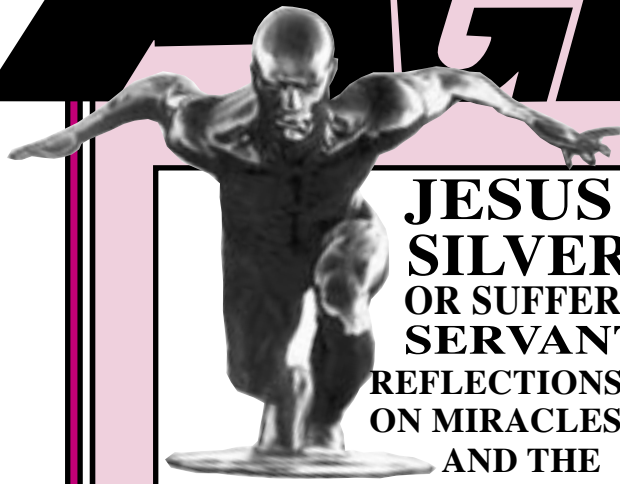


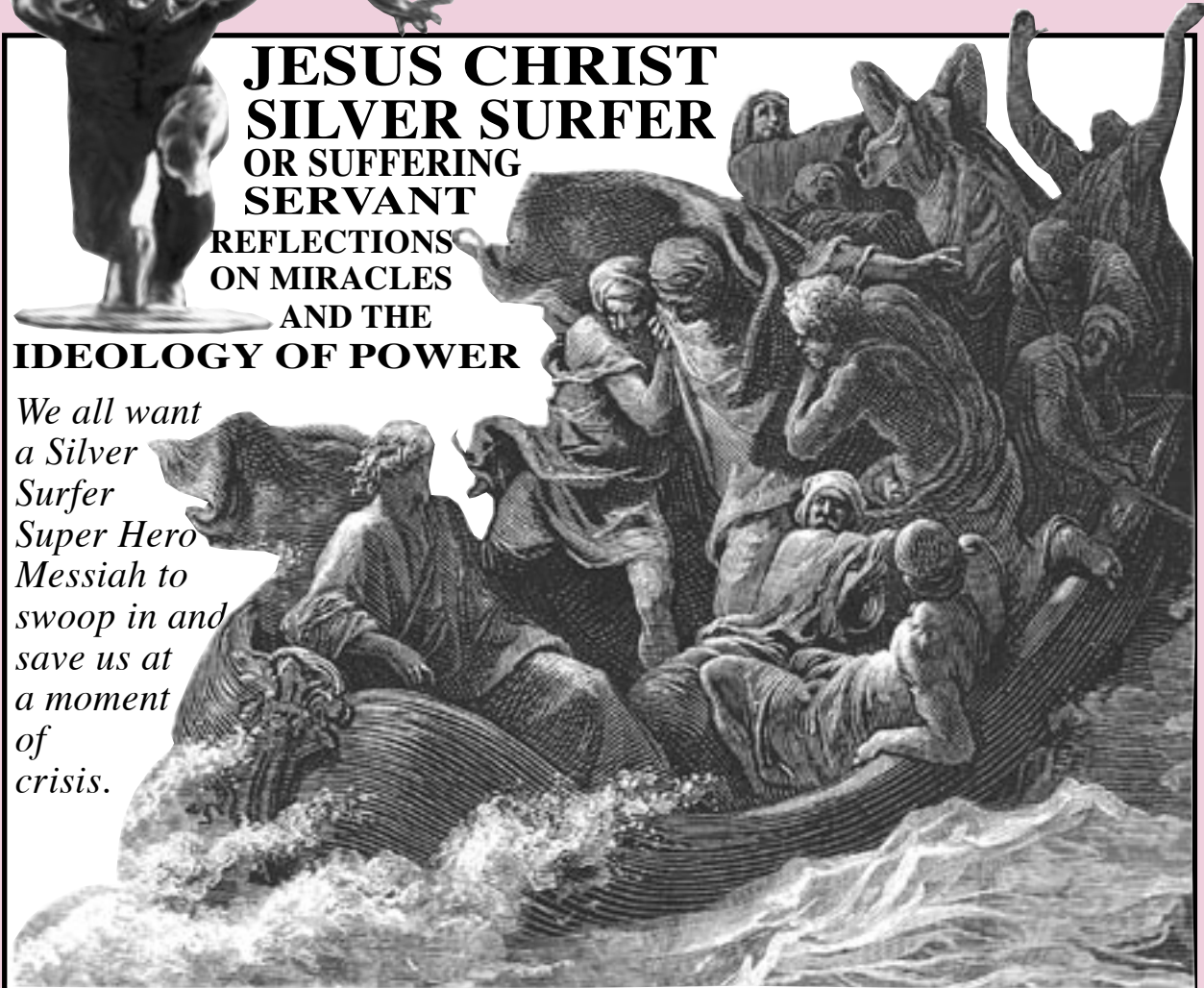
# CATHOLIC AGITATOR



## JESUS CHRIST SILVER SURFER OR SUFFERING SERVANT

REFLECTIONS  
ON MIRACLES  
AND THE  
IDEOLOGY OF POWER

*We all want  
a Silver  
Surfer  
Super Hero  
Messiah to  
swoop in and  
save us at  
a moment  
of  
crisis.*



# WALKING ON WATER

SUPPORT WAR RESISTERS IN THE MILITARY SEE PAGE 7

I AM PREDISPOSED TO SKEPTICISM REGARDING MIRACLES

WALKING  
ON  
WATER

JESUS CHRIST  
**SILVER SURFER**  
OR  
**SUFFERING SERVANT**

by JEFF DIETRICH

Jesus Christ, Silver Surfer—though it may sound a bit irreverent to speak of Jesus in terms of a comic book super hero skimming across the waves to rescue the disciples in their beleaguered fishing boat on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:22-23), it is nonetheless the image of Jesus that the majority of Christians adhere to, and the image of God that the majority of the world's population, both believers and non-believers, long for—a savior that will allow us to practice our collective follies of greed and war-making, and rescue us at the last minute.

As a child of the Enlightenment and scientific rationalism, I am, of course, predisposed to skepticism regarding miracles. But my issue with miracles goes far deeper. It has to do more with vocation than with cultural predispositions. As a Catholic Worker, I tend to think of Jesus as sort of like us: feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable, and periodically getting in trouble for being outspoken and scandalous. I also have difficulty with creeds and dogmas that forthrightly proclaim the virgin birth, and divine status and resurrection of Jesus as essentials of faith. On the other hand, I believe that the Gospels tell a great story and that miracles are crucial to the telling of that story.

