



# at the door

the quarterly newsletter of St. Francis Catholic Worker House – Chicago, IL

A few weeks ago Thom Clark & Paul Schultz, members of the Sunshower community that owned 4652 N Kenmore Ave before being "sold" to the Catholic Worker, wrote us a letter to say hello and shared a copy of one of their newsletters, circa 1973. Below are a few excerpts that still felt relevant to our style and the world at large, as well as a poem.

DID YOU KNOW THAT:

In the world of agricultural planners, the American farm by 1985 will be transformed into ten-mile long fields, leveled by nuclear explosions, planted by computer programs, and harvested by plants genetically altered to yield their crops onto conveyor belts. The family farmer and the farmworker (and certainly Sunshower type farms) do not fit into the agribusiness configuration. This type of farming is big business requiring massive infusions of capital, concentrated marketing, and up-to-the-minute technology.

1985 is not too far away in some parts of the country. In California, Texas, Arizona, Florida, and to a lesser degree other parts of the nation, vertically integrated corporate agriculture is a fact. Such industrial giants as Boeing, Dow Chemical, Tenneco, Coca Cola, and Standard Oil exercise considerable corporate control of the marketplace. Green Giant claims 25 percent of all U.S. canned corn and peas; Palston-Purina sells 14% of all livestock feed, 95% of the broilers, 75% of processed vegetables, 70% of citrus, 55% of turkeys, 40% of potatoes, 33% of fresh vegetables are grown under vertically integrated contracts to major U.S. corporations.

...Agribusiness, with its technological gadgetry, is presumed more efficient, yet even the government's own studies show that family farms ranging from 50 to 100 acres, depending on crop and location, are every bit as efficient as larger-sized farms.

-the above excerpt is taken (except for parenthetical part) from the pamphlet "THE CONDITION OF FARMWORKERS AND SMALL FARMERS" of the National Sharecroppers Fund. We reprint it for your information - just so we all know what we're up against as we try to put the CULTURE back into AGRICULTURE.

One thing we wanted to be sure to share herein was word of a new sense of clarity and direction which has been arising out of our recent farm meetings. We've been feeling a definite sense of working together and the new life that comes from that, so we make a New Year's Toast to that new sense.

BEING, or trying to be an Urban/Rural Experiment in Alternative Lifestyles actually IS as complicated as it sounds. To put

HARVEST MOON  
 this is the moon  
 of the wild rice  
 a cold moon  
 above the big woods  
 like an eye  
 filled with fire  
 and smoke

JOHNNY BRAUNSKI

in conclusion, obviously we couldn't say it all in one little try like this, so we do hope to be a bit more regular about this and other types of communication. So look for another such a piece of writing in about 3 or 4 months from now.

# Letter at the door

Dear friends,

In this season of wars, a worldwide refugee crisis and the climate thrown into chaos, when the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moves up its doomsday clock to 90 seconds before midnight, the Nevada Desert Experience invites you to join us in an event of hope and resistance in the desert.

Over Holy Week, March 23-29 2024, as for most of the past 40 years, NDE will host The Sacred Peace Walk, an interfaith journey of approximately 60 miles from Las Vegas to the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS, formerly the Nevada Test Site) through the Mojave in Nevada, on the beautiful traditional lands of the indigenous Western Shoshone and Paiute peoples.

The NNSS, established on land stolen from the Western Shoshone nation, was the primary testing ground of American nuclear devices from 1951 to 1992; 928 announced nuclear explosions occurred there, making it the most bombed place on earth.

Since then, it has continued to be the site of "subcritical" nuclear tests and other research for new nuclear bombs and for the "life-extension" of old ones. Even as we walk to the NNSS in March, it is expected that parts for the new "Scorpius" linear induction accelerator will arrive there before we do. This machine, the length of a football field and 1,000 feet below the ground when completed in four years, would conduct experiments with high-energy bursts of X-rays and plutonium. Government scientists call these experiments "tickling the dragon's tail" and insist that they are necessary to ensure that the aging stockpile of nuclear weapons will be "good to go" if the decision is made to use them and exterminate most life on the planet.

