



# THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE

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## Mary's Magnificat & Social Justice

by John Hogue

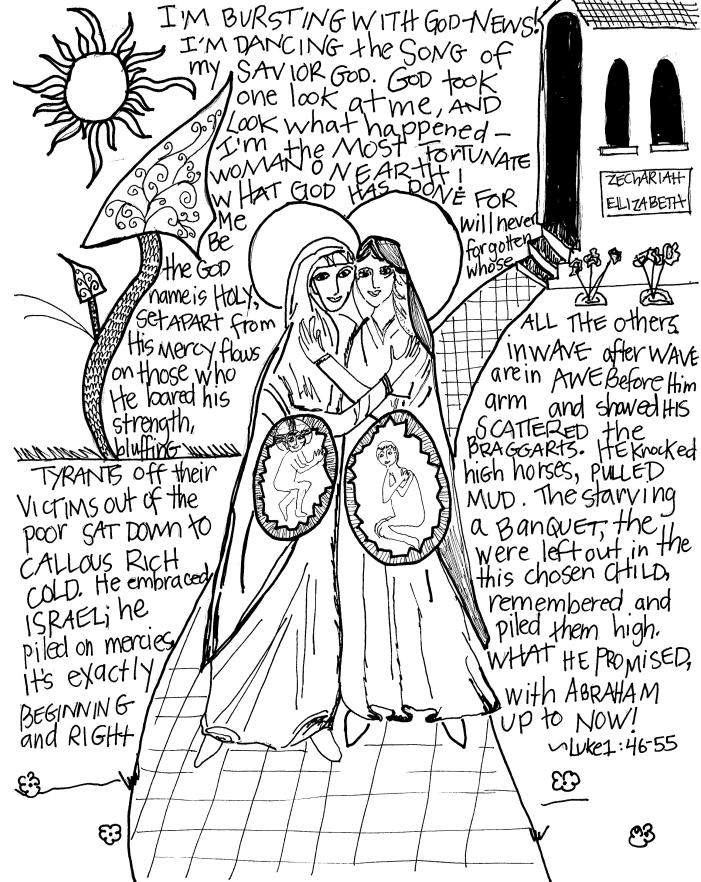
Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is keenly aware of the injustice in the world. Decades before her innocent son was brutally executed by an oppressive state, Mary's Magnificat articulated the scandal of the rich living alongside the hungry, the conceited clinging to their thrones while their neighbors languished on the ash heap. In her sheer humanity, Mary cannot but resist injustice. Her life orients us towards justice: she points us to Jesus, she beckons us into the Church, and she teaches us joy.

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord," Mary begins her magnificent song of joy which echoes daily through the centuries and teaches men how to pray. (This piece's Scripture quotations

come from Luke 1). Mary celebrates Jesus the Lord in her womb. Days earlier, an angel proclaimed to Mary that "God will give [Jesus] the throne of David his father." Now Mary impassionately prophesies of a God who "has thrown down the rulers from their thrones."

How is Jesus the Davidic King, heir to Jerusalem's throne, while his mother speaks of flattening hierarchy? Is Mary belatedly rejecting the angelic message? Does Jesus later renounce her egalitarian impulse? In truth, Jesus is the

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## Roundtable Discussions

by Jamie Antonelli and Stephen Storey

On October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Nativity House hosted an evening of discussion centered on habits of simplicity. After a delicious pot-luck dinner, we all gathered in the great room to share our personal experiences and reflections on the life and legacy of St. Francis. We started by going around the room describing our level of familiarity with St. Francis. The answers ranged from "He's that cute guy in people's gardens who loved animals" to "I'm a member of the 3rd order Franciscans." – quite a diverse crowd!

We were lucky to be joined by Stephen Storey, brother of house

intern Becca Storey, who recently spent two years discerning a vocation to the Franciscans with a community in Indiana. He shared some of his experiences from that period and stories from the life of Francis. This particular community sought to restore the original rule of the order, for which simplicity was a core principal. That translated to shaved heads, long beards, and no shoes! And if that weren't enough, they relied completely on God's grace to keep them fed, didn't have a refrigerator, and would share with the poor any food they didn't immediately need for themselves.

