

# MANNA *in the wilderness*

June 2004

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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## STAINS ON THE ALTAR OF SACRIFICE

by Stevi Carroll

My country is at war. Despite what the sign behind President Bush said on May 1, 2003 on the deck of the USS Lincoln. The mission is not accomplished, and Americans and Iraqis continue to be maimed and to die. War itself creates shock and awe. Even those people who are not bombed or shot are violated because their humanity, their ability to see other human beings as human beings rather than objects of contempt and fear is dimmed within them, and for their own self protection, they must act out the fight or flight response that lives in our ancestral selves.

A friend and I went to a slide show and talk about Ethiopia. One of the tribes of people the woman talked about teaches killing. In order for a man to be considered a grown adult, he must kill another man, a stranger to his group, or a wild animal. He cannot be accepted into the community as a man ready to marry and assume adult responsibilities until he has done this.

Now to me at the beginning of the 21st century in the USA, that sounds barbaric and really pretty ridiculous, but to these Ethiopians, it is serious. It is a little like someone getting his job training certificate or college degree. What interests me is that this fellow who must kill to be a grown man is somehow related to me in a very broad sense. Additionally, his practices are probably part of some ancient practice of my heritage, too?

In Zion National Park in Southern Utah, one of the peaks is named The Altar of Sacrifice. At the top, the Navaho sandstone is white with streaks of red flowing down the sides. Biblically, when God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac and then substitutes the ram, human sacrifice ends for the Israelites. On public television, I learned that for Moslems the same story occurs but with Ismael as the son. Abraham, Isaac and Ismael are Middle Eastern people so how related are they to me with my mix of Irish, English, Swiss, Italian, and Manx with a little drop of Javanese?

I know from history that Christianity, which comes from Judaism, is in my European background since the Church ruled Europe for centuries. The Church employed a notion we recently have heard again: you are with me or against me. And in due course, the

Church in the name of Christ —the Prince of Peace— tortured and slaughtered thousands of people.

What makes this so different from our Ethiopian fellow who must kill to be considered a man? Oftentimes military service is seen as that transition into manhood and now with women serving, simple adulthood.



THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM  
(1978) BY FRITZ EICHENBERG

Four recent veterans of the Iraq war are accused of killing another Iraq war vet. The news photos of them could have been mug shots of any "gangsta" thugs rambling our inner city streets — shaved heads, hard 'mad dog' looks. Did they, or at least the one who actually stabbed the fellow, come to believe they needed the same up close and personal killing as our Ethiopian fellow to be "men"? Were they just drugged up on liquor, out of their minds and since they had experienced the lifting of the murder taboo, where one's own survival depends on killing, reacted with murder as an instinct? The reward of "manhood" for killing — animals or humans— seems to run deep in human beings. Look at the number of people who hunt and kill without needing to feed themselves or their families. Why do people decorate their homes with the heads and complete bodies of dead animals? They are called trophies, and they attest to the person's ability to kill. Does this make them more "grown" than the rest of us who don't kill animals and display them?

Anyway, my country is at war. Hundreds of men and women are exposed to the kill or be killed reality of life. They will serve and then return to a well-documented violent society. How will those survival impulses manifest themselves in their non-combatant or civilian lives? What will their behavior cost us as an entire society? Many of their children may also be convinced that the way to reach adulthood is to be trained to kill on command. Some of these people may end up like the four accused of murdering their compatriot and incur court costs as well as prison costs with the ripple effect these and their incarceration have on families. Some may come back and like a W.W.II veteran near to my heart, be withdrawn and chose lives that will allow minimal intimate contact with others as they heal or heal over their invisible wounds. I know some people say that returnees from war assimilate and everything is fine with them. I hope and wish this could be true. I have my doubts but am in no position to question the validity of such statements. This could be true. I doubt it is.

Sometimes I think we humans keep killing one another because of the investment in killing that we have. We believe we must continue to honor the sacrifice of the taboo against murder that has come before. If we do not "stay the course," we dishonor those soldiers who have already given the ultimate sacrifice, and ultimately we sacrifice countless more sacred human beings. Oftentimes people use religious texts to justify killing: an eye for an eye or God's commands in the Old Testament to kill God's enemies, and of course, whatever side one is on is God's side, whatever one calls God. What interests me about that is that Jesus, that same Prince of Peace the Church murdered for in Europe, said something about loving one's enemy. He had a new covenant with love at its center. This is a fine idea and although human sacrifice was supposed to have stopped for Jews, Moslems, and Christians with Abraham and Isaac or Ismael, my country is at war, and on the sands of Iraq the blood of each of these religions flows, staining that Altar of Sacrifice.

