



THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE PROJECT

MARCH 2015

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 2

Society's Trash is the Lord's Treasure

by Margaret Motto

I was blessed with the opportunity to attend the March for Life in Washington D.C three times in college and it was an incredible experience! Seeing thousands upon thousands of people of different races, religions and walks of life come together to show their support for the dignity of life was so inspirational. I remember feeling so alone in my values often times in my college classes or amongst my peers, but when I was in the sea of people at the March, I felt strengthened and edified. For me, it was a real representation of the power of the living Body of Christ.

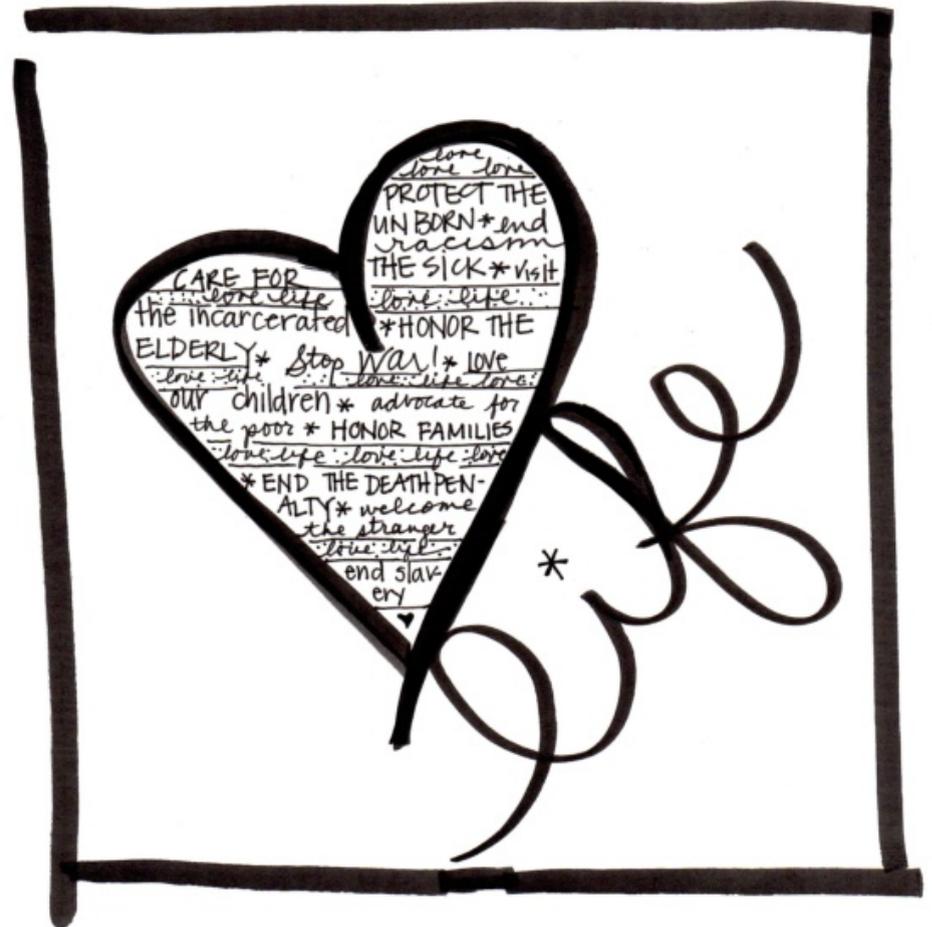
As I have gotten older and my pro-life views and beliefs have broadened, one of things I feel passionate about is the need for us to direct the energy of the Pro-Life movement to promoting the dignity of every human person, from conception and the issue of abortion to natural death and every issue in between. I came across this quote from Pope Francis and I think it highlights and challenges all of us to go deeper; "The victims of this throwaway culture are precisely the weakest and most fragile human beings who are in danger of being 'thrown away,' expelled from a system that must be efficient at all costs". If we really stop and think about groups of people society throws away, we could sadly come up with a long, heart-wrenching list.

