

# MANNA *in the wilderness*

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The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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## Two Assumptions of the Catholic Worker

*These two assumptions are excerpted from the book *All the Way to Heaven (A Theological Reflection on Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin and the Catholic Worker)* by Lawrence Holben. (Note: There are six assumptions, we printed the first four in the September 2010 Manna, available on our website)*

### THE FIFTH ASSUMPTION

While unambiguously set forth in the two creation stories in Genesis, the fifth assumption is one that the West has by and large ignored, especially since the advent of mercantile capitalism and the triumph of the Industrial Revolution. It is: **A vital part of our imaging of God the Creator, an essential component of the call that is ours as human beings, is to be co-creators with God, vicars and stewards for God of the lavish generosity of God's creation.**

While such a reality has obvious consequences for our use and treatment of the natural order (and forms the basis of what has come to be called Christian Ecology), for the Catholic Worker another less recognized import of this truth has been primary: Our work, our labor, is not just how we earn our keep; it is (or should be) an essential medium for acting out our destiny and dignity as human beings. Work is a "spiritual" issue.

God gives the abundant gifts of creation for the common good. God gives us the ability and the charge to take that abundance and — by our toil, ingenuity and creativity — make it more than it originally was so that we may share it with each other, again for the common good.

This is, in the true meaning of the word, an "awful" task: Our labor is alarmingly sacred. It is not a commodity. It should be a holy act of conscious cooperation in the continuing work of God in the unfolding of creation.

This participation in divine creativity is not the province of a select few: artists, farmers, crafts-workers. Every person born is summoned to it. As our particular talents and gifts differ, so the specifics of how we each individually play our part in this process of ongoing co-creation will differ. But we are less than fully human if we fail to play that part, and if the "system" somehow blocks the ability of anyone to discover, enact and celebrate his or her particular contribution to that process, then something is fundamentally wrong with the system.

### THE SIXTH ASSUMPTION

While the sixth assumption would seem the inescapable consequence of the first five, if any of the assumptions could be said to be "original" to Worker thought, at least in its positive and specific articulation, it would be this last: **The ideal society, the best structure for relationships between people, is one that clearly acknowledges the first five assumptions, seeks to embody their truth in all its systems, and is designed to enable all its members to live them out.** (Or, as Peter Maurin

more engagingly and simply put it: "We seek to create a world where it is easier for people to be good.")

Every human society, then, also has a call: to affirm not just in pious rhetoric but in the reality of its laws, modes of distribution, customs and attitudes that God (which is to say ultimate reality, by which all else is measured) is love, that every person is the object of that love, that every person is an image of God, that every person is called to en flesh love and to join (*see Holben, continued on back page*)



Robert Majors talks with police during NATO Summit in Chicago.

## Witness at NATO Summit

by Katie Kelso

When it comes to Dorothy Day's assumption of youth I am no exception. In her book *Loaves and Fishes* she explains, "One of the greatest evils of the day among those outside of prison is their sense of futility. Young people say, What good can one person do? What is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible only for the one action of the present moment. But we can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that will vitalize and transform all our individual actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes."

I have often asked myself what is the point of my protesting. I have vigiled for peace without passion and without hope of results. I have found myself even bored, disconnected, waiting for the time to pass, but I can say that my recent experience

of protesting the NATO Summit in Chicago was quite the opposite.

It began with the Catholic Worker Faith and Resistance Retreat, hosted by midwestern Catholic Workers. Around 150 Catholic Workers gathered together for a weekend at the Holy Innocents Convent just west of the loop. We shared home-grown meals together, had evening prayer circles, roundtable discussions, music, crafts, and spent many hours discussing the theme and performance of our action against NATO. Through many consensus-oriented meetings we decided to create a counter summit.

On Monday, May 14, we brought our counter summit to The Prudential building in downtown Chicago, Obama's campaign headquarters. Our largest banner summed up our primary message. It read "NATO = economy of war, Community = economy of love".

(*See Kelso, continued on back page*)

(Holben, continued from front page)  
with God as a co-creator.

Scripture, especially the prophets, tends to uphold this truth in negative form, through judgment. This is not surprising, since such a societal call, heard with any seriousness, is clearly a devastating critique of not only our own society but ultimately of every society ever created by humankind in history. Some may come closer to the mark than others, at least for a time, but all fall short and, inevitably, all finally seek to mask that failure by the creation of an alternative, pseudo-religious ideology grounded in models of power, self-interest and exploitation rather than love, self-emptying and liberation.

