

VOLUME • 73 NUMBER • 12 DECEMBER 1990

# THE WITNESS

A light

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THAT *darkness* COULD  
NOT OVERPOWER

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JOHN 1:5

# Letters

## How about underpants?

The Rev. Canon Whit Stodghill's "All my shoes" in the October issue was a perfect end piece to the discussions of U.S. presence around the world. Fewer shoes in our closets could translate into so many necessities for the have-nots!

I think there is also a less obvious side to the question of how many shoes we have; that is, we frequently assume the way we live and what we have is everyone's portion. After all, we see what we have all around us because, like the proverbial birds, when we have similar feathers, we flock together. That dulls and dilutes any perceptions of reality we may have about people who may be different.

To illustrate: One summer the non-traditional agency with which I was involved wangled, contrived, and managed to get camp scholarships for two (of seven) children in a single-parent family on welfare. Staff worked the system to get the required physicals at no charge and begged money to eke out what the kids earned toward the suggested allowance. All the bases seemed covered, but two days before camp began, the mother got a letter.

Now this was a proud and caring, poor mother. She opened the envelope to find a neatly typed list of items *required* for two weeks of camping.

The mother got through 2 blankets each. She began to panic at 2 pair of sneakers, 1 pair of shoes, and 1 pair of boots each, but the ultimate blow was *12 pairs of underpants each*. She reacted in the only way which seemed appropriate to her; she called to say her boys would not be attending the two-week camp session.

When one ignores the absurdity of expecting 10-year old boys to be so squeaky clean (which was what we found the average middle-class parent did in packing), how can "charitable organizations" be so insensitive to their

clients? I don't know the answer, except it does cut down on the number of scholarships that the charitable organization pays for, and insures that the flock has not too different feathers.

How many pairs of underpants do you have?

**Margaret E. Ferry**  
Palm Harbor, Fla.

## About WITNESS guts

I was on the verge of not renewing my subscription when you came out with that marvelous call to the President to bring our warriors home. Congratulations! Everybody else lacked the guts!

**The Rev. William B. Faherty, S.J.**  
St. Louis, Mo.

## Issue breaks silence

Many thanks for your wonderful July-August issue, "Breaking Silence." I ordered extra copies to use with a Clinical Pastoral Education group exploring issues of human sexuality among clergy. It was extremely well-received. I was later told that this was evaluated by the group as the most useful of the didactic presentations they had.

Of the various issues of human sexuality which surface in my pastoral ministry, sexual misconduct by clergy heads the list. Thank you for helping to break the silence which perpetuates it.

**The Rev. Carol Cole Flanagan**  
Baltimore, Md.

(To order this issue send \$2.50 to THE WITNESS, Box 359, Ambler, PA 19002.)

## Lauds Wehrli vs. Bush

I get my magazine two months late (by surface mail), so have recently received the July-August issue of THE WITNESS with the article that features Mary Brent Wehrli. I am delighted that she had the courage to confront El Presidente regarding El Salvador, as reported. God bless her!

Three years ago I was in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and what I learned there made me ashamed to be an American. Thank God there are at least a few people like Wehrli in the Episcopal Church.

**The Rev. Howard R. Kunkle**  
Curacao, Netherland Antilles

## Cuba clarifications

I was delighted to receive the March issue of THE WITNESS on Cuba, which we consider extremely interesting.

While indicating my appreciation on the approach not only of the issue as a whole, but of all the articles it contains, I would like to clarify certain elements.

In "Cuba studies role in abandoned Third World," Sam Day says that "Communist Cuba, like any government under virtual siege by a powerful foe, has repressive features such as occasional summary trials and executions, political prisoners, sanctions regarding religion . . ."

First, despite the fact that Cuba, as correctly stated, is under virtual siege by a nearby powerful foe, we have never resorted to summary trials and executions. In all cases, since 1959 onwards those who have violated Cuban legislation, irrespective of the gravity of the crime, have been given the right to due trial, with all guarantees the law provides. Moreover, executions in Cuba are extremely rare; our legislation provides for the extreme penalty only in the most heinous of crimes, and generally opts for alternative sentences. The death penalty is only passed by our courts in the most extreme circumstances. I wouldn't doubt our courts were much more lenient regarding the use of the death penalty than most judicial systems in the world, including the U.S. judiciary.

Second, regarding the term "political prisoners." Generally, political prisoners are those conceived as being in prison for their political beliefs and are gener-

ally termed as "prisoners of conscience." People are not imprisoned in Cuba for their beliefs, but only in those cases in which, by their actions, they violate Cuban legislation. Those, for example, duly tried and convicted for terrorist activities, or for espionage in favor of a foreign power, or for attempting actions geared at destabilizing the country cannot be termed "political prisoners" in the most common and generally used meaning of the words in the United States.

Third, nobody in Cuba is sanctioned for professing a religious belief. To be sanctioned might be construed as the equivalent of being punished, or even jailed. That is not the Cuban case. It is true that prejudices still exist against those professing a religion for understandable reasons explained elsewhere in your March issue, but, as I am certain you are aware, we are doing everything possible to correct that situation.

I hope these comments will be useful to correct some misconceptions still existing about our process.

**Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada**  
Permanent Representative of Cuba  
to the United Nations

## For shame

*Shame* that you defend such a cruel government as that of Mr. Castro's in Cuba. Havana is not Berlin, true; Berlin is already free!

**F. Fernandez**  
Miami, Fla.

## Kudos from FMC

We would like to thank you for sending the Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas your March issue which contains Cathy Ribas' interview by Susan Pierce. In her opinion the interview covers quite objectively all that was said and reflects the essential elements of our work.

**Esther Velis**  
FMC Secretary, Foreign Relations

## Re condoms and culture

I have two reactions to your April issue: In "Short Takes" you report the outrage of the Sisters of Loretto over the Roman Catholics bishops' refusal to alter their teaching on condoms when Hispanic women face having sexual relation with husbands who carry infectious diseases as a result of drug use. I admire the sisters' courage but doubt they understand the total picture. While drug use is undoubtedly a factor in the spread of such disease amongst Hispanic populations in the United States, cultural attitudes are likely to be just as dominant a factor, if viewing it from a South American perspective.

Extra-marital relations are a measure of masculinity, and are often ignored for the sake of the traditional role of the family. One's identity is strongly familial, and traditional views of reality are based on family as the key element in social organization and structure. The tendency for women to draw their identity from men is further complicated by their finding self-worth in having children. Under such conditions, "reasonable" promiscuity by married or "attached" men is tolerated.

Insistence on the use of a condom is a threat to a male's self-confidence and an unwelcome invasion into his sense of freedom and superiority. Asking a male to use a condom is difficult enough, but expecting the extra-marital partner to insist on it is wholly unreasonable. So the wife's insistence on the use of condoms will not be welcome, but she is in a stronger position than anyone to protect herself and future children.

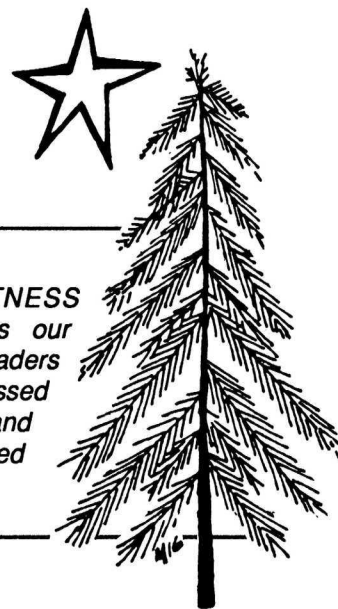
Homosexuality in the Hispanic context results in many homosexual men feeling forced to marry for their protection and social participation, and to demonstrate their own worthiness. They too have extra-marital affairs, often of a high-risk nature. Still, to maintain the structure, physical intimacy with their wives, even

if only occasional, is necessary.

Hispanic cultures are not unique in extra-marital affairs. The discipline of the family, the burden of which is mostly borne by women, is a little different than the Anglo North American experience. The roots are in the history of colonization, which brought few women to the Americas, and was characterized by generally uncommitted and often dehumanizing relations between European men and native women, with the cooperation of a state-controlled church. The tradition continues with little challenge. The church continues to be a partner in the scheme.

Your article on news coverage of the Panama invasion was welcome. While in no way an expert, my experience in Central and South America has seldom led me to many of the conclusions I read and hear from U.S. sources. I believe very little of what is distributed by the U.S. press establishment when it concerns Hispanic America.

**Peter L. DeGroote**  
Miami, Fla.



THE WITNESS  
staff wishes our  
family of readers  
a very blessed  
Christmas and  
a peace-filled  
New Year.

## THE WITNESS

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# THE WITNESS

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John 1:5



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## No to Phoenix in 1991

The Episcopal Church should change the venue of its 1991 General Convention from Phoenix, Arizona to a state less racist in the public eye.

A widely reported referendum to create a Martin Luther King Civil Rights holiday was defeated in Arizona in November, overriding the State Legislature's passage of a King Day holiday last May. Commendably, Edmond L. Browning, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, had actively lobbied for the latter holiday.

But former Governor Evan Mecham, (who was impeached from office last year), led opponents of the holiday and obtained enough signatures to reintroduce the issue on the November general election ballot. The effort prevailed by 12,000 votes.

As a result, four groups have cancelled reservations for conventions or stays at hotels, and the National Football League has recommended moving the 1993 Super Bowl to another state.

However, Bishop Browning has announced that "the Episcopal Church will go to Phoenix. While we cannot ignore or condone the results of the referendum, I believe that by working with people of good faith who are in Arizona, we can come and together make a vigorous witness for the dignity of all God's people — and against the evils of racism."

Nonsense. When Browning went to

Phoenix to lobby legislators and community leaders to establish the holiday, he said that here was "an international issue and a deeply moral one. What Arizona does with it reflects on America."

That still holds true.

A noble precedent exists for moving the Convention site. In 1955, Presiding Bishop Henry Knox Sherrill, citing a constitutional provision which gave him the authority to do so, transferred the General Convention from Houston, which at the time offered segregated hotels and eating facilities, to Hawaii.

To underline the irony of holding the 1991 General Convention in Phoenix, a resolution will be introduced next year to recognize the life and martyrdom of Episcopal seminarian Jonathan Daniels, gunned down in the Civil Rights struggle in 1965. Daniels had participated in the Selma march, and returned to work on voter registration. He was subsequently illegally arrested with a group of Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee workers. Just after release from jail, they were fired upon while entering a grocery store in Hayneyville, Ala. Jon's last act was to thrust a young woman out of the path of the gunfire. The gunman, Thomas Coleman, claimed he acted in self-defense and was acquitted by an all-white jury.

The late, noted Episcopal attorney William Stringfellow wrote at the time:

"Though justice was perverted radically in the trial, a more appalling circumstance has been the superficiality of church hesitancy, mildness and failure of outrage within Daniels' own church to his murder. The trauma of this incident for the Episcopal Church and for the church at large was minimal. In other words, we have, as a Christian people, become hard of heart. We never actually protested all those other murders (the children of Birmingham, Medgar Evers, and countless, nameless others). We did not even mourn them very long and so when mayhem struck close to home, we were, as a church, prepared to take it pretty much in our stride."

