

CYCLES OF TRUTH



Liturgical Incarnations and Incantations

by Jeff Smith

In Thanksgiving to the
community of Koinonia
past, present, and future;
especially to my friend
Moses, the liberator,
who keeps me in line.

a special thanks to the following people;
Elizabeth Girard - cover art
Tom Braak - cover photo
Monica Ensing - cover design
Eric Skogland - illustrations

There is no copyright on this book. Please feel free to reproduce
or use in anyway; subversion, camping toilet paper, fire starter, or anything
else that might not be complicit with banality or in collusion with the C.I.A.

Contents

Introduction	
January 25	Conversion of Paul Is it possible to visit a death camp?
February 23	Feast of Polycarp on the train to Dauchau
March 7	Feast of Perpetua & Felicitas Standing Over Me
March 21	Feast of Hildegard of Bingen A Lament of Central Americans in Exile
March 24	Oscar Romero: Martyr of El Salvador Felipe
March 25	Feast of the Annunciation Good Friday Easter splinters and planks
April 4	Feast of Martin Luther King Jr. Soweto Massacre in GR
April 9	Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Martyr
May 1	Feast of Joseph the Worker
May 12	Feast of Nereus, Achilleus & Pancras
June 11	Feast of Barnabas fast moving projectiles
June 21	Feast of Mechtild of Magdeburg
June 28	Feast of Potamiaena & Basilides
July 4	Feast of Eusebius ?
July 22	Feast of Mary of Magdela
August 10	Feast of Lawrence
August 28	Feast of Augustine ? We need an enemy
September 13	Feast of John Chrysostom
September 16	Feast of Cyprian
October 12	Repentance: Ownership of Our History What good is it?
October 12	Jubilee in the Year of the Quincentenary
November 1	All Saints Day
November 11	Feast of Martin of Tours a funeral for thousands
November 16	Feast of the Jesuit Martyrs
November 22	Feast of Cecilia
November 23	Feast of Clement of Rome
November 29	Feast of Dorothy Day anxious anxiety
December 2	Feast of Martyred Women A Qanjol translation of Psalm 126
December 13	Feast of Lucy

INTRODUCTION

"I went to the woods because i wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if i would not learn what it had to teach, and not when i came to die, discover that i had not lived."

H. D. Thoreau

"Leap ! Leap in ordered dance.

Be a vanquisher of evil spirits."

Mechtild

i can not completely articulate the fullness of this book in words. Like Thoreau, i want to live my life deliberately, with passion and courage. The bringing together of this poetry and prose has been the result of some dreams actualized, but mostly the fruits of my struggle to live koinonia - a right relationship: with myself, my community, mother earth and the spirit.

These reflections are centered around feast days in the liturgical calendar, some traditional, some new. They follow a pattern, a cycle, a movement towards a clearer understanding of justice, truth, and a committed life. The non-human world moves in beautiful cycles, cycles of change and newness. It seems that there is a natural ebb and flow of life that can be generated from cyclical celebration. This liturgical calendar has the ability to nurture hope, foster memory, and create a sustainable future. This type of re-membering and envisioning seems viable only within a communal context. It is to my community that i owe this book, its integrity, and its completion.

i begin the book with the feast of the conversion of Paul, partly because that is where hope begins, in conversion, but also because it is dedicated to my brother Jim who was that catalyst for change in my life. i am also greatly indebted to the individuals who, along the journey, have continued to challenge my belief and strengthen my conviction. It is my hope that the contents of this book will be an avenue for discussion, soul searching, and mostly action. i struggled to limit the scholarly approach with the intention of keeping it simple and honest. There are already too many theoretical works that are devouring the forests. i can only hope this endeavor doesn't follow in that category. i pray that the tree spirits will forgive me for my use of their bodies in order to share my thoughts with others. Like everything we fight against, this book too has blood on it.

we stand for what we stand on !

CONVERSION of PAUL

Jan. 25

(for my brother who transformed my life)

"As Saul was coming near the city of Damascus, suddenly a light from the sky flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul Saul! Why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' he asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you persecute,' the voice said. 'But get up and go into the city, where you will be told what you must do.'"

Acts 9:3-6

People who have converted to Christianity will no doubt tell a less dramatic story on how their life was changed. With those of us who are converts, I am one, the metanoia (Greek for conversion; radical transformation of mind and heart) that occurs is usually a long and subtle experience. In fact, it is an ongoing event in my life. I am forever converting myself in order to put on the mind of Christ more fully.

The feast of the Conversion of Paul is dear to me because I believe that what led Paul to Christ, and me to Christ, was not so much Divine intervention as it was the witness of Christians that we had encountered.

We know very little of Paul prior to his conversion except that in Acts 7 and 8 he persecuted the church. His first encounter with Christians that we know of is with Stephen, at the end of Acts 7. Stephen, the church's first martyr, was stoned, and as the beginning of Acts says, "and Saul approved of his murder." Acts 8 then goes on to say, "that very day the church in Jerusalem began to suffer cruel persecution...Saul tried to destroy the church, going from house to house, he dragged out the believers, both women and men, and threw them into jail." From then on we hear nothing of Paul until Acts 9 when he encounters the risen Lord.

My reaction to all of this, in light of his conversion, is that on the road to Damascus, Paul's encounter with the risen Lord was not so much a blinding light, as it was this awesome inner light that transformed his heart and mind because of the immense amount of love he witnessed from the Christians. There is no mention in Acts 7 and 8 of the Christians struggling with Paul, or using violence to defend themselves; no mention of them slandering Paul; no mention of the church hating Paul for his actions...the only reaction mentioned is by Stephen, in Acts 7:60, where Stephen asks the Lord to forgive the actions of Paul and the others.

It is my belief that the non-violent love of the Christians, even in the midst of such persecution, is what transformed this man from Tarsus.

Paul's life indeed affirms this. Just after his conversion, the Jews sought to kill him for his preaching in

Acts 9:23. We know he spent much time in prison, was almost stoned a few times...and yet he never advocates violence or hatred, but rather, steadfastness in the Lord. But the most powerful testimony to Christians about their conduct to the enemy from Paul is found in Romans 12. The whole chapter is an explanation of our response as Christians to all we encounter...especially the enemy.

There is one text in Romans 12 I wish to point out, because since Augustine, it has been misunderstood. Paul's statement about how one should treat the enemy: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him a drink, for by so doing you will be heaping burning coals upon his head."

The traditional way of interpreting this is to assume that Paul looks forward to severe pain or punishment of the enemy, either literally at the time of the final judgement or psychological anguish, which will come from pangs of guilt. This has been the dominant position since Augustine.

In opposition to that, it has been suggested that what Paul is referring to here is an Egyptian repentance ritual in which a person was to bear coals of fire on the head in order to bring about reconciliation. Accordingly, there would be no reference to pain or agony of any kind, since carrying coals on the head was a normal way of transporting them at that time. It is argued by scholars that any reference to pain inflicted on the enemy in this context, regardless of the purpose of the pain, has to be dismissed. It contradicts all that Paul says here about feeding the enemy to keep him alive and about 'overcoming evil with good.' (Romans 12:21)

This attitude that Paul has about overcoming evil with good has always been one of the cornerstones of my faith. I did not persecute Christians in the manner that Paul did, but again it was the witness of Christians who transformed my life.

I have always been amazed by the witness of the martyrs and the early church and a litany of people since who would rather die than harm God's creation. Whatever it was that made these people live with such intensity, I wanted it. I believe it is what makes us distinctively human. Jesus affirms this by telling us to love our enemies in order to be "whole as God in heaven is whole."

Pray with us, Paul

is it possible to visit a death camp?

silent steps
through the gate
barbed wire laid
out like flower beds
along the wall

efficiency barracks
close quarters
effective for smelling each others stench
floors fit to eat off of
not enough food

unburned documents
photos. letters
Himmler smiles at the camera
Eichmann began his career here
suicides are welcomed

twisted bodies
emaciated skeleton figures
star of David

one photo of a man
barbed wire foreground
lifeless eyes
look of intense despair
Damn you who took that
picture if you lived!!

ovens for bodies
not for bread
memorials built
litany of names
chapels built
why?

God did not answer their prayer
why should she answer ours?
prayers which should plead for
mercy for allowing it to happen
for being the impetus for its demise

if hell could be a museum
Welcome to Dachau.

"Abandon hope. all ye who enter here."

FEAST of POLYCARP

Feb. 23

"I assure you that whoever declares publicly that they belong to me, the son of God will do the same for them before the angels of God. But whoever rejects me publicly, the son of God will reject before the angels of God...."

"When they bring you to be tried in the synagogues or before governors or rulers, do not be worried about how you will defend yourself or what you will say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."

Luke 12:8-9, 11-12

On February 23, we celebrate those who took these words from Luke seriously. Possibly the oldest non-biblical account of a confessor/martyr that we have is about the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp. Polycarp was said to have been a hearer of John the apostle and martyred in 155 or 156 C.E. The account is a bit lengthy so I will only share a little with you.

Eusebius, the church historian, relates that the irenarch (police chief) and his father tried to persuade Polycarp before entering the arena by saying, "But what harm is it to say 'Lord Caesar', and to offer sacrifice and be saved?" Polycarp remained silent and finally said, "I am not going to do what you counsel me." Then upon entering the arena the Proconsul asked him, "Take the oath and I will let you go, revile Christ." Polycarp said, "For eight-six years have I been his servant, and he has done me no wrong and how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"

According to the work of M.P. Charlesworth, Polycarp was most probably a victim of an imperial law initiated under the Emperor Domitian. Anyone suspected of disloyalty was offered momentary freedom by offering sacrifice before the image of the emperor. If a person refused, she or he could be charged with atheism, neglect of the worship of the gods. As a result of Polycarp's confession he was fed to the wild beasts.

Earlier I called Polycarp a confessor/martyr, because his martyrdom came about by virtue of his public confession of belief in Christ, in spite of the consequences. There were many who would follow in Polycarp's footsteps, but there were also some who were not killed even though they were imprisoned or tortured for their confession. Some of these people were in the second through sixth centuries called confessors. They were given titles not just because they suffered for their faith, but because of that suffering were a witness to the community. In fact, according to Edward Schillebeeckx' book, "The Church With a Human Face", the confessor was one who acted in a ministered capacity. They were ordained without the laying on of hands, their witness was enough proof of the Holy Spirit's presence in them; they were also known to forgive sins. (1)

"X 1. But if a confessor has been in chains in prison for the Name, hands are not laid on him for the diaconate or the presbyter office. For he has the office of the presbyterate by his confession. But if he be appointed bishop, hands shall be laid on him."

Hippolytus of Rome - Apostolic Tradition

But Hippolytus is not the only one we get information concerning confessors. Cyprian, a student of Tertullian, and a presbyter in Carthage, himself writes several letters to Confessors in prison as well as to fellow presbyters encouraging them to, "...care for those who with glorious voice have confessed the Lord, and are confined in prison..." (2) In his letters to "Moyses and Maximus, and the Rest of the Confessors", he says, "A first and single confession makes blessed; you confess as often as, when asked to retire to prison you prefer the prison with faith and virtue; your praises are as numerous as the days; as the months roll onward, ever your merits increase. He conquers once who suffers at once; but he who continues always battling with punishments, and is not overcome with suffering, is daily crowned." (3)

For Cyprian this is our glory, to endure any suffering for the faith. In a letter to the same group he asks the rhetorical question, "For what more glorious, or what more blessed, can happen to any man from the divine condescension, than to confess the Lord God, in death itself, before his very executioners?" (4) Cyprian admonishes this in the confessors: to publically express your disapproval with the legitimate system if it breeches God's law and to, under pain of punishment, refuse to submit to, or comply with the state crimes. For the confessors their witness validated their ministry not the ecclesiastical authority.

After the sixth century very few people, if any, were considered confessors. My assumption is because there were fewer people who were willing to suffer for their faith. In fact, the next period in history where confessor or confessing Christian was widely used was during the Nazi era in Europe. Here we find not only individuals, but also whole communities taking on the role of confessor. Soon the resistance movement to Hitler in Europe was being called the confessing church and was headed by the likes of Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. What is interesting about the confessing church is that they were only a small percentage of Christians in Europe. One wonders why more of them did not publically confess Christ and not comply with Hitler. They may have known the consequences, but if they had publically confessed maybe six million Jews would not have been slaughtered.

Today we are still witnessing individuals and communities who, like Polycarp, are confessing their allegiance to Christ and not to "Caesar", especially in places like South Africa and Latin America. You could even say that there is a confessing church here in the U.S.A. There are people and

communities who are publically confessing their allegiance to Christ but denouncing "Caesar" in all his forms; militarism, nationalism, wealth, power, and consumerism.

i also believe that, like in Nazi Germany, the American confessing church is a minority. My hope is that we do not wait for another holocaust to happen in order to see the price that is paid for not confessing Christ publically. So let us, like Polycarp, confess publicly our faithfulness to christ. Let us be charged with atheotes - refusal to worship the gods of metal, refusal to be possessed by the gods of mammon, and refusal to be addicted to the gods of status.

Pray with us Polycarp

Notes:

- 1) Edward Schillebeeckx. "The Church With a Human Face". pgs. 131-140.
- 2) "The Ante-Nicene Fathers". Vol. 5. Cyprian Epistle XXXVI pg. 315.
- 3) Ibid. Epistle XV pg. 295.
- 4) Ibid. Epistle XXV pg. 303.

on the train to Dachau

on the train
not knowing
crowded with bodies
many different tongues

on the train
each stop
more bodies
smoke stacks at a distance

on the train
a woman
soft eyes
wondering
will she taste my sweat
one last time

on the train
packed in
heavy air
spine presses against elbows
can't inhale deeply

on the train
blurred trees go by
palms wet with fear
infant across from me
begins to cry

on the train
on the train
religious symbol adorns
his neck
don't know if he prays

on the train
arrive in zwei minuten
slowly we slow....down
tracks scream
as train grabs metal

on the train
doors open
one thought scares me
all these bodies
cameras in hand
want to see
Dachau

FEAST of PERPETUA & FELICITAS

Martyrs - March 7

"And his mother and brothers came;and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting about him. 'Your mother and brothers are outside,asking for you.' And he replied,'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking around on those who sat about him,he said,'Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'"

Mark 3:31-35

We hear much today,particularly from conservative American Christians,about the need to restore the biblical view of the family. It is assumed by these spokes-persons that the "biblical family" is a male dominated,nuclear family consisting of a working husband,a non-working wife,who is full time "mother",and several dependent children. What is really being assumed here is that the bible endorses a conservative version of the late Victorian,Anglo-Saxon patriarchal family. Such rhetoric about the "biblical view of the family" lacks a sense of the socio-economic history of the family over the last three to four thousand years.

If one was to venture on a biblical view of the family one would soon find that the bible advocates several models. In the Hebrew scriptures,a family consisted of several hundred people and was,in fact,a clan or small tribe. These families had a patriarchal head whose members consisted of several concubines,their children,his slaves,and their children,plus many other relatives and friends. I doubt that Americans would advocate such a family structure,although some might prefer it.

