



# THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE

OCTOBER 2021

VOLUME 11 ISSUE 4

## Love Thy Neighbor Title

by Toni Baier

When I was in college, I remember contemplating Jesus's words and his second greatest commandment, to "love thy neighbor as thyself". I thought, does Jesus literally mean for every penny I spend on myself, I have to spend a penny on someone else? For every time I think of myself, I should be thinking of someone else. For anytime I do anything for myself, I should do the same for someone else. Really? No way! The Church only says to tithe ten percent. I thought I was good. But the Holy Spirit kept this scripture passage on my heart, and I became uneasy with only giving

ten percent.

In hopes to untangle my heart strings I continued my research about this verse by looking at the lives of the saints. In doing so, I fell in love with Mother Teresa. Because of her, I wanted to become a nurse, I started going on mission trips, and soon found that I actually enjoyed loving my neighbors. Some of Mother Teresa's words still challenge me to this day. She said stuff like, "[for] love to be real, it must cost—it must hurt—it must empty us of self" and "a life not lived for

*continued on page 4*

## Title - Venus

by Venus Wozniak

*The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. (Matthew 13: 31-32)*

A large part of my full time work is spent listening to and pondering God's Word with children within the context of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. In the early childhood years we spend much of our time reading and responding to Jesus' kingdom parables. Many of these parables are concerned with farming analogies and wonderment at something very small growing into something large and beautiful

and amazing.

The children are very wise. In almost all circumstances after pondering these parables they pipe up with profound declarations. *These seeds are so tiny! Wow! That grows into a tree!? It looks like sand and it grows into a tree so big that it can hold birds' nests! We are like the seed. We start little too! God's kingdom grows!*

One of my favorite discoveries was when we were pondering the the parable of the Growing Seed:

*The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces*

*of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come. (Mark 4:26-29)*

Frequently what the child is captivated by is not what I would focus on. I would be concerned with the harvest. The child is captivated that the seed grows and the man knows not how. A second grader once asserted, "I know how the seed grows! God makes it grow!" Then another child gasps and exclaims, "Just like he makes his Kingdom grow!"

During the planting season of our Nativity House CSA, we invariably have a new member that meets seed planting with trepidation. "I am not sure I planted those beans right. I have

never done that before!" I always reassure them, "No worries! It is very hard to plant a seed wrong." Each week when the new gardener returns for the Saturday workday, "My beans are growing." And when the harvest comes, "I planted those beans! They grew! And they are so tasty sauteed with butter, salt and pepper!"

There is something deeper going on here. Not only is there a feeling of accomplishment and pride, there is joy and peace as well. I proudly assert that this is holy pride, joy and peace that comes when one partners with God.

When I look back over the last six years of the growth of Nativity House, I find myself in the same

*continued on page 6*



## Letter from the Directors

---

Dear Friends of Nativity House,

Happy Summer! Welcome to our annual issue spotlighting Care for Creation.

Spring and Summer are a bustling time here at Nativity House. The CSA (community supported agriculture) is up and running with weekly garden work days. We have a great mix of new and old members: 10 families total. The garden is teeming with activity and growth. Each Saturday from 9-11am the garden is all abuzz with children exploring the farm, families planting and/or harvesting something delectable, a few friends keeping one of our three dogs company, and a pair of garden members raving as they chomp on young sorrel leaves. Seriously, the joy is palpable.

In March our seventh guest mom made a big move into the city to be closer to her job and family. She expressed that her short stay at Nativity House gave her the confidence she needed to make this decision toward independence. She is doing well adjusting to her new apartment and work. Her baby is due in July. Just in time for the Easter Season our eighth guest mom moved in. She is due with a baby boy on June 8. With your help we showered her in early May with lots of love and gifts to help welcome baby Vayden when he arrives. We are also currently accepting applications for a second guest mom.

