded that, according to St. Paul, when one member of the community suffers, the health of the entire body is affected, the Catholic Workers called for taking this time of crisis as an opportunity to move forward and carry on Christ's message without compromise. "God, the victims, and timeless prophetic voices call on us, the church, the body of Christ, to repent from the sins of war, torture, and killing, from the making of widows and orphans, and from the fruitless works of darkness resulting in this last century being the bloodiest on record."

### Solidarity with victims of oppression

Catholic Worker communities, the statement added, have daily contact with the victims of our society, and strive to perform the works of mercy and to follow Jesus' command to be nonviolent witnesses for peace and justice. "As we confront the unrelenting violence and assaults on human life and our endangered earth, we repent for our own complicity in our culture of violence, and call on our church and all people of faith and goodwill to do the same," the Catholic Workers said.

They specifically called for the aboli-

See **Iraq**, Page 4

## 'Tis the Season to Be Jolly ... and Grateful for our Blessings

By Gil Gentile S.J.

*Fr. Gentile is spiritual director of the San Diego Catholic Worker.*

The "season" from Halloween—the eve of All Saints Day—to Christmas, that includes All Saints Day, All Souls Day, Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas with its Octave and the whole Christmas season is such a rich time of the year. These days are truly not just "The Holidays" but "The HOLYdays"; a season to be "jolly", of course, and also, perhaps more importantly, to be grateful. I have come to believe deeply that one of the most powerful ways to be "jolly"—to be happy, content or fulfilled—is to be grateful; to count our blessings and to express our gratitude for those blessings in acts of charity and self-giving.

As much as the custom of giving gifts at Christmas has run amok in our society with its consumerism and materialism, it actually has its roots in expressing our thanks and affection to our dear ones—and ultimately our thanks to God for the Word becoming flesh and all that the reality of Incarnation means for us and for our world.

The Trappist monk Thomas Merton wrote in "Thoughts in Solitude":

*"To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything God has given to us—and God has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of God's love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense graces from God. Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference."*

It is in truly living out our baptismal commitment that we "take nothing

for granted". We express our gratitude in Eucharist ("thanksgiving"), in prayer, in working for peace and justice, in acts of love, friendship and compassion, in doing the works of mercy, in being and acting like Jesus who poured himself out for humanity.

It is not just we in the religious community who believe in the power of gratitude. There was a column by Sandi Dolbee in the San Diego Tribune the Saturday after Thanksgiving in which she said, "Saying thanks (is) positively good for (your) inner self." She wrote about the "Positive Psychology Movement" and its Gratitude Intervention Studies in which volunteers are asked to write a letter of thanks to someone whom they have not properly thanked and then to subsequently read this letter to that

person. Dolbee quotes the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi writing in *Free Enquiry*, a secular humanist journal, "The volunteers who are randomly assigned to do this task show increases in happiness half a year after completing it".

In reading up on Positive Psychology I came across "Eight Steps Toward a More Satisfying Life" by University of California psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky based on her own and others' research. Two of the steps are: "Count your blessings" that includes a suggestion to keep a 'gratitude journal' and "Thank others", in person and in detail. The other suggestions to help increase one's level of happiness are: "Practice acts of kindness ... Savor life's joys ... Learn to forgive ... Invest time and energy in family and friends ... Take care of your body, and Develop strategies for coping with stress and hardships". One can't help but notice of course, how much these sug-

See **Grateful Season**, Page 2



## Amish respond to girls' killings with forgiveness for perpetrator

By Lee Van Ham

*Van Ham is a SD Catholic Worker.*

Various voices in the media clamor daily that we must hunt down criminals and terrorists and bring them to justice. But, for several eye-opening, heart-strengthening days in early October, the clamor had a counterpoint: the Amish, a low-tech people our culture has passed by, responded to a heinous, irrational, criminal act against 10 of their children by forgiving family members of the perpetrator.

Stories from Nickel Mines, Pa., spread quickly around the world. Ten young girls had been shot at point blank range in an Amish schoolhouse nearby, five of them dead. The killer, Charles Carl Roberts IV, killed himself. His words prior to the event were of one trapped in the common thinking that violence and death can alleviate guilt and shame, bringing closure to what a soul feels is too great to bear.

