



THE SOWER

True justice is the harvest reaped by peacemakers
from seeds sown in the spirit of peace. James, 3:18

Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm, Maloy, Iowa- Number 52, Spring, 2025

Making Sense of Life in Times Like These

Brian's report from the farm and the wide world



The first months of 2025 were especially tumultuous for this country and for the world, and so life on our little farm has likewise been exceptionally challenging and busy and blessed.

In mid-January, it was announced that the new improved

B61-12 nuclear bombs had been fully deployed, presumably to the NATO "nuclear sharing" bases in Europe and just about that time I was informed by a judge in Koblenz, Germany, that I was ordered to turn myself in to a prison at Wittlich in the Eiffle mountains on February 26 for a 15-day sentence.

If American "justice" can be likened to a meat grinder, in Germany it works more like a fine mill, working carefully and slowly and it took more than five years from the time of my arrest at the Büchel Air Base in 2019 before the court finally decided to lock me up.



Betsy setting up the loom with craft retreatants

I left Maloy on February 19 in a flurry of activity, as our 15th annual craft retreat that started six days before was just winding down. As in past years, our house was full and in a buzz of song, prayer, laughter and discussion of the perils of the time we live in.

Both looms in our living room were going from early morning to late in the evening while in the basement candles were being dipped and fabrics colored with natural dyes. All the while in the kitchen great meals were being prepared.

Catholic Worker friends and fellow travelers came from as far as Idaho and locals stopped by to share their skills and learn from others. The St. Isadore CW farm was represented as well as the new Little Platte CW farm, both in Wisconsin, and the Ozark Foothills CW farm in Missouri.

As I write in my article, **The Only Sane Solution** on page 4, I spent a week in the Netherlands before my prison sentence and a week after it in Germany before I flew home.

I came home from Europe to Maloy on March 20 to another full house. Theo, Chrissy and Lindsey from the new CW house of hospitality in St. Louis, MO, came to visit. Mary from Jerusalem Farm in Kansas City joined us and Ellen from the Ozark Foothills CW who was here the month before for the craft retreat returned with her partner Shane and their sons, Francis, 8 years old and Jonah, 6.

The last of those visitors had just left and I was off again, this time to New York City to participate in the "Dorothy Day Symposium: Practices of Peace in the Year of Jubilee," sponsored by the Dorothy Day Guild at Manhattan University on March 29. While in New York, I stayed at the Mary House Catholic Worker where I began this strange and wonderful journey almost 50 years ago, after I dropped out of school in October, 1975.



Brian taking in the sea air before reporting to prison in Germany

Thus says the Lord: "The land belongs to me and to me you are only **Strangers and Guests.**" Leviticus 25:23

Making Sense of Life...

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Barely catching my breath here on the farm, I was off a few days later to Nevada to help prepare for the Nevada Desert Experience's annual Holy Week "Sacred Peace Walk" from Las Vegas to the nuclear test site, some 60 miles away.



Catholic Worker friends gathered in Maloy

There was an advantage this year with Easter being celebrated so late in the spring- in the years that Holy Week comes earlier in the spring, we have faced freezing temperatures and even been driven off the road by sudden snow squalls. If one is to spend a week walking and camping in the Mojave Desert, mid-April is the most pleasant time to do it!

Back home in Iowa, though, this is just the time that the earth thaws and wakes and that there is much work to do, planting early crops and tending nursery plants in the house until the ground is warm enough for them.

With some help from her friends, Betsy kept up with the garden prep while tending the goats and chickens and leading the singing for the Holy Week liturgies at the parish church in Mt. Ayr.

Betsy is preparing an invitation for this issue (page 3) to join us in our work and life here in Maloy for the season or even longer. Our intention in moving to this little town 39-years ago was to build a community on the land for the long haul. While we have been blessed with good folks joining with us here for a week, a month, even for a year or more, since our two children have grown and moved away, we often find ourselves alone.

Precarity has always been a mark of our life here. That of precarity deepens as Betsy and I get older. As time goes by, we have the growing realization that we will likely have no one to pass our home and bit of land to. Beyond

our own small concerns, we take great solace and inspiration in the great works that many of the young folk who have passed through here are doing in the world.

With gratitude, Betsy and I mourn the death of Pope Francis on Easter Monday. I was on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol on September 24, 2015, hearing Pope Francis address Congress. Many Catholic Workers were rightly impressed that the Pope said, "I cannot fail to mention the Servant of God Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker movement." I cannot but think, though, that Dorothy was more truly honored later in Pope Francis' speech: "Here we have to ask ourselves: Why are deadly weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society? Sadly, the answer, as we all know, is simply for money: money that is drenched in blood, often innocent blood. In the face of this shameful and culpable silence, it is our duty to confront the problem and to stop the arms trade."

