

# SIMPLICITY

Winter 2009

*Live Simply So That Others May Simply Live*

Volume 21, No. 1

# Twenty Years On

by Steve Baggarly

September marked twenty years for the Norfolk Catholic Worker. We are indebted to all the people who have ever crossed our path, on the soup line, at the hospitality house or on the picket line, be they guests, volunteers, neighbors, sandwich makers, intentional community members, activists, antagonists, friends, or those who have held the whole thing in prayer both near and far. Dorothy Day often spoke of St. Paul's "cloud of witnesses" as present to the life of the movement, we have felt surrounded by that cloud time and again.

Our greatest visitation has been in the form of hungry and destitute people in our city who frequent

the soupline and the  
hospitality house.  
The needs of people  
are many and  
constant. One man  
needs bus fare to get  
into the Post  
Traumatic Stress  
Disorder clinic at the  
Veteran's Hospital  
across the river.  
Another is on  
dialysis but has no  
stable place to live.  
Another with a  
history of heart

disease is released from the hospital newly diagnosed with leukemia and is sleeping outside. One homeless man needs some rest after an entire night battling mosquitoes, and another who does landscape work is covered with poison ivy and needs medication. An older couple thrown out of their apartment after seven years because the landlord stopped paying the bills needs a place to spend a weekend other than in their car. Other people need jobs, substance abuse

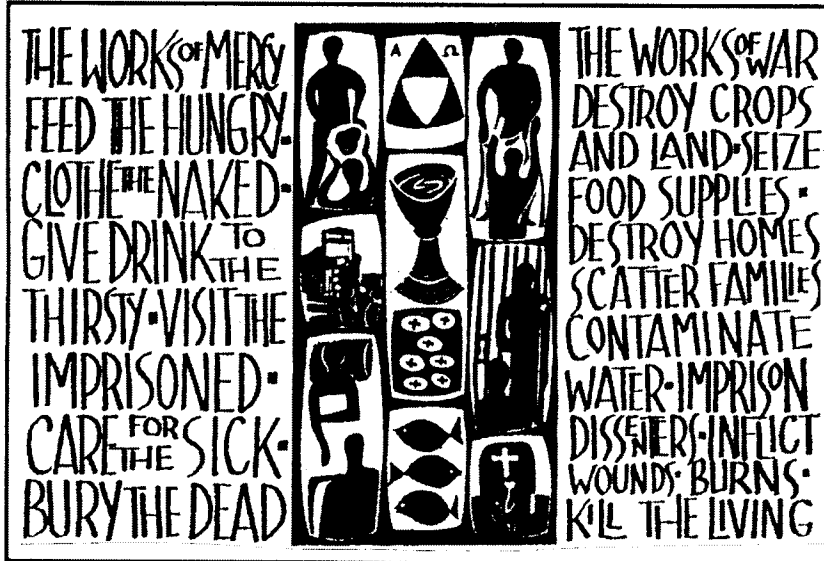
programs, disability compensation, counseling, psychiatric medication, dental work, a safe place to store belongings, a GED, identification papers, English language classes, work shoes and clean clothing, or blankets now that the weather is colder. A long time friend on the street who receives his mail at our address says, "I wish I could just have one time in life that is pure pleasure, something that I can remember later."

In "The Politics of Jesus," theologian and activist Obrey Hendricks Jr. posits that the foundational principal for Jesus' action in the world is that he treats the people's needs as holy. Hendricks

distills the core of Jesus' life and message thus: "treat your neighbors and their needs as holy, that is, by striving to fulfill their needs as if serving God." People are holy and people's needs are holy. Every need expressed or suffered silently is holy. Every shared bowl of oatmeal, old bicycle, piece of moleskin for

a blistered heel, or listening ear, is an encounter with the sacred.

