

The Hartford Catholic Worker

St. Martin De Porres House
St. Brigid House



Have we even begun to be Christians?

-Dorothy Day



*Lil' Jose, Fey, Lil' Anthony, and Timmy: Just teenagers
teenaging.*

"Long before the Negro child perceives this difference, and even longer before he understands it, he has begun to react to it; he has begun to be controlled by it. Every effort made by the child's elders to prepare him for a fate from which they cannot protect him causes him secretly, in terror, to begin to await, without knowing that he is doing so, his mysterious and inexorable punishment."

-James Baldwin

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Our Board of directors include: Justin Evanovich, Danielle DeRosa, Sr. Pat McKeon, Rex Fowler, Marybeth Albrycht, Isaiah Jacobs, Patricia Bellamy, and James Conway.

Dear Readers,

The bulk of this issue is devoted to a very troubling story involving two young men that were once children in our program. After I (Chris) had finished writing this essay I heard a segment on the public radio program *This American Life*, “[In Country, In City](#)” from the episode *Doppelgängers*. The story describes the incredible similarity of trauma experienced by combat veterans and young men like the man I write about. Listening to this story is a worthwhile way to spend 25 minutes.

In a second coincidence, after finishing this essay I read *Witness: Inside America's Death Chambers* in *The Atlantic*. [Click here for a link](#) to this testimony from a Christian opposed to the death penalty who repeatedly volunteers to be a public witness to executions.

These stories from *This American Life*, *The Atlantic*, and our newsletter are an unsettling triptych of violence, vengeance, and mercy that most of us understandably turn from. I'm asking that you don't look away; we can't fix what we don't (won't?) see.

-Chris



Ashanti, Jada, and Tylehjah



Tyzon

St. Martin's Wish List

- ♥ Peace with justice, justice with mercy, and life with dignity for all God's children
- ♥ That you pass this newsletter along after you've read it to someone who respects your values.
- ♥ That our older donors encourage a younger person in their life to please support our practice of the Works of Mercy by becoming a monthly donor.
- ♥ Gifts of time, talent, and treasure to help us perform the Works of Mercy. **Donations can be mailed to: HCW 26 Clark St., Hartford CT 06120.** Donations can also be made online by clicking on the “Donate” button at our website: <https://www.hartfordcatholicworker.org/>
- ♥ Having a birthday? Consider asking friends to make a donation to the Hartford Catholic Worker in your honor.
- ♥ Thank-you!

On Mercy, or Mitigating the End of Time ³

Christopher J. Douçot
(ed note: names have been changed
to protect family members)

I am mesmerized watching dominoes fall. Every semester I show my students a video of thousands of falling dominoes fall. I then ask them why the last domino fell. The first and most frequent response is that the second to last one knocked it over. This is true- but is it the whole story?

When I press my students to think some more someone will say the first one knocked down the second and so on, other students will say that someone knocked over the first one, that someone lined up the dominoes in just the right way for one to knock over the next. One student in 17 years called out “gravity”!

Yes! All these elements, even an invisible force- gravity, fully explain why the last domino falls. Unseen forces, planning, decisions, actions, and inactions are why many things, not just falling dominoes, happen. It seems to me the earlier an intervention in a process increases the chances of changing, or avoiding altogether, an outcome that seems all but inevitable when the second to last domino is already in the process of falling.

If the goal is for the last domino to remain standing perhaps we should not have arranged them in such a way that one knocks into the next. If they were already arranged without our noticing, maybe we could have prevented the first from being flicked. Or maybe if they are already falling with a little thought we would see the obvious outcome and intervene- maybe removing even a single domino from the chain and the latter may remain standing.

Unless we're billionaires playing with rockets, there's nothing we can



do about gravity, but there are other equally powerful forces at work in our world that may be invisible if one is not standing in the right place to see their impact. For example, impoverishment- not poverty; impoverishment, the process that creates poverty, is largely invisible to those of us who have not been impoverished and have never intimately known impoverished people. We focus our attention, usually in the form of blame, on impoverished people. We focus on the last domino or two. Charities and government funded social safety net programs- such as they are, are doomed to failure. As we fail to interrogate, and then abrogate, the processes that impoverish we might soften the blow of the last domino when it falls, but we aren't stopping it from falling. Justice demands that we replace every system that knocks people down with ones that elicit flourishing.