Creech Air Force Base, about halfway from Las Vegas to the test site, is the center of drone warfare and assassination for the US military and the CIA. NDE began protesting there in 2009 and since then war from a distance by remote control has grown to be a staple of US policy, and instrument of terror that exacts a horrific toll on civilians abroad and moral injury on troops at home. The walk will end at the NNSS with a "Nuclear Stations of the Cross" procession from the historic Peace Camp to the gates.

With permission of the Western Shoshone National Council, some will enter the test site,

risking arrest. After more than 30 years of not prosecuting activists arrested at the NNSS, local authorities have recently begun charging those who enter the site with trespass.'

March is a beautiful time to camp in the desert along the way and there may be limited indoor accommodations. Walkers are asked to bring their camping gear, but some equipment is available to borrow. Support vehicles will follow along the route to provide water, snacks, first aid supplies and porta-potties. All meals will be provided. You are free to walk the portion of each day's route that is comfortable for you. Volunteers are needed each day to support the walk by providing/serving meals, driving support vehicles, donating snacks and supplies, and other tasks.

The suggested registration fee for the SPW is \$125 general, and \$75 for veterans, seniors and students for \$20 per day.

For more information, to register or make a donation, see <http://nevadadesertexperience.org/spw> or call me at 773-853-1886.

Please join us to resist nuclear weapons and endless war, stand up for indigenous rights and create a peaceful, sustainable future. Together we can transform fears into compassion and empathy into action during NDE's annual Sacred Peace Walk!

*Brian Terrell*





# House News

By Sam Russo

It has been an eventful and impressively productive fall this year at Francis House Catholic Worker. Our headline-making update is that, through the generosity of our supporters, the hands of the workers at Avondale Roofing, and by the grace of God, we have a new roof! A project the community has been talking about for (literally) two years has finally come to fruition.

Work on the roof started on Monday October 2nd and wrapped up a week later. The crew used 40-foot ladders to scale the walls of our lovely “single family home.” They took off the old, curling shingles and put on new ones. They replaced the fascia and soffits, whose holes had become, in true St. Francis fashion, nesting grounds for birds (though not great for the house). The crew replaced both skylights in the 3rd floor dorm and installed new ones, both of which open now. This latest addition should create a cross-breeze in the summer, which will make life cooler and more comfortable for our guests living on the 3rd floor.

Replacing the roof and the boiler (which was featured in our Summer 2023 newsletter and is now up and running!) were satisfying an important tasks for the community to complete. Both projects date back to the decision in Fall 2021 to bring in an expert to complete a full inspection of the house. Two years later the two biggest projects advised by our home inspector, Reese Hamilton, have been realized. We could not have done these things without his help. Thanks again, Reese!

Prior to the cold setting in, we had a benefit on October 15th. We loved seeing so many friends of the house and workers from several generations of the community. We feasted on several different types of pasta and enjoyed the warmth of each other’s company. Please stay tuned for our next benefit, which will be on April 15th, 2024.

This fall, Francis House welcomed its second group of Jesuit scholastics from Loyola who are in Chicago for their “First Studies.” As a part of their studies, scholastics choose a ministry to attend weekly throughout the year. Cyrus Habib and Pablo Velasquez are back for their second year, while Brennan Dour and Nick Colaella started coming in September. Nick, who was an ordained priest before joining the Jesuits, kindly celebrated Mass on October 30th before Monday night dinner. We look forward to the next Mass at the house on December 11th at 5:30pm.

Community members Daniel Delapava and Dan Justman, as well as Dani Bodette, Justin Bartkus, and Sam Russo went out on 11/8 to celebrate Dorothy Day’s \*\*126th\*\* birthday. We went for food and drinks, and to toast the Catholic Worker’s beloved co-founder.

It’s important to take time to celebrate amidst the hard work at a place like Francis House -- especially over the last year. The community has witnessed a marked increase in the number of people coming by the house during our open hours. Most of our visitors are living in tents along DuSable Lake Shore Drive and many come by the house each day we’re open. Last winter, the house functioned as a soup kitchen, warming center, phone charging station, and rallying point. Throughout the Spring, Summer, and Fall, we’ve expanded access to showers and use of our wifi (yes, the house has wifi!). Monday night dinner regularly draws 40 people and fills up the first floor and front porch. But don’t worry, when you come by we’ll make space for you!



