



Rochester Catholic Worker

A Publication of St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, Rochester, NY
Spring 2010

Why I Love St. Joe's — Chava Redonnet

On Monday morning, February 8, I walked into St. Joe's for morning prayer and was met in the kitchen by James, who said, "We're ready to get married and we'd like to do it on Saturday. Will that work for you?"

James and Shawnta were going to be married last October, but had to postpone it because of a family crisis. They were all set but for the date... and now, they had a date. "Yes," I said. "Let's do it!"

The community pulled together a lovely wedding for James and Shawnta—about thirty people came, including a number of our regular volunteers. Tom set up chairs; Mirabai made a cake and a certificate for us all to sign; Linda and Harry brought some food. Tom Cleary sent over a unity candle. There was a lot of love in the room—an island of peace and happiness and good wishes for our newly married couple.

This is why I love St. Joe's. My spiritual director tells me, "Don't let perfect get in the way of good." Well, we haven't got a chance of perfect at the Catholic Worker, but we sure can do good. We can do loving, and we can do wonderful. James and Shawnta's wedding was all those things.

George asked me to write something about my call for the newsletter. I'd really rather write about how great the house is. But here is something: I am called to be here for the people who have trouble finding another place to be. I am called to bring love in the midst of chaos. I am called to just be, to sort of hold the door open for the Holy Spirit, and get out of the way and let the Spirit do what she will. I am called to be with people in both the happiest and the saddest moments of their lives: weddings and baptisms as well as hospital visits and funerals. I am called to



The happy couple, James and Shawnta

show up, to love, to forgive, and to hang in there; for our guests and our volunteers and our staff and anyone else God sends along to love and forgive and hang in there with.

And I am called to do it all as an ordained priest.

Way back in 1978 I went to an ordination at St. Boniface. The late Dan O'Shea was ordained a Catholic Worker priest, ordained to serve at St. Joe's, just as St. Joe's is calling me, now. Dan had a minute of silence at his ordination to remember women who were called to priesthood and unable to serve. I like to think he would support what we're doing, now... and I'm so grateful, all these years later, to be able to answer that call. It's pretty amazing and serendipitous to me that I get to be ordained on May 1: the feast of St. Joseph the Worker! I trust it is a sign of God's blessing on the whole endeavor.

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Fr. Neil R. Miller, a diocesan priest for more than 41 years and twin brother of Sr. Grace Miller, the Director of the House of Mercy, died December 27, 2009, at the age of 74 after a long illness. He was a great friend and advocate of the poor and marginalized of our city.

Neil was a close friend of St. Joe's, serving often as a celebrant at the Tuesday evening services and consultant to many of our guests. His last assignment before retiring in 2002 was at Our Lady of Perpetual Help where he served the poor for twelve years.



If I ever knew a saint, Neil was the real McCoy. I've known him for many years, but I especially got to know him these last three years of his extended illness. He was always his congenial self the many times I would visit him in the hospital or nursing home. He suffered a lot but never complained. A very patient man, he had a strong faith, and was so selfless.

He struggled these last years to get well so he could return to ministering at the House of Mercy but was able to do that only for brief periods. Every time I visited him he would have loads of friends and many of those times, Grace, would call out for Italian food and we all had a party. Neil loved people and everybody loved Fr. Neil.

After he retired, he dedicated his energy and ministry to the House of Mercy and its urban poor. He served as the chairman of the board and celebrant at their many funerals and liturgical occasions. Neil had a doctorate in counseling from St. Bernard's and was certified for drug and alcohol counseling. He was quoted in the paper after his retirement: "I'm not into building buildings. I'm into building people." ❧

On May 1 the Roman Catholic WomenPriests will ordain five women at Spiritus Christi (121 N. Fitzhugh St., Rochester—that's Downtown United Presbyterian, also). Theresa Novak Chabot and I will be ordained priests, and Caryl Johnson, Patti LaRosa, and Ann Penick will be ordained deacons. (Theresa, Caryl, and Ann are from New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, respectively, and Patti is from Rochester). You are invited! The ceremony is at 12:30 on Saturday, May 1, and I will celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving at Spiritus the next morning, May 2 at 7:30 am. But the big thing we want to invite you to is my second Mass of Thanksgiving, here at St Joe's on Saturday, May 15 at 5 pm. Hope you can join us.