In the New Testament,we also have a diverse view of the family. The pseudo-Pauline writings generally support the existing family structure known as the "pater familias", again a patriarchal mode.

Lastly I would like to mention the type of family that Jesus initiates. In Mark 3:31-35,the text at the beginning of this article,we see Jesus proclaiming a new kind of family,one that has voluntarily gathered by personal faith. This family is obviously in tension with the traditional blood-line family. In Matt.10:37,"He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." This is a preface to a discourse on discipleship and later on in the gospel story we hear Jesus affirm that teaching by saying,"Truly I say to you there is no one who has left house or brothers,sisters or mothers,fathers,children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundred fold now in this time..."(Mark 10:29-30)

For Jesus,the blood is secondary,what is required is to

first be faithful to the gospel, and this I might add, had serious ramifications on two levels. In those days the family was not just a social unit, it was a model of the ancestral religion and public order. For one to break from one's family was a subversive act against the ancestral religion as well as the nation state. This is precisely what happens to the women we celebrate today in the liturgical calendar.

Perpetua and Felicitas were two women who were martyred in North Africa at the beginning of the third century. Perpetua was from a prominent family and Felicitas was her slave. Perpetua was recently married and had just given birth to a son. She was arrested while being a catechumen along with four others, one of whom was Felicitas. Perpetua was begged by her father to consider her duty to the family, but she spurned these demands in order to express her loyalty to Christ. Meanwhile, Felicitas gives birth while in prison, but she too would rather face the beasts than revile Christ.

To the Roman observer this was a ridiculous scandal. Not only do these women refuse the demands of the state but they dare to refuse the demands of the patriarchal family. Felicitas, Perpetua's former slave, is now a sister in faith, and the catechumens imprisoned with them are their new family in Christ. Christ's message of love liberated these women from servitude in their existing families and broke down the barrier of slave and free. They were martyred together, both naked, one with sagging breasts, since she had just given birth, and before death they gave each other a kiss of peace to further display their new sisterhood.

Because of their witness the church made March 7 their feast day and some time in the third or fourth century a basilica was dedicated to Perpetua in Carthage.

It is interesting to note that many people who converted to Christianity at this time were women, slaves, and children; all who had no social standing in society, but in Christ they had a new family. A family which says, "There is no longer Greek nor Jew, slave nor free, male nor female, rather we are all one in Christ Jesus."

Pray with us, women of courage



Standing Over Me

i praise you
i touch you
i taste you

i breathe you
i celebrate you
i delight in you

i grieve you
i mourn you
i fight for you

i worship you
i admire you
i rest in you

ancient
standing tall
you preserve my life.

FEAST of HILDEGARD of BINGEN

March 21

"It is through water
that the Holy Spirit
overcomes
all injustice.
bringing to fulfillment
all her gifts.....

gifts
such that
humankind might thrive
in the moisture of justice
and stream to spiritual things
in the current of truth."

Hildegard

Immersed in water you can feel how it effects your whole being.your movement.sound.perception.and dependency on this powerful liquid. The thought of being plucked from this aquatic life support system....i can't imagine the sheer terror that fish.dolphins.ect...feel as they are permanently kidnapped from their homes.their world. We too are seemingly on the brink of this same predicament. Only we are the ones being kidnapped and doing the kidnapping at the same time. Our world is completely dependent upon water.every facet of our life depends on that fundamental element. And like the dolphin.if we are removed.either by force or by choice(both are apparent).we will die.

i have purposely placed.in heretical fashion.the feast of Hildegard on March 21.the traditional day of the Spring Equinox.to make a point about the church's disregard for the elements. Hildegard was acutely aware of the inter-relatedness of all life and therefore was not blinded by the popular dualism of the West. She saw that water has a rich heritage in the Judeo-Christian tradition and was not confined to being a ritual commodity.

It should come as no surprise to any of us that the Israelites attitude toward water was sacred. Anyone who lives a nomadic life or in the desert for a period of time quickly learns to appreciate.in god-like fashion.the need for the primacy of water. The Israelites were not subjected to the demons of convenience.since Pharaoh had not yet devloped faucet technology. One wonders if the parting of the water would have taken on a new meaning?

As this religious tradition developed.water continued to play a large part in its theological and sacramental life. Baptism(in greek meaning immersion) becomes one of the cornerstones of the faith for the early Christian

communities. Almost all the New Testament writers use it to articulate some element of the faith. For Paul it is a watery grave that brings forth new life(Romans 6:3f),and Luke's section on John the Baptizer states that with baptism our lives are radically changed like an altered landscape(Luke 3:4-6). Even the non-canonical literature of the first few centuries is filled with examples of the centrality of baptism. This centrality was not so much because of the ritual nature but because of it being the initiation into the community and because of its elemental necessity for true life.

The Didache(7:2),says that upon baptism,"..if you have no living water(flowing) then baptize in other water." It seems that using water in its wilder form is preferred over its contained stagnate counterpart. One wonders why baptism may mean so little to us today when we use water that is not only contained and stagnate,but also probably polluted and toxic. It is Tertullian however,who most profoundly expresses our need for water in his treatise on Baptism(1:1f),"But we,little fishes,are born in water after the manner of our 'IXOYE'(Lord),Jesus Christ;nor can we be otherwise saved,except by abiding permanently in the water." Not abiding in this primordial element will mean certain death, not only in a theological sense but physically.

And yet the way we generally relate to water is as a consumer. We consciously pollute it with our own waste(toilets),add toxic chemicals to it in order to "clean" our space,and by our very lifestyle pollute it because of our arrogance,even to the degree that it has become acid rain. i live in the Great Lakes bio-region where 1/4 of the worlds fresh water resources lie,and yet little effort is exerted to stop the onslaught of contamination by the likes of Dow,Consumers Power,and the endless litany of corporate demons.

This we instinctively know,because to resist means we must pay a price. Somewhere we know that Jesus would ask us,"Can you drink of the cup that i drink of;and be baptized in the baptism that i am baptized with?"(Mark 10:38) These words take on an even deeper meaning for us today,since even the opportunity to be truly baptized is a threat because of the pending eco-cide. Justice for humans means justice for all life. We must not wait for the days when we will sit by toxic ridden,oil slicked waters of Babylon and yearn for better days. We must follow the words of the prophet and be quenched with Yaweh's justice.

"If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted;Then light shall rise for you in the darkness,and the gloom shall become for you like mid-day."

"Then the Lord will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land. She will renew your strength,and you shall be like a watered garden,like a spring whose water never fails."

Isaiah 58:10-11

Aquatic suggestions:

- 1) Contribute less to acid rain,use mass transit,bike,walk.
- 2) Use a grey water system(see "The Integral Urban House".by Helga Olkowski,Bill Olkowski,Tom Javits and the Farallones Institute staff.)
- 3) Flush your toilet less,or not at all ...compost your waste.
- 4) Don't let the water run constantly when taking a shower,washing hands or brushing teeth.
- 5) Catch rain water for your house plants and garden.
- 6) Use biodegradable soaps and no toxic cleansers.
- 7) Don't use chemical fertilizers or pesticides and don't buy food from companies who do.
- 8) Reduce,reuse,recycle.
- 9) Swim,and stay off the jet skies.
- 10) Walk and dance in the rain.

Psalm 137

A LAMENT OF CENTRAL AMERICANS IN EXILE

Beside the waters in the United States
there we sat.
loudly we wept.
when we remembered you. O Central America.

Beside the pine trees in her midst
we hung up our guitars.
For there our captors demanded of us
words of song.
and our mockers songs of gladness.

"Sing for us a song of Central America."
O how could we sing Yaweh's song upon
alien soil?
Should i forget you
El Salvador.
Let my right hand whither.
if i do not remember you:
If i do not raise you
El Salvador.
upon my head in celebration!

Remember Yaweh. O sons of uncle sam.
the day of El Salvador.
You who said. "Rape her. rape her.
til she dies!"
O daughter United States. you devastator
blest the one who repays you
the evil you have done to us:
even if they take your babies and
butcher them with machetes!

OSCAR ROMERO

Martyr of El Salvador

March 24

It is late afternoon as i sit in front of an icon of Oscar Romero. The day has been filled with images and events: crosses, blood, silence, market place pomp and circumstance, signs, \$20 a plate glass cafe, and hope...a hope through memory and work of the day justice will bear fruit.

Today is March 24th, the anniversary of the assassination of Oscar Romero, bishop of El Salvador. Today is also a day in which we re-member the execution of a man from Galilee, named Yeshua. A profound coincidence indeed...what can we make of it?

Both were humans who were so intoxicated with the love of others that they willingly risked death. Both lived in countries where there was a wide chasm between rich and poor. Both were confronted with the reality that the very few owned most of the land and were able to keep it because of military support and intervention by the largest military nations of their day. About the only thing they didn't have in common, apart from some sociological formalities, was that Romero, just a few years before his death, went through a conversion that would impact El Salvador forever. Of course, i may be wrong on this matter, since we know little of this Yeshua before his public appearance. It is quite possible that he was just an ordinary Jew who kept his nose out of public affairs. Biblical scholarship has yet to deal with such a question and are scant to do so since we lack any real evidence of approximately his first thirty years. But this is not to be a reflection about the life of Yeshua, at least not directly.

Since Romero lived in our age of quick information and accessibility we are more likely to construct a hermenutic of his life with far less painstaking effort than that of the life of Yeshua. Not without some difficulty however, for just as the authorities sought to discredit or dismiss the person of Yeshua, so too with Romero.

Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman in "Manufacturing Consent, The Political Economy of the Mass Media", have done a marvelous job to show how the media and government authorities went out of their way to dismiss Romero as a communist sympathizer. There was very little coverage, in the U.S.A. press, of the assassination, and what was said gave no indication of who committed the murder. Of course if you ask any Salvadoran campesino who Romero was they could probably direct you to their picture of him that is hung in devotional fashion in their homes. They also probably not hesitate to tell you that it was the military and "los ricos" who killed him. Like some biblical scholars i tend to want to construct

a hermenutic from the testimonies of the people whom Romero walked with, the "anawim", the poor of Yaweh.

It is interesting to discover that prior to his conversion, Romero was very attracted to the Opes Dei movement, a right wing group in the Roman Catholic Church - there is hope for us all. Indeed, Romero was a well educated clergyman who enjoyed the social prestige of the church in Rome and in Latin America for many years. It was not until a large massacre in February of 1977 and the death of a fellow priest, Rutillio Grande, that Romero's ecclesiastical fish scales fell and he began to see that, "the church does not live for its own sake." (1)

Seemingly in no time at all Romero was seen walking the barrios, attending demonstrations and immersing himself in the struggle of the people. In fact, Romero used the struggle of the people as his format for sharing the gospel... i fail to see how else one could do it. He was known to celebrate the eucharist during public gatherings, demonstrations, and even land take-overs. For Romero table fellowship was the best political forum. Only a few short months after the death of Padre Grande, Romero also started a radio program as a means to empower the campesinos and to denounce the military. Romero did not stop there however, he was quite attuned to the fact that in many ways what helped to create the pain of his people was the support of the U.S.A. government.

This prompted Romero to write a letter to Jimmy Carter, where he pleaded with the president to stop supplying the Salvadoran military with weapons. This action was not without consequence. Shortly after Carter received the communication from Romero his administration, "...secretly lobbied the pope to curb the archbishop." (2) The letter was sent in mid February of 1980, in a little more than a month Romero would be dead.

In his own country Romero was even more confrontive and prophetic about the repression of the people. In one of his last radio communications he made his most powerful declaration. He appealed to the Salvadoran soldiers to disarm, to stop the killing of their brothers and sisters. The statement concluded with the focus on the perpetrators, the government:

"We should like the government to take seriously the fact that reforms dyed by so much blood are worth nothing. In the name of God, in the name of our tormented people who have suffered so much and whose laments cry out to heaven, i beseech you, i beg you, i order you in the name of God, stop the repression!" (3)

A few days later, while celebrating with the people, Romero was shot, according to former ambassador to El Salvador Robert White, "...by a plan carried out by D'Aubuson with the aid of former national guardsman of Somoza, but under the protection of General Garcia and Colonel Carrana." (4)

Six days later at Romero's funeral, bombs exploded and some 40 people were killed with hundreds wounded. Again the major media and government authorities tried to blame the

incident on leftist terrorists. What was not reported was a statement made by 22 religious leaders present at the funeral, that said, "...the panic had been started by a bomb thrown from the national palace, followed by machine gun and other shots coming from its second floor." (5)

So today some of us gathered to re-member this man, not in some nostalgic manner but by making a public out-cry to stop the U.S.A. supported violence in El Salvador. We vigiled and leafletted in the hope that we will not forget, by way of political amnesia, or imperialist bourgeoisie thoelogy. Rather we hope to re-member as Romero said, "The world that the church must serve is the world of the poor, and the poor are the ones who decide what it means for the church to really live in the world." (6)

notes:

- 1) Placido Erdozein, "Archbishop Romero, Martyr of El Salvador."
- 2) Chomsky and Herman, "The Manufacture of Consent, The Political Economics of the Mass Media"
- 3) Placido Erdozein, "Archbishop Romero..."
- 4) Chomsky and Herman, "The Manufacture of Consent..."
- 5) ibid.
- 6) Placido Erdozein, "Archbishop Romero..."

Felipe

wide smile
smiling eyes
hands rough....open to mine

on the bus
we hold each other up
sleeping

beans and tortilla banquet
sharing elote under
a mayan moon

walking in the plaza
marketplace communion
brothers on a dirt floor

semana santa
holy week
shot to death
not coming back from the dead.

FEAST of the ANNUNCIATION

March 25

Salvation through a Womyn

The other day i was reading a book that was describing the daily life of poor Latin American womyn. They prepare all their meals from scratch over an open fire, wash the family clothing in a nearby river by beating it, walk several miles sometimes to get fresh water, and give birth to children as early as age 14. Most of these womyn cannot read or write and probably never will. Their lives are filled with pain and hardship that more than likely will never change.

You may think that this is an unusual opening on a reflection about the Annunciation. i however, feel it is very appropriate, since the daily life of third world womyn is very similar to that of first century Palestinian womyn, like Mary of Nazereth.

It is almost impossible for most of us to imagine Mary as poor, illiterate, dark skinned, dark haired, dressed in simple clothes, and looking very tired and very old as a teenager. And yet this is probably an accurate description of her. Still most Christian art portrays Mary as a very beautiful, sophisticated, European, blond womyn. i would like to suggest that most artists portrayed Mary as the cultural womyn of their day. Biblical scholar J.L. McKenzie says that, "It would have rewarded the artist to study closely the hands, wrists, and forearms of womyn who grind meal every morning with a hand mill and who can hoist a water jar two feet tall to the top of their heads. The real Mary could have broken the arms of most of the artists."

For me it is important to talk about Mary on such terms before entering into biblical accounts of her. With many people the annunciation story almost always prompts discussion about Mary's virginity, which historically has led to division amongst Christians. For me the annunciation account is not focused on sexual purity but liberation.