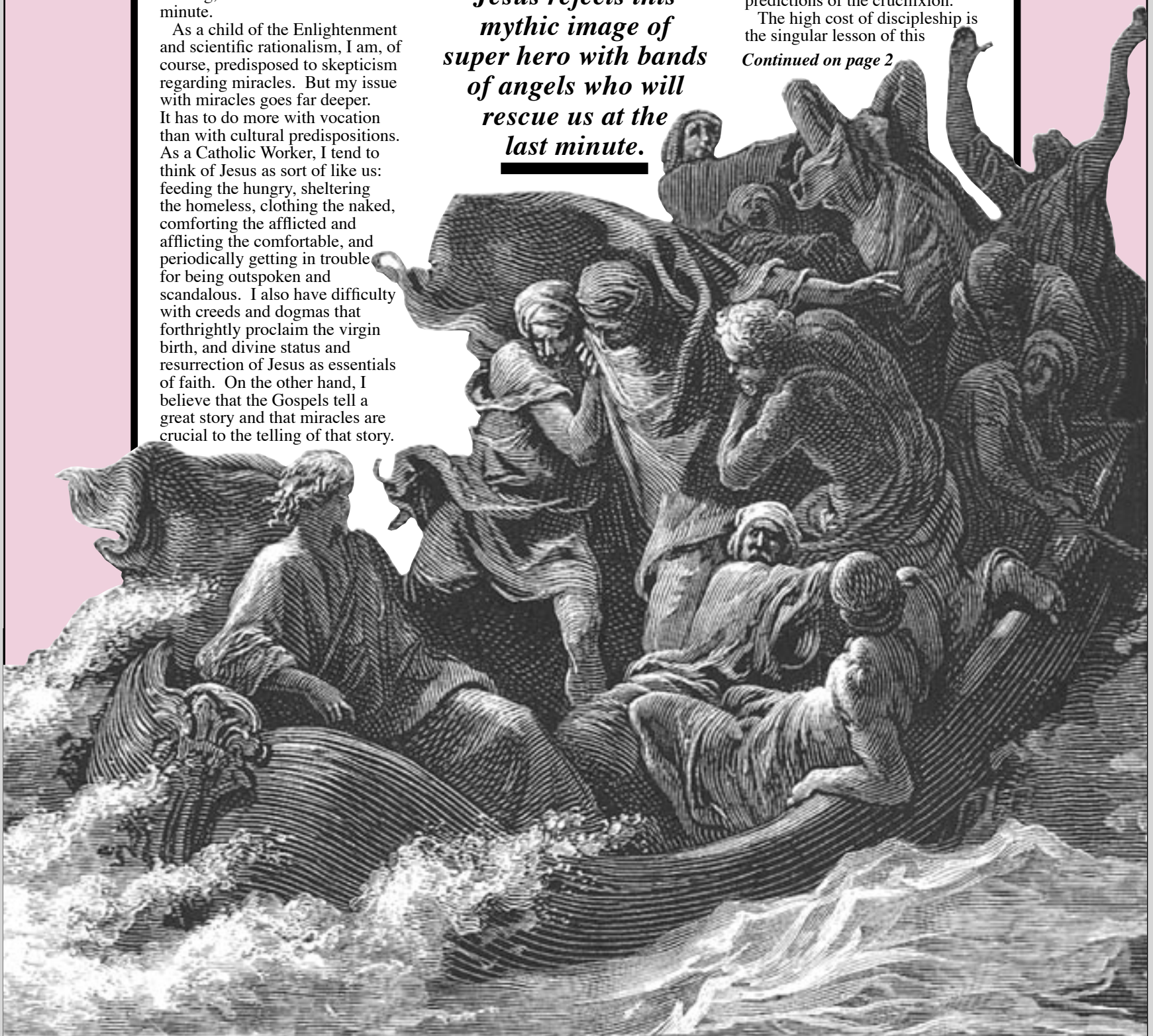


*Jesus rejects this  
mythic image of  
super hero with bands  
of angels who will  
rescue us at the  
last minute.*

In order to understand the walking on water scene, it is essential to realize that it comes at the beginning of an extended narrative of discipleship teaching that starts in chapter 14, and culminates in chapter 21 with the entry into Jerusalem and the ultimate crucifixion of Jesus. This extended narrative includes two feedings, numerous healings, and a major “theophany,” the Transfiguration. But it begins with the beheading of John the Baptist, a grisly foreshadowing, and includes increasingly vitriolic confrontations with the authorities, interspersed with three definitive predictions of the crucifixion.

The high cost of discipleship is the singular lesson of this

*Continued on page 2*



JACQUES ELLUL POINTS OUT THERE IS A BASIC ANTITHESIS IN SCRIPTURE BETWEEN SIGHT AND WORD

*Dietrich, cont'd from p.1*

entire six chapter section. It is in this context of increasing political opposition and increasing discipleship demands that Matthew presents his tumultuous water crossing as metaphor for the ultimate discipleship rejection of Jesus' project.

Jesus has just fed the 5,000 in the wilderness, and forced the disciples to get in the boat without him so that he can go up to the mountain to pray. The disciples row all night against the wind, still not getting to the other side. Then Jesus comes swooping like the Silver Surfer to rescue the beleaguered boatmen, who are filled with fear because they think he is a ghost. Of course, as soon as the disciples figure out what is happening, they immediately identify him as the son of God and fall down and worship him, which is just exactly the opposite of what Jesus desires from his disciples.

It is only natural for human beings to long for visual, manifest, incontrovertible evidence for our faith—a sign, if you will. But Jesus rejects a religion of signs and miracles, refusing to jump off the Temple or change bread into stones for Satan (Matt. 4: 1-11). He twice refuses the Pharisees' demand for a sign, telling them that, "it is a wicked and unfaithful generation that demands a sign." Obviously, for the Pharisees, exorcisms, feedings, and healings, which he has already performed, do not adequately qualify as signs. Indeed, most commentators do, in fact, make a distinction between what might be described as ministries of Jesus and such obvious transgressions of the natural order as defying gravity and death...as in the resurrection and walking on water.

In one of his most brilliant works, *Humiliation of the Word*, theologian Jacques Ellul points out that there is a "basic antithesis in scripture between sight and word." "The biblical revelation," says Ellul, "is radically opposed to everything visual...the only possible relationship with God," he says, "is based on the word and nothing else...It is out of the question to try to grasp God through sight, to claim that what one sees can be God. The whole visual sphere begins to be suspected Biblically."

Ellul is rigorously single-minded in his reflections on the Word. He recognizes God, the creator of the universe, to be the Word and that God's Word created all things and that that Word is all powerful. He further recognizes that human language is an intimate reflection of that Word, and through the Word, God speaks to every human being; the word that humans use to communicate with each other is intimately bound up with the living Word of God. And thus it is that scripture privileges the Word over the image, the statue, the icon.

But for humans, seeing is believing; the visual is synonymous with reality, while the word is ambiguous, argumentative, dialectical. It is hard to pin down. Yet it is within that ambiguity that we find freedom. "The word is an expression of freedom," says Ellul. "It presupposes freedom and invites the listener as well to assert his freedom by speaking. God is the liberator. We must constantly remember that the God of Israel manifests himself for the first time in the Exodus as the one who liberates human beings from slavery."

Essentially however, no one wants a religion of freedom, ambiguity,

**THREE-QUARTERS OF A BILLION DOLLAR SETTLEMENT  
THE CHURCH SEX SCANDAL**

by JEFF DIETRICH

**T**he clergy sex scandal! I do not want to write about it—it is not one of our issues. But on the occasion of the historic settlement of the Los Angeles Archdiocese, I feel that we must say something so that our readers might not conclude that we are unthinking supporters of the institutional Church. We are not! But, of course we are so predisposed to criticize the Church that we hesitate to enter the field where so many critics have obviously tread before us.

As readers of this paper, you must know that I periodically find myself in jail for various protest actions. In jail I hesitate to disclose that I am Catholic, for fear of being misidentified as a pedophile priest. This scandal has definitely impacted our humble ministry for peace, to say nothing about the larger ministry of the Church itself to speak out for the poor and the immigrant and for peace and justice.

I keep hoping that it is possible that I do not know all of the facts, and that Church leadership may have information that I do not possess. But even if that is the case, even if, in the best case scenario, the Bishops and prelates are trying to act in the highest interests of the victims of clergy sex abuse and the larger Church, their actions scream otherwise.

Like our foundress Dorothy Day, we both love the Church and hate the Church for the scandal that she is. I hope that my frequent criticisms

reveal that love. I am part of this scandalous Church. I am part of the Catholic Worker, and I am outspoken and critical in the improbable hope that this scandalous Church might come closer to the vision Jesus had in mind for it.

