



THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE PROJECT

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Mary, Comforter of God's Children

Venus Wozniak

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

Isaiah 40:1

But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

John 19: 25b - 27

A few weeks ago, I rose before dawn to get ready for work. It was to be an early and late day of work. Gracie, our 5 year old daughter, heard my rustling about and woke to investigate the

noise so early in the morning. Upon seeing that I was dressed and almost ready to leave, her lower lip began to quiver and out came deep sobs. Gracie's body effused sorrow, "you were going to leave without saying good-bye." I collected her grief-stricken self, snuggled her back into bed, and reassured her that I would never leave for work without a kiss and snuggle. She snuggled in and fell right to sleep. I, however, was still shaken by the sorrow that I had just encountered. So I paused for a moment to pray over Gracie. I made the sign of the cross on her forehead and asked Mary to be with her through the day, to keep Gracie close to her heart in prayer.

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Do you read *The Visitation*?

We are just coming to the end of our second year of publishing *The Visitation*. If you look forward to seeing us in the mail or in your Church Narthex please let us know! We would love to hear from you. Drop a note in the envelope included in this issue. We would love to keep sending out *The Visitation* to willing readers. If you would like to sponsor a subscription please enclose \$5 in the enclosed envelope. It would be great if you told your friends about us too! Let us know of anyone else that would like to receive *The Visitation* in the mail. For more information or comments feel free to email us at newspaper@nativity-house.org

Local Faith Communities and Justice for Workers

Steve Jackson

On October 1, 2012, 500 workers from Warehouse Workers for Justice (WWJ) and coalitions with other unions from Joliet and Chicago provided the largest demonstration ever seen in Elwood, IL. Walmart warehouse workers went on strike to protest working conditions and discriminatory management practices in the warehouse. 14 people, including 6 interfaith clergy, from the WWJ Interfaith Action committee and supporting organizations were arrested

by the Elwood Police for blocking the road in front of the Walmart warehouse. Walmart closed the warehouse for the day. In this same week, Walmart settled with the striking workers and agreed to provide safer conditions and respect to the individual workers.

My name is Steve Jackson, member of Pax Christi USA for over 10 years, co-coordinator for Pax Christi Illinois (PCIL), and active member of Pax

Christi Servants group. We have been involved in prayer services for peace, non-violence training, and anti-racism. As a social justice minister having completed five JustFaith Ministries programs including Just Faith, Engaging Spirituality, Crossing Borders, Mission Based Communities, and Faith Encounters the Ecological Crisis, I can no longer ignore injustice when I see it. I must act.

In 2009, God called me to take organizer training with Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ). I did not know why, but I trust God, and try to do his will on a daily basis. In November 2009, 70 warehouse workers in the Bissell Warehouse in Elwood, IL

protested the conditions in the warehouse and were immediately fired. After a meeting with religious leaders at the Diocese of Joliet, I was asked by Tom Garlitz, Director of the Office for Human Dignity, to coordinate the Interfaith Action Committee (IAC) for WWJ as a volunteer. God provides what you need before you know you need it.

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Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching

Adam Setmeyer

These days, if I may be so bold to make a judgment based purely on anecdotal evidence, it is not only our clothing and culture that have become branded, but we, as human beings, have branded ourselves as well. We declare our allegiances to Mac or PC, Coke or Pepsi, Team Edward or Jacob, and Ford or Chevy to name a few. And while these may seem innocent enough, the truth is that Americans are, in fact, separating themselves into “teams” more and more. Just ask the citizens of “Paulville” a community forming in Texas which is made up of 100% Ron Paul supporters, or read the book, *The Big Sort*, by Bill Bishop which scientifically details this type of “clustering.”

Unfortunately, as Catholics and Christians we tend to sort and cluster as well. In the worst cases these clusters of Catholics grab a portion of our Church’s teaching, place a primacy

upon it which only belongs to Christ himself, and then use it as a litmus test for the rest of the church. Certainly, the majority of Catholics located in such clusters find themselves there for good reasons – they are passionate about their faith, and find affinity to a particular portion of it. However, in my opinion, we Catholics often follow the same pattern described in *The Big Sort*, and our sorting is becoming less and less benign. Personally, I have met people who have labeled themselves as the following: Traditional Catholics, Vatican II Catholics, Pro-life Catholics, and, the newest addition to the sorting, Evangelical Catholics. There is, of course, another cluster of Catholics which needs to be mentioned, *Social Justice Catholics*.

I bring this issue of clustering up, ironically maybe, in order to introduce myself and many of the articles in this issue of *The Visitation*, as they are

written by a social justice ministry team at Lewis University and are based upon the principles of *Catholic Social Teaching*. The **Catalyst Social Justice Leadership Team**, comprised of six undergraduate students and two University Ministers (Sabrina Poulin and myself), spends the fall semester growing in their understanding of social justice by participating in service projects, prayerfully reflecting weekly on topics related to social justice, hosting a Fair Trade Fair, and writing for this newspaper. All the while they are preparing to pass on what they have learned to thirty other students during the **Catalyst Retreat** in January – out of which next year’s Catalyst leaders will be chosen – by reflecting on how their eyes and ears have been opened to the need for justice in our world; their call by Jesus to become people of justice; how they have been transformed and hope to become agents of transformation in the

world.

Upon first glance, a team bearing the title Catalyst, does seem like the epitome of clustering, but let me explain why I believe Catalyst is actively working against this tendency. First, Catalyst, by its very nature, is evangelical and missionary. Its fundamental goal, its reason for existence, is *not* to form a separate community of passionate students at Lewis University who are committed to justice, but, rather, to aid the Holy Spirit in bringing a passion for God’s kingdom of justice to our entire campus. The living witness to this can be found in the profound reflections each of the Catalyst Team members delivers during the retreat.