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I remember first hearing that Nativity House would be hosting a roundtable discussion on Colonialism vs. A Culture of Life and knowing immediately that I would have to make the drive from South Bend, IN to attend. I didn't decide that I had to attend this discussion because I was pumped about pondering colonialism and the scars that it has left upon our society. This is not my idea of a good time. However, it seems imperative that I consider and discuss these realities, especially as one who has benefited greatly from colonialism and who endeavors to live into the culture of life that my Church prescribes. So, I drove up

to Lockport with a mix of anticipation and trepidation.

The conversation began with a brief fleshing out of the history of colonization in the Americas and a specific emphasis on the role of religion in this colonization. While colonialism is defined as, "The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically," the harm of historical colonialism was not merely in its seizing of another people or region's resources. There were also

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## Letter from the Directors

Dear Friends of Nativity House,

The October snow put an early end to the outdoor activities here at the house. The surprise blanketing came just after we improved our goat housing and put it to the test. Now the garden beds and new grape sprigs are tucked under straw for protection. As we put those projects to sleep, we reflect on the growth that has happened this year.

Work in the garden is often a race - against daylight, the weather, the season, or sometimes one of the animals. There is just not enough time to get it all done the way we would like. Thus, we have greatly valued a few new regulars in the CSA and relied thankfully on our veterans. They helped in some new experiments, including elderberry and currants, productive plants that will reward us with rare fruit for years to come.

The honey harvest was a highlight in the middle of the summer. More hives means more work, and the expertise and plain fun of beekeeping has become a bigger part of the project. When other tasks consume energy and sometimes fail to return the favor, it is greatly satisfying to consider how much work the bees do on their own, paying out by the jarful in exchange for their modest accommodations.

Our energetic goats have also contributed by consuming brush and weeds, a chore that has earned them more pasture and free space. This has greatly reduced the amount of grass we need to mow and maintain. We are hoping for baby does in the spring to increase our milk supply. The flock is a great conversation piece when new visitors make a stop.

All of these things have been heavily supported by our CSA members and volunteers. We have had several hard-working student groups, including contingents from Lewis, Benedictine, and Notre Dame. We always look forward to these meetings and the conversation and interactions they bring.

Our Farm to Table was a joyous event that celebrated all that has been accomplished this year. Thanks to all who supported us there or in all the other ways throughout the year!

Peace of Christ to you and yours,

Justin and Venus Wozniak

## 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 Nativity House. Submissions are accepted from readers everywhere.

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Past issues are online at:

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

## About Nativity House

Nativity House serves as a house of hospitality for first-time mothers in need of residence in the southwest Chicago suburbs. Nativity House operates an on-site community supported farm (CSA) that provides nourishment for the Nativity House 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.

Nativity House 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 are extremely helpful in carrying out the mission of the house. Nativity House was recognized as a public charity in August, 2011.

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We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

## Mary's Magnificat & Social Justice

ultimate fulfillment of his mother's prophecy, for no one has descended so radically from a position of power into solidarity with the human condition as Jesus has in the Incarnation. Jesus is the first and mightiest to be cast from his throne. He voluntarily leaves his rightful place in heaven to take up the fullness of humanity. The divine response to injustice is self-emptying, humbling love. Jesus justly provides what every person needs: a loving Savior. Mary's Magnificat doesn't just point to Jesus, it also reveals this wonder of his love.

Jesus begins his incarnation being utterly entrusted to Mary. Even while Mary sings his praises, she makes space for him and he depends on her for his very life. Mary, like every mother, enjoys a special participation in the Trinity's selfless love by her pregnancy, sharing her body and blood so that another might live. In this, Mary knows herself to be a lowly handmaid whom the divine gaze has exalted. It is precisely such a participation in the self-emptying of Jesus that undergirds the Catholic Worker movement's voluntary poverty and nonviolence. In conformity to Christ, we willingly relinquish our privileges and protections out of love for others. We hope that by these sacrifices the Trinity will cause justice to spring up.

Mary also invites us into the Church to sustain our love. She invokes a wider people with her closing line, extolling God's consistent mercy "to Abraham and to his descendants forever." Through the generations, Christian artists have depicted the Visitation and Magnificat as unfolding communally. Both Mary and Elizabeth are pregnant.