Twenty five years later, Martin Luther King, Jonathan Daniels and all those who suffered or died in the Civil Rights struggle deserve better than the church taking events such as the Arizona vote "in its stride." If you agree, a letter to that effect would be in order (Office of the Presiding Bishop, Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017).

The Episcopal Church should have been the first to announce the changing of its Convention site. To paraphrase Matthew, "except your righteousness exceed that of the NFL and the Super Bowl, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven." ■



Donna Binder/Impact Visuals

Jim Lewis, left, with FOR delegation leader Doug Hostetter at Baghdad airport.

# Crossing the line in Iraq for peace

by Jim Lewis

**R**ushing through a checklist of things to be done before departing for Iraq, I charged into the bank and had my newly-composed will notarized.

Watching the woman behind the desk apply the seal to the document, it occurred to me that the last time I had drawn up a will was back in 1959 prior to departing for Marine Corps duty in the Far East.

Irony of ironies — signing my name to a legal document, once in preparation for possible combat in Southeast Asia, and now before embarking on a peace mission to Iraq.

On Oct. 17 I flew to New York to join a 21-member delegation under the leadership of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a 75-year-old peace and justice organization. We were headed to Jordan and Iraq, attempting to offer a peace presence in a potential war zone.

The delegation had been put together

hastily. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2, followed by the rapid deployment of U.S. troops into Saudi Arabia, caught everyone off guard. Organizing a response to this rush of military action proved anything but easy for a peace and justice network.

Under the guidance of FOR, a plan finally emerged to address the crisis, baptized as the “Crossing the Line Campaign.”

Its purpose was to recruit people in the United States willing to cross the lines drawn in the sand, around which land and resources were disputed and over which a catastrophic war seemed imminent. The campaign’s goal was to draw new lines connecting the people of Iraq with the people of the United States.

Those willing to enlist in the campaign had to be committed to the belief that a nonviolent, negotiated settlement was the way to a just peace. They had to be willing to travel to Iraq to be a peace presence, to meet with and listen to the Iraqi people — who had been declared our “enemy” by President Bush — and

spread the word that vast numbers (one poll says 90%) of U.S. citizens do not want war.

The members of the delegation had been chosen from dozens and dozens of people who came forward, on short notice, to volunteer to make the trip. Meeting one another across the table we discovered ourselves to be Christian, Jewish, and Muslim, spread out from Alaska to North Carolina.

One introductory task was to share what we’d brought with us. In the sharing, we began to discover our own expectations for this 10-day trek. After all, human beings are known by what they carry. If you want to know the heart of a man or woman, look for clues in his or her purse or suitcase.

One man carried candy and balloons to give to the children he hoped to meet in Iraq. A Vietnam vet carried an artificial leg he’d received in battle. The delegation leader carried painted peace messages to the school children of Iraq from his children’s school. One woman carried a book of peace activist A.J.

**The Rev. James Lewis**, Director of Social Ministries for the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina, is a contributing editor to THE WITNESS.

Muste's meditations. A man carried a camera to capture faces and stories for the folks at home. I carried a prayer card from folks at home as well as a picture of my two grandchildren accompanied by a note from my daughter, the mother of nine-month-old Katherine.

In that note, my daughter gave me her blessing and commissioned me: "I appreciate what you are doing now, as always. In fact, the trip to Iraq seems so profound, particularly now that my daughter is here and I am entrusted with her new world. The impotence many of us new mothers feel is yet another reason for you to go in our place. I know that Deb (her sister, the mother of one-year-old Alex) feels the same. Making children, and making peace too, requires much help. My farewell message to you then is the request that while you're away, you will seek out the mothers and children of that foreign place and remember your own grandchildren at home. Maybe you will say a word to them about us and what we are doing here with our children so that they'll understand that we wish for peace. I hope you come back with stories about women for us, too."

From the very start, it was clear to us that we carried more than our luggage. We carried the hope that U.S. citizens could do something to rise above the sweeping tide of doom that seemed to be carrying our nation to an inevitable war. We felt small in comparison to the half a million troops massed along the border between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, but justified in our conviction that a life committed to what Dan Berrigan calls "humble possibilities" is a life worth living, a risk worth taking, a grace worth trusting. Basic to each one of us was the belief that human beings not only have the power to make war but have, as well, the ca-

capacity and power of our own witness, with God's grace, to stop a war.

We also carried \$67,000 worth of medicines to be distributed to evacuees in Jordan fleeing Kuwait, and to the children of Iraq.

O God, you fill the universe with light and love.  
In you we live and move and have our being.  
We pray for Saddam Hussein and George Bush.  
Enlighten their minds, and fill their hearts with  
the power of your creative love.  
Guide their actions so that all civilians and  
soldiers in the Gulf area are protected from the  
sufferings of war.  
Inspire their decisions so that the crisis in the  
Middle East is resolved peacefully, and all  
peoples of the world learn to walk in the ways  
of justice, love and peace. Amen.

Fellowship of Reconciliation Box 271, Nyack, N.Y. 10960

**Prayer carried by the FOR delegation to Iraq  
in English and Arabic versions.**

اللهم يا من ملأ الكون بالنور والمحبة والحياة  
آمننا بك وتوكلنا عليك  
ندعوك ونبتول اليك ان تنير بميررتي الرئيسين  
صدام حسين وجورج بوش  
وتملأ قلوبهما باليقين .  
اللهم ندعوك ان ترشدهما لدفع غيوم الحرب والدمار  
عن كل الناس في منطقة الشرق الاوسط  
اللهم اهديهما من اجل السلام الدائم والعدل في هذه البقعة  
واهدي الناس جميعا سبيل العدل والاخوة والحنان  
آمين

The following are stories and observations regarding the scene in the Persian Gulf.

## Jordan

A day and a half in Jordan gave us a chance to get first-hand reports from American Friends Service Committee field workers, members of the Episcopal Church, and a former newspaper editor and now writer in the area. Time was

provided to visit one of the evacuee camps, Al Andalus, and talk with Sri Lankans, Bangladeshi and Palestinians who had fled Kuwait. An evening was set aside to meet with Crown Prince Hassan and Rajai Mouasher, the former director of the Jordanian Ministry of Trade, in the home of Major General Ihsan Shurdom, the commander of the Jordanian air force.

As I left Jordan for Baghdad, my notebook was full of scribbblings. Under close scrutiny, all the rhetoric could be reduced to a few simple observations: Jordan is going broke. Jordan is angry.

The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq has caused enormous social and economic strain on Jordan's economy. Over 700,000 evacuees have flooded into tent villages set up under Jordanian guidance. With great compassion and efficient care, the Jordanians have been able to

move these people on to their home destinations. The cost — over \$70 million — is a result of the disruption caused by this influx. And the massive social unrest created by the crisis, coupled with the U.N. and Saudi embargo on Jordan, has caused a near-collapse of the Jordanian economy.

Jordan is angry over U. S. inability to understand the Middle East situation. Jordan has condemned the Iraqi invasion but has pleaded for the world to understand that

Saddam Hussein embodies, for the Arab people of the region, centuries of frustration over colonial exploitation. Saddam is standing up to the powers that have dictated borders in the region, set in place political regimes, controlled natural resources (oil and water), and supplied an arsenal of weapons to the region, being careful always to see that Israel has the larger force. All of the activity has been designed to serve only U.S.

interests. Saddam is saying that enough is enough. Come and kill us by the thousands, but we are going to stand up to you, spoiled child of the Western world.

Jordan, long a friend to the United States, cares enough to tell us that our Marines will not solve the regional problem and that U.S. double standards on U.N. resolutions will no longer be tolerated. In short, Iraqi occupation of Kuwait is linked to Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

## Iraq

Baghdad is a city in motion. Traffic moves briskly and business goes on. Only the sight of anti-aircraft guns on downtown rooftops gives hint of possible war. Outside of Baghdad, one discovers the raw feeling of the people.

Fifty-year-old Kadem Abdullah Has-soum, the owner of a rice farm in the fertile land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, waves his hands in the air and becomes poetry in motion. He is angry at George Bush and vows to triple his rice production to show the United States that an embargo will not work. He and two other farmers break into a dance and chant, "Saddam, you are our leader and we are ready." It is a battle cry offered to energize the troops about to go into warfare.

Iraq has put the bulk of its economic energy into oil and a military force that has fought Iran for eight years. That effort has cost Iraq over 100,000 dead and 600,000 wounded, as well as an inefficient agricultural system. Even with that, however, it seems obvious that Iraq has both the capability to fight a major war and the potential to produce the food necessary to defeat the embargo.

We have many meetings with the officials of Iraq, including the Speaker of the Iraqi Assembly; the director of the Red Crescent Society (where we deposit our medicine); Taha Yassin Ramadan, First Deputy Prime Minister, second in command under Saddam; and the Minis-

ter of Endowment, Minister of Health, and Minister of Finance and Commerce. The significant moment for all of us comes, however, not in any minister's office but in our encounter with students on the campus at Al-Mustansiriya University and with mothers and children at the Saddam Hussein Teaching Hospital for Children.

On the campus I show the picture of my grandchildren to a student, saying we are here in peace to tell the Iraqi people that U.S. citizens do not want war. He begins to cry and then embraces me. I cry with him as we walk, he holding my hand in true Arab fashion. He tells me he does not want war. In a year he will be required to serve in the military. He has no interest in killing Marines. At that point I introduce him to Ric, the Vietnam vet who carries his own story about the tragic effects of war on young men. Before we depart, this young man gives me his name so I can pray for him.

At the hospital, again I share my photo with mothers hovering over babies in need of medical care. The embargo on food has begun to cause shortages in infant formula and pre-natal medicine. One child has a hydrocephalic head and a damaged heart. Her mother and I pray and cry over the child.

The trip into Iraqi reality would not be complete without visiting some of our men being held against their will. Lutheran pastor Mary Jensen from California, Roman Catholic bishop Michael Kenny of Juneau, Alaska and I spend two evenings with these men.

During our time with them, we listen to their fear, their anger and their concern for loved ones at home. One man stands out vividly in my mind. An ex-Marine who had been working in construction in Iraq, he is being held in Iraq, while his son, a Marine pilot, is stationed in Saudi Arabia. Two men, father and son, on either side of the line drawn in the sand by President Bush, share a common plight — the need to be released

from a conflict that could end in death.

## Back home


We are home now with dozens of stories to tell and work to do to prevent armed conflict in the Middle East. It's not an easy job given the news that the United States is committing 100,000 more troops to the region.

FOR has hired staff to continue the Crossing the Line Campaign. By the time this article reaches readers, another team of U.S. citizens will be off to Iraq to carry not only medicine but milk for the children of that hospital we had visited. Monthly delegations are planned.

Since we've come back, delegates have been speaking in their regions and working politically to get a negotiated settlement. I have been working as a liaison between FOR and Episcopal Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning to gather a team of religious leaders to call on President Bush. Browning and his staff are taking the lead in that effort.

