

The ALBANY CATHOLIC WORKER



Newsletter of Emmaus House of Hospitality

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We Are All Siblings

By Fr. Bob Longobucco

Pressure bears down and exposes all fundamental weaknesses and small fissures lead to ruptures. Pope Francis began his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (FT) apparently before the Coronavirus pandemic, but the consequences of the virus shaped and radicalized his social encyclical. His proclamation in the opening chapter should sound familiar to followers of the Catholic Worker movement. "Anyone who thinks that the only lesson to be learned was the need to improve what we were already doing, or to refine existing systems and regulations, is denying reality." (FT 7)

Francis sees the twin curses of the current politics as that of isolation and insulation. Isolation represented by a new nationalism which he calls "myopic, extremist, resentful and aggressive," (FT 11) that has the haunting aroma of the 1930s in Germany and Italy. Insulation displayed in the form of a "throwaway" culture, where "the outside world ceases to exist and leaves only "my" world, to the point that others, no longer considered human beings possessed of an inalienable dignity, become only "them". (FT 27) These Dark Clouds over a Closed World (the title of the second chapter) bring a cynicism that threatens our greatest societal hopes. "In today's world, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia. What reigns instead is a cool, comfortable and globalized indifference, born of deep disillusionment." (FT 30)

Francis is hardly against political systems. Indeed, he calls for far greater cooperation among political bodies than frankly seems plausible these days including a beefed up role for the United Nations, alleviating third world debt, ensuring the rights of immigrants to provide for a better life regardless of borders and the demand for "tireless recourse to negotiation, mediation and arbitration." (FT 257)

But what underlies these fervent hopes is not a new world order but a conversion of hearts. Indeed, we might recognize it as personalism - the desire to recognize the needs of the other and to serve them like the Good Samaritan who "was able to interrupt his journey, change his plans, and unexpectedly come to



Ade Bethune

the aid of an injured person who needed his help." (FT 101) He is the prime example of the one who serves the stranger; whose world is open and who is dedicated to transforming it with acts of justice. "No one can experience the true beauty of life without relating to others, without having real faces to love." (FT 87)

Recognizing the inherent dignity of each person shifts the basis of politics from power to love. This radical call extends the act of personal charity into the realm of governance. "It is an act of charity to assist someone suffering, but it is also an act of charity, even if we do not know that person, to work to change the social conditions that caused his or her suffering." (FT 186) Inevitably, "the spiritual heart of politics, is always a preferential love shown to those in greatest need; it undergirds everything we do on their behalf." (FT 187) Love is also the space that allows true dialogue rather than "parallel monologues" (FT 200) which only appeals to course partisanship. Instead Francis pleads for genuine encounters where the oppressions of the past are acknowledged so that the path of reconciliation can be followed.

A politics of love. A politics based on the experience of those who have been endlessly exploited and conveniently forgotten is truly revolutionary. Showing high skepticism of the idea of a "just war," Francis listens to those who have been silenced. "Let us ask the

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On the Road to Emmaus

By Diana Conroy & Fred Boehrer

One of our children (we will not say whom) was about to walk to a friend's house around the corner from us. When we offered to drive them over (instead of walking), our child asked, "Why would you want to drive me literally, around the block when I can just walk?"

Parent: Because with all the recent shootings, we don't feel comfortable with you walking there, especially at night.

Child: I'll be fine walking.

Parent: We know driving a short distance seems silly, but it would give us peace of mind.

Child: I'm OK walking.

Child leaves Emmaus House. Two minutes later, gun shots are fired on the block where child was walking.

Child (texting): I'm okay.

The summer and fall have seen large increases in shootings in Albany, especially in our neighborhood. A young man was shot and killed near one of our Emmaus House gardens. The next day, someone fired 18 gunshots in front of Emmaus House on a Saturday afternoon. It was very unsettling to witness this from our front window. Thankfully, it seems there were no victims. Our neighbors are rattled. We are rattled.

