

SIMPLICITY

Live Simply So That Others May Simply Live

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Rain, Song, and the Kingdom

by Elizabeth Simpson Earley

I write this on Doubting Thomas Sunday. The question arose at Mass today of where in the world was Thomas the first time Jesus appeared after the resurrection?

I've always felt an allegiance with Thomas, doubter that I am, and here again, I could relate. Skip a gathering, and who shows up but Jesus. Just my luck. If it were me, I had probably decided to do something important like stay home and play with my dog Jack.

Lucky for Thomas, (and me) Jesus showed up again, this time to allow him to put his hand in his side and the wounds of his hands.



Daniel Mauk

When I first started volunteering at the Norfolk Catholic Worker's soupline about 10 years ago, I remember literally sucking wind at the sight of such a long line of hungry people. How was it possible we had done such a poor job of sharing? I knew there were poor, rationally, but seeing them queued up like that, the young, the old, the able bodied, the disabled, and even children, was stunning and scary.

I had gone to the place we call "The Wall" thinking I would continue to go only if they needed me there. They didn't, at least not in the way I was thinking, that is, to pour a cup of coffee and hand out a sandwich. But they did in another way, which I learned early on from Steve Baggarly: God calls us to stand on the side of the poor.

And so that's why I returned every Thursday. The first time I woke up and heard it raining, I thought, "Do they have the soupline in the rain? I bet no one even comes. They couldn't possibly need ALL of us there."

But I got up and, sure enough, they serve rain or shine. (Steve went by himself during Hurricane Isabel!) One of the men on the line that day thanked me for coming and said, "Don't ever think we won't be here."

His words still ring in my ears when I wake to rain, knowing the poor will always be with us.

Two guys from St. Pius X parish, Jack and Dave, came to serve soup long before me, and they had all these stories about how it would be pouring rain on the way to the line, and then, just as they arrived, it would stop.

And while I too, saw that happen many times, there are also times, frankly, when it just rains.

Once, it was raining in just this way, and a friend of mine, Mary Ann, was coming to the soupline for the last time before moving to New York. And I remember us all standing there in the rain, passing out food and drinks.

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NEWSLETTER OF THE NORFOLK CATHOLIC WORKER

Why This Issue—Hunger

by Steve Baggarly

Before community dinner at the Catholic Worker house we often pray a grace in both English and Spanish which comes from Colombia, South America: "Lord, to those who hunger, give bread. And to those who *have* bread, give the hunger for justice." The simple words sum up Jesus' invitation to the kingdom of God. As St. Luke announces, the kingdom belongs to poor and hungry people and calls for action on their behalf.

In the wealthiest, most overfed nation on the planet, we are surrounded by hunger. We know people are hungry when they come to our outdoor soup line in the driving rain, or in ice and snow, at 7 in the morning, to stand in line for a very simple meal. We know people are hungry when 400 families in our country own half of the country's wealth. And we know we live in a hungry world when the assets of its 85 richest individuals equal those of its poorest 3.55 billion. 25,000 of these are children who die hunger related deaths each week. There has been a great theft from poor people, whose rightful share of the world's goods unjustly accumulates in the closets, garages, bank accounts, investment portfolios, and real estate holdings of others.

People like C., who is living on the street while he heals from skin cancer surgery that took a chunk out of his face and then became infected. Like Frank Simmons, a Navy veteran who lived in the woods for years, until kidney disease sapped his floor of a friend's apartment VA to decide on a treatment vet, who froze to death this past neighborhood. Or his buddy D., the woods anymore and camps blocks away. Or Barry Harper, of the past ten years until he like Tony Phelps, who was shot rundown apartment building. car after she lost one of her two part-time jobs and could no longer afford both her rent and the vehicle. All these have joined us for meals on our soup line or at the hospitality house over the past year.