And yet, our “interrogation” of every social ill remains maddeningly on what to do when that penultimate domino is already bearing down on us. For heaven's sake! What will it take for us to pay attention and act sooner?!

I can't believe I'm typing the following: the federal government is seeking to execute two young men who were part of our program as children: Carlos and Alex.

Carlos's daughter is currently in

our program and his older sister, also once a Green House kid, regularly volunteers with us. Alex's nieces are currently in our program and his older brother also regularly volunteers with us.

This is an abridged account of Alex's story. A fuller account would be book length and, frankly, it has been written in various forms. I read one version, *All God's Children* by Fox Butterfield when we first began our ministry. Aside from [the book](#) which introduced me to Dorothy Day, this book has had the most profound impact on my thinking and doing.

Before we met Alex, we knew his older brother Juan, whom we've often written about over the years. Juan was around 5 when he started showing up outside the Green House, sometimes in his jammies. We invited Juan in for breakfast the first Saturday he appeared and immediately fell in love with him.

He lived in an infamous apartment building a block away. Many of our kids have lived in this dumpster over the years. The hallway floors are permanently sticky, the stairwells have reeked of urine every time I've climbed them, and the hallways have multiple blind spots for persons of nefarious intent to lay in wait. A 700 square foot, one bedroom apartment rents for \$800.

One Saturday morning Juan showed up early per usual, knowing

(Please see: *Mercy*, p4)

Mercy cont.

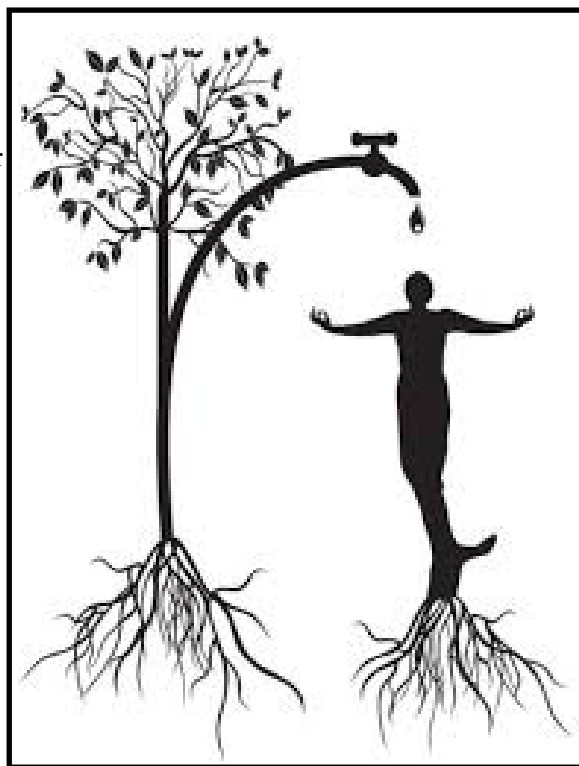
we would provide him with breakfast. While he munched on his Corn Pops a Green House teen who lived in the same building asked if Juan had said anything about what had happened the night before. He hadn't. Living with Juan was his mother, who was badly losing battles to addiction and other mental illnesses, a teen aged sister Marisol, who was recovering from cancer, an itinerant "uncle" who may have been involved in the drug trade, and his little brother Alex. Before I write anything more- if any of you take this as a cue to surmise that this family somehow deserves the fates that have befallen it because an uncle may have sold drugs, what do you think about all the people now doing the same thing selling pot or alcohol?

Juan's apartment had been raided during the night. When I arrived I found the door on the floor, its frame splintered. Every cabinet emptied, every piece of furniture overturned, and Juan's mom appeared to be in the beginning stages of withdrawal. Neighbors overheard the police discussing who to arrest in lieu of the absent uncle. They chose Marisol the teen-aged caregiver to Alex and Juan, apparently they did not want to deal with the potential of their mom vomiting or seizing in their car. As far as I know, no drugs were found that night. I didn't see Alex that morning. Marisol was soon released.

We didn't meet Alex until he was 5 or so when he began tagging along with Juan on his way to the Green House. By then it was clear that he had been very badly neglected for his entire life. While Juan became a near constant presence in our lives, even spending nights with us, Alex came and went.