The political atmosphere at the time of the annunciation for the Jews was not good. Expectations of a Messiah were in the air, one that would overthrow the enemy and restore Israel as a great nation. The angel Gabriel tells Mary that she is to give birth to a son whom she will call Jesus. In Greek, Jesus' name means savior, a title given to Roman Emperors. Gabriel also says that, "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David." (Luke 1:32) Both of these statements for any first century Jew would primarily be political, not "spiritual". Here the annunciation is seen as liberation from political oppression.

For Mary, the annunciation has liberating effects on another level. First of all i would like to point out that her pregnancy does not follow from the proper role of womyn. Indeed, it puts Mary under danger as someone who has been

making her own choices about her body and sexuality without regard for her future husband. She may be accused of being a prostitute or a "loose womyn" and "put away". Luke, however, goes out of his way to stress that Marys motherhood is a free choice. When the angel arrives, Mary does not consult Joseph, but makes her own decision. Luke sees this free choice as an act of faith. The decision to have the redemptive child is between her and God. Salvation comes through a womyn, and as 19th century womyns rights activist Sojourner Truth says, "Jesus came from God and a womyn, man had nothing to do with him." Here the annunciation is seen as liberation for Mary from patriarchal oppression.

Gabriel then goes on to tell Mary that Elizabeth, her relative, is also with child. So without hesitation Mary went to see Elizabeth. These two womyn are seen singing praises to each other. Elizabeth sings praise about Marys womynhood (Luke 1:42-45) and Mary sings praise about Gods coming justice (Luke 1:46-55), in the magnificat.

We have been accustomed to hearing the magnificat sung to exquisite Gregorian or classical music and interpreted in a very devotional manner. Yet if we look at Marys song we find that it is quite revolutionary. The proud are scattered and the mighty are put down from their thrones, but the lowly are raised up. The hungry will be filled with good things, while the rich are sent away empty handed. Only someone who knew poverty and hardship could proclaim this song of Gods judgement.

In the beginning of this reflection i mentioned the plight of the third world womyn. What i did not mention is that it is precisely third world womyn who are best articulating Gods justice today. They are conspiring like Mary and Elizabeth to give birth to a new age where Gods mercy will reign forever and ever.

Act for us, womyn of justice !

GOOD FRIDAY

"a scandal....and an absurdity."

For most of us a cross is a common everyday symbol. We see crosses on necklaces and earrings, clocks, bookmarkers.... on almost anything that is marketable. The symbol of the cross has been used to usher in "Holy Wars" against the infidels, to bless submarines with nuclear warheads, and burned to mark victims of racism. In Christian theology it has most often been a sign of redemption and salvation. Catholics still frequent the sign of the cross, often quite flippantly, before most of their prayers. But what was the cross to people in ancient history?

Most people think that Rome invented the cross as a tool to kill (crucify) social deviants. However, crucifixion was found to be used in Assyria and Persia hundreds of years before the Roman empire. Crucifixion became an especially popular form of execution in the Hellenistic world after the reign of Alexander the Great. Rome then continued to use it even up to the time of the Emperor Constantine.

Historically crucifixion was a punishment used against political criminals (Matt. 27:37). However, Rome inflicted it upon the lower classes, slaves, violent criminals, and foreign captives. In 7 C.E. in Judea, a revolt was mounted against Rome. It was quickly squelched, and the Roman Empire crucified 2,000 Jews in Jerusalem for its rebellious uprising. No doubt Jesus himself heard of or even witnessed this atrocity, which meant he was no stranger to this type of death.

The main reason for crucifixion for the ancients was of course to act as a deterrence. Victims such as criminals were crucified at crossroads, in theatres, on high ground, and at the spot where the crimes took place. Generally they were also stripped naked as a further sign of humiliation and left on the cross for days so that all could see these despised people.

But for a Jew the nakedness was not the only form of humiliation. In Deuteronomy 21:22-23, we find that "one who is impaled on a tree is an affront to God." To be a Jew and to be crucified was the worst form of death, indeed it was a blasphemy toward Yaweh.

With all of this in mind it is no wonder Paul says that the crucified Christ is a "scandal" to the religious Jews, and an "absurdity" to the intellectual Greeks and other Gentiles. What kind of a person would believe in a God that is humiliated, spat upon, mocked, stripped naked, and nailed to a tree like a common criminal?

These words may leave us baffled or speechless. But I believe that the earliest message of the crucified God demonstrates the solidarity of the love of God with the suffering of those who are marginalized, stripped of dignity, and put to death by human cruelty. The Christian God is a Crucified God!

It is interesting to see how the cross has evolved as a

symbol for us. But in reality, the cross is just an historically bound symbol. The wood itself is not the redemptive element, but the life that brought it there. If the Romans had executed Jesus in an electric chair our symbolism might be significantly different. It would surely have ramifications on our collective stance towards capital punishment. The jewelry market would no doubt be manufacturing countless necklaces with electric chairs on them, and pious devotional art would no doubt be depicting Jesus on the road to Golgatha with an electric chair strapped to his back. But it is our hope that his followers would be preaching a God who was electricuted with other common criminals...and the religious community would be saying its a scandal...and the academics would still be saying its an absurdity.

the cool fall breeze
moves through the hanging
spider plant

as i read
by candle light
next to the Farside poster
about Nazi doctors
and nuclear scientists

and i wonder
what the hell
i'm doing in
this world
and whether or
not i'm in this
world
and where the hell
is this world

shattering wine bottles
remind me of this world
and one of the addicts
says he can sing
better than James Brown

Moses yawns
next to the fern
giving birth to a
new branch

and i look
at the wall
and ponder its etchings

si quieres paz,
lucha por justicia !

EASTER

The Feastal Protest Against Death

"Where, Death, is your victory? Where, Death is your power to hurt." I Cor. 15:55

It is with much hesitation that i attempt to write about resurrection. Not because i have difficulty in believing that the resurrection was a historical reality and not because i don't believe that it has the power to transform lives. i hesitate to write about such an event because i believe that the resurrection is not taken seriously in our culture.

First of all to experience the resurrection means one must experience the cross. This alone, in our culture, is enough reason to quickly dismiss the belief in the resurrection. We are constantly being reminded, in any way we can, to avoid voluntary suffering for others. We may, like Peter, on our lips proclaim that Jesus is Lord, but when it comes to picking up our own instruments of death we have all kinds of excuses. In fact, we, like Peter, will go out of our way to prevent each other from entering into the blood, sweat, and tears of the passion of God by rationalizing everything.

Another reason why i believe it is difficult to believe in the resurrection in this culture is because of our fear of death. i didn't come upon this conclusion by taking a poll or hearing people state that fact. i make the conclusion by virtue of peoples lifestyles. Of all the countries in the world, i believe we go out of our way so much to "protect" ourselves from death that we end up killing others and ourselves.

Many Christians in the U.S.A. must not really believe in the power of the resurrection otherwise they would not be so intent on trying to save their own skins. We have an intolerable fear of death. We believe that death has the last word and that we will just end up being food for worms. And yet in the resurrection account, the angel tells the woman, "Do not be afraid: for i know you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He is risen." (Matt. 28:5) In fact, in the rest of the New Testament, there is no mention of the believing community living in fear: fear of arrest, fear of imprisonment, fear of death. Still we continue to hide in our "upper rooms" wishing that we will not be associated with the creative love, exemplified in Jesus.

The people that should be and are afraid of the resurrection are those in power. Matthew tells us that the chief priests and the Pharisees were afraid that the disciples would steal Jesus' body and spread this word of anarchy....the resurrection. So they requested a guard be posted at the tomb. The powers that be were plotting to discredit Gods power over death. Indeed, after the resurrection the guards were bribed by the religious leaders

to."Tell people,his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep."(Matt.28:13)

So the resurrection becomes in large part,as Dan Berrigan says,"an interference with the death process of the state". It says that the state,with all its power,has been robbed of the last word,because God has the last word. The resurrection is a feastal protest against death. Edward Schillibeeckx also says,"It is an affirmation of Gods trust in the life and teaching of Jesus." So if we are willing to enter into the human condition as much as Jesus and live lives of non-violent love,we too will transcend death. Faith in the resurrection should not simply be hope in the after life,but participation in Gods creative rebellion against death.

Finally i believe it is difficult to believe in the resurrection because of who we are. According to Walter Brueggemann,"the resurrection was a new historical event which opened up a new world for the marginal victims of the old order of death....the disinherited:the poor,homeless, and weak. So the resurrection can only be celebrated as a new action of God to create new futures for people who are living in the midst of despair." It can not mean much to people who gather on Easter Sunday to celebrate unneeded clothing. We are not the marginal,the disinherited,or the despairing,and that is why the life,death,and resurrection of Jesus means little to us. If it will mean anything to us we have to be willing to participate in Gods protest against death. Belief in the resurrection ultimately means participating fully in Gods creative power to bring forth a living hope for those who have no hope.

splinters and planks

early morning wetness
gathers us together
the children
must learn
not imitate

a nation at risk
defending the right
of the children
to live in the
darkness of ignorance

national scandal
one nation under god
clothed in metal
hiding his teeth
all the better to
devour you.....

devoured
cracked plaster playroom
used needles unnoticed
by blackened brown-eye
next to black skin

eaten by
barbed wire cement gym
glass turf cuts
upon being tackled
their opponent
the white bomber

i pledge allegiance to.....

FEAST of MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

April 4

For my neighbors and the people of my block club

"Early morn. April 4, shot rang out
in a Memphis sky.
free at last, they took your life.
they could not take your pride."

U2. "In the Name of Love"

It is from the very outset that i must make clear that i am a white man writing about what King said and did and what that means most specifically to the white community...if anything. This is not a reflection on black liberation. The black community is free to decide that fate for themselves. For me to even allude to suggestion of a black theology would reek of another form of racist intervention.

For some 7 years now i have been living in a section of town (Grand Rapids, Mi.) that is predominantly black. It also happens to be one of the poorest areas of the city as well, meaning it receives little, if any, attention from the city officials. There has been no better way for me to see and feel the reality and effects of racial violence. i could never have learned this from a text book, nor could i begin to painstakingly understand the full impact of King's message. Not living here would mean that i would have enshrined King in the White Non-violence Hall of Fame...meaning a place passionless and where there is no risk.

One thing that has been gnawing at me for some time now is, why is the "peace movement" so predominantly white and middle class? It is a continual source of frustration to be apart of meetings and to organize work in ethnocentric circles. Not only does this create a very limited perspective but even more devastating it means that those involved are speaking and acting from places of systemic privilege. This ultimately means that our passion for justice will only be a spark instead of an all encompassing flame. Lets face it, many in the white peace community have never really endured much, suffered much, have never really been victims of systemic violence...by enlarge. For me this usually means that since people have not endured much they are not willing to risk much. It is incredible to listen to people at meetings when they go out of their way to avoid talking about root causes of injustice as well as making sure that we never do anything to offend people. We never really express our anger, our rage...possibly because we have none. This may be because we have not endured much, but also because we have too much to lose: status, position, influence, image, ect.

Another issue which continues to invade my thoughts is why in the world does the black community choose to embrace the religion of their, present tense, slave masters? Why believe in a spirituality which justified and continues to justify the enslavement of a people? Again i have to look at

things from below instead of from above and see that that spirituality speaks to the black community precisely because it was born from those who endured slavery. So the white community, the white church, is in reality the children of Pharaoh and not the children of Israel. And like the slave masters we want to impose our demented view of spirituality in order to continue to keep people down. So it seems to me in part we need to relearn or learn for the first time our Judeo-Christian heritage from the black community. They are the ones who will teach us about liberation.

So what seeds of truth can we learn from Martin, if we are ever to leave our political white houses of power? King obviously was one who endured much and at the same time was with those who knew pain all too well. Because of that King could say, "Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom, but it must be our blood." There is no way to avoid it, we must be willing to risk much in order for real change to occur. And this freedom he talks about is for all, since even slave masters are not really free. "They, the white community, have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom." This is so urgently needed for our present predicament. King clearly saw how everything is related and connected and therefore could not be silent about the effects of the arms race or Viet Nam on, especially the black community, most notably in places like Harlem and Detroit. Likewise, we need to be clear about how weapons for El Salvador means no housing for millions here in our communities. But we must speak and act, even if it means taking a bullet, otherwise nothing will change.

"Even a superficial look at history reveals that no social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of dedicated individuals. Without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the primitive forces of irrational emotionalism and social stagnation."

Again we are left with choices, choices which may not look appealing but none the less are real. We have a long way to go to get to the promised land, but we know how sweet its fruit will taste. So let us commit ourselves to the movement, to truth, and no longer betray the black community. As Martin says, "A time comes when silence is betrayal."

Move us to act, Martin!

Soweto massacre in G.R.

June 16th
hot day
cheaply manufactured chairs
rot under a maple

the Rose is passed around
ways to keep em down
brown bag,
breakfast, lunch, and dinner,
late night snack

reminiscent nights
blacktop basketball
sandlot, parking lot baseball
dreams amidst broken glass

suburban skin allows it
cheap entertainment
a-political
no rides for freedom

deaf man does not hear dog bark
shrapnel wound
carpenter out of work
calls me mike

admires my yard
on the way to the forget it store

my neighborhood
i can leave at anytime

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Martyr - April 9

"The Lord says to her people, 'Your wounds are incurable, your injustices can not be healed. There is no one to take care of you, no remedy for your sores, no hope of healing for you. All your lovers have forgotten you; they no longer care about you. I have attacked you like an enemy; your punishment has been harsh because your sins are many and your wickedness is great. Complain no more about your injuries; there is no cure for you. I punish you like this because your sins are many and your wickedness is great.'"

Jeremiah 30:12-15

Depending on your theological geography, this statement from Jeremiah may affirm your wishes upon a people or it will indict your faith (less) community. Jeremiah is obviously talking about the judgement upon the Israelites, because of their denial of the Torah and its implications for governing a new social order. But you can be sure that different people throughout history have stood in conflict with Jeremiah and yet have used his pronouncements in their favor. One such community was that of the Christian community, especially in Europe, during the Nazi-era.

It is forever a source of grief for me to think about the silence and complicity of the Christian community in regards to the slaughter of millions of Jews. But even this is not the whole truth, for I believe, as Hannah Arendt states, "they (the churches) not only failed to prevent this catastrophe but in many ways contributed to the impetus for mass death."