As the clock ticks, there is a moment of celebration as two of our delegates, who remained in Baghdad, return with four sick U.S. citizens who have been released from captivity. The headlines say that these "hostages" are free.

I am willing to call the people, and all people being held in Iraq and Kuwait against their will, hostages. I am willing, that is, if I can include under the definition of hostages all the Iraqi women and children, all the U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, the people of Jordan, Palestinians and Israelis in the Occupied Territories and Israel, and all U.S. citizens who will suffer if a war breaks out. The cry "Let my people go" is applicable to that full cast of characters and not merely to those we've designated as hostages.

Any other understanding of the situation in the Middle East misses the mark and fails to recognize the full power of violence present in the region, and the necessity for an even fuller grace found in nonviolent witness. 





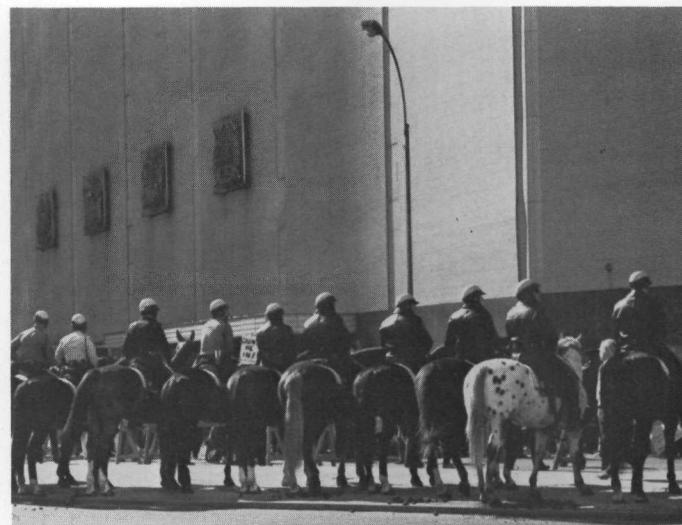
## Thousands protest U.S military buildup

Thousands of demonstrators marched in 16 cities across the nation Oct. 20 to protest the U.S. military buildup in the Middle East. New York staged the largest protest, with more than 14,000 in the streets. They represented a cross section of society including youth, minorities, women, and senior citizens as well as groups representing labor, healthcare, Vietnam vets, churches, and lesbians and gays.

Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who formed the coalition, and documentary filmmaker Michael Moore marched at the head of the demonstration.

Rallies also took place in Australia, Canada, England, Italy and Panama, according to the Coalition Against U.S. Intervention in the Middle East, sponsor of the Manhattan rally.

New York photos, left to right, clockwise, from above: Labor delegation carried banner, "Jobs not war, Labor's fight is here"; Korean youth danced and drummed to lead Asians Against the War; mounted police lined demonstration's origin and officers on foot, the parade route; student protestors included Union Seminary delegation; Robert Glover, of Black Veterans for Social Justice, interviewed along the march; an ACTUP delegation chanting disapproval of U.S. intervention.



# Gulf crisis obscures lethal legacy of

Despite being displaced from the news media by the Persian Gulf confrontation, violent conflict still rages in Central America. Recent events reveal that the wounds of war refuse to heal in Nicaragua, and attacks by the military against civilians continue unabated in El Salvador.

## Nicaragua

Since the surprise defeat of the Sandinista party in the February elections, Sandinista supporters and the ruling UNO party have been caught up in conflict.

Runaway inflation, strikes and factional violence have dominated the scene as the U.S.-backed government of Violeta Chamorro has tried to dismantle the Sandinistas' socialist structure and replace it with a free-market economy. Unions, the military, civil servants and teachers, for the most part pro-Sandinista, have protested or reluctantly participated in the changes.

But the economy, severely damaged by 10 years of war and the U.S. economic embargo, desperately needs promised U.S. aid, a large factor in the UNO election victory. However, that aid has been slow in coming. U.S. attention and money has been drawn away by events in Eastern Europe and now the Persian Gulf. The resulting desperation and frustration is pushing the country once again towards violence.

A particularly difficult point has been the resettlement of demobilized contras. Lack of economic support from the United States, and lack of land available for distribution, have resulted in bloody battles in rural areas as frustrated contras have taken over cooperative farms, most of which had been organized when the former Sandinista government gave land to poor rural farmers. These takeovers

are seen as attempts to force the Chamorro government to meet the contras' demands.

One particularly tense region is the mountainous northeast, along the former "contra corridor" from Honduras, an area that experienced frequent attacks during the war. In mid-September some contras began seizing cooperatives near the town of Waslala. According to reporters and church workers who visited the seized cooperatives, the contras were heavily armed. Though ordered to surrender their weapons this summer, many still carry guns and reportedly arms caches are hidden throughout the countryside.

### Guatemala

Elections took place in Guatemala on Nov. 11. A future issue of THE WITNESS will carry an analysis of the effect of U.S. intervention in that troubled country.

Blaming the Chamorro government for the takeovers, a group of cooperative members occupied the Waslala city hall. The following day, contras and their supporters seized La Inmaculada Catholic Church, and looted the church-run clinic. Apparently the contras and their supporters believed that the parish priest, the Rev. Enrique Blandon, and other church workers had encouraged the cooperative members to take over the city hall.

Blandon had come under attack before because of the parish's program for training cooperative members in improved agricultural techniques. The parish also maintains 500 lay pastors, known as delegates of the word, in 65 villages in the region. During the war, he was threatened repeatedly by the contras and was kidnapped along with an evangelical pastor for 11 days in 1987.

In the violence at the church, two U.S.

church workers were beaten and stoned by the mob of contras. Blandon said some 200 contras, armed with pistols, machetes and assault rifles, then ordered church personnel to leave town. Government officials reportedly accompanied the contras.

Blandon blamed the Chamorro government for the violence in Waslala, saying the contras are tired of waiting for a response to their demand for land to farm. "The families of the demobilized contras are hungry and that hunger can't wait for a year or two."

The priest also declared that the contras are being manipulated by pro-government politicians who want to exploit the suffering of the former combatants in order to "take apart the Sandinista cooperatives."

## El Salvador

Though the U.S. Congress recently voted to cut military aid to El Salvador in half to show displeasure at the Salvadoran government's reluctance to investigate last year's murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter, the Salvadoran military remains well-armed and unrepentant.

In a recent report from the offices of CRIPDES (Christian Committee for the Displaced of El Salvador), a Lutheran agency in San Salvador, staff member Josie Beecher describes the unceasing war against the poor that has claimed



# U.S. Central America policy by Susan E. Pierce

75,000 deaths in the last decade.

Beecher, an Episcopalian who was expelled from El Salvador last fall during the rebel FMLN urban offensive, has returned there to help document the military's campaign of terror in isolated rural communities. In a recent alert, she describes the conflict that is being waged out of the sight of the world:

"Every day people from the displaced and repopulated communities come into our office to tell us about the attacks which their *civilian* communities suffer. While things may appear calm in the city and the government carries out a radio and television campaign about peace and human rights, in the rural communities the air force and army are carrying out bombings and strafings either in the fields where the people grow their crops or directly in the areas where they have their houses.

"Certainly these villages are located in areas of conflict but this does not justify disregard of their civilian status, particularly on the part of the air force. Nor can the part of the United States in providing the rockets and bombs which are tearing these communities apart be justified.

"While everyone focuses on the case of the killing of the Jesuits, the Salvadoran army continues a concerted campaign against the poor, civilian population. But because these people live in isolated communities far from the capital, and because the military restricts access, very little attention is paid to these incidents."

A typical case is that of Fabian Lopez Rivera, who told how after a skirmish with the FMLN in the area, the Salvadoran army and air force launched a heavy assault against his rural village, even though rebels were no longer in the vicinity. After battles on the ground with

machine guns, rifles and grenades, helicopter gunships and planes arrived and began to strafe and bomb around the houses.

Lopez described how he and his family tried to hide from the fighting: "We were lying on the floor (of the house) because if we stood, we could be killed. The helicopters launched rockets at the houses, two of which fell on my house. There were screams from everyone and when we looked around I saw my little son, Jose Luis, aged 23 months, and my little grandson, Miguel Angel, age two, covered in blood. They didn't move because they had died right away. My wife Virginia was wounded in the right arm and the left leg by shrapnel.

"I went to the side of the children. Shrapnel had fallen on the legs of Jose Luis, leaving them thoroughly ruined with only little pieces of bone sticking out. Shrapnel had passed through the stomach of Miguel, dividing him in two pieces.

"When we were still lying on the floor, we heard the voices of some soldiers saying, 'Abel, fire a grenade in this house, because if you don't do it now, I'm going to fire at you, you son of a bitch.' After he said this, the grenade exploded at our door and it was destroyed.


"My wife grabbed the body of Jose Luis in her arms and we ran out in the middle of the fighting to the house of my brother-in-law. When we ran out of the house, a soldier said, 'Aim another one at them,' and we ran faster. The body of my little grandson was left behind. A few minutes later Albertina Lopez came out with the two pieces of Miguel in the midst of flying bullets and brought them to us."

Lopez went on to tell how the

villagers lay on the floors of their houses during the day-long attack, weeping in fear, the children "crying from hunger and thirst." When the fighting stopped, Lopez and others approached the soldiers to ask for medical care for villagers wounded in the fighting. Lopez's injured wife and son Ignacio, whose face was burned when the grenade exploded in their house, were taken to a military hospital, only to be refused treatment because they were not from a military family.

The plight of poor families like the Lopezes are ignored. "Attention is paid here and in the international community when an archbishop or a priest or maybe a union leader is killed," notes Beecher. "But when will the world pay attention to the killings of the José Luis Lopezes or the Miguel Angel Lopezes, and so many more who are killed and maimed here every day?"

The isolation works both ways, reports Beecher: "Here we get very little information about what is happening in the United States." She adds that Salvadorans continue to count on the U.S. faith community to work to bring an end to all U.S. military aid and support for this war against the poor.

Beecher concludes, "As church workers our role is to console the bereaved and to accompany them in their pain and suffering, but our role also has to be to denounce this sin, and to work actively to bring about the conditions of justice in which God reminds us to live." 

## Resource

*Carta de La Gracia*, a newsletter by Josie Beecher about the situation in El Salvador, is available for a contribution of \$10. Make out checks to Grace Church Mission Fund, c/o E.T. Hall, Rt. 2, Box 3217A, Lopez, WA 98261.



# Abused children: Harming our most

What is our most precious natural resource? Is it fossil fuels, produce, timber, stone, grain, water? All are necessary for life. All are resources.

I believe, however, that life itself is our most important natural resource — more specifically, young life. And we must call ourselves to account for our disgraceful disregard and abuse of young human life.

The gap between the rich and the poor in the United States is the largest it has ever been since 1947 when we started keeping this statistic. Of the poor, over one-third (13 million) are children. And 500,000 of these poor children are homeless — a population larger than that of Atlanta. The waiting list for public housing (funding for which was cut 80% in the past eight years) is 18 years long in New York City and 20 in Miami. We have the highest infant mortality rate, and the highest teen pregnancy rate, of so-called “developed” countries. Yet we do not question if we should develop a Stealth bomber — just how many to develop. Like the neutron bomb, we will protect our country, even if it kills us.

