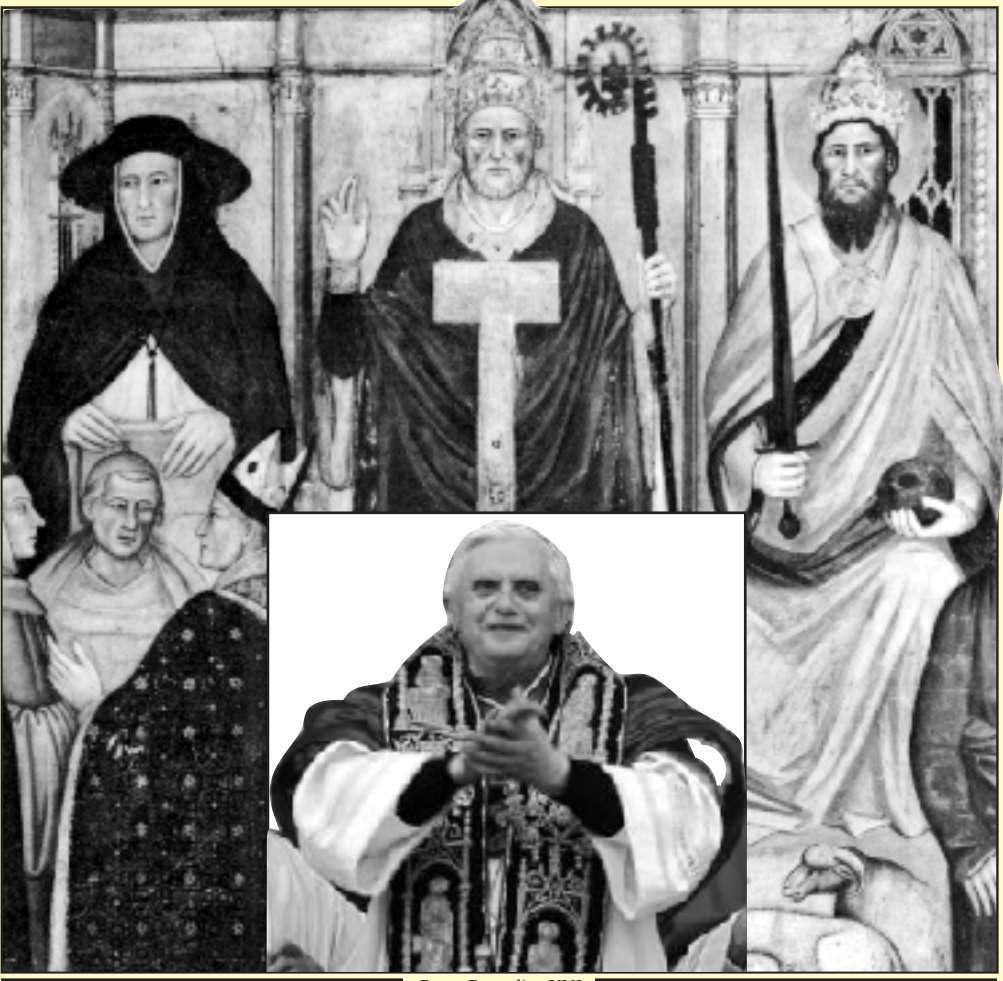


Liz McAlister  
Interview on  
new Pope, page 3

# CATHOLIC AGITATOR

THE TRAGIC TURN



Detail of "Ecclesiastical and Civil Authority" by Andrea da Firenze. Photo from news.yahoo.com

Pope Benedict XVI

## CRITIQUING THE IMPERIAL PAPACY

MORDECHAI VANUNU & IRISH PLOWSHARES UPDATE P.7

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# HELP

THE TRAGIC TURN

# CRITIQUING THE IMPERIAL PAPACY

by JEFF DIETRICH

It's bigger than the Super Bowl, bigger than the war in Iraq, bigger than the election of a mere American president, bigger than tsunamis in Indonesia or earthquakes in Turkey. It is a spectacle of unparalleled proportions. The death of a pope is the biggest show on earth.

Ordinarily I feel quite at home in the Catholic Church. Well, at least I feel uncomfortably at home in the Catholic Church. But there are times like these—the death of a pope or the building of a new cathedral—that my discomfort level is significantly increased. It must be something akin to the level of discomfort felt by populist Britons at the coronation of a new monarch, causing a reexamination of the entire complex of antiquated, vestigial structures that remain attached to the body politic like the superfluous appendix remains attached to the human body for no apparent reason. Well, it's not quite like that, because the Papacy is hardly vestigial or superfluous to the functioning of the institutional Church.

Anyone who has taken a Western civics course is familiar with the quote: “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Some might even remember that the author of the quote was Lord Acton, a British aristocrat. And like myself, they probably assumed that Lord Acton was referring to some despotic British monarch. But they no doubt would be as surprised as I was to find out that Lord Acton was referring to the pope—Pope Pius IX, to be exact—when he had declared himself infallible in Faith and Morals at the First Vatican Council in 1870.

In an effort to shore up waning Church authority in the face of 19th-century attacks by science, rationalism, and democratic populism, Pius IX convened the First Vatican Council, which confirmed his infallibility and rejected almost 2000 years of episcopal equality and collegiality, and officially removed the supreme power of the Church from the council of Bishops and relocated it in the person of the Pope himself. Theologian Hans Küng, among others, recognizes this event as the final tri-

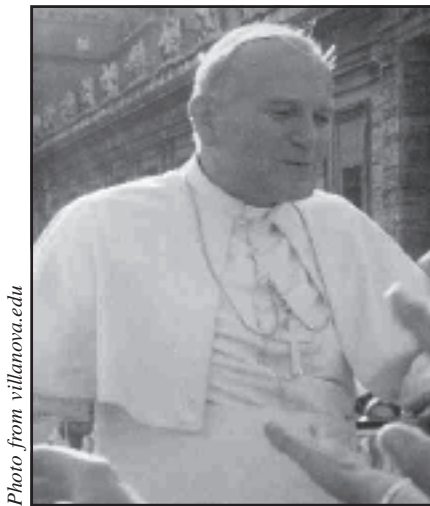


Photo from villanova.edu

Pope John Paul II

**“Once Christianity became the religion of Empire, its success was linked to the success of empire, and preservation of empire became the decisive criterion for ethical behavior...Its accommodation to power politics through the infinitely malleable ideology of the just war, its abandonment of the...social theory of atonement for the blood theory, its projection of the reign of God into an afterlife or the remote future—all of this gutted the Church’s message of its most radical elements.”**

umph in a lengthy historical quest for absolute papal authority that began, at least, with the advent of the Emperor Constantine. “At long last,” says Küng in his book *The Catholic Church, A Short History*, “the Roman system had found it’s cornerstone” (Küng, 167).