### Consoled killer

The grandfather of one of the murdered girls took a totally different path. He went to the home of the murderer's father, consoled him and hugged him. In bold simplicity, the duplicity of demonizing enemies and justifying ourselves was laid aside. The two men were, the grandfather knew, joined in a human experience of unspeakable grief; both had a great common need, namely, to find a way through a great tragedy, one that most often tears communities apart. Many watching the story realized that their own profession of spiritual practice, whether following Jesus or some other faith, was just that, a profession, when it came to heinous crimes and violence against family. The Amish people's profession of nonviolence, forgiveness, and community became also their practice in the moment of terror.

Though some regard forgiveness as too weak a practice for horrors of this magnitude, the Amish trusted its power. For them, forgiving first of all heals the forgiver, moving them out of the toxicity of hatred and vengeance. Beyond that, whatever impact forgiveness has on the one being forgiven, is a byproduct available only if the forgiveness can be received.

In addition to their belief in forgiveness to heal wounds and terror too big for words, the Amish practice of intentional community also factored into their response.

### Columbine chaos

Consider how school shootings, dramatized so unforgettably in the Columbine High School (Colorado) tragedy of 1999, shatter the consciousness of our children. Irrational violence turns school patterns into chaos, brings in teams of counselors, and reconfigures security. These responses we understand. But in this Nickel Mines community we saw another dynamic at work as well.

We saw victim families take the initiative to ask the households related to Charles Roberts, the murderer, to please continue as their neighbors rather than leave the community in shame. Healing would come gradually, they said, if they could continue to reshape life to-

See **Amish**, Page 4

## Why did we go to war?

*Somehow we were sent to invade a nation because it was a direct threat to the American people,*

*or to the world, or harbored terrorists, or was involved in the September 11 attacks,*

*or received weapons-grade uranium from Niger,*

*or had mobile weapons labs, or WMD, or had a need to be liberated,*

*or we needed to establish a democracy, or stop an insurgency,*

*or stop a civil war we created that can't be called a civil war even though it is.*

*Something like that.*

—Kevin Tillman, writing in The Nation Magazine to commemorate the birthday of his brother, Pat, who was killed in Afghanistan.

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# A brother who can spare two dimes

## *Memories of a Catholic Worker Thrift Shop*

By Florence Gilman

*Dr. Gilman is a professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at USD.*

Men's trousers were 10 cents that day. The day before they had been free, but the lady in charge of the thrift store that morning told me that we would have a sign saying they were now 10 cents. She was also putting prices, ridiculously low ones, on a number of other things that had been free. She seemed to think that we might have quite a few customers. Was it the chill in the late fall weather in our upstate New York city of Syracuse that told her that? Or was it the morning's bright sun and clear sky following an evening of rain, after which she suspected the park bench sleepers were still wet and would need 'new' dry clothes? Either way it struck me as the wrong time to tack a price onto what had been free yesterday. I also wondered to myself, why, if she wanted to make a bit more than nothing, did she not say a dollar per pair for those trousers? But I was just a new, temporary helper, and I wasn't about to voice my questions.

Among the motley crew who straggled in that morning there indeed soon came a man who headed straight for the trousers. He was tall, stood rather erect and seemed reserved. Because he reminded me of one of my own, tall, vibrant yet dignified uncles, the question went through my mind of how he ended up where he now was. Had he, too, once operated like my uncle from a position of, let's say, social strength? Had he once been vibrant, dignified and strong, but was now beaten down by life's experiences and choices? Although I could only guess his story, because my imagination superimposed my uncle upon him I was starting to feel embarrassed by the transaction I could see we were moving toward.

### The right fit

He seemed confused about the pants sizes, so I pointed to the pile of those that were in his range. He took his time, holding various pairs in front of himself to gauge the fit. He was actually quite particular about which pair he would take. This small thrift shop had no booth for trying on clothes, and I was feeling increasingly more uncomfortable—because I was mentally not relating to him, but to my uncle. It seemed like trying on clothes should be a more dignified experience. Also, I was assuming that he must be self-conscious about some great downslide in life that now caused him to obtain trousers in this way. What had happened that brought him to this?