Also holy is people's bodily integrity. After twenty years we feel that, like Dorothy Day said of poverty, "we must always talk about [violence], otherwise people insulated by their own comfort lose sight of it." One African-American friend was accosted by two skinheads driving through our neighborhood who cursed him *(continued on page 2)*



# The Newsletter of the Norfolk Catholic Worker

*Twenty Years On* and took a swing at him before he could run. Another friend was beaten out of his home by his father when he was seven years old and at twelve endured 30 seconds of vicious beating and kicking by fellow gang members, his welcome into a new family steeped in violence. L. lived on and off the street for a long time and was renting a room at a rooming house when a drunken argument ended with him stabbed to death. W. was sentenced to two weeks in jail for trespassing, likely didn't receive his heart medication from the authorities as needed, and his heart stopped after four days. For years B. lived in a wooded area near railroad tracks that run through the city, and a few days after saying he didn't know if he'd be around much longer he fell on the tracks and was cut in half by a train. D. visited our soup line for several weeks before he was murdered three blocks from where it gathers.

Gustavo Gutierrez describes poor people as "those who die before their time." John Sobrino SJ, says that there are historically "crucified peoples", entire populations who have been and continue to be the collateral damage of centuries of slavery, colonialism, and white supremacy. He says the question for those who are not affixed to this cross is to ask themselves "What can I do to help them down from the cross?" The answer to this question is the vocation of the Church—to end poverty and violence.

We are grateful for Dorothy Day's clear vision of the centrality of active nonviolence and the works of mercy. They are the heart of Biblical politics and economics, grounded in the reality that both people and their needs are holy. Both mean living simply and both lead to community, and as Dorothy said, "love comes with community."

We appreciate Rita Corbin's artistic rendering of the works of mercy and the works of war, of what we are for and what we are against. We are for the meeting of human needs and oppose the inflicting of greater need. Poor people are always the main casualties of war, and war has always been the main reason why the works of mercy are so needed around the world. And the US is the warmaking center of the planet. It spends over half of world expenditures on war, corners two-thirds of the global arms trade, invades and occupies foreign countries, wages covert operations around the globe, and maintains the world's largest stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction. In the heart of empire we have resisted war and it's ultimate weapons for twenty years.

In June during our weeklong Walk for Disarmament, we stopped at 13 local military installations calling

### **Bishop Walter F. Sullivan Pax Christi Community**

On October 1st, 60 people gathered in Norfolk to found a new Pax Christi community. Marie Dennis, vice president of Pax Christi International, and former Pax Christi Bishop/President Walter F. Sullivan, Bishop emeritus of the Richmond Diocese, spoke on militarism, global development, and peacemaking. The local community chapter was named after Bishop Sullivan.

Pax Christi is an international Catholic peace movement with chapters in over 50 countries. More info is at [paxchristiusa.org](http://paxchristiusa.org). To contact the new local Pax Christi, call Lucy Yatsko (757) 471-0814.

for nonviolence, disarmament, and economic conversion. In the most militarized place in the western hemisphere, our walk snaked through a maze of yellow ribbons and flying flags, recruiting ads and military discount signs, numberless military support industries, bumper stickers, uniforms, VFW posts, war memorials and museums, and streets named for battles and warriors. We were the only "NO"

on the landscape. The vulnerability of our modest walk whetted our taste for society as a community of communities that gives primary place to poor people, victims, and children, that chooses to be unarmed and vulnerable along with them, trusting in God and sisters and brothers rather than weapons and greater firepower.

We are grateful for everyone who has shared time and effort, resources and prayers, and have been the lifeblood of the Norfolk Catholic Worker. Recently the driver of a front-end loader who moved dirt piles within sight of our soup line each morning gave us money several times to help supply food for the people who come to eat. He did this in spite of being unemployed himself for most of the past year and unsure if he would have work after a couple more weeks on his current job. His sense of compassion and community is emblematic of the kindness and generosity we've been graced to witness day in and day out.

