



at the door

the quarterly newsletter of St. Francis Catholic Worker House – Chicago, IL

St. Francis House: In the Beginning (1968–1974)

Excerpts from the article, "Chicago Catholic Worker History," written by David Buer (Franciscan), and featured in the Winter '85-86 issue of At the Door.

The fourth generation of Chicago Catholic Worker Houses began as a seedling in the "hotbox" of the Vietnam War and the days of riots spurred by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. It was also the summer of the Democratic National Convention where the anti-war protesters met head-on with the Chicago Police—it was a turbulent time, especially in Chicago.

The beginnings of the current [St. Francis] CW house can be traced back to that spring of 1968 when Phil & Kathy Dahl-Bredlne moved to the inner-city and met Karl Meyer and a Protestant Religious community called Taize.... In Phil's own words:

"...Kathy came home one afternoon waving a curious looking newspaper with bold woodcuts and even bolder proclamations of the Gospel in the spirit of St. Francis. She had discovered the Catholic Worker in the Northwestern U. library and we enthusiastically recognized it as the expression of the Christian life we had been longing for. We determined we must visit Dorothy Day and her group in NY.... We arrived in the evening and Dorothy sat us down and gave us first hand training in saying Compline. At the end of our weekend with Dorothy she advised us to return to teaching, but we left knowing that, after what we had seen and heard, we would not be able to follow her advice for long.

"In the spring of 1968, we moved from the Northwestern campus to a northside neighborhood in the inner city near Armitage & Halsted. Soon after, Sue Dziennik, with whom we shared our two-flat on Burling St, helped us to open Casa San Jose, a store-front on Halsted St. where we tried to

provide emergency food and clothing, and a place for Friday evening round table discussions.

"It was during this period that we met Karl Meyer who was running St. Stephen's House on Mohawk St. some 10 blocks south of where we lived. This was also a period, we realize now, in which we met with some of the strongest spiritual influences that the Church had to offer a pair of new Catholics: in addition to the CW we became friends with the Taize Community, the Little Sisters of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld, and with the Franciscan brothers at Taize.

"Casa San Jose soon was closed down by the landlord who was not pleased when we occasionally housed people overnight at the storefront. Karl, Kathy, Sue and I planned for a new house which never materialized. Then in the fall of 1969, just after we had moved our growing family (now two children) to an apartment at 1024 W. Armitage, we were introduced one night at the Taize Community to a small group of Franciscan friars who wanted to form a small community among the poor in the spirit of St. Francis. Within a few weeks Fr. Sergius, Fr. Blase, Br. Tom, and Br. Dominic occupied an apartment above ours on Armitage. So began a community of lay and religious, CW and Franciscan in spirit, which came to be called the Gospel Family. These were, for us, beautiful years spent absorbing from the brothers an ever deeper sense of Francis' way of living and breathing the Gospel.

"Dorothy visited the community when in Chicago. Her deep love for the Church and her strong faith that the teaching of the Gospel and the social teachings of the Church held an answer for the problems of our world and society helped us to

(Story continued on page 3)

House News

By Dan Justman

The backyard is filled with birdsong, the garden is in bloom, the days are getting longer—springtime is surely here at St. Francis House. Coincidentally, the longer days seem to be getting fuller too, so it arrived just in time.

It seems only appropriate that a season of growth should parallel growth in the St. Francis House community, and it's with great excitement to share an update about two new members, Michael Nitsch and Quinn Smith. Michael is a long-time friend of the House who recently returned to Chicago from Massachusetts, and Quinn is from Denver. Both are taking an opportunity to see what any of this means (join the club, guys).

Daniel and Dan joined several other Midwest Catholic Worker communities at the annual Days of Faith & Resistance Retreat in Kansas City, MO from April 12-15 (see report on next page). Many thanks to the Jerusalem Farm and Cherith Brook Catholic Worker communities for hosting that gathering. During Memorial Day weekend, Michael joined them for the Ohio River Valley Gathering in Indiana put on by the Bloomington Catholic Worker. Both were amazing opportunities for fellowship and community, with the former culminating in an action at the National Nuclear Security Administration plant operated by Honeywell, where 10 people were arrested.