Then the tall man, this individual, not my uncle, pulled me back to reality. He said in a matter of fact voice one might use in making such a purchase, "I'll take these two pairs. Would you have a bag?" We went over to the counter, I bagged the trousers, and he placed two dimes on the counter. He rather wanly smiled and then walked slowly out of the thrift shop. I kept thinking about him, however, and also the two dimes. I suspected that the two dimes which had passed between us had made it easy for him to take his time looking, and to choose not one, not just any old pair, but two that he felt would fit him. Maybe it was the two dimes that also permitted him to say just a brief, normal thank you to conclude the transaction and to take his time leaving the store, entertaining perhaps the purchase of other things he passed. Had the two dimes also helped to move me beyond my embarrassment? An appreciation for the lady in charge of the thrift store was also dawning upon me. She indeed seemed to know a thing or two about preserving a person's dignity. I noticed she was also very adaptable. While some people paid her token prices, as soon as others indicated they had no money, she simply distracted everyone with conversation and bagged their choices like all the others.

### Restoring dignity

The incident of the man with the trousers happened to me many years ago, yet I still recall that man and his purchase as a strong reminder that one must try to find

See **Dimes**, Page 4

## **Fodder for Devil's Advocate?**

# Collection of memories of Dorothy Day displays her human and even funny sides

## **DOROTHY DAY: PORTRAITS BY THOSE WHO KNEW HER**

By Rosalie G. Riegler. *Orbis*, 2003.

Review by Bill Pease

Recently I had occasion to read two quite different books devoted to the life of the founder of the Catholic Worker. In preparing for this review I had already finished the compilation by Rosalie Riegler, "Dorothy Day: Portraits by Those Who Knew Her," *Orbis*, 2003, when my attention was drawn to another book published years earlier. This came about through some e-mail correspondence with Patrick Jordan, managing editor of *Commonweal*. (He had the same position at the Catholic Worker in the 1970s.) I had reacted to an article in *Commonweal* mentioning Dorothy's commitment as a Benedictine Oblate. That was surprising news to me, since years earlier a mutual friend, a member of the secular institute of Charles De Foucauld, had said that Dorothy belonged to the latter organization. Mr. Jordan referred me to a book by Sister Brigid O. Merriman, "Searching for Christ: the Spirituality of Dorothy Day." There I learned that Dorothy was indeed an oblate of St. Procopius Abbey in Illinois. In her admiration of De Foucauld she had later tentatively associated herself with that other organization, but dropped out when it seemed to interfere with her leadership of the Catholic Worker. None of this appears in William Miller's lengthy, and supposedly definitive, biography of Dorothy.

### Based solely on written word

The earlier book by Merriman (1994) is one that will provide a favorable hand should the process of canonization for Dorothy go forward. It is based solely on writings by and about her. The written word, especially by someone so adept as Dorothy was, is typically approached and edited with care, unlike our casual conversations. In the Merriman book we find a steady, almost studied advance in the spiritual life in a manner that is an inspiration to read. Much of it I had known from other sources, but there were some new items. For instance, did you know that Dorothy had spent some time nursing the second wife of Forster Batterham (her one time common-law husband) during that woman's terminal illness? The book brings forward all the spiritual influences on Dorothy that, even from outside sources, led her forward as a progressing Catholic. One of the last chapters is captioned as Friends but only three, exemplary Catholics all, are included.

### Dorothy kept in touch

The book hardly mentions Ammon Hennacy who was an important character in the Catholic Worker story and who was baptized into the Church through his friendship with Dorothy and later dropped away. His autobiography first titled, "Autobiography of a Catholic Anarchist," was later revised under a different title. Dorothy maintained good relations with earlier socialist comrades and with Judith Malina of The Living Theatre, on the basis not of religion but of progressive social principles. Other non-Catholics to whom she always had affectionate ties included her brother and sister and Batterham, her daughter's father.

### Grateful Season, continued from Page 1.

gestions are also suggestions for living a Christian life.

Thanksgiving Day is of course a perfect opportunity to "count our blessings" and "thank others" and so, at Mass I thanked the people in church for their presence at our Eucharist and said that I couldn't think of a better way to express our gratitude for our blessings. I talked about the power of gratitude and that God doesn't really need our gratitude, rather WE need to be grateful; it changes us, it strengthens us, it's good for us. One of the weekday Prefaces at Mass addresses God the Creator, "... our desire to thank you is itself your gift. Our prayer of thanksgiving adds nothing to your greatness, but makes us grow in your grace."