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Police at Elwood demonstration in full body armor. Photo by Twitter user @daneyvilla.



Steve Jackson (seated on left) moments before arrest. Image capture from Chicago Sun-Times video.

Continued from Justice for Workers

The IAC and WWJ have worked tirelessly to obtain justice for the warehouse workers in Will County and across the country. Many lawsuits have been filed and won. City, County, and State government officials have been educated on the conditions in the warehouses, including wage theft, health and safety violations, racial and ethnic discrimination, sexual harassment, and lack of respect.

Warehouse management companies use temporary agencies to get the needed labor. The agencies do not provide affordable health care, sick time, or vacations for the workers. The workers are “Perma-Temps”. The warehouses pay almost a living wage to the agencies. The warehouse workers receive an average of \$9.25 per hour when they are working.

This level of income is not sustainable.

Workers and their families must then rely on public assistance, local charities and food banks to survive. State and local tax dollars went into building the warehouses in Will County to provide good jobs. Instead the “high cost of low prices” takes more tax dollars to support the workers while the warehouse owners enhance their bottom line.

The IAC and WWJ continue our struggle to get justice, respect, and living wages for the warehouse workers. The workers are beginning to

be successful in organizing and pressuring warehouse management to improve conditions and respect the workers. Local faith communities are getting involved to support the workers. We continue the journey working for justice to get peace. 🏠

Steve Jackson is a parishioner at Christ the Servant in Woodridge, IL. He was arrested as he sat on the street in Elwood, IL on October 1, 2012.

Continued from Catholic Social Teaching

These deal with the themes of *Opening Our Eyes* to the injustices around us, *Hearing Jesus' Call* to move from charity to justice, and letting our hearts be *Transformed* so that we might transform the world. The students spend approximately five weeks writing, editing, and refining the delivery of these reflections, which combine their personal experiences, scripture, and Catholic social teaching. Those who hear them are deeply moved.

This leads me to the second reason Catalyst is boundary breaking, our integration of *Catholic Social Teaching*. Unfortunately, many baptized Catholics still have not heard of CST, so let me offer a brief explanation. While CST is not limited to the magisterial writings of the church. It is most often associated with them, and specifically the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (or *New Things*) written by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, in response to the industrial revolution and its awful working

conditions. Most consider *Rerum Novarum* the first "social encyclical," and *Caritas in Veritate* (or *Charity in Truth* by Pope Benedict XVI) being the most recent in 2009 (with many other written in the time lapsed), but it should not be forgotten that Christians at all times have tried to address the ever changing situation of the world through the good news found in Jesus Christ. In other words, *Catholic Social Teaching* can be very complex, and this, I am sure, is part of the reason why it is not as widely spread as it ought to be.

Fortunately, many have tried to distill CST into a few principles, so that it is more easily understood. I believe the best of these comes from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in their document *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*. In this document our pastors identify seven principles: Life and Dignity of the Human Person; the Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; the Dignity of Work

and the Rights of Workers; the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; Solidarity; and, Care for God's Creation. In other lists one might find also "the promotion of peace" and/or "the principle of subsidiarity." Additionally, it is often said that "Life and Dignity of the Human Person" is the fundamental principle to the other six, and that "Solidarity" is the principle which holds the other six together as cohesive whole. Obviously, some have used CST as brand by which to sort out from other Catholics, but I believe this does not have to be the case and Catalyst is an example of this. By focusing on this body of teaching, Catalyst prevents clustering, because we understand the essence of the teaching to be "for" something rather than "against" many things. Specifically, Catalyst desires to promote the first principle, the dignity of every human person in every situation, as it is experienced through the subsequent principles. These principles offer Catalyst, and all Christians, something to lift up as a sign of hope in our often broken world, and compel us to walk together rather than further apart.

The six students of this year's Catalyst Team have prepared articles on many of these principles. Sometimes the students have chosen to offer their personal experiences, while others are reflecting on the world they see around them, but in either case I hope you find new insights into a rich tradition.

We are so honored to participate in this issue of *The Visitation*.

Blessings,

Adam Setmeyer

Assistant Director of University Ministry, Lewis University



From Sandwiches to Solidarity

Angela Cotta

During last year's Catalyst Social Justice Retreat, Lewis University students exemplified the Catholic Social Teaching principle of solidarity while visiting homeless shelters in Chicago.

The retreat participants and leaders (I was one of the leaders) split into groups, and each group went to a different shelter. My group went to a women's shelter in the Uptown neighborhood on the north side of the city. When we first arrived at the shelter, we served sandwiches and snacks. Taking the time to serve food to the poor is a significant charitable action that should not go unnoticed, but too often, it is forgotten that charity alone is not enough. Society's vulnerable at all levels need human interaction as much as those of us in more fortunate circumstances. Practicing solidarity is also key in aiding the poor and vulnerable. This was the purpose of the trip: to show the retreat participants what solidarity looks like when it is put into action.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in their document *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*, describes the principle of solidarity with the following words, "We are one human family whatever our national, racial,

ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers and sisters keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world."

On Catalyst, we demonstrated this principle by simply setting foot in homeless shelters and conversing with the people who called the shelter home. We talked to the individuals as if they were a part of our own families and asked them questions such as "what is your favorite sports team?" and "how do you like spending your time?" We showed the women there that they were our sisters in Christ, and that we respected and acknowledged them.