"No victims." That is not entirely true. Even though no one was struck by a bullet that afternoon, the ripple effect pervades our neighborhood. The next few days were eerily quiet. No children played on the sidewalk. No neighbors sat on their front stoops. Eventually, children and adults began spending more time outside again. But the invisible scars remain. One neighbor, whose family has lived on our block since the 1960s, told us that she had never seen a summer so filled with violence. "As bad as the 1970s were, they do not compare to what is going on now."

A few Emmaus House supporters, already cautious because of COVID-19, decide to put their donation in the mail instead of dropping it off. Others will still drive to our house with grocery donations, but they prefer to remain in their car. It's understandable.

Some have asked us if we have considered moving out of our neighborhood. While we suppose that we have the option to pull up stakes and move to another neighborhood, we choose not to. We live in a neighborhood where some have no option to move somewhere else. And we, as Catholic Workers, are in love with a God who chose to spend time with people who have few options in life. These seasons of Advent and Christmas remind us of vulnerability. Our God decided to become human and walk among us. God chose not to arrive as a warrior or king, but rather, as a vulnerable newborn child. "God has sent me to bring

glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted."
(Isaiah 61:2).

We have been supporting our community's reckoning with racial injustice by attending and participating in local Black Lives Matters teach-ins and protests. We hosted online discussion groups in July and August for local Catholics wanting to promote racial justice from a faith-based perspective. We appreciate Dahlia Herring, who served as our facilitator. Through readings and videos, participants prepared for each session. We asked each other how white privilege operates within our diocese, our parishes, and our personal lives.

We celebrated small victories, like conversations which reflected someone's *metanoia* about racial justice. But we grieved many moments. For a church which promotes itself as pro-life, many Catholic leaders were slow to display how they value the lives of people of color.

Our perpetual homework assignment: to challenge instances of racism and prejudice we encounter daily. One calls to mind Dorothy Day's quoting of Dostoyevsky: "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams."

COVID-19 has impacted the lives of families we assist. It has also complicated how we stand alongside these families, including immigrants, as we offer works of mercy. Pre-pandemic, Diana was often accompanying adults and children to medical appointments. Sometimes she provided Spanish/English translation. Other times, Diana was there for emotional support and to make sure our friends fully understood the medical plan being put forward by the physician. However, many medical offices and hospitals eliminated visitors. Diana "accompanied" some Emmaus House guests through phone calls placed during the medical appointments.

Children who had been in school, found themselves at home, often with limited technology or internet service which would cut out frequently. Parents who were employed, found themselves out of work. (We can relate: after teaching 21 years at a local college, Fred was one of 70 people to have their positions eliminated.) Food insecurity affected many families we know.

Our own Emmaus House food pantry began to dwindle (understandably, many of our terrific supporters did not feel comfortable going food shopping and then bringing groceries to Emmaus House). Diana and Carol volunteered at local mass-food distributions. One time, they both greeted drivers of cars seeking food. A driver, with tears in his eyes told Diana how he was confused. "I've worked my entire life. I've never waited in line like this to get food."

————— (Continued on pg.3) —————

Calendar

Wednesday Dec 16: Donation of Christmas Gifts for families assisted by Emmaus House. We are distributing toys, books, clothing, and groceries to families for Christmas. Please deliver your donations to Emmaus House no later than today (December 16). Thanks.

Friday Dec 18: Advent Morning Prayer for Peace (11am). Join us online (via Zoom) as we reflect upon Advent readings. All are welcome.

Wednesday Dec 30: Donation of Backpacks for children of KwaNdebeqheke village (KwaZuluNatal Province, South Africa)

In memory of Gogo Celestine Zondi, we are collecting backpacks at Emmaus House. We will ship them across the Atlantic Ocean to be received children and young scholars of all ages. Drop off your backpacks at (or have them mailed to) Emmaus House. Thanks!



We Are All Siblings

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victims themselves. Let us think of the refugees and displaced, those who suffered the effects of atomic radiation or chemical attacks, the mothers who lost their children, and the boys and girls maimed or deprived of their childhood. Let us hear the true stories of these victims of violence, look at reality through their eyes, and listen with an open heart to the stories they tell. In this way, we will be able to grasp the abyss of evil at the heart of war. Nor will it trouble us to be deemed naive for choosing peace."