Thank you, James and Shawnta, for sharing your wedding day with all of us. Thank you, St. Joe's, for being a community that can make a wedding happen in five days. Thank you, all of you reading this, for supporting our house and our work, for making it your house and your work, too. We couldn't do it without you. ❧

Please Join Us

Saturday, May 15, 2010

5:00 p.m.

*St. Joseph's House of Hospitality
for a Mass of Thanksgiving
celebrated by our new priest,*

Rev. Chava Redonnet

RSVP, Mirabai, 232-3262

***Come for Mass and
stay for the party!***

Thoughts on War, Healthcare, and Taxes

— Tim Sigrist

No one wants to pay taxes or they want to pay as little as possible, right? BUT, our government is waging two wars, and wars cost money. Without a tax increase, how are we paying for them? We BORROW, mostly from China, but from other countries, too. It is estimated that by 2014 (*New York Times*), we will be paying \$516 billion dollars yearly for debt interest, alone. That will exceed our budget for all domestic programs!

So, how would we pay for universal health care? What would be its chunk of “domestic” spending? We are told Europe’s free healthcare system isn’t free. Exorbitant taxes pay for it. Right? Let’s use France as an example. “Business Week” reports that free healthcare, there, represents 9% of their GDP. While OUR ineffective system already takes up 16% of our GDP. Why so much more than France? A big part of the answer is that insurance companies, pharmaceuticals, and physicians get rich from our program, while 40,000,000 citizens have no coverage at all!

Would a thoughtful person buy what he can’t possibly pay for? Why does a government do it? Why does a government let health care companies gouge the system? They are all allowed their rate hike ... while people pay ... many suffer ... and some die before their time. ☹

Update from St. Fiacre Gardens — Chris Phillips

We are accepting members now for two advance order programs: fruit and summer veggies. Advance orders are like a CSA, but instead of getting a large crate full of the harvest share every week, members have some choice of what crops they want, roughly how much and how often, and how much they spend (beyond the minimum deposit required to join). Order forms are available to look over.

The crew of volunteers from St. Joseph’s Church and Penfield First Baptist who care for the carrot Gift Garden got ready for the growing season with a day of prayer, reflection, and planning on February 27. We hope to grow over 1000 lbs. of carrots this year

Compassion for Maintain

Here heed those ones in desperate straits, lift up,
To them be kind, be gracious, merciful;
Don’t disregard, disdain, be pitiful
And fill with generosity their cup.
To overflowing fill, their thirst now slake,
Their hunger sharp now blunt with hearty bread;
From fullness, your’s, those needy let them take,
Rejected not, the poor may they be fed.
As given so now give, Christ’s name we bear,
Like Him who gave be generous, let rain
Upon the destitute your plenty, gain,
His tender love show toward, His tender care:
Their bitter lot relieve, compassion for maintain,
Indifferent, calloused, heart of it beware.

Mike Spezio, Thursday volunteer

What’s a Trillion?

If you spent a million dollars every day since Jesus was born, you still would not have spent a trillion dollars.

A trillion is a million times a million or a thousand billion.

A trillion is enough to give \$325 to everyone in the United States each year for the next ten years.

to share with the Penfield Food Pantry and urban meal programs for the hungry.

As the Gift Garden grows larger we will be looking for volunteers to help pick and wash the carrots and to deliver them to the partner programs. We also hope to find volunteers with basement or garage space to offer for root cellaring the carrots in very cool, moist conditions. This could extend the giving through the entire winter.