Nevertheless, in my thinking about the Church regarding this scandal, I do not impose such high standards. I think rather of George Tenet, former director of the CIA, who in his resignation speech took full responsibility for the "deficient intelligence" that led us into the war in Iraq. I do not believe for one second that George Tenet or the CIA delivered faulty information to George Bush or to Dick Cheney. But I do believe that he was embroiled in the midst of a scandal created by others and enflamed by an antagonistic press, just as our Church is. I believe that George Tenet was a "company man" and a "stand-up guy," and like a "good soldier," he "fell on his sword" for the "greater good," as he saw it, of the CIA and the nation. I am still waiting, and I believe that the American Church is still waiting, for an American prelate that will stand up and take responsibility for this scandal—a scandal they may not have personally caused but that happened on their watch—and have at least as much integrity as the director of the CIA, one of the most reviled entities in the world. Ω

*Jeff Dietrich is a member of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker and is editor of the Catholic Agitator.*

and dialogue—we want a religion of signs, certainty, and dogma. But, "faith and sight are in contradiction," says Ellul. "The miracle is a sign without meaning in itself. Its truth resides only in the word that accompanies it..."

And this is precisely the case in Matthew's most visually compelling theophany: the Transfiguration (Matt. 17: 1-13). Here too, it is the word that holds center stage and clarifies why the disciples got it wrong in the boat.

When the disciples actually see the glory of Jesus revealed on the mountaintop along with the resurrected Moses and Elijah, they betray their predisposition for a visual faith by proposing the quintessential church project: a building program. "Lord let us build three booths. One for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." Like a typical Christian, the disciples are ever ready to build a church and worship the visibly powerful transfigured Jesus. But in a very

real sense, their worship of Jesus is idolatry.

We tend to think of idolatry as the false religion of images practiced by the ancient benighted pagans, but Christian idolatry is unfortunately the religion practiced by the vast majority of Christians who separate the Word of God from the miracles of God, and allow themselves to become transfixed before the power of God.

Divine theophanies, tangible manifestations, miraculous events are all manifestations of power and are problematic for human beings. In the absence of the Word, theophanies become mere images, images become idols, and idols are the image of power around which powerful institutions coalesce: Caesar, Pharaoh, and Alexander in ancient times; Hitler, Stalin, and Mao in our time. It all follows from the "building of booths"—temporary shelters become permanent edifices that overtime become institutional structures for the "glory of God"

and the enhancement of power for the acolytes and bureaucrats who mediate that "glory."

Ellul identifies the roots of this Christian fascination with images in the post-Constantinian Church. "The Church," he says, "opted for the visible, and with it for power, authority, efficacy, and the agglomeration of crowds around a reality that was at last seen and grasped." Thus, in the Gospel of Matthew, it is the very voice of God that must speak in the Transfiguration to indisputably affirm the preeminence of word over image.

"HELLO. THIS IS GOD! GET A CLUE—HE'S MY SON. LISTEN TO HIM!" Ironically, God confirms the disciples' original insight in the boat regarding Jesus' divine parentage, but they are deaf to the Word.

Along with the disciples, the reader also receives divine affirmation that the most important thing that we can do is not worship Jesus, but listen to him. Listening is the central motif of the Gospel, and it is first introduced at the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7: 24-28) when Jesus says, "Whoever hears my word and puts it into practice is like the man who built his house on a rock."

Too bad Jesus didn't copyright the image of the Rock, because in our culture it has been appropriated by the folks at Prudential Insurance Company, who tell us that security comes from prudent financial investment. But Jesus says just the opposite: You cannot serve God and money (Matt. 6:25). "Stop worrying about what you are going to eat, or what you are going to drink, or what you are going to wear...seek first his kingdom and all of these things will be given you besides." "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (5:44)

No wonder the voice of God has to confirm these words of Jesus—they are so contrary to worldly prudence and security. In truth, the bulk of Christian theology over the centuries has been dedicated to explaining why Jesus did not mean exactly what he said.

As implausible as it sounds, the rock of discipleship is grounded on hearing and practicing these very words. But the disciple Peter represents quite a different kind of rock. When Jesus asks him, "Who do you say that I am?", Peter, just as he did in the boat, gets it half-right. "You are the Messiah, the son of God," he says. For his insight, Jesus declares him Rock, and "upon this rock I will build my church," he says.

But it's a pretty shaky Rock. When Jesus explains what it means to be the Messiah—going down to Jerusalem to confront the authorities and getting killed—Peter protests, causing Jesus to identify him as Satan. "You are trying to make me trip and fall," says Jesus.

Ironically, Peter the Rock has rejected the solid rock of discipleship hearing and practicing, and, like so many attracted to the power of the institution, become instead, a "stumbling rock." It is thus no accident that this passage comes just before the Transfiguration. Only the voice of God can make these words palatable.

The critical element of the Gospels is not the miracles of Jesus, but the teachings of Jesus. The Gospels use miracles to emphasize that the very God who created the universe, the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth,

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Skid Row is the poorest neighborhood in the city. People live here because they can afford no other. Meanwhile the police stop and search you every time they see you on the streets.

# “THEY’RE TERRORIZING PEOPLE”

Photo by Mike Wisniewski



Rich Meehan, L.A.C.W. Volunteer Dentist arrested in Skid Row sweep.

by Ed Pilolla

**R**ich Meehan has worked as a volunteer dentist at the *Hippie Kitchen* for nearly twenty years, so he’s been to Skid Row so many times he probably couldn’t even guess at the total number. But last month was the first time he was ever arrested, on Skid Row, or any place. All he was doing was leaving the Hippie Kitchen after doing his usual four-to-five hour shift filling cavities, scraping off plaque, and pulling rotten teeth for free.

Rich, 72, recalls the incident as if he made some sort of mistake. “I was parked on the wrong side of the street,” Rich recalled, a couple weeks later while working on a patient sitting in the worn leather examination chair. “I was saying goodbye to Jesse, and he put his arm in the (car) window and I shook it,” Rich said.

Jesse, a full-time community member, supervises the garden on Fridays while Meehan sees as many as a dozen or more patients. Jesse helps homeless folks get comfortable, refills water jugs, fetches folks plastic bags, and asks others not to play the radio in the garden. Basically, Jesse runs a tight ship, and when Rich is done seeing patients without any means to pay for dental work, Jesse feels it’s appropriate to shake his hand in order to say thanks.

From now on, however, Jesse is going to shake Rich’s hand inside the garden and not out on Gladys Street. “I don’t reach into any white person’s car anymore because I don’t want them to get arrested,” Jesse explained.

After laughing and saying goodbye to Jesse, Rich put his gearshift in drive and headed back home to Rolling Hills Estates—or at least tried to.

As Rich pulled his car away from the curb, two mounted police officers up the block waved for him to pull over. “What’s going on?” Rich remembered asking.

“That’s what we want to know,” one of the officers responded.

The officers explained that they witnessed “suspicious behavior” when Rich shook hands through his car window. The police are trying to eliminate the drug trade on Skid Row and that behavior appeared to be a drug exchange, they said.