Imagine a world where everyone is counted among the blessed. Who then would practice war, exploit the environment, support the death penalty or seek to raise the value of one life over another? To be brothers and sisters all is not just the destination. It is the way. The only way.

(Fr. Bob Longobucco is Pastor of St. Kateri Church in Schenectady, N.Y. Bob is also a co-founder of Emmaus House.)

Road to Emmaus

(Continued from pg.2)

About 15 years ago, a woman lived with us two separate times. Shawna wrestles severe mental health issues and an addiction. She is still haunted from being physically and sexually abused. She is known to many local human service providers. While some social workers tried to help her develop a healthy game plan, Shawna finds it difficult just to survive day -to-day.

Five years ago, she moved about 500 miles away, telling us she planned on going to college. We wanted to be supportive, but Shawna's plan made little sense to us. She didn't know anyone in her new town. She did not have a place to call home there. And life's many obstacles made it challenging for Shawna to finish any course taken at Albany learning centers. How was she going to travel three states away, arrive homeless, manage her health issues, and take college classes?

Shawna would occasionally call us, sharing with us some of her struggles and joys. (To be honest, they were mostly struggles.) She questioned whether she made the right choice. She was often confused about what should be her next step. We would remind Shawna that she is a special person and has persevered through many struggles. She appreciated our listening ear.

Then, out of the blue, Shawna arrived at the front door of Emmaus House this summer. We could not believe our eyes. Not just that she made this long journey – but that this was not the "same" person we hugged good-bye five years ago. Shawna has a stronger sense of self. She found a supportive community to help her address some of her demons. She speaks with clarity and is well-grounded. Shawna is close to finishing her bachelor's degree and is planning to enroll in graduate school next year. She still has some struggles, but they no longer overwhelm her.

When Jesus preached in Nazareth, onlookers were in disbelief. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" There was a disbelief in who he was and a desire to have him leave their sight. Jesus remarked, "No prophet is welcomed in their own town."

I had never thought of Shawna as a prophet. But I consider how we failed her during her two stays at Emmaus House. And how many Albany-based programs also failed her. She had to leave her hometown to be heard. To be appreciated. To be welcomed.

Dorothy Day liked to remind us, "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2) During this Christmas season, may we welcome the strangers and prophets in our midst. Merry Christmas! Happy New Year!



William Hart McNichols

By Dennis Sullivan

Recently I thought about writing a Christmas carol in which I would say what Christmas means to me. As we know, for half a century the meaning of Christmas has been up for grabs.

Writing a carol is not an ego thing, mind you, nobody knows who wrote "Away in a Manger" and maybe not even "White Christmas."

As preparation for my carol, I began jotting down everything that came to mind about Christmas. It's the way some poets work—they write down ideas in prose and from that make the poem.

I never asked anyone if they had written a carol—maybe they're writing one right now—and, if they are, I want to know what they're saying about Christmas.

Christmas is no small thing. For many folks it carries an emotional wallop with deep feelings tied to cutting down a tree in the woods, Midnight Mass, hot chocolate by a fire with Mel Tormé—the kids and grandkids always in the picture.

That prevailing view of Christmas reflects middle- and upper-middle class sensibilities about a holiday that has nothing to do with the man it's about. But they do reflect what a person thinks about happiness—and such thoughts are indeed deeply rooted. It's an economic variable in the sense that the vision manifests itself in how the person lives day-to-day—micro and macro.

I'm not sure if I'll ever finish my carol but I did start writing down thoughts that came to me. They are in no particular order or preference; maybe one will make the carol.

When I took mediation training years ago for helping divorced parents settle visitation rights—e.g. where Mary and Abeer would spend Eid Al-Fitr—we were told, forewarned, that the parties would come emboldened with emotions attached to persons, places, and things—especially holidays with the kids.

We were told—and this is an exaggeration—that some would die before giving up Christmas. All I remember is: mediator, beware.

What follows are data for my carol: the consciousness of a child of Christmas reflecting upon a self that was born one night amid the cold of winter.

1. There ought to be a Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) that measures people's attachment to holidays: the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas—and, if

a person picks Christmas, he has to say what he thinks about Santa, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the manger, the mall, presents, devotion to a market economy, Christmas as addiction. Part 1(a) of the Inventory.