Speaking of sent from God, during February we welcomed the first Catholic Worker Farm Apprentice at Fiacre Gardens. Austin Youmans comes from Harrisonburg, VA. He has spent the last 12 years living and working with Christian intentional communi-

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House Comings and Goings — Mirabai

“A shelter provides protection along the journey, but is not a place where we intend to stay. It is where we rest up, dry off, re-provision and prepare to set off again.” Faith Streams

It is early early morning, practically the middle of the night, as I begin to complete this article for the spring newsletter. Looking out the window at the newly fallen snow, the crows who gather here each autumn and winter are still roosting in the bare-branched tree just down the street. They have yet to begin their morning wake-up cawing. In this quiet time, with candle of remembrance and gratitude lighted, a cup of freshly brewed coffee sitting by my side (my own personal wake-up call), the roaring of the furnace (ah, warmth) I begin to relay to you, our faithful readers, the events of the past season, a.k.a., winter; the ebb and flow of guests and volunteers here at St. Joe’s.

I continue to be struck by the history of this place. This building has operated as a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality for almost seven decades, beginning in 1941. In 2011, we will celebrate 70 years being here to offer a safe haven for some of those who are in need of shelter, food, and clothing.

St. Joe’s long-awaited renovations to repair the facade began in October. The house was able to offer limited services during the time we were closed. It was a blessing that the warmer climate continued through most of the time, though there were mornings where those of us who served out the back had to be bundled up well. Bagged lunches and some hot food and drink were offered in the backyard each day for about an hour. Our winter emergency shelter was postponed for several weeks, opening at the beginning of November. The house was able to open more fully just the week before Thanksgiving, which, of course, gave us so much more for which to be thankful.

We put the finishing touches to the new side entrance of St Joe’s thanks to the generosity of the six Hickey children (reporting in from Alaska and the lower 48) in memory of their father, E. James Hickey.



Guests stand near our new entrance.

In February Litron Labs of Rochester employees came in one Saturday to prep the walls of the hospitality room; the following Saturday they painted the entire area, which was much appreciated action, as the increased light from the new windows emphasized the flaws.

At this writing the Lenten season has just begun. But for the moment, let us journey back, in memory, to recall a most favorite time of celebration in the Christian calendar — Christmas. To begin the festivities, we were blessed with an offer to decorate for the season with the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit, located just down South Avenue. Fr. Patrick Cowles, his wife, Mary, with a group of college students came bearing tree, lights, decorations, and a delicious vegan meal to share and celebrate the season of light and hope.

Christmas Eve was celebrated with a dinner for our shelter guests, volunteers, and residents of St. Joseph’s. Frank and Arline Liberti, Donna Stina, Rosemary Stina, and John Stina prepared a sumptuous dinner: roast beef, mashed potatoes, green beans, and a variety of pies, with whipped cream, for dessert along with beverage, table cloths, and candles...truly a wonderful festive atmosphere for our house and the homeless men who have found shelter with us through the holiday season.

Much gratitude and appreciation to all the many local churches and organizations who have contributed gifts to the House, both specific and general, for our guests in celebration of the season.

The new year found the house revisited by all three of our summer interns: Joe, Alex and Timothy. Each brought a lovely young woman to experience the works of mercy in practice: Beckah, a student from New Hampshire University, Nora, a Columbia University student, and Sara, who studies at Eastern University. Also, Bridget, 19, came from Michigan, for a week, to explore the possibility of joining the community in the near future. What a delight to have so much youthful energy and exuberance here.

Currently, we have two new live-in volunteers, who have joined us in the past few weeks. **Kevin**, from Texas, will be here for ten months, before joining the Peace Corp in the fall. **Alex** is a member of a Pennsylvania Bruderhof community who is planning to become a EMT tech this summer, on his way to paramedic training. Alex graduated from high school last June.



Kevin



Alex

On the kitchen's front burner, there are some changes. Rafael is easing into retirement this year with a shortened workweek: Monday through Wednesday. Peg Gefell, the owner of Savory Thyme, a local catering business here in Rochester, will be doing the honors on Thursdays and Fridays. Saturdays will continue with church groups coordinated by Harry, while Sundays utilize the services of church groups coordinated by Tim.

Our "Men in Transition" program, re-established this year, is welcoming Ricardo and Trent, who join Quinton who was already part of the program. They are men who have been in our emergency winter shelter program and have "graduated" up to the second floor dormitory. Our hope is that by providing a sense of stability and one-on-one support, the partici-

pants will have a stronger sense of security and rootedness needed for making life changes. Let us pray for their success.