Rich, who described the officers’ behavior as both professional and courteous, handed over the usual things: driver’s license, registration, proof of insurance. The officers asked why he was on Skid Row, and Rich told them about his “job” with the *L.A. Catholic Worker*, and showed the officers his dental license



## SAFE HARBOR ON SKID ROW

*Robert Green is a writer and an occasional diner at our soup kitchen. The following laudatory reflection was written for his church bulletin.*

by ROBERT T. GREEN

*The downtrodden, who are the creators of slang, hurl pithiness and color at poverty and oppression—Anthony Burgess.*

**I**f you ever find yourself alone... without the basic resources... where every face you see harbors the unknown potential of friend or foe...and your entire being aches from another weary wandering without rest; when your stomach doesn’t even bother to rumble anymore because there’s nothing left in it...and your body begins to tighten all over in the expectation of a meal and cool drink that may never come...that is when you need to heed my advice and head on down to the one place that reminds me of what some envision as Heaven’s Kitchen. Nestled behind fences laden with monstrous bougainvillea boughs on one side and a convoy of rusty shopping carts on the other (each lovingly packed with their owner’s valuables and memories) and across from the impenetrable fortress they call Gladys Park, there dwells a deceptively unobtrusive mural-covered sanctuary I have always known as the “*Hippy Kitchen*.”

Now, for the most part, I consider myself a humble kind of person. We often persuade ourselves that we are forever striving to some greater state of gracious understanding, that is until circumstances reveal to us all of our shortcomings that so often thwart our progress to that end. Despite such inevitable failings, it doesn’t seem like I need a lot—food, drink, shelter, maybe the occasional stimulation of education, recreation, and companionship. Still, as sure as cream rises in the churn, so too do the essential demands of everyday life impose themselves incessantly upon us, routinely requiring our daily

upon us, routinely requiring our daily attention. Highest on that list would have to be a decent, nutritional meal and the only thing demanded of the dirtiest road bums at the Hippie Kitchen is a healthy appetite and a willingness to break bread with the various Angelinos assembled every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday mornings—all cut from the same cosmic cloth, uniting as one to dine in the heart of our fine city.

It’s quickly turning into one of those unforgettably perfect mid-summer’s days, with cirrus pillow-clouds rolling overhead, slightly extinguishing the growing fireball above, and the sticky marine layer being burned away by a slow, clean inland breeze. As I approach the gates, a relaxation that only comes over you when you sense you’re in safe territory envelopes me as I take my place at the back of the line. It appears the whole family’s come for today’s brunch as is usual, and I pass the time staring at the wall-art of broken, multi-colored plates, their sparkling shards beautifully collaged into a mosaic of four exotically breathtaking birds that mirror the five living parakeets in the adjacent giant cage, willing to converse with anyone who speaks their language. On my right is a secluded grotto housing an almost hidden, yet enormous cross fashioned of railroad ties and enshrouded by a barbaric barrier of barbed wire and menacing metal-jawed animal traps; it’s simply brutiful!

The line is long, but life is exploding all around us. Cacti mix with towering, alien-looking trees, clingy ivy, statues, rock formations, and (near the end of our mealtime mambo line) a life-sized triple-layered water fountain luxuriously splashing its effervescence to and fro. The lush flora and fauna leave no doubt that this respite is friendly to man and beast in a harmonic triad of plants, people, and peace. I am reminded of becoming parched,

*Continued on page 6*

with the hope of proving to the officers he was telling the truth. While one of the officers continued to ask questions, the other officer began searching his car. (Rich doesn’t remember whether the officers asked to search the car or not.)

“I wasn’t worried,” Rich said. “There was nothing there (in the car). Then he came out with a Zip-Lock bag, with a bread crumb inside the size of your thumbnail. And he says, ‘Here’s the evidence.’”

Rich’s response: “Evidence of what?”

The officers said the substance looked like cocaine. The plastic bag was inside a paper bag, and the cocaine-like substance was a bread-crumble. The officer found it on the floor of the car beneath the seat.

At this point, Rich went fishing, so to speak. He dropped a name. Rich asked the officers if they happened to know a police officer he knew. Turned out, the man Rich knew for many years was the officers’ lieutenant. Still, the officers patted Rich down, handcuffed him, and informed him the substance must be tested at the police station. The officers did allow Rich to make a phone call from his cell phone, and Rich phoned his daughter to inform her that he was, apparently, going to be late coming home that day.

After the phone call, Rich’s daughter called the lieutenant, and the lieutenant, according to Rich, said he couldn’t do anything, and that the substance had to test negative before Rich was let go.

I want to give credit to the lieutenant and the officers for not giving Rich any break based on the fact that he happened to know a high-ranking Skid Row police officer. The officers did do him one favor: they handcuffed Rich’s wrists together in front of his body instead of behind his back, which was nice.

The conclusion of this story is that one of the officers drove Rich’s car, with Rich sitting in the passenger seat, back to the police station. Rich sat on a bench and waited until they tested the bread crumb and found it not to be cocaine. Then Rich was released. (A short time later, Jeff and Catherine, leading a throng of summer interns, burst into the police station intending to stage a sit-in until the *L.A. Catholic Worker* dentist was released.)

What’s the moral of this story? Police officers are all over Skid Row looking to make arrests, any kind of arrest, especially drug arrests.

In the ongoing effort to please wealthy developers and clear Skid Row of its low-income and not aesthetically pleasing residents, the police, with the blessing of the mayor, have been jailing as many folks as possible. Routinely, the police handcuff people on the street and search their property, hoping to find drugs. This sort of search is only legal, though morally indefensible, to anyone on parole. However, the Los Angeles Police Department handcuffs and searches residents of The Row who are not on parole, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, which has interviewed dozens of folks over the past year or so.

Rich was able, and thankful, to

*Continued on page 6*



*That cult of technology, that faith in technology, is very powerful, even though American people are more and more incapable of actually creating or understanding. The idea that we could hoodwink or bluster or bombast our way out of every problem is pretty strong. And then, we can always just nuke whoever threatens us. I think that is right behind every aggressive foreign policy decision that the United States makes. You know, we are the only country in the world that has actually used nuclear weapons.*

# EVERY ACTION HAS A REACTION

## INTERVIEW WITH FRIDA BERRIGAN

*Frida Berrigan is a Senior Research Associate with the Arms Trade Resources Center of the World Policy Institute. A graduate of Hampshire College in Amherst, she worked for two years in the Central American solidarity movement before joining the Institute. She has a special interest in U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America, and also an expertise in nuclear weapons policy, weapons sales to areas of conflict, and military training programs.*

*Frida Berrigan is the daughter of activists and Plowshares Movement founders Phil Berrigan and Liz McAlister. She was raised in the Jonah House resistance community in Baltimore and is a lifelong friend of the Catholic Worker Movement.*

**Agitator:** This month we especially remember the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Can you talk about the changes in U.S. nuclear policy since the Bush administration has taken control?

**Frida:** U.S. nuclear weapons research and development spending has increased at an extraordinary rate since the Bush administration came into power in 2001. And most extraordinary of all is that this increase has gone largely unnoticed.

If you asked most Americans, they would say that the biggest nuclear threats come from Iran or North Korea. They don't understand that North Korea might have one nuclear warhead it would be impossible to deliver to the U.S., and that Iran is fifteen years away from developing a nuclear warhead. Iran does not present any immediate threat whatsoever, and there is a lot we could do to keep a future threat at bay.

Most Americans have no idea how many nuclear weapons the United States has or how much money we spend on nuclear weaponry. Throughout the Cold War, we spent an average of about \$4.5 billion dollars a year on nuclear weapons. This spending understandably began to decrease at the end of the Cold War and then, throughout the Clinton administration, it was fairly stable. One would think that since the Cold War is over (and nuclear weapons were not what ended that war) we would dismantle this global annihilation machine. Jonathan Schell talks about the gift of time that we were given: we didn't destroy the world during the Cold War.