Another great opportunity for fellowship occurred in mid-May when the St. Francis community was able to celebrate the LA Catholic Worker at the 4th Annual Berrigan-McAlister Award ceremony at De Paul University with longtime LA Workers Jeff and Susan Dietrich. Jeff accepted the award on the LA Worker's behalf and spoke about his lifetime of resistance, work, and witness.

Right around the same time, the House hosted a surprise pilgrim for a weekend, Aidan Stenson, a Jesuit novice studying in St. Paul, MN. Aidan was able to attend the award ceremony with the SFH community before heading back to St. Paul.

And speaking of surprise visitors, Fr. David Buer, OFM, a close friend of the House all the way from the beginning, stopped by in March to check in on things. David was generous enough to spend the afternoon with the Workers as well as contribute several issues of *At The Door* from past decades (see page 1!!). His visit could not have been more well-timed as the House looks forward to celebrating its 50th anniversary in October.



David Buer featuring David Buer

St. Francis House continues to hold monthly roundtables. Topics discussed during the past few months have ranged from organizing for climate change, hosted by Paul Campion from the Emmaus House Catholic Worker; how the spirit of the Worker informs living as a professional, hosted by Justin Bartkus; and Contemplative Prayer and Social Justice, hosted by Lincoln Rice from Casa Maria Catholic Worker in Milwaukee. Be sure to check our upcoming topics on the next page so you can join in the conversations!

Last but not least, it is with great excitement that we share with you one final addition to the SFH community: Francis Rocco Russo! Sam & Elizabeth's firstborn arrived on 5/13. Congratulations to the proud new parents.

More details about our 50th Anniversary and the Catholic Worker National Gathering (Oct. 4-6) can be found on the next page—we really hope to see you here in Chicago! In the meantime, don't be afraid to show up at our door either; you just might make the next newsletter. And as always, thanks for keeping up with us.

In the Beginning

(Continued from page 1)

keep a strong sense of direction in the often chaotic '60's. The community prayed together, offered hospitality to men Br. Tom would bring home from skid row on W. Madison St., and began housing and work cooperatives with people of the neighborhood. The 'society in which it is easier to be good' we hoped, with God's grace, would struggle to germinate in little patches in the neighborhood...."

1971 was a pivotal year. The Dahl-Bredine family moved to the grounds of the Franciscan monastery at Burlington, WI.... Karl Meyer was sentenced to prison for non-payment of taxes. The Taize community headed back to France and the friars left there, decided to move to Uptown....

Several events worked together in 1972 to bring a renewed effort in Co-op Housing. Karl was released from prison in Feb.; Tom & Carol LaPointe were married; and Kris Pierie joined the community on Armitage St. Eventually the co-op housing effort failed but Tom LaPointe then channeled his energies into a new effort in what became known as "The Storefront".

The Storefront was inspired by a Catholic Worker vision. Each morning before work assignments were given there was morning prayer. The workers were neighbors who wanted to make a small amount of money. The idea was to encourage an environment where the workers could sense that it was their storefront. Old furniture was donated and the neighbors helped to pick it up, restore it and sell it. Clothing was sold at a nominal price. A free lunch was provided each day for the workers and guests and on Friday evening there was a prayer meeting and a special meal....

The Gospel Family was a Franciscan/Catholic Worker community. During the years on Armitage St. (1969-1974) there was much direct contact with Dorothy Day. She visited the community about once

a year [...but by] 1974 several factions emerged which dispersed the Gospel Family. The neighborhood was changing—it was being rehabbed for young urban professionals. St. Jeanne McNulty found two apartments in a building on Gordon Ter. in Uptown. Blase Karas, OFM, Sergius Wroblewski, OFM, Madge Korecki, SSJ-TOSF, Miriam Friday, SSJ-TOSF, and others joined her in moving there. Others, though, wanted to stay in the old neighborhood. Jerry Zawada, OFM & Dominic Figura, OFM found an apartment just down the block and the LaPointes stayed too and kept the storefront going. Kris Pierie was ready to start a CW House of Hospitality. She came to Uptown with other friends and began searching for a suitable house.