This should come to no surprise to us in some ways: Anti-semitism has been much apart of Christianity since its inception (see Rosemary Ruethers: "Faith and Fratricide"). Indeed, Hitler himself had theologians who wrote lengthy treatises on the justification of the slaughter of the Jews. This condemnation cut across all denominational boundaries and came many times from the hierarchical caste. And this public condemning of the Jews did not go on only during the 40's at the height of genocide but many years earlier. In 1933, when many Germans were being asked to boycott Jewish businesses, Cardinal Bertram was asked to address this issue. Some of his reply reeks of imperialist bourgeoisie theology: "My hesitation rests on: (a) the fact that this is a matter of economics, of measures directed against an interest group which has no very close bond with the church; (b) the fact that such a step appears to be intervention in an area which has little to do with the episcopates field of activity; there are good grounds for the episcopate restricting itself to its own working area." (see Peter Matheson: "The Third Reich and the Christian Churches, A Documentary Account of Christian Resistance and Complicity During the Nazi Era")

Raul Hilberg, a Jewish Holocaust historian, has shown some striking similarities between at least 15 articles of canon law between the council of Elvira, 306 C.E., and the council of Basel, 1434 C.E., and Nazi measures taken against the Jews. Upon reading this litany of absurdity i am moved to believe that those who claim to be apart of the Christian community need to be about the business of serious repentance. i am not talking about any sort of self-flagulating self pity but rather a radical change of heart and mind.

First and foremost we need to take ownership of the horrible past that the majority of Christians played in the genocide of the Jews. We need to familiarize ourselves with the literature that came out of the holocaust, that of the survivors. i would suggest reading anything by Elie Weisel, it will get you in touch with some of the utter pain and anguish of the Jewish people. Individuals, congregations, and denominations should be writing letters of humility, asking for forgiveness from the Jewish community. And lastly maybe we need to clear our minds of all its anti-semitism, and begin to see that to be a Christian means knowing our Jewish roots, especially to acknowledge that Jesus was a Jew not a Christian.

Now we can finally say something about Bonhoeffer. Dietrich Bonhoeffer should not, i believe, be revered in any pious way, but rather affirmed for the simple fact that he took Jesus seriously. His resistance to the Nazis and eventual death in a concentration camp is nothing more than the result of embracing the call to radical discipleship we find in the gospels. If he had viewed Christianity the way most of us do he would probably have continued to teach instead of being banned from public speaking, or worked in a country parish instead of dying in a death camp. One could wonder that since Bonhoeffer was an intelligent, articulate man that if he chose to be silent, we could assume that he would have endowed us with volumes of theological manifestations similar to that of a Karl Rahner. One wonders why Rahner was silent. In spite of the inevitable outcome Bonhoeffer was not silent. Cynical on lookers may well have said, "...what good will it do, he can not stop the slaughter, they will just kill him." In recently re-reading his "Letters and Papers from Prison", i believe Dietrich would have responded to such banality with this thought: "We... must take our share of responsibility for the moulding of history in every situation and at every moment, whether we are the victors or the vanquished."

If there is anything that we learn from the outcome of the Holocaust it should be that we not let it happen again. We are faced, like Bonhoeffer, with the stark reality that our faith community is not only being complicit but justifying the genocide of countless cultures in the world and the possible genocide of all humanity, i.e. the arms race, as well as eco-cide, the destruction of mother earth. So like Bonhoeffer we need to, in spite of the seemingly hopeless odds, step out in faith and say we will not participate in

death any longer, but we will work to prevent death with our
lives !!

Pray with us Dietrich



6:00 am,Mutlangen,Germany
holding hands in a circle
standing silent
like the corn fields next to us
we ponder the future of.....

Achtung ! reads the sign
by the fence
evenly decorated with
barbed wire that from
a distance takes the
shape of used slinkies

"its a honky prayer meeting"
one of the men clad in kaky cries
our sign says
we can't have both
children and the bomb

in the morning we sweat
toughing up our hands
trucks pass by
street signs emerge
from the base
caution signs
not cattle
missile crossing

into the forest they go
war games,training exercises
we talk about non-violence
to young minds
they are practicing
for the end of the world.

FEAST of JOSEPH THE WORKER

MAY 1

Reflections on the Meaning of Work

"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he/she is one of your brethren or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns; you shall give him his hire on the day he earns it before the sun goes down (for he is poor, and sets his heart upon it); lest he cry against you to the Lord, and it be sin in you." (Deut. 24:14-15)

It is safe to assume that the writer(s) of Deuteronomy were not employers, not "well to do", and not supporters of the profit motive. Marx himself would identify this passage with the basic right of all the proletariat. Notice, from the text, that the writer(s) does not only imply this standard on the local folk but even the foreigner. Does this mean that migrant workers are entitled to some dignity and fair treatment? Sweat shop owners no doubt have edited this piece from their scriptures. The implications do not stop there. We are also told that the poor should receive his/her pay at the end of the day. Now this is just going too far. How can a businessman expect to make any money off of his laborers when he can't gain interest on their wages? I suggest that if this imperative from the Torah were taken seriously capitalism would die...or at least it would be seriously wounded.

Another interesting element of work in the Hebrew tradition was the creation of the Sabbath rest. Let's put this in context, however. I don't think that we should continue to support an insanely stressed work week, where on one day we can sit back and be entertained by the T.V. This commandment of resting on the 7th day is not some divine reflection on how Yaweh spent her weekend. The commandment can only be seen as a reaction to the 7-day work week that the Israelites endured under Pharaoh. This should set the stage for us to see that the Israelites are not advocating for 6-day work weeks, rather they are saying we will not work in similar fashion as when we were slaves in Egypt. This is what Walter Brueggemann calls the emergence of new social energies and vision. It is a reaction to an old paradigm. Brueggemann goes on to say that "Sabbath is an act of remembering the liberation that permitted new life...the Sabbath is a defense thrown up by the gospel to guard the weak against the strong...", like in Amos 8:4-6: "the routines of exploitation are brought to a halt. Amos understands the Sabbath as a day when economic exploitation does not happen." Therefore, I believe that it is with utmost importance that we should be about the task of constructing our own vision of what work should be in our own setting.

In E.F. Schumaker's "Small is Beautiful", he says that "...work should enable people to overcome their ego-

centeredness by joining with other people in a common task." For Schumaker work is a natural element to build community and relationships. Work should not be seen as something that we do without taking others (all life forms) into account. What effect will my work have on the rest of creation? Do I perform my job as a means to earn money or as a service to life? Let's face it, most of us are concerned primarily with the pay and benefits; meaningful, creative work is secondary if considered at all. So what might happen if we, before taking a job, critically looked at how it affects all life forms?

Many of the jobs created in our industrial growth society are jobs that merely produce non-necessary items; i.e., consumer goods and luxuries such as alcohol, candy, sugar, and chemical-based snack foods, tobacco products, technical pacifiers...stereos, T.V.'s, VCR's, video games, etc. This is employment that we should deny since it just perpetuates dehumanization and waste. Then there is this litany of jobs in the military industrial complex that we would have to boycott since they serve no purpose than to kill, maim and make us a debtor nation as well as international terrorists. This seems to narrow down the possibilities but there is still more to take into consideration. Again there are numerous jobs in this country that either during production or use of the product cause serious environmental hazards; i.e., car production, styrofoam, plastics, pesticides...with the present environmental crisis that we are faced with we can no longer afford to have jobs that perpetuate eco-cide. Finally I would like to add that when deciding upon employment we need to consider location. Do we get a life-giving job that demands we drive long distances creating acid rain, air pollution, and future oil-spills? This type of work would be a lesser evil, but still mitigates death. So good work would be work that allows for creative self-expression, serves the community, and preserves the integrity of the bio-region. With this criterion you may say that sort of limits the job market possibilities. It does...which brings me to my next point.

What we will end up having to do is to work fewer hours for money, thus enabling us to take a healthy Sabbath rest. This of course means that our standard of living will need to change, since we no longer have the same monetary resources. This is where real work begins to come into play. We need to consider providing our own forms of basic necessities: food, energy, entertainment, etc.. Sure gardening is time-consuming, but it's life enhancing work that can be a tremendous community builder. I have relished the long hours of peeling apples with housemates in order to can our own applesauce. Indeed, this type of work can almost seem like play, since it facilitates festive interaction. But apart from being more self-sufficient, we will soon find that we have more available time to devote, not only to social change (which probably won't happen unless we become more self-sufficient), but to create art and play. For so many of us this seems to

be something we must deny ourselves because we don't have enough time. We need to make time!

The "primitive" bushmen of the Kalahari, as well as other cultures, spend 1/5 of their time to work, which allows them enormous amounts of time to develop a real and healthy culture. European Christianity would respond to that by saying that idleness is a tool of the Devil. When we are not working/laboring we become prey to evil temptation, therefore "busy work" is necessary for our salvation. This attitude is what accompanied the capitalistic protestant work ethic and has brought us to our present Industrial wasteland society.

In contrast to the industrial wasteland society, the old European cultures celebrated May 1, the Beltane, as a great fertility feast. People danced around maypoles representing the phallus element in the greening of life. Couples as well would go amaying into the woods to sleep and bring back wild flowers to share with the villagers. This approach to May 1 would support a non-consumptive, earth-loving concept of work and leave us a healthier people. Dolores LaChapelle makes this point clear when she says, "Sadly, Mayday now glorifies the rootless masses dehumanized by the Industrial Growth Society with its creation of an abstract 'one world' proletariat that provides a convenient market for its products. Rather than contribute to the IGS denigration of humanities real work into 'jobs' that destroy the environment, let's all go amaying...sleeping out together in nature on Mayday eve and experience the blossoming of human nature within all of nature..."

Dwarves whistling while they work is not the answer, rather people critically and creatively fashioning new visions of what it means to work. So let us, like Joseph, be crafting new realities with our hands and hearts.

work with us Joe

Books used in this article:

- 1) "Small is Beautiful", by E.F. Schumaker
- 2) "To Work and To Love", by Dorothee Soelle with Shirley Cloyes.
- 3) "Sacred Land, Sacred Sex", by Dolores LaChapelle
- 4) "The Land", by Walter Brueggemann
- 5) "The Spirit of Capitalism and The Protestant Work Ethic", by Max Weber.

FEAST of NEREUS,ACHILLEUS,and PANCRAS

Martyrs May 12

On May 12 we celebrate the feast of three martyrs in the early church. All three of them died during the persecution of Diocletian, Emperor of Rome. Little is known about any of the three, especially Nereus and Achilleus. What we know of them is this: they were both in the military tribunal and upon accepting the Christian faith they promptly resigned from the military. Apart from that there isn't anything else to mention.

At this point you may be wondering if this is going to be another reflection about the supposed non-violence of the early church, or an article advocating justice, peace, love, and that other stuff. Or even still, "Why doesn't this guy talk about real people instead of these martyrs, people with families and a real job....not some extraordinary people whom we make plastic statues out of and put in our gardens or on the dash boards of our cars".

Well this reflection is exactly about non-violence and martyrs. Why is it that everytime i look at the liturgical calendar i see someone canonized for their faithfulness? In fact, almost one quarter of the feast days are devoted to martyrs. And most of these other women and men who weren't martyrs, but are found in the liturgical calendar lived lives worthy of martyrdom. There are a few exceptions, however. Some of the exceptions are ivory tower theologians who wrote extremely lofty works on everything from what Jesus the second person of the Trinity did before he was Jesus the human, to where do babies go if they are not baptized and die.

Why is it that people are offended or find it difficult to deal with the fact that the church has recognized individuals who chose to die because of their faith instead of kill because of their faith? i am not aware of the church canonizing someone who, after becoming a Christian, joined the army and killed other people. Nor am i aware of individuals who we celebrate in the liturgical calendar that ruthlessly butchered men and mostly women during the Inquisition or who slaughtered other people during the Crusades. And we are not likely to see anyone in the future canonized who blessed nuclear submarines or who built beautiful expensive churches while millions were homeless and hungry.

It would seem to me that Nereus and Achilleus left the military because their faith dictated it or because they, in good conscience, could not see Jesus (or themselves) ready to hack an enemy to bits with a sword. It seems that what made them want to be apart of the believing community is that the believing community was different than the rest of the world. They were joyful people who weren't afraid of death but refused to kill.

i am convinced that what makes Christians distinctively Christian(apart from how or when we worship)is that we are commanded by Jesus to love our enemies. If that is not what makes us distinctively different from other traditions in the western world,then what does?

FEAST of BARNABAS

June 11

"The group of believers was one in mind and heart. No one said that any of her/his belongings was her/his own, but that they all shared with one another everything they had... There was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale, and turn it over to the apostles; and the money was distributed to each one according to her/his need."

Acts 4:32,34-35

The other day i was speaking with a woman who was passing out literature on hunger. i asked her if she thought that changing our consumeristic life-styles was necessary to prevent hunger. She said no...and told me that it was a matter of raising enough money to be sent overseas.

This statement affirmed my frustration at the prevailing attitude that benign philanthropy is the key to helping the poor. It is my belief that faith in the incarnate God transforms one's heart and mind (and also one's economic outlook) to live a radical life - meaning that one gets to the root of the truth. It is also my belief that incarnating Christ in me means a life of simplicity. This does not mean a life of rigorous asceticism, of neglecting my body or having a negative attitude towards creation. Simplicity for me is having an appreciation for the things of life and seeing how everything about me is connected to others and to the earth. In other words, simplicity is the norm for being a servant of God for others. And this is urgently so in today's world, where almost everything we consume has "blood" on it.

i write these things upon reflecting on a recent feast in the liturgical calendar. On June 11, we celebrate the feast of Barnabas. Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement" was a Levite named Joseph before becoming a follower of the Way. We first hear about him in Acts 4:36-37, just after the author talks about the sharing of possessions of the community. The writer then goes on to tell us that Barnabas.... "sold a field he owned, brought the money and turned it over to the apostles."

It is interesting that Luke places this witness of Barnabas right after the description of the Jerusalem community's practice of shared possessions. No doubt Luke wanted to impress upon his readers, with a concrete example, that people took seriously the communal spirit of shared goods. This example of Barnabas is evident enough to refute bed-wetting liberal arguments that somehow the Acts account of 4:32,34-35 was idealistic and never really practiced by anyone except heretical groups and renegade monks. But this emphasis on shared goods does not end here.

Luke goes on to say after the account of Barnabas' liberation;

"But there was a man named Ananias, who with his wife Sapphira sold some property that belonged to them. But with his wife's agreement he kept part of the money for himself and turned the rest over to the apostles. Peter said to him, Ananias, why did you let Satan take control of you and make you lie to the Holy Spirit by keeping part of the money you received for the property? Before you sold the property, it belonged to you; and after you sold it, the money was yours. Why then did you decide to do such a thing? You have not lied to men... you have lied to God! As soon as Ananias heard this, he fell down dead; and all who heard about it were terrified. The young men came in, wrapped up his body, carried him out, and buried him. " Acts 5:1-6

This contrasting story adds an interesting twist to the spirit of possessions and wealth. There is no mention in Acts that selling your property and handing the money over to the apostles was mandatory. Barnabas does this of his own free will... because he was moved by the spirit. Ananias on the other hand initially had deceptive greedy motives. As we see from his conversation with Peter, it's not because he didn't give all the money to the community, it's because he wanted people to believe he had indeed done so. Their sin, if you will, was wanting to appear to be more pious and devout believers in the eyes of the community. The Greek translation for the money with-held by the couple better translates as embezzled, according to Cadbury. (1) This would affirm that their initial motives were tainted with greed, even to the point that the with-held money was earmarked for something comparable to the present day illegality of, say the S & L's drug laundered money.