In 2009 when he was 8 police showed up at our door looking for

Alex who had not returned home the night before. (see [Alex Was Missing](#) from our Christmas 2009 issue). We organized a search and provided the police with a much more recent photo of him to distribute. He was soon found; he simply had fallen



asleep on a friend's couch while playing video games.

It was not long after that DCF took custody of Alex and Juan. We maintained our connections with these boys, picking them up every Saturday for program, even as they cycled through several foster homes. After a few years DCF was apparently convinced that their mom was better. The boys were returned to her custody. Twenty years on their mom is still not well.

Alex came by less and less frequently. We heard stories of his escalating hijinks apparently performed at the request of older boys, perhaps for their approval? We heard that he stole a golf cart from Keney Park that led to a low-speed chase; he stole sneakers from Walmart for the older kids; he lit up a fireworks display inside a Stop and Shop. According to his federal indictment he and

a half dozen of his friends had joined the "Hoodstarz" gang, and later allegedly assumed leadership when a founding leader was killed.

In all my years working with kids in gangs I've never once heard them refer to the gang as a gang; most often they are referred to as family.

Meanwhile, Juan had formed a close bond with a high school aged volunteer. He too ended up with a new family as this young woman raised enough money to send Juan to a Catholic middle school. When she moved away for college, she convinced her parents to take Juan in and she raised the money for him to go to a local Catholic high school! Entering adolescence, these brothers entered starkly differently funded schools, differently resourced families and communities.

Juan did well enough to graduate and attend a state college briefly. He was also briefly married to a woman with whom he has two precocious, precious sons. His love and affection for his boys is a joy to witness. Juan's life is far from idyllic. His marriage went south despite his best efforts at forgiveness, and just before the pandemic the building he lived in burned to the ground. He was left with just the clothes on his back and a confident outlook that he has a bright future to come. Further tragedies have not vanquished his hope in the future. I marvel, *I envy*, his fortitude and good spirit.

I'm not sure Alex ever had confidence that there was a loving home, never mind a secure future, for him in this world. I don't think he ever had a chance in this world.

And then on April 10, 2021 Marisol was driving by with her three very young children sitting in the back when she saw Alex walking near where their brother's apartment building had burned down. According to one police report I read his

sister pulled over to chat with Alex when another car pulled up and a 23-year-old man jumped out and began shooting. Alex's three-year-old nephew was shot and killed. Nobody else was shot, including, incredibly, the little boy's sisters who were sitting on either side of him. These girls come to our after school and Saturday programs. They are delightful, one of them looks and reminds me of Juan at her age. They don't speak of that day and maybe, I hope!, don't remember it.

The gunman was arrested and sentenced late last year to 40 years in prison. There were multiple shootings and killings in Hartford and East Hartford that summer; likely reappraisals back and forth between grieving, angry, untethered, and- until they pulled their triggers- seemingly unwanted young men. Alex is being held in a Rhode Island prison, the multiple acts the government alleges he committed coincide with an especially merciless time in our land. The federal government is using the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Law ([Rico](#)) so that a conviction of his alleged acts can trigger a federal death sentence. And this is why a "mitigation specialist" has met with Jackie and me. Her job is to see if there are mitigating factors that would preclude the federal government from killing Alex in my name and yours.

[Mitigating factors](#) relevant to Alex include: impaired capacity: *"the defendant's capacity to appreciate the wrongfulness of the defendant's conduct..., regardless of whether the capacity was so impaired as to constitute a defense to the charge"*, duress: *"the defendant was under unusual and substantial duress..."*, disturbance: *"the defendant committed the offense under severe mental or emotional disturbance"*, and *"other factors in the defendant's background, record, or character or any other circumstance of the offense that mitigate against imposition of the death sentence"*.

I believe all these mitigating factors apply to Alex- but they are among the very last dominoes to collapse onto him. Yes, of course, Alex is not a domino, he has/d agency- but how much power did he have to resist the cascade of dominoes that were lined up and began falling on him before he was even born?

Regardless of whether he is sentenced to die, it seems to me that we've been killing him since the day he was born. What good is it for an individual, or even a society, to condemn the death penalty while simultaneously condoning the slow death of neglect via impoverishment?