I would like to close this portion of the newsletter with an expression of deep gratitude for the Catholic Worker movement and especially St. Joseph's House of Hospitality. I am being offered each moment the wonderful opportunity and challenge to serve God by learning how to serve "the least of these." This is a blessed place. ✠

St. Fiacre Gardens *(continued from page 3)*

ties. Recently he has been on a tour of Catholic Worker houses. Just before St. Fiacre's he served 2 months at Unity Acres in Orwell, New York, which serves as home to 100 men, and at the Saginaw Catholic Worker prior to that. Austin has strong interests in farming, prayer, meditation, and the performing arts. He will be with Fiacre Gardens until mid-November.

We hope to find a large field where we can expand production, follow better organic practices, and grow lots more surplus to give away. The time is coming when Fiacre Gardens will be able to break even while practicing radical giving, and at some point beyond we may reach the goal of a viable green business based on Catholic Worker values, which can support a household of praying farmers.

For more information, please call 288-1073 or send an email to fiacregardens@yahoo.com. ✠

— MAY 1 —

FEAST DAY OF
ST. JOSEPH
THE WORKER



Community-Supported Bakery: A Proposal

— Paul Frazier

Here at St. Joe's we are experimenting (Gandhi spoke of his efforts as "experiments in truth") with creating a small-scale, community-supported bakery. And just what is that, you ask?

Many know of community-supported agriculture (CSA) models: farmers and consumers work together to share the costs, risks, and benefits of growing fresh, local food. Consumers put up funds in advance. Farmers have guaranteed sales. Less time and effort spent on marketing and selling. Consumers receive a box a week of fresh produce, grown in season. Everyone benefits.

The community-support bakery model works in a similar way. Designed for the St. Joe's community it looks like this: good fresh bread is produced at St. Joe's by hand, by those in need of small-scale employment. Friends of St. Joe's will agree to purchase a loaf a week for, let's say, ten weeks. With those sales in place we can then bake extra loaves for those who cannot afford a loaf. (We think of places like the House of Mercy where good, fresh food needs are always in demand.)

With this design, everyone wins: Those who can afford a loaf will receive a fresh, organic loaf of bread. Those in need of work can receive a wage for

their efforts. Those in need of good bread will receive the same wholesome, fresh, organic bread. Fresh bread does not sit around on a shelf, waiting to be sold and then, unsold and stale, given to those in need. All of this is in agreement with the Catholic Worker principle: "From each according to their abilities; to each according to their needs."

We have support from Rochester's Savory Thyme catering, from experiences shared by way of Syracuse's Jail Ministry and their 30-plus years of Glory Bee baking. We have people in need ready to learn the baking trade. We have start-up money. For our small-scale beginning, we are looking for 40 members of the St. Joe's community who will make a weekly purchase of a loaf of fresh, organic whole wheat bread, once a week for ten weeks, our "Spring Wheat" experiment.

The one-and-a-half pound loaves sell for \$4. We will arrange a weekly drop-off, pick-up place where the fresh bread will be delivered.

Give Mirabai a call, 232-3262, and be one of the first members* of the St. Joe's Community-Supported Bakery. The bread is rising. And we are known in the making, and the baking, and the breaking of bread. ✕

**As we go to press, the bakery has its first four subscribers!*

Good Friday, April 2, we will be doing the urban Stations of the Cross to call attention to local institutions and businesses that make it hard for our brothers and sisters to get a toe hold on the American dream.



The Catholic Worker Food Program in Haiti

— Sarah Ahimsa

Everywhere around the world, elderly people are neglected, left feeling lonely, and sometimes left without adequate care, but in Haiti the choice to leave the elderly is not made out of neglect or malice. It is a choice of survival because many families cannot meet their own basic needs for food, water, shelter, and clothing.

When there isn't enough food to go around, the children eat first, then the men who must go off to work in the fields to plant more food, then the women who take care of everyone, and then finally, the elderly. Elderly people whose children have died are often given a make-shift room by another family, but they wander the streets begging or scavenging for food and money in order to eat. At this time, when everyone is struggling after the earthquake, there is more a need than ever to support these



Christmas dinner is served!

most vulnerable members of the community in Borgne.