Thus, every human society becomes, in biblical terms, "Babylon" — an illegitimate distortion of God's intent for human life. Inevitably, each will posit for itself ultimate moral preeminence, demanding an allegiance that is by rights God's alone. In doing so, each makes of itself a blasphemous counterfeit of the Kingdom of God.

There is a consequence to the collision of this final assumption with the painful facts of human history: Since every human society not only fails to live up to its divinely ordered purpose but also justifies its failure through self-serving ideology at war with the truth, every human society stands under the judgment of God and must be called to repentance. This means that the prophetic stance (truth spoken and enacted in self-emptying love, not in self-righteousness) is not an occasional occupation of God's people but the permanent reality by which they must live until the inauguration of the Age to Come.

### Peter Ediger: Poet, Prophet, Peace Maker (1926-2012)

by Julia Occhiogrosso

At the Catholic Worker, Peter was the music that rose above the clamor of pot washing. Peter was the thinker that lifted our thinking. On the streets of Las Vegas and the desert wilderness, Peter was the sign, held with relentless conviction. He was the practitioner of gospel nonviolence, teaching, learning, turning over in his heart and mind the way to follow Jesus more closely.

(Kelso, continued from front page)

Our counter summit was that of community. We brought a table and handed out food to pedestrians. We aimed to bring an invitation to Obama to join our community summit rather than support NATO, an organization of war making and weapon proliferating. We made it as far as the mezzanine in the building but the elevators were locked before we could go farther. While in the building we read our one page Catholic Worker statement on NATO/G8. Within the statement our objections to NATO were explained:

"Since the end of the Cold War, NATO forces — led by US interests and the West's insatiable appetite for oil and free markets — have been controversially involved in conflicts in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. In 2010, NATO countries spent a collective \$1.08 trillion on defense and military expenditures, including a resurgence of nuclear weapons. The US and NATO are leading the way for the militarization of the globe at the expense of human and environmental needs. We say no to nuclear weapons, no to the out-of-control defense spending, and no to the logic of violence.

The G8 — the Group of Eight, including the US, Russia, Canada, Japan, Italy, Germany, France and the UK — represent the destructive engines of capitalism whose "growth-at-all-costs" mentality has desecrated communities, the environment, and human rights all in the name of

**PRAY FOR  
PEACE  
IN OUR  
WORLD!**

(FOR  
TAB)

*Rosary:  
Fridays,  
8 a.m.*

On May 31, we had a service and installed a cross in the Catholic Worker front yard.

progress. As people of faith and conscience, we advocate relationships and economics rooted in love: the works of mercy at a personal sacrifice, craft and worker-based cooperatives, gift and barter economies, agrarian communities, and a more simple lifestyle. **Let love be our guide for our collective future without war and capitalism."**

After our entire statement was read and many songs of peace were sung, we were asked to leave the building; all but eight did who were soon arrested. We then marched back to the convent, police escort



Las Vegas at NATO Summit, from left: Jessica, Robbie, Mary Lou, Jim, John, Katie at our side, energized and gratified with our attempt to offer an alternative to a system of violence and dehumanization.

After media began becoming available, we were pleased to see that the majority of press well reported our action as a nonviolent protest emphasizing peace and inclusion rather than aggression and disconnection. Our action was the first of many to come during the week and we were happy to set an example of what love and community look like.

In the conclusion of our weekend retreat I believe many left taking comfort in Margaret Mead when she tells us to "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has".

### **Closed in August**

The Las Vegas Catholic Worker soup line and Hospitality Day will be closed from August 5 - 18.

**Website: [www.lvcw.org](http://www.lvcw.org)**

#### **PLEASE JOIN US:**

- Wednesday-Saturday\*, 6:00 a.m.:** Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.
  - Wednesday-Saturday\*, 6:30 a.m.:** Breakfast served to the poor & homeless. \*closed on fourth Saturday of month
  - Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. - noon:** Hospitality Day, we invite 20 homeless men home for showers, to wash clothes, and to have a great lunch.
  - Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.:** Vigil for Peace in front of Federal Courthouse, 333 Las Vegas Blvd. S.
  - Thursday, 10:30 a.m.:** 50 Bag lunches delivered to homeless.
  - Third Saturday of month, 8:00 a.m.:** Deliver food boxes to homes in need.
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