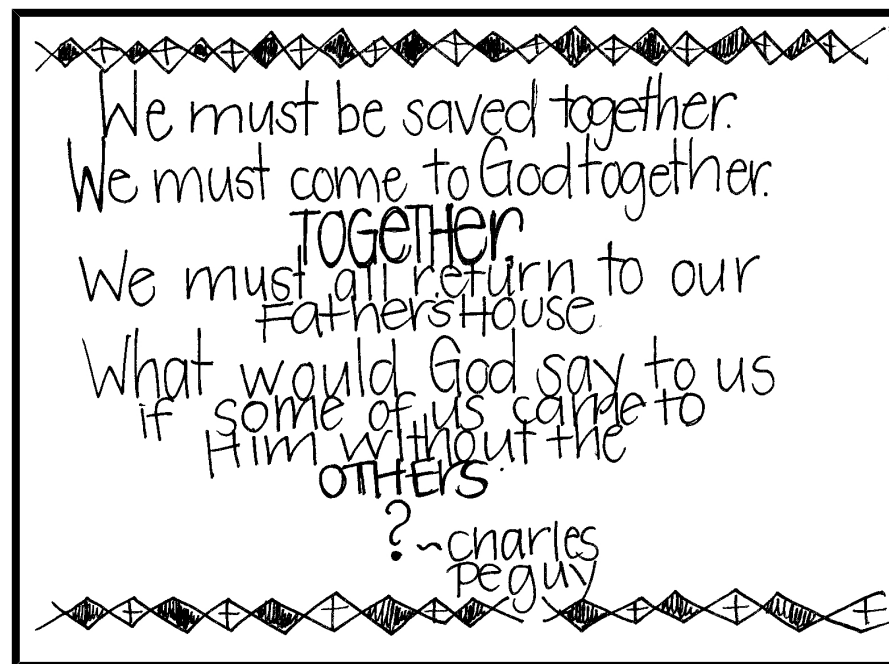
I cannot speak for my group members, but, for me, visiting the shelter was a powerful experience. The Catholic Church teaches that each human has inherent dignity within him or herself, and this experience allowed me to recognize the dignity of each human life around me. I found myself disregarding the common stereotypes of the homeless and instead took the opportunity to be a companion for that one special night. Experiencing solidarity in action that night at the shelter served as a reminder of Jesus living among the poor, the sick and the

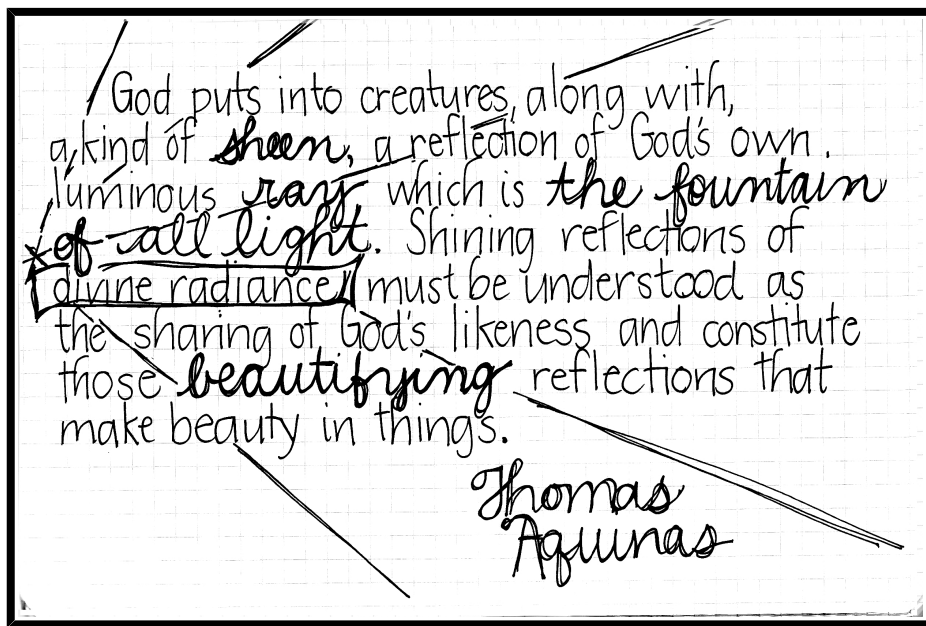
dying during His time on Earth.

Solidarity can be shown in any community. It is a principle that does not require much to be put into action. With civility, humility and compassion, each of us can recognize the inherent dignity in each person around us. We can break down the barriers and stereotypes that plague our communities. Solidarity is such a valuable principle to practice because it promotes equality and the central principle of Catholic Social Teaching: Life and Dignity of the Human Person.



Angela Cotta is a senior double-majoring in history and theology and loves all things social justice.





Preferential Option for the Poor

Bob Seiberlich


In today's world there are many different ways that we look to improve our own lives and satisfy our own needs. One of the Catholic principles of social justice is that we must have a preferential option for the poor. This means that we need to show care for those that are most in need of the services being offered by our society. In a world where we are constantly focusing on ourselves - it is all about the "me, me, me" - we need to realize that there are millions of people out in the world that need our help. This is exactly what the preferential option for the poor calls us to do.

The Preferential Option for the Poor does not only call us to think of the people that are financially poor, but to think of numerous other groups of people that are in need of our help. Such groups would be young single mothers, those in poverty, people with disabilities, unborn children, and the elderly. These are all examples of the different groups of people that we are called to be responsible for. We have a duty to ourselves to make sure that these people receive the proper benefits and aid that they deserve and most desperately need.