Jesus and John the Baptist share a special joy at the center of their mothers' embrace and some icons even depict both fetuses, highlighting the incipient role of these little ones. Many paintings include on their fringes Elizabeth's husband Zechariah emerging from their house and Mary's betrothed Joseph following behind her bringing up their bags. Scripture records neither man speaking in this meeting. In the background, they accompany silently, Zechariah by the angel's curse and Joseph by habit. Doubtless they had prayed with Mary and Elizabeth the Hebrew Scriptures the women draw upon in their praises. Surely their hearts too rejoice at such marvelous events and each delights as his beloved advances salvation history.

This is a stunning local Church. These prophets--who are called blessed through the ages--gather in relationship with each other and with God. In our Advent preparations we too practice such relationship as we turn to the sacraments and our loved ones to hold our vulnerabilities and nourish our growth. These encounters shelter us while we admit our own finitude and our perpetuation of injustice. Our acts of love enact justice locally and fuel us to share it more widely. In but one small example of how the Church's life equips us for justice, Dorothy Day wrote: "I never think of the Visitation to Elizabeth without thinking of some pregnant woman who needs our prayers."

Finally, Mary reveals the boundless joy latent during the struggle for justice. The entire first chapter of Luke's Gospel

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### Happiness is not what you want

by Venus Wozniak

As I write on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, I am reminded about God's Will. There was a time that I was deeply concerned with God's Will for my life. I was consumed with worry that I might do something that is against His Will. I had an overwhelming sense that God has a plan for me and if I do something contrary to His plan I would reap horrifying consequences. To say I was fearful would be an understatement. During this time, on the recommendation of my boss, I sought out spiritual direction. Looking back, the thing that I take away from this period of my life is what God's Will actually is. Are you ready for it? God's Will for your life is the same as it is for me. God's Will is that He wants you to be happy.

Are you underwhelmed? I was. Really? That's it? My twenty-something self then sought answers to the next question. What makes me happy? Truly happy. This is where the Solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe comes in. As I was sitting in Mass this morning, struggling to overcome feelings of exhaustion and throw myself wholeheartedly into the celebration of liturgy, there it was in the Collect (the prayer before we sit to hear God's word):

*Almighty ever-living God, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of the universe, grant, we pray, that the whole creation, set free from slavery, may render your majesty*

*service and ceaselessly proclaim your praise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*

God's will is to restore all things! Right now, today, yesterday and most likely, tomorrow, we are in a period of restoration. God is working to restore all things back to Himself. You see, there was a time when things were much simpler than they are now. God and all of His creation yearn for this simple time that existed once.

There was a time when all of creation - rocks, hills, plains, frogs, crickets, badgers, and humans alike- existed in perfect harmony. And all of creation enjoyed the presence of God moving freely and interacting with humans face to face. Humanity was not always wondering, "God? Is that you?" I imagine that this time was something like the prophet Isaiah talks about:

*The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. (Isaiah 60:19-20)*

Isaiah was specifically talking about the time when all of creation would be fully restored God. It's bewildering. The sun

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## Mary's Magnificat & Social Justice

ripples with joy even amidst oppression, poverty, and sin. Elizabeth and Mary rejoice heartily in a season of pregnant waiting. They have as of yet only a glimmer of the justice their sons will bring: feeding thousands, curing hundreds, even intriguing the powers that be and discoursing with them about truth. Yet such a mustard seed beginning provides ample space for celebration, because it grounds the hope that God's mercy cascades from age to age and God's justice will have the last word.

With Mary so boldly proclaiming justice, would she not have had a profound impact on the young Jesus and John the Baptist? Would not these cousins have learned much from her example and wisdom that would inform their later ministries? Are not their great prophecies building upon hers? Two millenia later, this was certainly the case for Dorothy Day. After witnessing the Hunger March, Dorothy begged Mary for a way to put herself at the service of the poor, praying at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. When she returned to her apartment she found Peter Maurin with his inspired vision for Catholic action towards justice and she found her prayer answered. No wonder Dorothy said so confidently that "those who love Jesus in His humanity must also love Mary, His Mother, who hears our prayers." No wonder she recited the Memorare every day.