It is disconcerting now, to hear Catholics and others heaping their praise on Pope Francis all the while main-

taining a shameful and culpable silence on the arms trade, ignoring his concerns for the plight of immigrants and the slaughter in Gaza. I am saddened, too, that there are those who identify with the Catholic Worker



Francis and Jonah from Ozark Foothills CW Farm show off their weaving

movement and with Dorothy Day and yet ignore or disagree with Francis and Dorothy regarding our own duty to confront the problem and to stop the arms trade.

As always, our prayers and gratitude for all the friends who support our life and work and all of those trying to make sense of life in such tumultuous times. I think especially of those who were with both Betsy and with me in spirit while I was imprisoned in Germany. Your love and solidarity sustain and challenge us daily.

An invitation:



Chuck Trapkus

Spring is in bloom in Maloy! This early in the garden season we have outdoor clean up to do still and my attention is divided between working in the garden, weeding perennials, chopping back “volunteer” trees and shrubs planted by birds and squirrels and my many little seedlings that I have started indoors. These spend time in a sheltered spot outdoors when weather allows, as they grow and wait for weather to be mild enough to make the transition outdoors. They can grow under lights some of the time. Tender plants that moved in from the herb garden last fall to winter by our windows are being moved out, as conditions suit them. Plants have also arrived by mail; onions and strawberries to find a place in the garden.

When the weather is just right, then there is more work than we can manage, with the other activities that balance out our life and work at Strangers and Guests. We are expecting the birth of kid goats almost any minute. As usual in the Spring we look out toward our friends and readers—Do you have some time and energy to spend in Maloy this growing season? We have space for you—to work, study and pray. We feel especially short of practical skills, even after all this time, and energy, as at this stage of life, we need to rest more often. We can teach and guide learning of various homesteading skills, especially with the dairy goats, herbs and vegetables. We have a good library of Catholic Worker books. Other crafts, that we share most intensely during our winter craft retreat, can also be passed on in summer, if we get caught up with the work that provides most of our food supply.

If you are willing and able, think of coming for a working visit. The times are troubled and the needs are great, and sometime of peace, refreshment and that “tired in a good way” feeling after work is rewarded with good food may be a recipe for keeping up the struggle.

Betsy

A letter from a Craft Retreatant

Hi, Betsy!

What an absolute joy to be in your home and with you. Honestly, yes the crafting, singing, eating together was the point and such a gift but the highlight for me was having the time and capacity to sit at the feet of my CW elders (you and Brian) and listen to your stories. Being able to ask my questions about how you keep hope alive after doing this work for so long and why we should continue to craft and make things in a world of such overwhelming overconsumption and hear your uplifting voices and wisdom around these subjects will continue to carry me.

“Don’t discount your loaf & fish!” Brian said emphatically.

What a balm for the soul—those words and the weekend. So grateful to be part of the CW community/family.

Thank you, thank you!

Mary Kay



Mary Kay McDermott, with some of the works of her hands from the craft retreat in Maloy, lives at the Saint Isidore Catholic Worker Farm in Cuba City, Wisconsin

The Only Sane Solution...

Resisting Nuclear Weapons in Europe

"We still hold that nonviolent resistance is the only sane solution, and that we have to continue to make our voice heard until we are finally silenced--and even then, in jail or concentration camp, to express ourselves."

Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker, 1940

Brian Terrell

When I arrived at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport on February 20, my passport was flagged and I was informed that due to a previous arrest at Volkel airbase, where a U.S. Airforce squadron keeps 20 nuclear bombs ready to load onto Dutch planes in a NATO "nuclear sharing" arrangement, I was banned from entering Europe and would be immediately flown back to the United States. I explained to the immigration officer that I had an order from a German court to turn myself in to the prison at Wittlich on February 26 for a 15-day sentence for taking direct action at Büchel, the German airbase where there is a similar nuclear sharing relationship in 2019. After a short wait my passport was returned and I was waved through the queue to join my good friend Chris Danowski patiently waiting



Christiane Danowski and Bernd Büscher greet Brian at the Wittlich prison gate, March 12

in the arrivals area to take me to Jeanette Noel Huis, the Catholic Worker in Amsterdam.

Before my "surrender," I spent a most pleasant few days with Dutch Catholic Workers. I spent part of the day after my arrival with an old friend, Abdulhai, whom I first met in Kabul, Afghanistan

in 2009 on a delegation with Voices for Creative Nonviolence. It was a joy to reconnect with Abdulhai, who is living in a refugee camp and working at an Afghan restaurant

in Rotterdam. Chris and Susan van der Hijden, who recently spent 115 days in prison herself, took me out for a night on the town in Amsterdam's old central city and a brisk walk at the beach at the North Sea. It was a blessing just to spend a few days in the rhythm of prayer and work and fun with the Jeanette Noel Huis community and their guests.