Why was he born impover-



Wigga Bedviya

ished? Why was his mother born impoverished? Why do we ration mental health and addiction treatment? Why was he returned to his mother? Why is DCF underfunded and understaffed? Why do we not have enough foster families? Why do we have more guns than people? Why were the schools Alex attended underfunded and in disrepair? Why did I never fail to hear multiple

adults yelling at children every time⁵ I entered one of those schools? Why do we glorify violence and celebrate vengeance, at least when the target is not someone we love and care about? Why [have we spent \\$10,000 a second](#), every second of Alex's life on war instead of care? We have not made the world "safe for democracy". No! We've made the world unsafe for all of Creation! Why?

Why?

Why!

I mean for God's sake- what is the death penalty if not the pre-meditated murder of someone in the name of the rest of us? It's vengeance not justice. Our vengeful ethic, one of many invisible forces knocking down our neighbors and their children, is why we spend trillions on wars and weapons. Our vengeful ethic is why we arrest homeless persons for sleeping outdoors. Out of vengeance the government will spend upwards of [\\$1.5 million](#) seeking to kill Alex when nary a dime could be spent to nurture him as a babe.

Justice ensures a dignified home for everyone. Justice fills every belly, and compassionately treats any malady experienced by any child of God. Justice is a vibrant classroom in a fully resourced school for every child. A just society nurtures hopeful, confident children, full of dreams.

Vengeance is a choice; so too is Justice.

Will we keep lining up the dominoes of poverty, neglect, and demonization? Do we look the other way because those we love don't seem to be in the path of falling dominoes? Do we not look at all because we avoid any contact with those being crushed by the falling dominoes? Do we blame them, suggesting that their choices alone led to that last domino falling on their family?

(Please see: *Mercy*, p7)

I Love Smelling like Sheep in the Morning... It Smells like Faithfulness

(ed note: Extra credit to those who get the *Apocalypse Now* reference.)

“The priest who seldom goes out of himself ... misses out on the best of our people, on what can stir the depths of his priestly heart. ... This is precisely the reason why some priests grow dissatisfied [and] lose heart — instead of being shepherds living with ‘the smell of the sheep.’ This is what I am asking you — be shepherds with the smell of sheep.”

Pope Francis addressing priests, and the rest of us, in 2013.

Joan Vennoch

His final Easter message before death was a powerful call for peace, love, and charity toward all — especially migrants — and for the political leaders of the world to lead the way in embracing those values.

“I appeal to all those in positions of political responsibility in our world not to yield to the logic of fear, which only leads to isolation from others, but rather to use the resources available to help the needy, to fight hunger, and to encourage initiatives that promote development,” Pope Francis declared in a missive read by Archbishop Diego Ravelli after the ailing pope greeted the Easter crowds at St. Peter’s Square.

The forces against Francis’s brand of Catholic theology are powerful, too — maybe more powerful. Before he died on Easter Monday at 88, you could say Francis confronted them directly when he met with Vice President JD Vance, who as a repre-

sentative of President Trump is part of a sweeping political movement that champions fear and division over hope and inclusiveness.

That battle, which is dividing America, is also dividing the Catholic Church. As the cardinals meet to choose Francis’s successor, the direction of the institution is very much at stake. Will it veer right, or try to keep

norm-shattering. With that papal thought and others that followed, he infuriated conservatives.

But he also frustrated liberals, who came to see his words as more talk than action. He was also a disappointment to those who wanted the church to take more concrete steps to address clergy sexual abuse.

Francis will be judged by conservatives who saw in his words of tolerance a weakening of church doctrine, and by liberals who yearn for a church that is kinder, gentler, and more welcoming to all. Soon enough, with the election of the next pope, we will see what he attained for the church, and what he could not accomplish.

But in the last months of his life, Francis staked out the grounds upon which he wanted to be judged, as a voice of moral clarity, speaking out for the marginalized. He made that clear in his fight with Trump and Vance over immigration.

Answering a question about Trump’s plans to deport undocumented immigrants right before his inauguration, Francis said, ***“If true, this will be a disgrace ... This is not the way to solve things.”***

Later, he took on Vance after the vice president tried to use Catholic theology to justify Trump’s immigration policy.

“Just google *ordo amoris*,” Vance wrote on X on Jan. 30. That post came after the vice president said in an interview, “You love your family, and then you love your neighbor, and then you love your community, and then you love your fellow citizens in your own country. And then after that, you can focus and prioritize the rest of the world.” With that, Vance was presenting his interpretation of the “order of



alive even a vestige of the spirit of Francis?