In the homily I went on to talk about a married couple I know at the Casa de los Pobres in Tijuana named Eloisa and Roberto who through their gratitude over the years have helped me and many others grow in God's grace. These two people, both lepers, truly embody what it means to say that there is power in gratitude. Eloisa is much more limited by the effects of her Hansen's Disease than Roberto. Her hands are curled up into a ball and Roberto has to help her to eat and to care for herself. Within the last few years she has had to have her legs amputated because of poor circulation. This does not prevent them from attending Mass, when they are able, on Thursday mornings at the Casa. Recently I arrived at the chapel just after they did and after Roberto waved off my offer of help, he lifted Eloisa out of her wheelchair and with a smile struggled up the stone steps with her in his arms.

In contrast to the Merriman book the recent work by Riegler might be of some help to the "Devil's Advocate" assuming that function still applies to the business of canonization. Not that any big scandals come to light. Enough of those occurred in Dorothy's youth and are now public knowledge. We meet a woman who had good moods and bad, who smoked and occasionally swore in her early years as a Catholic. She was not over-supplied with patience, not so much as regards bad behavior but as regards effectiveness in "the Work." And yet her patience with "the men," those in line for food and help was seemingly endless. She would doggedly press forward in the Catholic Worker enterprise against hierarchical advice and yet would not hear a word spoken against the bishops. She would not tolerate in her hearing any word of sexual dalliance or variation, despite—or because of?—her own laxity as a youth.

### Different folks, different memories

Any of us being described by a number of different acquaintances might come through as not one but a variety of only loosely similar people. That is much the case in the Riegler book, given over to memories of those who knew Dorothy Day at different times. In a beautifully written foreword her granddaughter Kate Hennessy reports "She is two people to me—an uneasy marriage of grandmother and public figure ... one fantastic granny." Some of the many vignettes found in the book are from the 1930s, very early memories by those now disappearing. One of whom I had not heard of before, was Joe Zarella, now a writer, who joined in 1935 and became a life-long Worker. His comments are particularly rich about her humane and funny side and her intensity: "If you've ever been under Miss Day's influence, you can't shake it. You're haunted." We learn that her reading was not just of profound theologians and Russian novelists, but of murder mysteries as well. And that she could carry rebel placards one day and distribute holy cards another.

While many people attracted to Dorothy Day can be characterized as restless seekers or pilgrims, she herself had an unusually steady focus throughout her Catholic life. In a rare change of opinion she went on record against the ordination of women but years later calmly told an inquirer that it might eventually come, preceded by married priests.

### Hard to pin down

To return again to the memoir by Kate Hennessy, "She (Kate's grandmother) is difficult to pigeonhole or put on a pedestal, and she is a dangerous woman to admire. Admiration, in itself, show that perhaps there is too much time spent in thinking about what should be done and not doing it. Admiration is a comfortable distance at which to stand." Perhaps, while reading the many human interest stories brought together here, we might be forgiven admiration of the fine photographs in Riegler's book. Those of us who met Dorothy in her later years can enjoy seeing her once more, both in that era and in her early Catholic Worker days, viewing again the face of a strong and serene woman.

*Pease is a retired college librarian and a volunteer in earlier years with the Catholic Worker, both in New York and San Diego.*

I climbed the steps behind them thinking that I might be able to brace him up if he fell backwards. Eloisa didn't seem to be a bit afraid, and she smiled at me over her husband's shoulder and proceeded to tell me how fortunate they were that they could make it to Mass and how grateful they were to me for always celebrating the Mass. Roberto was sweating and gasping with the effort of carrying Eloisa up the stairs but he managed to grunt, "Si, si, Padre, gracias."

I had a lump in my throat. Later in the dining hall, when I saw Eloisa eating the Casa breakfast of oatmeal, refried beans and corn tortillas she called out to me, gave me a beaming smile and raised up her arms for a hug. As she enveloped me in the hug she said simply, "Gracias padre, gracias." As I disentangled myself I remarked that she always seemed to be smiling. She said that she smiled out of joy because she felt so blessed. That really gave me food for thought and for prayer as I traveled the few miles back across the border: if a woman with as much suffering and pain as Eloisa can be happy because she names her blessings, then what a profound lesson that is for all of us to be grateful and to express that gratitude in words and in deeds.