I argue that we should nurture and protect our children for children’s sake. Life in and of itself should be what we most revere and most value. The Holy is never so present to us as in a newborn’s face or a kindergartner’s wonder or a teenager’s love.

This argument, however, is not highly regarded today. In the children’s shelter I direct in Mount Holly, N.J., I see over and over again the result of denying just such a policy.

The Crisis Intervention Center is a temporary residence and a counseling program for runaway, homeless, and

abused youth. Recently, we professionals have added another sad category to this list: throwaways. These children did not run from home; they were kicked out. For varied and painful reasons, their homes are not working out. Their families are angry and hurting.

These children come to the shelter from all over New Jersey and the country. They run away from violent homes. Having served over 700 youth in my two-year tenure with the program, I have not met one young man or woman who claimed to run for the “adventure” of it. Like Tom Sawyer who was tired of beatings with the strap, these youth are fleeing dysfunctional or dangerous families.

Some youth come whose parents simply need a break. The stress of trying to cope with their child’s or stepchild’s behavior has gotten too intense. Rather than become abusive, they seek intervention and guidance in parenting. I commend their bravery in admitting they want help, in a culture that so greatly stigmatizes asking for such services.

Other parents, however, are beyond needing a simple time out. They are too troubled to meet their children’s needs, as their own are so intense. These parents are addicts or active alcoholics. They are men and women who beat their partners and their children. Often, though not always, they have learned these behaviors from their own parents.

New Jersey’s agency — The Division of Youth and Family Services — is an active partner in counseling and housing these youth. I wish I could report that funding and servicers abound. They are woefully inadequate, a blatant reminder of which “resources” we value. But Anna, Paul, Jamal, and Tina need a voice:

• Anna is a 17-year-old from Newark. She has a history of drug-running and

prostitution and last year had an abortion. Her mother has abandoned her; Anna does not know where she is and has not spoken with her in eight months. Anna will turn 18 and “age out” of the child welfare system in just two months. This will make her ineligible for youth services, and she will be homeless. Welfare will pay her less than \$200 a month.

• Paul is 15. He has lived in 14 places in the past 18 months: foster homes, group homes in the community, temporary shelters. He is an extremely bright youth, friendly, helpful, likes to collect baseball cards. His father is missing and his mother has been incarcerated for two years. Paul will not deal with anything deeper than pleasant conversation. “I meet too many people to get involved,” he says.

• Jamal is 13. His parents have been charged with 26 counts of physical and sexual abuse against him and his siblings. They admitted to terrorizing Jamal in an attempt to discipline him. Jamal is so out of control that none of his aunts and uncles can manage him. He himself has been charged with two counts of sexual assault and has been assigned a lawyer by the court. Jamal’s therapist feels that Jamal never developed a conscience.

• Tina is 10 years old. She wrote a letter to her neighbor that, in 10-year-old language, described being raped by her 12-year-old brother. Tina’s brother, in turn, is so scared of his father that he runs away constantly. He has been too terrified yet to talk about what’s going on there. Because he cannot describe any abuse, child protective services take him back home to his sister and father each time.

These youth are not from New York City or Los Angeles. They are from city and suburb in New Jersey. They do not

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**Mary Lou Killian, A.S.C.W.**, is a social worker in private practice in Trenton, N.J.



# precious natural resource

by Mary Lou Killian

represent the "worst case scenarios" of our small, private program. They represent the norm.

Perhaps I should not call children like Anna, Paul, Jamal or Tina "resources." People, regardless of age, are not commodities. They cannot be researched, developed, marketed, sold. They cannot be traded on the stock exchange. Or can they? We have sold children, in the earlier years of our country, or have forced them into abusive apprenticeships. We have allocated funds to market children, to make our cause glossy and media-appropriate. These funds must be spent convincing ourselves that children are a worthy cause, instead of being allocated for education, housing, health services for the children directly.

Today we are raising a lost generation. They are the 500,000 homeless youth in our cities' welfare motels. They are the 350 youth that our Crisis Intervention Center serves each year, the 350 served by the shelter in northern New Jersey, and the 425 served by the shelter across the river in Bucks County, Pa. Half of these children move so often that they never attend school. If they do attend school, they are shunned by their classmates and peers. All of them are hungry.

How much does it cost to house one inmate for one year in federal or state prison? Anna and Tina's brother and Jamal have already committed crimes that, if they were 18, would send them there. How far would the money spent on their prison cells stretch if used to house and school and counsel them instead, before their youthful pain becomes adult crime?

The connection is undeniably clear. At three, four, or five years old children can hardly be culpable for many of their actions. It is not their fault that they live in one room 12 square feet in a squalid ho-

tel. They did not choose to be brought up there.

Neither, at ages seven or eight do they choose their primary feelings — rejection, despair, frustration, and rage simply exist.

At 10 and 12 years old they turn these feelings into prostitution, drug running, breaking and entering, Satanic cults. They never learned to value themselves so they don't know what else to do. The money sure helps buy dinner when mom's welfare check only stretches through half the month. They haven't been to school, and have no other skills. They're still too young for minimum wage jobs.

As their teenage years go by — if they live to see them, for their health care and lifestyle are poor and risky — they feel increasing despair. Young black men are more likely, statistically speaking, to end up in prison than in college. As for young women, the odds are 1 in 4 that they will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday.

Today's adult caregiving generations are responsible for crimes against children. We are responsible for neglecting our children and leading them to crime.

Is this another article by a bleeding heart liberal? I hope so. The label comes from the image of Jesus' bleeding on the cross. No less powerful an image is needed to portray the dire consequences of inaction on behalf of our children. As we rape the earth of her resources, so we literally and figuratively rape our children. Many of these victims will end up blamed, incarcerated, or hospitalized. They will pay a dear price for their broken childhoods. What price will we pay for this lost generation?



# Homeless teens tell their story

*The tragedy of homelessness is revealed in the lives of young people who tell their grim stories of drugs, violence and despair in the recently published book, **The Place I Call Home: Faces and Voices of Homeless Teens**, Shapolsky Publishers, 136 W. 22nd St., New York, NY 10011 (\$14.95). Lois Stavsky, a New York City public school teacher, had her students collect autobiographical essays as part of a class project on teenage homelessness. Stavsky and I. E. Mozson developed the interviews into a book, with photos by Robert Hirschfield. The following three stories are excerpted from the book. Due to the sensitive information revealed by the subjects of these monologues, the actual names and photographs of the teenagers speaking here are not used.*

## **Family destroyed by drugs** **Lisa Cabrera, 15**

My earliest memory of my mother is of her drinking a bottle of Clorox in front of me. I was four years old. I remember her telling me that she was drinking that poison because she wanted to die. I remember crying, "Please, Mommy, don't." The next thing I remember is my father calling an ambulance and my mother being rushed to the emergency room.

When I was five years old, my father was sent to Rikers for dealing drugs. My mother felt that she couldn't go on without him. She was only 15 years old when I was born and she was very dependent upon him. She tried to slit her wrists. I still remember all the blood.

Then my mother was sent to some rest home upstate. She stayed there for a year and a half while I lived with my grandmother. My aunt had tried to get custody of me, but it was decided that I'd stay with my grandma until my mother was well again.

When I was seven years old my mother came back home and moved in with me and my grandmother. Within a few months, she hooked up with my stepfather. He was a young handsome Italian guy who owned his own hardware store. We moved in with him, and for a while things were okay. My mother was even working. She was helping sell ap-

pliances in the store.

When I was nine years old, my mother became pregnant, but the baby died when she was two days old. I can't believe that I once had a sister. I wish I did now. Anyway, after the baby died, my mother got real depressed again. That's when she started messing around with drugs.

I blame my stepfather. He used to snort cocaine occasionally, but soon he and my mother were shooting up all the time. They were mixing all kinds of drugs: heroin, cocaine, speed. And they were sharing needles. Then about five years ago, my stepfather was diagnosed as having the AIDS virus. He died a year later when my mother was pregnant with my brother. My mother did not know that she had AIDS nor that my brother would be born with AIDS.

My mother was okay until about two years ago. She started feeling sick a lot, and started spending a lot of time in the hospital. At that point, my baby brother went to live with my grandmother and I went to live with my aunt.

My mother just died two months ago. Her last year was terrible. She could hardly breathe, could barely walk and spent most of the time in the intensive care unit at Bellevue Hospital. She had completely lost her will to live. I was afraid she'd kill herself before she died a natural death. But on the last day of her

life, she was joking around. She told me that she knew her time was up. She had just seen her entire life flash before her eyes. I miss my mother so much. I still can't believe she's gone.

I feel so alone. I worry all the time about my brother. He's four years old and a real playful, healthy kid. But he's carrying the AIDS virus, and I know that at any time, he could get sick and die. Every time I see him, I get depressed. I keep on imagining him in his coffin. Now that's no way to see your brother. I also feel guilty that I can't help him or my grandmother. But there's really nothing I can do, but keep on living for me. It's a constant struggle for survival, even when you're not dying of AIDS.

## **Cocaine love affair** **Bobby Ramirez, 17**

When I was 13, I fell in love with cocaine. My best friend at the time was Domingo. Domingo's mother, Anna, was a big-time coke dealer. She had become a dealer to support her own habit, and she made loads of money. Whenever Domingo wanted any cocaine, all he had to do was ask his mom. I had started smoking marijuana when I was 11, but I'd never done any coke. One day, though, I got curious. I told Anna that I wanted to try some coke. "No problem," she said. "Anything for Domingo's best friend."

Soon Anna was supplying me with one gram a day, and two grams on Saturdays and Sundays. She never took any money from me. The street value of the cocaine that I was snorting was about \$1,000 a week. But for me it was free.

Anyway, after about a year and a half of this, my mom got suspicious. I hadn't been spending much time in school. I was in Wagner Jr. High School at the time. Instead of going to school all I did was hang out with Domingo, snort coke, and go to rock concerts. One morning when my mom was doing my laundry, she discovered some cocaine in my pants pocket. She freaked out. To this day she does not know that Anna was supplying me. Anna was doing me a favor, and I would never turn her in. Well, my mom called up some drug abuse hot line and, after dozens of phone calls, she and my dad drove me upstate to Middletown Hospital.

They took me up to the second floor. I spent one week there being detoxified. That was the worst week of my life. When I wasn't unconscious, I was in terrible pain. My nose wouldn't stop bleeding. I still have a hole in my nose from all the cocaine that I snorted.

I thought I would be going home after spending a week at Middletown. But my parents had other plans for me. My older brother told me that they were planning to put me in a drug rehab center in Port Jarvis, N.Y. I was real pissed and made plans to run away. All I could think about were the great tickets Domingo and I had for the Iron Maiden concert coming up that Sunday at Madison Square Garden. There was no way in the world I was going to miss that. Running away, though, was not possible. I had no money. I couldn't even afford a bus ticket out of there.