As all the obituaries conclude, this pope’s legacy is mixed. He nudged the church toward a more progressive stance on issues like same-sex marriage, a bigger role for women, and the possibility of married priests. At least he let that conversation take place.

The hope on the progressive side began the year Francis was elected pope, when in answer to a question about gay Catholic priests he said, ***“If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?”*** The mere expression of tolerance in a church known for the opposite on that topic was

love,” or “order of charity,” a concept known as “ordo amoris.”

No, the pope said to Vance. You got that wrong.

A February letter from Francis to US bishops that chastised them for not speaking out against Trump’s immigration policies included this paragraph:

“Christian love is not a concentric expansion of interests that little by little extend to other persons and groups,” wrote the pope. **“In other words: The human person is not a mere individual, relatively expansive, with some philanthropic feelings!... The true**

ordo amoris that must be promoted is that which we discover by meditating constantly on the parable of the ‘Good Samaritan’ ... that is, by meditating on the love that builds a fraternity open to all, without exception.”

In his Easter message, Francis made an even more passionate case for inclusivity, love, and peace.

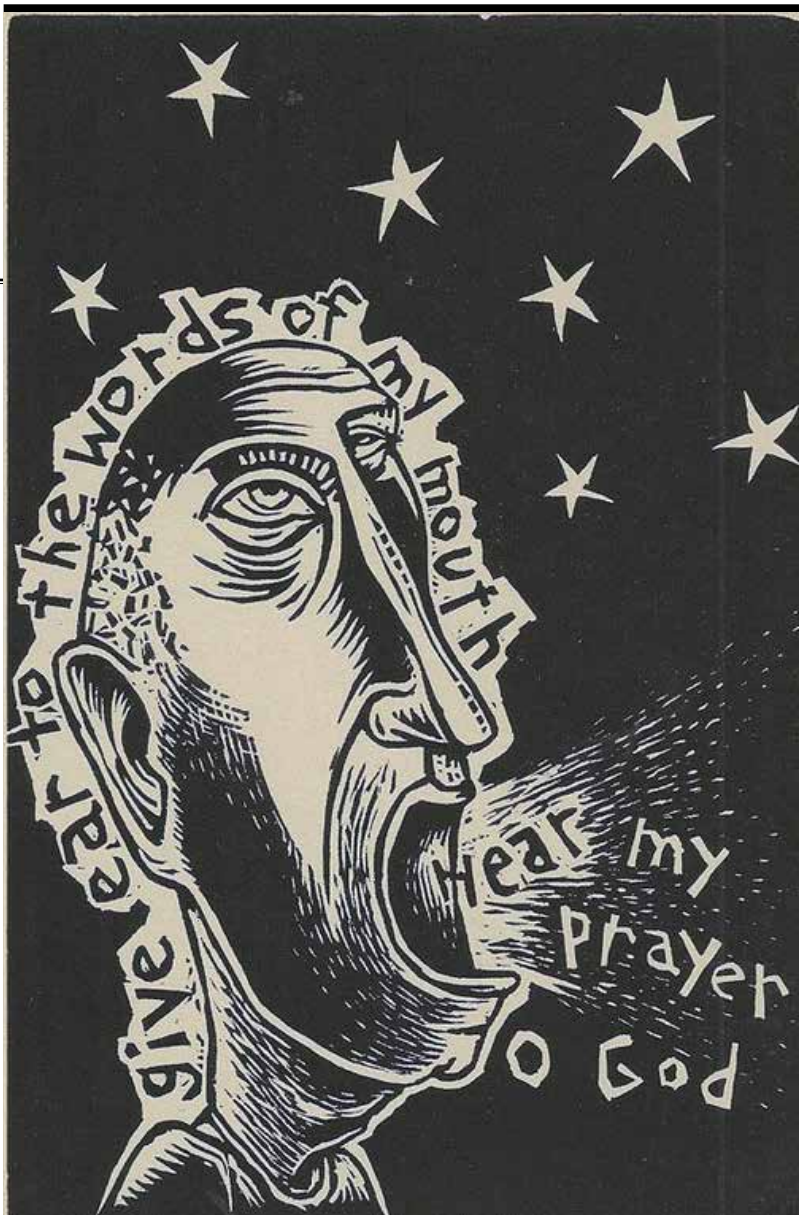
“What a great thirst for death, for killing, we witness each day in the many conflicts raging in different parts of our world!” his message said. **“How much violence we see, often even within families, directed at women and children!**

How much contempt is stirred up 7 at times towards the vulnerable, the marginalized, and migrants!”