**Agitator:** Why are we so concerned about Iran and North Korea when we have so many nuclear weapons?

**Frida:** We have more than ten thousand nuclear weapons, and the former Soviet Union has about the same number. We have signed agreements with Russia that we would bring the number of active warheads (warheads that are targeted and ready to go at a minute's notice) down to about 1500 by 2012. There is no plan to destroy the remaining weapons—they are simply going to be taken off line and retained as a hedge. It is inaccurate to think that we are disarming; we are unplugging the machine, but not destroying it.

Iran and North Korea are a "paper tiger" that the Bush administration has created that serves to rationalize both the U.S. nuclear weapons arsenal and the development of a ballistic missile defense system. At this time under the Bush administration we are spending about 6 billion dollars a year on nuclear weapons development and we are spending another 9 billion dollars a year on ballistic missile defense. This spending is obviously an extraordinary drain on resources and without rational military justification.

**Agitator:** Let's talk about the arms trade and U.S. foreign policy.

**Frida:** There are about 190 countries in the world and the U.S. considers about 120 or 130 of them to be markets for military hardware and military services. There are a couple of reasons that the U.S. sells weapons: to build or cement relationships with other countries, such as our close allies in Europe, who go into battle with us; and to build new relationships with countries, to make them militarily dependent on us and allow us to exercise political influence on them.

This is the argument that is used in the case of Indonesia. They used to be a client state. Now they're the largest Muslim democracy, and as such they are a key ally in the war on terrorism—an ally that keeps the war from looking like an anti-Islamic crusade. We need them, but we don't trust them entirely, so we keep them supplied with military hardware. Then, if they dissatisfy us, we can cut them off.

**Agitator:** The U.S. is the world's greatest exporter of weapons. How does that affect our economy?

**Frida:** I want to talk about an example from some years back: Boeing wanted to sell fighter craft to Saudi Arabia, but the U.S. wasn't supportive of the proposal. So, Boeing brought out its union workers, who went to Washington. They were blue collar workers, iconic, and the sale was made into a jobs issue. But relatively speaking, not many blue collar jobs are dependent on the weapons industry; they are, rather, used as a very effective bargaining chip.

What is not apparent in the discussion is the way in which the military industry, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and the rest, are subsidized...In the automobile industry, I'm sure there are tariffs and so forth that are very advantageous, but when Boeing makes a fighter plane, the research and development has been paid for by the U.S. taxpayers. The industry goes out on a limb, so to speak, with technological innovation, but when they recoup that investment, they don't give it back to the federal government. The marketing of that sort of weaponry is supported by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency within the Commerce Department—federal employees promoting the products of private corporations. And then wars, which are the only context in which this military hardware is actually utilized, are obviously paid for by the federal government.

Here's another very clear example

of the way it works: In the case of F-16 fighter plane sales to Poland two years ago, the U.S. government loaned the money for the purchase to Poland. The Government Accountability Office reports that it is a very rare occasion indeed when these kinds of loans are paid back.

**Agitator:** Let me get this straight: The taxpayers subsidize the arms industry, then we give other countries the money to buy the arms from these manufacturers, and then on top of that, this high-tech industry doesn't produce that many jobs that pump money back into the economy!

**Frida:** That is exactly how it works. It has a negative drag on the economy. This is a funny thing for a pacifist to say, I know, but I think that if we are going to have weapons manufacturing in this country, it should be nationalized.

**Agitator:** Why do you say that?

**Frida:** There should be no profit involved at all and we shouldn't be selling it. Then we would make only what we actually needed for the defense of the country. The way it stands now, we are selling fighter planes to the United Arab Emirates, for example, that are more sophisticated, more high-tech, and more powerful than the planes that the United States military owns.

**Agitator:** Why is that?

**Frida:** The United States filled out its fleet of F-16s, but there is always innovation, and they are selling these newer planes now to other countries. So the Joint Strike Fighter, developed by Lockheed Martin and other companies in collaboration (there is no real competition between weapons manufacturers) is slated to replace our F-16 fighters. It is a more sophisticated plane, but the only reason it is necessary is because Lockheed Martin has sold "improved" F-16s to these other countries.

**Agitator:** So, they are more interested in creating a market than in defending the country?

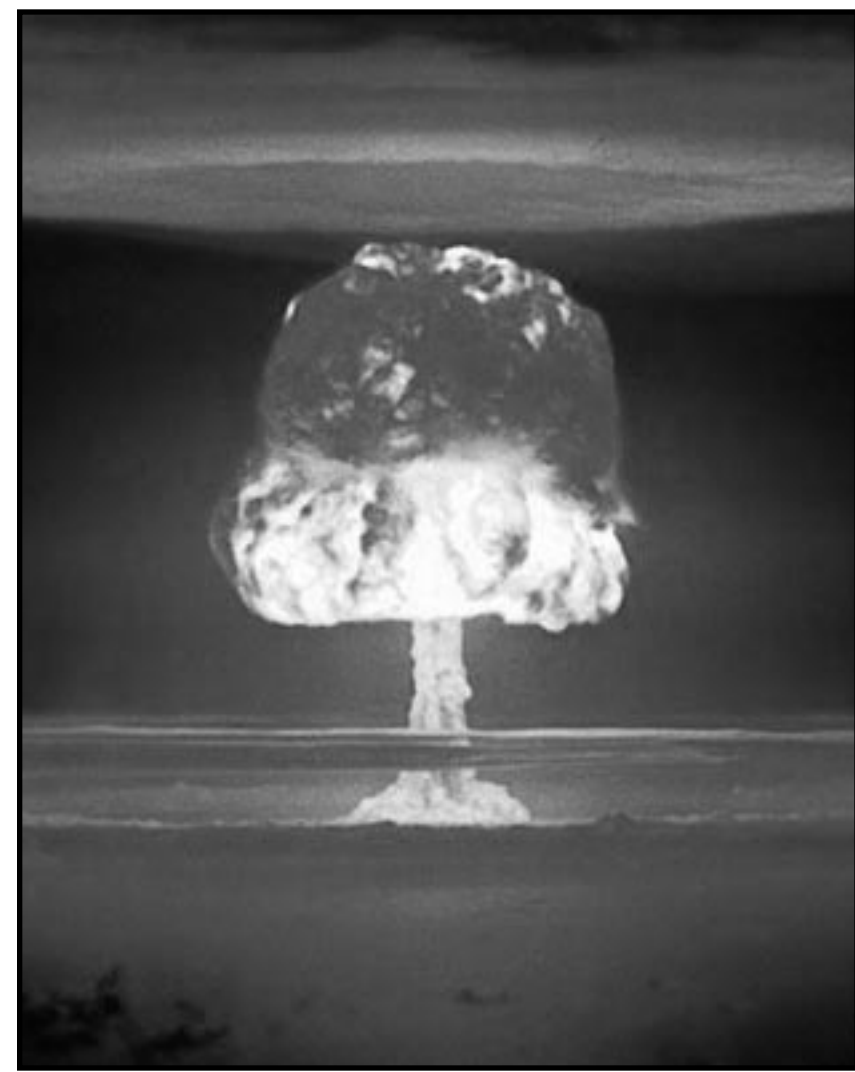
**Frida:** These corporations are good at defending their bottom line. They prioritize, over everything else, the most high-tech, the most sophisticated, the most complicated technologies. They are building sensors and unmanned aircraft and remote control devices.

**Agitator:** In Iraq we seem to be involved in a war that requires troops on the ground going door to door, yet the national priority is high-tech weapons.

**Frida:** The weapons industry is really scrambling to be relevant to that context, trying to develop robotics, remote control, things that might simulate ground troops without actually involving ground troops. We have a half-trillion dollar military budget at this point.