So I ended up going straight from the hospital to a huge home in the country. Riverside House was a private rehab center for drug addicts. Most of the guys there were older than me, and almost ev-

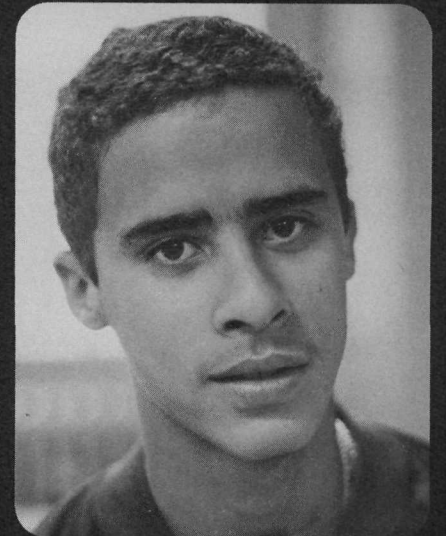
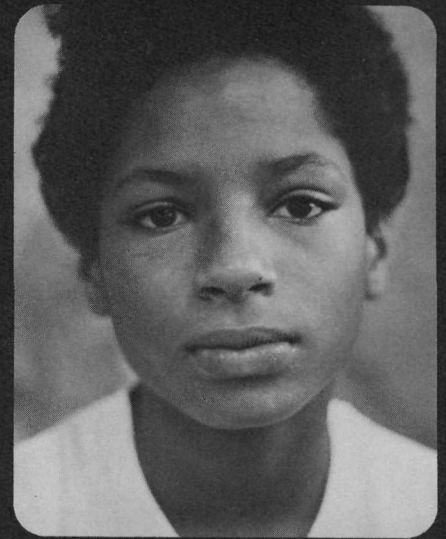
eryone there was Italian. My mom is Jewish and my dad is Puerto Rican, and I hardly ever hung out with Italians. Almost all my friends are Spanish. I hated the place at first. I was scared, and being out of the city freaked me out. My roommate, Pat, came off as a rich spoiled white boy. All that I knew about him was that his dad was a lawyer. For the first few days, I kept on plotting schemes to escape.

But the people at Riverside were too hip. They could read us junkies through and through. You see, everyone there, including the cook, had been a drug addict. There was no way to "get over."

As the weeks became months, I began to love Riverside. It was home to me. In fact, it was better than home. At home my parents were always fighting. They were even legally divorced 10 years ago, but continued to live together "for the sake of the kids." My mother has a boyfriend, a rich black cowboy, who spends a lot of time in our house, even with my father around. And I never felt right about that. Also, my mom was always on my back about something or another. So now, for the first time in my life, I lived in a home where people treated each other with love and respect.

Also, I felt that I was needed. We were all given different jobs to help out around the house. We worked in the fields, chopped wood and took responsibility for one another's tasks. In fact, I personally became responsible for this guy Mike, who was crippled from the neck down. Mike had been in a car accident when he was high. He had survived the accident, but he was now stuck in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. He was a few years older than me and had been living at Riverside for four years. I helped Mike get dressed and undressed every day.

Back home on 28th Street, I had no way to release my anger. Here at Riverside there were boxing bags and basketball courts and constant ways to work





out my frustration.

We met in groups three times a day. Each meeting went on for about two hours. We talked about our problems and what got us into drugs in the first place. When I first came to Riverside, I thought that I'd gotten into drugs just for the fun of it. But at Riverside I came to understand that drugs were an escape. I wasn't dealing with my parents' screwed up relationship and my mom's nasty habit of always dumping on me.

Neither of my parents is religious. But at Riverside, we prayed to God every day. We asked God to give us the strength to overcome our weaknesses and the wisdom to know right from wrong. I felt good knowing there is a higher power in my life. I also learned that there is a purpose to my life. This is something that I was not taught at home.

I spent almost a year at Riverside. When I came home last spring, I felt that I wasn't ready to return to school. But now I'm at Seward Academy trying to make up as many credits as possible. Living at home is okay, mainly because my parents now pamper me a lot and try not to argue too much in front of me. Also, I have a wonderful girlfriend who's 20 years old and a dancer. Next year, as soon as I become 18, we plan to get our own apartment. I will finally have a home of my own.

### ***Homeless teen mother*** **Shanita Dixon, 17**

Things were never really cool with my mother. She didn't take drugs or drink or anything like that, but she had her highs and lows. She was completely unpredictable. When she got into her bad moods, she would leave it out on me. If she was feeling lousy for whatever reason, I was the one who suffered. When I was younger, she used to beat me all the time with a wet ironing cord. Sometimes she just used the iron. I still have scars all over my legs.

When I was 14 years old, I became

pregnant with Mikie. My boyfriend Richie offered to help me out at the time. After Mikie was born, Richie moved in with me and my mom and took care of Mikie while I worked. I worked as a cashier and made just about enough money to cover my expenses. Shortly after Mikie was born, I became pregnant again. Richie did not want to have the baby. I didn't want to abort it. Richie and I started arguing a lot, and eventually I found out that he had another girlfriend who was also pregnant. Richie moved out.

After my second son, David, was born, I saw Richie only occasionally. Things were not good between us. Almost every time we were together, we fought. Sometimes, though, he babysat while I went to work. One day I came home from work to find Richie, Mikie and David gone. At first I thought they'd just stepped out for awhile. But soon it was midnight, and they hadn't returned. I panicked. I called Richie's mother. It seems that Richie had run off with the kids to some relatives in Baltimore. His mother wouldn't tell me much more. I contacted the police and within two weeks, the kids were found in Richie's aunt's house in Baltimore. I went down to Baltimore to get my kids back, and that's when I met Robert.

We were both 16 at the time. Robert was cute and kind. We fell in love, and Robert offered to come back with me to New York to help me out with the boys. I guess he kinda felt sorry for me. My mother, at first, liked Robert a lot. She was glad to have him living with us. When he first came up to New York, he got a job doing construction work and helped us all out. He paid for just about all our food. But the construction company folded, and Robert was out of work. He had a few odd jobs here and there, but the money wasn't good. Robert was real honest, and he never tried to make easy money. Robert started feeling depressed and hung around the

house a lot.

At about the same time, my mother hooked up with another woman. She'd had a number of gay relationships throughout the years, but this time she was in love. She invited her new lover to live with her and threw me, Robert, and my two kids out of the house.

That's when I started living in a shelter. Me and the two kids were placed in a shelter downtown. I had to sneak Robert in all the time. It was real hard on all of us. There were shoot-outs in the halls and drug dealers roaming around as though they owned the place. Everything we had was stolen from us. The halls stank from piss and worse. This was no place to raise children. But it was the children that kept me alive. People felt protective towards me because they knew that I had two young kids to take care of. Also, they looked out for my kids. Mikie is kinda hyper, but David is slow. He is 14 months, but he doesn't walk yet. He is just now wearing the cloths that Mikie wore when Mikie was five months old. David was born prematurely when I was in my seventh month, and the doctor keeps telling me that he will catch up. Sometimes I worry about him.

Anyway, living in a shelter put a strain on my relationship with Robert. He felt terrible that he couldn't support me and that we couldn't afford our own apartment. About two months ago, Robert started acting real depressed

We went for a walk in Central Park, and Robert started playing with a rope. I thought he was just playing, but before I knew what was happening, he was dead. He died in my arms.

I just wanted to die, too. I called up my mother whom I hadn't spoken to in a while. I told her what had happened. I told her that I wanted to kill myself. Her only response was, "If you kill yourself, you better take your kids with you, 'cause I'm sure as hell not gonna take care of them."

FW



# Short Takes

## Too many rich people

The most common misconception of the population problem is that it's a problem of poor Indians who don't know how to use condoms. Actually, the problem in the world is that there are too many rich people.

— Paul Ehrlich, professor of population studies, Stanford University, explaining that one American is likely to do 20 to 100 times more damage to the earth than an inhabitant of, say, Bangladesh or Venezuela.

Harrowsmith 7-8/90

## Squeezed at the pump

The oil giants are again profiting from the world's trouble. During the 1973-74 oil crisis, the profits of the 19 leading U.S. oil companies rose from \$5.5 billion in 1972 to \$12.5 billion in 1974, shocking consumers who had been led to believe that OPEC was to blame for high oil prices, not Exxon or Gulf. The sharp rise in profits repeated itself in 1979 and 1980.

In the current crisis, once again the desire for profits, not a shortage of oil, is driving up the price of oil . . . As the *Economist* commented, "Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was not unadulterated good news for oil companies, but it was the best they have had in a long time."

Patricia Horn

Dollars & Sense 11/90

There is no reason to repeat bad history.

— Eleanor Holmes Norton

## Christians and AIDS

It is a source of constant amazement and discouragement to me that Christians have such an impoverished view of what they have to offer in the face of something like AIDS. Just as it is a source of constant amazement and much joy to me that every once in a while, somebody will come forward and dare to demand our ministry anyway. Companions in dying, ministers of reconciliation, purveyors of hope, prophets of meaning: This what we are called to be.

Integrator Michaelmas 1990



## Too busy for real Christmas

"The busyness of preparing the nursery" for Mary and Joseph was no "hanging the greens, the wreaths, the poinsettias." It was the mucking out of a cruddy stable so it would be as clean as possible for the birthing — and that would require some shoveling of manure out of the way, I would imagine. Could it be that modern preparations in churches as well as homes, the getting ready for Christmas, are "busyness for busyness sake," to keep you too busy to sit down and think about what "born in a stable and laid in a manger" really involved for Mary and Joseph?

We "deck the halls with boughs of holly" and anything else we can think of — and never, or hardly ever, think of the realities of the birth in a stable. We gussy up our churches with riches galore and so distance ourselves from the home for the Christ Child — that was the best that Joseph could provide and very poor it was — to show how much fancier and richer a "home" we can provide — as if we were trying to shame Joseph — so fancy that street people wouldn't dare to wander in to a Christmas Eve service. Nor would poor Mary and Joseph and Jesus either!

Abbie Jane Wells

The Gospel According to Abbie Jane Wells

## Health care a luxury

Some 31.8 million Americans have no health care and millions more have inadequate coverage. Of these, two-thirds live in families where at least one member works full-time.

NCC Mark-Up 8/90

## Surprise from the poor

When John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council in 1962, he said that he prayed the bishops would be able to make the church "once again what Christ intended it to be, namely a church of the poor." Responding, the Jesuits announced that the promotion of human justice would be an integral element in the worldwide work of their order. Other Catholic groups moved whole schools, hospitals and parish services from handsome suburbs to forgotten shantytowns. It was to be a costly change.

But as they made this jarring transition, church leaders discovered something they had not expected. Instead of bringing the Gospel to the castoffs and losers, they were meeting Christ in a fresh way, among the same kinds of people with whom he had lived and worked during his earthly years.

They also discovered that the wounded people among whom they were working nourished a persistent faith in God's ultimate justice, and even though the church had sometimes ignored or betrayed them, they retained a stubborn confidence in its mission.