I suppose that, in some ways, it is idealistic in the extreme to seek a return to a pre-Constantine church, but it is nevertheless important to reexamine the tragic turn that the Christian church took as it moved from the humble house church of the crucified Christ to the Church of empire under Constantine. As theologian Walter Wink has noted in his book *Confronting the Powers*, “Once Christianity became the religion of Empire, its success was linked to the success of empire, and preservation of empire became the decisive criterion for ethical behavior...Its accommodation to power politics through the infinitely malleable ideology of the just war, its abandonment of the...social theory of atonement for the blood theory, its projection of the reign of God into an afterlife or the remote future—all of this gutted the Church’s message of its most radical elements. Jesus was divinized, the Mass became a perpetual sacrifice, rather than an end of all need for sacrifice, and Jews were scapegoated for the death of Jesus...” (Wink, 150).

It is the scapegoating of the Jews, according to author and historian James Carroll in his exhaustive book *Constantine’s Sword*, that forms the dark side of Christianity. True, while Carroll locates the roots of Christian anti-Semitism in the early church, and to some extent in the gospels themselves, these were relatively benign elements until the formation of the imperial papacy and the solidification of Church dogma, which under Constantine invested the Church with state power.

It was Constantine himself who called and presided over the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, the first-ever gathering of all bishops in an ecumenical council. Constantine literally imprisoned the bishops in a royal palace until they all agreed upon a unified set of principles, which later be-

continued on p.2



A PARALLELISM WAS ESTABLISHED BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE EMPEROR

## THE TRAGIC TURN OF THE CHURCH

### ED BIRMINGHAM (aka JOHN MOWERS) 1926 - 2005 R.I.P.

On March 23, Ed Birmingham (also known as John Mowers), our long-time guest, died in our home. The following tribute was written by Karl Meyer, who knew him longer than any of us here in Los Angeles.

by KARL MEYER

I met John in 1958. A priest sent him. He was my fourth guest at St. Stephen's House of Hospitality in Chicago. I was twenty-one and he was thirty-one at the time. Of the hundreds who stayed with us, he was one of two who returned many times over the years, and the only one left alive still in touch with us until his death on March 27.

I'm looking now at the one image of Jesus that hangs on the wall in my bedroom. John assembled it from found objects and gave it to me shortly after he came the first time. It is a cheap gold-painted image of

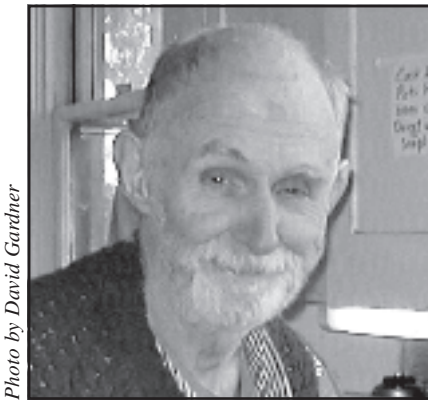


Photo by David Gardner

Ed at Hennacy House, Summer 2002.

Jesus on a cross, taken from a discarded rosary. He glued it to the rusty surface of a flattened tin can. It hangs by the pop-up top from a soda can. An inscription made with embossed plastic labeling tape reads, "What shall we do with him?" This is John's ironic commentary on what Christian culture has done with the

essential meaning of Jesus.

John was discarded in our society. He was born near LaSalle, Illinois. Orphaned or abandoned in early childhood, he was separated forever from six brothers and sisters, and raised in an orphanage. He ran off in his teens and wandered as a rootless tramp for the rest of his life, living mostly in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, or Los Angeles. He once disclosed that he had labored in the wage system not more than two or three days in his whole life. In the forties he worked part of one day as an elevator operator at the Chicago Athletic Club before quitting, and a day or two as a bellhop elsewhere.

He had a brilliant mind and an encyclopedic memory, but he also had a volatile temper that he kept concealed beneath a persona of obsequious politeness. He scratched a sporadic livelihood out of elaborate con games, intricate in conception but not very lucrative in execution. So, he spent much of his life on the street or at shelters, eating meals at soup kitchens. He is fondly remembered

at Martin de Porres House in San Francisco as well as at the Los Angeles Catholic Worker.

John was obsessed with wealth and valuable objects. He had encyclopedic knowledge about finance, money, precious metals, priceless antiques, jewelry, classical and modern art, and every other kind of object that could be valued at a high price. Kathy Kelly, whose interests are focused completely on human relationships, used to beg him to spare her from detailed lectures on precious objects.

Notwithstanding his interests, John accumulated and possessed nothing for himself. Whenever he scored a few hundred dollars from one of his schemes, he spent it all within a few days on a hotel room, one set of new clothes, art supplies, and the rest on generous gifts or hospitality to whatever friends or casual acquaintances happened to be around.

John had a *modus operandi* for scamming some of the richest corporations in America for modest amounts of cash. He read the *Wall*

*continued on p.6*

*Dietrich, continued from p.1* came known as the Nicene Creed. This creed laid the cornerstone of Church dogma and set in place and gave the murderous Roman empire unwarranted spiritual authority.

It also set in place the historic mode of a legalistic, demagogic Church, which persecuted and executed pagan, Christian, and Jewish deviants from the creed, giving rise to the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition and ultimately to the holocaust itself. In the Roman Church of empire, a heretic was quite literally a traitor.

The paradox and ambiguity of the scriptures, which in the Jewish tradition has inspired centuries of eloquent debate and dialogue, was, over time, crammed into a narrow Roman system of legality and morality that privileged orthodoxy over orthopraxy—right thinking over right action.

"This moralistic attitude is essentially a masculine trait," says French theologian Jacques Ellul in his book *Subversion of Christianity*. It is an attitude of judgment, of stiffness, of rigidity, of calculation of debits and assets, of classification, of designation, of the establishment of what should and should not be done.

It necessarily led to the suppression of the feminine in the entire corpus of scripture, but most especially as it is manifested in the gospels. "Neutralizing women," says Ellul, "was essential precisely because the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, as it is given throughout the Bible, assigns to women all the values of life (as opposed to the values of mere social well-being)" (Ellul, 93). Thus the Imperial Church is, and continues to be, a patriarchal, hierarchical church.

And Christian art under Constantine, says Justo Gonzalez in *A History of Christian Thought*, "now became triumphal art, progressively centered on Christ as Lord of heaven and earth. Liturgy, which had remained relatively simple, now began to take up the uses of the Imperial court. For a parallelism was established between Christ and the emperor. And architecture now undertook the construction of churches that reflected the imperial liturgical developments." (Gonzalez, 261).