I don't know, even after reading numerous commentaries, whether or not their deaths were real or if this is just a metaphor articulating the couples spiritual and communal death. The point seems to be that the consequences of deceiving the community and the Spirit are grave and serious.

One other interesting element about Ananias and Sapphira is that they are not portrayed as bandits or thieves, but as upstanding members of the community. This for us can shed light on smashing icons of those who are depicted as thieves. St Basil says, "...the money you keep locked away is the money of the poor, the acts of charity that you do not perform are so many injustices that you commit." What Luke seems to be communicating is that "respectable" members of the community are just as guilty of deceit and thievery as anyone else. And that this desire on the part of "well intentioned" people to share of their excess, with cameras fixed, is nothing short of hypocrisy. Band-aid charity only prolongs the agony of our wounded society. If anything is going to change we must be willing to look directly at the brutalized victims pain to

have a compassionate response.

It is scandalous to note that Americans, which continue to proclaim themselves as Christians, spent in 1986, \$59 billion on alcoholic beverages alone, while spending \$6.2 billion on economic aid to third world countries. (2) Millertime is more important than preventing thousands of children from dying from diarrhea. This consumption of non-necessary luxury items is piled on top of the already insanely outrageous military budget that most of us support with our tax dollars. These facts however, are not just directed at the Sunday believer but even progressive peace folk, like Ananias and Sapphira.

But even this does not suffice to reveal the beauty of today's feast of Barnabas. If there is one thing that the witness of Barnabas has taught me in my own life is this: living a life of simplicity is not the outcome of some ethical mandate, rather it is a growing realization of my human potential. Never have I felt more free, more able to determine how I will live out my life. This to me is the message of a life devoted to Yaweh. Not just to live simply so that others might simply live, but to live simply so that I may have a fuller life.

Pray with us Barnabas

notes:

1) H. Cadbury, "The Book of Acts in History", London: Black, 1955.

2) Seeds, June 1987, "Christians Concerned About World Hunger", 222 East Lake Drive, Decatur, Ga. 30030.



....fast moving projectiles

cutting through the air
penetrating mountains and valleys
thrusting themselves upon the open plains

In and out of drive-ways
drive-throughs
drive-ins
drive-over
thorough-fair
highway
by-way
exists
one-way
DEAD END!

so says the insects on the grill
high speed suicide
the animals along the side of the road
(thank you Gary Snyder)

....to feel the power between my legs.
under me.surrounding me
be-hind the wheel....

horse power??? lets consult the stallion
combustion.... convenience....rain as acid
the trees scream....petroleum slaves

NO THANKS I'LL WALK

FEAST of MECHTILD of MAGDEBURG

June 21 - Summer Solstice

Reflections on the socio-environmental impact of cars
and other combustible demons.

i would like to begin with three things: first an observation. If we were to make this room relatively air tight and then somehow channel all the exhaust that would be generated by the cars that were driven here today for this "global warming" conference, we would all be dead by the end of the day. Secondly, the following is an excerpt from the May 1989 Earth First! Journal: "Saturday night, after two days of calm, the winds rose to over 70 miles per hour, driving the oil throughout the islands and bays of the western edge of Prince William Sound. Within hours, hundreds of miles of shoreline were despoiled, including critical habitat for sea otter, harbor seal, stellar sea lion and countless shore and water birds. Orcas and sea lions were seen surfacing in the slick and reports of dead animals poured in to Bird and Mammal Resource Center, established on the campus of Prince William Sound Community College. The otters were most immediately impacted, since they live on the surface of the water where the oil was most concentrated. The oil destroyed the natural buoyancy and insulation of their thick coats and they drowned and died of hypothermia by the hundreds. Those that didn't succumb immediately are now dying of kidney and liver failure caused by ingesting the toxic oil as they try desperately to clean their own fur. Hundreds of sea birds died in the first few days and thousands more will die in the months to come. Migratory wildfowl in the millions will soon be entering their nesting grounds around Prince William Sound, where they will find oil soaked shorelines and pools of mayonnaise-textured petroleum. The food supplies for these huge flocks will be tainted with oil for years to come." Thirdly, i would just like to read the back page to the May/June, 1990 issue of "GreenPeace": Cars are the biggest source of greenhouse gases and the largest single cause of ozone smog: Nearly twice as many Americans have died on the highway than in all the wars since 1776: In Mexico City, 7 of 10 infants have blood lead levels from car emissions in excess of World Health Organization standards: Traffic in London today moves as fast as it did in the days of horse and carriages: cars cause acid rain by emitting 34% of the nitrogen oxide in the U.S.: Do-it-yourself mechanics dump an Exxon Valdez worth of used motor oil every 2 1/2 weeks: oil consumption topped 225 billion gallons last year: We spent \$50 billion last year to protect oil tankers in the Persian Gulf: Half the land in an average American city and two-thirds of the land in L.A. is used for cars: Americans will drive the distance to the planet Pluto and back 364 times in 1990.

Before we discuss the impact of cars i would like to rename them bio(life)rapers, since rape is done by force.

without consent, and is severely damaging. Cars rape all human and non-human life, by force, without the consent of most life, and does irreparable damage to all life. Possibly the most devastating force in this century. And let's keep in mind as I describe all of this destructional impact that it has occurred in the past 80 years or so.

In order to talk about what impact the bio-raper has had on all life we need to start with its inception. The bio-raper is made from various materials, predominantly metals, glass, rubber, and plastics. The auto industry in the U.S.A. accounts for 1/4 of iron and steel consumption. Think of how much environmental devastation takes place when mining the ore that is needed to build bio-rapers, not only what is stolen from mother earth but the pollution created from the mining itself. This of course destroys all kinds of species habitat. Then, transportation costs, economically and in pollution, once it arrives at the processing plant... again a lot of energy used and pollution created in the manufacturing/forming of bio-rapers on the assembly line, the ensuing testing and shipping the bio-rapers to dealers. Think of how much is destroyed in this process and how much space/wilderness is used/abused by this process. In 1987, 126,000 bio-rapers came off the assembly line daily.

For the bio-raper to move and be moved fuel is needed. The earth is drained, in vampire fashion, of its blood. Most of this is imported, causing more pollution and devastation, plus incredible resources are used and more pollution is created in the "protection" of this commodity\drug. There are numerous deaths that occur because of political realities... just to provide us with fuel to nourish our bio-rapers. As fossil-fuel junkies we cause a lot of violent suffering in order to obtain this addictive substance, not to mention the imported oil is responsible for 20% of our foreign debt.

Again when hearing the following statistics think of the space used as potential wilderness. There are 139,200 gas stations in the U.S.A., not including convenience stores. Then there is the amount of paved space... roads and parking space account for 4 million miles of paved space or 10% of our arable land... plus all the resources and pollution created in making them. Then we have bio-raper repair garages, parts stores, the manufacturing of parts and all the pollution created in this as well as space used/abused. Then there are all the re-creational assaults... off road bio-raper destruction, plus the incredibly large racing industry, which are major perpetrators of bio-raping.

Other side issues related to the roads are thus: oil and gas leakage from bio-rapers on roads and parking lots end up in our water table, numerous animals are killed on the road by impact (the Humane Society of the U.S.A. estimates 1 million a day)... plus air and noise pollution that kills all forms of wildlife. Herbicides and pesticides are used on right of ways to keep "weeds" down (approximately 25% of all herbicides sold in the U.S.A. for non-agricultural purposes are used in highway maintenance). Roads cause unnatural

water run-off that creates alot of erosion. Plus roads interrupt the gene flow necessary to retain genetic variation that fuels evolution.since it creates barriers to life forms not known before.(for more detailed info on the effects of roads see Earth First! "Killing Roads-a primer on the effects and removal of roads).

So now we are ready to drive this bio-raper.and by the end of the year the bio-raper will have caused 300,000 deaths just from accidents. The American Lung Ass. says that another 30,000 deaths are due to bio-raper pollution in the U.S.A. alone.and bio-raper emissions(as well as industrial) will cost Americans \$40 billion annually in health care expenses. Bio-rapers are the primary sources of lead pollution, responsible for 1/4 of the gases that contribute to the greenhouse effect. In 1986,between 40-75 million Americans were living in areas that failed to attain Air Quality Standards. In most cities bio-rapers create,75% of carbon monoxide,48% of nitrogen oxides,40% of hydro carbons,13% of particulates,3% of sulfur oxides. Bio-rapers cause photo-chemical smog,which causes health disorders,fetal deformity, bad vision,erodes buildings, reduces crop yields,causes acid rain..a major contributor to deforestation. Bio-rapers deforest in another way as well. The fast food industry would probably not exist if it weren't for bio-rapers.and the fast food industry gets its beef from cattle raised in deforested Latin American countries. Bio-rapers also destroy fresh water and marine life from the emissions.

Drivers in L.A. use one of every four gallons simply idling their bio-rapers in traffic jams. That amounts to an equivalent to 80 Exxon Valdez' in smoke. Driving bio-rapers meant 235 billion gallons of oil was consumed in 1989. Dead bio-rapers occupy space as well,some 650 million have been discarded since 1900 in the U.S.A. alone.

This havoc wreaked by the bio-raper is primarily ours(U.S.A.)responsibility. There are 400 million bio-rapers in the world,we have 139 million. 1 of 2 persons has a bio-raper in the U.S.A....China has 1.2 million bio-rapers,1 of 4 Chinese has a bike. In Bangladash,tri-shaws carry more tonage than all the bio-rapers combined. Only 1 of 40 bikes in the U.S.A. is used for commuting. This issue is no longer a choice...we have to change our means of transportation....estimates(high)say we have 45 years left of fuel supplies and this does not take into account the pollution problems and continued effects on the biotic community. "Greenpeace recently commissioned a study by a group of prominent British scientists to examine the measures that would be necessary to stabilize the 'effective carbon dioxide concentration' of the atmosphere over the next 30 years. Their answer is sobering. Besides eliminating chloroflorocarbon production by 1995 and halting net deforestation by the year 2000,carbon dioxide emissions would have to cut to 30% of their present level by the year 2020. Assuming that the worlds population will continue to grow,and that the industrialized world is most responsible

for the production of carbon dioxide, they calculate that per capita emissions could be no more than .24 metric tons a year. According to my back of the envelope calculations, this means that car users would be allowed 13.7 gallons a year. That's only enough to drive a car that gets 30 mpg about 400 miles, the distance from Washington to Boston or San Francisco to Los Angeles. That's it." (Greenpeace May/June 1990)

The energy used just isn't efficient. A comparison in calories used per passenger mile... for a bio-raper it takes 1.860 for one occupant, .35 for a bicycle. The sad thing is that of the potential to change is not realized. Just one example of what needs to happen and this is no significant change, but it will give us an idea for the potential. If 10% of bio-raper trips under 10 miles were made by bicycles this country would save 14 million barrels of oil per year... 2% of our total consumption. Another example on a local level is this: estimating that there are roughly 150,000 bio-raper owners in the Grand Rapids area. These bio-raper owners would spend annually \$15 million on bio-raper payments, \$75 million on maintenance and repair, \$53 million on gas, \$180 million on insurance. This would total \$323 million that would be spent in one year just in Grand Rapids. Now imagine what kind of mass transit system we could develop with an annual budget like that, not to mention the environmental, physical, and mental health that would improve.

I am personally tired, as a bicycle rider, of being forced off the road, of riding in fear, of being forced to ride on the edge of roads... the poorest area of the road. I am tired of having to breathe the deadly pollution. I am tired of being abused, without consent, where the damages are great. I am tired of being biologically raped.

What I would propose is to start a new action/lobby group. To work for better, more efficient, environmentally sound transportation. To tax the hell out of people who use cars, and parking lots and give tax breaks to those who don't. Allow bikes more of the road, give health benefits to those who walk and use bikes. Put a stop to any new road and parking lots, plus tear up some existing lots for housing, community gardens, or just for wildlife re-inhabitation.

I would like to end with another quote from the May, 1990 Earth First! Journal: "The image of a lifeless Prince William Sound must guide our actions for the rest of our lives. We must remember Prince William Sound every time we start our cars, picture oil soaked loons as we buy plastic wrapped produce. We can only stop Exxon and their cohorts by refusing to buy the products they wrench from the earth."

The choice is clear... will we continue to rape life or have a loving relationship with it.

* talk given at a 1990 Global Warming Conference

FEAST of POTAMIAENA and BASILIDES

June 28

"Seventh among them must be reckoned Basilides, who led the renowned Potamiaena to execution. The praises of this woman are even today loudly sung by her own people. Endless the struggle that in defense of her chastity and virginity, which were beyond reproach, she maintained against lovers, for her beauty of body as of mind was in full flower. Endless her sufferings, till after tortures too horrible to describe she and her mother Marcella found fulfillment in fire. It is said that the judge, Aqiula, subjected her whole body to dreadful agonies, and finally threatened to hand her over to gladiators for bodily insult. She reflected for a moment and when asked what she intended to do, gave no answer which offended their religious prejudices. She had hardly spoken when she heard sentence pronounced, and Basilides, a member of the armed forces, seized her arm and led her away to execution. As the crowd tried to plague her and insult her with obscene jests, Basilides thrust them back and drove them away, showing the utmost kindness towards her. Potamiaena accepted his sympathy for her and gave him encouragement; when she had gone away she would ask her Lord for him, and it would not be long before she repaid him for all he had done for her. This said, she faced her end with noble courage, slowly, drop by drop, boiling pitch was poured over different parts of her body, from her toes to the crown of her head. Such was the battle won by this splendid girl."

Eusebius E.H. 6.5.7.
Severus to Decius

This account from Eusebius is purposely cut short to make a point. Basilides was a Roman guard/soldier whom we know nothing about. Being a prison guard he had to take an oath, "sacramentum", to serve the Emperor. He was no doubt quite used to the daily routines involved in prison life: degradation, humiliation, inhuman conditions, and a lack of respect for life. He came in contact with numerous people who had violated the Pax Romana, the social scum whose deviant behavior had brought them to Basilides' dungeon cells. He was also frequently confronted with violent death at the hands of executioners or wild beasts and no doubt, like Eichmann, had to adjust to these unsightly occurrences. What he was probably not used to was the courage and strength emitted from the likes of Potamiaena. Here was a prisoner of conscience, who was not controlled by her environment, who chose not to de-humanize... a prisoner who endured great tortures and was being threatened with multiple rape. Basilides had to look upon all of this... and yet was able to find some sympathy for her. This, however, is not the reason for his inclusion in the feast day. Being a "nice" guy does not merit ones

canonization. The church, like Eusebius, includes Basilides in the June feast because his witness is connected to and is the direct result of the person of Potamiaena. Eusebius goes on in telling the story by saying:

"Not long afterwards Basilides was for some reason asked by his fellow soldiers to take an oath, but he insisted that he was unable to swear in any circumstances, as he was a Christian and made no secret of the fact. At first they thought he was joking, but when he stuck doggedly to his assertion he was brought before the magistrate, who, as he made no attempt to hide his convictions, committed him to prison. When his brothers in God visited him and asked the reason for this amazing impulse and determination, he is said to have declared that three days after her martyrdom, Potamiaena stood before him in the night, put a wreath about his head, and said that she had prayed for him to the Lord, had obtained her request, and before too long would place him by her side. At this the brethren bestowed on him the seal of the Lord, and the next day, nobly witnessing for his Lord, he was beheaded. The records state that at this period many other citizens of Alexandria accepted the teaching of Christ in a body, as Potamiaena appeared to them in dreams and called them."