There are things that we can do to help bring justice to these people's lives. We have to vote for people who will look out for the poor and those that are in need. The whole society has a responsibility to these people. We can volunteer our time to shelters and help to take care of these different groups in need. A simple step would be to take some of our extra spending money and be willing to donate it to a charitable cause that benefits the people we want to help the most. Another way to help would be to donate some of the clothes

that we no longer wear, or donate food to food pantries.

I specifically remember a time when I was in high school and it was Christmas season and there was a food drive going on at school. I wanted to help out as much as I could, so I went to the store and bought around 100 cans of soup to support the food drive. The next day when I brought all of the soup into my chemistry class the teacher was amazed. I felt so good about being able to help a great cause and bring joy to other people. Through my donation to the food drive more people would be able to eat.

As we can see, the actions that we take don't have to be big, but they make a giant impact on others lives. Jesus calls us to live as modern apostles in our world today. That doesn't mean we have to be priests or saints, but we need to act in ways that demonstrate that we are followers of Christ. There are so many ways that we can live our lives in Christ, but we need to be open to this calling, and follow the opportunities that we are given. If we all work to live out Christ's call we can work to make a better place for all of us to live. 

Bob is a Junior at Lewis University double majoring in sport management & marketing, with a double minor in business administration & theology.


Fair Trade to Support the Dignity of Work

Elizabeth Jilek

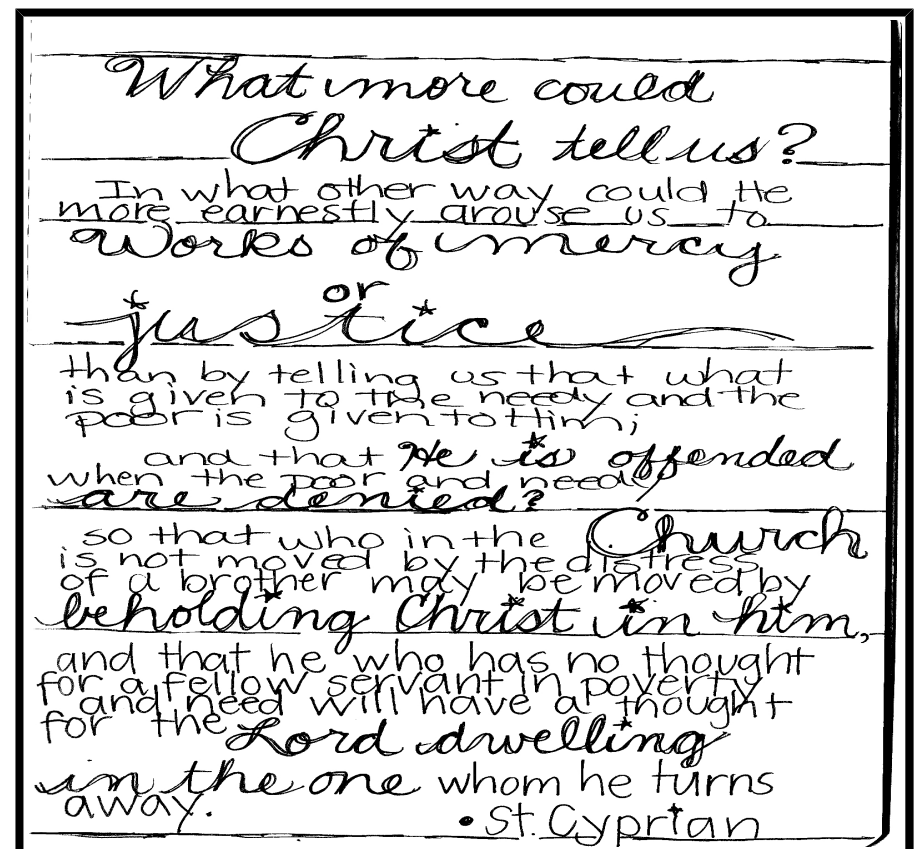
In what looks like a simple green box are sixteen individually wrapped bags. Each bag contains millions of small green leaves. These leaves give me energy and they taste delicious when boiled in water. These are green tea leaves. When it comes to tea, there is a lot that you might not know. Most importantly, when I look at my box of tea, there is a little square in the corner of the package that reads, "Fair Trade Certified". This label guarantees the consumer that the farmers and factory workers responsible for the production of this tea were paid a fair wage. By buying this tea over other commercially produced tea, I am paying a dollar extra per box, but more importantly, I am ensuring that my money goes to support disenfranchised farmers instead of big corporations.

