



at the door

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

Friends sent help when we needed it most

by Denise Plunkett (1979-1983)

Denis Murphy, FSC (RIP), and Paul Ackerman, FSC, were both Christian Brothers and friends of the Catholic Worker. One summer they proposed the idea of moving into the attic of the Worker and helping us during their vacation. Their help and friendship was a blessing to all of us.

Several churches in Uptown served food to the poor on different days of the week. St. Thomas of Canterbury had the Soup Kitchen on Tuesday and Friday (it is still going on 45 years later!) Uptown Baptist served a meal on Wednesday, and The People's Church on Lawrence served another day or two a week. If I remember correctly, the Salvation Army, on Broadway in the 1970's -1980's served every day of the week. The homeless were well aware of where to go for a meal each day.

Shock hit the community when the word was out that the Salvation Army would no longer be serving any meals. People in huge numbers began lining up at the front door of the Catholic Worker and asking for a meal.

The first night it happened, people hurried through their dinner to clear the table or tables, wash the dishes, and reset the tables for the people waiting to come into Francis House. Mr. Seven was scrambling to find more food to continue cooking. Everybody in the house was helping dry dishes and reset the table, over and over. Within two or three days, the line up the steps of St. Francis House extended down the street, beyond the end of the block, almost to Wilson Avenue. There were 100 or more lined up night after night. Rather than sending someone from the line in when another left, we decided to let groups of 14 enter and eat, and when they were finished the dishes would be washed and reset.

Anna was very small but with a very confident, no-nonsense attitude. She stationed herself at the front door and when a group at the table finished eating, she would wait until the table was cleaned, the dishes washed and reset and then Anna would count the next group of 14 people in. This situation was very taxing for everybody, especially Mr. Seven. I don't remember how long we were feeding at least 100 people on several nights a week. Each night that the group of 100+ came, it would mean that many people were coming up the stairs and onto the porch and waiting. The weight on the stairs and porch would have been at least two hours without let-up. It might have gone on for a month. I can't remember how it was resolved, I don't know if another agency began providing food.

When these groups of 100+ were done coming to the house, we noticed the front steps were beginning to pull away from the house. One day, not long after we had been serving 100+ a few times a week, I was coming home from work and while walking down Kenmore I noticed two or three ladders around the house. As I got closer I saw about five men in the yard. Bro. Denis Murphy, FSC, and Bro. Paul Ackerman, FSC had both been teaching in Christian Brothers Schools for years. They asked a group of their former students, all of them working as carpenters, to take a look at the Catholic Worker. None of us had any idea they were coming. The men worked together to do whatever was necessary to brace up and reattach the front porch to the house. They also rebuilt the front steps, secured them to the front porch, and painted them.

Every day at the Catholic Worker, all of us would be aware of the kindness and generosity of so many people making the House possible. The Story of the Loaves and Fishes was witnessed every day, and we were thankful.

House News

By Dan Justman

Is it too late to say Happy New Year? Well, whatever—happy New Year! Much like this abnormal winter itself, it has been a busy, unpredictable season full of changes, trials, subtractions, additions, and ultimately joy here at St Francis House.

We've been fortunate to be visited by many long-time friends during this season. In November, our good friend from Colombia, Andres Felipe, visited and shared with us stories of his robotics work at Purdue University where he is currently pursuing a Masters Degree. In December, long-time friend of the House, Rosalie Riegle, came for dinner, as well as two friends from the Denver Catholic Worker community, Sam and Allison Tomasso.

We've also been lucky to make new friends this season. A recent and regular addition has been that of Patrick McCabe, an Alexian Brother serving in Elk Grove Village. Brother Patrick has been coming by every week, spending time with our visitors and guests, bringing his own friends like Father Erwin from his Alexian Community, and helping prepare Monday night dinners, including on Christmas Day. His assistance and presence has been invaluable these past months.

We've also welcomed two new guests into our house during this winter, Bella and Angel, who have been wonderful to have around as well.

As the cold set in, the live-in workers winterized the house in both practical and aesthetic ways, including hanging plastic on many of our windows and putting up Christmas lights...which, yeah, are still up, but they look great around guest Shada'e's homemade Valentine's and now St. Patrick's decor.

Meanwhile, old friends continue to help out as well. Larry O'Toole was a great help touching up the famous porch, as well as cement laying, and installing a much-needed handrail on the exterior basement stairs. We also were beyond fortunate to

receive a new washer from Doug and Marie Liu this past season.

We also implemented a monthly series of roundtables and recent topics have ranged from an open poetry night to the genocide in Palestine. Check our schedule elsewhere in the newsletter to see upcoming topics.