The Edward Pola/George Wyle carol proclaims Christmas as "the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," which Andy Williams lathered on America in 1963.

But I wondered: who said Christmas is the most wonderful time of year? There were Christmases I didn't have fun. Picking the first tomatoes of August outstrips any Christmas I knew. And Andy Williams never sang about the great "Dester's Amish" tomato.

2. If you tell me your three favorite Christmas carols, I can tell not only what your view of Christmas is but the ethical foundations you live by. Part 1(b) of the Inventory starts: How do you rate December 26th, February 9th, and August 23rd? Carols are Rorschach and lie-detector rolled in one.

3. Take the carol "Angels We Have Heard on High." One of the lines goes, "Come, adore on bended knee." I sang that line a million times as a kid but later began to ask what it meant to "adore" someone, especially on "bended knee."

The carol says the recipient of the knee is: Christ the Lord, the newborn King. (Christmas carol as catechism.)

I wondered what it'd be like to have a "Lord" or "King" in my life upsetting my happiness-quotient (HQ), telling me what cereal to eat, where I can go to the bathroom, and whether I have a doctor when I'm sick—proselytizing like an infidel.

And—for the grammatically-gifted—Kings and Lords never use the subjunctive.

4. People have no sense of how much they give away when

So much deper

they rate Frosty and Pa rum pum pum over the founder of the holiday. It not only reveals the inner life of the person but the extent to which his faith requires him to help others—with time, money, attitude, sweat—and, on a macro level, to stand for policies that allow everyone to share in America's bounty. It's a radical definition of family.

5. The best Christmas carol I ever sang is "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming," from the centuries-old German: "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen," a hymn worlds apart from "Frosty the Snowman," "Jingle Bells Rock," and blue Elvis.

6. Years ago I sang in a choir and, when Christmas rolled around, "Lo, How a Rose" topped our repertoire; we sang it in four-parts the way the Mormon Tabernacle Choir does today.

Our choir did a lot of chant, four part-hymns, and once we sang a six-part Mass by Palestrina with harmonies as close as Crosby, Stills, and Nash.

7. "Lo, How a Rose" is about a woman who gives birth to a child in a manger in a stable—a story every Christian child knows by heart. The hymn shines light on her ancestral tree especially on a savior who will come "Amid the cold of winter." And will live and die that way—amid the cold of winter.

8. Musically "Lo, How a Rose" is in 4/4 time with the opening "Lo" getting two beats—a kind of "hear ye hear ye." I think the Mormon Tabernacle Choir jumps the gun on the count or maybe they slip into "how" too soon. Listen for yourself. Here are the words of "Lo":

Verse One

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming / From tender stem hath sprung / Of Jesse's lineage coming / As men of old have sung.

*It came, a flower bright, /Amid the cold of winter
When half-gone was the night.*

Verse Two

*Isaiah 'twas foretold it, /The Rose I have in mind:
With Mary we behold it, /The virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright /She bore to men a Savior
When half-gone was the night.*

Verse Three

*This Flower, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor /The darkness everywhere.
True man, yet very God, /From sin and death He saves us
And lightens every load.*

So much depends on a boy who will lighten the load of everyone. If that song were a vacuum cleaner, I'd have bought it years ago to get the cat hair off my rug—but I must admit I did buy it . . . and the cat hair is still on the rug.

Author's editorial note: That is what I jotted down in my Christmas carol free-for-all. I hope you have one. To all who celebrate the joyous light a winter night affords when things grow small, I wish you well, and freedom from the torment of what's closed us down—we live amid the cold of winter.

In the old westerns they used to shout: the cavalry's coming! The cavalry's coming! But the cavalry's already here: in all those faces sweating behind a plastic shield to save the life of a soul who refused to wear a mask; in the kid who delivers pizza to the door; and in the guy at the Customer Service desk who still treats you like a person.

To all of you, you front-line workers, I kneel down in adoration, especially those who hear Pa rum pum pum pum the way Jesus played it.

Twenty-Twenty's been a long long winter. Feliz Navidad, toda mi familia. Feliz Navidad.