In Luke's gospel Jesus exhorts those within earshot to "hear the Word of God *and act on it*." Our inspiration is the community trying to hear God in the Scripture, in the silence, and in the needs of suffering people, and that treats people as holy and not as targets. For twenty years we have done the works of mercy and resisted the works of war, trying to imitate Dorothy Day as she tried to imitate Christ. \*\*

# Disarm Here and Now

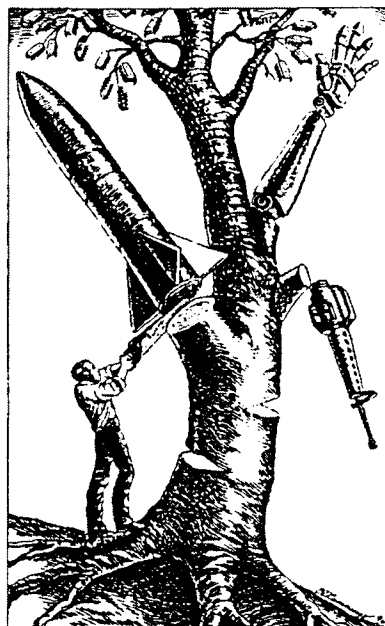
*There have been over 100 Plowshares nuclear resistance actions worldwide since 1980. Activists generally use household hammers and blood to symbolically, yet really, enact the disarmament spoken of by Isaiah and Micah, that "God will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many people. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. And nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."*

**Nuclear Weapon Here Pruning Hooks** On anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Rev. Carl Kabat, OMI, entered a Minuteman III site in Colorado. Wearing a clown suit over his hung several banners on the fencing including two Weapons are a Crime Against Humanity" and "We and Misguided White Men".

In the deadly force area, Carl proceeded to mechanism for the hatch cover that leads to the indicate the readiness of the missile. In theory, if the entered, the Air Force may turn off the missile and disarmed in that moment.

The Minuteman III missile Carl addressed nuclear warhead with 20 times the blast, heat, and Hiroshima bomb, and is one of 500 in the US

This is Carl's seventh plowshare/pruning turned 76 years old in October and has spent 15 of



August 6, 2009 the Hiroshima, Japan, nuclear missile silo clerical garb, Fr. Carl stating, "Nuclear Have Guided Missiles

hammer on the locking instruments that hatch cannot be thus it would be

carries a 335 kiloton radiation of the arsenal.

hooks action. He his last 29 years in jail

for these and other disarmament actions. Carl will go on trial December 21 in Denver on misdemeanor charges of trespassing and criminal mischief. He faces 5 to 12 months in jail.

**Disarm Now Plowshares** On November 2, All Souls Day, five people were arrested on Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor in Washington state. Bill Bischel, SJ, Susan Crane, Lynne Greenwald, Steve Kelly, SJ, and Anne Montgomery, RSCJ, entered the Trident submarine base to begin the conversion of the world's most lethal weapons into plowshares.

The Navy stores 2,364 nuclear warheads in Bangor, 24% of the US arsenal and more than China, France, Israel, India, North Korea and Pakistan combined. All told, the 14 Tridents stationed in Washington and Georgia carry the explosive power of over 750 billion pounds of TNT, their D5 missiles allowing for a US nuclear strike anywhere on the planet within 15 minutes.

The five cut through three security fences, carrying a banner, trailing blood, scattering sunflower seeds, and symbolically hammering the roads upon which the weapons are transported. They were stopped after they cut through the fence to Strategic Weapons Facility-Pacific and before their destination, the weapons storage bunkers. They were cited for trespassing and destruction of government property, given a ban and bar letter and released.

## Frida Berrigan

Coming **December 2** at **7:15 pm** to the **NARO theater** in Norfolk, activist and researcher Frida Berrigan of the New America Foundation's Arms and Security Initiative will speak about the urgent need for US leadership to achieve a nuclear free future. Daughter of noted anti-war activists Philip Berrigan and Liz McAlister, Frida blends policy analysis with on-the-street activism.

The event will include a screening of **Stop the Bombs**, which documents the continuing work at the Oak Ridge, TN, nuclear weapons complex and the local efforts to close it down.

While President Obama declares his commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons, the new nuclear weapons reduction agreement with Russia only commits the U.S. to reducing our omnicidal stockpile to 1,500 to 1,675 over the next 7 years, not much different from the Bush-era agreement. The Administration continues to request millions of dollars to design a new nuclear bomb plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and recently allocated \$91 million to construct all three stages of rocket motors for the Trident D5 missiles, upgrading the nuclear delivery system.

For more information on both actions see [jonahouse.org](http://jonahouse.org).