Transform Now Plowshares Sentenced

In February, Sr. Megan Rice, SHCJ (3 years), Michael Walli, and Gregory Boertje-Obed (5 years each), were sentenced for their July 2012 direct action at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant in Oak Ridge, TN. For more information and for their prison addresses go to transformnowplowshares.wordpress.com

strength and he died on the after waiting months for the plan. Like Joe Madison, also a winter in the woods in our who is too saddened to live in out on a busy street corner two who lived in his truck for most died of cancer this spring. Or to death in the doorway of his And like S., who lived in her

Intimately tied to bodily hunger pangs is the hunger for justice and peace. According to the Hebrew prophets, it is precisely those material and financial resources that go into making war that have been stolen from poor people—the tools of war are forged at the expense of ending world hunger. So the gospel demand is not only economic justice but also nonviolence.

One aspect of US warmaking we have focused on lately at the Norfolk Catholic Worker is the use of armed unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones. Drones, the latest technology in modern warfare, regularly slaughter civilians and induce mass trauma. Drones hover, buzzing, twenty-four hours a day over communities in northwest Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Yemen. The people below never know when their homes, vehicles, or public spaces will come under attack without warning. As a result, constant "anticipatory anxiety" and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder are widespread. Terrorized, powerless, and unable to protect themselves, people exhibit traits of torture survivors. In such places women have more miscarriages, children wake up screaming in the night, are kept home from school and are not allowed to play outside. People are afraid to attend weddings, funerals, or village meetings, as all have been targets. Many become refugees rather than live under the relentless stress. One Yemeni engineer whose brother, an anti-Al Qaeda cleric, was killed by a drone, said, "We are losing an entire generation to drones."

In this issue, Elizabeth Simpson Earley, Chrissy Nesbitt and Kathy Kelly all reflect on hunger—the hunger of empty stomachs and the hunger for justice with peace. Please come hear Kathy when she comes to town September 17-20, bringing stories from civilians in countries where the US is at war, stories disallowed in our mass media. Her speaking schedule is in a box on page 4.

Our Colombian grace rephrases Jesus' message; "Repent, the kingdom of God is at hand." Those who *have* bread are called to repentance—to equitably redistribute the world's goods and services, and to help end war, that multiplier of hunger, injustice, and unspeakable suffering—to be emissaries of a kingdom that is present wherever good things happen for hungry and victimized people. **

Salt and Terror in Afghanistan

by Kathy Kelly

Back in January, in a room in Kabul, Afghanistan, I joined several dozen people—working seamstresses, some college students, socially engaged teenagers, and a few visiting internationals like myself—to discuss world hunger. Our emphasis was not exclusively on their own country's worsening hunger problems. The Afghan Peace Volunteers, in whose home we were meeting, drew strength from looking beyond their own very real struggles.

With us was Hakim, a medical doctor who spent six years working as a public health specialist in the central highlands of Afghanistan and, prior to that, among the refugees in Quetta, Pakistan. He helped us understand conditions that lead to food shortages and taught us about diseases, such as kwashiorkor and marasmus, which are caused by insufficient protein or general malnutrition.

We looked at UN figures about hunger in Afghanistan that show malnutrition rates rising by 50% or more compared with 2012. The malnutrition ward at Helmand Province's Bost Hospital has been admitting 200 children a month for severe, acute malnutrition—four times more than January 2012.

A recent New York Times article about the worsening hunger crisis described an encounter with a mother and child in an Afghan hospital: "In another bed is Fatima, less than a year old, who is so severely malnourished that her heart is failing, and the doctors expect that she will soon die unless her father is able to find money to take her to Kabul for surgery. The girl's face bears a perpetual look of terror, and she rarely stops crying."

Photos of Fatima and other children in the ward accompanied the article. In our room in Kabul, Hakim projected the photos on the wall. They were painful to see and so were the nods of comprehension from Afghans all too familiar with the agonies of poverty in a time of war.

As children grow, they need iodine to enable proper brain development. According to a UNICEF/GAIN report, "iodine deficiency is the most prevalent cause of brain damage worldwide. It is easily preventable, and through ongoing targeted interventions, can be eliminated." As recently as 2009 we learned that 70% of Afghan children faced an iodine deficiency. Universal Salt Iodization (USI) is recognized as a simple, safe and cost-effective measure in addressing iodine deficiency. The World Bank reports that it costs \$.05 per child, per year.