Like all imperial entities it was necessary for the Church to focus on the visual: art, architecture, and liturgy. While I am well aware of the momentous contributions that the Church has made to the artistic heritage of Western culture, it is impor-

tant to hold that contribution in tension with the essential biblical wisdom that forbade the Hebrew people from worshiping graven images or from making a visual representation of God or, even, of a human person. Taken in concert with the prophetic and the gospel critiques of temple liturgy, it is a formulation of the ancient Biblical recognition that the visual arts, whether manifested through the pyramids in Egypt or the Parthenon in Athens or the ziggurats in Babylon or the Coliseum, were idolatrous images that provided incarnate visual efficacy to the divine power of the oppressive and enslaving state authority.

Rich and powerful people pay for art that reinforces the status quo of the dominant power paradigm—starving artist notwithstanding—and that is the essential biblical wisdom.

"The Church," as Ellul writes in his powerful book *Humiliation of the Word*, "allowed itself to be invaded by images. It wanted to become visible, establishing itself on the foundation of visible evidence. This developed alongside the theology of the Church's power and lust for power, which became incarnate in the institution." (Ellul, 183)

It is this artful element of spectacle that has kept the contemporary media so focused on the Vatican—the drama and the ritual, the images of Michelangelo and the Sistine chapel, the red-robed Cardinals, the pageantry of the Mass, the processions, the paintings of DaVinci.

And it is that same element of imperial spectacle that created the perfect stage for John Paul II, the former drama student, who with his charis-

matic, flair and world-traveling pagantry, was able to focus world attention on the Church. John Paul II was able to use the power of his popular media embracing personality to reinvigorate the centralized papacy and frustrate the egalitarian reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Catholic theologian Hans Küng writes, "He is a man with charisma...with an impressive gift for publicity...he has become a media superstar, and for many people in the Catholic Church...a kind of living cult figure...But...his course of conservatism and restoration is so clearly recognizable that in every respect he must be courteously but unambiguously criticized." (Küng, 190)

The unprecedented reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1958-1965) were an attempt by the Church to dismantle some of the increasing centralization of the papacy and its administrative arm, the Curia, that had been solidified by the reactionary Pope Pius IX in 1870, and return the Church to a more populist model of "collegiality" in which power resided not in the centralized authority of an infallible pope, but in the hands of the local bishops.

Though the Church has for centuries been one of the most centralized organizations in history, the vast distances under its watchful eye insured a certain autonomy of local churches. It is only with the advent of modern technology that the Vatican has been able to utilize its centralized authority to control the actual day-to-day operations of far-flung local churches in much the same manner as a modern CEO.

"Meanwhile under John Paul, Roman legalism, clericism, and

triumphalism, which had been so vigorously criticized by the bishops at the council," says Küng, "has come back with a vengeance, cosmetically rejuvenated and in modern dress."

John Paul, through his personal charisma and personal charm, has done more than any other pope to dash the hopes of reform that could have achieved much to move the Church from sins of Constantinian imperial papacy towards a more popularly-based collegial Church. My own sentiments are best summed up in the spirit of Catholic priest and theologian Richard Rohr, in a recent article in *Sojourners* magazine.

"My disappointment in the present pope," Rohr writes, "is that John Paul has said and written many fine and courageous things that will stand the test of time...but it is quite clear that he does not appoint cardinals or bishops or call forth a Church culture that does much of the same... We have become more and more an exclusionary institution. Our present list of 'purity codes' has little gospel support and does not speak to mature people."

You might rightly ask why bother to remain in a Church where it doesn't look like things are going to get much better, especially with the election of our new pope? Why bother to remain in a Church that will probably continue down the road of the triumphalistic Constantinian papacy, that continues to denigrate women, persecute free-thinking theologians, and reduce the gospels to moralistic purity codes?

Well, I remain because it is still paradoxically the Church of Philip Berrigan, Cesar Chavez, Dorothy Day, Archbishop Romero, Mother Teresa, and a whole cloud of heroes and saints who continue to inspire me. I remain because of the Mass. I remain because of the Eucharist. I remain because, despite its sinfulness and brokenness and perversions, it is where I first heard the gospels. I remain because it is still, as Dorothy Day once said, the Church of the poor. I remain because we have been "commissioned" to be the tiny mustard seed of gospel "orthopraxy" stuffed down the dark, lifeless soil of an imperial Church that will, in God's good time, rend the stony monument of imperial pride. I remain because it is my home and my family. Ω

*Jeff Dietrich is a member of the LACW and editor of the Agitator.*

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*It means to be poor and live among the poor, to be nonviolent and insist upon nonviolence. To be truthful and loving, not owning stuff and not lording it over anyone. And it means going to some position of equity with one another... It means that we must be people of prayer and people of the good book...*

AND WE WILL  
**NAME OURSELVES CHURCH**

INTERVIEW WITH  
**LIZ McALISTER**

*Liz McAlister is a long-time peace activist and resister. She and her late husband Philip Berrigan, founded Jonah House resistance community and are founders of the Plowshares movement.*

**Agitator:** My primary interest in talking with you would be to get your reaction to the new pope. But, would you care to talk first about the former pope?

**Liz:** I would have really respected him if he had gone to Iraq and if he had made it clear to the clergy in this country that the war is wrong. If, because of his leadership we had had priests preaching that you can not receive the Eucharist if you vote money for this war or if you participate in this war... That is the kind of leadership that we need in the church. And we didn't have that. Clearly, he was against the war, but that message got lost among everything else that he said. As far as I am concerned, he's not relevant.

And of course, Benedict XVI is the one who ordered that politicians who support abortion or same-sex marriage ought to be denied the Eucharist. That came right from him. But nothing comparable towards people supporting the war.

**Agitator:** Why do you think it is that there are all these great papal statements against the war and against global capitalism, but all you hear about is the church's stance on abortion and gay marriage?

**Liz:** I think, in addition to not making the message clear enough, the church in this country and the church in general largely identifies morality with *personal* morality and refuses to deal with public morality.

The church in this country is largely about "me and Jesus" and the Eucharist and confession and issues of marriage and family, and is not very involved with social issues. The church here is very good about doing good, but it is very bad, if not utterly uninvolved, in confronting evil and naming evil. The only evil that it seems to confront is individual morality, specifically sexual morality.



Photo from news.yahoo.com

Pope Benedict XVI

**THIS POPE IS A DISASTER FOR THE WORLD AND FOR THE JEWS**

by RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

Since the days in which he served in the Hitler Youth and Nazi army in Germany (apparently against his will, but nevertheless apparently absorbing the deep patriarchal and authoritarian character structure that the fascists did so much to foster in youth), to his role as the leader of the forces that suppressed the liberatory aspects of Vatican II and purged or silenced the Church of its most creative leadership. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger has distinguished himself as a man who can be counted on to side with the most anti-humane and repressive forces, in opposition to those who seek to give primacy to a world of peace and justice.

