

via paciis

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker community

APRIL 2026

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VOLUME 50, NO. 1

What's Happening?

by Frank Cordaro

The world is going to Hell. I can't tell you anything more you don't already know about how hell-bent the human race is on destroying the planet's life forces through war and other means.

I can tell you, when we pray the Our Father and ask God to "give us our daily bread," it's not the food produced by our current industrial, corporate global food system.

The food and all the other things we beg and receive are products of the "Powers and Principles" that are currently destroying the planet.

So, when we pray the Our Father, asking God to give us our "daily bread," it does not mean the food produced in our current global agri-food system.

The primary Kingdom work we do at the DMCW is providing hospitality to the poor, our guests. We offer the first floor of the Bishop Dingman House as a place where our guests can hang out and be fed. There, we operate a small storeroom where clothes, toiletries, non-perishable and perishable foods, and all other necessities for people living on the streets are given out freely.

We give an amazing amount of 'stuff' away solely on what we beg.

We have a shower and a bathroom to offer. TV room.

We are open 5 days/ 18 hrs. a week. Could be more. We are doing what we can.

It's in Dingman House, that we are fulfilling our Our Father discipleship pledge "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven."

The New Testament tells us the Works of Mercy are the kind of acts of love needed to serve "Christ in our midst" and transforms our hell-bent world to service in the Kingdom of God. We are doing our small part.

What we do at Dingman House is also a blessing for us who serve and for those who support us by volunteering on shifts, giving stuff & money so we can keep doing the work and paying the bills.

The industrial food we serve is now redeemed food, made holy by feeding the hungry at Dingman House.

For an old guy like me, it don't get any better...

Rachel Corrie House

DMCWer Julie Brown is recovering from a major car accident and is slowly returning to her job and back to some kind of normal.

Husband Mohammed and his sons are from Iraqi Kurdistan. The US war on Iran is personally affecting their friends and family members. Mohammed was planning to visit them for two weeks at the end of this month. The War has shut down all commercial flights in the Middle East. Please keep Mohammed and his family in your prayers.

Berrigan House

Araceli Benitezmoyna continues to be our sole DMCW living at Berrigan House. The 1st and smallest of the 4 DMCW Houses. Araceli is from Chiapas, Mexico. She is an amazing woman! Holds down a full time job as a school cook. Sends money back home to family. And does a full time job as a DMCWer cooking, cleaning and taking shifts at Dingman House.



A man named Jesus helps with yard work at the Manning House

Richard Flamer, a former DMCW is Araceli's husband. They met in Chiapas. Araceli hosts many people at Berrigan House. Richard is soon to return to DM for a visit in April.

Manning House

Currently the two oldest members of the community live in Manning House. Ed Bloomer (79 years) and Annie Patton (66 years).

Ed's not doing well. He has multiple health issues; heart, blood pressure and kidneys. He can't wake up or go to sleep. When he is up and around he looks like a ghost. He is revered by all.

A survivor of colon cancer, Annie continues to be the Queen of the serving line. When she smiles the world lights up!

Right now there are two young women visiting the community and staying at Manning House. Kate Kleinle and Alex Tone. They have been a God-sent! Taking shifts, cooking meals and doing "deep cleaning" efforts in Manning and Dingman Houses, doing food runs. Kate is staying till the end of March and Alex will stay till the end of April.

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via pacis

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EDITING AND LAYOUT

Mack Swenson

SUBSCRIPTIONS

via pacis is published tri-annually. How to subscribe: mail, email, or phone your name and address to the editor.

THE DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER COMMUNITY

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition.

We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, shower, or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice.

BECOMING A DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER

We are open to new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or send an email to dmcatholicworker@gmail.com.

MAILING ADDRESS

Des Moines Catholic Worker
PO Box 4551
Des Moines IA 50305

BISHOP DINGMAN HOUSE

(Drop-in Center and Business Phone)
1310 7th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-214-1030

Hospitality Hours:

Monday and Wednesday: CLOSED

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 3-6:30pm
(meals at 3pm and 6pm)

Saturday: 12-2pm (meal at 12pm)

Sunday: 4:30-7pm (meal at 6pm)

PHIL BERRIGAN HOUSE

713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314

RACHEL CORRIE HOUSE

1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314

CHELSEA MANNING HOUSE

1317 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314

RESIDENTS

Eddie Bloomer, Frank Cordaro, Araceli Benitez-Moya, Julie Brown, Mohammed Salah, Aland Mohammed, Annie Patton

PHIL BERRIGAN PEACE AND JUSTICE LIBRARY

Contact Person: Frank Cordaro, (515) 490-2490,
frank.cordaro@gmail.com

CHIAPAS PROJECT

Chiapas, Mexico
Contact Person: Richard Flamer,
flamerrichard@hotmail.com

WEBSITE

<https://www.facebook.com/DesMoinesCatholicWorker/>



As for ourselves, we must be meek, bear injustice, malice, and rash judgment. We must turn the other cheek, give up our cloak, go a second mile.
-Dorothy Day

Announcement

Promotional event for Rev. Bob Cook memorial delegation

When: Tuesday, May 5th at 7 p.m.