Photos, from left to right: The Secular Franciscans visited the house for a cook-out on 10/8. Mark Paye performing during our benefit on 10/15. Celebrating Dorothy’s 126th!

# Sharing a Room With Dear Minnie

by Denise Plunkett (1979-1983)

I wish I could remember where I first met Minnie, possibly at the Soup Kitchen, or she might have come over to sit on the porch at the CW, or in the house to spend time during the day. She was very sweet, friendly, and soft spoken. Minnie came to the CW wearing a black fur coat over layers of clothes, maybe a blouse, vest, sweater and jacket under the coat, and a skirt or two, she also wore two knit caps, one pulled down on top of the other.

We had an abundance of clean clothes of every size, donations of clothes were left on our porch regularly. We pulled out some things we thought Minnie might like, but she didn't want any of them. We let her know she was welcome to look through the clothes and take anything she would like, but she didn't want anything.

The woman I had been sharing a room with left and Minnie would be sharing the room I was in. I took Minnie upstairs to show her where her bedroom and bed were. Later that night as people began going to bed, there were always those who found it hard to go to sleep and they might be up for hours. Sometime after 11 PM I told Minnie I was going upstairs to go to bed because I had to be at the Wilson "L" at 7 AM in order to get to work by 8. Minnie said she wasn't tired and would go up to bed a little later.

Sometime after falling asleep, I heard the door creaking as it was opened, Minnie came in quietly. I didn't say anything because I knew if a conversation started it could go on into the night. Minnie pulled the covers back, took her shoes off, and climbed into bed, leaving her clothes on, including the fur coat and caps. It was quiet for a few minutes, then she adjusted the pillow and quilts and began praying. . . this is a very close approximation, but the prayer went on for about 10 - 15 minutes.

"God, I feel just like a queen. I'm like a queen in a castle, I am in my castle, I am in a bed. It is my bed. I can't remember how long it has been since I slept in a bed. I don't remember God, when was last the last time I had a bed? How long has it been, how long has it been God? It has been so long I can't remember. Thank you for giving me a bed God, I feel like a princess, thank you God, thank you for everything. God, you found this bed for me, you found a bed for me. I love you God, Thank you so much God."

I was almost in tears that night. What a gift and privilege to have shared the room with Minnie. Minnie wore those same clothes day and night, year in and year out, never taking the coat off until about 2 years later -- that will have to be Minnie, Part II.



*In the picture -- Left to right: Walter, Clara (she lived in an SRO and was at the house nearly every day), I don't remember the name of the young man, he came to help us for a few months, Minnie is on the right. The dog is Clancy, a Wheaten Terrier. I didn't use good judgment in bringing him home from the Anti Cruelty Society one day. Wheatens need a lot of exercise and we didn't have a fenced in yard. Jake and Love, loved Clancy and walked him multiple times a day on a leash, poor dog couldn't run free and would bark when tied outside.*

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## Our Historical Memory

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We continue to prepare for our 50th Anniversary – to be celebrated with a nine-day-long festival from September 28th to October 6th, 2024 – by collecting memories of St. Francis CW. If the community has a special place in your heart and you'd like to share your stories, please email us at [sfh.chicagocw@gmail.com](mailto:sfh.chicagocw@gmail.com). Thank you to everyone who has shared their memories with us so far, we are honored.





NEVADA DESERT EXPERIENCE

## Sacred Peace Walk

March 23-29, 2024

For more info call:  
Brian Terrell 773-853-1886.

### **Realities are more important than ideas**

“There also exists a constant tension between ideas and realities. Realities simply are, whereas ideas are worked out. There has to be continuous dialogue between the two, lest ideas become detached from realities. It is dangerous to dwell in the realm of words alone, of images and rhetoric. So a third principle comes into play: realities are greater than ideas. This calls for rejecting the various means of masking reality: angelic forms of purity, dictatorships of relativism, empty rhetoric, objectives more ideal than real, brands of ahistorical fundamentalism, ethical systems bereft of kindness, intellectual discourse bereft of wisdom.”