As Ignacio Martin-Baro (one of the Jesuits killed in El Salvador) himself once told me, "Instead of the church making an option for the poor, we found that the poor had already made an option for the church, or more accurately, for the gospel the church is supposed to teach and represent."

Harvey Cox writing in *Interamerican Public Opinion Report* 1/90

## Gay/lesbian conference

"Gay and Christian Yes! Accepted As Living Members," a conference for gay, lesbian and bisexual Christians, will be held in Browns Summit, N.C., December 14-16. The Rev. Malcolm Boyd, noted author and gay/lesbian activist, will lead the conference, sponsored by the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina. The \$135-165 per person fee includes registration, rooms and meals. Scholarships are available. Mail reservations to: Registrar, St. Phillip's Episcopal Church, PO Box 218, Durham, NC 27707.

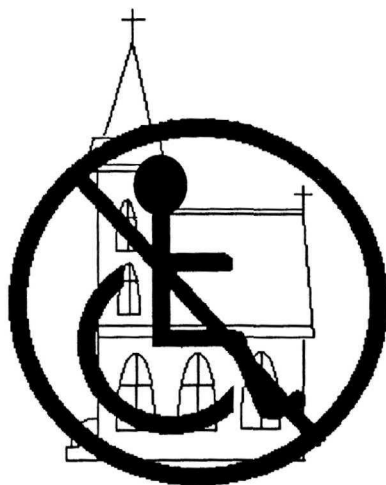
# No inclusivity without accessibility

by Sara Fischer

The Americans with Disabilities Act, which President Bush signed into law this year, will guarantee new freedom and new opportunities for 43 million Americans in every area of society except the church. Described as the most sweeping civil rights legislation to come through Congress in 25 years, the ADA affirms the rights of people with disabilities by mandating equal opportunity in employment, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications for anyone whose "mental or physical impairment substantially limits everyday living." The ADA extends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to people with disabilities, and extends the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 beyond facilities operated or funded by the federal government to private employers and to the transportation and telecommunications industries. Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), one of the bill's sponsors, has called it "an emancipation proclamation for people with handicaps." It seeks to end discrimination against people with disabilities in all aspects of daily life.

Every day but Sunday, that is. While the rest of the country will be obligated under the new law to uphold the rights of people with disabilities, each church must choose whether, and to what extent, to open its doors to those 43 million Americans.

The section of the Act which guarantees "the full and equal enjoyment" of services and facilities offered by public accommodations, including those operated by private entities, explicitly ex-



empts "entities controlled by religious organizations, including places of worship." The original version of the bill contained no such exemption; the exclusion was introduced in the summer of 1989 only after representatives from the U. S. Catholic Conference, the Synagogue Council of America, and several major Protestant denominations lobbied strenuously on the grounds that inclusion threatened to breach the line between church and state.

Religious organizations wrestled at some length with how to approach the ADA. In this particular instance, it is difficult to argue that sound government policy is not also sound theology. On the other hand, from the perspective of a rigid, "hands-off" interpretation of the free-exercise clause of the First Amendment, the church-state concern is a convincing one. The Act would set a potentially dangerous precedent by listing churches and synagogues as public accommodations; it might then be possible for future, less "theologically sound" laws to extend to churches. In addition, by requiring religious institutions to become accessible to people with physical

handicaps, the state would be in a position to influence a particular church or synagogue's budget process. For example, a church could no longer choose whether to allocate resources toward building a wheelchair ramp or feeding the homeless; the state would mandate the former as a priority.

And yet, the churches' response to the prospect of being included in this civil rights legislation smacks sadly of the not-in-my-backyard syndrome, treatment which people with disabilities experience in so many other aspects of their lives as they try to live, work, shop, and recreate alongside their peers without disabilities.

Legal exemption does not imply moral exemption. The church's freedom from the sweeping effects of the ADA ought not to mean freedom from responsibility to those millions of Americans who will otherwise benefit from the new law.

The very existence of this legislation asks all of us to look at a call from an authority higher than the federal government, and examine our attitudes as well as our buildings, with a view toward opening our hearts, our facilities, and our liturgical, educational, and outreach programs to the full participation of all people, especially those with other abilities.

Our culture has historically segregated people with mental or physical handicaps. In biblical times, segregation was most commonly manifested in social ostracism and exclusion from worship. In our own time, segregation has taken many forms, from architectural barriers to warehousing people in huge institutions to placing children with disabilities in "special" classrooms away from "normal" children.

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Segregation of people with physical handicaps is also fueled by our culture's focus on physical appearance and the myth of the perfectibility of our bodies. The media teaches us that certain attributes are critical for success: good looks, well-proportioned, athletic bodies, physical strength, "personal style". . . the list is endless and, for many of us, painfully ingrained. The ADA will facilitate fuller integration in the work place and other aspects of community for many people, but our preoccupation with earthly treasures such as physical beauty and stamina serves to widen the gap between people with disabilities and people without disabilities, perpetuating a sense of "us" and "them" as old as Leviticus.

In the culture of the Old Testament, as in ours, disease set people apart, and was most often an experience of alienation and brokenness. As many people with disabilities are painfully aware, the Hebrew Bible contains a varied spectrum of messages about the causes and treatment of disease and disability, and the community's relationship to those who suffer. On one hand, the people are instilled with the belief that any form of disease or "affliction" is a punishment from God. On the other hand, God's primary purpose is always to preserve community, and God is the source of healing and restoration. All that comes from God is of God, including all sorts and conditions of abilities, perhaps most beautifully illustrated in God's commissioning of Moses. Moses protests that he is "slow of speech and of tongue. Then the Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.'" (Ex. 4:10-12)

Not one of the church leaders who took a position on the ADA denied that opening church and synagogue facilities to all people, with and without disabili-

ties, is the right thing to do, and a proper expression of their faith. But *are* churches expressing their faith in this way? *Will* churches do the right thing without the law to push them?

Many of us resist sharing our faith community with people with handicaps because they are unfamiliar: Perhaps they do not "fit," either physically or mentally, into "our" pews, parish suppers, or Sunday school classes. But as a community striving to live as God's people, we are called to welcome people who are different from us, and open ourselves to them. The book of Exodus reminds us: "You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in Egypt." (Ex. 23:9) We have all been strangers at one time, and we often "oppress" through our fear of that which is unfamiliar.

Jesus' life and ministry teach us that God, the giver of abundant life, calls us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to treat all people like neighbors. In word and deed, Jesus embodies the radical inclusivity of all people. He comes to restore the community of God's people to the fullness born of including all people in its midst.

Jesus' work of restoration is most evident in the healing stories which fill the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life on earth.

In Matthew's Gospel, "a leper came to Jesus and knelt, saying, 'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.' And Jesus touched him, saying 'I will; be clean.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." (Matt. 8:2-3)

Jesus then directs the leper to show himself to the priest; the leper's primary experience of healing is that of being restored to his community.

The crowd scenes depicted throughout the New Testament show that healing is available to all people. In *Mark 6*, at Gennesaret, "the whole neighborhood" knows of Jesus' power and looks to him for healing. They "besought Jesus that

they might touch even the fringe of His garment; *and as many as touched it were made well.*" (italics mine, Mk. 6:56) Jesus' healing does not discriminate or segregate.

The Synoptic Gospels all contain versions of the story of a paralytic brought to Jesus by his friends for healing. This is a story of many things: access, the power of a community of faith, and Jesus' power to heal and to forgive sins. Luke's version of the story also contains another important detail; when the paralytic takes up his bed and goes home, he does so "glorifying God." (Luke 5:25) The one who has been healed joins the community through active worship.

In the world of today, few of us witness the kind of healing described in the Gospels. We seldom see a paralytic walk, or a blind person see. However, we must remember that *healing is not so much the absence of symptoms as the absence of suffering*, and as followers of Jesus we can do much in our faith communities to remove suffering. We can look honestly at our buildings, our educational programs, our worship services, our personnel, and most of all, our attitudes.

If we make entry into our places of worship difficult, either physically, through the lack of ramps or accessible restrooms, or emotionally, through lack of acceptance, we shut out the people of God. Most people agree that churches do not have a great track record in the area of accessibility. Church entrances, such an important evangelical statement for most denominations, are notoriously difficult for many people to negotiate. Restrooms are another bastion of inaccessibility. As one advocate put it: "They're not going to come if they can't go."

However, access is not only the presence of architectural or technical adaptations for people with disabilities, but

*Continued on page 25*



# Lyman Ogilby: Ambassador of Christ

The Rt. Rev. Lyman C. Ogilby, former Bishop of Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and the Philippines, collapsed at the October consecration of his old friend Jeffery Terry as Bishop of Spokane, suffering from the effects of a chronic and serious respiratory illness. Typically, he asked for oxygen so that he could make it through the ceremony. Ogilby, 68, was never to return to his home in Philadelphia; on Nov. 3 he died of pulmonary failure in Spokane.

Such faithfulness had often cost him dearly during his career as a bishop.

Friends and family filled the cathedral-sized Church of the Saviour in Philadelphia on a wet November morning to celebrate Ogilby's life and ministry. The Rt. Rev. Robert DeWitt, Ogilby's predecessor in Pennsylvania, reminded the congregation that Ogilby had spent 37 years — over half his life — as a bishop. His ministry covered some of the most significant and controversial events in the history of the Episcopal Church.

He was born an Anglican. His father was the Rev. Dr. Remsen B. Ogilby, president of Trinity College in Hartford, Conn. After college, Lyman Ogilby served on a PT boat in the Pacific during World War II. He attended the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge, Mass., graduated in 1949, and was ordained a priest a year later.

In 1950, Ogilby began his ministry in the Philippines. His love and respect for the Filipino people made the struggle to liberate the Episcopal Church and Philippine society from the yoke of colonialism one of the passions of his life.

He was elected suffragan bishop of the Philippines in 1952, and became bishop in 1957. In 1967 he resigned as bishop so the Philippine Episcopal Church could elect their first indigenous bishop. He worked tirelessly to help the Philip-

pine Church achieve independence. Ogilby served on the Joint Committee on the Philippine Covenant and saw his dream realized when the Philippine Church attained autonomy in May 1990.

The Most Rev. Richard A. Abellon, Prime Bishop of the Philippine Episcopal Church, wrote of Ogilby's death: "It is very unfortunate that the 'Apo Lakay' passed away at a time when the Philippine Episcopal Church is just beginning to live out the blessings and challenges of autonomy — the realization of which he was one of the great architects. His ministry has been deeply etched into our hearts — a gift that will always serve as an inspiration to those who vow to follow the path of Christ."

From the Philippines he went on to be elected bishop coadjutor of the then-Missionary District of South Dakota, and became bishop three years later. While serving there, his lifelong opposition to the death penalty and support for Native American rights brought him into the center of controversy, according to the Rev. Suzanne Hiatt, a long-time friend.

Hiatt, now a professor at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, said that Ogilby became involved in a notorious case in South Dakota. Thomas Whitehawk, a young Native American, accused of a brutal murder, was "being railroaded to the chair," said Hiatt, when Ogilby intervened and got expert legal counsel that managed to get Whitehawk's sentence reduced.