He also said, **“There can be no peace without freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and respect for the views of others.”**

If only that could be the final word, not just for the church — but also for this country.Ω

(This story was reprinted, without permission, from the Boston Globe, April 21, 2025, sorry... We do pay for a subscription and we encourage our readers to subscribe to their local paper and also support public radio and television.)



[Psalm 54](#)

Mercy cont.

Or will we choose to seek out those being crushed? Will we try to move them from harm’s way? Will we disrupt the falling dominoes? And will we stop those who are lining them up only to knock them down knowing people will be crushed? These, too, are choices we make every day.

The [Psalms tell us that the Lord hears the cries of the poor and delivers them from their troubles.](#) The Lord hears what we hear. The Lord delivers who we deliver. If we can’t hear the cries of the poor, we need to get closer to them.

We can deliver each other to a world of cascading justice, mercy beyond measure, and a flourishing future for all, but only if we choose to do so. Budgets, both of time and money, are moral documents. Interrogating how we as individuals, families, nations, and a species spend our time and money tell us more about who, and what, we value than any essay, stump speech, law, or papal pronouncement. If we are to set in processes that uplift rather than crush, it’s nigh time for some auditing.

Mercy is the succor of compassion, vengeance its desiccant. A world parsimonious with mercy is burdened with despair and aggrieved by misplaced, unwarranted righteousness. In a just world, mercy is a torrent, the land bountiful, the people kind, and the future pregnant with goodness and possibility. We can choose this world or settle for the one we’re destroying.

Please join us in our prayers for the victims of Alex’s alleged violence, for Alex, and their families.

Kreg Yingst May God have mercy on all of us. Ω

The Provocations of Dorothy Day ⁸

Kate Hennessy

(Kate is one of Dorothy's grand-daughters. This is an excerpt from the October 2023 *New York Catholic Worker*. We will publish the remaining provocations in subsequent issues)

Find Your Vocation

Dorothy said: "*You will know your vocation by the joy it brings you.*" She added that it would be good if your work can be in the context of the Work of Mercy, but the essential thing is joy. Dorothy's vocation was a writer, which she began in childhood, writing short stories on a Lake Michigan pier with her sister, and ended nine days before her death at Maryhouse in NYC. Her writing was evocative, detailed, with an eye for the unusual and beautiful, and fueled by constant curiosity. In all the years of the *Catholic Worker*, very few people other than Dorothy have been able to capture that elusive beauty, that wild improbability of joy and love amid tragedy, illness, destitution and death that is the movement's story.

"*Work is so necessary and so healing,*" my mother said to me when I was young and searching for my place in the world. "*Find your vocation—what you are good at.*"

How do you live a life in which you aren't divided against yourself, where your work is an expression of the best of yourself? The artist Robert Henri said that we are not here to do what has already been done. He also said that art is a matter of doing things, anything, well. This is no light matter, and few have the courage and stamina. If you succeed, even in some small measure, you may

have to sacrifice for it, as well as take delight in it, all your life. I think this could be said of all those who live authentic vocations.

I think with a true vocation every aspect of your life is involved. We are shaped by our work—physically, emotionally and spiritually. It is how you live in the world, and this is nothing to be careless about. The beauty of individual callings is that they can be found in any kind of work, but there does need to be some sort of reckoning with the common good. I can't see it being possible to feel joy doing something that your conscience tells you is wrong. In the 1980s, when [Joseph Campbell was broadcasting](#) his advice, "*Follow your bliss,*" my mother cried out, "*Yes!*" But what a societal backlash followed. You can't do that—you can't follow your bliss. Who would do all the real work, then?

For many, recognizing and being able to follow one's vocation is no easy task. It can be a provocation to oneself and to one's family, community and society. There can also be a confusion between vocation and career, and you may need to separate your vocation from earning money.

There are many ways we kill our

worthy?