Eusebius E.H.
Severus to Decius

If there is one thing that I have learned over the years from participating in direct actions, it is this...the code of non-violence you embrace is not just for the action itself, but is to be carried through the courts and into the jails. It is in the jails in fact that adhering to this code is most difficult. It is there that maintaining our integrity is most needed. What fruit will be produced if we save our faith-filled conscience for the media/event arena? What kind of effect will an ill-hearted witness have on the prison population? This is all not to say that our "job" is to convert all prison guards or those who work for the system. It is a matter of integrity for the long-haul.

The view from within has taught me that steadfastness to your commitments will create "metanoia" dynamics. This presupposes you are there to dialogue...not to claim moral superiority, but to relate the faith in real/incarnate terms. A sense of solidarity is what is needed not only with the prisoners but especially the guards. Relating how your

actions are connected to their lives...this is what will bring heavenly visions to their dreams. Basilides came to see the clarity of the kingdom vision because of Potamiaenas steadfastness, because she did not give in to the system intimidations. Her courage helped to reveal the inherently oppressive nature of the Roman "justice" system. And because of this unveiling quality, as Eusebius conveys, many people of Alexandria, like Basilides, acted on their visions.

There are numerous other accounts as well...of this prison guard liberation and its contagious effect. In the "Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas", Tertullian says that, "Pudens the official in charge of the prison, the official who had gradually come to admire us for our persistence, admitted many prisoners to our cell so that we might mutually encourage each other." Arnobius, another patristic author, is himself said to have been a former prison guard who was converted after contact with some of the imprisoned faithful.

One last point I wish to make is that rarely is this a solitary witness. In some way or another there are always those who are there in support, who offer affirmation, and who help seal the newly formed relationships that have arisen from prison encounters. How many of us have had joyous hymns sung to us from outside the walls...as well as letters of hope? These are all part and parcel to bring forth newness that elicits change. After Basilides imprisonment, he is visited by the believing community where he is encouraged and freely takes a different oath (sacramentum). He no longer sees himself entrenched in the system or powerless in front of omnipotent evil. He has found a third way. This is precisely why the faith community needs to nurture the newly liberated.

Come to us in visions
Potamiaena & Basilides

FEAST of EUSEBIUS ?

July 4

"You know that men who are considered rulers of the heathen have power over them, and the leaders have complete authority. This, however, is not the way it is among you. If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest; and if one of you wants to be first, he must be the slave of all, for even the Human One came not to be served but to serve."

Mark 10:42-45

"He it is - the word of God proceeding above all things, and through all things, both visible and invisible - who is Lord of all the Universe, from whom and through whom the king, the beloved of God, receives and bears the image of His Supreme Kingship, and so steers and directs, in imitation of his Superior, the helm of all the affairs of this world. As there was one God, so there was one king."

Eusebius' Eccl. History; statement about Emperor Constantine

To the most simple minded it is evident that the preceding texts are in deep conflict with each other. To the most dispassionate reader of history it is clear that the later text was the preferred path to glory.

Just after the persecution of Diocletian, in the early part of the 4th century, a military politician named Constantine was preparing to make his mark in history. It can be said that beginning with the Edicts of Toleration and of Milan the Christian community would never be the same. This is not to say that the person of Constantine was solely responsible for the corruption of the church, no more than Columbus was solely responsible for exterminating the inhabitants of the Americas. Constantine was a politician, one who was concerned about maintaining order and increasing the wealth of his empire. He did what any power hungry fiend would have done in order to obtain his objective. What troubles me is all the co-operation he received from the so-called Christian leaders that prostituted themselves and became bedfellows with the persona who tempted Jesus in the desert. Thus we attribute this article in memory of Eusebius of Caesarea, church "historian" and imperial theologian.

Eusebius was a bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, who lived from 263-339 c.e. He is most noted for being the first historian of the church, one that moved the memory of Christianity from oral tradition to a written one. Eusebius was a product of the school founded by Origen, somewhat platonic in thought, which had significant influences on his worldview. This worldview allowed him to see the earthly kingdom headed by the emperor as the temporal image of the heavenly kingdom. The corollary is that the emperor reflects the very image of God and that God is most like the emperor.

For Eusebius, Constantine is the new Solomon and the Christianizing of the empire was just the beginning of the fulfillment of God's creation.

This worldview is strikingly in contrast with some of his western brethren from Tertullian to Hippolytus and Cyprian to Donatus. These folks viewed the state from a more Jewish/apocalyptic sense, where the state was always in conflict with the will of Yaweh and that its precepts are precisely what Jesus rejected in the desert. Thus for Tertullian, though the world must have been made by God, all that was worldly belonged to Satan. Cyprian too, saw the empire in terms of corruption and the tiredness of old age. Donatus, following in the north African tradition, saw the rulers of the present age as permanently on the side of the Devil, and asks, "What has the Emperor to do with the Church?" (1) It is no wonder then that certain movements within the church would be marginalized and eventually deemed heresies. Anything that confronted the imperial theology came under attack, but this marginalization did not come about solely because of doctrinal differences.

Beginning in the 3rd century certain sectors of the church, especially the bishops, began to accumulate considerable wealth. The only way to really maintain wealth, amassed greed, is through force and domination. So naturally these folks would welcome a "Christian" emperor, one who would protect their standard of living. Constantine sought to centralize and militarize the empire even more than his predecessor Diocletian. In order to do that land was appropriated for the state and heavy taxation was imposed upon the people. "Taxed beyond their capability to pay, the productive classes of society resented the new order, and many ceased producing. The flight of the farmers from the land accelerated. This process is clearly documented in Egypt, where the flight 'anachoresis' of farmers and peasants reached new levels. In response, the government issued a series of edicts expelling from the cities Egyptians who had no business there. This, however, was not enough, for it did not address the root causes for the flight from the land. Therefore, many who were expelled from a city simply went to another or took refuge in the wilderness, where Roman authority did not reach." (2)

These same rural people were the ones most profoundly influenced by the literal meaning of the New Testament with its hopes for the reversal of fortunes between rich and poor. It was here that people like Marcion, Montanus, Cyprian, and Donatus, just to name a few, were developing base communities. These communities were dramatically effected by the foreign and domestic policies of Rome to the degree that it prompted revolution and sedition. In some rural areas revolutionary movements sought to take matters into their own hands and reverse these earthly fortunes. The Circumcellians (named so because they lived near the tombs of martyrs) were known to have thrown rich men from their carriages, confiscated their wealth, freed the slaves and then made them run alongside the

carriage while they rode off with the goods.(3) This economic dilemma, coupled with the arrogance of Constantine and his bishop cohorts to construct expensive churches as well as exempt clergy from taxation, did nothing more than foster dissent.

Another interesting development at this time is the rise of monasticism. Many people have this conception that the monastic movement was derived from the desire of individuals to live a more devout life. This may be the case in post Benedictine monasticism, but its Christian origins tell a different story.

Anthony is usually considered the founder of such a movement, but that, at best, is debatable. Here Gonzales says, "Anthony did not belong to the poorer classes. Although a Copt, he was the son and heir of a small farmer in the village of Coma, on the left bank of the middle Nile. Yet among anchorites he was an exception, for the early monastic movement drew most of its recruits from the impoverished Coptic masses. Few knew Greek, and many were illiterate in both Greek and Coptic. It is significant that these people received the title of anchorites, that is, practitioners of the flight that for a long time had been the only recourse of the poor in Egypt. Anachoresis had also come to mean the ancient equivalent of a strike, when people absconded as a means of protest or simply because their situation had become untenable. To authorities of the existing order, anachoresis was a crime, and those who had recourse to it were no better than brigands, which they often became by force of circumstances. Thus, the early Egyptian monastics continued an ancient movement born of economic desperation and social protest. This is one reason the origins of Christian monasticism lie hidden in the mists of history: they hark back to pre-Christian times and are not to be found solely in religious ascetic practices."(4)

The flight to the desert was not the only vocational response to the imperialization of the church. The church became more doctrinal and dogmatic, the only way to know the faith was to be of the learned caste in society. A significant split between the ordained community and lay people was legitimized after the Constantinian takeover. Here Edward Schillebeeckx says, "The ordinary believer was thus forced well into the background, and Christianity was narrowed down to a cultic community under the leadership of 'clerici' at least in the eyes of the pagans, though this cannot have failed to have affected the way which Christians understood themselves."(5) Thus the assimilation is almost complete. There is no separation between God and Emperor, and after Theodosius, there is no separation between faith and state law. In 380 c.e., he made Christianity, including belief in the Triune God who has become man in the Son, the imperial law.

Quite possibly the most grotesque assimilation of Roman Imperial practices that the church embraced was its military theology. It follows that when one equates the Emperor with God and the maintenance of wealth as legitimate, one needs a

strong army to uphold these absurdities. Essentially the church went from a persecuted church to a church of persecutors. The church was unmistakably opposed to military service prior to Constantine, but by the reign of Theodosius one could not become a soldier unless he were a Christian. From the Codex Theodosius two interesting decrees are made: one forbade under pain of execution Christian soldiers to throw down their arms in times of peace; secondly in 415 c.e., pagans were legally not permitted to join the military. To kill for the state is not only necessary, it is the Christian thing to do, and so the church begins its trek towards supreme hypocrisy. The words of Charlie McCarthy come to mind: "Since that fateful moment 1700 years ago when some Christians initiated the justification of the will to kill, the history of the Church has been a history at the butcher's block. In the last 1700 years no sociologically identifiable group has slaughtered more people in war than that group that can be identified as Christian." (6)

It becomes more and more apparent as one reads this era of church history, that in many ways what determined the imperial thinking of Rome is the same for many of the present day nation states. It is no coincidence that Christian dictators in Latin America kill Christian campesinos who are demanding rights to land, just as the Donatists did 1600 years ago. These base communities of course are bordering on heresy and eventually are labeled communists or guerilla collaborators. In the U.S.A. people involved in the faith and resistance communities are also marginalized, labeled unorthodox, heretical, or dupes of socialist ideologies. At least there is integrity with this movement, unlike the imperial church which has compromised its position so much that it speaks in continuous spineless fashion.

So what can be done? It seems to me that it is fundamentally necessary to re-appropriate the history of the Christian community, somewhat in the manner of what Howard Zinn did with his "Peoples History of the United States". Eduardo Hoornaert has done some of the work in his "The Memory of the Christian People", where he begins to reconstruct early Christian texts. We can no longer read history from the eyes of the privileged. Eusebius was one of the privileged who even admitted to fashioning history to meet certain interests. In "The Life of Constantine" he states that he would "select from the facts which have come to my knowledge, such as are most suitable, and worthy of lasting record." This clearly implies that he was aware of other less suitable facts and chose to ignore them.

John H. Yoder has done a nice job of laying out some criterion for re-appropriating some of the non-Constantinian tradition:

- 1) that the fourth century shift continues to explain much if not most of the distance between biblical Christianity and ourselves, which is a distance not simply of time and organic development, but of disavowal and apostasy.

2) that many efforts to renew Christian thought regarding power and society remain captives of the fallen system they mean to reject.(7)

Much of the ecclesiastical struggle today is based on this dominative view given to us from Eusebius, et al. It all seems to bring us back to the text we began with, when Jesus states the primacy of service to others over dominance from the top down. What is at issue is power. Is the authority, the author-ship, of the church to be used to serve creation or to control it? The latter has been actualized, but must be denied. The service of creation must be our focus for the future or there will be no future....."if 'kenosis' is the shape of God's own self-sending, then any strategy of Lordship, like that of the kings of this world, is not only a strategic mistake likely to backfire but a denial of gospel substance, a denial which has failed even where it succeeded. What the churches accepted in the Constantinian shift is what Jesus rejected, seizing godlikeness, moving 'in hoc signo' from Golgatha to the battlefield."(8)

notes:

- 1) "Religion Popular and Unpopular in the Early Christian Centuries: The Roman Empire in the Eyes of Western Schismatics", by W.C.H. Frend.
- 2) "The Wealth of Christians", by Gonzales.
- 3) "Religion Popular and Unpopular in the Early Christian Centuries: Heresy and Schism as Social and National Movements", by W.C.H. Frend.
- 4) "The Wealth of Christians", by Gonzales.
- 5) "The Church With a Human Face", by Edward Schillebeeckx.
- 6) "Second Epistle to the Church of the Twentieth Century: Christian Nonviolence: The Only Practical Way to Peace", by Charlie McCarthy.
- 7) "The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel", by John H. Yoder.
- 8) *ibid.*, pg. 145.

FEAST of MARY of MAGDELA

Apostle to the Apostles

July 22

"I passed on to you what i have received,which is of the greatest importance;that Christ died for our sins,as written in the scriptures;that he was buried and that he was raised from the dead,as written in the scriptures,that he appeared to Peter and then to the apostles."

I Cor. 15:3-5

It may seem strange that i would begin a reflection on the feast of Mary of Magdela with a quote from Paul that says nothing about her. It is precisely for that reason that i use the text from I Corinthians. In the gospel accounts of the resurrection Mary was the first to see the risen Jesus and it was she who went to the disciples to tell them of this liberating event. So why does Paul choose to omit her as a witness to the resurrection?

It is possible that Paul does not include the testimony of Mary because in the legal world women could not give credible testimony in public. It is also quite possible that Paul omits Mary from the story because he does not want to give equal ownership of faith to women in the community. The later seems to be more plausible since this is not the only text where we find a definite patriarchal bias. Many other stories of women have been deleted from the present day canon of scripture. This is what Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza calls the "patriarchalization of the canon." (1)

The early believing communities did not have a "set" collection of literature that they called the bible. Some used only certain gospels, letters, and readings from the Hebrew scriptures for reflection and worship. But many communities also used literature that was not accepted as being "inspired" by the folks at the council of Nicea, 325 C.E. We know that there was a numerous body of writings that were used in many of the early communities, writings that were given equal importance as the present day New Testament. It is interesting to note that a great deal of this literature is that which gives equal roles in ministry to women. (2) So it is no coincidence that the celibate men at the council of Nicea would decide which writings supported "orthodox" teaching and those that were teaching heresy, i.e. leadership roles for women. Therefore the canon is a record of the "historical winners", but not necessarily of the historically faithful.

What a shock this is.....! If the formation of the canon was not just how can we use it as a means of inspiration in discerning the will of Yaweh in our lives?