So it was with great distress that we watched as Cardinal Ratzinger led the Vatican in the past twenty-five years on a path that opposed providing birth control information to the poor of the world, thereby ensuring that AIDS would spread and kill millions in Africa.

And we watched with even greater distress as this Cardinal supported efforts to involve the Church in distancing itself from political candidates or leaders who did not agree with the Church's teachings on abortion and gay rights, prioritizing these issues over whether that candidate agreed with the Church on issues of peace and social justice. As a result, Cardinal Ratzinger has led the Church away from its natural alliance with Jews in fighting for peace and social justice and toward a stance which in effect allies the Church with the most reactionary politicians whose policies are militaristic and offer a preferential option for the rich.

We can't help noticing that under Cardinal Ratzinger's tutelage the Church began moves to elevate the infamous Pope Pius XII to the status of saint. Instead of repenting for the failure of the Church to give unequivocal messages telling all Catholics that they would be prevented from receiving communion for collaborating or cooperating in any way with Nazi rule, or for failing to hide and protect Jews who were marked for extermination, Ratzinger has sought to whitewash this disgraceful moment in Church history. Many Jews are outraged at a Church that denies communion to those who have remarried or those who oppose making abortion illegal but that did not similarly deny communion to those who participate in crimes against humanity.

In fact, Cardinal Ratzinger published on p.6

**Agitator:** Is that a reflection of a political perspective or is it a consistent theological perspective?

**Liz:** I would tend to say that it is both, don't you think? Jesus put the command to his apostles to preach the good news and to cast out demons. In this country we don't see the demons, we don't understand revelation, and the idea of casting out demons has been utterly lost in the Catholic church. That practice has been taken over by right-wing evangelicals, who see evil rather differently from the way I do.

**Agitator:** Do you think that there was a period in Catholic history when the church had more of a social agenda?

**Liz:** Yes, the first couple of hundred years, before Constantine. During those years Christians would not serve in the army; they would not kill. Nor would they kowtow to the empire. And they were regarded as pariahs and as a threat and so they were persecuted and killed.

**Agitator:** At what point do you think that the church made a wrong turn?

**Liz:** With Constantine, certainly. People got tired of being second-class citizens and saw that period as an opportunity to spread Christianity. In effect, the temptations Christ faced in the wilderness were acceded to by church leadership. But everybody breathed a sigh of relief and said "Now we've arrived," and they didn't realize to what they had arrived.

Look at today's world, for heaven's sake. This new pope fought in the Nazi army. He deserted in 1945. Well, good for him, but give me a break. Folks say he didn't really have a choice back then, but we all know lots of Germans who made other choices, and many of them died for it.

**Agitator:** Who are some of those Germans that come to mind?

**Liz:** The most obvious would be the draft-resister Franz Jaegerstatter and Dietrich Bonhoeffer and also the White Rose group, Sophie and Hans Scholl, and then all the rescuers, those wonderful people who just saw it as the most natural thing in the world to save Jews. Andre Trochme,

continued on p.6



*"I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered." Hereby Martin King names the principalities and powers; he's singling out the three reigning powers in American life.*

# NAMING THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

Bill Wylie-Kellermann, a long-time friend of the LACW, is a teacher for the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago, the author of *Seasons of Faith (Orbis)*, the editor of *Keeper of the Word (writings of William Stringfellow)*, and on the steering committee of *Word and World*. Bill was the presenter at our First Sunday session on April 3rd. The following is an excerpt from his talk that afternoon.

by BILL WYLIE-KELLERMANN

I want to set two important theological texts before us. One is the reflection of William Stringfellow at the first Conference on Religion and Race at Chicago in 1963. The other, from Martin Luther King, Jr. (who also addressed that conference), is his major speech at Riverside Church, April 4, 1967, wherein he went on record against the war in Indochina, precisely one year before his martyrdom.

Stringfellow was a Harvard-trained lawyer who went straight from law school in 1956 to East Harlem where he improvised street law, before there really was such a thing. He is crucial, theologically, for being the one in the U.S. to bring the "principalities and powers" back on the map of ethics and ministry. This language, found largely in the letters of Paul—the rulers and authorities, and princes, thrones, and dominions—comprise terms which had been hermeneutically inaccessible to the church, virtually since the conversion (so-called) of Constantine in the fourth century. Stringfellow would reference that same event, actually, as the conversion of the church to empire. Since that time, all these New Testament terms, so explicitly political and tied largely to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, came to be read as little more than wispy distant things, impertinent hierarchies in spiritual outer space.

It took certain historical crises, such as the rise of National Socialism in Germany, to bring people to a re-reading of these texts, to see them with new eyes, and reclaim the language of the powers. In that case it was the Confessing Church—Bonhoeffer, Barth, and others. Christians in Germany said, Where does Nazism come from and what does it mean? Are we to be subject to these authorities?

In the U.S., the crisis was the struggle for racial justice on the one hand and the war in southeast Asia on the other. These same kinds of questions were being asked about the structures of American apartheid and the Pentagon. What are these raging powers, biblically and theologically?

Stringfellow claimed it was the people of East Harlem who put him on to the powers, simply by the way they talked of the Man or the cops or the Mafia or the welfare bureaucracy or the real estate landlords—as though they were predatory creatures arrayed against the community, eating it alive. It was they who sent him scurrying for the biblical texts. But the '63 Religion and Race Conference took their concrete application to a new level. Though his remarks were controversial on a number of



Bill Wylie-Kellermann offers blessing during liturgy at LACW April First Sunday event.

scores, it was this theological take which provoked the biggest response. He said in part,

*From the point of view of either biblical religion, the monstrous American heresy is in thinking that the whole drama of history takes place between God and human beings. The truth, biblically and theologically and empirically is quite otherwise: The drama of this history takes place amongst God and human beings and the principalities and powers, the great institutions and ideologies active in the world. It's the corruption and shallowness of humanism which beguiles Jew or Christian into believing that human beings are masters of institutions or ideology. Or to put it a bit differently, racism is not an evil in human hearts or minds: racism is a principality, a demonic power, a representative image, an embodiment of death over which human beings have little or no control, but which works its awful influence over human life.*

Some people found this a bleak assessment. In fact, the Hebrew scholar and prophetic mystic, Abraham Heschel, to whom he was a respondent, retorted, "Mr. Stringfellow, if my people had believed as you do, we would still be making bricks for Pharaoh." That is how dark a word some were hearing in these remarks. Benjamin Mays, who chaired the conference, wrote in his autobiography that at the time he felt Stringfellow was preaching despair, but he later came to believe that he was right.