No wonder Dorothy commends Mary to us: "We are all children of Mary." We can turn to Mary in our struggle for justice and she will help. She will give us the levity to rejoice, the humility to

labor in and with the Church, and the courage to pour ourselves out for others. She will give us Jesus. "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." May this be true of us as it is of our Mother. God's justice will be fulfilled!



*John Hogue is a member of the Su Casa Catholic Worker Community in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood.*

### Happiness is not what you want

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will be no more? The Lord will be the everlasting light? This must have been a wild time, beyond our wildest imaginings. Somehow our happiness is wrapped up in this notion of restoration.

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Brokenness. Through our work of offering hospitality at Nativity House we encounter it everyday. Every woman that has come our way seeking a home has one thing in common. They are lacking support. Their families failed them, they failed their families, or they simply have no family. Their stories are big and heavy and fraught with many levels of brokenness.

Brokenness abounds. We don't

### Easy Essays:

#### Rich and Poor

by Peter Maurin  
(1877-1949)



Afraid of the poor  
who don't like to get poorer,  
the rich who like to get richer  
turn to the State for protection.

But the State is not only  
the State of the rich  
it is also the State of the poor  
who don't like to get poorer.

So the State sometimes chooses  
to help  
the many poor  
who don't like to get poorer,  
at the expense of the few rich  
who like to get richer.

Dissatisfied with the State,  
the rich who like to get richer  
turn to the Church  
to save them from the poor  
who don't like to get poorer.

But the Church can only tell the rich  
"Woe to you rich  
who like to get richer:  
who like to get richer,  
if you don't help the poor  
who don't like to get poorer."

have to look only to homeless shelters to find it: addiction ravenging a family; past hurts and grudges enduring through generations; fear of others so abundant that ideologies of hate and violence prevail; power for power's sake where each human in its way becomes a cog. Then there's our simple human nature that causes brokenness: pettiness, back-biting, gossip, grief, etc. Pain and woundedness run deep. It is, at times, completely overwhelming.

We somehow left the place of perfect harmony and traded it for brokenness. God in His infinite

wisdom gave us free will. He could have created us to be automatons that automatically love and respect Him and each other. But he didn't. He created us with the immense gift to make choices. And so, day to day, we make choices. How much thought do we put into them? Is this going to be a life or death choice? Is this going to make me happy? The decisions we make on a daily basis are not arbitrary. Our actions and decisions must somehow move toward restoration and away from brokenness. This is not something to be done alone.

A time that rings clear in my memory that I experienced a few moments of God's full restoration

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## NATIVITY HOUSE SEEKS STAFF

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Nativity House staff celebrates Charlotte's 1st Birthday with former Guest Mom

*Are you passionately Pro-Life?  
Seeking a year of service?  
Eco-justice minded?*

Nativity House is an intentional Catholic community and house of hospitality for expectant mothers rooted in Catholic Social Teaching in Lockport, IL.

We are seeking interns!  
Full time and part time positions are available.

### *Job Description*

- Living at Nativity House and participating in Intentional Community
- Monthly Stipend, Room and Board, Health Care Benefits (for full-time staff)

### *Tasks include*

- Hospitality: Caring for the specific needs of 1–2 guest moms
- Community Living Tasks: managing keeping house tidy, cooking rotation for community meals, community laundry
- Community Farm: participation in community work days, caring for animals – chickens, goats, cats, dog
- Newspaper Editor: formatting, writing, delivering our quarterly publication *The Visitation*
- Community Events & Fundraising: help plan 2 fundraisers per year; help plan community events Holy Mass & Roundtable Discussions
- Spirituality: participate in morning & evening prayer; commitment to personal spiritual growth