But what is amazing is that they can't even produce a gun that works in the sandy, harsh, hot climate in which Americans find themselves. Our urban police departments have body armor and weapons that work but our soldiers do not. But it is not nearly as profitable to produce good body armor as it is to produce unmanned aerial vehicles that can take pictures

**Every action has a reaction and there is always a choice. Children on the playground have a better sense of that, and are more strategic and thoughtful and interested in self-preservation, and ultimately are more compassionate than people who are leading this country—in large part, I think, because this administration is completely insulated from consequences, personally and politically.**



Continued on page 6

## SHADOW OF THE BOMB

by CHRIS ROONEY

I can remember the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet Union. And I remember things like the Gulf War and NAFTA as the backdrop against which I lived my childhood. One of my first girlfriends had an older brother serving in the first Iraq war; I lived near an Army base as a child. I can remember begging my mom to let me watch the war on TV. We all watched the war on TV eventually.

Somehow though I grew up thinking that once Communism was over, all of those bombs just disappeared, like ghosts or smoke or nightmares. I never had to learn about the horror of fallout, or practice civil defense drills in school. I didn't plan out any hiding place in the basement of my mother's house.

When I began to take an interest in current events, I was sickened and terrified to learn that the American Department of Energy has plans to "rehabilitate" its nuclear arsenal. I recall, on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing, reading a report about something called Complex 2030 and realizing that these weapons were still active, never disarmed, never dismantled, never a thing of memory, just retargeted toward every possible threat. The only thing that had evaporated was my sense of security, and my idea of what it meant to be alive in a post-Cold War world.

Last year on August 6th, Hiroshima Day, I was at the Jonah House community taking part in protest vigils in front of the Enola Gaye, and later, outside the Pentagon.

As I stood in front of the Pentagon, I was thinking how that same abusive father never took his hand

off the trigger; he just stopped telling us all that one day he would shoot.

The other thing that's been on my mind recently is "non-lethal" background radiation. I watched a documentary here at the L.A. Catholic Worker called *Bound by the Wind* and it's upsettingly relevant, though it's a couple of decades old. It tells the story of the people known as "downwinders," people who lived

downwind of nuclear test sites all over the world. The movie talked about the contamination of drinking water and soil and breast milk and food and animals and people and of whole families dying of cancer. It told about children born with terrifying mutation, and it talked about the fight for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the birth of the Nevada Desert Experience.

The film ended with the phrase: "We're all downwinders now," and that got me thinking also. I've had three close friends get cancer just this year, and another who died of it last year. I've long known that since the first nuclear tests there hasn't been a generation of people born without trace levels of radioactive material in their bodies. Radiation is a fact of life in this brave new world.

I was born with a double uvula— that hangey-down thing at the back of the throat— and when I was a child,

I thought that was how everyone's looked. Then, as I grew older, I would joke that I have one like that because I was born in Ontario. But thinking about background radiation and about how many people I've known who've had physical deformities or have died of cancer, I started to ask myself, how big a part does radioactivity play in all of this?

I was born nowhere near a nuclear test site, and I don't know anyone who was. Still, could it be that the cancers in my friends and family are one result of decades of atomic tests? Could this be why my best friend lost one of her ovaries, why I have otherwise healthy relatives who've had prostate cancer, and friends with leukemia and throat and breast and brain cancer? Many of us were born into this post-Cold War world; we grew up believing

the lie that the nightmare was over. Neither my friends nor I nor anyone else alive has ever asked for this. I worry that I could have cancer myself and not even know it; I worry that my children might get it as well. I am worried about what kind of world I'll be leaving to them, while wondering

Continued on page 6



## L.A.C.W. VOLUNTEER DENTIST ARRESTED IN SKID ROW SWEEPS

### Rooney, cont'd from p.5

what sort of world's been left to me. This afternoon I've been looking up pictures from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These days there's serious talk of America using nukes on Iran and developing new generations of "tactical" or "battlefield" warheads that could be used in future wars. North Korea is mastering the art of nuclear diplomacy; Israel has close to 200 warheads in its arsenal; India and Pakistan are invoking mutually assured destruction over Kashmir. The list goes on and on.

Last summer, Fr. Steve Kelly said to me that we are living in the shadow of the bomb and that, in one way or another, everything comes back to this fact. A few months later a war resister friend of mine told me about a conversation he'd had with a World War II veteran. The vet had said the same thing—that once you realize the destructive power of the bomb, nothing else in the world matters. The destructive potential in those weapons dwarfs everything, and the world is put in a frighteningly new perspective.

I think about these things a lot and I think about the witnesses of people like Steve Kelly, Ardeth Platte, and Phil Berrigan, and I pray for more people to follow their example. I pray that God would make us into wrenches falling into the gears of war, wooden shoes to jam up the works of genocide, so that no more children ever have to learn that the world they once thought so safe was really full of poisonous machines.

This year, even if only for a second, please think about the bomb and its bitter, rotting fruit, and then think of a world where these false gods have become mythology.

And with these things on our minds and in our hearts, let's all work towards that world. Ω

*We first met Chris Rooney in the Spring of 2006 when he stayed with us for a month. He is currently a participant in our Summer Program. Chris is the editor of **The Christian Radical** and is part of the Vancouver Catholic Worker. He can be reached at the.christian.radical@gmail.com.*

### Berrigan, cont'd from p.4

to be analyzed in Colorado. It's just not as profitable.

**Agitator:** Do you think the U.S. will be in Iraq for a long time?

**Frida:** Yes. Between the infrastructure that we've built there and the long-term designs that the United States has on Iraqi oil reserves, I see no way in which the United States is planning to pull out any time soon. I think we may see U.S. troops pull way back and bunker themselves. They may cordon off large areas around the oil fields and "de-Iraqify" them—push the population out of that area. The United States has invested so much money there, not for hospitals or water purification or education or any of the things we've promised, but in establishing huge bases and rebuilding the oil infrastructure.

**Agitator:** We are going up to Vandenberg Air Force Base for Hiroshima Day. It is one of the centers for the missile defense shield. Could you tell me what the status is on that project? Does it work yet and how much does it cost thus far?

**Frida:** They do not have anything that works. Holes are being dug in the ground and equipment is being deployed, so the casual observer might assume that they have figured out the technology, but that is not the case. The missile defense agency is

## CORBIN HARNEY 1920-2007 A GREAT SPIRIT PASSES



Corbin Harney

Corbin Harney, 87, a spiritual leader of the Western Shoshone Nation who challenged the federal government by opposing nuclear weapons on aboriginal land, has died of complications from cancer near Santa Rosa, California.

Harney, a medicine man who lived in Owyhee, Nevada, near the Idaho border, was often a participant at anti-nuclear rallies and traveled worldwide as a speaker and environmentalist.

In recent years he led protests against Yucca Mountain, a high-level nuclear waste repository planned for an area northwest of Las Vegas that his tribe called Snake Mountain.

In the late 1990s, Harney established a traditional healing retreat called *Poo Ha Bah* at an area of mineral hot springs in Tecopa, California, near the south entrance to Death Valley. May he rest in peace.

still doing periodic tests. The tests are scripted; someone else might call them rigged. And if the test fails, as the most recent one did, they simply say it wasn't a test after all.

**Agitator:** And the cost, so far?

**Frida:** There are a lot of places to begin. Reagan first promoted this idea of a shield that would render nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete in 1983. Since then, Star Wars has taken a number of different shapes, but we've invested well over 200 billion dollars pursuing this technology. What we are talking about now is not anything near a shield; that is impossible. Rather, we're talking about interceptors in key places: Vandenberg; Ft. Greeley, Alaska; the Czech Republic, and other places throughout Europe; and also on sea platforms.