Where: St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Johnston IA

I am helping to organize a September 2026 "Rev. Bob Cook" Memorial Delegation to El Salvador! And to help promote the delegation, I invited 'my miracle worker' and friend from my first trip: Cecilia Garcia, founder and Chief Executive Officer of One Hundred Angels foundation to help organize and promote the trip. In El Salvador, Cecilia knows and works with all the same people Bob did in Berlin. She and her One Hundred Angels nonprofit have been working in El Salvador the last seven years, doing the same stuff Bob did, with the same people.

Cecilia first found out about Bob seven years ago by joining one of the yearly medical delegations from Iowa that Bob helped start. She then read Bob's book "Miracles In El Salvador: A Minister's Journey for Justice and Hope" and kept returning to Berlin. Working through her One Hundred Angels nonprofit, Cecilia was able to replicate and expand on many of Bob's efforts to improve the lives of the same people, the poorest of the poor, living in small 'cantons' – the small mountainside communities surrounding Berlin.

To help promote the delegation Cecilia has agreed to spend a week in May at the DMCW to help promote the trip and its project.

Come listen to Cecilia on May 5th. Consider joining the delegation or at least donating for the project being done in Bob's memory.

For more info contact:

Frank Cordaro – DMCW

515 490 2490 / frank.cordaro@gmail.com

Cecilia Garcia, One Hundred Angels

602 826 0784 / onehundredangels@icloud.com

www.onehundredangels.org

Cecilia at Bob's altar in El Salvador



Dingman House

I have moved back into Dingman House for two reasons:

Firstly, there was no one living in the house. We needed someone there for security reasons.

Second reason, as we are updating our Land Trust and to avoid being designated a “rental” property, we needed to have one of the DMCW Land Trust trustees living in each of the four houses.

Since then, Tony moved into Dingman House with me. He came from the Mission. He is not a Catholic Worker. He is designated a full time live in volunteer and is doing a great job serving our guests when we are open and cleaning the kitchen after every shift.

A shout out goes to all the folks who are volunteering at Dingman House during the shifts, five days a week, total 18 hrs.

We really could not do the work without the help.

Special mention of Mary Ann Koch, Victoria Christian. David Langer and Donna Richard-Langer for their work in the Store Room – the place where we give out food, clothing, toiletries and all other sorts of things needed to survive outdoors. They are doing a great job of giving some sense of order in a room that changes day to day, hour by hour with ‘stuff’ coming and going. See their story on page 6.

The Friends of the Catholic Worker Fund Update

Ray Blasé and the Friends of the CW board have been raising thousands of dollars through their nonprofit the food and basic essentials we need to feed the folks who show up at Dingman House. They also help us raise money for major rehab and upkeep projects on the four community houses.

Mostly made up of folks who have volunteered over the years at Dingman House and want to see the community and work continued after I’m gone.

See Ray Blasé’s December newsletter for the Friends on page 5.

Planning a September 2026 Rev. Bob Cook Memorial Delegation

I am helping to organize a return trip to El Salvador and visit with my adopted Honduran family in Sept!

And to help promote the delegation I invited “my miracle worker” and friend from my 1st trip Cecilia Garcia, Founder & Chief Executive Officer of One Hundred Angels foundation to help organize and promote the trip.

In El Salvador, Cecila knows and works with all the same people Bob did in Berlin. She and her One Hundred Angels nonprofit have been working in El Salvador the last seven years, doing the same stuff Bob did, with the same people.

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To help promote the delegation Cecilia has agreed to spend a week in May at the DMCW to help promote the trip and its project. Her public talk is already scheduled:

Tuesday May 5th at 7 p.m. St Paul’s Presbyterian Church, Johnston IA

Consider joining the delegation or at least donating for the project being done in Bob’s memory.

What I Am Not Doing

There has never been a more important time in my life to get out in the streets, protest and get thrown into jail than right now! From Gaza, to MPLS to the War in Iran. From protesting IA water quality to welcoming the stranger without papers. All good causes for protest and jail risking today.

And for many reasons I tell myself I cannot take such risks right now.

Others depend on me. We are so low on people here doing the work. I’m cooking 3 meals a week plus all the book work for begging, depositing checks and paying bills. I can’t get arrested. I can’t go to jail.

Plus my work for Jess and support for my Honduran family prevents me from risking arrest and jail.

Besides, I’m 75! Older than the Pope.

None of these excuses are good enough....I’m struggling with it. Pray for me.

Trip to D.C.

I went to Washington D.C. March 27th for the 70th Birthday Day Celebration and Protest at the Pentagon for Catholic Worker Patrick O’Neil.

Patrick’s the father of six daughters and two sons. He and his wife, Mary Rider, cofounded the Fr. Charlie Mulholland Catholic Worker House in Garner, N.C. in 1991 and raised their family there.

Patrick wrote in a recent email “Come hear Dorothy Day’s granddaughter-Martha Hennessy, former CIA agent Ray McGovern, Weapons In Space expert Bruce Gagon, Pax Christi International policy expert Marie Dennis, Catholic Workers Art Laffin, Frank Cordaro, Paul Magno and others.”

It was also a chance for me to connect with East Coast CWers and resisters who I have known for over the years from my many travels to Jonah House and Washington D.C. in the last century.