## St. Francis Roundtable

*continued from page 1*

The discussion was consistently insightful with many people sharing in turn their reflections on Stephen's prompts. We focused first on Francis' life of radical simplicity, which was enabled by his complete and child-like trust in our Lord as a capable Father and caregiver. Francis similarly saw all men and women as children of God and therefore his brothers and sisters, whom he had an obligation to care for. But he also had a profound trust in the reciprocity of this relationship, knowing that those around him in the Church were the family in whose care God had placed him. Stephen told a beautiful story that symbolized Francis' relationship with the Church. On the fateful day when Francis' father publicly disowned him in the presence of the Bishop of Assisi, Francis responded by completely disrobing, signifying that he was returning everything of his father's, and announcing he would call only God his Father from that day on. The Bishop took pity on the young naked man and, in an act with both concrete and symbolic meaning, took off his cloak and wrapped Francis in the tender care and protection of his mother the Church. Because Francis had removed all distraction from his life, he clearly saw the identity of every human as fellow children of God. But he was able to see beyond that, to the rest of the natural world. His love of animals was born out of this expansive understanding of the family of God. And not only did Francis feel a connection to the rest of the living world, but even to the entire natural order of creation. That is how Francis can speak of "Brother Sun" and "Sister Moon". He understood at a deep level the words of Psalm

19: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Francis lived such a radical life it's easy to wonder how we can even begin to imitate him. Stephen left us with a trio of mutually supporting habits of simplicity: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. He explained how prayer gives us the grace to make the selfless acts of fasting and almsgiving. In its turn, fasting removes distractions from prayer and leaves us with extra resources for use in almsgiving. And finally, almsgiving helps us by removing any excess food or resources that could tempt us away from fasting, and by turning our focus outwards beyond ourselves it calls us into dialogue with God in prayer. Through these simple habits, we can participate in the tremendous legacy Francis left the world that can be seen from neighborhood backyard gardens all the way up to the chair of St. Peter where his namesake currently sits.



*Jamie Antonelli and his family have been CSA members for two years now. He works as a data scientist in downtown Chicago but finds his true fulfillment in caring for his wife and four children.*

## Happiness is not what you want

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of creation to Himself was on mission to the Philippines. The team of missionaries had spent two weeks building alongside a hundred or so villagers in the seaside village of Mangrove. Over the two weeks these villagers had quickly become our closest friends. We were enjoying a

celebration of the house being built and a newly paved main road into the village; but mostly we were celebrating each other. The celebration began with one of the most heartfelt Masses ever. Then we moved into a tremendous yet simple feast and then hours of dancing, talking and hugging. If there were tears, they were only of joy. Christ's presence was palpable in the people gathered. It was truly a moment of heaven and earth meeting.

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All of humanity desires true happiness, don't we? We go about our lives searching. In many instances we think we know the answer. Many times what we think we know leads us to a dead end. True happiness is living out God's will. God's will is that we will all be unified with Him one day. As gifts along this journey we are given the AH-HA moments to urge us on. Sometimes they are big moments like the one mentioned above.

joy. It is not overwhelming and giddy. It is not mere contentment. It goes much deeper. Divine joy is the satisfaction that only God can give.

It's time for paradigm shift. The paradigm shift is that we take this period of restoration seriously. What is needed in your family, your workplace, your church, your neighborhood, your son's basketball team in order that relationships, hearts, souls are restored to Him? Do we participate in brokenness by creating more of it? Are we broken ourselves and need to pay more attention to the health of our souls? For some of us this means taking an honest look in the mirror and responding to the hard questions. The path to restoration of all things God demands of us to participate.

This Advent, I challenge you: Work hard for the things not of this earth. Pray more. Worry less. Love harder. Simplify, leaving behind only the things that matter.



*Venus Wozniak is the Director of Faith Formation at St. Dennis, and the Director of Nativity House. She can be contacted at [venusad@nativity-house.org](mailto:venusad@nativity-house.org)*

## Colonialism vs. A Culture of Life

*continued from page 1*

innumerable instances of imposing things on colonized regions that were problematic. The example of interest for the roundtable discussion was that of religion. The imposition of Christianity on indigenous peoples in the Americas oftentimes led to a nominal Christianity, rather than a Christianity which the indigenous people had fully embraced and integrated into their lives. So, the problem of colonization seems to not be limited to taking things from the other but to also include giving things to the other that were not willingly received. One description of colonization that I found particularly helpful during the discussion was that, at its core, colonization stems from an **opposition to movement**.