This was obviously a very unconventional take on racism. It was racism understood as more than prejudice and more even than an institutional structure. He was contending that racism has a spiritual reality to it, such that you could dismantle the legal apparatus of apartheid in this country, that is, repeal Jim Crow and...end of racism, right? No, it rises up and reconfigures itself in some more subtle and guileful form, but every bit as demonic. This is a very potent spiritual reality, with structural (it is always incarnated) dimensions. That is what Stringfellow means in calling it a power.

He doesn't, however, stop there. We best read just a little bit further. *This is the power with which Jesus Christ was confronted and which at great and sufficient cost he overcame. In other words, the issue here is not*



Front row, left to right: Sara Suman, Donald Nollar, Rich Meehan (holding cross), and Jesse Lewis lead annual LACW Stations of the Cross.



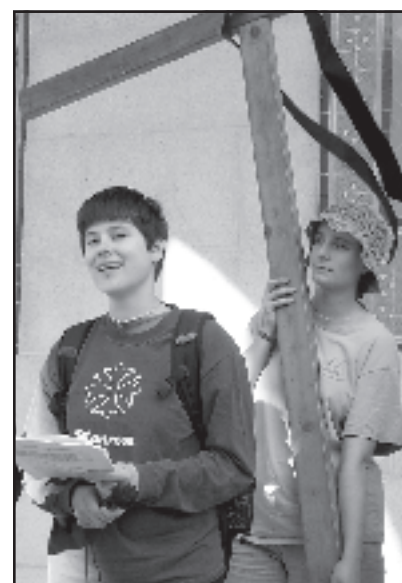
Fr. Mike Kennedy SJ, and Fr. Chris offer up a prayer of repentance for war making as part of March 16 LACW vigil, civil disobedience action.

*equality among human beings but unity among human beings. The issue is not some common spiritual values nor natural law nor middle axioms. The issue is baptism. The issue is the unity of all humankind wrought by God in the life and work of Christ. Baptism is the sacrament of that unity of all humanity in God.*

Here we are offered a concise snapshot of Stringfellow's theological method, his radical sense of paradox. He says: It is worse than you think it is and you are freer than you think you are. The powers are raging beyond your control and they are al-

ready overcome in Christ. The division is an uncrossable spiritual chasm and it's been crossed. Each of these things are true irrevocably and at once.

Notice moreover that by his lights, racism is the very power that Christ confronted. To say that baptism is the issue renders racism not simply a social problem, but fundamentally a gospel matter. This encounter comes close to the very heart of the good news. In that sense he anticipates what came to be in South Africa, where apartheid was declared a heresy. It was understood as outside of



JVC member Theresa Vela, and LACW member Clare Bellefeuille-Rice at Stations of the Cross.

the gospel, verily an affront to it. Stringfellow was already saying much the same by vesting the issue in baptism. Yet notice, read closely—he says that baptism is the sacrament of the unity, not of all Christians, but of all humanity. This is important: he contends that baptism alters your relationship to all humanity, well, ultimately to all of creation. These are no small theological potatoes.

Turning to Dr. King's momentous speech (also uttered with Abraham Heschel standing over his shoulder on stage), he says: *I am convinced*

Over 200 our friends & supporters joined us for our annual Anti-War Stations of the Cross.

On March 16<sup>th</sup> David Gardner, Catharine Morris and Sara Suman were arrested at the Federal Building in protest of the war in Iraq.

More photos and updates can be found on our new website: [lacatholicworker.org](http://lacatholicworker.org)



JVC member Sara Suman and LACW community member David Gardner are arrested at Downtown LA Federal Building, during March 16 LACW vigil, civil disobedience action.

*that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.*

Hereby Martin King names the principalities and powers; he's singling out the three reigning powers in American life. Now in Dr. King's work you are not going to find so much the language of the principalities. I suspect that is in part because the writings of Paul are not prominent in the African American canon for two reasons. One, because of the household codes in Colossians and Ephesians: "Slaves be subject to your masters." And two, because of the cultural preference for narrative in the African American church for its preaching and Bible study and music. In story, the focus is on Jesus, the Exodus account, and the prophetic narratives. The powers are certainly present as characters in the narrative forms—Go tell Pharaoh, whose army gets drowned—but not the specific language of powers and principalities. Yes in this address Dr. King comes very close to employing that language. He certainly puts his finger on what we would call the ruling ideological powers and virtually

suggests what Walter Wink calls the *domination system*, where the powers coalesce into a systemic configuration. Just as Stringfellow's neighbors saw the powers arrayed against their Harlem community, so in Dr. King's speech we recognize the powers that are arrayed against human community in American life: racism, militarism and materialism.

Between the conference on Religion and Race in 1963 and his death in 1968 Martin King was growing ever more radical. In this period he was trying to bring together movements already at work against each of these forces in American life. The Riverside Church speech attempts to connect the anti-war movement and the freedom struggle. The Poor Peoples' Campaign to come would pull these strands together with movements for

the giant triplets, the ruling powers of domination!

His fourth reason is literally pivotal, dynamically cutting two ways—backward to the list of powers and forward to his vocational identity. On the latter, the voices of constraint would hold him back with a narrowing definition of his calling: "Aren't you a civil rights leader?" But even that compels him, since from the beginning the motto of SCLC had been, "To save the soul of America." He understood the nation as a spiritual power, albeit a fallen one, but with a constitution and a vocation that could be called upon. He cites Langston Hughes: *O, yes I say it plain, America never was America to me, And yet I swear this oath America will be!*

In his "concern for the integrity of life in America," Dr. King could lead a march walking the nonviolent way of the cross, and carry the flag along in train—summoning the best of the American tradition, and so its hope. Later in this address, however, after naming the giant triplets, he comes to a very strong point: "Any nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

It's interesting to set Stringfellow alongside King here. He too could point to the constitution, to invoke it's remedies against tyranny—the power of impeachment for example, or to size up the times by the public assault on its rights and protections. But his biblical radicalism led him increasingly to identify America with Babylon, to see it as the greatest purveyor of death in present history. Stringfellow wasn't at the Riverside speech (he was actually here in L.A. that day), but he had himself by then visited Saigon, and saw the war as exemplifying in America "death as social purpose." Spiritual death indeed.

Dr. King's reasons are also related to his "vocation," however agonized. The broadening and deepening of the sequence is noteworthy. Starting again with number four, he does base the opposition on his work as a civil rights leader and the task of healing the nation's soul. But further, he feels it incumbent upon him because of the Nobel Peace Prize, which he accepted as an internationalizing commission. It laid upon him a task of global nonviolence. And, reason six, he is compelled as a minister and disciple of Jesus. That is no small thing. For some, most religious, that would be the pinnacle of vocational cause, but Dr. King goes another step deeper: it is his connection with all humanity as a child of God. He speaks out of his vocation to be truly and fully human. In this he couldn't agree more with Stringfellow on the meaning of vocation in baptism: it is the sacrament of the unity of all humanity in God.