The Catholic Worker Food Program has been serving 50 elderly and disabled people two hearty meals a week for the last year and a half. This Christmas we celebrated Christ's birth with a holiday party, com-

plete with fried chicken, popcorn, and a little *cremas* (a bit like eggnog), dancing, jokes, and songs.

Please help St. Joe's continue this important program! We will be holding the 5th Annual Pancake Breakfast for Haiti to support this program at the end of March. As we go to press, we don't have the exact date set, but call St. Joe's for details. ☞

Sarah Ahimsa has written more about Haiti. Go to www.saintjoeshouse.org to read her article.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I read Harry Murray's "Visit with Mary Farren" article in your last newsletter to my mother, Joan Abbott, after Thanksgiving dinner, yesterday. She and Mary were classmates at Nazareth College. They are still dear friends. Joan met John Abbott at the House, married him, and raised eight kids.

Mary and Art Farren, Loretta and Tommy Scahill, John and Joan all were couples who met and married as volunteering college students coming down to help feed the hungry in the heart of the Great Depression. They met activists like Willie Higgs and Milt Fess and his brothers, who ran the farm in Scottsville, supplying food to the House.

Although the Abbotts would pass out of the active life of the House, they bonded for life with all these founding members and maintained a lively intellectual/spiritual life amongst them. They were, and are, genuine intellectuals who are vitally interested in the philosophical tenets under-pinning the moral and ethical issues effecting the policies of social justice here and world-wide. They're devout Catholics who enjoy a great discussion of the writings of the great theologians and philosophers of Catholic Intellectual History from the Dead Sea Scrolls to Liberation Theology to "The Family," they and you have kept it alive and real. Thanks for the enduring and necessary work of the House and the monthly Letter.

John N.Jr. and Joan M.O'Reilly Abbott

St. Joseph's House of Hospitality

Rochester Catholic Worker Community

Some of us live in houses; some of us live on the street; some of us have a room of our own, or a bed and a place to keep; some of us have a cot or piece of a couch or patch of floor to return to each night; some hold special positions of power and roles with specific responsibilities, some do whatever they can. Our aim is to try each day to "build a new society in the shell of the old" as we practice the various works of mercy and labor with whatever resources, physical as well as spiritual, that we have been given at the time.

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
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House Needs:

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Prayers | Sugar | GLOVES | Sleeping Bags | Bath Towels |
| Butter/Margarine | Boots/Sneakers | Hats | Hoodies | Socks |
| Laundry Soap Powder | Jeans/Cords | Toilet Paper | 39-gal Trash Bags | Paper Towels |
| Men's Underwear (32-44) | Jelly/Jam | Forks | Razors | Toothbrushes/Paste |

— C A L E N D A R —

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| St. Joseph's Day | March 19 |
| Jan San Visit | March 21-24 |
| Foot & Hair Clinic | March 28 1-3 p.m. |
| Urban Stations of the Cross | April 2 |
| Bike Clinic Starts | April 14 |
| House Closing | April 18 |
| Maintenance & Cleaning | April 19-23 |
| House Re-Opens | April 24 |
| Chava's Ordination | May 1 |
| Mass of Thanksgiving | May 15 |

Celebrants for

5:00 p.m. Tuesday Edumenical Service

We suggest that you call the House in case the service time or celebrant has been changed.

| | |
|----------|------------------------|
| March 9 | Fr. Jim Callan |
| March 16 | Pastor David Domina |
| March 23 | Pastor Marc Egbujar |
| March 30 | Deacon Bill Coffey |
| April 6 | Tim McGowan |
| April 13 | Donna Eckert |
| April 20 | Pastor Thomas Felton |
| April 27 | Rev. Lawrence Hargrave |
| May 4 | Fr. Richard Brickler |
| May 11 | Mirabai Chrin |
| May 18 | Minister Sandy Whalen |
| May 25 | Deacon Tom Cleary |
| June 1 | Fr. Larry Tracy |
| June 8 | Fr. Jim Callan |
| June 15 | Rev. Chava Redonnet |