"The whites never forgave him," said Hiatt. "When he resigned as bishop (in 1970), he hoped the diocese would elect a Native American, but they were so mad at him that they elected another white bishop."

"He took risks out of principle," said Hiatt. "It must have cost him more than we'll ever know."

Controversy and change seemed to

follow him throughout his career. Not long after he became bishop of Pennsylvania in 1974, succeeding the often-stormy tenure of resigned Bishop Robert DeWitt, plans were afoot in the diocese to host the ordinations of the first women priests, in defiance of the official church ban.

Ogilby, a strong believer in women's ordination, did not feel that the unsanctioned ordinations would best serve the cause. Hiatt, who was one of the ordinands and at the time was also on Ogilby's staff, said that he felt General Convention was the proper forum for deciding the issue and that his job was to hold the diocese together.

After the ordinations, said Hiatt, "He tried to keep the peace by keeping off those who wanted to kill us, and holding off the 'radicals' as well. He got us all through this thing."

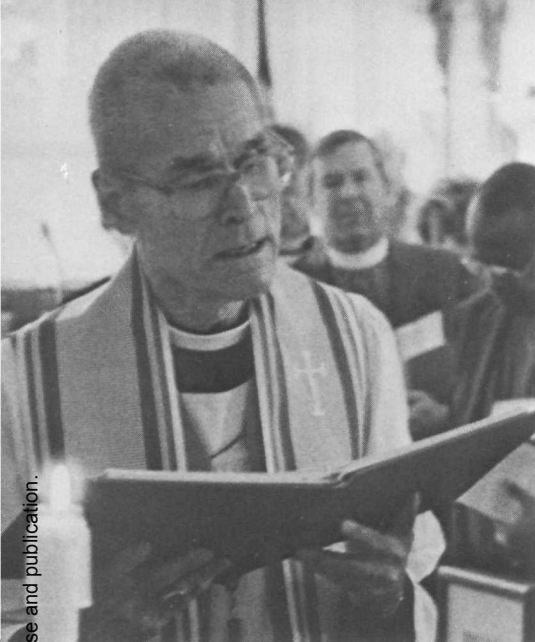
The Rev. Paul Washington, host of the July 29 ordinations at his inner-city Church of the Advocate despite fears he could be suspended, recalled how gently Ogilby dealt with disagreement.

"Some months after the ordinations, I went to visit him. I had no idea what I had to say; he had already admonished me. But we talked both in a loving and respecting way," said Washington.

As they discussed the official reaction to the ordinations, "I said to Lyman, 'The church is not willing to be prophetic.' And he answered, 'Institutions are not prophetic. The church can raise up prophets, and support them, but it can't be expected to be prophetic.'"

Washington said, "He felt that the church had to have its arms open to the left and the right, to embrace all." He noted that despite the "awkwardness of July 29," Ogilby later made him a member of his staff and valued his input as the pastor to a community struggling with the effects of racism and poverty.





The Rt. Rev. Lyman C. Ogilby (1922-1990), reading the Gospel at Christ Church, Philadelphia, during the 1989 House of Bishops worship service.

The Rev. David Gracie, one of Ogilby's urban mission staff and a veteran of civil rights battles, sharply disagreed with Ogilby's handling of the July 29 ordinations.

Gracie recalled asking to speak to Ogilby before the regular Thursday Eucharist for the staff. "I was upset. I said, 'I don't feel in communion with you.' And Lyman said, 'David, why don't you be the celebrant?' He literally brought me to the table."

Ogilby's commitment to keeping the peace was difficult, said Gracie. "He was under tremendous strain; he didn't want to harm the ordination cause, but he didn't want to split the diocese. I knew he sensed the pain."

When Ogilby retired as diocesan in 1987, said Gracie, "it was a great load off his shoulders. He could be 100% for what he believed."

Despite failing health, after his retirement Ogilby remained active, assisting with episcopal visitations in the dioceses of Western Michigan, Bethlehem, Maryland, Washington, D.C., as well as Pennsylvania. He also served the church's peace and justice community. He was vice-president of the Episcopal Urban

Caucus and a major force in the Urban Bishops Coalition.

Diane Pollard, president of the Urban Caucus and a member of the Church Pension Fund Board, said of Ogilby, "He did so much for the church in a quiet, unassuming way. I could call him up anytime and get a straight, compassionate answer."

Dr. Louie Crew, educator and founder of Integrity, the group for gay and lesbian Episcopalians, said Ogilby's commitment to justice extended to the gay and lesbian community. "When we had our third convention in Philadelphia," said Crew, "he came and preached a wonderful, supportive sermon."

Crew said Ogilby mourned the church's lack of support for gay and lesbian rights. "He was so clearly on the side of social justice. He was always ready to listen, and it's not easy to get access with the issues I represent.

"He felt grieved that the heart of the church was not near the heart of Christ. He didn't eat freeze-dried manna," noted Crew.

Marge Christie of the Episcopal Women's Caucus said that though Ogilby had had doubts about the manner of the July 29 ordinations, his basic commitment to women's rights was unwavering. "He was such a dynamic man," she said. "He had no reservations about standing tall for justice for everybody. He was a member and supporter of the caucus."

The Rt. Rev. Barbara Harris, suffragan bishop of Massachusetts and the first woman bishop in the worldwide Anglican Communion, recalled how she felt Ogilby's affirmation and warm friendship throughout her church career.

"He made me a deacon, priested me and was a co-consecrator when I was made bishop," said Harris.

Because he was both an ally for justice and had a voice that penetrated to the farthest reaches of any room without a microphone, Harris noted, "I hate to lose

that strong voice in the House of Bishops. The House will be diminished by the loss of his perspective and wisdom from 37 years in the episcopate."

It was Ogilby's dedication to the episcopacy that his colleague DeWitt emphasized as he preached at Ogilby's memorial service. "The apostolic role of bishop was the identifying and dominant mark of his ministry. He wore the mitre easily and naturally.

"It is helpful to remember that the word 'apostle' refers to one who is sent, as an ambassador is sent to represent his native realm to a far land. Just so, a bishop is an ambassador of Christ, sent to represent God to the kingdoms of this world," said DeWitt.

Ogilby's successor, the Rt. Rev. Allan L. Bartlett, Jr., told the congregation that "in his last days, Lyman kept saying 'No fancy speeches.'"

A statement by Ogilby's family outlined how best to honor his memory: "We would like to say a few words to those who loved and lived with Lyman C. Ogilby. Just before his death, he reminded us that God needs helpers to carry out God's mission and that we are the feet and hands of the cosmic Christ. We are needed to work for peace and justice. We ask that you remember this as you celebrate his life. This living memorial will be as diverse as the people who have been touched by Lyman C. Ogilby. Let your contributions to this mission reflect your abilities and talents."

In closing, Bartlett recalled how Ogilby, while attending a funeral at Philadelphia's historic Christ Church, pointed to a dogwood tree in the church yard and said, "When I die, that's where I'd like to be."

"He asked for a simple service, a small service," said Bartlett. Smiling as he surveyed the capacity crowd, he added, "We could do simple; small was not so easy."

— Susan E. Pierce

# America in search of itself

by Malcolm Boyd

Thirty-five years ago, on a sunny day in December I was ordained an Episcopal priest. The years have sped past. In the 1960s, the civil rights movement exploded into reality and became the major focus of my life. In the '70s I "came out" as a gay man and priest. In the '80s, as a parish priest, I came face-to-face with, and often preached about, fast changing problems.

Today, bridges of my own intellect are under fire. Lines in the sand disappear. The Middle East: Can it be defined in a dialogue instead of being blown to pieces? El Salvador's charred bodies and houses: Aren't they just over that ridge? Images of pain and violence intercut in my consciousness: A government building that stands mere blocks away from torture chambers; refugees; starving children; urban crime; political prisoners; the emergence of ever new demagogues to inflame racial hatred and perpetuate separation.

A deadly opponent of the human spirit threatens to seize possession of a strategic hill that lies directly behind my eyes.

How can one survive as a whole human being with hope and courage? How can one serve the cause of loving when the force of hate literally overpowers so much of life? One has been told that religion is dead, its trunkful of truths mere shopworn platitudes that have been buried by a bitter and scarred generation.

Yet the Talmud speaks about the quality of life many earnestly seek: One who destroys a single life destroys the entire world; one who saves a single life saves

the entire world. And Jesus responds directly to my questions:

*For I was hungry and you gave me no food.*

*I was thirsty and you gave me no drink.*

*I was a stranger and you did not welcome me.*

*Naked and you did not clothe me.*

*Sick and in prison and you did not visit me.*

## Two brands of Christianity

I can do something. I can contribute to changing the very quality of life. Christianity is an unflinching force of overpowering truth that lifts us up and reminds us eternally that we have been created in the image of God and have the salvific work of love to carry on in solidarity with others.

Still, there is a brand of Christianity that awaits the Second Coming of Christ to solve pressing "social problems" such as hunger, poverty, war, racism, sexism, homophobia, colonialism and loveless exploitation. This type of Christianity explains that it renders unto God what belongs to God, unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and remains uninvolved in social issues.

But in fact, this brand of Christianity is involved in social issues by its support of the status quo. It is rewarded by privilege, tax exemptions, and the prestige bestowed traditionally upon docile religion. The state uses such religion for its own purposes as do corporate empires, or powerful people who don't want anything changed.

Religion-with-a-price-tag provides well-trained clergy who publicly mouth lukewarm yet politically supportive caricatures of prayers at government cere-

monies or ritualistic assemblies of the powerful and mighty; who plead with a partisan god to let "our" side win its wars and distort the Gospel of Christ in accommodation to the status quo.

All this would not be so dangerous were it not for today's sophisticated technology. Technology brings the McLuhan prophecy full circle so that the medium is the message. Take, for example, a crowd flaunting religious symbols and in the distance an evangelist superstar performing under bright lights. The giant revivalist rally has given way to creating an impeccable image for the TV screen. Every technological, promotional, and publicity device has been put to work.

The contemporary disciples of P.T. Barnum — the patron saint whom American religion is too snobbishly dishonest to canonize — use every gimmick to manipulate people. The gospel preached is a message of power, authority, public relations and packaging.

It is a truly Orwellian scene. We are into the numbers game. Even otherwise sane people have come to gauge the significance of U.S. denominations in terms of numbers. American Christianity decided that it must grow and grow and grow. It is a friendly green giant in a clerical collar. But where did JEEE-sus go? Where is the hard Gospel moral/prophetic content? The scandal of the Gospel is banished by a focus on worldly success. The betrayal of Jesus Christ is perpetrated in His own name, even as His own words are read aloud.

The environmental crisis has shown that sheer growth can be negative and self-defeating, and even lead to extinction. It is a warning to revise our criteria for measuring the quality of life. We

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stand in dire need of *perestroika*, which means restructuring not only our institutions, but attitudes and values. We also need *glasnost*: a new honesty that is public as well as private. *The church needs glasnost and perestroika*. Parts of Christianity seem to be avoiding involvement in the social-cultural issues that represent the spiritual context of most people's lives.