This Spring we have been hard at work on a new project: Resurrection Trails. Nativity House sits on five acres; three and a half of which are largely impassable woods. The vision of Nativity House has always been to offer a safe place where healing and reflection can take place. We believe that connection with the Earth is a large part of that process. We rallied our greater community and you came through. By the time you read this three trails through our woods will have been completed. What an amazing blessing! God is Good!

Our intern community is largely responsible for the amazing progress on the Resurrection Trails project and the many opportunities for hospitality this coming summer. Becca, Karen, and Megan are amazing women of faith that are eager to serve joyfully and they do! We are looking for another intern to join this amazing team. If you know of any young adults looking for a gap year or a year of service, send them our way!

We are looking forward to a great summer of hospitality. We are hosting our first ever Camping at the Farm weekends. Friends and families are invited to join us for working in the garden, farm projects work, campfire fun and farm crafts. The details for our annual Farm to Table Celebration are also in the works! Hopefully you will be able to join us for some fun on the farm this summer!

As always we are humbled by your prayers and support. Please know that we hold you and yours in our daily prayers.

Peace of Christ,

Venus & Justin 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.

To contact us, email us at:

[newspaper@nativity-house.org](mailto:newspaper@nativity-house.org)

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.

To connect with us, please email Venus Wozniak at:

[venusad@nativity-house.org](mailto: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.

### Wish List

- 50 solar garden lights
- 10 2x6x8 cedar/pine boards (for bridge making)
- Outdoor Benches
- Echinacea Plants
- Birdfeeders
- St Joseph the Worker Statue (outdoor)

## How does one build a Community

---

by Nia White

How does one build a community?

If you would have asked me ten years ago, I would have said “with love”. Today if you ask me, I will say “I do not truly know as there are many ways”. I have had the privilege of being a part of many communities. College. An orphanage. A Lasallian retreat center. My hometown. Community is defined as a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. How often have we been in community where the members have nothing in common with each other?

For me, this has happened in every community I have been a part of in my life. So, when I began as the first member of Jordan River Farm, I wanted to begin to build with those experiences in mind.

By the summer of 2021, we had a community that was made up of different generations, races, cultures, different species (two cats and two dogs) and background. We had those who lived with us, supported us, and visited us once a week. There was (and still is) a legacy of sister missions that have been established for many years (Bethlehem Farm, Nazareth Farm, Emmaus Farm, and Jerusalem Farm).

Here are few pointers we have learned to create the best community for us:

Spend time together

Once a week, we will spend intentional time together. This could be shopping for groceries, watching tv, or dinner. I am convinced time on farms moves much faster. This intentional time creates bonding between us.

Spend time apart

Time apart is as essential as time together. Not all of us are extroverts. We are together most of the day. Our community works and lives together. All of us in the community are a mix of introverts and extroverts. Time apart is for the health of all of us.

Listen and be heard

Once a week, we meet as community to discuss aspects of the household. It can be easy to discuss grievances with each other at all hours of the day. That would not be healthy. It would be like your roommate calling you at work to say that you left a light on and left the water running. For us, this would create a hostile environment. During those meetings, we listen, and we hear what each other has to say. There is no hierarchy in the meetings.

*continued on page 7*

## Love Thy Neighbor

others is not a life”.

*continued from page 1*

Through these experiences, Catholic Social Teaching gradually became a cornerstone in my life and I was introduced to Servant of God, Dorothy Day. My journey in service continued with becoming a nurse, wife, mother, and director of a Catholic Worker House. Love for my neighbor is still growing, but not how I imagined. I have found that serving one another is more than the privileged taking care of the poor and walking away happy and proud with their good deeds. It is deeper. It is deeper because I am living with the poor and I love them and I see them. Now, instead of proud, I usually walk away feeling helpless, pitiful, and frustrated with many systems that make it so difficult to get out of poverty. Their suffering becomes my suffering. Yet, I feel great joy serving them because it is all for the Glory of God.