Eloisa and Roberto have helped me know the truth of Merton's words: "The grateful person knows that God is good not by hearsay but by experience. ... that is what makes all the difference." And may it continue to make a difference to all of us and help us to know that the season to be grateful, the true "Holydays" are "Alldays" if we but see them with grateful eyes and experience them with grateful hearts.

## Annual Dinner and Auction

# Close to 300 friends of SD Catholic Worker support important fundraiser

Maybe the turnout was not quite as good as previous years, still approximately 300 friends of San Diego Catholic Worker turned out for the Annual Gourmet Meatball and Spaghetti Dinner and Auction at St. Mary Magdalene Church Hall, Sept. 30. A record amount of money was raised, \$10,500, for which the Catholic Worker, but more importantly, the beneficiaries of those donations, are especially grateful. It would not be possible to list the names of the dozens of volunteers who made the evening such a success. We list here the names of the businesses who graciously provided items for the auction.

Acapulco Restaurant  
Adam's Steak and Eggs  
AJ's Restaurant  
Albie's Beef Inn  
Anthony's Fish Grotto  
Bamboo Hair Salon  
Bea and Tom Roberts  
Bed Bath & Beyond  
Boater's World & Marine Center  
Body Therapies (Satisha Sproston)  
Mr. & Mrs. George Beall  
Brigantine Restaurant Corporation  
Buick Invitational Golf  
Bully's Restaurant, Mission Valley  
Busalacchi's Ristorante  
Cottonwood Golf Club  
Chipotle  
Clairemont Surf Shop  
Cottage Restaurant, La Jolla  
The Diamond Source  
Del Mar Race Track  
Disneyland  
El Torito Mexican Restaurant & Cantina  
EagleRider Motorcycle Rental  
European Cake Gallery  
Foot Solutions  
Fiddler's Green Restaurant  
Mr. & Mrs. Classen Gramm  
Fr. Gil Gentile, S.J.  
Great News Cooking School  
Humphrey's Half Moon Inn & Suites  
Fr. Ron Herbert  
H & M Landing  
In-N-Out Burger  
Icetown  
Iris Mencinger  
Jack and Giulio's Restaurant

Legoland  
Lorraine and Jack Duffy  
Mex-Art  
Masterpiece Concrete Composition  
Dr. Marianne McDonald & James Dolan  
Magic Mountain  
Michael Mansfield  
Mimi's Café  
Mingei International Museum  
Mission Bay Aquatic Center



Lilian Macy spent quality time with friends.

Mt. Woodson Golf Club  
Napoleone Pizza House  
Nati's Mexican Restaurant  
Natural History Museum  
Osinski's Jewelry  
OutBack SteakHouse, Clairemont  
Old Venice  
Point Break Café  
Paradowski's Swim & Sport  
Point Loma Camera  
Pizza Nova  
Prince of Peace Abbey Retreat Center  
Reuben H. Fleet Science Center  
Renzulli's Jewelry World  
Rubio's Restaurants, Inc.  
Route 44  
Rancho Bernardo Inn  
San Diego Aircraft Carrier Museum  
San Diego Museum of Art  
San Diego Natural History Museum  
San Diego Tennis and Racquet Club  
San Diego Zoo  
Sardinas Ristorante Italiano  
Sea World  
Silver Designer  
South American Imports  
Squidco  
Shugrue Photography  
Susan Bartlett  
Susan and John Fackler  
Susan Self  
Torrey Pines Club Corporation  
Trains Are Good  
Tio Carlos Mexican Restaurant  
Tio Leo's Mexican Restaurant  
UCSD Bookstore  
Wilshire Fireplace Shops



Tony Di Meglio wore a huge smile at the dinner-auction.

J.W. Tumbles  
Mr & Mrs. Joseph Kampp  
Karen's Consignment Gallery  
Mr. & Mrs. John L'Estrange  
Lamb's Theatre

The band, *Something to Comply*, with Jon Edillor, Ian Santos, Joshua Simona and Joshua Vasquez, all from St. Michael Academy, Paradise Hills, provided great music, the Philippine Dancers, Cindy Le, Marissa Ramirez, Kanani Agosto and Kasandra Bunting, along with their teacher, Mary Monroe from Holy Family School in Linda Vista provided great after-dinner entertainment, and the Bill Buntz Trio served up wonderful "oldies," but "goodies" all evening long.