I also got arrested with 26 other CWers and peacemakers. Got a June 4th Court date back in D.C. Stay tuned!



Frank’s No Beard look

I tried trimming my beard by myself. Kept making mistakes until It was so poorly cut I shaved it all off. Went to visit my sister DeeDee (79) who fell and broke her neck in the hospital. She said she like my new look. I told her as long as she keeps fighting to stay alive, I’ll keep my face shaved. She still very much alive and getting better.

Lesson: Find meaning and purpose in every thing I do, even a botched beard-trimming effort.

To donate funds to the Des Moines Catholic Worker, mail checks to PO Box 4551, Des Moines, IA 50305.

Flying Home Through Uncertainty: War, Distance, and the Pull of Sulaymaniyah

by Mohammed Salah

There is something special about going home for Newroz and Eid. Newroz (New Day) is the new Kurdish year. March 21st is the first day of spring and for Kurdish people it is the first day of the new year 2726. Eid is a three day feast for Muslims around the world celebrating the end of Ramadan.

For me, it's not just a trip. It's a return: to my family, to my friends, to familiar streets, and to the energy of Sulaymaniyah during its most meaningful days. It's where laughter feels different, where celebrations feel deeper, and where even silence feels like belonging. But this year, as I prepare to travel, that feeling is mixed with something else: uncertainty.

The Middle East today feels like it's standing on a fault line. Tensions between the United States, Israel, and Iran have escalated into open confrontation. Missiles and drones are no longer distant headlines: they are part of everyday conversations. Countries across the region are affected, directly or indirectly. Iraq and the Kurdistan region are right in the middle of it all. It's hard to explain what it feels like to watch a

place you love become part of a geopolitical map. Places you know by heart suddenly described in terms of strategy, risk zones, and military positioning.

Sulaymaniyah, to me, is family, memories, and celebration. But to the world right now, it sits in a region marked by uncertainty. In normal times, booking a flight home is simple. You choose a date, confirm your ticket, and start counting the days. Now, every step feels fragile.

Flights are delayed or canceled. Airspace opens and closes with little warning. Routes are redirected to avoid danger. Even when a ticket is confirmed, there's a quiet understanding that it might not mean much. I find myself checking updates constantly, wondering:

Will my flight take off?

Will I be able to land?

What if everything changes overnight?

It's a strange feeling: when something as basic as going home becomes uncertain.

Why Does This Journey Matter More Now?

And yet, despite everything, I still want to go. Because Newroz is not just a date on the calendar. It is identity. It is resilience. It is lighting fires on the mountains and remembering who we are and where we come from.

Eid is not just a celebration. It is a connection. It is sitting with family, visiting loved ones, and sharing moments that remind us what truly matters. This year, those meanings feel even heavier. When the world around you feels unstable, the need to hold onto these traditions becomes stronger. Not weaker. I would be lying if I said I wasn't worried. There is a quiet fear that follows every plan. Not overwhelming, but present. A constant reminder that things are not normal. But there is also something else—something stronger. It's the pull of home.

Because no matter how complicated the situation becomes, there are people waiting. There are moments waiting. There is a version of myself that only exists there. And that is hard to ignore. This journey is no longer just about traveling from one country to another. It's about navigating uncertainty. It's about choosing connection over comfort. It's about showing up, even when it's not easy.

I think about seeing my family again, sitting with friends, and even crossing paths with familiar faces and public figures in the vibrant atmosphere of Sulaymaniyah during Newroz. Life doesn't stop there, even when the world feels like it should. That thought gives me hope.

The Middle East has always been a place of contrasts—conflict and beauty, hardship and resilience. And Sulaymaniyah is no exception. Even now, I know that people will gather. Fires will be lit. Families will embrace. Celebrations will happen, not because everything is perfect, but because life must go on.

As I unpack my luggages for this trip, I carry two things with me: caution and hope. Caution, because the situation is real and unpredictable. Hope, because home is still there. I don't know what will happen with my flight. I don't know what the next few days will bring. But I do know this:

No matter how uncertain the journey is, the meaning behind it has never been clearer. I'm not just traveling. I'm going home.

Before I conclude my article, I want to give you dear reader an update that I am planning to travel to Dallas, Texas to join my people there that are celebrating Newroz and Eid. A couple hundred families established a Kurdish community in Dallas. And they gather every year to celebrate Newroz. I appreciate my US family and my community for supporting me to travel to Dallas by driving for almost 12 hrs and spending three days with my Kurdish people.



Friends of the Catholic Worker Update

Food, Food, Food

The Friends continue to fundraise for the meals served at the Bishop Dingman House on 7th street in Des Moines. 700 meals weekly, 3000 monthly. We estimate 36,000 free meals annually. Our meal costs remain steady at about \$4,000 monthly. We have located wholesale outlets for our most costly items, fresh meat and vegetables. Paying wholesale has allowed us to continue to provide the same number of meals at a near constant cost.

Coats, Hats, Gloves, and Blankets

On Tuesday November 25th, the Second Annual Winter Gear Giveaway took place at the Bishop Dingman House. 160 Coats, Hats, Gloves and Blankets were distributed to the low income and homeless community. Cost of the merchandise exceeded \$13,000 and was paid for through specific event fundraising and grants.