(Dedicated to Jim and Wanda Gardner)

(Editor's note: Dennis Sullivan, a member of the Albany Catholic Worker Community, is author of several books on restorative justice and a baker of extraordinary pies. His most recent book, *Homeward Bound*, is published by The Troy Book Makers. An earlier edited version of this essay appeared in *The Altamont Enterprise*, where his monthly columns appear.)

Who Are We?

We assist families and women who are low-income and/or temporarily homeless. We also support many families who are immigrants, regardless of their documentation.

We are Diana Conroy and Fred Boehrer and family, along with a whole lot of supporters who join us for prayer, meals, volunteering, demonstrations and offer donations. We do not receive a salary for our work at Emmaus House. As a Catholic Worker community we live in voluntary poverty, practice nonviolence and offer works of mercy. We receive no government assistance, but rely upon personal and group donations. Since we are neither incorporated nor tax-exempt, donations to Emmaus House are not tax-deductible.

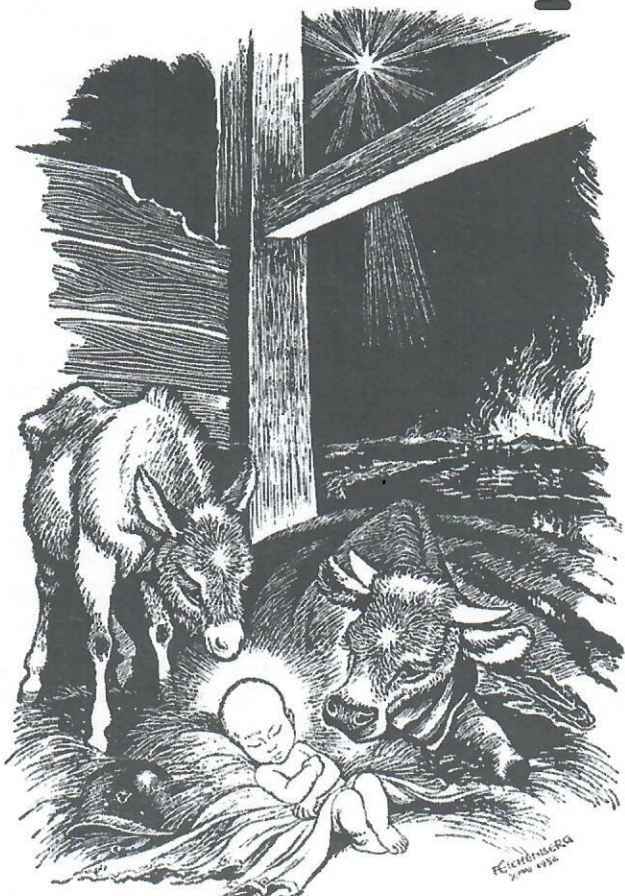
Our ability to serve others depends upon the generosity of our readers.

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Checks may be payable to "Emmaus House" or "Albany Catholic Worker."

Feel free to e-mail us about our ministry:
fred.acw@gmail.com or
dianaconroy@gmail.com

ands on a boy



A. Berline

Letter from South Africa

Dear Emmaus House Family & Community,

I greet you all and wish a Merry Christmas. I hope you and your families have remained safe amidst the global Covid-19 pandemic. The world news keep us updated about the status of the pandemic globally and we can only hope that your families are not directly affected. We are saddened by the numbers of those whose lives the virus claimed and pray that God will comfort them in these times of great sorrow and uncertainty. Last night our President [Ramaphosa] cautioned us to be extra cautious as the second wave is predicted., especially with the festive season on us. We wish each one of you safety.

I am sure some of you are aware that we lost our mom [Gogo Celestine Zondi] on the 29th of April 2020 -- when the country was on high alert for COVID-19. We are grateful that after spending almost three weeks in hospital she returned home COVID-19 free. She passed away a week after being discharged. Sad as we were, we thank God for the 86 years she had on this planet where she dedicated her life to the welfare of the people of KwaNdebeqheke. The community loved our mom even during the last two years of her life which were not easy. They visited her, came to pray and eat with her, and made her feel good amidst her physical ailments. We feel blessed to have shared our dear mother with a lot of people.