But what right do we have to crush someone else's dream, or even our own? Sometimes your vocation is deliberately, actively kept from you, usually for reasons that are dehumanizing. What to do then? Maybe choose your battles, your priorities. Be creative, or be a warrior. If it doesn't change for you, it may change for someone else coming after you. Maybe seeing the joy in another's face as they do their work can allow us the generosity to see it within ourselves. Following one's vocation is an act of generosity in and of itself, and it will be contagious. What a wonderful gift to give, this joy in one's own work, this inner power of living a fulfilling life. We either believe each of us, no matter what color, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic bracket or abilities, has a vocation, or we don't.

What a powerful act to look around at individuals, whether you know them or not, and believe that they each have a calling. What a way to instantly change one's perception of a person. How then can you not be affected by the injustices of others not being able to pursue their calling? Isn't it then our obligation

to do what we are called to do? Our calling may require us to live with an awareness of the gaping difference between what we imagine we can do and what we can actually do, but if you deny your vocation, like your conscience,



If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.

(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

own calling and the calling of others. Be realistic, don't be selfish, how are you going to pay the bills? You owe it to your family. Aren't you fiddling while Rome burns? Your parents didn't get to do this—what makes you

it will keep returning, no matter how many years pass. And once you accept it, you will feel like an arrow sent on its way with no turning back. And it will be part of the Works of Mercy.Ω

Notes, cont.

that much food?"

"To give to people who need it." I said with a smile.

"Like you sell it?" she followed up

"No, we just give it away to anyone who asks."

"Can I have some?"

"Sure." I said and slid a couple boxes of mac and cheese and some peaches into her mostly empty backpack.

I am lucky to spend so much time in the merciful oasis of the Green House. (Ammon has been accepted into UCONN's graduate Social Work program. If the funding comes through he will be with the Husky Sport Program this fall at UConn.)

I am struck by how vital the Works of Mercy are on days when our government seems to revel in adding to the burden of the poor. The 'Big Beautiful Bill', soon to be the humungous hideous law, may be big... but there is no beauty in it. It will be one of the largest transfers of wealth, redirecting wealth [from the poorest among us to the wealthiest](#). It will cut almost a trillion dollars over the next decade from [Medicaid](#) and the Affordable Care Act. It will cut a tax on gun silencers, reduce funding to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and keep our society flooded with guns. [Tribal peoples will lose funding](#); tax incentives for [renewable energy](#) are slashed, while investors in nuclear and fossil fuels will profit at the expense of death and the degradation of God's creation. The bill penalizes students needing college loans and makes debt forgiveness (unlike the businesses who had [\\$755 billion in PPP loans](#) from the pandemic forgiven) impossible. It further hollows out the Department of Environmental protection and [steals public land for private profit](#). The median age of the current Congress is 59- surely they remember the time before the EPA cleaned our air and water- you know, when the air was unhealthy because [smoke-stack pollution](#) made every afternoon akin to today's wildfire air quality alerts, and factory discharge led to our [RIVERS CATCHING FIRE!](#) Hey, Boston sports fans- every time you sing Dirty Water you're singing an ode to when the [Charles River was so dirty](#) folks were told not to touch it. This bill will build [for profit prisons](#) to

incarcerate human beings, meanwhile there are people [gleefully selling Alligator Alcatraz](#) (sic, and sick) hats and t-shirts! This should horrify all of us.

At the Catholic Worker, we are trying to live in a way that resists the greed, the grift, and the grotesqueries on display by our nation's "leaders". We cannot lose hope. Our hope is vital to God's beloved children whom we serve.

We know we are small, but in the words of our beloved Dorothy Day: "*The sense of futility is one of the greatest evils of the day... People say, 'what can one person do? What is the sense of our small effort?' They cannot see that we can only lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible for the one ac-*

confident that its ever widening circle will reach 9 around the world. We repeat, there is nothing that we can do but love, and, dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other; to love our neighbor; to love our enemy as well as our friend."

I believe we will change the world. We are not the only ones throwing pebbles in ponds. Our little ripples will become mighty waves of renewal when they meet up with the little ripples cast by hopeful pebble throwers from around the world.