Such humanity is both reason and response to war in an imperial time. In our own, let us pray to live such a sacramental ethic: living humanly, as fully and freely as these two brothers. Ω

Photos by Mike Winiawski

## CRITIQUING THE IMPERIAL PAPACY

*Lerner, continued from p.3*  
licly praised the fascist movement in the Church known as Opus Dei and supported canonization of Josemaria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei, an open fascist who served in the government of Spain's dictator Franco and who publicly praised Hitler.

Those of us in the Jewish world who have enormous respect for Christianity and for the wisdom and beauty of the Catholic tradition are in mourning today that the Church has confirmed for itself a destructive direction that will hurt not only Catholics but all those who seek peace and justice in the world.

We remain hopeful that the new pope may return to his original more progressive positions (pre-1968) and realize that the world needs a church that can respond compassionately and wisely to what is needed rather than remain wedded to dogma that is so destructive. In a statement that Ratzinger made a few years ago, he seemed deeply aligned with *TIKKUN's* critique of selfishness and materialism of the contemporary world. We hope that he stops blaming that on secularists and comes to understand that secularists too, as well as people from other faiths, can be allies in the struggle for a new ethos of love and generosity. We pray that he may find a way to bring a better, kinder, more loving and compassionate agenda to the Catholic Church.

It is precisely because we continue

to feel allied with the Church and see it as an important ally in the struggle for social justice and peace that we are so dismayed at this misdirection. Meanwhile, we reaffirm our solidarity with the many millions of Catholics who had hoped for a very different kind of pope who could make the Church more open to women's leadership, to prioritizing social justice, to rethinking its opposition to promoting birth control, and to returning to the hopeful spirit of Vatican II. We can say publicly what many of you can only say privately—that this new Pope does not represent what is most beautiful and sacred in the teaching of Jesus. Ω

*This article originally appeared on tikkun.org. Rabbi Michael Lerner is the editor of TIKKUN magazine.*

*McAlister, continued from p.3*  
he wasn't a German, but he lived under the occupation... And the resistance movement in Denmark, Norway and Sweden....

**Agitator:** So there was substantial Christian resistance to the Nazis, but why didn't it come from the Catholic church?

**Liz:** Good question, good question. Jaegerstatter's priest and his bishop told him to go and serve in the military. The church was, I think, looking out for its own skin. And it was also anti-Semitic itself, let's face it. There are wonderful stories of the priest Maximilian Kolbe, though.

That's a rich tradition of resistance that has been utterly bypassed.

**Agitator:** Yes, it is so edifying and uplifting and such a contrast to the official Church perspective. Would you reflect now on the current Pope Benedict XVI/Cardinal Ratzinger.

**Liz:** He's been the henchman for the Roman Curia and he's taken a persecutorial stand. Too many people have been pushed out by him; too many good people. I was listening the day he was elected to somebody who talked about the underlying meaning of the word *pontiff*. Do you know what the word means? *Bridge-builder*. That is what a pope is supposed to be. But I am afraid it's going to be, "Get in line or else." If that's the case, there will be an island of orthodoxy, with the rest of us out there flapping in the wind.

**Agitator:** Speak for a moment about women in the church and your own situation. And how do we survive, now?

**Liz:** I just think we ignore them, as we've ignored them for years. And I think when we don't ignore them, we resist them, as you people did for years with Mahony. What's coming down now, Jeff, you know it is not a good scene, but we'll be doing what we've been doing under John Paul II. With this new pope we'll just be further out and further cut off, is my suspicion. I'd love to be proved wrong, but I doubt I will be. At any rate, we will keep on doing what we are doing and we will name ourselves

*church* and be the church we want the church to be.

**Agitator:** What does that mean, "Be the church we want the church to be"?

**Liz:** It means to be poor and live among the poor, to be nonviolent and insist upon nonviolence. To be truthful and loving, not owning stuff and not lording it over anyone. And it means going to some position of equity with one another, with an understanding that the Spirit speaks where she will and that it is up to us to listen. It means that we must be people of prayer and people of the good book; that we continue studying our scripture and trying to make sense of it in our lives today and in our world today. We must stop consuming so much stuff and being dazzled by stuff, including all the robes and the gold and the jewels that are part and parcel of Vatican City. The people who are hanging in there now, they're hanging in there because they are confronted each day by the realities of poverty. You keep looking at poverty every day until you understand it and you can't not understand it, because it is right in front of you all the time. So, you keep doing what you can do to ease the bitterness and embitteredness at the bottom. Whenever you can, you are out on the street saying "No!" to the most violent policies of the empire, whether the imperial state or the imperial church. And we will be farther out than we ever were before. Ω

*Meyer, continued from p.2*  
*Street Journal* and the *New York Times* business section voraciously, with special attention to corporate takeover battles. He'd place person-to-person calls to the CEO of an embattled target company. He'd represent himself as an outside banker or other financial professional: Through business contacts he'd learned that a highly-placed employee in the target company was betraying crucial insider information to those financing the hostile takeover attempt.

John would offer to fly to corporate headquarters to provide confidential documentation of this perfidy. He found embattled corporate executives eager to believe such stories and desperate to get their hands on the information he offered. Of course, they'd promise to compensate him generously, but he'd modestly deflect such offers, pending an appointment to present the information in person at their headquarters. This would be quickly arranged for a few days hence. Sometimes he had to decline offers to send a corporate jet to pick him up. Though John was creative in elaborating details of his schemes, he was so utterly disreputable in dress and appearance that he could not follow through on any significant scam by appearing in person.

A day or two before the appointment he would call back—using some lame excuse, he'd ask that the cost of his airline ticket and minor expenses be wired to him at a Western Union branch office address. Whatever they may have believed about his excuse, the advance he asked for was peanuts to these corporate chieftains. They were so eager for the information he offered that they'd promptly wire the amount requested. They would never hear from him again.

When he'd made such a score, he'd vanish from our house without a word of explanation or goodbye, carrying nothing but the clothes on his back and the various forged identity cards in his pockets. We might not hear

from him again for several years.

Early in our acquaintance I learned to put a lock on the phone when he was with us to prevent the astronomical phone bills he could leave behind, and keep him from using our phone for his schemes. I'd warn him that if anyone called for him at our number I would tell them the truth.

He never told me what he was up to currently, but years later he'd tell me details of past exploits. Sometimes when we were away at work and he needed to give a call back number to close a deal, he'd give out our number. On these occasions, he'd be gone by the time I'd get the blowback or urgent calls from his clients, sometimes telling me details of his offers in their eagerness to get in touch with him.