On February 22, it was an honor to join Dutch campaigners at an "ecotage" action at the Port of Amsterdam. A most moving liturgical direct action in solidarity with Colombian activists, removing stones from the railbed that carries coal taken from Colombia to burn in European powerplants.

On the 25th, Dutch Catholic Workers accompanied me on my way to prison. We were joined by other activists for a vigil at the Volkel airbase, in solidarity with the Global Day of Action to Close Bases. More folks from around Germany met us at Büchel airbase, the "scene of the crime," for another vigil in the pouring rain. The next morning, our small contingent picked up a few more souls at the prison gates, who sent me off to my "vigil behind bars" with prayers, embraces and the blast of a trumpet.

Catholic Worker Frits ter Kuile had been imprisoned at Wittlich some years before and filled me in on what to expect. Wittlich is a high security prison and I had been informed that I would not be allowed to take any books with me. The chance that I took bringing my Bible paid off and it was the only book that I had during those 15 days of almost unbroken solitude. Most prisoners at Wittlich have work assignments, attend classes or participate in sports, but for my short stay, a morning shower, an hour of exercise in the yard each day and Sunday Mass were the only times that I got out of my clean, spacious and comfortable cell with a large window from where through the bars I could see the rooftops of the town over the wall and the Eiffel mountains in the distance.

In the five years that passed since the international peace camp organized by Nukewatch in the United States and the German GAAA where Susan van der Hijden and Susan Crane of Redwood City, California, and I took bolt cutters to the security fence protecting nuclear bombs at Büchel, the world had grown to be a far more dangerous place. The events of the weeks and days leading up to my incarceration did nothing to dispel real anxieties for the near future.

I had mixed feelings, then, about opting to pay a fee to have a television in my cell, but now it seems unthinkable not to have had access to the news from February 26 to March 12, 2025! I had the news from CNN and from the English language programs of several European countries, as well as bureaus based in Beijing, Caracas, Istanbul and Doha to watch Trump and Vance scold President Zelen-

skyy in the oval office on February 28 and to hear the international responses to Trump's "America is Back" tirade before Congress on March 4. As happy as I was to have a Bible, I found more challenge than comfort in its prophetic exhortations, reading it in the context of the times.

It was interesting to be a U.S. citizen inmate in a European prison just as many Europeans are coming the realize that the United States is not the "reliable partner" they thought we were! (What to do when a relationship goes sour and among the common property to deal with is a stash of nuclear weapons?) It is a good and necessary thing that the malevolent influence of the United States outside its borders is waning, but horrifying to hear European heads of state speak of massive rearming to replace the "umbrella of security" that they think that U.S. nuclear weapons provided. When European leaders speak of massive rearmament, they are in effect calling for a moratorium on any real progress toward averting environmental catastrophe.

On January 16, five weeks before I went to prison, U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration administrator Jill Hruby, announced that the old B61 bombs in place at Büchel and other NATO bases in Europe since 1968 had been replaced with the new improved more flexible, more precise and easily deployable B61-12 bombs. The B61-12 presumably in place now at Büchel is just part of a \$1.7 trillion program to extend the "lives" of and exercising "stewardship" over the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.

Despite admitted security challenges, Hruby spoke glowingly of "the future of the nuclear security enterprise." "All is not gloom and doom" because, she said, "The new B61-12 gravity bombs are fully forward deployed, and we have increased NATO's visibility to our nuclear capabilities." "It has been the honor to serve as the NNSA Administrator, and a pleasure to observe the progress" said Jill Hruby on January 16, "I am fond of saying that my proudest accomplishment is getting our mojo back in NNSA."

On January 20, just four days after the NNSA got its mojo back, Donald Trump was inaugurated president of the United States and on his very first day Jill Hruby and more than 300 other NNSA employees lost their jobs.



"If your soul is at peace and without remorse, prison can even be a pleasant place for a rest. Fear of prison is a trick invented by the authorities to demoralize good Christians. Many acts of cowardice, in fact, are excused by the fear of ending in prison." IGNAZIO SILONE

Most of them, but not Hruby, were rehired a few days later.

The mission of the U.S. Strategic Command's Command and Control Facility, housed in a bunker outside Omaha, is to "aid the president's nuclear response decision-making process, and, if called upon, deliver a decisive response in all domains." It was scary enough before (delivering "a decisive response in all domains" means the death of most species on this planet) but the thought of anyone aiding Donald Trump's "nuclear response decision-making process" is especially chilling at this moment.