Grants, Grants, Grants

We have been diligent in pursuing grants to support the activities of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community. As the IRS/501C3 fundraising arm of the DMCWH, we are eligible to apply for many funding opportunities that CWH alone would not be eligible for. Listed below is the Grant support we have received in :

The Sisters of St. Francis, Dubuque: \$6,000 split between winter gear and storeroom supplies.

Polk County: \$4,000 for winter gear and \$3,000 for meat, thank you Supervisors McCoy and Connolly!

KC 5038, Ankeny \$250 quarterly for meat and \$2,000 for prepared meals.

Casey's: \$500 for coats and \$250 in gas cards

OLIH Parish, Ankeny: basket pass and other gifts \$6500

Northwest Area Foundation, St. Paul: \$250,000 (not a typo, continue reading for more information)

DMIEC: a Des Moines area faith community; \$5,000

Veridian Credit Union \$1,000

Warming Center Grant

Yes, it's a big grant for a small non-profit charity such as ours. But

there are big plans a-brewing to open a Warming and Cooling Center for those days of temperature extremes that are declared as an emergency. Typically, there are between 20-30 days each year that are deemed dangerous. We (the Friends) have been asked to operate a facility that would be open 24 hours a day during those emergency days. We have named the project Sanctuary Station. Sanctuary Station would be a year-round hub for overnight warming and cooling center, pop-up health clinics, immunizations, a legal clinic, lockers, showers, mail service and more. The grant monies from the Northwest Area Foundation are to be used for startup funding for this project.

Infrastructure Needs

While we plan for the future with the Sanctuary Station Project, there are immediate needs for infrastructure improvement.

The Des Moines Catholic Worker community resides in four houses in their near north side location. These homes were all built-in the 1880's and have continuing needs. DM Catholic Worker founder Frank Cordaro reports that windows and doors need to be replaced in all four houses and two of the houses that are three stories are in need of fire escapes. Contact Frank Cordaro or Ray Blase if you want to support the infrastructure needs.

RMD/IRA/Donor Advised Funds

As an IRS/501C3 Charity, we can receive your tax advantaged donation directly from your financial institution. Please remember us as you make your financial decisions for the year 2026.

How Can You Help?

Your continued support is needed for any of the activities mentioned above. Any amount is appreciated and spent wisely. Checks can be mailed to Friends of Catholic Worker, PO Box 1386 Ankeny, Iowa 50021. Online donations at our website friendsofcatholicworker.com or via PayPal. ALL donations are tax deductible.

Thank you and have a healthy and prosperous rest of 2026!

The Friends hosted a cook-out in the back of Dingman last year. Many showed up to receive good food!



Meeting the Personal Care Needs of our Guests

by Mary Ann Koch

Since about 2018 I have been volunteering at Des Moines Catholic Worker. In the beginning I spent most of my time on dish duty. When the Covid pandemic struck, I chose to take a sabbatical from volunteering because of my fear of Covid. After a while I returned to help out in the supply store, handing out through the side window food supplies, toiletries, and some clothing as it was donated to Catholic Worker. Eventually, we were able to open our doors and the store opened on the inside and the distributions continued as before the pandemic.

Working in the store was often frustrating for the volunteers along with our guests when we did not have the items they needed. When some asked for shampoo or a razor, we often had to turn them away empty handed. They usually thanked us anyway for coming to help at Catholic Worker. Then, last fall I heard that the Sisters of St Francis in Dubuque were offering some Direct Ministry Grants. I have been an associate with them for over 25 years, so I thought we (Victoria Christian, Donna Richard-Langer, Dave Langer, and myself—the regular Thursday store keepers with Eddie Bloomer) might be able to get some funds to help procure personal care items for our guests.

This past fall we received a generous grant from the Franciscan Sisters which has allowed us to purchase toiletries such as shampoo, lotion, razors, towels, and hand warmer. A portion of the grant also went towards the purchase of winter coats which were distributed in November. We are very grateful to the Franciscan Sisters in Dubuque that we are able to carry on the work of the Sisters, St Francis, and Dorothy Day as we meet the personal care needs of some of our neediest neighbors. Our guests have been very grateful.



Left Behind

by Victoria Christian

That Thursday our guests at a Des Moines shelter were terrified. It was far below zero with dangerous wind chills. Blizzard warnings abounded.

The “mentally ill” couldn’t understand why we had no blankets. Neither could we. We were just out of them.

We handed out t-shirts, hand towels and jackets for warmth. Some guests were handicapped, in wheelchairs or on crutches.

They needed pop-top canned soups because they had no can openers or stoves. Most lived by the river or on the ground.

They needed toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, toilet paper, combs and more. Why? They were stolen off them as they slept.

As we left, the wind howled and snow dimmed our vision. We saw the man missing part of his leg sitting on the open front porch with two friends, all huddled in used clothing and hand towels.

“Ladies, ladies” he called, don’t go that way, too slick. Take the stairs and hold on to the side rails at each step. Be careful! Bless you.”

So we left them there. And returned again next week.