Finally, it is with heavy hearts that we inform you of the passing of long-time house guest Tommy Hodges in December. Tommy was about as good-hearted of a man as you could ask for; he was warm, generous, and so much fun to be around. He loved karaoke and several of us here were lucky



Tommy Hodges

enough to see him on stage. He was a singular presence. There is no doubt that he will be missed for a long time. There was nobody quite like Tommy.

As we look forward to the coming year, we'd be remiss if we didn't mention our 50th anniversary this fall again (we're kind of excited about it). Stay tuned for details; we would love to see you there!

Thanks for keeping up with us—St. Francis House could not have made it 50 years without you.

50 Years: Save The Date(s)!!



Friends, we are beyond thrilled to announce our upcoming 50th anniversary celebration this fall!

Taking place from 9/27 to 10/6, we are planning daily local events and activities around the City that will culminate at St Gregory the Great's grounds in nearby Andersonville, where we'll be able to host a **national/international Catholic Worker Gathering the weekend of October 4th through the 6th!**

Mark your calendars and stay tuned for further details-- we would love to see you all there!

Monthly Roundtables Are Back At St. Francis Catholic Worker House

Please consider joining us for one of our upcoming roundtables! Doors open at 6pm with refreshments, and discussion begins at 7pm.

April 18th: Workers will report back from the Midwest Faith and Resistance Retreat and anti-nuclear direct action in Kansas City, MO

May 16th: Anti-gentrification with Shannon Fauwkes from the 21st Street Co-op, Milwaukee WI

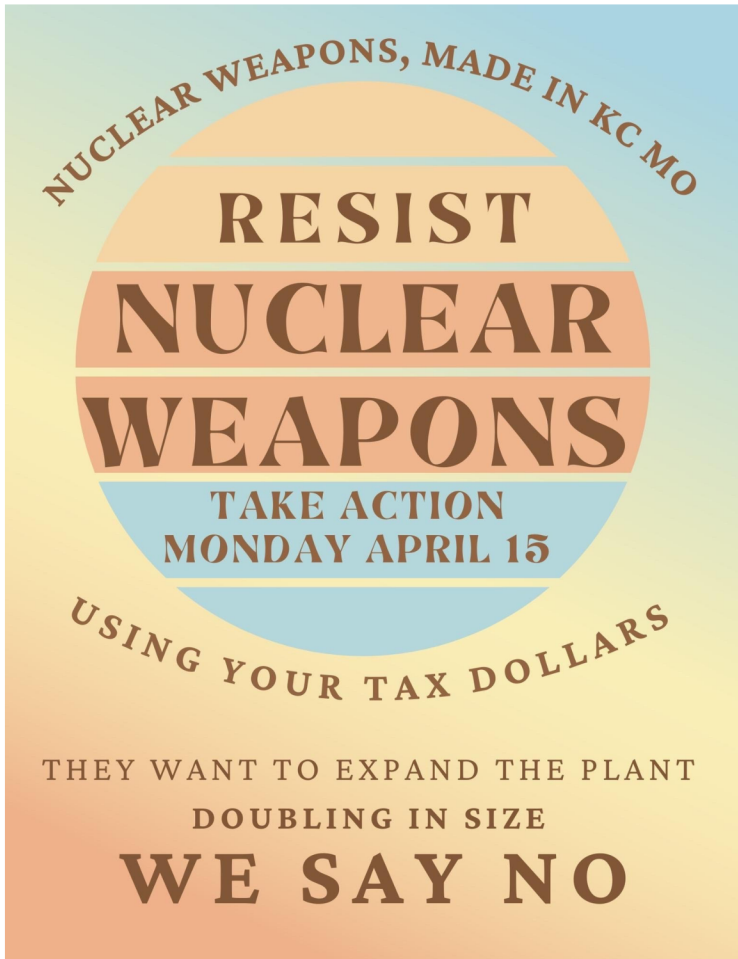
June 20th: Contemplative Prayer and Social Justice, with Lincoln Rice from Casa María CW

July 18th: Henry David Thoreau, Civil Disobedience, and the Catholic Worker

August 22nd: The Catholic Worker—Staying Relevant With Shifting Forms Of Digital Media, with Lydia Wong from Emmaus CW



We need Round-Table Discussions to keep trained minds from being academic. We need Round-Table Discussions to keep untrained minds from being superficial. ~ Peter Maurin



Midwest Catholic Worker Faith & Resistance Retreat

Kansas City, MO
April 12-15, 2024

With some 7,000 employees, the Kansas City National Security Campus produces more than 80% of the U.S. nuclear weapons' non-nuclear components. This spring, Catholic Workers will gather for a weekend of education, prayer, reflection, fellowship, and training followed by nonviolent direct action on Monday, April 15.

For more information contact Ann Suellentrop at 913-271-7925 or annsuellen@gmail.com. If you can't make it, join us at a roundtable about it on April 18th, 6pm here at Francis House for a report back.

Bills, Bills, Bills!!