Being a Catholic Worker is daily dying to self. It is doing all the evening clean up because your spouse is exhausted, it is providing shelter because a brother is fleeing from danger, it is cultivating a welcoming home because a neighbor is lonely, it is feeding the hungry because a sister chooses to buy what they are addicted to instead of food, but most importantly, service is a loving relationship. Imagine trying to convert someone to Christianity by buying their vote. It can't be done. You must get to know them, befriend them. It is the same when trying to love your neighbor as yourself.

Loving your neighbor can be strenuous work. So strenuous in fact, the Apostles decided it was best to live in community. In this fellowship they were able to hold one another accountable for their sins and live radically different

than society. They gave everything away to those in need. They lived together, broke bread together, and prayed together. The Christian way of life is not sustainable alone. Even Christ amid his crucifixion had his community. His mom was praying for him, Veronica soothed him, and Simon helped him carry his cross. We Christians are called to live in community.

I am never going to be as great a saint as Mother Teresa, but I really do want to try to be a little saint. I thank God for this great desire of mine, for this burning virtue of hope for heaven within my soul. I want to spend eternity with our Lord and Savior, the communion of saints and angels, with my family, friends and neighbors. Heaven and sainthood is not

unattainable. In my understanding, to become a saint one must live a sacramental life, repent, and do God's will. Living with the poor, in poverty, and in community is God's will for my life. And that is exactly why we started a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality.



*Toni Baier is a director of Sacred Tent. She is a stay "outside" mom now with four children.*

### *Easy Essays:* Houses Of Hospitality by Peter Maurin (1877-1949)



We need Houses of Hospitality  
to give to the rich  
the opportunity  
to serve the poor.

We need Houses of Hospitality  
to bring the scholars  
to the workers  
or the workers  
to the scholars.

We need Houses of Hospitality  
to bring back to institutions  
the technique to institutions.

We need Houses of Hospitality  
to show  
what idealism looks like  
when it is practiced.



---

**Title**

---

*continued from page*

---

*continued on page #*

**FALL  
ROUNDTABLE  
DISCUSSIONS**



NATIVITY HOUSE

7PM

Oct 15 - How the Pandemic has Unveiled Inequality

Nov 12 - A New Humanism: The Reinvigoration of  
Personal Initiative

Dec 10 - Creative Hospitality - The Christ Room

*\*scones, coffee & tea will be served\**



Title - Venus

*continued from page 1*

state of wonderment as the child over the growing seed. In the early stages, before we even had a house to accompany us on the Nativity House journey, Justin and I would dutifully do the work God set before us: editing and publishing this newspaper, applying for our non-profit status, writing grants, having many conversations with city and county zoning officials. We have always marveled at how plans and dreams unfurled, especially when tasks or obstacles seemed tantamount. God has always been the impetus making the seed grow.

\*\*\*

Through the work of Nativity House I have gotten much closer to a full view of many of the grave errors of society. We were in the early days of the global shutdown. It was not safe for anyone to be in public without fear of contracting the deadly virus. Our guest mom who had a long list of health issues, including asthma, had to use her food subsidy in person. She was not given the option for grocery delivery or even curbside pick up. Food subsidy is a blessing for all who qualify. But in a global crisis allowances were not made. On a more recent occasion, a guest mom had a COVID scare. She did what was appropriate and went and got tested. She has state subsidized health care. Her test took five

days for results when the typical wait time for a standard middle class patient insured through work would have a response within twenty-four hours. The working poor who need their jobs so badly, the working poor who do not have paid leave for illness are given these safety net systems as a “gift.” These give the barest minimum of protections.

I would argue that the major fault of such state run systems is that they are too big. Unfortunately, the poor are merely cogs in an economic system not set up to serve the common good. Wouldn't it be lovely if these systems were deemed *too big to fail?*

It is easy for us to fall back on these state run systems. It is easy to let someone else do the work. It is easy to think that the poor are cared for by my tax dollars, and that my social obligation is complete.