*Top: Mary Ann serves a guest from DMCW’s shop
Middle: Bins in the shop carry personal care products. DMCW often needs more lotion, deodorant, chapstick, razors, combs, and other personal care products to meet the personal care needs of guests.*



Des Moines CATHOLIC WORKER BEG LIST

📍 1310 7th St, Des Moines, IA



WINTER IS COMING



Pantry Items

- CANNED SOUP
- INSTANT RAMEN
- CEREAL
- DRY SNACKS
- CANNED GOODS (TUNA, CHICKEN)
- HOT CHOCOLATE / TEA BAGS
- DRY FOOD
- HEAT & SERVE



Home Supplies

- LAUNDRY DETERGENT
- BLEACH
- PINE SOL & MURPHY OIL (WOOD FLOOR)
- BROOM
- TOILET PAPER
- PAPER TOWELS
- TO-GO CONTAINERS
- TRASH BAGS/SMALL PLASTIC BAGS



Hygiene Products

- SHAMPOO (BIG & SMALL)
- BODY LOTION
- DEODORANT
- SOAP/BODY WASH (BIG & SMALL)
- RAZORS/SHAVING CREAM
- COMBS/HAIRBRUSH
- FEMININE HYGIENE
- VITAMINS
- ASPIRIN/TYLENOL/IBUPROFEN
- ALLERGY MEDICATION
- FIRST AID KIT
- Q-TIPS
- TOOTHPASTE/TOOTHBRUSH
- TISSUES/WET WIPES



Clothes

- WOMEN 'S CLOTHING
- MEN 'S CLOTHING
- WOMEN 'S UNDERWEAR
- MEN 'S UNDERWEAR
- JACKETS/HOODIES
- SOCKS
- GLOVES/BEANIES/SCARVES
- SHOES
- SWEATSHIRTS/SWEATPANTS
- BLANKETS
- HAND/FOOT WARMERS
- TOWELS/SHEETS/PILLOWS
- TOTE BAGS/GYM BAGS/BACKPACK
- SLEEPING BAG

There Are Fruit Trees Nearby

by Alex Tone

It's been over two weeks since Kate, Tahoe, and I arrived at the Des Moines Catholic Worker. From getting into the rhythms of hospitality here to figuring out how the industrial-size can opener works, every day is full of new things for me, but I'm starting to see some parallels between this work and growing vegetables. Let me try to explain.

I've spent most of my adult life working on farms, ranches, and gardens in Ireland and the US. I don't come from a farming family, and working alongside plants, animals, soils, and people can be a mountain range of learning curves. The biggest mountain has been learning to unravel the myth of scarcity: If there are more people than resources, says the myth, there's never enough to meet everyone's needs, so a society needs to establish criteria that makes some people more "worthy" of getting their needs met than others. The myth uses different names – survival of the fittest, the tragedy of the commons, capitalist competition – to make us believe that scarcity is as fundamental and natural a law as gravity, as love.

Growing stuff busts this myth wide open. Plants give away far more energy than they need to survive through sharing nutrients through their root systems, debris for compost, fruit, nuts, oxygen, you name it. Look at a handful of soil through a microscope, and

you'll meet more kinds of life forms than people you'll ever be able to name. Living things in ecosystems eat and are eaten by each other, but a closer look will show a relationship of mutual nourishment rather than cutthroat competition (sorry, Darwin). The healthiest farms I've worked on have been the healthiest ecosystems,

growing huge amounts of good food from almost nothing but good soil and a whole lot of hard labor and care. Working on farms taught me that the fundamental law of ecosystems – of the "real world" – is not scarcity. It's generosity; it's abundance; it's everyone getting what they need.

I see this here at the DMCW. These folks feed over a hundred people five days a week, help them get what they need, and create a space to be human for a moment, all out of what sometimes looks like thin air. Each day can feel like a small miracle because it can feel like the "real world", the one I've seen in the garden beds and in the forest. It chips away at the myth of scarcity by showing how much can be done with little resources and lots of skill, work, and care; how much we can look after each other without hoarding resources, without determining who is more "worthy" than another.

Frank and Kate have been talking about the line in the Lord's Prayer – "Give us this day our daily bread" – in this context. The scholarly consensus is that the prayer isn't necessarily asking for our daily bread to fall into our laps. Rather, it's there in the soil, the seeds we plant, the labor we put into cultivating the wheat and turning it into flour, to make our daily bread. This isn't a story of scarcity. It's a story of the generosity of creation, the worthiness of everyone to enjoy its fruits, and the hard work and deep care it takes to do it.

A few years back, a dear friend of mine in the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia showed me hobo code – symbols that people would leave for each other to give warnings, to direct them towards good water and roads, and more – and its simple, beautiful symbol for "there are fruit trees nearby". I have a print of it that he made on the wall in the room I'm staying in at the Manning House, I see it every time I get ready to start a shift or hop on a food donation run. It's a daily reminder for me that the wild generosity of trees and ecosystems I knew in those mountains plays by the same rules as the daily cycles of care in a Catholic Worker house of hospitality. It reminds me that the bridge between the abundance of the world and turning some of it into our daily bread is work, and a profound commitment to the humanity in each of us. There are fruit trees nearby.



Alex, Kate, and Annie hand out good vibes while volunteering during hospitality hours



When has it ever been otherwise?

by Tom Cordaro

This article was originally published by Pax Christi USA.

A note from Tom: This article took shape weeks before the start of the latest war in the Middle East. Any semblance between what I wrote, and current events is purely coincidental and completely predictable.