For me personally, there is a particular group the culture "throws away" that I feel the Lord is preparing my heart to love and serve.

I feel a call to eventually start a residential home focused on the rehabilitation, healing and development of juvenile delinquents. I truly feel this is a group of individuals who is told over and over that they aren't worth any effort to help them, that they don't matter, that they are a lost cause that should be thrown away, and that they don't have dignity. Here in the US we have a larger youth incarceration rate than any other country with upwards of 500,000 youth in detention centers each year. The vast majority of juvenile delinquents come from homes with abuse, addiction, neglect, poverty and instability. Because of this, crime often becomes a means of survival for these young people. My intent isn't to defend the crimes they commit, but in light of affirming their dignity, why not provide more programs for these youth that affirms their worth, allows them to experience healing and therapy and learn healthy coping mechanisms and life skills. What it comes down to is that they, the youth of America, are worth it.

As we approach Lent, we might be reminded of the bold, challenging gesture Pope Francis made last year on Holy Thursday. He broke the tradition of doing the Holy Thursday Mass at a Basilica in Rome to instead celebrate Mass in the Casal del Marmo juvenile detention facility in Rome. Pope Francis washed and kissed the feet of a dozen inmates at the juvenile detention center. This drew a lot of attention from the world

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Experience at March for Life

by Katelyn Dombrowski

700,000 walked the streets of D.C., hundreds of thousands of young people, all of them standing up for the millions of unborn souls. The impact of their feet walking upon the ground may not be visibly seen, but it is the greatest impact in the world. Our bond there at D.C. as one voice, one family, one people was a strength given by God. Despite our daily struggles, our pain, and our problems all of us were able to fight against this injustice in our world. Some of us may not have realized it, but the Holy Spirit was so prominently there guiding our every way. The Spirit was there to reassure us of the sanctity of life. It was there when we as a group wanted to give up, go back

home, and watch T.V. At the very moments the trip seemed hard, uncomfortable, and worthless; it suddenly became more to us. When our faith wavered, there we were sitting at the Basilica of the National Shrine for six hours. In the Presence of Jesus for six hours. The trial to be patient tested us; made us ponder the reasons for us sitting there. It made us think about life. Not just the lives of those aborted or the elderly whom we lose the will to care for, but the meaning of our own lives. Where are we in our faith? What do we even believe and stand up for? Are we truly living and growing and

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Treasure

and sent a message to millions, reminding them of the worth of these youth who are often forgotten. I personally was so moved by this gesture as well. As much as it meant to the world, it meant the world to youth in prison who heard and saw what the Pope did. Pope Francis received over 500 letters from U.S. prisoners sentenced to life in prison for crimes they committed as juveniles. Jesuit Father Mike Kennedy runs the Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative (JRJI) in California to provide support and to juveniles with life sentences and he also told all of the inmates what Pope Francis had done. They were so moved, that they too wrote letters. These are a couple of their letters that they sent to the Pope:

Dear Pope Francis,

Thank you for washing the feet of youth like us in Italy. We also are young and made mistakes. Society has given up on us, thank you that you have not given up on us.

Dear Pope Francis,

I know you have a good family because you are a good holy man. I am writing this letter to you because I know that my family is suffering because of me. I know have done some bad things but I am not a bad kid and when last year in our big state we got a new law called SB9 this made my family happy because this is a beautiful message that we kids deserve a second chance.

Pope Francis responded to many of them with the resounding message "Don't lose hope," he said. "With hope you can always go on". In his humble, bold way, the Pope brought

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to light a group of youth who are hungry for love, mercy and healing. It is my desire and mission to respond to this need and commit myself to this Pro-Life issue.

As Lent approaches, a challenge for all of us might be to ask, "Who is the Lord calling me to love this Lenten season?" When we ask, He answers. How incredible would it be to fast, give alms (both time and treasure) and pray for a specific group of "throw aways" in an effort to be Christ to them and see Christ in them. The beauty is that when we step out and do this, it is us who are deeply changed by the people we choose to love.