In 2012, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) announced a four-year project that aimed to reach nearly half of Afghanistan's population—15 million Afghans—with fortified foods. Their strategy was to add vitamins and minerals such as iron, zinc, folic acid, Vitamin B-12, and Vitamin A to wheat flour, vegetable oil, and ghee, and also to fortify salt with iodine. The project costs 6.4 million dollars.

The sums of money required to fund the delivery of iodine and fortified foods to malnourished Afghan children should be compared, I believe, to the sums of money that the Pentagon's insatiable appetite for war-making has required of people in the US.

The price tag for supplying iodized salt to one child for one year is 5 cents.

Brenna McKernan

The cost of maintaining one US soldier has recently risen to 2.1 million dollars per year. The amount of money spent to keep three US soldiers in Afghanistan in 2014 could almost cover the cost of a four-year program to deliver fortified foods to 15 million Afghan people.

Major General Kurt J. Stein, who is overseeing the drawdown of US troops from Afghanistan, has referred to the operation as "the largest retrograde mission in history." The mission will cost as much as \$6 billion.

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Over the past decade, spin-doctors for US military spending have suggested that Afghanistan needs the US troop presence and US non-military spending to protect the interests of women and children.

It's true that non-military aid to Afghanistan, sent by the US since 2002, now approaches \$100 billion.

Several articles on Afghanistan's worsening hunger crisis, appearing in the Western press, prompt readers to ask how Afghanistan could be receiving vast sums of non-military aid and yet still struggle with severe acute malnourishment among children under age five.

However, a 2013 quarterly report to Congress submitted by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan shows that, of the nearly \$100 billion spent on wartime reconstruction, \$97 billion has been spent on counter-narcotics, security, "governance/development," and "oversight and operations." No more than \$3 billion, \$100 per Afghan person, were used for "humanitarian" projects—to help keep thirty million Afghans alive through twelve years of US war and occupation.

Funds have been available for tanks, guns, bullets, helicopters, missiles, weaponized drones, drone surveillance, Joint Special Operations task forces, bases, airstrips, prisons, and truck-delivered supplies for tens of thousands of troops. But funds are in short supply for children too weak to cry who are battling for their lives while wasting away.

A whole generation of Afghans and other people around the developing world see the true results of Westerners' self-righteous claim for the need to keep civilians "safe" through war. They see the terror, entirely justified, filling Fatima's eyes in her hospital bed.

Kathy Kelly's Schedule

Wednesday, September 17, 7:15 pm at the NARO Theater (1507 Colley Ave., Norfolk). After the film "The Kill Team," about an US Army platoon in Afghanistan that hunted civilians, Kathy will speak on her two months spent this summer in Afghanistan.

Friday, September 19, 7:30 pm at The Fellowship of the Inner Light (620 14th St., Virginia Beach).

Saturday, September 20, 1 pm at Monumental Chapel at Virginia Wesleyan College (1584 Wesleyan Dr., Norfolk). As part of the annual One Love Festival, Kathy will speak on "Making Peace Amid War: Voices from Iraq and Afghanistan."

In that room in Kabul, as my friends learned about the stark realities of hunger—and among them, I know, were some who worry about hunger in their own families—I could see a rejection both of panic and of revenge in the eyes of the people around me. Their steady thoughtfulness was an inspiration.

Panic and revenge among far more prosperous people in the US helped to drive the US into a war waged against one of the poorest countries in the world. Yet my Afghan friends, who've borne the brunt of war, long to rise above vengeance and narrow self-interest. They wish to pursue a peace that includes ending hunger. **

Kathy Kelly is a founder of Voices for Creative Nonviolence. She has spent decades in the Middle East in solidarity with civilians in countries where the United States is at war.

We were dripping wet, and I was feeling a little grumpy, wishing it would all be over. And one of the men on the line started singing. And then I heard someone else laughing. And then I saw a man pushing his friend in a wheelchair. Since it was wet, the man kept sliding down in his chair, and his friend kept pulling him back up.

For me it was a glimpse of the kingdom, a place where we break bread together, one helping the other, singing and laughing. My grumpiness turned to gratitude in this baptism of rain.

I've caught many a glimpse of the kingdom there at the wall.