Sometimes they had trouble accepting my explanation that they had been scammed by a petty con man, who had no useful information to give them. They couldn't figure out why he'd give them the number of someone who'd tell them the truth. I never gave out his name or any help in finding him. What he got was just nickels and dimes to them. I think most, for their own reasons, dropped it right there and never went to the police or the FBI.

John served one long sentence at Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, as a coconspirator in currency counterfeiting, and a later term at Danbury Federal Prison for one of his corporate scams. He corresponded with me from prison, so the U.S. Marshals Service and the FBI knew I was his friend.

They came to our house several times looking for him. They'd never tell me why and I'd never give them any useful information. They'd warn me that harboring a fugitive is a Federal crime, but he was never at our house when they came, and I never knew where he was when he wasn't with us, except when he was in jail. I'd just say, "If he calls, I'll sure tell him that you'd like to hear from him," and they would smile and go away.

My friends sometimes suggested

that I colluded in his thievery by befriending him and taking him in. In the presence of opportunity and temptation he would steal from poor people and from friends, but mostly he stole from wealthy corporations. To know of these things and to harbor him was certainly less an act of collusion in crime than buying gas at Exxon, shall we say, or buying Third World goods at Wal-Mart.

John had a wealth of knowledge, stories, and ironic perspectives on finance, politics, and religion. He was fun to listen to. He faced candidly the futility and failure of his life. He'd say to me, "Karl, I'm a piece of shit." Unfortunately, he believed that. I hope he always understood that I did not.

His great passion was art. His life's dream was to be a successful artist. Unfortunately, he had very little talent for drawing or painting, though he had a fertile imagination. He expressed it through scissors, glue, construction paper, and clippings—assembling ironic collages with political, religious, and artistic themes. Whenever he had a stable place to stay for a while, he occupied himself delightedly in making collages and devising schemes to sell them, trying to emulate the flair for marketing that he admired in Andy Warhol and Salvador Dali. His marketing schemes never worked, so he gave his art to friends, and abandoned a batch of it whenever he vanished from our house.

When he got old enough, I helped him to get Social Security old age benefits. He'd splurge on his art and still spend much of the month homeless on the streets. In later years when he stayed several times for long periods at the Los Angeles Catholic Worker, he had time and resources for his art. The last time he stayed with us at Nashville Greenlands in 2001, he told me with pride that his collages brought several hundred dollars at a silent auction benefit to the Los Angeles house, and that Martin Sheen had bought one of them.

Over the years, John used many aliases. At the LACW he used the name Ed Birmingham, an identity he created in the eighties to be able to get away from some of his past activities as John Mowers.

John was a cynic and a skeptic on matters of faith. He'd been raised Catholic in the orphanage. He had a piercing interest in the Catholic Church, seeing how hierarchy, pomp, and institutional wealth mock the ideals of Jesus. He returned constantly to this theme in conversation and in his collage art. For me there was a final rightness about his death on Holy Saturday, in the comforting care of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker community. For me, he was always the good thief that we read about in the Gospels:

*There were also two others, criminals led with him to be put to death...then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed him, saying, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us."*

*But the other, answering, rebuked him saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing that you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."*

*Then he turned to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

*And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, this day you will be with me in paradise."*

Our Nashville Greenlands community, Kathy Kelly, and my sons, William and Eric, who were also his friends, offer our gratitude to the Los Angeles Catholic Worker for receiving John into their community in his dying years. *Thy Kingdom come...on earth as it is in heaven.* Ω

*Karl Meyer is a long-time Catholic Worker, anti-war activist and war tax resister, the founder of St. Stephen's House in Chicago, and is presently at the Nashville Greenlands community in Tennessee.*

# ON THE LINE

## WAL-MART'S PAY GAP

Wal-Mart's corporate documents released on April 15 reveal that CEO H. Lee Scott, Jr. made \$17,543,739 in 2004—nearly twice the average of \$9.6 million for other leading CEOs, according to *Business Week*. Wal-Mart's compensation for top executives contrasts sharply with wages of people who produced or sold the goods that earned the company \$10.3 billion in profits. When reduced to an hourly rate, CEO Scott made \$8,434/hr; the average pay for a full-time employee is \$9.68/hr; the pay for subcontractor employees range from \$0.17 to \$0.53/hr.

—[www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org)

## ANTI-WAR ARRESTS

On April 5, five anti-war activists were arrested at Senator Richard Durbin's office in Chicago. The activists include Kathy Kelly and Jeff Leys, of Voices in the Wilderness, Rosalie Riegle, author and Catholic Worker, Katie Dahlseng and Reba House of Evanston. They sought a pledge from Senator Durbin to vote against the \$81 billion funding increase for the Iraq and Afghanistan occupations. These additional funds now place the total over \$300 billion.

—[www.vitw.org](http://www.vitw.org)

## H-BOMB TESTS

According to a recently released study by the National Cancer Institute, the number of cancers caused by hydrogen bomb testing in the Marshall Islands is set to double, more than fifty years after the tests were conducted.

—[news.yahoo.com](http://news.yahoo.com)

## EMBARGO VIOLATION

The Bush administration broke its own arms embargo against Haiti by overseeing the sale of \$7 million worth of weapons to the illegitimate Haitian government to equip its police force. Human rights groups have documented routine police executions of dissidents with weapons illegally funneled to armed militia.

—[news.independent.co.uk](http://news.independent.co.uk)

## DEFEAT FOR HUMANITY

Former U.S. Vatican envoy, Jim Nicholson recalled Pope John Paul II's vehement opposition to the U.S.—led invasion and occupation of Iraq because he believed the war represented a "defeat for humanity." The Pope believed that if he "could keep the war from breaking out, there was a chance peace would break out."

—[news.yahoo.com](http://news.yahoo.com)

## VANUNU UPDATE

The Israeli government, on March 17, in an attempt to further harass and intimidate nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu, charged him with violating the restrictions imposed on him upon his release from prison in April 2004. The restrictions prohibited Vanunu from making contact with foreign nationals, speaking to the media, leaving Israel for one year, coming within 300 meters of a foreign embassy or international borders and changing residences without approval. Vanunu was charged with speaking to the media and attempting to leave the country for his bid to attend Christmas Eve Mass in Bethlehem.

—[www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org)

## PIT STOP PLOUGHSHARES

The trial of five Catholic Workers from Dublin collapsed on March 14, as Judge Frank O'Donnell, for unstated reasons, declared a mistrial and dismissed the jury. The retrial is scheduled for October 24, pending the prosecutor's decision whether or not to prosecute. The five—Ciaran O'Reilly, Deidre Clancy, Nuin Dunlop, Karen Fallon, and Damien Moran—were charged with causing criminal damage to a U.S. Navy warplane at Shannon Airport on Febru-

ary 3, 2003. If convicted they face up to 10 years in prison. Shannon Airport, a civilian airport, is currently being used as a pit stop for U.S. warplanes en route to Iraq.