## Fall was a good time for Catholic Workers to study homelessness, conflict, and theology

By Denys Horgan

Horgan is a San Diego Catholic Worker

October and November were great months to be a Catholic Worker in San Diego. Not only was the weather exceptionally good, for the most part, this year, but there were two world-renowned speakers at two of our universities and a five-week seminar on homelessness was conducted downtown.

First, the seminars on homelessness: They were the brainchild of "Fr. Joe" Carroll, president of Father Joe's Villages where thousands of people are fed and hundreds of indigent men, women and children in our town are sheltered every day. Fr. Joe was watching the local news on TV one evening when, once again, he said, incorrect information regarding homeless people was being broadcast.

Rather than put up with the frustration, he asked his staff to invite anybody at all interested in homeless people—and homeless people themselves—to a public education forum, "State of Homelessness." They organized free lunches and seminars that would last for a couple of hours once a week for five consecutive weeks. The downtown Lions Community Manor graciously provided the premises, Nazarene University of Point Loma helped out with the food, and some 120-140 people representing more than sixty organizations turned up each week. Two San Diego Catholic Worker board members, Lee Van Ham and Denys Horgan, made sure the voice of Dorothy Day got a hearing.

### Every little bit counts

What did we learn? Personally, the complexity of the problem. On the very first day, Oct. 5, at the conclusion of a general discussion when participants were invited to stand up, briefly introduce their organization, and state just one particular service it provided, we were all mesmerized at the vast variety of the needs that homeless people have and the number of mostly untrumpeted groups of people volunteering to assist them. And still the problem not only remains, but gets bigger all the time.

That might be cause for apathy, except that one person reminded us all that we never know what specific act of kindness or generosity, large or small, counteracts the overall culture of rejection of homeless people by society and inspires him or her to reach out for help. We just never know.

One is reminded of John-Paul Sartre, in one of his nihilistic moods, comparing the plight of the human race to a long line of people silently waiting as one person is taken out each day and shot. What can we do, he asks. Well, the least we can do is to turn to the person on each side of us and ask them their name. Likewise, instead of turning away when we see a homeless man or woman, reinforcing their feelings of dismissal as invisible nobodies, we might engage them in some way, and if not ask them their names at least look them in the eye with compassion.

### What's the problem?

The real problem of homelessness in San Diego was illustrated to us at the third seminar, unwittingly, when a downtown resident told us that homeless people were smelly and untidy; they left rubbish, "debris," he called it, behind. Unspoken was the implication that their presence was a blight on the city, making residents uncomfortable, and God forbid, maybe even bringing property values down.

Listening to such a pitiful lament, one could not but wonder if the real problem that downtown San Diego has with homeless people is not the attitude of some of the residents, most of whom are newly arrived and dismayed at, having paid exorbitant prices for privacy, finding the public spaces occupied by unsightly people down on their luck.

Fr. Joe saved the day with a reminder that homeless people are simply "our neighbors in need." And what do we do for neighbors in need, he asked, we give them help. Rather than seeing homelessness as problem, we should look on it as a challenge and an opportunity to practice our Christianity. We all had a good chuckle when he said the greatest difficulty homeless people experience is "access to service." And what is the greatest obstacle to access to service, he was asked. That's an easy one, he replied: "absence of service."

Then there was the Amartya Sen lecture under the auspices of the Center for the Humanities at UCSD, Oct. 5. Sen, who won the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics, is an authority on world poverty, its causes and remedies. Rarely have I seen an auditorium so full of mostly young people. Not only was every seat taken before Sen began to speak, but there was standing room only at the back, and there was a student sitting on every inch of floor space, in the aisles, in front of

# Missionary to Pacific homeless finds solace and nourishment in Catholic Worker lunch

By Nancelle K. Lauffer

*Lauffer, is an apostle to homeless people in Pacific Beach.*

Halfway through the Masters in Marriage and Family Counseling Program at the University of San Diego, the Lord God asked me to withdraw from the program, move into my 1978 Chinook, and minister to homeless people just as He did in the Gospels.

That day I was engulfed in a huge wrestling match with my selfish ambition wanting to make lots of money with the therapy degree, driven by a desire to prove to others and myself that I could achieve this goal—despite having taken nine years to get to that point because of a learning disability—and now the Lord God was asking me to throw all this away?

I won the wrestling match, for I wrestled down my selfish ambition, pinned it dead to the cross, and said yes to His will only. What freedom! So I moved into my Chinook and drove to the boardwalk in Pacific Beach.