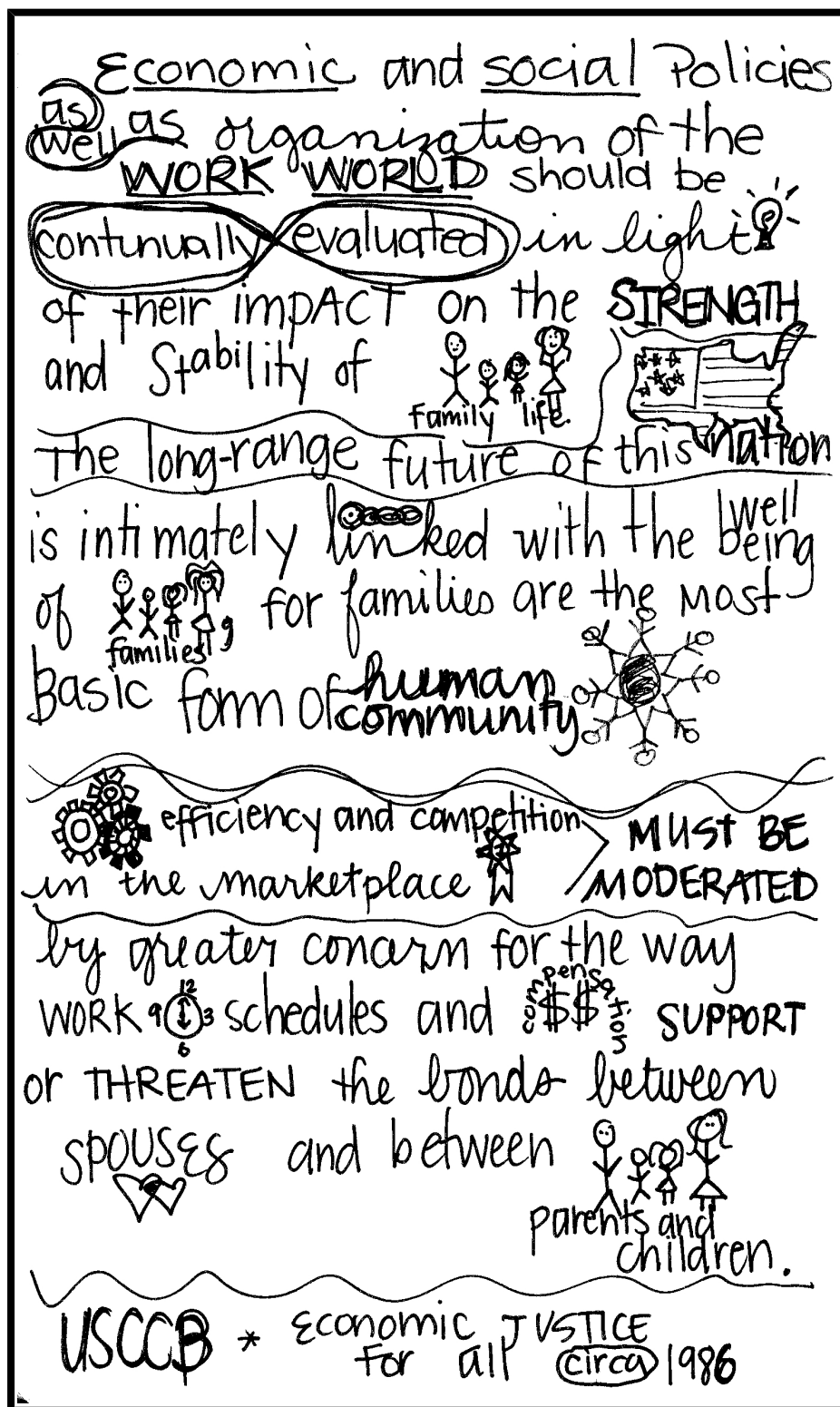
Catholic Social Teaching's theme of The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers believes, "the economy must serve the people, not the other way around". The theme goes on to state that work should be protected because it is more than a way to earn a living. It is a way for citizens to become a valuable part of their community. Furthermore, work should be productive and result in fair wages. In the world right now there are 2.5 billion workers that are living on less than two dollars a day. They are not earning fair wages for their

product. Instead, larger corporations dominate the global economy, out-competing small farmers for wages. The small farmers cannot afford to sell their product at the same low cost that the corporations are selling, so they lose access to the global economy.

This is where Fair Trade comes in. This business model allows disenfranchised workers around the world an opportunity to sell their products in the global market. In addition to tea, Fair Trade also includes coffee, chocolate, handcrafts, and clothing. Next time you are at the supermarket buying any of these products, keep in mind where your money is going. If your budget allows, consider buying the fair trade product in order to support the small producers. Every time you buy a fair trade product you are guaranteed that a percentage of your money will go towards funding grants to support small farmers. Additional fair trade products can be found on www.crsfairtrade.org. 

Elizabeth is a senior at Lewis University majoring in Nursing.





Call to Family & Participation

Steph Daley

A family is a group made up of a mom, dad, and children...right? In my opinion, family means much more than members connected through biological makeup. My family extends out to a community of people that cares and looks out for each other. As followers of Christ, we are called to love and respect our families and communities. But, what does that mean? How can we put that love and care into action in our everyday life?

My mom set a great example of living out her call and care for family. During my junior year of high school, a family close to ours was going through financial burdens. This family did own their own house, but the payments were

becoming too much to pay every month. They really could not afford to live in this house month after month and they were facing potential foreclosure. After realizing this, the family decided they needed to move away from this home and make a plan of where to go after the move. The eldest daughter in the family was old enough to move out into her own apartment, she just needed the time and motivation to save up. The rest of the family could also then look into an apartment setup that would fit the needs of the other four members.

During the transitional period, our close friends were homeless. Someone so close to me did not have a solid

Rights and Responsibilities

Bryan Bolton

It is not absurd to think that every person has a right to have enough to eat, drink, or have a comfortable place to live. Despite this belief, in today's society we routinely see people living on the street. We see people working three jobs just to feed their children. Poor people are often seen as lazy, but some people are just unfortunate. I believe people should not be doomed because of these circumstances.

I have found that most people in society live with an "I" mentality. I want this or I need to do this are common phrases that we hear today. We live in a society that values individual achievement, which is not always bad, but it leads us to live life with blinders on. By focusing only on our own wants and our own needs leads to certain things being overlooked. The people that are overlooked most often are the poor. Jesus showed us how to do this with the example of the Canaanite woman. She cried for help and at first he ignored her, but after a while he realized he had the duty to help all people. We seem to only look out for ourselves. The only time we help one another is when we get something out of it. There are not many people that help out of the goodness of their heart anymore. This is something that needs to change and it needs to start at the top and work its way down.