We, as the chosen people of God, have much work to do. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by large systemic wrongs that plague our society: lack of proper support for the poor, marginalization of single mothers, systemic racism, mass incarceration, a corrupt health care system, depletion of the earth due to carelessness and selfishness (to name a few). Jesus was pretty clear, “When you do it for the least of my people, you do it for

me.” (Matthew 26) I frequently fall back on the work and words of Dorothy Day:

We have a big program but we warn our fellow workers to keep in mind small beginnings. The smaller the group, the more work is done. (Day, *Houses of Hospitality*, 1936)

She was adamant that when each of us, as called by our Baptism as a child of God, has a personal responsibility to help right these societal wrongs. She talked of a *big program* of Catholic Social Teaching - human dignity, dignity of work, personal responsibility, solidarity, subsidiarity, care for creation - but smallness is what gets big work done. Here we find echoes of the tiny mustard seed.

God calls each of us to participate. Because we are made in the image and likeness of the Trinity we are made for community. If we are paying attention to this we can't help but be aroused by the sufferings and needs of our fellow humans, the poor in particular. I challenge the people of God to this work in the words of Dorothy Day:

We emphasize again the necessity of smallness. The idea of course, would be that each Christian, conscious of his duty in the lay apostolate, should take in one of the homeless as an honored guest, remembering Christ's words, ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it

unto me.’” (Day, *Houses of Hospitality*, 1936)

I have always been humbled by Dorothy Day's example and call to action. She was able to stir up a fire within people.

Dorothy Day's animation of the Gospel call is what inspired Justin and me. We were confident that we could start with one guest mom. It was important that we spread the word of the work we intended to do. We watched and waited. To paraphrase Pope Francis: the works of mercy are contagious. When you engage in the work of the Gospel, people can't help but be drawn in. Nativity House began just like the mustard seed. Small. One guest mom; one staff member and a family of three. Over the years we have watched it grow. We marvel over the growth much like the farmer in the parable of the growing seed. God makes it grow. In the spirit of Dorothy Day, we do the work so as to show what needs to be done and that you too can do it. I would be happy to give you statistics of the number of women who are abortion vulnerable due to lack of stable housing. But where God has called us, he might not be calling you. But no doubt, He is calling you.

He is calling all of us. We need not be overwhelmed by the ills of the world. We just need to watch, pray and act. Trust that the seed will grow.



*Venus Wozniak is the co-founder of Nativity House and Director of Faith Formation at St Dennis in Lockport, IL.*

---

## How does one build a Community

*continued from page 3*

Do not force anything

If you look at every community aspect and each member as a puzzle piece, you will not force any parts of that together. We cannot force the introvert to spend every moment together with the other members. If you force anything, even friendship, it could cause a break down later.

Each person should create a personal sanctuary

This is different from time apart. A personal sanctuary is where you can be alone and no one else can enter. It is your safe zone where you can control. For me that is my

room, I control who comes in and it is where I can just be at peace.

Pray together

Just that simple. No explanation. Pray together. There is no specific way.

Hug your pets

Our community is blessed to have two cats, Snoopy and Woodstock, and two dogs, Leona and Eudora. There is one for each community member to have pet comfort therapy if needed. Each pet is more than willing to give that to us all.



*Nia White*

## St. Mother Theodore Guerin

*continued from page 8*

a cholera outbreak, and the discrimination of women and Catholics. However, perhaps her greatest hardship was suffering through the persecution, betrayal and continual interference of Bishop de la Hailandier. The bishop was described as a troubled man who sought to undermine and impede Mother Theodore Guerin's work at the mission. Even though Mother Theodore Guerin was treated horribly by the bishop, she always treated the bishop with respect, humility and always considered that he acted out of good intentions. When a conflict arose, she wanted to completely understand the other person's point of view and not get frustrated or angry. She told others, "Never speak when you are excited (agitated). Keep back words that wound (others and) your loving Jesus." If she did make an error in her words or actions during a conflict, she was humble and asked for forgiveness. Mother Theodore Guerin completely forgave Bishop Hailandier, and others that hurt her. She believed that holiness begins with forgiveness and was always inspired by God's love and His love of all his children. She forgave others as Jesus forgave. She recognized that all people are a God given blessing to the world and treated them accordingly. Forgiving others can be difficult, but it is a journey that we all must take.

