

MANNA *in the wilderness*

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The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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Instruments for a True and Lasting Peace

by Julia Occhiogrosso

Like many, since the September 11th attacks I have been occupied with confusing feelings, thoughts and reactions. While many see me as a strong person living my life out of cogent principles, I am secretly a coward. My biggest weakness is my fear of conflict. So much of what I choose to do with my life has some underlying interest in avoiding conflict. And, while I recognize that conflict is a part of life and many times is the catalyst for creative positive change, my body still wants to hide when conflict in any form emerges.

September 11th yielded and brought into focus many types of conflicts. There is the obvious overt potential for escalating armed conflict. Verbal conflict in street protests, on news radio and talk shows highlight the societal conflicts. I have been aware of my interior conflicts brought on by statements like: "If you are not for us, you are against us!" a statement that assumes that if I do not endorse a military solution as a way to gain justice, that I do not care about my country or those victims who suffered or the survivors who carry enormous grief. This type of statement creates great conflict for those who believe that finding our way through to

resolutions is not an either/or proposition. I have felt alienated from my surroundings because I am not inclined to hang a flag in my window. I am conscious of the reluctance I feel in revealing to family and friends my seemingly minority perspective - opposing acts of retaliation or revenge. Even as I write this, I am hesitant, caught in the tension of not wanting to move too quickly into rhetoric that conveys judgment or self-righteousness, but desiring to speak from experience and knowledge of the dynamics of violence and the hope filled potential of active non-violence.

I feel deeply moved by the heroic stories of faith and courage that surfaced in the days following the attacks. These acts of courage humbled me and put me in a mood of introspection. While they may not have been knowing practitioners of active nonviolence, the stories of rescue and selfless love in response to this tragic event made its mark on the human soul and will live into eternity as a sign of ways in which we are capable of "conquering evil with good." It is these positive qualities of compassion, selflessness, dedication and courage that must be harnessed as instruments for a true and lasting peace.

In my years of work with Pace e Bene* I have been steeped in the study of the spirituality and practice of active nonviolence as an effective viable tool for addressing conflict at all levels. It is my understanding of the power of active nonviolence that has brought healing and hope to me in regard to facing conflict and violence in all its forms. In this moment I feel totally confident in advocating that we confront injustice and violence with the principles of active nonviolence. The principles of active nonviolence are universal. They are found at the roots of many faith traditions. For Christians, strong invitations can be found throughout scripture. The nonviolent mission of the Catholic Worker has been inspired by the Sermon on the Mount and the gospel call to "love your enemies," "turn the other cheek" and "walk the extra mile." I have had twenty years of experimenting with these teachings when addressing conflict and violence first hand on our soup lines and hospitality houses. These teachings speak to an important nonviolent strategy; which is to do the unexpected (with love) in the hopes to create a moral dilemma or challenge which makes a vio-
(continued on next page)

THE WORKS OF MERCY
FEED THE HUNGRY.
CLOTHE THE NAKED.
GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY.
VISIT THE IMPRISONED.
CARE FOR THE SICK.
BURY THE DEAD



THE WORKS OF WAR
DESTROY CROPS
AND LAND. SEIZE
FOOD SUPPLIES.
DESTROY HOMES
SCATTER FAMILIES
CONTAMINATE
WATER. IMPRISON
DISSETERS. INFLECT
WOUNDS. BURNS.
KILL THE LIVING

Las Vegas Catholic Worker Celebrates 15 Years!

Thank you to all who made our 15th anniversary events so special.

Following is a letter written by Jeff Dietrich of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker and read at our 15th anniversary.

by Jeff Dietrich

It is the fifteenth anniversary of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker but it is also the fifteenth anniversary of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker sister house network. The network had its beginning when a naive Julia Occhiogrosso proclaimed that the first sister house should be located in Las Vegas, and I said, "No way, Jose, it's too hot; it's too desolate; and its way too far away from L.A." My concerns about this youthful neophyte from Brooklyn, who couldn't even drive; far from home

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lent option less viable for the opponent.