It seems to me that the whole idea of a set and static canon in and of itself is detrimental to the faith community.

i do not believe it was the intention of any of the New Testament writers to contribute a piece of literature so that it could be divinized for eternity. They were all writing to specific communities with specific needs and problems. This is not meant, however, a slander on the value of these writings. What i am saying is that we need to have a more inclusive canon of faith. And i am not only advocating for the inclusion of some of the early church literature, but the canon should include literature from all of church history/ herstory. A sermon from Oscar Romero speaks the truth of Yaweh as well as a letter from Paul, and a letter from Dorothy Day stands on a par with the epistle from James. This would be what Walter Brueggemann refers to when he says that the canon is not a settled truth. "It is an ongoing conversation in which the ongoingness is an epistemological decision about the character of truth." (3)

This approach to what we hold as sacred scripture might create some biblical anarchy but it will not easily allow for hierarchies to "use" the word as a means to oppress and deny all of creation freedom to participate in the fullness of life. A closed canon only leaves us with closed hearts and minds.

Pray with us, Mary

notes:

- 1) "In Memory of Her", Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza.
- 2) see Elaine Pagels, "The Gnostic Gospels", and "Adam, Eve, and the Serpent"; and Edward Schillebeeckx, "Ministry", and "The Church With a Human Face".
- 3) Walter Brueggemann, "Interpretation and Obedience, From Faithful Reading to Faithful Living".

FEAST of LAWRENCE

Martyr Aug.10

"Do not lay up treasures for yourself on earth,where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal,but lay up for yourself treasures in heaven,where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is there will be your heart also."

Matt. 6:19-21

In 258 C.E. Rome was under the leadership of Emperor Valerian,a time when persecution against Christians was great,especially for the ordained members of the community. According to Ivo Lesbaupin,"Valerians first edict,in August 257 C.E.,was aimed especially at the clergy - the bishops, presbyters or priests,and deacons - of whom recognition of the gods of the empire was stipulated,through an act of ritual sacrifice. Simultaneously,however,its dispositions affected all the faithful as well,in that it forbade them, under threat of capital punishment,to celebrate their worship or meet in their cemeteries. Valerians second edict provided for the immediate execution of such members of the clergy who had not offered sacrifice,and the confiscation of the goods of Christians of the upper classes."(1) It was at this time that Lawrence was a deacon of the community in Rome.

He was a close companion to the bishop of Rome,Sixtus,who was arrested and sentenced to death for preaching and enacting the gospel. Before being separated Sixtus told Lawrence to watch over the treasures of the church,so that persecution could not get it. A Roman imperial guard overheard them and reported this to the Prefect. The Prefect ordered Lawrence to be brought to him and demanded that Lawrence hand over the treasures to him immediately. Lawrence responded,"It is true,indeed O Prefect that the church possesses a treasure greater than any which the Emperor can boast of. Give me three days to put it in order." Three days later Lawrence returned accompanied by people who were blind,lepers,the lame,widows and the poor. Lawrence said,"Here O Prefect,is the treasures of the church." At that Lawrence was promptly arrested and put to death.

It seems to me that to talk about theology,the character of God,sacraments and even the use of violence in religious circles(in the U.S.A.)these days does not merit much resistance. Of course people might find discussions of violence and non-violence much more pensive if they put themselves in positions where it was not a luxury to discuss or live. However,when the discussion of property,wealth,and economics is raised somehow the crowd always seems to

disperse. Even in the more "progressive" circles this is a taboo topic. There is probably no issue that the Christian community has abused more than the issue of wealth apart from its treatment of women, but at least it has always been brutally clear about its brutal treatment of women. With the issue of wealth we have always straddled the iron rod fence, leaning inward, that surrounds the church of the buck stays here, all the while using as Jose Miranda says, "... bourgeois conscience tranquilizing exegesis to justify our allegiance to mammon."

Many in the early church, like Lawrence, knew that what was central to belief in the Risen Crucified...solidarity with the poor. I am not referring to a benign philanthropy, which means the giving of our excess, rather the work towards equal re-distribution of the world's resources. This is not to say that solidarity with the poor was orthodox teaching in the early communities, indeed even in the gospels we see tension surrounding the issue and how the respective communities dealt with it. I would like to spend some time looking at the story of "The Rich young man", as a further means of discussing wealth.

In recent years there have been two critical works written on Matthew and Mark's gospels that I believe should be standard texts for anyone genuinely seeking to better understand the gospels. ("Binding The Strong Man, A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus", by Ched Myers and "House of Disciples, Church, economics, and justice", by Michael Crosby.) Fundamentally for Myers, Mark's account of the story of "the rich young man" is a critique of the present social order and for Crosby it represents the present economic struggle "...in the increasing prosperity of his (Matthew's) house churches." (2)

It is interesting that in the beginning of the story the man asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, as if it was something gained through one's lineage (something relegated to the privileged of society). Jesus' original response is standard...follow the precepts of the Decalogue. Here it is important to note that Mark (the older text) includes in the commandments, "Do not defraud." Myers believes that this inclusion must have meant that the man was a large landowner, since, "In the Greek Bible the verb to defraud is appropriated to the act of keeping back the wages of a hireling..." (3) This sheds light on the fact that to be rich means more than to have a large bank account. It means to have many possessions, which is precisely what Jesus recommends he give up and turn over to the poor. Possessions (hyparchonta) as Crosby states, "...did not merely represent material goods. Since material property, especially for someone young, was inherited, possessions reflected one's status and household position in life." (4) What Jesus is advocating is a re-ordering of economic, family status as well as material goods. This call to discipleship is rejected, as we see, since the man "had great possessions."

The story does not end here however. Jesus goes on to say

with brutal imagery, that it's impossible for the wealthy to enter the kingdom. What I believe the author(s) are trying to communicate with this story is what is necessary for eternal life, what is normative for discipleship, is this serious change in our privileged economic status. We can no longer, "...serve both God and mammon." (Matt. 6:24) Crosby clarifies that to serve, "doulouein", better translates as "to be given over to, to be possessed by." (5)

Radical economic re-ordering means that we denounce that temptation to addictive possessions of wealth and the constant agonizing over trying to rationalize the maintenance of a lifestyle that suffocates the gospel. What Jesus understood quite clearly was that to maintain our comfortable status meant the support of imperial structures, since that is what imperial structures do... defend "our way of life", plus the exploitation of the masses who suffer at our expense. What we can not do is say that the Rich man typifies Donald Trump. In a realistic, global context, the rich young man represents us, since we live better than 80% of the world's population. We are the rich, young, white men who try to explain to Yaweh, in eloquent fashion, that we are keeping all the laws, observing the religious obligations, and leading a respectable life. What we fail to see is that what Yaweh wants from us is not to live respectable lives, rather lives which are noticeably, in all facets, not submitting to the dominative cultural addictions and insecurities that will never proclaim to the world that there is a better way.

What is most saddening to me is the failure of our faith communities to envision and recognize the potential in living such lives. We need to begin to invest only in the truth, to be insured by the community, to earn justice, acquire joy and inherit the earth. Lawrence knew that true treasures were not found with maps or acquired underhandedly. Heavenly treasures are experiencing the fruits of a life lived for others.

Notes:

- 1) "Blessed are the Persecuted: Christian Life in the Roman Empire, A.D. 64-313", by Ivo Lesbaupin.
- 2) "House of Disciples: Church, Economics, and Justice", by Michael Crosby.
- 3) "Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus", by Ched Myers.
- 4) Crosby, "House of Disciples".
- 5) Crosby, "House of Disciples".

waiting
in
line
is
humiliation

waiting
rooms
are
comfortable
prisons
for
economic
victims

the
rich
and
middle
class
have money
no
time
to
wait

FEAST of AUGUSTINE ?

Aug. 28

"We will not be influenced by every new teaching we hear from men who are trying to fool us. Those men make plans and try any kind of trick to fool people into following the wrong path. No! We will speak the truth with Love."

Ephesians 4:14-15

For most people the need for unity is a principle which can generally be agreed upon. It is something that is desired, hoped for, and in some ways made real. Most of us would even like to believe that this unity was an implicit reality in the early church. This view is, unfortunately, naive and ignorant of the incredible diversity that has always existed. Ever since W. Bauer wrote his monumental work, "Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity", scholars have generally agreed that there was never a single mindedness that existed in the early communities.

The New Testament gives evidence that there were sects or groups that existed, the very reason that prompted some of Paul's writings. As Christianity begins to spread we see even a larger diversity that begins when the gospel encounters other cultures and groups of people who attempt to incorporate the message and person of Jesus into their lives. In fact, it was diversity in the early church that prompted the so called need for orthodoxy. As an example, Marcion, later deemed a heretic, formulated his own body of sacred literature. This prompted some of the patristic writers to respond by creating their own canon. "So the initial impulse to fix a canon was the work of a heretic, and the canon itself, as often, was a response of 'orthodoxy' to that challenge." (1) As time passed, "orthodoxy" became that form of church organization and teaching which came to be associated with Rome and which was able to impose its authority, always imperfectly, on the rest of Christendom.

Although it could be argued that orthodoxy was a necessity for the early church, it did have significant negative consequences. Beginning with Ignatius of Antioch, we see dissent, unorthodox teaching, or diversity as a sign of the devil. "Ignatius said that anyone who acts without the bishops advice and consent adored the Devil. The Devil encourages schismatics, who divide the community, and the heretics, who teach false doctrines." (2) Polycarp says, "anyone who twists Christs words to suit his own desires and says that there is no resurrection or judgement is the first-born of Satan." (3) Shortly after this Satan is being called the arch-heretic, the same title given to those who "strayed from orthodox teaching." The key figure in the linking of Satan and heresy is Irenaeus, whose passionate and meticulous attack

on heretics reflects the effort of the Rome-dominated church in the latter part of the second century to impose its views on the diverse groups who called themselves Christian."(4)

So dissent and diversity is no longer tolerable, and anyone deviating from orthodoxy was demonized. This demonization was especially true after the Constantinian take-over of the church, which legalized the intolerance and repression of other religious beliefs. The following is a litany of decrees by councils, clerics and emperors on the fate of heretics and other infidels:

- within a few years of the Edict of Milan, heretics were being denounced in unequal terms and denied the right of assembly.
- 317 c.e. Constantine's edict against the Donatists, confiscating their property and exiling their leaders.
- Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nicea refused to sign the anathema against Arius and were exiled.
- Council of Nicea, fixed the date of Easter different than Nisan 14, because the Jews were a hostile people.
- May 11, 330 c.e., no offering sacrifices in pagan temples, no worship, no festivals.
- 335 c.e., Athanasius exiled because of theological dissent.
- Eusebius the historian cities in his writing on Constantine that pagan temples were ransacked.
- radicalism was being linked to schism and heresy.
- Slaves such as Blandia, heroine of Lyons, was no longer considered a saint.
- Marriages of Christians and Jews prohibited in 388 c.e., Cod. Theod. III 7.2.
- The effective prohibition of Paganism, 391 c.e., Cod. Theod. XVI 10.10.
- Theodosian edict states, "all were ordered to follow the form of religion handed down by the apostle Peter to the Romans, and all other teaching is heretical poison."
- 333 c.e. edict announces that whoever hides Arius' writings shall be condemned to death.
- end of the 4th century all Gaza's temples are torn down and burned and the city is cleansed of every belief but the christian.
- a well outside of a Donatist church in Carthage is full of the bodies of the slain, as a result of a campaign against the pagans. This was a result of an imperial decree.
- Augustine in Carthage, addressing a congregation says, "that all superstition of pagans and heathens should be annihilated is what God wants, God commands, God proclaims!"
- in 356 c.e. worship of images was also declared a capital crime.
- in 383 c.e. the Macedonian and Apollinarians added to list of heresies. Inquisitors were appointed and informers encouraged to denounce people suspected of unorthodoxy.
- 391 c.e. pagan sacrifices and rites forbidden.
- 392 c.e. edict declares that heretical clergy be fined 10

pounds of gold and that their places of worship confiscated.
- by 407 c.e. all non-christian religion was outlawed.(5)

The above mentioned atrocities are only a short portion of the churches history. It does not include the butchering of the Crusades,where Muslim infidels were impaled;the Inquisition,which murdered millions of women who threatened the male dominated church as well as thousands of Jews and Pagans;the European colonization,which sent the cross with the sword and devastated countless cultures;nor does it include the ecological imperialism that has justified a majority of the environmental destruction wrought since European expansion and the Industrial devolution. What i am basically saying is that Christianity has perpetuated more evil than any other religious tradition in history.

So what does this all have to do with Augustine you say? Well,if you recall in the litany mentioned above,Augustine also advocated extermination of the heathens. He too embraced a certain sort of imperialistic salvation. Surely there are numerous things we can say about him that are commendable,but i can not calmly ignore such brutality as "that all superstitions of pagans and heathens should be annihilated is what God wants.God commands,God proclaims!"(6) We can not just passively except our past nor unquestion the lives of the saints. This same narrow-minded demonization of Augustine to other views is no different than the one presented by Mr. Bush and his cohorts during the U.S.A. war on the Persian Gulf. Saddam was satan,Iraqi's were demonized,and Muslims were heretics. This all of course resulted in thousands of charred bodies of children and thousands more dying of disease and malnutrition.

If we are to continue as a species,then tolerance is necessary. In fact tolerance is only a stepping stone to the appreciation of pluralism and diversity. We can no longer live with the belief that we will get along in spite of our differences,we must embrace the fact that we will live better because of our differences. Diversity is Strength!

notes;

- 1) "The Old Enemy:Satan and The Combat Myth".by Neil Forsyth. pg.299.
- 2) Satan:The Early Christian Tradition".by Jeffery Burton Russell.pg. 35-36.
- 3) ibid..pg.42.
- 4) Forsyth.pg. 318.
- 5) the litany of information was gleaned from W.H.C. Frend's "The Rise of Christianity",and MacMullen,"Christianizing the Roman Empire".
- 6) MacMullen.pg.95.

We need an enemy

The cold war
is no longer frozen
our leaders claim

but military minds
are still looking
through the kaleidoscope
a new colored scare

they ride camels
ads say
or is it dromedary
instead
no wise man
at the helm

Saddam is not sheik
holding hostage "our" oil
holding us hostage
unemployment knocks on the Pentagon's
door

we need new enemies.

FEAST of JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Sept. 13

"But what is the meaning of 'mine' and 'not mine'?... chilly words which introduce innumerable wars into the world."

The other day i was meeting with other people who deal with the homeless of our city. Some government workers were there to clarify for us the status of the homeless and what was available to them. i was informed that anyone we give temporary shelter to is not considered homeless. Homeless to the state means you must be living on the street.

It seems to me to be a problem of understanding but also a matter of word usage. People who temporarily stay somewhere, but know where they are going, we could call sojourners. People who come to stay with us, the homeless, i would call wanderers. The wanderer is different from the sojourner because she has no idea where she is going. She is homeless because she has no share in the ownership of the land.

In the earliest recorded history of humanity, his homelessness/landlessness was not known. Most tribal communities of ancient history had no concept of property. use of the land was collective. Words like my or mine are not even found in many tribal languages. The land was looked upon as a gift or mother and used as a means of survival not productivity. However, when societies moved from hunter/gatherers to a more agrarian mode they started to realize that controlling the land would eventually give them control over the labor of the land, which is nothing short of controlling the people. This has been the scenario ever since. And it seems to me that one way to create change is to learn from the people who have been landless not land-lords.