I opened with Thomas because the soupline is how I finally saw the poor, really saw them, looked in their eyes, and learned their names and their stories, and saw their humanity and kindness. Saw them as me, and me as them.

In the same way Jesus showed Thomas the wounds in his side and hands, God has shown me the poor and asked me to stand with them. Most of the time, I am not needed to pass something out, or set up the tables (the guys on the line usually do that) or pick up trash.

But I am needed to stand with them. I pray my friends sing with me in the rain, and laugh, and pull me up in my wheelchair, when needed, and I will do my best to do the same for them. Til kingdom come. **

Elizabeth Simpson Earley is a member of St. Stephen Martyr Catholic Church in Chesapeake, VA.

A Pilgrimage of Presence

by Chrissy Nesbitt

(Editors note—This past Holy Week we took part in a five-day, 53 mile, Stations of the Cross. Carrying an eight foot cross, we walked to 14 local military bases and held a one-hour vigil at each, remembering the crucifixion of Christ and the crucifixion of humanity in war. We ended on Good Friday with civil disobedience at Langley Air Force Base in Hampton, opposing its participation in drone warfare.)

Mindful presence and dedication turn a walk into a pilgrimage, and this Holy Week our group of pilgrims was abundantly gifted with both. As we entered the communal space below the Virginia Beach Friends Meeting House on Palm Sunday, the swirling sounds and smells of a joyful community meal greeted Beth Brockman and me, fresh Durham, North Carolina. supporters had come out the pilgrimage, some of since the pilgrimage in reconnected, met new exuberant potluck fellowship continued as prayer. The room Stefan Waligur played blended our voices and failte—"Welcome to all



Clifford Harper

off the road from A packed room of local to celebrate the start of whom we hadn't seen 2009. We talked, friends, and enjoyed an spread. The rich spirit of we went upstairs for swelled with music as the keyboard and we all sang: "Caithe mile things." week, "Caithe mile

Over the coming failte" would characterize the spirit of our pilgrimage. We welcomed all we saw—not just the comfortable world, the world we pull close around ourselves when we're afraid the whole truth will overwhelm us—we welcomed harsh views of military installations and weapons manufacturers. We welcomed passers-by and onlookers and security personnel. We took in the stories of Afghan families targeted by JSOC raids, and of US military families devastated by PTSD and suicide. We brought our full and prayerful presence to every stretch of pavement, every grassy curb, every sloshy puddle that we walked through.

The pilgrimage participants who did not themselves walk were equally dedicated in their presence. They attended to all the details of the week that the walkers couldn't, providing them with warm clothes on bitterly cold mornings, preparing hot meals, arranging rides in wit-scrambling logistical feats, and making sure the kids among us were able to participate in the ways that were best for them.

Openness to all that is, taking it all in, lends a sense of awareness and clear-sightedness to life in this war-making empire. And that in turn gives me the desire and energy to act with courage. How can I live in such a world and not want to change it?

Walking the pilgrimage this Holy Week, I found myself walking in the footsteps of my younger self. Neither the Hampton Roads peace pilgrimage of 2009 nor the one of 2014 included any sites that would traditionally be considered "holy," but both of them have had a profound spiritual impact on me. When I visited all of these war-related sites, private and governmental, in 2009, it struck me for the first time how horrifyingly vast and real the military industrial complex is, upon which our nation so heavily depends. This year I stood listening to members of our group read Steve's meticulously researched, soul-stirring reflections, and my eyes rested on the huge, non-descript, undeniably real buildings standing in front of me, the physical places that made possible the atrocities that were tearing my heart as I heard about them. War-making is not some nebulous cloud or abstract concept—it's concrete and exists in the here and now.

But I stood filled with hope because just as war is real, so is resistance to war. So is community, forgiveness, beauty, and nonviolence. On Good Friday, the last day of our pilgrimage, six of our number blocked the main road into Langley Air Force Base and were handcuffed. We stood with them, and together we celebrated our hope that simple unarmed people, bringing nothing but their presence, can dismantle the war machine and transform it into the beloved community. **

Chrissy Nesbitt is a teacher, a member of the Southern Life Community, and a knitter par excellence.