I wish to share one joke that happened on the day of my mom's "final send-off". After leaving the graveyard, which is at our home premises, I met this little girl (about 6 years of age) behind one of our houses. She was crying and looked like it had been quite a while by the look of her face. I wondered why nobody had paid attention to her. I asked her what the problem was and she explained that two older kids had told her they would not have a Christmas Party at our homestead on the 26th of December because Gogo Zondi was gone forever.

I comforted her and promised her it will happen. In any case, for the last two years mom was no longer involved in these events. Rather, I took over and delegated my son, Nhloso and his cousins to be involved. It's amazing how it has become fun for our children as well to bring joy to these kids. While initially it benefitted the kids from the Imbalenhle Day Care (our mom's initiative), we see that older Emmaus House scholars also join in and are happy with whatever little gift they receive. Therefore, I look forward to hosting the "First Annual Gogo Zondi Children's Christmas Party" on the 26th of December 2020.

KwaNdebeqheke during Covid-19

The coronavirus context demonstrated beyond any doubt the gross inequalities that exist in our country. High profile government officials are suspended for stealing COVID-19 funds meant for the poor which they are said to have preyed on for their self-enrichment. These funds have not reached remote parts of the province, which KwaNdebeqheke is part of. KwaNdebeqheke has never benefitted from any government relief funds, hence in the first place my mom's (and my) involvement in helping out in small ways.

When lockdown was declared from March 26, all forms of schooling came to a standstill. Some KwaNdebeqheke

breadwinners (most of whom do not have education) were laid off from work. They suffered from hunger on a daily basis: some were not even able to afford one meal a day.

People who could afford to drop some noon perishables at my home did so because they knew that the two women, who were my mother's caregivers, would prepare some soup and bread for those who needed food the most. We managed to put together to feed those who needed food the most. The helpers felt they were useful since reaching out kept them busy. We have a big yard at home, so they have been growing vegetables, which they share with those in need. We continue keeping mom's caregivers until we know the way forward. They have families that depend on them which would starve if they lost the income they receive. So, we will just wait and see. They did a wonderful job caring for our mother with such dignity and respect and love.

On the positive side, nobody in our village has suffered or died from Covid-19 related symptoms. When the disease began, I asked colleagues in my department to translate some literature into isiZulu which is our vernacular. I arranged for the pamphlets to be photocopied and sent to KwaNdebeqheke, thanks to my faculty which supported the initiative by paying for the courier costs. Young people, especially those who have benefitted from Emmaus House Scholarships, volunteered to go door to door to educate the community, especially those who cannot read or write. They taught them how to protect themselves and prevent it from killing the villagers, especially those with comorbidities and the elderly. My university also helped with buying materials to sew cloth mask and supplied soap. Young people emphasised the importance of washing hands regularly. There was no way we could provide sanitisers, as they are just too expensive.

As an update, here are the scholars that were supported by Emmaus House in 2020

2020 Emmaus House Scholars

5. Mthalane Bukhulu Grade 12
6. Mshengu Minenhle Grade 11
7. Mshengu Phila Grade 10
8. Mbhele Siboniso Grade 7

(I am not sure either that the other children will move to the next grades due to Covid-19 non-schooling)

Let me take this opportunity to wish each one of you a better and Happy New Year in 2021.

Kind regards to you and family,



Mpume Zondi, South Africa

Editors' note: Emmaus House is collecting backpacks to ship to the village of KwaNdebeqheke for all children (young and old) for their new school year (which begins in January). Please drop off your backpack donations to Emmaus House (or have them shipped to us at):

Emmaus House (Albany Catholic Worker)

45 Trinity Place, Albany, N.Y. 12202

(518) 482-4966 - Thanks!

Urban Gardens: Connecting Farms and Cities

By Dick Shirey

My main job as an Ignatian Volunteer at the Emmaus House has been to help Fred and Diana prepare and plant vegetables and flowers in wood framed boxed beds of soil near the Emmaus House. The boxes are mostly on top of gravel or just plain lousy soil. Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, would say that through this inner-city garden, we are "building a new society within the shell of the old." Vegetables are grown primarily to support the House, their families, and to share with the neighborhood.