The shock, anger, and profound sadness we feel at the unending horror show emanating from the federal government under President Trump is usually described in the progressive media with phrases like “unprecedented in our history” or “not who we are.” I remember early in Trump’s first term seeing a photo of an elderly woman at a demonstration holding a sign that read, “I can’t believe I am still protesting this sh*t!”

Under the Trump regime, many of the progressive gains of my lifetime have been disassembled: voting rights, fair housing, the right to food, healthcare, and education. White progressives like me have lived with the illusion that support for these basic rights was baked into the system and was now settled law (if not uniformly and justly applied).

In some progressive circles, there exists a belief that our current existential crisis represents a break with the “normal” progression of ever-expanding freedom and equality embodied in the “American ideal.” If this is our starting point, I am not sure we will ever find a way out of our current predicament. This overly optimistic belief about ourselves may make it more difficult and perilous for us to respond to the signs of our times. If we want to respond faithfully to our current crisis, we need to face the truth about our past.

I was born one year after the armistice was signed that ended combat operations in Korea (though there is no formal peace treaty.) The way this conflict ended (did not end) set the tone for US foreign policy going forward. I am 71 years old, and I can remember less than 10 years of my life when the United States was not at war (declared and undeclared) somewhere around the world. I also cannot remember a time when our nation was not at war with itself. (Members of the Gen X, Millennial, and Gen Z cohorts – anyone born after 1965 – have never known a time when the United States has not been at war overseas and at home.)

As of this writing, the United States is involved in seven publicly known military engagements across five different wars. For the US, war is not a break or a fracture of the normal order; it is our standard operating procedure. The Trump administration is just the most extreme example of what the US has been engaged in since its founding. From the genocide of native peoples to slave auctions and slave patrols, to Japanese internment camps, to mass deportations of Mexican in Operation Wetback, to extrajudicial killings of brown and black people by the state, violence and oppression have always been a part of our nation’s DNA.

Trump and MAGA do not represent a break from the past; they represent the counterrevolutionary forces that want the US to return to the good old days of white supremacy and privilege – especially for the corporate oligarchy — a time when women and communities of color were kept in their place. They may have a more realistic understanding of US history than many progressives and liberals.

This year we are celebrating the 250th anniversary of the day when the British North American colonies declared their independence from the Empire. Maybe this would be a good time to re-examine our understanding of our national narrative. Let’s begin with the basics: What does it mean to be a citizen of this country?

To answer this question, we may need to discard the notion of an “American ideal.” There is much to commend the notion of a perfect state or endgame that we strive for. However, this belief often glosses over an important truth: The United States has always been and always will be a work in progress.

What it means to be an American is always changing (check out Bad Bunny’s Super Bowl performance – as he pointed out, America stretches from Chile to Cuba to Canada.) What the MAGA crowd fears is change. What they fear is being left behind in the shifting terrain of our national identity. MAGA wants to stop change and turn back the clock, but change is the lifeblood of this nation, giving it vitality, ingenuity, and resiliency.

Our challenge is to create an ever-expanding circle of concern that insists that no one be left behind. Expanding our circle of concern also means embracing the idea that our national identity is not fixed, but evolving, adapting, and ever renewing. To be a citizen of this country means always changing and adapting while holding fast to the civic principles and values that allow us to continue to “form a more perfect union.”



A crucible, a container that can withstand very high temperatures

Maybe, in place of the notion of an “American ideal,” we can embrace the notion of “America the Great Crucible.” I am not talking about a melting pot where every European immigrant community is stripped of its uniqueness to create a white superman. A crucible is a place of severe testing: a place or situation in which concentrated forces interact to cause or influence change or development.

It is in that crucible that we are made. The United States is not a prize to be won. It is not a birthright to treasure. Being a citizen of this country is not a privilege or entitlement; it is the greatest challenge and adventure that anyone can embrace.

In his 2015 address to Congress, Pope Francis spoke of four US Americans who embodied the fundamental values and enduring spirit of the people of this country: President Abraham Lincoln, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton. It should be noted that two of these people were assassinated by fellow citizens, and Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King, Jr. spent time in US prisons for “disturbing the peace.” The hermit monk Thomas Merton found ways to resist the racism, poverty, and wars of our nation.

I believe that only in the crucible of this country could such heroes be formed. They became heroes by taking up the challenge of living authentically and with integrity in this crucible. I believe that only this crucible, with its contradictions, dismal betrayal of its values, and its addictions to violence and greed, could produce resisters like Phil and Dan Berrigan, Malcolm X and Fanny Lou Hamer, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, and a host of women and men who took up the challenge and adventure of being a US American.

Social progress requires tireless effort, not passive waiting. As Dr. King reminds us, “Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle.” This is what it means to embrace the challenge of the crucible of this country.

I have no clue what we should do next. I only know that we will never figure it out until we begin to let go of some of our cherished ideas and long-held assumptions. We might need to leave the certitudes of our comforting ideologies and theologies and enter the wilderness, a liminal space with few signposts or roadmaps.

But, as Thomas Merton reminds us, “You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope.”

Welcome to the crucible!

An interview with one of DMCW's longest-serving community members, Eddie Bloomer

How did you come to the Worker?