Government officials are supposed to be serving the will of the people. The unfortunate fact is that some politicians only serve the interests of the elite, those with the money that can help get them re-elected. What about people without money? They seem to remain

invisible to the people who are supposed to be serving their best interest. It is the responsibility of all people, but especially public officials to make sure that all people are given the resources needed to survive. Between both political parties, a total of \$1,960,811,975 was spent on the recently concluded presidential campaign (according to opensecrets.org). Maybe, just maybe, some of that money could have been spent helping those people that need it the most.

Middle and upper class Americans, for many reasons, often tend to think in terms of I want this or I want that. We always want the next big thing. This needs to change, especially seeing that there are people that can barely afford to eat. The following commitments might be beneficial: Instead of buying the next new technologies we will donate some money to a charity. Before we think that we want something we will evaluate what we actually need.

Most of us take comfort for granted, which is not fair seeing that some people are literally sleeping on the street and forced into begging for money just so that they can eat. The comfort of adequate living standards is a *right* that all people should have, but it just is not a reality. It is the *responsibility* of all human beings to help one another so we can all live in this comfort. 🏠

Bryan is a senior at Lewis University, and is studying Secondary Education.

place to sleep. My mom took action almost immediately and responded to her call from her faith. She opened up our house for the family to move in. Our house had enough space to offer, but every part of the house would be lived in. Including the six people in my family, we had eleven people total in our house. My mom took control and reassigned rooms to make sure her guests were comfortable. I was beyond irritated because I had to give up my own room, a privilege that I had taken for granted. As a sixteen year old, I was bitter and upset and did not understand that my mom was demonstrating being a strong person of faith. My emotions and actions only reflected my age and immaturity. I am embarrassed to admit that I was once a person that did not understand. The time passed and the family only stayed with us for two

months. Looking back on this time, I realized that the situation was not negative at all.

This experience was eye opening and I learned a great lesson from my mom during that time. She truly acted above and beyond her call and helped out a family in need. From her example, I know that in any similar situation I would follow my mom's lead and help out as much as I can. She is my role model and I only hope that I can follow in her footsteps and help others and answer my call. 🏠

Stephanie Daley is a third year student at Lewis University pursuing an Early Childhood Education major and Theatre major.

Eco-J

Natalie Asp

Environmental issues are very prominent in our society today—recycling, global warming, and the destruction of the rainforest are common discussion topics. As Christians it is one of our callings to care for the Earth and to respect God's creation, not just on Earth Day but actively in our lives every day.

I was able to apply this principle in my own life when I joined our University Eco-Justice Service Trip to Racine, WI. For one very interesting week I, along with 4 other students and our coordinator Sabrina, spent time living with the Dominican sisters at the Eco-Justice Center, learning about sustainable living, and using our


resources wisely. The Eco-Justice center is a farm that is home to ducks, chickens, goats, a dog, barn cats, and alpacas. The sisters also practice organic farming, growing most of their own produce.

Before Eco-J, I had never thought I could re-use so many things. I was always taught to recycle my water bottles and to conserve water, but the sisters took conservation to a whole new level. They re-use plastic sandwich bags, have a large compost pile, they use as little water as possible during chores and not one scrap of food, whether it is for themselves or for the animals, is wasted. I was so surprised that a house of five women

could have such a small garbage can, but by the end of the week I was thinking four times before I put anything into it. Everything that they consumed they did so very carefully and with a purpose. Their resourcefulness and ability to recycle items was something that I really admired and want to practice more in my own life.

Along with practicing conservation and making smart choices about our resources, I have found that we also need to educate other people about the importance of our environment. The Dominican sisters gave us a tour of their farm and taught us about the ways they save energy and water. They use geothermal energy, which combines energy from their solar panels on the barn roof and the natural heat of the earth to heat their house. The sisters also host birthday parties

and camps for school age children, which can include tours, scavenger hunts and craft projects; all of things help educate the children in the Racine area so they can grow up to be good stewards of the Earth.

This trip was very beneficial for me, I learned so much! It made me take a good look at my life and my use of the resources around me. The sisters showed a great reverence for the earth and the living things on it, it inspired me to really appreciate all that God has created. We can all have a relationship with God, and now I understand how we can use that relationship to connect with the Earth as well. 

Natalie is a junior at Lewis University where she majors in Social Work.

Continued from Mary, Comforter of God's Children

That evening I was lucky enough to make it home just in time for night prayer and bedtime. During our family night prayer, when it came time for Gracie to offer her intercessions she joyfully began singing, *Hail Mary, Gentle Woman*. I was awe-struck. This moment for me was the answer to the prayer I offered up fourteen hours before. Whether consciously or not, Gracie was responding to Mary's presence in her heart.

Since this mini-Mary-moment, I have thought of Mary in a new way. The image of the pieta has been a new image. Being a joy-driven person, this image was not one that I have felt particularly drawn to as a focus of meditation. That morning in the midst of attempting to comfort Gracie's sorrow, I was aware that this sorrow was beyond me. I called on the person that I know to be the best Mother ever. In my weakness, I asked Mary to intervene and be the comfort Gracie needed. I now have an image of Mary holding and comforting Gracie as she held and caressed her son in that moment at the foot of the cross.