**Agitator:** Why do they pursue this? Is there any rational foreign policy goal behind it?

**Frida:** If you believe that it works or that it will eventually work, it allows the United States to remove itself from the international community. We would not need treaties, we would not need resolutions, we would not need any mutual restrictions. We could act completely on our own, because this shield would insulate us from the actions of other countries. But in order to really pursue this, you have to believe that eventually it will work, or that other countries will believe that it will work.

**Agitator:** Do policy makers believe one or both of those propositions?

**Frida:** I kind of think that they do. The American people, and their leaders as well, have an

extraordinary belief in technology, as if there were a technological fix for every problem from global warming and catastrophic climate change to earthquakes and poverty. If we don't have a fix now, we will have one eventually, they think.

That cult of technology, that faith in technology, is very powerful, even though the American people are more and more incapable of actually creating or understanding technology. The idea that we could hoodwink or bluster or bombast our way out of every problem is pretty strong.

And then, we can always just nuke whoever threatens us. I think that is right behind every aggressive foreign policy decision that the United States makes. You know, we are the only country in the world that has used nuclear weapons.

This rhetoric about "all our options on the table" is so pervasive that all three of the leading Democratic candidates have used that same language. "All options on the table" with regard to Iran is insane, as though we could bomb Iran and there wouldn't be consequences...

When we were children, our dad would talk about the *tennis ball of violence*. It was a special tennis ball, and with each bounce it got stronger and stronger. He was talking about my brother and I fighting with one another, tit for tat. That was useful, but also cliché. But having looked at the arms trade since 1999, when the U.S. intervened in former Yugoslavia from 15,000 feet, bombing to stop the killing, and then, on to September 11, 2001 and our response to declare war on one of the poorest nations of the world... it is like watching a train wreck in slow motion. Every single thing that thinking people said would go wrong did, in fact, go wrong. It was like the playbook of how not to do something.

It brings me back to that tennis ball: every action has a reaction and there is always a choice. Children on the playground have a better sense of that, and are more strategic and thoughtful and interested in self-preservation, and ultimately are more compassionate than the people who are leading this country—in large part, I think, because this administration is completely insulated from consequences, personally and politically. They have created a system where nothing sticks to them.

### Pilolla, cont'd from p.3

drive out of The Row. "I think I was probably treated a little better than some of my patients," Rich said.

For those living on Skid Row, there's no escaping the police, guilty or not. You walk from your low-rent hotel room to the grocery store and the police might stop you, handcuff you and search your pockets. It happens routinely, every day for many people.

One homeless man in the garden at the *Hippie Kitchen* described the police behavior this way: "They're terrorizing people, man."

At random, I asked a homeless man the other day how often the police search him on the street. "Every day," he said.

Skid Row is the poorest neighborhood around. Some people like living on The Row, but many live there because they can't afford any other neighborhood. So you're stuck on The Row if you don't have much money. You think

to yourself, "I'd like to get out of here." But you can't because you don't have enough money to move. Meanwhile, the police stop and search you every time they see you on the street.

A sincere **Thank-You** to Rich, who has helped so many low-income and homeless folks with his years of dedication. A Head-Shake to the police for dedicating themselves to arresting as many as possible by searching as many as possible. Ω

*Ed Pilolla lives and works with the Los Angeles Catholic Worker part-time and is also busy writing a book.*

### Green, cont'd from p.3

when lo and behold, some nice person offers me a refreshing cup of ice-cold water as I round the final turn to the big red door. Everywhere there are signs alerting us VIPs of upcoming picnics planned, hotline numbers and other helpful messages, as well as warnings not to leave the line or we'll lose our place. We'd have to be foolish or full to turn back now as the aroma of delicious food wafts over us, leading us forward, saliva glands at the ready.

As I maneuver up to the first station, I see that it's beans and pork again (that's not a complaint either). Next is an exquisitely prepared salad followed by an appetizing slice of buttered rye. With the accompanying spork, I imagine I'm in a 21st-century communal feast that, instead of charging you an arm and a leg, merely provides a helping hand in the form of natural, healthy foodstuffs prepared simply and generously for all. Ω

### Dietrich, cont'd from p.2

and the sea, wants us to practice loving each other, turning the other cheek, giving to all who ask, giving up all our wealth—to follow him and practice not power but powerlessness. These are difficult and ineffectual actions largely ignored by most Christians. But these are the actions that keep us human and create a human world. We are not a people who are about miracles, we are a people who are about the mundane and the human, remembering that the miraculous is always on the side of those who choose to practice Jesus rather than merely worship Jesus.

For Mathew as for Ellul, the congruence of image and word is finally resolved in the implausible Incarnation itself. And that Incarnation is preserved for us today not in images and icons that glorify Jesus, or in shrines or cathedrals where we worship Jesus, but in the least of our brothers and sisters. As Jesus himself has told us: "*Whatever you do to the least of these you did to me.*" (Matt. 25:45). The only living image of Christ we have in the world today resides not in images of power and glory, but in the poor, the outcast, and the victims.

We all want a Silver Surfer Super Hero Messiah to swoop in and save us at the moment of crisis. But Jesus rejects this mythic image of super hero with bands of angels who will rescue us at the last minute, and rather, insists that our sole salvation resides in the human practice of mercy, forgiveness, and confrontation with injustice. Rejecting miraculous salvation, Jesus instead embraces the cross, taking on the title not of super hero, but of "*suffering servant*," who accepts the cross as the fate of all who speak out against injustice, and stands with the poor, the outcast, the victim. Ω

*Jeff Dietrich is a member of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker and editor of the Catholic Agitator.*

# ON THE LINE



## WAR RESISTER

On June 19, Army Spc. Eleonai "Eli" Israel chose to follow his conscience and place himself at great risk as he informed his upper command that he will no longer play a "combat role" in this illegal, immoral, unjustified war nor, as a private guard, "protect corporate representatives." He was warned that he is "violating a direct order." Eli has been in Iraq for over one year, receiving one medal for his actions and has been recommended for two others, that he now doubts he will receive—nor wants. Eli now believes that the Bush/Cheney Administration used the attacks of September 11, 2001 as a pretense to invade Iraq and that "we are now violating the people of this country (Iraq) in ways that we would never accept on our own soil." Eli is at Camp Victory in Baghdad with JVD Bravo Company, 1-149 Infantry of the Kentucky Army National Guard

He has filed for conscientious objector discharge and awaits the military's next move.

—[couragetoresist.org](http://couragetoresist.org)

## WITNESS AGAINST TORTURE UPDATE

Thirteen justice and peace activists went to trial in U.S. District Court in Washington, DC on July 18 and were found guilty for their nonviolent direct action on April 18 against U.S. torture policy. Dressed in orange jump suits and black hoods, the activists, including Norfolk VA Catholic Worker Steve Baggarly, walked from the U.S. Federal Court in DC to the Supreme Court, to Congress, then to the Justice Department, ending at the White House, where they chained themselves to the fence until Park Police used bolt cutters to cut the chain and arrest them. All were found guilty of "stationary demonstration in a restricted zone" and sentenced to time served and a mandatory \$25 assessment fee.

—[jonahhouse.org](http://jonahhouse.org)

## PRIEST ABUSE SETTLEMENT

The Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles, headed by Cardinal Roger Mahoney, agreed to a \$660 million settlement, by far the largest amount yet in the sex abuse scandal, to a class action suit brought by 508 abuse victims, some of whom have

waited five decades for resolution. Not included in this figure is the more than \$114 million already promised in other settlements, bringing the total to more than \$774 million. The archdiocese will pay \$250 million in cash, with the balance coming from insurers and religious orders. Church property also is being sold along with programs and personnel cuts to pay for the settlement.