—[www.warontrial.com](http://www.warontrial.com)

## CIW BEATS TACO BELL EXPANDS BOYCOTT

In the wake of their spectacular victory against Yum! Brands (owners of Taco Bell), the Florida Based Coalition of Immokalee Workers are set to take on a trio of fast food giants: McDonald's, Burger King, and Subway. They urge supporters to send letters insisting that these corporations meet with the CIW and address human rights violations in Florida's tomato fields.

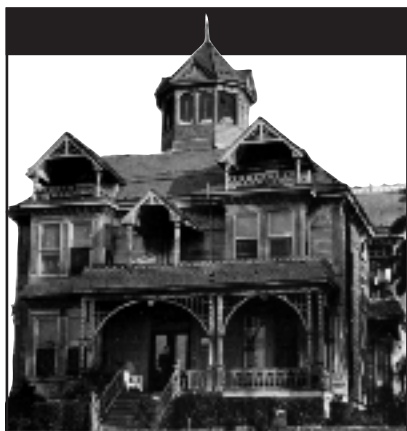
**Mr. Jim Skinner, CEO**  
McDonald's Corporation  
McDonald's Plaza  
Oak Brook, IL 60523.

**Mr. Fred DeLuca, President**  
Subway Franchise Headquarters  
325 Bic Drive  
Milford, CT 06460.

**Mr. Greg Brenneman, CEO**  
Burger King Corporate Office  
5505 Blue Lagoon Dr.  
Miami, FL 33126.

—[ciw-online.org](http://ciw-online.org)

On The Line is compiled and edited by Mike Wisniewski.



## THE HOUSE JOURNAL

On the eve of the second anniversary of the beginning of the war in Iraq, community members David Gardner and Catherine Morris, and Jesuit Volunteer Sara Suman were arrested at the Downtown LA Federal Building. Community member Clare Bellefeuille-Rice had set about constructing a peace crane for each of the servicemen and women who died in Iraq, with the help of kitchen volunteer Lana Chwe and 150 that were sent by mail all the way from Detroit by LACW friend Kim Laba, they totaled 1563. The peace cranes with flowers, boots, and icons were to be used to construct an altar on the steps at the entrance of the federal building to commemorate the American soldiers and the Iraqis who have been killed in the war.

However, federal officers and members of the Homeland Security Office confronted them and immediately handcuffed and arrested them. After they were led away, those of us



Photos by Mike Wisniewski

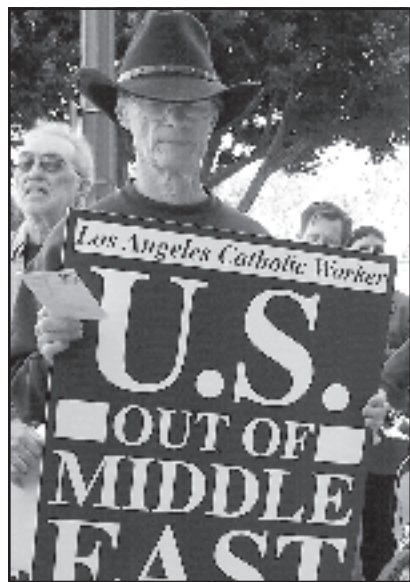
JVC member Theresa Vela with House Journal editor Faustino Cruz at anti-war march.

who remained read the names of several hundred of the soldiers killed.

Catherine, David, and Sara will be arraigned on May 4. Many thanks to all of you who accompanied us on that day of mourning.

We were heartened to see so many of our friends and supporters at our Stations of the Anti-War Cross on Good Friday. Donald Nollar once again prepared a memorable and touching script that was read by Sara Suman and Theresa Vela, our friends from the Jesuit Volunteer community. As we navigated around downtown through the places of power and privilege, where so many decisions have been made which negatively impact the poor and our friends on Skid Row, we hoped to remind our leaders and everyone that Christ's message of peace and call to repentance remain relevant today.

We celebrated Easter with a delightful brunch at our home in Boyle Heights. Clare spent many hours making the traditional Easter fruit bread, master chef Jeff Dietrich



Jim Parkhurst at March 16 LACW vigil and arrest action.

whipped up some of his famous cheesy scrambled eggs, and everyone else pitched in to set a lavish table. The weather stayed nice and some of our guests were able to dine and visit on the lawn. We were also honored to be present at the First Communion of Kieran, the youngest son of former community member Tina Delany and Paul McCudden. We were pleased to welcome so many members of the Delany and McCudden clans to our brunch and wish to congratulate Kieran on his special day.

Just as we began the Lenten season with the death of Feliciano Aparicio, we ended the period with the death of another long-time friend and guest, Ed Birmingham. Ed, also known as John Mowers, died at our home after a long and difficult battle with a variety of ailments, including bladder tumors, pneumonia, and diabetes. Ed, an artist in his own right, surely helped us recognize Christ in all of our suffering brothers and sisters, and more than sustenance, Ed certainly enjoyed a good listener.

We began each of the past two months with a continuation of our successful First Sunday program. Wes Howard Brook and Sue Ferguson Johnson brought to light new insights into the word of St. Paul and celebrated a beautiful liturgy with us. Bill Wylie-Kellermann juxtaposed the writings of William Stringfellow and Martin Luther King and helped us understand how both call upon us to turn away from the idols of militarism, racism, and materialism. We were also blessed to meet up with Liz McAllister from Jonah House in Washington D.C. Liz was in Los Angeles to receive an award from the Methodist Church. Ann and Tom Smet, Jeff's sister and brother-in-law, graciously hosted a gathering at their home for Liz and some friends.

Recently we have been beset by a number of unexpected serious health problems in our community. David and Catherine contracted pneumonia, most likely while tending to Ed Birmingham. Ann Boden, who staffs our clinic desk, picked it up next. David is nearly fully recovered except for a lingering cough and Catherine, whose illness interrupted her family reunion, is greatly improved after a short stay in the hospital. Ann is on the mend too, and we hope to see her back at the kitchen shortly. Jim Parkhurst suffered major complications after a routine surgical procedure. His recovery looks to be long and arduous. We ask for your prayers for everyone's continued improvement, especially prayers for Jim and his wife Joyce.

As we wearily continue our work and prepare for our Catholic Worker version of the Seder, we long for liberation and deliverance epitomized in the themes of the Haggadah, and for God's comforting and just presence here in our streets, our country, and the world.

House Journal was written by Faustino Cruz.