And so friends, we threw pebbles last week by setting up retreat space for kids at Ahimsa. Another pebble is cast as we work towards [rematriating](#) land in Voluntown (named Volunteer Town in 1721 because if you volunteered

to kill native people you were given land.) We take in gifts of food, ripples of pebbles cast by our supporters. We seek community building with folks opposing the genocide in Gaza. We defend the Sacred by feeding the hungry, loving the immigrant, and helping the prisoner. We work to teach the children about caring for the Earth and each other and resisting violence- all pebbles cast.

On Sunday I will accompany our dear Marisol to Los Angeles. Marisol came to live with us more than twenty years ago as a homeless high school girl, today she is our daughter. For years she has suffered from debilitating migraines and other issues that may be the result of a cerebrospinal fluid leak. Remarkably, the nation's leading specialist had an opening to see Marisol right away. Please pray for her healing.

My prayer is one of Thanksgiving: for the good people who help us with food and donations and time and energy; or those who resist laws that when enforced contradict Christ's demands that we love our enemies and lay down our lives for our friends; for those who live in a way that counter laws that say the immigrant is our

enemy when we know that the immigrant is Christ himself looking for shelter in our hearts.

My prayer is also for the Holy Spirit to take possession of our hearts (and by us, I mean all of us including Trump, Vance, Johnson, Taylor Greene and all those whose hearts have been made smaller by greed and hate) to enkindle the Spirit of God's divine LOVE and strong Sacred Heart!! God Bless you!Ω



The indomitable Princess Di, and Raffi, making Saturday Program lunch

tion of the present moment."

And

"What we would like to do is change the world-make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended for them to do... we can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be

Notes From De Porres House

Ammon and Jackie Allen-Douçot
(These "Notes" were jointly written by Ammon and Jackie, Ammon gets the ball rolling and Jackie wraps it up.)

There were days during winter when the program was more than a little slow. Harsh temperatures and an iced over basketball court led to days where we only had five or six kids, the uno games were endless, hot coco flowed freely and Raffy was fed dozens of snow balls. Fast forward to the end of May and the first half of June and we were back to twenty plus kids of wildly diverse ages. Littles as young as six scootered and pogo-sticked about in the driveway. On the court 4 generations played basketball together. Alumni who attended the Green House when I was a kid, balled with alumni who only graduated last year, played with kids who were on the cusp graduating this year, and middle schoolers who were just getting the hang of their rapidly growing bodies balled with elementary schoolers who made up for their lack of skill with vibrant youthful enthusiasm worked on hoop skills and good sportsmanship. On our last day of the program, as

we waited for pizza to arrive we put up two new murals made by Jackie and traveling Catholic Worker Dimitri Kadiev- the backyard looked more beautiful than ever. As I watched from the sidelines, I couldn't help but see the backyard as a garden with flowers in all stages of life.

Of course to keep such a garden vibrant, an incredible amount of care is required. Up until the last few weeks, we were dependent on volunteers from UConn and North West Catholic ... but as their school year ended we were down to a bare minimum of adults. We were very lucky to have help from Chris' former UH student Mae, Marissa from Northwest, and former community member Christian to keep our ratio of adults to students somewhat reasonable. Much gratitude to steadfast Jim Conway and Marybeth Albrecht who rarely missed a Friday or Wednesday afternoon with the kids and deep apologies to any friends who have donated and not yet received a note of thanks...we hold you in our disorganized hearts.

On the other side of the coin, the food pantry continued to fill and then empty like the tide coming and going out. It is a testament to our broad support from churches like St. James

Episcopal, who has been our biggest donor since the Covid pandemic, St. Peter Claver, St. Timothy, and St. Mary's as well as many individual contributors- Rita Holby you're a gem, and our crew from the former St Helena's: Mimi John, Pete and Tom) who keep our pantry open as the numbers of folks who need help rises.

We are still shocked by the response to our request from FOODSHARE to be able to access their resource, we were told "there are too many food pantries in that neighborhood already operating". We know ...BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN ONE FOR 33 YEARS! This hit hard, as a former director had told us that if we updated our kitchen we would be eligible. We spent thousands of dollars doing that- to no avail. As political narratives seem to focus more and more on what we can't do, it is a blessing and a joy to be able to offer some relief for our families. A young girl named Zaryah, one of our newer "littles", recently entered the pantry after taking a wrong turn going to hang up her backpack. As I went to help her, she turned to me with wide eyes and asked "Why do you have

(Please see: Notes, p9)