Stevi Carroll is a retired school teacher and long-time member of the Catholic Worker Core Group.

# Please Join Us: Summer Program Activities

This summer two college students from Marquette University will be staying at the Catholic Worker. Their names are Melissa Herguth and Kelly Von Ruden. We have planned some special activities for the summer and invite you to join us. Please call us at 647-0728 if you have any questions.

## Round Table Discussion Film Series:

We will show a short film followed by a discussion. These events will take place in the Catholic Worker house from 6 - 8 p.m.

**July 7:** Crossing the Line, a video about the School of the Americas.

**July 14:** Crisis of Faith: The American Dilemma.

**July 21:** Bound by the Wind, a video about those living downwind from the Nevada Test Site.

Finding Hope in a Time of War: *Find Hope* in personal action against the war, *Find Hope* in joining together with others, *Find Hope* in working for Peace.

## Voices for Peace Vigil

Join us every Thursday from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. in front of the Federal Court House at 333 S. Las Vegas Blvd (between Bridger and Carson).

**July 28:** The Atomic Cafe, a documentary featuring film clips from the 1950's and 1960's.

## From Violence to Wholeness Program

A four week series on the spirituality and practice of active nonviolence. Workshops will take place at the New Day House Saturday mornings from 9 - 11:30 in the upstairs prayer and retreat room. The workshops will be on **July 10, 17, 24 and 31**. Participants are encouraged to attend all four sessions. From Violence to Wholeness is a curriculum published by Pace e Bene, a Franciscan service in nonviolence.

## Community Prayer

Silent contemplative prayer takes place every Tuesday and Friday from 8:30 - 9:00 a.m. upstairs in the prayer room at the New Day House next to the Catholic Worker.

## Voices for Peace Vigil

Please see the ad to the left.

## Friday Presentations

Presentations will be held on Fridays at the Catholic Worker house from 1 - 3 p.m.

**July 16:** Pace e Bene: Living, Learning and Teaching Nonviolence presented by Peter Ediger.

**July 23:** A History of the Catholic Worker movement presented by Julia Occhiogrosso.

**July 30:** A Consideration of Gandhian Principles in Regard to Modern Life presented by Stevi Carroll.

## Hospitality Days

Every Wednesday morning we invite 3 - 6 homeless men home to the Catholic Worker house to hang out, wash clothes, take showers, etc. Then we serve a nice lunch. We can use help with people providing lunch.

## Hot Dog Parties

On July 8, Aug. 5 and Sept. 2 we will serve hot dogs, lemonade, macaroni salad and watermelon on our morning soupline thanks to Christ the King Catholic Community.

PRAY  
FOR  
PEACE  
IN OUR  
WORLD!

(FOR  
TAB)

*Thanks to all our  
Donors who make this  
ministry possible!*

**Richard Rohr, ofm** will present:

*"Hope Against Darkness: The Transforming Vision of  
Franciscanism in an Age of Anxiety"*

on August 6, 2004 at Christ the King Catholic Community  
(corner of Tropicana and Torrey Pines) at 7:00 p.m.

This public talk is part of August Desert Witness 2003, a weekend retreat commemorating the 59th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For more info contact: Nevada Desert Experience, (702) 646-4814, nevadadesertexperience.org

## PLEASE JOIN US:

**Wed., Fri., Sat., 6:00 a.m.:**

Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.

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

Breakfast served in Masjid-As-Sabur mosque parking lot (G & McWilliams St.) to the poor and homeless.

**Wednesdays, 7 a.m. - noon:**

Hospitality Day, we invite 3-6 homeless men home for showers & lunch.

**Thursdays, 8 a.m. - 9 a.m.:**

Vigil for Peace in front of Federal Courthouse, 333 S. Las Vegas Blvd.

**Last Saturday of month; 8:30 a.m.:**

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

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Las Vegas Catholic Worker  
(702) 647-0728  
500 W. Van Buren Avenue  
Las Vegas, NV 89106-3039

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