On March 12, Chris and Bernd Büscher of the Kana Soup Kitchen in Dortmund met me coming out of prison. The next day, I met Barath, another Afghan friend who had arrived in Germany with his family last December and is now in a refugee camp in Delbrück. I joined Barath, his mother, wife and two children as

they broke their Ramadan fast with a traditional Afghan meal. From Delbrück, a visit with more old friends, Hanno and Gisela Paul in Bünde. Sunday evening March 16, I gave a talk at the Kana Kitchen and the next evening, took part in a discussion with local activists at the Café Aufbruch in Dortmund. On the 18th, Chris brought me back to Amsterdam to fly home the next day.

My first visit to Germany was in October of 1983, a time referred to as the "long hot autumn," an exhilarating time when millions of Germans took to the streets to protest the short-range Pershing II nuclear missiles then deployed by the U.S. on trucks roaming the border between the capitalist West and the communist East. In solidarity with activists protesting around the globe, the Pershing program was successfully ended and a few years later there was vast reduction of nuclear weapons that lasted until 2009. Today, profiteers and bureaucrats like Jill Hruby do not view the reduction of nuclear weapons of those recent decades as lifesaving progress toward a more peaceful and sustainable world to build upon, but as years of regrettable neglect and they have reason now to celebrate "the long-term future of the stockpile."

The need for a mass movement like the world saw back then could not be more urgent than it is today. I look with both fear and hope for one to arise. In the meantime, I know that mass movements are not made by people waiting for a mass movement to arrive. A mass movement is

“The only solution is love,” said Dorothy Day, echoing Jesus and the prophets. She also called nonviolent resistance “the only sane solution.” I am growing to realize that these are two ways of saying the same thing.

built by people joining with others to speak and act for peace the best they can in their circumstances and who are willing to risk apparent failure in their efforts.

Considering the enormity of the danger that the world is facing, do our small efforts, our protests and jailings make any difference? In our movements there is a false dichotomy, I think, between being faithful and being effective. “I’m convinced that if the world survives these dangerous times, it will be tens of millions of small things that do it,” said the folk singer, Pete Seeger. Perhaps the best, the most effective contribution we can make to save the planet will be for each of us to accomplish one or two of the tens of millions of small things that need to be done.

In this time of climate catastrophe, famine and pandemic, the waste of resources to build nuclear weapons is an unspeakable crime and the conceit that they provide security is dangerously insane.

“The only solution is love,” said Dorothy Day, echoing Jesus and the prophets. She also called nonviolent resistance “the only sane solution.” I am growing to realize that these are two ways of saying the same thing.

We can no longer, in the world as it is, dismiss loving our neighbors and even our enemies as ourselves as a “counsel of perfection” or as a utopian, impractical, unreachable and dangerously sentimental ideal. Love, today, is the only truly pragmatic option. Albert Camus called realism “the art of taking into account both the present and the future” and it is clear that there is no realistic course open to humanity other than to lay down our weapons and learn to care for our planet and share its resources equitably with all. The alternative is the end of life as we know it.

I am grateful to all the friends whose prayers and solidarity went with me. I started the penitential season of Lent, 2025, on Ash Wednesday in a German prison and expect to finish it on Good Friday at the nuclear test site as the Nevada Desert Experience ends its annual Sacred Peace Walk.

Drawing on previous page by Chuck Trapkus on the occasion of Brian being sentenced to four months in federal prison in 1992



Before the first world war, there was no such thing as passports and visas and all these barriers to immigration that the Pope has so spoken against when he cries out for a living space for the poor. Now we are ticketed, and docketed and numbered, and registered and secured, and it is a sad and pitiful thing to see a man fumbling for papers to prove his existence, his right to work, to eat.

Dorothy Day, 1955

Likewise, Jesus Christ, loving everyone with a universal love, educates us in the permanent recognition of the dignity of every human being, without exception. In fact, when we speak of “infinite and transcendent dignity,” we wish to emphasize that the most decisive value possessed by the human person surpasses and sustains every other juridical consideration that can be made to regulate life in society. Thus, all the Christian faithful and people of good will are called upon to consider the legitimacy of norms and public policies in the light of the dignity of the person and his or her fundamental rights, not vice versa.

Pope Francis, 2025

Excerpts from the

“URBI ET ORBI” MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

EASTER 2025

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 20 April 2025

Christ is risen, alleluia!

Dear brothers and sisters, Happy Easter!