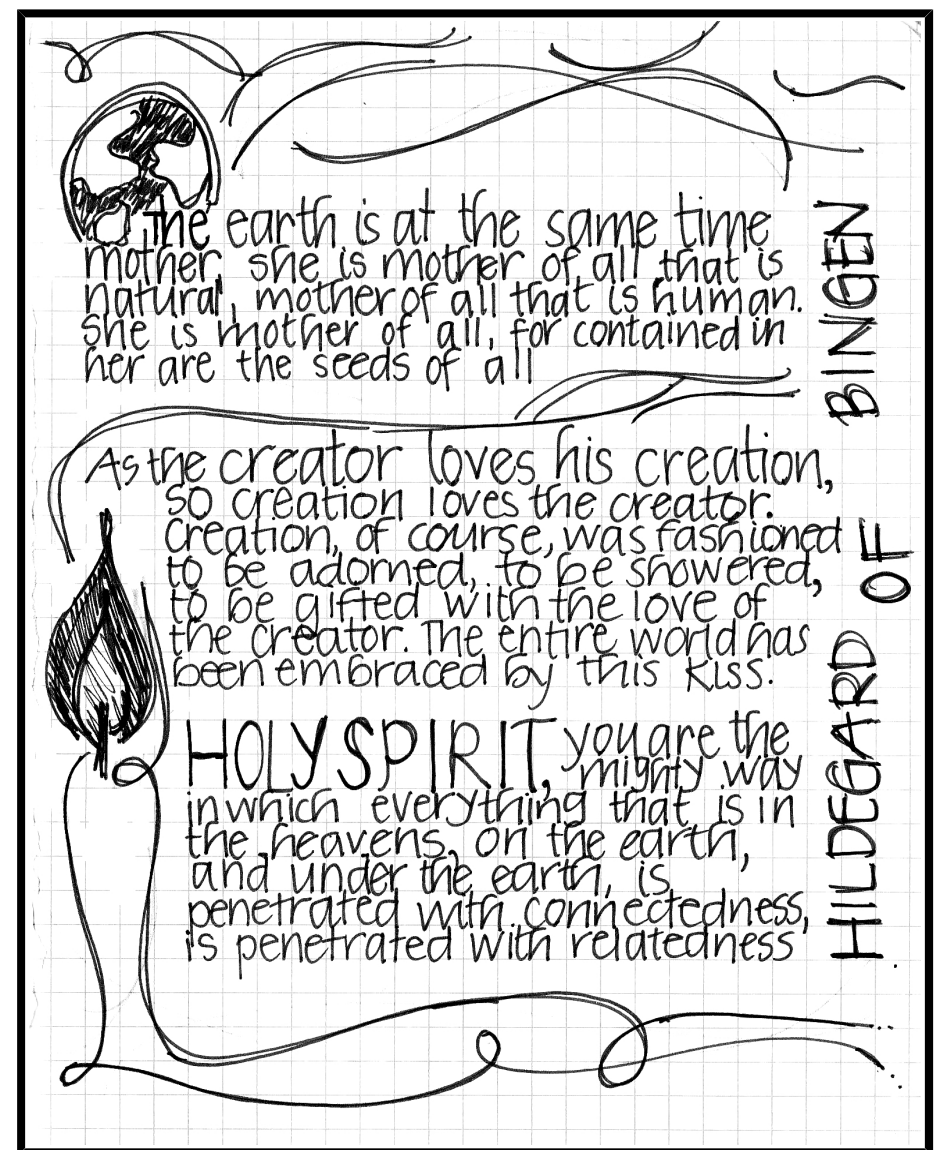
Mary, once again, answered the request of her dying son – that we behold our Mother and she behold her children. Jesus in his last breath, offers to us a heavenly maternity that is but a heartbeat away. In the moment of asking she is present, answering our prayers with prayers to her Son. If we are to act as Jesus did we are to also entrust ourselves as children to Mary's care. She is eager and waiting for us to

do so.

Mother Teresa is an example of this. Upon the call to start the Missionaries of Charity, Mother Teresa had 3 visions. The first was of a crowd of all sorts - very old and very young, poor and suffering and they were saying *Come, come save us, Bring us to Jesus*. In the second vision, that same crowd was there and the suffering and sorrow of the crowd was visible. Mary was there asking of Mother Teresa – *take care of them, they are mine, bring them to Jesus, carry Jesus to them, Fear not*. And in the third vision, there was the crowd covered in darkness and, off a bit in the distance, was the cross of Christ. And there was Mother Teresa, small as a child with Mary standing behind her with Mary's hand on Mother Teresa's shoulder. From the cross Jesus spoke – *I have asked you, and she, My Mother, has asked you, will you refuse to do this for me – to take care of them, to bring them to Me?* (from *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of our Lady*)

In this instance, Mary not only invites maternity upon Mother Teresa; Jesus does too. Mother Teresa was given an image of being called at the foot of cross by Jesus with Mary at her side. Mary was not only a comfort to Mother Teresa but was working through her to continue divine maternity.

Without Our Lady, we would be... alone before the crosses of life, oblivious to Jesus in our midst. (from *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of our*



Lady)

As we enter the Advent season, I am particularly aware of the ways in which Mary could and should permeate our spiritual realm.

Continued on page 7

About *The Visitation*

This newspaper, *The Visitation*, is a publication on topics of social justice, spirituality and theology. It is published four times a year by the Nativity House Project. Submissions are accepted from readers everywhere.

We need help with:

- Articles and topics: news, views, reviews, letters, event listings, etc.;
- Art: hand-drawn or graphic design; or
- Web and outreach volunteers.