The Lord God said to me: “People in the world are tired of hearing about money from the church, so don’t ask, hint, or beg for money. Ask Me in secret, and I will reward you openly, for the just live by faith.” I said, “Yes Lord.”

The “big problem” came when vehicle repairs ate all my money, I had no food, and too many days passed with

only water for nourishment. The “big solution” came when some homeless people I knew said they were going to the Friday lunch served by the Catholic Workers at the Lutheran Church on Cass Street.

We arrived at the lunch, and a woman with a great smile said, “Welcome!” This somehow dismantled my stress. Once seated, people came out of the kitchen with trays of salad and bread. It was an awesome salad with lots of veggies—much needed nutrition when hunger is a frequent companion on the streets.

When the main course was served, I began to cry with tears of relief and joy. Relief that my hunger pains were satisfied, and joy because I felt like I was in a restaurant, being treated special in the midst of my hardship, and loving the attention.

Gourmet desserts were served, and I was speechless with joy. I have eaten in soup kitchen lines, thankful for what they do, but I always feel as if we are cattle going to a feed than dining. Restaurant style may take more effort, but worth the effort for those blessed by it at the Friday lunch.

The Lord God allowed the poverty and hunger in my missionary life to let me know what my extended family experience on a daily basis, to humble me, and to experience what a blessing the Friday lunch is to poor people.

## Iraq, continued from Page 1.

tion of the Military Commissions Act, which allows for the indefinite detention of “enemy combatants,” the denial of habeas corpus right for these prisoners, and the use of interrogation methods that constitute torture.

The Military Commissions Act of 2006 had been signed into law by President Bush just two days previously, Oct. 17. Opponents of the bill say it is unconstitutional and jeopardizes core rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

“Our path to redemption lies in the repudiation of domination and embracing the daily need of service to the vulnerable,” the Catholic Workers said, urging the following actions to achieve that end:

- prayer, fasting and nonviolent civil resistance to end the military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan
- support and encouragement for all conscientious objectors
- the closing of Guantanamo and other secret U.S. military prisons
- a redirection of resources from war-making and exploitation to meeting human needs and saving our planet,
- a refusal by all U.S. military and private contractors to engage in torture

The head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops,

## Amish, continued from Page 1.

gether. Justice, they were saying in words and deeds, is not just about fair retribution for offences. It is also about restoring shattered people to the community that sustains life, and being very intentional about it.

Many of us doubt that we have the spiritual capacity to practice forgiveness and restorative justice should our family be shredded by terror or crime. But the slower-paced, low-tech communities of the Amish people reveal to us that our doubts may not express the deepest capacities of our own souls. Their caravan of horse-drawn buggies that memorialized their children, and quietly drove by the households of the Roberts’ family in an act of inclusion and solidarity, was bearing not only grief too great for words, but the medicines of forgiveness and restorative justice. It was not the kind of medicine that brings closure, but that brings enclosure—a community with enough safety so that sacred presence and open hearts will not only heal wounds, but open to a future not yet perceived.

## Dimes, continued from Page 1.

ways to preserve or restore wounded human dignity. Catholic Workers and others with long experience in clothing and food distribution could probably each write a complete theology of preserving human dignity. This is important to muse upon because, of course, we all approach a day when we, too, will each stand in absolute total need, only this occasion will be in the presence of the Creator. Some theologians describe the good deeds we do during life as what we think we will hold out to God to earn our way, rather like dimes for salvation. Yet in our hearts we know “’tis amazing grace,” not ourselves, that enables any good we might do and grace that will mercifully bring us home. Still, there is no doubt that God will respectfully care about the dimes we have amassed and hold out to God in our own final great ‘transaction,’ for they are what have kept us in touch with the reality of both the human and the divine. As Jesus phrased it, “whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matt 25:40).

William S. Skylstad, has signed the National Religious Campaign Against Torture statement declaring that, “Any policies that permit torture and inhumane treatment are shocking and morally intolerable. Nothing less is at stake in the torture abuse crisis than the soul of our nation. ... Let America abolish torture now—without exceptions.”

The Catholic Workers also called on Catholics and other people of goodwill to join them for a nonviolent action in Washington, D.C., Jan. 11—the 5th anniversary of the first prisoners arriving at Guantanamo—to call for its closing.