Today at last, the singing of the “alleluia” is heard once more in the Church, passing from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart, and this makes the people of God throughout the world shed tears of joy.

From the empty tomb in Jerusalem, we hear unexpected good news: Jesus, who was crucified, “is not here, he has risen” (Lk 24:5). Jesus is not in the tomb, he is alive!

Love has triumphed over hatred, light over darkness and truth over falsehood. Forgiveness has triumphed over revenge. Evil has not disappeared from history; it will remain until the end, but it no longer has the upper hand; it no longer has power over those who accept the grace of this day.

...All those who put their hope in God place their feeble hands in his strong and mighty hand; they let themselves be raised up and set out on a journey. Together with the risen Jesus, they become pilgrims of hope, witnesses of the victory of love and of the disarmed power of Life.

...What a great thirst for death, for killing, we witness each day in the many conflicts raging in different parts of our world! How much violence we see, often even within families, directed at women and children! How much contempt is stirred up at times towards the vulnerable, the marginalized, and migrants!

On this day, I would like all of us to hope anew and to revive our trust in others, including those who are different than ourselves, or who come from distant lands, bringing unfamiliar customs, ways of life and ideas! For all of us are children of God!

... I express my closeness to the sufferings of Christians in Palestine and Israel, and to all the Israeli people and the Palestinian people. The growing climate of anti-Semitism throughout the world is worrisome. Yet at the same time, I think of the people of Gaza, and its Christian community in particular, where the terrible conflict continues to cause death and destruction and to create a dramatic and deplorable humanitarian situation. I appeal to the warring parties: call a ceasefire, release the hostages

and come to the aid of a starving people that aspires to a future of peace!

Let us pray for the Christian communities in Lebanon and in Syria, presently experiencing a delicate transition in its history. They aspire to stability and to participation in the life of their respective nations. I urge the whole Church to keep the Christians of the beloved Middle East in its thoughts and prayers.

I also think in particular of the people of Yemen, who are experiencing one of the world’s most serious and prolonged humanitarian crises because of war, and I invite all to find solutions through a constructive dialogue.

May the risen Christ grant Ukraine, devastated by war, his Easter gift of peace, and encourage all parties involved to pursue efforts aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace.

...Nor is peace possible without true disarmament! The requirement that every people provide for its own defense must not turn into a race to rearmament. The light of Easter impels us to break down the barriers that create division and are fraught with grave political and economic consequences. It impels us to care for one another, to increase our mutual solidarity, and to work for the integral development of each human person.

...I appeal to all those in positions of political responsibility in our world not to yield to the logic of fear which only leads to isolation from others, but rather to use the resources available to help the needy, to fight hunger and to encourage initiatives that promote development. These are the “weapons” of peace: weapons that build the future, instead of sowing seeds of death!

May the principle of humanity never fail to be the hallmark of our daily actions. In the face of the cruelty of conflicts that involve defenseless civilians and attack schools, hospitals and humanitarian workers, we cannot allow ourselves to forget that it is not targets that are struck, but persons, each possessed of a soul and human dignity.

In this Jubilee year, may Easter also be a fitting occasion for the liberation of prisoners of war and political prisoners!

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the Lord’s Paschal Mystery, death and life contended in a stupendous struggle, but the Lord now lives forever (cf. Easter Sequence). He fills us with the certainty that we too are called to share in the life that knows no end, when the clash of arms and the rumble of death will be heard no more. Let us entrust ourselves to him, for he alone can make all things new (cf. Rev. 21:5)!

Happy Easter to everyone!

THE SOWER

Strangers and Guests

Catholic Worker Farm

108 Hillcrest Drive

Maloy, Iowa 50836

641-785-2321, Brian's cell: 773-853-1886

Brian: brian1956terrell@gmail.com

Betsy: keenanweaving@yahoo.com



*Celebrate the summer solstice and the feast of St John Baptist with us in the remote and colorful town of Maloy, Iowa, on **Saturday, June 21**. Festivities begin about 4 pm in the Maloy City Park at the center of town. At about 6 we will have a pot luck supper in the park, featuring the first fruits of our gardens, fields and pastures. After supper there will be folk dancing in the park until dusk, followed by a bonfire in our orchard, more food and drink and music. Bring friends, bring some food or drink to share if you wish (there is always enough) musical instruments, lawn chairs. There is room to tent if you want to stay the night, room to sleep on our floor and we can try to arrange for a bed for anyone who needs one. Children welcome, of course. Please let us know if you're coming, especially if you are planning on staying the night.*

The sun still shines! Come celebrate the longest day despite the darkness of the times around us!



While there is a lower class, I am in it, while there is a criminal element, I am of it, and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.

– Eugene V. Debs