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March for Life

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becoming the human beings Christ wants us to be? To ponder these things in our Lord's Presence expanded our view of life and our role in this world as Catholics and Christians. As the three hour Mass began, it was there that we began to discover the treasure of life and how important it is for us to be leaders and role models. How important it is for us to give Jesus the gift of our life.

An opportunity to give this gift came at the Youth Rally and Mass. Our praise and worship filled the stadium with an abundance of love and joy. We were there for God. We were excited to be the generation exalting life as the tremendous blessing we know it needs to be seen as. We were proud to be humble in our actions, prayerful instead of profane, and willing instead of rejecting. Then at the Mass we heard the thanks of Pope Francis and the heartfelt gratitude of so many priests and bishops. It moved our hearts and helped us to understand the humanity of the religious and how they too are people like us. People who have faced

hardships in faith and the threat of they themselves losing their own life to abortion. Their stories held truth that each life is precious and that every life, no matter how much struggle there is, belongs to God and can be for God. When our paths bound us together towards the road of the March, we stumbled upon our journey towards the truth. Our lives, seemingly meaningless before, had a new life shed upon them as we pursued to fulfill the journey. With every minute; every hour of the day we could change something. Our voices now have the power to start a tidal wave of renewal. Our being can impact the lives of those we meet. And above all, every footstep we took on that journey led us to find the truth about the path of righteousness. Our life, our unity, our love is the gathering of soldiers coming to bring the true meaning of life to the world.



*Katelyn is a sophomore at
Joliet Catholic Academy.*

Lenten Roundtable***Has Pope Francis surprised you?***

Nativity House is holding a potluck dinner and roundtable discussion about Pope Francis and the recent encyclical, *The Joy of the Gospel*. Join us at 6pm Friday, March 20 at Nativity House, 17141 W. 143rd St. Lockport, IL. Check Facebook for the latest information.

Please RSVP to venus@nativity-house.org

God, by his sheer grace, draws us to himself and makes us one with him. He sends his Spirit into our hearts to make us his children, transforming us and enabling us to respond to his love by our lives.

— Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*



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.

To contact us, email us at:

newspaper@nativity-house.org

Past issues are online at:

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

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. As of 2014, the program operates an on-site 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:

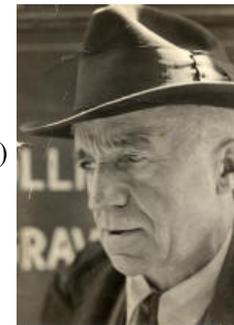
Nativity House
17141 W. 143rd St.
Lockport, IL
60441