—[latimes.com/abuse](http://latimes.com/abuse)

## PERMISSION DENIED

The ACLU has reported that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials recently blocked a U.N. observer on a fact-finding mission to examine the status of immigrant rights in the U.S. from visiting a family detention facility for undocumented immigrants in Taylor, Texas. According to the terms agreed to by U.N. member countries, the U.N. Human Rights Council is to have "access to all prisons, detention centers and places of interrogation."

—[upi.com](http://upi.com)

## SAINT FRANZ

The Vatican has set October 26, 2007 as the beatification date for Austrian peasant and WWII Pacifist and Martyr, Franz Jägerstätter. Franz, born on May 20, 1907, was beheaded by the Third Reich on the same day St. Edith Stein was executed at

Auschwitz, August 9, 1943, for refusing to fight in Hitler's army because of his faith convictions.

## U.S. ARMY SUED

Army reservist Erik Botta, 26, of Port St. Lucie, FL has filed suit in federal court in Florida against the U.S. Army over his *fifth* deployment to Iraq, which if upheld, would cost him his job, his home, and prevent him from earning his engineering degree. He is in the seventh year of an eight-year Reserves commitment. —[vaiv.org](http://vaiv.org)

## U.S. RENTS PAK ARMY

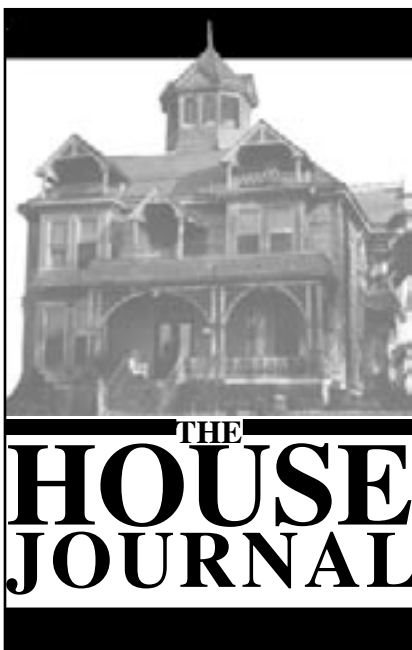
The U.S. is paying approximately \$100 million per month for the deployment of 80,000 Pakistani troops on its border with Afghanistan as part of the war on terrorism. Currently U.S. aid to Pakistan is nearing \$2 billion annually.

—[timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com)

## PRISONER REQUEST

An *Agitator* reader in a private Florida prison has requested correspondence from other *Agitator* readers. You can write to him at: **Jimmy Pesci, #990495, F.C.C.C., 13613 S.E. Hwy 70, Arcadia, FL 34266**

*On The Line* is compiled and edited by Mike Wisniewski



Generally our summer doesn't officially begin until *Hennacy House* is filled with the joyous clatter and racket of the youth who journey from throughout the country (and sometimes the world) to participate in our Summer Intern Program. This year's batch is quite the lively bunch, starting with **Natalie Boydston** outta Gainesville, Florida, who quickly reminded us that she hails from the home of two-time football and basketball champions University of Florida, where she is a student. In her free time, Natalie, who is fluent in French and has made great strides in Spanish, wrestles alligators, bikes, runs, and visits farmers' markets, so it was not a coincidence that she loves working in our garden passing out the donated fresh fruits and vegetables that comprise our soup kitchen "farmers market." She is majoring in saving the world and psychology,

and her goal is to one day be an emergency physician with *Doctors Without Borders*.

**Mariah Schoppman**, originally from Sacramento, is a recent graduate of Azusa Pacific University, which she attended after transferring from that Bible-thumping college, Biola University. She definitely felt more at home at Azusa, where she discovered her love for community and the homeless when her friends and roommates decided to share their place with the homeless. Mariah is sure she wants to live in intentional community, and hopes to live out the gospel of love and justice, while saving the world. Her next stop is Bolivia, where she plans to improve her language skills. Thoughtful, friendly, and a good listener, Mariah enjoys mingling in the garden while practicing her Spanish with our guests.

**Chris (Great) Scott** recently graduated from Shepherd University, located deep in the backwoods of West Virginia, where he majored in hunting, fishing, and the beer can toss, not to mention Political Science and English. As a rebellious young Mennonite-Episcopal hybrid, he rediscovered his faith in college and became active with *Progressive Action Committee* (PAC) and the *Multi-Cultural Leadership Team*, which campaigned for fair trade coffee, anti-mountain top removal and strip mining, and facilitated work presentations on diversity and anti-oppression. After working one year in an intense service program with an affordable housing program, he wants ever so much to attend seminary for Divinity and Peace Studies with the ultimate goal of pastoring an alternative flock, while fearlessly dumpster diving

and saving the world. He enjoys worshipping and preaching the word at Wednesday liturgy and Friday prayer. Zany, playful, and scruffy, Chris has the gift of gab and has become quite the conversationalist in the garden.

**Canuck Chris Rooney**, returning for a second visit to our home, this time as an intern, recently moved into *Samaritan House*, the Vancouver Catholic Worker. *Samaritan House* works closely with the *War Resisters Support Campaign*, where like-minded conscientious objectors can find refuge in the tradition of the underground railroad and the sanctuary movement. He continues to publish his zine, *The Christian Radical*, and also recently published a chap book of guest Arnal Kennedy's poems. Since last we saw him, he has recorded a CD-R of his original Canadian guitar and folk music. Bear-like, Mohawk-headed, kilt-wearin', a booze-abstaining ruffian, Chris is a quiet, nice guy and Vancouver's most eligible Catholic Worker.

**Jodi Granado** is a homegirl straight from the town of Rotan, located in the heart of West Texas. Recently graduated from, the University of Texas at Austin, where she majored in shrinkology and government (too smart for a 2.0 but too much fun for a 4.0). Growing up spending long hours sweating under the hot sun, she excelled at every sport, especially hoops; she's a baller. After finishing up with us, Jodi will be joining the *Vincentian Service Corps*, where she will be saving the world while working for the *Chrysalis Employment Program*. Jodi likes interacting with our friends while she delivers cool, refreshing water to quench their thirst in the

the blazing (though not as hot as Texas) L.A. sun.

Stunning opera soprano, organ maestra, and music director, **Gundi Gabrielle**, from New York by way of Muenster, Germany, arrived at the end of May. She immediately became a hit in the garden and on the serving line with her amazing ability to serve huge quantities of fruit salad and salsa with great speed and aplomb. After a quick turn as a film actress and a spiritual music recording career, Gundi, deeply influenced by Mother Teresa and Albert Schweitzer, has decided to devote her life to serving God's poor. She turned her back on the world, and felt she gained all.

Summer ushered in the busy traveling season. We've already had three of last year's interns check in to *Hotel Hennacy*, including **Sophie Goldstein** who decided to re-up for another exciting summer with us, and **Allison McGillivray**, who with freshly minted history degree in hand plans to stick around until she gets the job of her dreams (we've already given her some glowing recommendations...no, really.)

**Francesca Apper**, taking time out from her very busy schedule scouting out likely college campuses, dropped in for a quick visit at the end of July. **Jason McGaughey**, our mid-year intern from last year, returned from an exciting semester at Southern Illinois University to renew his close friendships. Jailbird **Sarah Suman** came back, leading a dozen students for a summer immersion program.

Somehow we manage to make room and roll out the welcome mat.

*House Journal* is written by Faustino Cruz

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## THANK YOU!

We and our guests thank all who made generous donations to help make this year's summer picnics a huge success. Along with the usual activities, all enjoyed special treats like barbequed hot dogs and hamburgers, along with all the fixings. Your help made it possible.



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