The colonizer often encounters a new region and a new people with a firmly rooted agenda. Whether the agenda is to seize some resource or to impart an element of culture, this agenda-based approach immediately places the

colonizer on a higher ground than the colonized. How different this approach is from the culture of life, which demands that we encounter the other as one with dignity equal to our own. Suddenly, we cannot engage the other as one who stagnantly gives what we want to take or takes what we want to give. The other can no longer be seen as a means to an end. Suddenly, we must recognize that they too have a voice that must be heard and we must be open to their voice influencing our own. Put simply, the culture of life demands that we be **open to the movement** of our wills that relationship with others brings about.

Having parceled through some of these meta, philosophical reflections on colonization and what distinguishes it from the culture of life, the conversation shifted to our present experience of colonization and how we might embrace life in the midst of it. While the geographical colonization of the United States is no longer a part of everyday life, traces of the colonial mentality persist. The group discussed “colonization by

corporations” and how other countries and cultures around the world are still constantly exploited to feed American consumerism. Brainstorming responses to this large-scale colonialism is an intimidating prospect. Fortunately, however, I think that the problem of colonialism might be one of those instances in which a big problem is better addressed with many, small solutions than with one big one. The many, small solutions, of course, are each of us and our daily decisions to embrace the culture of life. I want to close by sharing two examples from the discussion of ways in which we might do this. The first, and more concrete, is that we can all strive to limit our consumption in order to minimize our involvement in colonization by corporations. The second, and the one that has remained on the forefront of my mind since participating in this

discussion, is that we can practice receptivity in our relationships. The colonial manner of encountering another seems to be characterized by agenda-driven relationships in which we are either parasitic or authoritarian. The culture of life calls us to personalism: to see the other and receive before taking action.

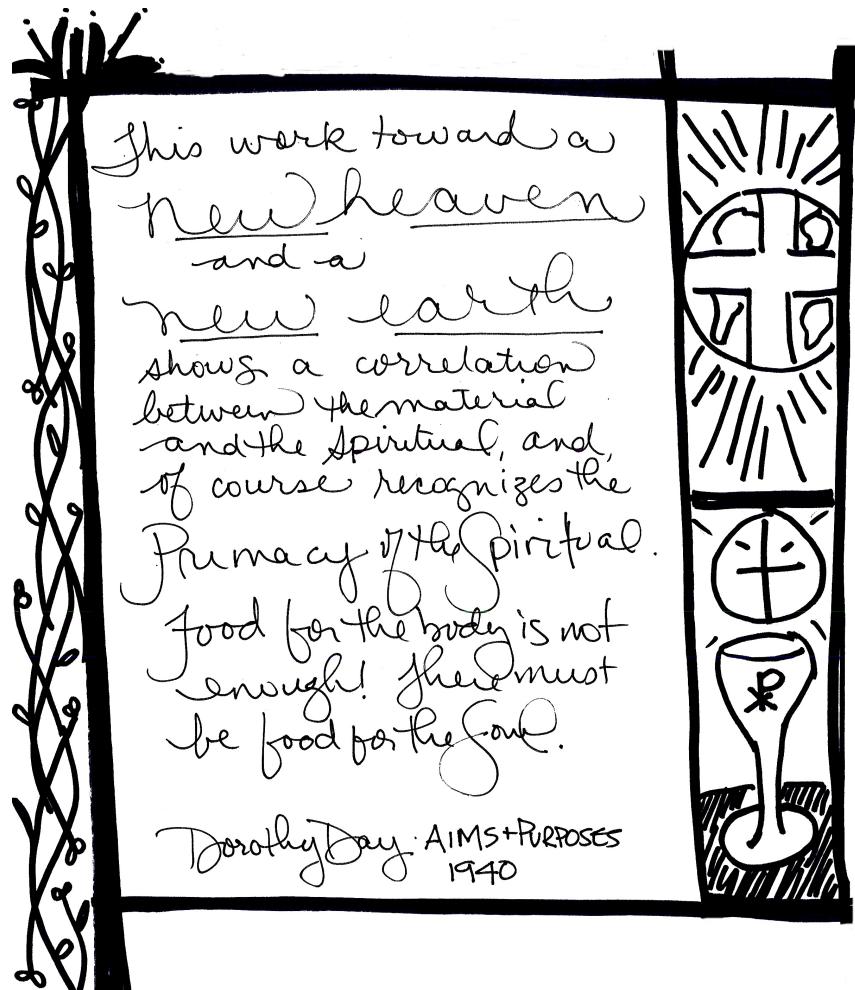


*Stephen Storey is a sustainable farmer in South Bend, Indiana and a lover of the Catholic Worker movement.*