Therein is a personalism that comes with them. Many of our tomatoes started from the care of Voorheesville gardener Dennis Sullivan (see his Christmas essay in this issue.) Most of our other plants originate from Roxbury Farm, a community utilizing biodynamic growing methods, in Columbia County. They started as seeds in the Roxbury greenhouses. Diana and I make sure they are distributed in community gardens in low-income areas of the Albany. Part of my role is to serve as a bridge between Roxbury Farm and these special gardens around Albany.

We plant spinach, lettuce, cucumbers, squash, eggplant, tomatoes, cabbage, chard, collards, potatoes, peas, green beans, onions, and more. All the beds have marigolds and other flowers nearby to beautify the vegetable beds and keep some pests away from the vegetables.

On most days we work a couple hours, then prayerfully reflect on readings and the signs of the times. One of the charisms of the Catholic Worker movement is a focus on the idea of culture, and, for Emmaus House, the culture of agriculture. This focus has gifted me with insight into my personal culture. For me, the beauty of the tomato blossom, an eggplant or squash flower feeds my gardener's soul. I feel a great solidarity with gardeners and farmers, past and present, who have nurtured plants from seed to fruit. I especially feel a connection with my deceased relatives who were gardeners and farmers.

From this inner-city garden, I have reflected on the web of creation, the embedded life-force in the seeds, the insects that pollinate them and all who work and share in abundance. I feel a strong bond with nature and especially with the giver of the life-force that impels growth from seed to maturity.

The vegetables and flowers soften the sometimes-harsh urban landscape and enable a personal connection with the neighbors of Emmaus House. Not long ago, Fred harvested a giant cucumber from the back garden. On the way back to the house we encountered a neighbor Reggie. Fred greeted him, "Hey, how are you doing?... How would you like a cucumber?" Reggie lit up. "I love cucumbers; I'll make a salad out of it when I get home."

On another occasion, carrying a large bag of spinach along the street, we encountered two women whom we never met before. They were curious about the spinach. Fred simply gave it to them. This led to introductions and the exchange of names. One of the women introduced herself as Patricia. I told her my sister's name is Patricia. We chatted. I told her my sister was "tough." She said, "so am I, tough as leather." We had a big laugh.

I am grateful to have been part of these small interactions, among others. It's nice to make personal connections in this neighborhood where gun violence has twice littered the street in front of Emmaus House with dozens of shell casings. These inner-city garden plots – both vegetable and floral - are a welcome alternative to abandoned lots. I pray for ongoing transformation from violence to the peace of a "new society within the shell of the old".

Peter Maurin's 1936 Easy Essay "Personalist Communitarian" continues to inspire my vision:

A personalist is a go-giver,
not a go-getter...
Through words and deeds
he brings into existence
a common unity,
the common unity
of a community.

For the complete essay (and others), see *The Forgotten Radical Peter Maurin: Easy Essays from the Catholic Worker* edited by Lincoln Rice, (Fordham University Press, 2020) pp. 208-9.

(Dick Shirey is a member of the Albany Catholic Worker Community and an Ignatian Volunteer.)



Children of KwaNdebeqheke village shout "Siyabonga!" ("Thank you!") to Emmaus House supporters. This photo is from several years ago. It is time for us to replenish them, in time for the start of their new school year (which begins in January.) Please drop-off or mail your backpack donations to Emmaus House by December 30. We will ship them all to KwaNdebeqheke.

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Eileen/Dick Shirey
112 Eileen St.
Albany NY 12203

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Emmaus House!

*Thanks for your ongoing support as we
serve low-income families in Albany and
throughout the Capital Region.*

We need:

toilet paper	canned vegetables & fruit
toothpaste	toothbrushes
bath soap (Ivory)	napkins
laundry detergent	dish detergent
tall kitchen trash bags	vegetable oil
rice	pasta
tomato sauce	beans
tuna fish	mayonnaise

- gift cards to: Price Chopper, Hannaford, ShopRite, Stewarts, and Honest Weight Food Co-Op
- CDTA Navigator Cards
- gift cards for Target, Visa or Mastercard
- Financial donations (payable to "Emmaus House" or "Albany Catholic Worker")