Active nonviolence is a process that seeks to resolve conflict in a humane and effective way. Following are some elements of active nonviolence. Active nonviolence is a creative, powerful and effective process for addressing and resolving conflict. Active nonviolence seeks to break the spiral of violence and to create options for a more human alternative. Active nonviolence is an act of faith in the Nonviolent God; it is a powerful means of experiencing this God. Active nonviolence holds that human beings are meant to love and be loved. For active nonviolence, reality is one. The nonviolence practitioner therefore yearns to transform all that separates human beings from themselves, from one another and from the earth. Active nonviolence seeks the truth: the opponent's truth as well as one's own. Active nonviolence acknowledges the woundedness, the violence and the sacredness of ourselves and others. Active nonviolence is a process of repentance and transformation. Active nonviolence is a spiritual journey from fear, despair and greed to compassion, balance and wholeness. (These elements of active nonviolence are taken from the book *From*

alone in desert desolation were amply born out on her first plaintive phone call back to the mother house. "Hi, this is Julia. I'm here all alone," she sniffed, "and I don't have any food to eat." Now Julia was used to the big L.A. Catholic Worker soup kitchen operation where food just seems to magically appear. Thus I began reality lesson #1. "Julia," I said, "You know that big pile of money that we gave you before you left? You can take some of it down to the store and exchange it for food." Well, ever since then, the food began to just magically appear at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker.

So thank you Julia and thank you, Gary, for fifteen years of manna in the desert; for fifteen years of protecting the innocents and rebuking the Herods. Thank you for fifteen years of making a way in the wilderness and singing the Lord's song in this desert Babylon. Thank you for fifteen years of gathering disciples and leading by serving. Thank you for fifteen years of proclaiming the words of the prophet: *All you who are thirsty, come to the water. You who have no money, come receive grain and eat. Come without paying and without cost. Drink wine and milk. Why spend your money for that which is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy.* And, finally, thank you for not listening to me when I said, "No way, Jose."

**PRAY
FOR
PEACE
IN OUR
WORLD!**

(FOR
TAB)

**THANK
YOU
FOR
YOUR
SUPPORT!**

Violence to Wholeness.)

The attacks on September 11th have yielded feelings of fear and vulnerability in our country. And we as a nation have an opportunity to face the truth of our vulnerability and powerlessness with love and courage. Rather than being tempted once again to depend on the illusory power and security found in violence and weapons of mass destruction, let us be receptive in this moment to the hope-filled

Celebrate the Catholic Worker!

The following song was written and performed by Peter Ediger at our 15th anniversary celebration.

(tune: Joyful, Joyful by Beethoven)

Celebrate the Catholic Worker
In Las Vegas fifteen years
Celebrate the trials and triumphs
Celebrate the joys and tears.
Half a million cups of coffee
Half a million bowls of soup
Dorothy Day smiles down from heaven
Loves her loyal Vegas troop!

Offspring of the L.A. Worker
Julia came in eighty-six
Gary joined her some years later
All the broken things to fix
Volunteers from urb and suburb
Came to pray, prepare and serve
Half a million cups of coffee
Half a million bowls of soup.

Hospitality with adults
Left some children needs unmet
Then came brothers Nick and Cody
Full of energy, you bet!
Half a million brand new questions
Half a million brand new joys
Dorothy Day smiles down from heaven
Loves her Catholic Worker boys!

-repeat first stanza

possibilities of putting our faith in the power of God's love to enter human history and transform our hearts and the heart of the world.

**Pace e Bene is a Franciscan Nonviolence Center in Las Vegas. For info: (702) 648-2281, 1420 W. Bartlett Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89106. The name comes from a greeting used by St. Francis meaning "peace and well being."*

PLEASE JOIN US:

Wednesday-Saturday, 6:00 a.m.:

Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.

Wednesday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m.:

Breakfast meal served at St. James Church parking lot (G & McWilliams St.) to the poor and homeless.

Tuesday, 5:30 p.m.:

Mass or Liturgy, potluck following. Call for location.

Seven Days a Week:

Hospitality (IHN) to 3 to 5 homeless families, call 638-8806 to volunteer.

Last Saturday each month; 8:30 a.m.:

Deliver food to homes in need, gather for reflection & prayer, call for info.

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