In recent editions of At The Door, we've been proud to share with you that our whole operation only cost about \$2,000 per month. To give you a better idea of how that cost breaks down, here are a few examples of our monthly bills. Please consider becoming a monthly donor (by using the QR code) to help us cover some of these recurring costs.



\$25.00

Shower supplies for Monday and Saturday visitors



\$30.00

House compost subscription



\$50.00

House internet for visitors and guests



\$60.00

Ventra pass for house guests



\$100.00

One Monday night dinner per month



\$150.00

Monthly water bill



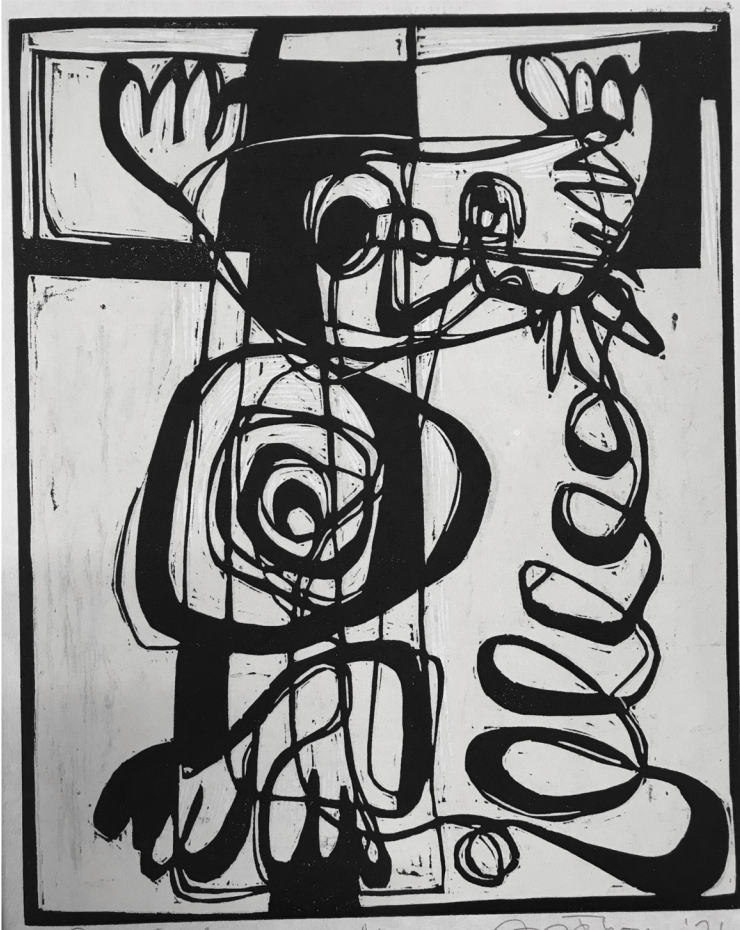
\$200.00

Monthly electric bill



\$500.00

Monthly gas bill



"Crux", woodcut print by Gary Thomas

"How can a man be satisfied to entertain an opinion merely, and enjoy it? . . . Action from principle,—the perception and the performance of right,—changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary, and does not consist wholly with any thing which was. It not only divides states and churches, it divides families; aye, it divides the individual, separating the diabolical in him from the divine."

~ Henry David Thoreau, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* (1849).

"Will it really be everyone who can be reconciled? No theology or prophecy can answer this question. But love hopes for everything (1 Cor 13:7). I cannot do otherwise than hope for the reconciliation of all men in Christ. Such unlimited hope is not only permitted to Christians, it is commanded."

~ Hermann-Joseph Lauter, *Pastoralblatt* (1982), 101.

THE CASE FOR UTOPIA

by Peter Maurin

*The world would be better off
if people tried to become better.*

*And people would become better
if they stopped trying
to become better off.*

*For when everybody tries
to become better off,
nobody is better off.*

*But when everybody tries to become better,
everybody is better off.*

*Everybody would be rich
if nobody tried
to become richer.*

*And nobody would be poor
if everybody tried
to be the poorest.*

*And everybody would be
what he ought to be
if everybody tried to be
what he wants
the other fellow to be.*

"A Christian has to conduct philosophical inquiry on account of his faith. Believing in the absolute love of God for the world, he is obliged to understand Being in its ontological difference as pointing to love, and to live in accordance with this indication... The Christian remains the guardian of that metaphysical wonderment which is the point of origin for philosophy." ~ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of God*, Vol 5, 646-7.

"Esse significat aliquid completum et simplex, sed non subsistens." ~ Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia*, 1.1.



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Thank You

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In Loving Memory of James E. Eder

Born

December 21, 1940

At Rest

February 6, 2023

House Needs

- Prayers
- USPS Stamps
- Electric Kettle
- 50-100 cup Coffee Percolator
- Used Bicycles,