Nativity House Fireside Mass

Wednesday, December 18 @ 7pm  
Potluck Dinner to Follow

RSVP on Facebook or [venusad@nativity-house.org](mailto:venusad@nativity-house.org)

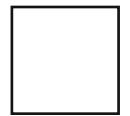




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Nativity House  
17141 W. 143rd St.  
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## Mother Marianne of Molokai

*Feast: January 23*

by Jessica Peek

A few years ago, I had the incredible fortune to lead a pilgrimage for college students to the islands of Oahu and Molokai in Hawaii. Our focus for the pilgrimage was vocational discernment amidst transition and change as students move on from college into "the real world." In researching our models of holiness whose missionary locations we would be visiting, I found myself greatly inspired by the tenacity and conviction of St. Marianne Cope. (1838-1918)

More than likely when people hear of leprosy and Molokai, they think of St. Damien, who indeed also has a powerful witness of service and trust in his work on the island. Yet, Mother Marianne's leadership and resourcefulness is much to credit for the improved conditions and care for the lepers who were isolated in the leper colony of Kalaupapa.

Today, leprosy is used as a rhetorical device more than a diagnosis, as we often speak of the "lepers of society" and we look back on Jesus' healing of lepers as a symbol of our own need for healing. And yes, the societal

and religious notions and fears about leprosy can shed a great deal of light on deeper issues of the heart, but it has become easy sometimes to forget that leprosy is a devastating disease that still afflicts over 7 million people today. The cure was only discovered in the 1940s. Up until that point, anyone diagnosed with the disease was quarantined to leper colonies and ostracized from society. Leprosy was endemic among the Pacific Islanders in Hawaii, so the Kalaupapa Peninsula on the island of Molokai was designated as a leper colony because of its natural barriers between ocean and large sea cliffs that would isolate the afflicted from the rest of the population.

Fr. Damien took a great leap of faith in volunteering to serve the Kalaupapa community as their priest and companion. He brought a voice and a spotlight back to a people who were unseen and unheard. It was his boldness that moved Marianne to action, and she took up a fight that revolutionized palliative care in the colony.

Marianne was called by God to dedicate her life to serve of God's work and at the age of 24 she joined the Franciscan community in Syracuse. Her natural leadership moved her quickly into positions as community superior, novice mistress, provincial, and superior of St. Joseph's Hospital. These leadership roles gave her the experience and opportunity to be in the right place to respond to the call to care for people with leprosy in Hawaii.

Though Marianne knew that her gifts, experiences, and vocation called her to Kalaupapa, she struggled to get there. Many of the Hawaiian officials did not think it appropriate for a woman to be working in the leper colony so they delayed her mission by pushing her into other health care and administrative centers in Honolulu. Even though this was not where she knew God was ultimately calling her to serve, she committed to doing the best for the people she encountered, and helped establish good homes for the orphaned and separated children of those diagnosed with leprosy. Never deterred, Marianne fostered connections with those who had the power to help her achieve the mission she knew God had planned for her and eventually was able to go to live at Kalaupapa and serve the afflicted in that community. Her leadership in hospital service guided the Franciscan sisters who



committed to the palliative care of Kalaupapa until the isolation law was repealed 1969, and some still serve those who have chosen to continue to live in the home they have known their whole life.

On our pilgrimage to Kalaupapa, we were able to visit the National Historical Park that now protects this site and see the buildings where Damien and Marianne dedicated their lives in service to the literal outcasts of society. In Marianne, I found a model of holiness whose resilience, perseverance, trust, and selflessness called others to turn towards where society said to turn away, to go out where society said to fit in, and to give where society said to give up.



*Jessica Peek is the Director of University Ministry at the University of St. Francis and a dear friend of Nativity House.*