Pope Francis  
*Evangelii Gaudium, 231*

“My hypothesis has nothing in common, however, with that cheap disposition which revels always in prophesying collapse or destruction. It has nothing in common with that desire which would surrender the valid achievements of modern man. Nor is my hypothesis linked with a longing for a romantically envisioned Middle Ages or with an advance into a glorified utopia of the future.”

Romano Guardini  
*The end of the modern world, pp 50-51*

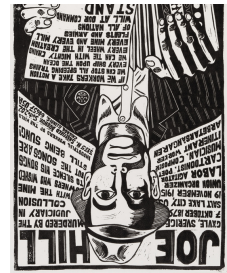
## An anonymous poem that finally answers the question, what is the Catholic Worker?

THE CATHOLIC WORKER: EXPLAINED AT LAST!

IF YOU KNOW YOUR GREEK MYTHS  
YOU KNOW THEY HAD A LIKING  
FOR INVENTIVE IRONIC PUNISHMENTS.  
PROMETHEUS STOLE FIRE FROM THE GODS  
AND WAS CHAINED TO A ROCK  
AND EAGLES ATE HIS LIVER EVERY NIGHT,  
CASSANDRA COULD FORETELL THE FUTURE  
BUT NO ONE WOULD BELIEVE HER PROPHECIES.  
NARCISSUS LOVED HIS OWN BEAUTY TOO MUCH  
AND WAS TURNED INTO A FLOWER  
FOREVER GAZING AT ITS REFLECTION.  
SISYPHUS... I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT HE DID  
TO OFFEND THE GODS, BUT HE HAD TO PUSH  
A BIG ROCK UPHILL, ONLY TO HAVE IT  
ROLL TO THE BOTTOM AGAIN AND AGAIN.  
YES, THOSE GREEKS HAD A FLAIR FOR IRONY  
AND A LIVELY SADISTIC IMAGINATION.  
WHICH BRINGS US TO THE CATHOLIC WORKER:  
HERE I AM TRAPPED WITH AN ASSORTMENT  
OF COLUSSALLY ANNOYING PEOPLE  
EACH OF WHOM POSSESSES SOME QUALITY  
THAT INESCAPABLY REMINDS ME  
OF MY VERY OWN YOUNGER SELF.  
NICE WORK, GREEK GODS!  
WHO KNEW YOU WERE STILL IN CHARGE?



Memorial for people killed in Gaza, on Leland & Broadway, Uptown Chicago. Let's pray for Peace and a ceasefire!



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## Thank Yous

Claire Sexton, Thom Clark, Paul Schultz, Kristine Sonnleitner, Bill O'Brien, Denise Punket, Brian Terrell, Theodore Kayser, Julia Occhiogrosso, Jim Revord, John & Anita Revord, Ann Suellentrop, Jackie Simon, Basil A Tiritilli, Laurette Hasbrook, Dani and Barb Bodette, Justin Bartkus, Stephanie Held, Sam Russo, Marieluise Kailing, Mark Lindebland, Patrick McCabe & the Alexian Brothers, James Murphy and Renée Roden, Ray Graham, Thomas Gelnnon, Mustafa Maboud, Anthony Sphalla, Sister Bernadine Karge, New Life Community Church in Roger's Park & Nitin Shelke, Peggy and Mark Justman.

## House Needs

- Prayers
- USPS Stamps
- Washing machine
- Vacuum cleaner
- Rice cooker
- Blender

Support the daily operations of our community by mailing a check payable to "St. Francis Catholic Worker", donating on our website [francishousechicago.org](http://francishousechicago.org) or scan this QR code with a smartphone camera to donate online.



## What St. Francis Desired

*By Peter Maurin*

*What Saint Francis desired according to Johannes Jorgensen, a Danish convert living in Assisi:*

1. Saint Francis desired that men should give up superfluous possessions.
2. Saint Francis desired that men should work with their hands.
3. Saint Francis desired that men should offer their services as a gift.
4. Saint Francis desired that men should ask other people for help when work failed them.
5. Saint Francis desired that men should live as free as birds.
6. Saint Francis desired that men should go through life giving thanks to God for His gifts.