I got ran out of the [GE] factory. We were doing union work, and for about six months I was doing orderly work with a handicapped kid. This is back in 1981.

And then I dug ditches and painted houses and cleaned windows for a while to sustain myself, and then I had a community newspaper that said that they needed people in Washington, DC to help staff a soup kitchen and drop in center and street clinic. So I went there in March of '83. It was sort of like a Catholic Worker house, in a way. It was service to the poor, needy and hungry.

And I was there until November of '84, and then I came out here and worked at Kindred Community at the local church here. At night, we had about 35 men that slept on floors and tables and chairs. Then in April of '85 I went back to Louisville and did nonprofit work. I worked for Project Warm, which weatherized homes for the needy and handicapped and elderly and poor. And did that for about a year.

Then I worked at a drop in center for mentally challenged people, and then came out here in August of '93.



Did you always know that you wanted to do work like what we do here at the Worker?

Well, I realized that I was a needy person, and there was worse off people than I was, and so I thought, you know, being sympathetic to the human race that I would like to do this.

What made you want to stay here?

It was community, and I didn't realize how lonely I was until I came to the Catholic Worker in August of '93. I was invited out here by Carla Dawson, and she said, Come on, get your little hobo bag and come on out and help us out, if you want to. And I've been here since August of '93 and I found love in this community and companionship and support, and it's been a great experience.

What's something you've learned here?

Probably human nature and seeing how close we are to the human race and to each other, and that makes a difference. People come first.

When did you get involved in advocacy and peace work here at the Worker?

Well, probably after I got here, and I've been arrested about 50 times. I've served a little over 100 days in jail time. And of course, that's nothing compared to some of the other resisters in the movement that have spent years in prison before because of war and peace concerns. I did it because it was the right thing to do, and it's an American thing to do. Whether it's the Boston Tea Party or the civil rights movement, it's important to stick

your neck out.

When you were doing that work in the factory, would you have imagined that you would end up here and doing civil disobedience?

I didn't know what to expect when I went to Washington, DC. I figured we'd all be standing around the fire barrel, roasting rats in the alley and really having a hard time. But then I got religion while I was in Washington, DC, the community was creating nonviolence.

...Once a Seventh Day Adventist Church in Washington, DC, donated 300 blankets to the shelter. So that was impressive to see how people Christians responded to the need of a call to help the poor.

I've seen how people reacted to the needy and the poor, and that's gospel platform Beatitudes, or the Sermon on the Mount. And I was impressed that I was an atheist or agnostic when I went, and by sharing in the faith and with others and the work, I got religion. I hate to sound corny, but you know, I found the love of Jesus in the poor.

Do you have a favorite civil disobedience or act of civil disobedience where you felt the most alive?

Each time I felt alive and I felt dead at the same time, because I didn't think I was doing enough, and they all were significant to me. I don't really know which one.

I took a couple of fasts for protest in Washington, DC that we the government promised to upgrade our shelter... Fasting and prayer was really a good thing to draw closer to work and people and to God. I've fasted for over nine months on just water, but not all at one time.

I fasted 30 days in Kansas City to free up the commodities that were in a limestone cave... We were able to get the government to bend over a little bit and give these commodities to the poor, the nursing homes and churches and whatnot. I would go for two weeks fasting just on water, maybe have a yogurt and go for two more weeks. And I really enjoyed the results of it. After each phase, I felt compelled to do something that was important my life or to help other people.

What would you want to say to the people of Des Moines about this place and volunteering here?

We're open and we need help, and the poor will always be with us, as Jesus said. But he didn't say anything about the rich, except woe unto them.

Just continue to support us and pray for us, and don't forget the needy and hungry that are all walking the street every day. And it's getting worse in America. The economy's being run into the ground, and with these tariffs and war going on, we could be headed for a great big depression like in the 1930s. But just keep on praying and hoping and look forward to the future.



Standing with Immigrants and the Poor

Los Angeles Catholic Worker Jeff Dietrich Speaks to the Court

On March 6, Jeff Dietrich appeared in Federal Court on charges stemming from his act of nonviolent civil disobedience blocking an ICE van at the downtown Los Angeles Metropolitan Detention Center, where immigrant detainees are held. The judge decided not to give Jeff a fine or jail time. What follows is Jeff's statement to the judge.

Your Honor, I am almost 80 years old, and I suffer from aphasia, so I speak slowly and without affect. I want to tell you about a man I met during one of the vigils we hold for immigrants. Manuel was his name. He sobbed profusely as he told me the story of his wife, Maria, who had been kidnapped by masked ICE agents in San Bernardino and transferred to the hellhole "dungeon basement prison" below the Federal Building in Los Angeles, where they hold immigrant prisoners. I promised Manuel and his kidnapped wife, Maria, that I would stand in solidarity with all immigrants by blocking the ICE vans that transport immigrants. I will not pay a fine or forego any punishment that this court might inflict on me.

Your Honor, I have been serving the poor of Skid Row since 1970. I proudly refused induction into the U.S. Military in 1970. I subsequently met the Catholic Workers (to whom I am still attached 55 years later) at a retreat outside of St. Louis, Missouri. I had an "Ah ha" moment when the Catholic Workers returning from the trial of the "Milwaukee 14" said they had been "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, and burning draft files." I thought that is what Jesus Christ would do if he were alive today. Though I have never burned draft files, I have committed acts of civil disobedience against every war when the U.S. invaded another country. I have poured blood and oil on the steps of the downtown Federal Building, and I have cut the fences of the Nuclear Test Site in Nevada.