We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

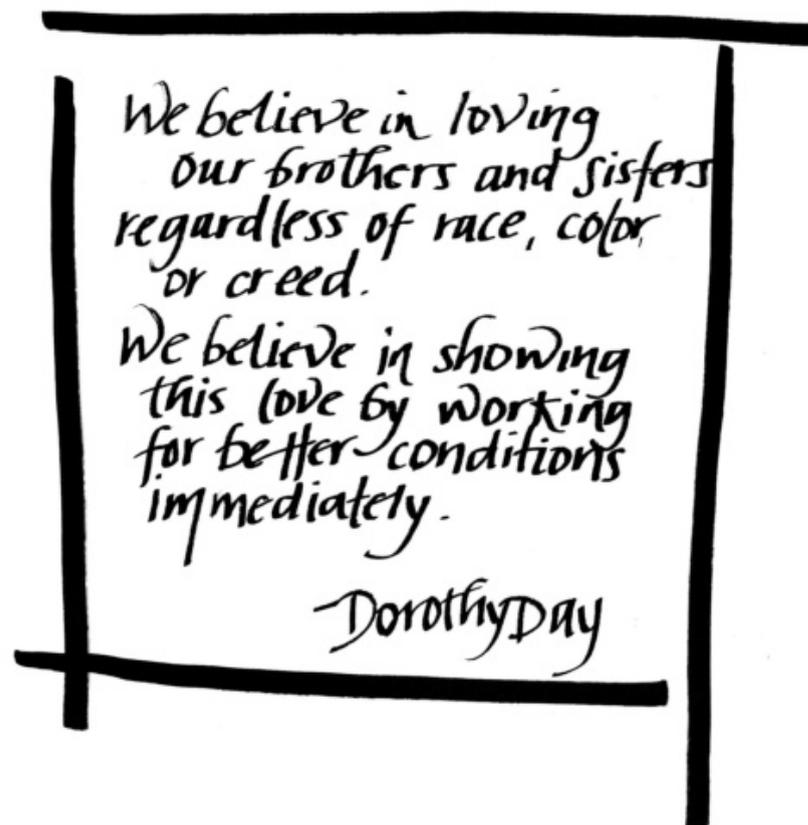
Easy Essay

The Duty of Hospitality

by Peter Maurin (1877-1949)



1. People who are in need
and are not afraid to beg
give to people not in need
the occasion to do good
for goodness' sake.
2. Modern society calls the beggar
bum and panhandler
and gives him the bum's rush.
But the Greeks used to say
that people in need
are the Ambassadors of the Gods.
3. Although you may be called
bums and panhandlers
you are in fact
the Ambassadors of God.
4. As God's Ambassadors
you should be given food,
clothing and shelter
by those who are able to give it.



St. Patrick

Zealot for Love of Neighbor

by Justin Wozniak

Like jolly old St. Nick, the great saint of Ireland has been caricatured to the point of irrelevance. St. Patrick is little more than a totem on a passing parade float, captain of an insular feast in the middle of Lent. Yet this preacher to the Celts led a life of high adventure fueled by a passion for human dignity against the barbarism of his day. Could this beer-soaked cliché have been a lean, green, social justice champion?

The most famous legend of St. Patrick is the driving of snakes from Ireland. While it is very strange that there are no snakes on the island so close to another island with snakes (Britain), this is an image of the great work the saint performed by changing the culture, an economy of slavery. In one of his surviving works, *Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus*, he rails against the capture of Christians by Christians, among associated abuses.

Patrick was no idle observer when it came to kidnapping. Born a Roman citizen in the receding imperial colony of Britain, he was taken as a slave in his youth to Ireland. Once he managed to escape, he returned home, and became a priest. His missionary career took on a single focus: return to Ireland and preach a Gospel of freedom!

Wild snake-handling would probably have been preferable to the situation Patrick, now bishop, faced when writing the *Letter*. While normally known as a mild-mannered person, you can hear his voice shake with rage in the opening:

*Now I am driven by the zeal of God,
Christ's truth has aroused me,
I speak for love of my neighbors!*

Some number of men and women who recently received the sacraments from Bishop Patrick himself were violently taken captive. Their fate was grim: the pirates would likely sell them to distant, uncivilized tribes. The fact that the culprits were supposedly evangelized soldiers is what shocks Patrick the most:

*Bloody men have chosen,
by their hostile deeds,
to live in death... ravenous wolves!*

This unconscionable act clearly shook Patrick's confidence in the fledgling Christian community (to say the least). An additional concern was the tolerance of such evil among ordinary society. Patrick makes clear that he is addressing "not only those who do evil, but also those who agree with them."

Closer to our own day, in the 1960's,

Catholic monk and writer Thomas Merton addressed his own *Letter to a White Liberal*. Addressing what Merton saw as a nominally Christian, yet practically post-Christian society, he attacks the "organized injustices and violence" of a polite society that does not want to rock the boat by addressing the evils of racism and war. Such Christians try to "please everyone with soft words and pleasant generalizations," while ignoring the "gigantic arms race," an economy based on "profits first, people afterward," and a "basic assumption of white superiority" that connects them to the most hardened racists.

Patrick never despaired that the

soldiers of Coroticus would "come to their senses." His mission in Ireland changed not just the social situation but also brought books, literacy, and learning, leading to the use of the Celtic alphabet and the recording of the Irish legends. And he conveyed his impressive spiritual center, the mystery of the Trinity, an invisible relationship he modeled for the uneducated with a shamrock, but who was to Patrick the source of great wisdom and strength.



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St. Patrick quotes from the translation by John Skinner, 1998.



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