It was Dorothy Day's visit to Chicago in May of 1974 to speak at DePaul U. that was the catalyst to get the present St. Francis House on Kenmore going. After her talk at DePaul she learned of Kris' interest in starting a house. She gave a substantial part of her honorarium to Kris to find a house. Dorothy toured the storefront with Tom LaPointe and gave him a donation too. But Tom treasured Dorothy's advice more than the donation. Facing various problems at the storefront he asked her, "What about lawyers and taxes?" Dorothy put her arm around Tom to comfort him and said, "Don't worry about the Scribes, just build a family."



With some 7,000 employees, the Kansas City National Security Campus operated by Honeywell produces more than 80% of the U.S. nuclear weapons' non-nuclear components. After a weekend-long retreat during the **Midwest CW Days of Faith and Resistance** over 50 Catholic Workers gathered on Monday, April 15th at the NSC to protest and practice non-violent direct action. Ten were arrested.

“Lessons from 50 Years of St. Francis House and the Future of the Catholic Worker”

WHO: Catholic Workers, near and far, and friends of St. Francis House

WHAT: Catholic Worker National Gathering and 50th Anniversary Celebration of St. Francis House

WHERE: St. Gertrude Church Social Center, 1401 W Granville Ave, Chicago IL 60660

WHEN: Friday, October 4th - Sunday, October 6th, 2024

We invite you to join us as we all ponder lessons learned from 50 years of St. Francis House, reflect together about the future of the Catholic Worker, and celebrate with friends old and new.

Be on the lookout for an online registration form in early July or check our website, www.francishousechicago.org, for updates.

Upcoming Roundtables

Please consider joining us at 4652 N Kenmore Ave. for our monthly roundtables! Doors open at 6pm with refreshments, and discussion begins at 7pm.

July 18th: Henry David Thoreau: Civil Disobedience, and the Catholic Worker

August 22nd: The Catholic Worker—Staying Relevant With Shifting Forms Of Digital Media, with Lydia Wong from Emmaus CW

September 19th: Workers will report back from the annual Midwest Catholic Worker Gathering at Sugar Creek (Preston, IA, September 12-15)

Donations to our house are welcome, but are not tax deductible.

Please make checks payable to "St. Francis Catholic Worker", donate on our website francishousechicago.org or scan this QR code with a smartphone camera to donate online.



Prayer for Peace

by Peter Maurin

Dismayed
by the horrors of war
which bring ruin
to people and nations,
we turn, O Jesus,
to Thy most loving Heart,
to our last hope.

O King of Peace,
we humbly implore
the peace for which we long.

From Thy Sacred Heart
Thou didst send forth
over the world
divine charity,
so that discord might end
and love alone
reign among men.

Do Thou inspire
rulers and people
with counsels of meekness,
do Thou heal the discords
that tear nations asunder.