Everyday Alex, one of our homeless guests, comes to Hospitality Kitchen, where we serve meals to the poor, and says: "hero to the needy," in recognition of the day I threw myself under the huge wheels of a dump truck to prevent the city from stealing the possessions of the poor and in recognition of my ongoing service to the poor of Skid Row. And I have also blocked the bathrooms of city councilmen in a confrontation to get porta-potties for Skid Row people.

Your Honor, I stand with the immigrants. I stand in opposition to Donald Trump. I stand in opposition to the invasion of Venezuela,

which the Trump administration did not even bother to "cover up" their motivations with slogans such as "to promote democracy" or "free the Venezuelan people." No, the administration just wants its oil in the form of "might makes right," which has no place in the international world order and is a violation of International Law, to say nothing of the U.S. Constitution.

Your Honor, Donald Trump is handling foreign policy as if he were back on the reality TV show, *The Apprentice*:

Venezuela, "You are Fired!"

Cuba, "You are Fired!"

Greenland, "You are Fired!"

Denmark, "You are Fired!"

Iran, "You are Fired!"

NATO, "You are Fired!"

This reality TV show rhetoric has no place in the International World Order that the U.S. has maintained since WWII. It is pure "might makes right" bombast and bravado. The President of the United States is behaving like a spoiled child. A spoiled rich child, whose mantra is power for power's sake. His immigration agents murdered Rene Good, a peaceful demonstrator, labeling her a "domestic terrorist." Rene Good—Presente!

Again, I am almost 80 years old, and suffer from aphasia, so I am not as articulate as I used to be. That said, I still write books and work every week with my wife, Catherine Morris, on the streets of Skid Row serving the poor in L.A., where we provide more than 1500 home-cooked meals a day. I live in a community with other members and several formerly homeless guests to whom we provide meals and shelter.

I stand with the late Pope Francis, who lamented, "How much contempt is stirred up at times toward the vulnerable, the marginalized, and migrants... For we are all children of God."

And I stand with Pope Leo XIV, who said, "No one should be forced to flee, nor be exploited or mistreated because of their situation as foreigners or people in need. Human dignity must always come first."

Your honor, I am guilty of standing with those who have no due process rights or visitation rights and were kidnapped by masked, badge-less men. I am standing with the immigrants fleeing from war, poverty, and climate change. And of course, Manuel and Maria, his kidnapped wife, because we are all "children of God."



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HOW YOU CAN HELP

Prayers . . . without them, nothing happens.

VOLUNTEERS:

Individuals and work crews for hospitality (serving food, cleanup), cleaning and general inside and outside maintenance . . . without them, we burn out.

FOOD:

Fruit, Vegetables, Meat and Fish, Milk, Cheese, Salted Butter, Olive Oil, Sugar, Coffee, Creamer, Juice (sugar free), Salt, Black Pepper, Fresh Garlic, Salad dressing, Soups and Stews (both canned and fresh). Leftovers from weddings, funerals and other social gatherings . . .

MEAL PROVIDERS:

Provide a meal for 100 people once a month! Call or email for current openings: 515-214-1030, dmcatholicworker@gmail.com

HEALTH AND

HYGIENE:

Menstrual Hygiene Items, Diapers, Baby Formula, Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Multivitamins, Antibiotic Ointment, Band-Aids, Lip balm

TOILETRIES:

Disposable Razors, Shaving Cream, Shampoo, Conditioner, Lotion, Deodorant, Soap, Toothpaste (Small sizes preferred for handout), Toothbrushes and Toilet Paper.

NEEDED CLOTHING:

Underwear, Socks, T-shirts, Sweatshirts, Hoodies, Coats, Work Pants. (All Sizes, Especially Big) Sleeping Bags, Blankets

HOUSEHOLD

SUPPLIES:

Bleach, Laundry Detergent, Environmentally-Friendly Dish Soap, Murphy's Oil Soap, Pinesol, Trash Bags, Brooms, Rugs, Candles, Energy-Efficient Light Bulbs, Aluminum Foil, Plastic Wrap, Sandwich and Freezer Bags, Bath Towels, Playing Cards, Candles, Phone Chargers

HOUSE REPAIRS:

With four old houses, there are plenty of projects large and small. We invite do-it-yourselfers--individuals or groups--with skills in carpentry, plumbing, painting, electrical, etc. to come in, look over our housing needs, and choose a project. Bring your own tools if possible.

LIBRARY:

Peace and Justice books for the Berrigan House Library

\$CASH MONEY\$:

Cash donations are essential to pay our property taxes, utilities, repair and maintenance of property, upkeep and gas for two vans, purchase of needed supplies, our community gardening and for the continued publication and mailing of the *via pacis*, a good twenty percent of our annual expenses.

Find us on Facebook

at www.facebook.com/DesMoinesCatholicWorker/



Cordaro brothers Frank, Joe, and Bill (visiting from Kansas City) during hospitality hours at DMCW