To contact us, email us at

newspaper@nativity-house.org

Issues are online at:

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About *Nativity House*

Nativity House will serve as a shelter for first-time mothers in need of residence in the southwest Chicago suburbs. The project will also foster a mothering community offering education and support for all mothers. The program will operate on-site with community supported farm (CSA) that will provide nourishment for the mothering community and the greater community. Overall we envision a healing environment focused on the dignity of each person, the dignity of work, and stewardship of the earth.

The project is administered by a board of directors and an advisory committee of individuals with a broad range of experience. Nativity House has formed positive relationships with relevant local organizations that will be extremely helpful in carrying out the mission of the house.

Nativity House was recognized as a public charity in August, 2011.

To connect with us regarding this project, please email Venus at:

venusad@nativity-house.org

Postal mail should be addressed to:

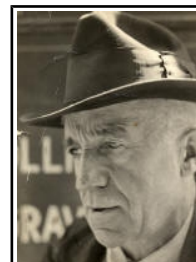
**Nativity House
5621 Plymouth St.
Downers Grove, IL
60516**

We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

<http://www.nativity-house.org>

Easy Essay: Man Has a Duty

Peter Maurin (1877-1949)



Man Has a Duty

Man has a duty
to be intelligent.

Man has a duty
to choose intelligently
between two alternatives.

Man has a duty
to act intelligently,
using pure means
to reach pure aims.

Continued from *Mary, Comforter of God's Children*

It is during this season that we are given the time to focus on Mary's acceptance of the call of the Lord, willingness to partner with the Holy Spirit, and humble service to her Son through becoming the Mother of All. Thank God for her willingness – what a comfort knowing she said yes that Jesus be born into the world. As, Mother Teresa in a very real way experienced the call to divine maternity – to comfort and compassion – we too are invited to be this comfort and compassion. We too can ask Mary to be that comfort and compassion for us.

Advent, a season that is meant to be one of slowing down and reflecting, has become for most of us the season that we are pulled in many different directions – searching out the perfect gift for those who already have, trying out a new recipe to please our already full stomachs, rushing from one celebratory event to the next with little time for the prayerful focus required of the season. We frequently find ourselves in patterns of discomfort during this season.

During this Advent, let us spend some time partnering with Mary to be that comfort. Let us offer up those who have not – have not the shelter of loving families, have not the security and protection of worldly parents, have not physical and spiritual nourishment, have not deep friendships.

Mother Mary, Comforter of God's Children, thank you for the "yes" that brought Salvation to the world. We entrust to you those hearts where sorrow and loss abound, where there is oppression and violence, where there is depression and loneliness, where dignity is being denied. Bring your motherly comfort and compassion to those who most need it. Pray with us, to your Son, that his love may be realized in all hearts. Amen.



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Profile of a Saint

St. Kateri Tekawitha

Lily of the Mohawks

Allison Covey

July 14

Patroness of Ecology, Native Americans, Loss of Parents

October 21st of this year saw the canonization of North America's first aboriginal saint, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Lily of the Mohawks. St. Kateri was born in what is today New York state, her father a Mohawk Chief, her mother a Catholic Algonquin. At the age of four, Kateri's parents and brother fell victim to a smallpox epidemic, the disease leaving Kateri herself scarred and nearly blind. As a teen, living with her aunt and uncle, Kateri's village was visited by Jesuit missionaries who began to instruct Kateri in the Catholic faith, a choice not without controversy in her tribe which was understandably distrustful of the settlers. At twenty years of age, Kateri was baptized and, within two years, was forced to flee her village for the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, a Christian Mohawk village in Quebec, amidst threats and accusations from those who disapproved of her conversion. There, in Quebec, she made her First Communion and, later, resisting both Mohawk and Jesuit pressures to marry, took a vow of perpetual virginity, becoming the first consecrated virgin among the Mohawk tribe.

Kateri was known for her devotion to

the Blessed Sacrament and to the cross, often fashioning crosses out of twigs and branches and even creating an outdoor chapel. In her short life, she worked with children, teaching them prayers, she cared for the sick and elderly of the Mission and she made clothing for those unable to sew for themselves. Kateri succumbed to tuberculosis shortly before her twenty-fourth birthday and was buried at the Mission, along the St. Lawrence river. Her final words were, "Jesus, I love you."

Like all saints, St. Kateri's love of the Lord and of her neighbour are inspiring. What makes her especially significant for us today, however, is not that she spent hours in prayer nor that she attended Mass twice daily but that she lived this faith-filled Catholic life without discarding her identity as a Mohawk. Despite her conversion to the religion of the settlers, Kateri remained true to who she was as an aboriginal woman. The Church's relationship with the native people of North America has been a strained one, missionaries often criticized for taking a triumphal approach to evangelization which discounted native persons and their way of life as primitive and inferior. The canonization of St. Kateri is a long overdue celebration of the holiness alive in North America's original people and a reaffirmation of the universality of the Church.



Ours is a faith that does not bulldoze culture, creating identical Christian communities wherever it goes like a chain restaurant opening new franchises. Ours is a faith that embraces and celebrates unity in diversity, that recognizes the unique contribution each culture, each individual Catholic brings to the Church. The miracle of Pentecost was not that all persons suddenly spoke the same language but that they each heard the Good News in their own native tongue. In a time of increasing secularization, when few of us can truly say we come from a Catholic society, St. Kateri Tekakwitha stands as a much-needed example of one who found a successful balance between faith and culture. Her story is an inspiration not only to Native American Christians but to all of us

who struggle to understand our identity as Catholics in light of our identity as members of a particular culture or society, to honour and preserve our heritage without compromising our beliefs. 🏠

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THE VISITATION

- *Advent and Mary*
- *Lewis Students' Reflections on Catholic Social Teaching*
- *Local Witness for Justice*