German theologian Dorothee Sölle catches the meaning of this connection when she notes in her book *Revolutionary Patience* that there is a relationship between "study of the sufferings of Christ," and "study of a world map pinpointing illiteracy and manufacturing of arms." Daniel Berrigan, in jail for civil disobedience writes: "Holy, Holy? Bend your ear to the chorus, a scratchy record in a groove; the minds of prisoners shuffle about, wall-to-wall on run-down heels." Berrigan affirms a radical worship that involves the sacrifice of one's body and well-being, a type of prayer that has inevitable and ominous public consequences.

Prayer is largely misunderstood. It is not "proper" words. It is frequently action without words. Or it is "improper" words. Here's a prayer from John Shea's *Hour of the Unexpected*:

*So where were you last night, my  
good time deity,  
drinking buddy, frat brother  
when failure was in my throat  
and every word a scream for peace.*

### Communion with god of violence

Prayer became central in my life during time spent in jail recently after being arrested for civil disobedience during a demonstration in support of people with AIDS. Chained to a bench, the hours grew long. My 67th birthday had been just four days before; I wasn't so sure of my inner strength and level of resistance. The situation became painful and discouraging. Acknowledging my

own total absence of control, I asked for help. I prayed, I meditated, and tremendous peace, a centering, a trust came over me. However, many people have difficulty finding this trust right now, as troubles seem to hold center stage and difficulties mount.

An encroaching, universal doom sticks like a thorn in the national consciousness. This sense may come from problems or forces in one's own environment rather than from any outside attack. A number of people feel this dread may be linked to increasing violence. Stanley Kubrick's film *A Clockwork Orange* went so far as to depict worship of a god of brutality. Young men filled with verve stomp a helpless old man, and gang-rape a woman while kicking her husband's face to a pulp, in the liturgies and rites of violence.

It troubles me that such adherence to a creed may represent far more profound

communion than the lifeless travesty of worship in a piously conventional ritual of churchianity. Writing in *The Day of the Locust*, Nathanael West warned that people consumed by the fury of an "awful, anarchic power . . . had it in them to destroy civilization."

### Examining America's soul

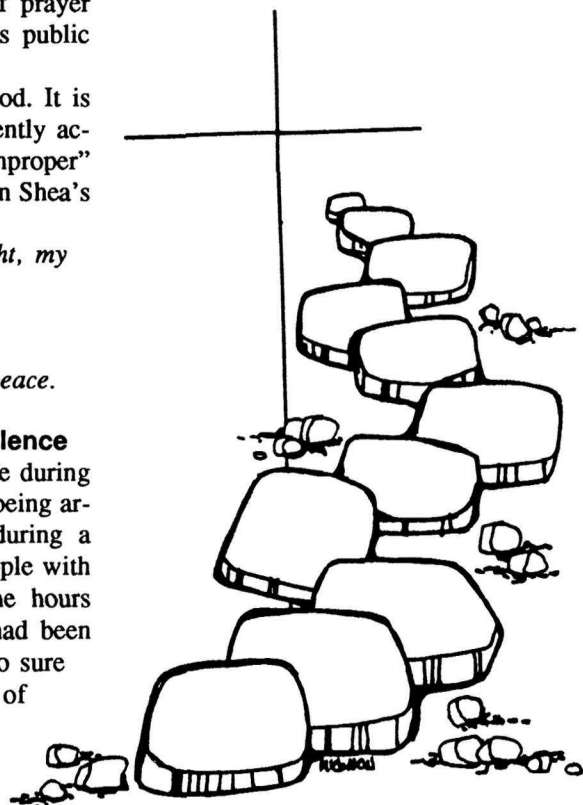
As we embark upon the final decade of one century and prepare to greet another, we need to examine America's soul.

A nun in California who teaches in a parochial school told me: "This soul has to express itself. All the anger, dirt, and frustrations need to come out. After that, there can be a new beginning. In order to love, one must hold oneself wide open to other people. Yet people merely pretend to communicate. They are insensitive, deeply troubled, searching for their real self. It's difficult to hold standards and maintain an ideal when ideals are considered obsolete. Patterns for the future cannot use an old map. Instead we need to break down old forms and restructure. We need a new set of pioneers."

A graduate student in social work said: "Am I hustling for nothing? Confronting the situation as it is, and where it seems to be going, I try not to look closely at it. The system is so rotten. Who is honest? Who is telling the truth about anything? I can't see how there will be any way to be successful without selling my soul."

A teacher of first-grade children saw society's moral resources as hollow. "The school system doesn't really want to deal with the child," she said. "The child is supposed to accommodate to the school. And so many older kids think they're protesting, but they have no values. The kids themselves have no control over the forces that are shaping them."

An African-American college administrator told me: "There is no moral leadership. There is no sense of anyone's caring strongly, loving deeply, or trying to turn around a near-hopeless racial situation. The inner cities are black, the





suburbs white. There are few bridges or lines of communication between them. A match could ignite an inferno that would make Washington, D.C. after Martin Luther King's death look like child's play. And nobody is doing a damned thing to stop it. America's soul is in deep trouble."

Unquestionably it is. We want comfort. Does God give us comfort? We want peace. Does God give us peace? No, not in any self-serving way in an agonized world. Organized religion is largely to blame for our misconceptions. We have been misinformed, promised a rose garden, and led down a primrose path.

### Engaged in pilgrimage

Each of us, in one way or another, is engaged in a small pilgrimage toward truth, fulfillment, meaning, responsibility and joy. Now we must get these small pilgrimages together and share the big one. The long pilgrimage must include an involved, pragmatic concern about meeting the planet's problems and one's personal issues. Christianity, when correctly practiced, gives us the answer to both. It does not offer a personal gospel *here*, a social gospel *there*.

Clearly, we haven't accepted Christ either personally or socially, and the result can be found in the wreckage that surrounds us. But this is our failure, and Christ points the way for us to overcome it. Christ offers us communion with God and each other. Christ respects our God-

given free wills, never wishing to manipulate us.

Because America's soul is troubled, people feel guilty, frustrated, and restless. The gap between people's unfilled spiritual needs and organized religion's failure of nerve is fertile ground for the growth of a demagogic, chauvinistic religious movement. This, I believe, is one of the most frightening prospects Americans will face if precautions are not taken now.

### An alive church

Many people in the church know that the church is always healthiest when it is responding to tensions in the world. I recall a bishop saying, "I have two types of clergy in my diocese, the disturbed and the dead. I hope I will remain always one of the disturbed."

A number of "disturbed" clergy and laity are moving close together in a new life style that disrupts the old caste system separating them. Thank God there are women priests. Hopefully, openly lesbian and gay priests will also feel free in the near future to share and interact more naturally with others in the Body of Christ. An alive church will increasingly find its altar on Main Street, its holiest people ordinary women and men who care about other people and therefore, about God. Its "social action" will place its own body on the line, inseparable from the love always talked about from pulpits.

A public demonstration is good for jarring a pickled conscience. But really effective social action — obedience to the Gospel — is ongoing work rooted in education, housing, jobs, peace, politics and breaking down ghetto walls. The essential church remains the movement that shattered the peace of Peter, Mary Magdalene, St. Francis, Joan of Arc, St. Teresa of Avila, Luther, Kierkegaard, Simone Weil, Dag Hammarskjöld, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, James Baldwin and Eleanor Roosevelt.

## What Jesus really said

### Not much

I am  
here  
now  
with you.  
I see you,  
God-in-you.  
I need to touch you.  
I need you to touch me.  
I need to be alone.  
I will not leave you alone.

### Respect all beings.

Be compassionate.

Take risks to help others  
and to become your whole  
self.

Be present in every moment.

Love as fully as life allows.

Live as fully as love allows.

I love you.

Let yourself be loved.

Accept acceptance.

Remember me.

— Alla Renee Bozarth

Success in the church will not come from public-relations events, real-estate construction, or power-structure prelates.

All in all, despite bloodstains, wasteland rhetoric and strains that shatter lives, the essential church is passionately alive, embarrassingly well, and living in a moon-drenched world of sensitive, sometimes crazy, changing and growing people. These people do not hear the majestic, martial strains celebrating the divine Hero in imperial glory and establishment power.

Instead there is a quiet celebration of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the anti-hero of his own time, the brother and servant who died on the cross in God's identification with human pain, failure and hope, and the search for joy and love.

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## Inclusivity . . . Continued from page 19

also a fuller understanding of their needs, *and gifts*. Many churches today have wheelchair ramps and accessible restrooms; some have large-print bulletins, interpreters for the deaf, and Sunday school classes for children with mental retardation. Such things are very important, and congregations are to be commended for the services they offer people with handicaps.

But meeting Christ in our sisters and brothers means more than special services or adaptations. It means being in communion with the whole person, not just his or her deafness or learning disability or chronic illness. And this communion means full access to all aspects of parish life. We must ask ourselves: how many people with handicapping conditions are in the choir? On the vestry? In the pulpit? When we plan our annual stewardship drive, or recruit new Sunday school teachers, or search for a new rector, how many of us think of people with disabilities?

At a recent gathering of people with

disabilities and their advocates someone said, "Freedom is not just the absence of barriers, but the presence of possibilities." The Americans with Disabilities Act represents new possibilities for million of people in this country. It also presents the church with a special challenge to maintain the balance between protecting the church-state separation on one hand, and discerning the moral mandate to welcome people with disabilities into faith communities on the other. Like a drawing of two silhouettes which form a chalice between them, both halves of the balance compel our attention and affirmation. At this point, the church is in a position to maintain the separation between church and state *and* strengthen its integrity, by voluntarily meeting — perhaps exceeding — the standards set by the new law. A starting point might be to communicate a strong proactive position to its members with disabilities, letting them know that we *will* make our building and programs accessible, not because the state tells us so, but because it is the only true response to God's call to community. IV

## Stroke!

She had no time  
for sunsets once but  
now she drinks them in  
her stiffened frame; soft  
rounded eyes, alone which move,  
wonder as they turn about  
the glory of the scene. No time  
before, she hurried through the  
evening with supper smells and  
table placements uppermost — but  
that  
was then.

Now there is not much but  
Time for the settings and the risings  
of the sun. Though slight the joy,  
it's no small thing: this meeting of  
two brightnesses that, despite the  
odds,  
shine on.

— Ann Maureen Gallagher, IHM



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wait until the end of the year to make their tax-deductible contributions. If you are among them, your name will appear in our fiscal year Nov. 1, 1990-Oct. 31, 1991 listing — in a future issue. We are so appreciative that you support our advocacy journal for peace and justice in this way. Your gift will sustain our voice. Many thanks!

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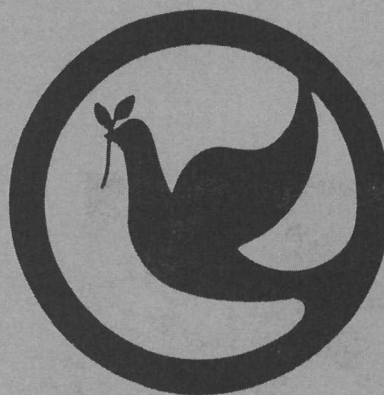


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