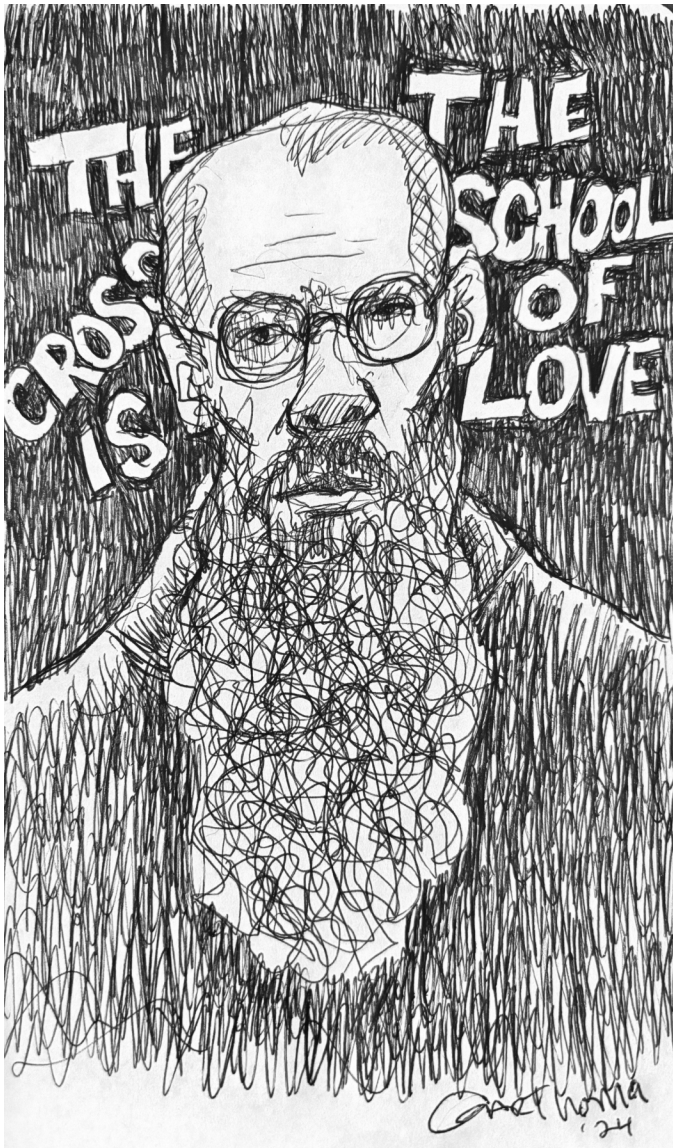
Some trust in chariots,
and some in horses,
but we will call
upon the name
of the Lord our God.

– Benedict XV*

*Peter Maurin based a number of Easy Essays on quotations from others. This Essay is his heavily adapted “version of Pope Benedict’s peace prayer. Benedict directed all Catholics in the United States to recite it in their churches on 21 March, 1915, which he designated as Peace Sunday” (quoted from *The Forgotten Radical Peter Maurin*, ed. Lincoln Rice, Essay 340).

“When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you.”

~ Luke 14:12:14



“Kolbe”, drawing by Gary Thomas

“You’re probably surprised to find us so inhospitable,” said the man, “but hospitality isn’t a custom here, and we don’t need any visitors.”

~ Franz Kafka, *The Castle*

“I remember a bad day last year: It just about took my breath away, it sickened me when I heard the expression for the first time, barely understanding it, the expression *crime of hospitality* [*délit d’hospitalité*]. In fact, I am not sure that I heard it, because I wonder how anyone could ever have pronounced it.... It concerned a law permitting the prosecution, and even the imprisonment, of those who take in and help foreigners whose status is held to be illegal.”

~ Jacques Derrida, 2001

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Thank You

Alexian Brothers, Father Mike Gabriel & St. Gertrude Church, Laurie Hasbrook, Mustafa Abdul-Maboud and the Pantry Program of the Reva & David Logan Foundation, Donna from Starbucks, Claire Sexton, Mark Lindeblad, Professors Scott Moringiolo and Michael Budde at DePaul, Ronald Carrier, Sam & Elizabeth Russo, Stephanie Held, Jessica Britt, Dani Bodette, Justin Bartkus, Annie Church, Chris Inserra, Lincoln Rice, Larry O'Toole, Ray Graham, Jerusalem Farm and Cherith Brook Catholic Worker House in Kansas City MO, Bloomington Catholic Worker and Christian Radical houses, Torriente Toliver, Jeff & Susan Dietrich from the LA Catholic Worker, St. Harold's Community, David Buer OFM, Anonymous Angel.

House Needs

- Prayers
- World Peace
- Friends old and new
- USPS Stamps
- Ventra cards
- Used bicycles
- Twin size mattress
- Instant Pot
- Bulk socks (large+)
- Air mattress (twin or full size)
- Bath towels



**Congratulations Sam &
Elizabeth Duff-Russo!
Francis Rocco Russo,
born 5/13/2024**