We all go through trials and hardships in our lives. Pain and suffering are a part of living. Wouldn't it be astonishing if we

could try to live our lives like Saint Mother Theodore Guerin? She met all hardships in her life with love by "loving all in God and for God and all will be well"; with charity, by doing what "God calls you to do, not to do ALL the good"; by humility, by setting pride aside and "make sure all your efforts focus on God not your own needs and desires"; by forgiveness, by forgiving completely as Jesus did, and above all, trust in God and His Divine Providence. It didn't matter what circumstances she faced God was always first in her life. She put troubling situations behind her without complaining, discussing or dwelling on them. She trusted in God instead. Can we all strive to put God first in our life and trust Him completely? Maybe these words from Saint Mother Theodore Guerin can help us:

"Answer your call to God by concentrating on the direction we are being encouraged to take and proceed out of trust in God."

"Walk in the presence of God."

"Do all actions solely to please Him."

"Offer God all your actions, your troubles, your temptation, your little humiliations, and go about your day with cheerfulness".



*Mary Kae*



In this issue:

- Love Thy Neighbor
- Title - Venus
- How does one build a Community
- 
- St. Mother Theodore Guerin

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



## St. Mother Theodore Guerin

Feast Day: October 3rd

by Mary Kae

Patron: of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lafayette in Indiana

When asked to write this article, I felt a desire to discover a lesser-known saint. A relatable saint that could inspire myself and others to become a better person and to trust in God's will or Divine Providence. I asked for God's guidance, and prayed each time I lifted a book in research. In one book I read Saint Mother Theoderin's words, "with Jesus, what shall we have to fear?" This simple phrase immediately got my attention, and reminded me of a Slavic phrase my deceased Father often said, "Ne maste strach". Which means "Have no fear" or "Don't worry". Which my dad implied as, "trust in God and all will be fine". Halleluiah! My prayers were answered and I finally chose to write about Saint Mother Theodore Guerin.

Throughout her life, Mother Theodore Guerin faced hardships, tragedies, illnesses, self-doubts, discrimination, and persecution. Some of which many people, including myself, also struggle with today. Not only did she endure her hardships and

tragedies, she did it with courage, kindness, love, humor, humility and an unwavering trust in God's guidance or Divine Providence. Wow! Isn't this how we should all strive to approach our daily struggles?

Saint Mother Theodore Guerin was born Anne-Therese Guerin on October 2, 1798, in Etables, France. When Anne-Therese was fifteen years old, her father was murdered and her mother fell into a deep depression. For 10 years Anne-Therese took care of her mother and younger sister. When she was 25, she entered the congregation of the Sisters of Providence in Ruille-sur-Loir, France. This congregation was devoted to teaching and caring for the poor. It was here that she contracted small pox and almost succumbed to the disease. The illness, and possibly the treatment, left her with a life long stomach ailment and a weakened body.

In 1839 she accepted the challenge to lead the new mission in Indiana, called Saint Mary-of-



the-Woods. Mother Theodore Guerin did not take this decision lightly. She would have to leave all that she knew and loved behind, travel across a stormy ocean to a country that she didn't speak or understand the language, and then to a place deep in the wilderness that didn't have any modern conveniences of the time. Her frail health and the concerns mentioned, gave her strong self-doubts and fears about successfully handling the venture. She ultimately put her fears and doubts aside and said "Yes to God" and "put (herself) gently

into the hands of Providence." The fears and doubts she faced were enormous! But she calmly put them all into the hands of God and trusted in Divine Providence. When we have struggles, can we turn to God with so much trust that our worries and anxieties evaporate?

During her years at St. Mary-of-the-Woods mission, she endured continued poor health, a devastating fire, the loss of all the mission's money in a bank failure,

*continued on page 7*