And they called on all Catholic Worker groups and their friends to contact their local bishops and request a meeting at which they can express their faith and concerns regarding the war in Iraq, the Guantanamo prison, and torture.

## Listening to the voices of justice

*I think another example of how we might listen to those outside our structured, institutional church, would be to listen to the Christians of other denominations, where it seems, at least to me and to many, more justice is done for women, who are allowed to have leadership positions in the church. A woman bishop is the head of the whole Episcopal church in the United States. I think that's a message being spoken to us from an outsider, I guess you could call them, but it's really God's word speaking a word of justice for women in our church.*

*We need to listen, to change.*

—Bishop Thomas Gumbleton

## Catholic Worker Meetings schedules

Please note that SD Catholic Worker meetings are held 6:30 p.m. on the second Monday of every month in the Sacred Heart Parish Hall on Sunset Cliffs Blvd. at Saratoga in Ocean Beach. Next meetings will be held Jan. 8, Feb. 12, March 12, April 9, and May 14.

### Mission Statement

The San Diego Catholic Worker is committed to the following actions that imitate Christ: a call to service, a belief in the human dignity of all, and an interrelationship with a compassionate God and one another.

As Catholic Workers, we struggle to carry out our double mandate: to minister to the needs of society’s forgotten people, and to challenge and offer alternatives to the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and perpetuate suffering and violence.

Following Christ’s example, we also believe it is our duty to spread the word of our work and provide others with the opportunity to serve.

The San Diego Catholic Worker will achieve its goals by the grace of God and by working together to bring about a world of peace and justice as envisioned by our founders, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin.

## Seminars, continued from Page 3

the stage, and behind and beside him, on the stage.

Sen spoke about identity and violence, the subject of his most recent book, arguing that when people are identified by just one modifier, such as ethnicity, or religion or nationality, to the neglect of all other identities, confrontation is invited and an opening is created for extremists to whip up violence.

Sen learned this lesson at an early age. He was a boy of 11, when a Muslim man who had been stabbed burst into the family garden and asked for help. The man was a poor day-laborer, a victim of the Hindu-Muslim riots that engulfed India in the 1940s and resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent people on both sides. His family was hungry and against his wife’s judgment he left home in search of food. He died in Sen’s lap on the way to hospital.

Not much has changed since. We still identify people exclusively as Muslims, or Christians, or Jews, or black or white, or Hispanic, or whatever, and we suffer the consequences, whether in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, Rwanda and elsewhere. The remedy is not to restrict people’s identity to one dimension, but to be aware that everybody has any number of so many other identities and these commonalities need be recognized and encouraged as unifying factors cutting across our differences.

But it’s much easier and simpler, of course, to label people, treat them as others, not-us, and disparage them, demonize them, and then treat them as threats to our culture and fair game for a preemptive strike.

### Father of Liberation Theology

When Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez O.P, the father of liberation theology, spoke at USD, Oct. 30, we were reassured that the movement to compose a theology from the perspective of the poor of Latin America was alive and kicking, despite harassment from the European theological elite.

Fr. Gutiérrez, who topped off his formal theological training in France when Vatican II was in full swing, came into his own as a student at the school of hard knocks, living and working among the poor of Rimac, a Lima slum.

According to Fr. Gutiérrez, all Christian theology, indeed, all Christianity is a commentary on Jesus of Nazareth. The commentaries differ according the age and the milieu in which they were made or written. Thus, we should not expect the theology developed in medieval monasteries to be identical to that developed in a modern academic milieu. Nor should we expect a theology written from an all-male perspective to be the same as one written from a female perspective.

Likewise, Fr. Gutiérrez insists, a commentary on Jesus of Nazareth written from the perspective and the experience of the oppressed people of Latin America and elsewhere in the world of our time should have its own identity. It would be framed in terms of a “preferential option for the poor.” A poor person whose oppression and hunger is inflicted by an unjust economic system will not have the same take on Jesus of Nazareth as the powerful who construct a society in which the rulers’ every whim is satisfied.

Listening to Fr. Gutiérrez, one wondered what a North American version of liberation theology might look like. In the midst of wealth unparalleled anywhere in the world, millions of children go hungry every day, hundreds of thousands are homeless, millions more cannot afford health care, and while wages plummet in terms of real dollars, profits and stocks soar, and executives make out like bandits.

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