When Israel left the landlords and brickyards of Egypt they tried to articulate an attitude towards ownership of the land. Two theme dominate much of the Hebrew scriptures: land as task/gift and land as temptation.

For Israel, land as task was to keep the Sabbath. And to keep the Sabbath in the earliest teachings is for freeing slaves (Ex. 21:1-11) and for cancelling debts (Deut. 15:1-11) and for resting the land (Lev. 25). Sabbath also is a reminder that land is not from us, but is a gift. So for Israel it is the affirmation that people, like land, can never be owned. They are in covenant with us, and therefore lines of dignity, respect, and freedom are drawn around them which must be honored by people who will have the land as a holy place. However, when Israel became Sabbathless the land becomes a temptation. The land then takes on a new meaning of producer/consumer instead of gift. And from that point on there is no more lived Torah, but only, as Walter Brueggemann says, "the royal consciousness that covets without limit."

And it is in this context that we hear the words of the prophets and Jesus calling us back to koinonia, to shared community, to a right relationship. It is interesting that their words are always directed to the wealthy and the religious leaders because these were the people who possessed the most and had the most to lose.

The early Christian community tried to live the koinonia ideal, the shared community/right relationship. The book of Acts gives a brief description of this attitude of ownership, one of equality and according to their needs not wants (Acts 2.4). This ideal seems to have worked for the first few centuries for some of the communities, but once Christianity and Rome were married all was lost. One observation I would like to make about this time period: Christians only started to justify the use of violence when they started to acquire wealth and property. It is no secret that Augustine was writing the principles to the "just war" theory in his ivory tower, while the poor "barbarians" were knocking at his door. The sword or the gun or bomb are "just" when it protects our interests; namely land, property and means of production. And this is something I believe that the U.S.A. Catholic bishops are failing to deal with. Their pastorals on war and economy do not make this connection: when one acquires wealth one uses violence to keep it. And if they are making the connection they are ignoring it because they might have to give up a comfortable life. It is no wonder that the Catholic church, or any other church, will not stand firm against violence, because they would have to get rid of a lot of baggage.

The same is true for any group, institution, or government. The main reason, in my opinion, for U.S.A. military support and presence in Central America (or anywhere else) is because many of our multi-national corporations have vested interests in that region. So the only way to keep exploiting places like Central America is to oppress or kill those who don't want us to have the luxury of coffee and bananas for breakfast. Unjust use of the land will result in the use of violence. And this is the law of the land... lords.

This scandal is not only happening in far away lands but in our own backyards. For example, the state of New Jersey is 4.8 million acres, and at least 12 U.S.A. corporations own more land than the state of New Jersey itself. The largest is Standard Oil of Indiana, which owns 20.3 million acres alone. It is appalling for us to know that in third world countries 95% of the land is owned by 5% of the population, but in the U.S.A. 1% of the population owns 65% of the land. We are not far from making bricks.

The other day I heard a native American woman speak about the injustice being done to her people. They are being forced off their land by the U.S.A. government, with the help of some big corporations, so that their land can be raped of its resources and beauty. One of the resources they are aborting from mother earth is uranium, which is used in the production of nuclear weapons. So the cycle of violence is

complete, we control the land in order to rape the people and we rape the land in order to control the people.

What we need to do as a people is put our feet and hands back into the soil. We need to feel the rich energy that lies within. We need to again see land as gift, land as life, and land as hope. We all have a right to a piece of land on which to live and die, sweat and bleed, and to laugh and cry so that the tears of our joys and sorrows soak the earth, along with our sweat and blood, to produce an abundant harvest. We all have a right to a bit of land on which to make music, dance, and give thanks in vital ritual to the Spirit who is giver of life and land.

FEAST of CYPRIAN

Sept. 16 - Martyr

"We look with glad continences upon confessors illustrious with the heraldry of a good name, and glorious with the praises of virtue and of faith; clinging to them with holy kisses, we embrace them long desired with insatiable eagerness. The white-robed cohort of Christ's soldiers is here, who in the fierce conflict have broken the ferocious turbulence of an urgent persecution, having been prepared for the suffering of the dungeon, armed for the endurance of death. Bravely you have resisted the world; you have afforded a glorious spectacle in the sight of God; you have been an example to your brethren that shall follow you." (1)

During the persecution of Decius, 250-51 C.E., Cyprian, a presbyter in Carthage, wrote one of his many treatises entitled "On the Lapsed." It is a document that is a response to the tremendous amount of faithlessness that occurred within the Christian community because of the imperial persecution. In this castigation Cyprian cites many reasons for the lapse of faith, but the overwhelming reason was the maintenance of wealth. Surely there were other elements that caused some people of faith to falter under pressure, some that Cyprian even seems to be sympathetic to. "...but when, with the renewed barbarity of the most cruel judge, wearied out as I was, the scourges were now tearing me, the clubs bruised me, the rack strained me, the claw dug into me, the fire roasted me; my flesh deserted me in the struggle, the weakness of my body frame gave way..." (2) Since I have not suffered torture because of my faith it would be arrogant of me, I believe, to somehow shake my head at those who lapsed after enduring such cruelties.

Cyprian is not so polite, however, to those who have abandoned the faith because of possessions and property. The bulk of this treatise is devoted to pointing out how many chose the material world over allegiance to Christ. The following are only a few examples of his serious criticism:

"Each one was desirous of increasing his estate; and forgetful of what believers had either done before in the times of the apostles, or always ought to do, they, with the insatiable ardour of covetousness, devoted themselves to the increase of their property." (3)

"The truth, brethren, must not be disguised; nor must the matter and cause of our wound be concealed. A blind love of one's own property has deceived many; nor could they be prepared for, or at ease in, departing when their wealth fettered them like a chain. Those were the chains to them that remained - those were the bonds by which both virtue was retarded, and faith burdened, and the spirit bound, and the soul

hindered:so that they who were involved in earthly things might become a booty and food for the serpent,which,according to God's sentence,feeds upon earth. And therefore the Lord the teacher of all good things,forewarning for the future time says,'If thou wilt be perfect,go,sell all that thou hast,and give to the poor,and thou shalt have treasure in heaven:and come follow me.' If rich men did this,they would not perish by their riches:if they laid up treasure in heaven,they would not have a domestic enemy and assailant."(4)

"But how can they follow Christ,who are held back by the chain of their wealth? Or how can they seek heaven,and climb to sublime and lofty heights,who are weighed down by earthly desires? They think that they possess,when they are possessed:as slaves of their profit,and not lords with respect to their own money,but rather the bond-slaves of their money. These times and these men are indicated by the apostle,when he says,'But they that will be rich,fall into temptation,and a snare,and into many foolish and hurtful lusts,which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the root of all evil is the love of money,which,while some have coveted,they have erred from the faith,and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.' But with what rewards does the Lord invite us to contempt of worldly wealth?" (5)

Cyprian does not mix words. simply put,people have become slaves to the maintenance of their property and possessions. Cyprians statements are not however,confined to time. These words ring true for us today. Yes,it is true that we are not being threatened with death,in the same way as the early church for our convictions,but i do believe that we are being persecuted.

The dictionary tells us that,to persecute means to oppress or harass with ill-treatment. In this culture,in this society,we are definitely being harassed and oppressed. There is overt oppression that people suffer;especially people of color,women,the handicapped,refugees and AIDS victims. But for most of us the persecution is subtle or better put...covert. Indeed,we suffer from,to borrow a term from the Pentagon,low intensity conflict. We are constantly being bombarded by the government,corporations,the media,and even religious institutions:to think a certain way,to behave a certain way and to consume a certain way. So in a sense ,it is not just the "faith" community that is being harassed,its all of society,apart from the mega-rich elite,who control the above mentioned institutions. Most of U.S.A. society is being harassed,oppressed,even coerced into embracing this way of nihilistic non-being. Our lives are so attacked,even assaulted by the dominative culture,a culture that has reduced us to objects which consume commodities.

Now if one chooses to venture out of this inferno of apathetic consumerism,to abandon trivality,to embrace your own path - os....you have committed a grave error. You have

committed the crime of truly being alive. In our culture it is criminal to question and challenge the social norm, and above all it is criminal to envision another WAY. Anything short of envisioning another WAY, under imperial terms, to the early Christian community, was considered an apostate. This was to the early communities a grave sin: to buckle under imperial standards, to give in to the world, the social norms. So much so, that it was debated as to whether or not this lapse could be forgiven. Those whom the faith community considered to be repentant, were asked to go through the process of "exomologese", a penitential discipline. "The precondition for penance was acknowledgment of the truth: the candidate for reconciliation must be capable of self criticism, of an integral recognition of his or her lapse." (6)

This debate about acceptance of those who had lapsed was not easily resolved, if ever. Cyprian summoned a council in 254 C.E. to respond to the issue of what to do with bishops and other clerics who also lapsed during the persecution. Cyprian decided at the council that "no delinquent cleric was tolerable as a minister in the Church. The sacraments dispensed by such a cleric were invalid and endangered the welfare of the congregation." (7) This was in serious conflict with the bishop of Rome, Stephen, who thought that penance followed by the laying on of hands would suffice. The controversy would exist for years to come and peak over the split between Catholics and Donatists. The Donatists believed that they could not be in communion with certain bishops and those who succeeded their office, who lapsed under persecution. These the Donatists believed were "traditores", or the failed. Emperor Constantine furthered the division by siding with the "traditores" and even provided them with funds to combat the Donatists. In the fifth century the Catholics "won" the debate and promptly labeled those from North Africa who embraced the theology of Donatus as heretics.

Upon thinking about this issue of those who lapsed under Roman imperial pressure, I have come to wonder how we "give in" here in the U.S.A. For me the atmosphere that existed during the U.S.A.'s war on the Persian Gulf is an excellent example.

Ivo Lesbaupin, in his book, "Blessed are the Persecuted", lists three kinds of apostates that could easily apply to the various responses during the war. First there was the "sacrificati", those who had taken part in sacrifice to the gods. This I would liken to Christians who served in the military, willingly or not. To me they sacrificed themselves to the god of war, Mars. The second was "thurificati", those who had only offered a few grains of incense to honor the emperor. This we could compare to those who funded the war, paid federal taxes, and those who showed visible signs of support: i.e. the yellow ribbon bearers. The third apostate was the "libellatici", those who had not offered sacrifice, but had in one way or another obtained the "libellus", the

certificate to the effect that they had indeed done so. Even though there was no certificate issued to those who were complicit with the war, many were indeed complicit. Not speaking out against the violence, not resisting the banality in some way was a sign to others that you have lapsed; that you have renounced your commitment to truth.

Again one has to wonder why the resistance to the war was so limited and weak. I would again refer to Cyprian and say that it was because we did not want to give up our status, threaten our economic security, and incur the wrath of the proponents of blind patriotism. The unwillingness to risk these things, in light of the incredible slaughter that took place is scandalous. Scandalous to the degree that the faith community needs to look at how we are going to go through this process of "exomologese", penitential discipline. How can we say we are committed to truth, un-conditional love of others, non-violence and whimsically respond to the most intense aerial bombing in history?

Dan Berrigan says, "We have assumed the name of peacemakers, but we have been by and large unwilling to pay any significant price. And because we want peace with half a heart and half a life, the war of course continues, because the waging of war, by its nature is total - but the waging of peace, by our own cowardice, is partial."

Wendell Berry says, "...I am sickened by complicity in my race." Indeed, I am ashamed of my response, of our response; a response that brings self condemnation. Here Cyprian says,

"Why bring with you, O' wretched man, a sacrifice? Why immolate a victim? You yourself have come to the altar an offering; you yourself have come a victim; there you have immolated your salvation, your hope; there you have burnt up your faith in those deadly fires." (8)

Cristo ten piedad !

notes:

- 1) "The Ante-Nicene Fathers", vol. 5, Cyprian's letters, pg. 437.
- 2) *ibid.* pg. 440.
- 3) *ibid.* pg. 438.
- 4) *ibid.* pg. 440.
- 5) *ibid.* pg. 440.
- 6) "Blessed are the Persecuted: Christian life in the Roman Empire A.D. 64-313", by Ivo Lebaupin, pg. 57.
- 7) "Saints and Sinners in the Early Church: Differing and Conflicting Traditions in the First Six Centuries" by W.H.C. Frend, pg. 100.
- 8) "The Ante-Nicene Fathers", vol. 5, Cyprian's letters, pg. 439.

* see also W.H.C. Frend, "The Donatist Church".

REPENTANCE : OWNERSHIP OF OUR HISTORY

October 12

Columbus Day

"....the reign of Yaweh is at hand. Repent and believe the good news." Mark 1:15

"They do not bear arms.and do not know them.for i showed them a sword.they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane...They would make fine servants...With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want." Howard Zinn:" A Peoples History of the United States"

One year from now the Church and State will be celebrating what they call...the arrival of Salvation to the Western hemisphere. Gold coins are being minted with the icon of Columbus himself,while secular and religious institutions plan historic festivities. Millions of people will eat tons of food.consume oceans of alcohol,line streets for parades, and go on pilgrimages to holy landings to pray to God in thanksgiving for the "new world". What is sickening about all of this is that it is an attempt by the Church and State to continue to bless,condone,and even praise the complete slaughter of countless cultures and people.

Noam Chomsky states that"...there may have been 80 million Native Americans in Latin America when Columbus "discovered" the continent - as we say -and about 12-15 million more north of the Rio Grande. By 1650,about 95% of the population of Latin America had been wiped out and by the time the continental borders of the United States had been established,some 200,000 were left of the indigenous population." (1) This is our history. We(white European decendency) are the offspring of zealous,well intentioned, pioneering,adventurous,Christian murderers. Let us make no mistake about all of this. The societal privilages we enjoy, our status,even the very land we occupy with our homes is a bloodied inheritance.

i began this reflection with a quote from Marks gospel of Jesus' first utterance where he says toRepent! This is no admonition to cower in fear or to wander about drowning in our guilt. To repent(greek-metanoia)means to embark on a radical transformation of self,in order to"...believe the good news",of compassion,justice,and reconciliation. Columbus day for most is a celebrating(knowingly or unknowingly) of slavery,imperialism,exploitation and death. What the faith community needs to do is to develop its own account of its history in order for real repentance to take place. This is no easy task because the imperial Church and State have its own interpretation of history and the theologians to support its outcome. Here Chomsky says,"...T.D.Allman observes that 'the American national experience of genocidal slaughter of the Indians'is'nearly nonexistent'. 'They were not human

beings, they were only obstacles to the inexorable triumph of American virtue, who must be swept away to make room for a new reality of American freedom." (2)

So what is it that must be said about this history in order to come to conversion? Unlike what popular stories about Columbus say, he was not out sailing the high seas to prove that the world was round. He was commissioned to search for one thing...gold. Columbus himself said, "...the best thing in the world is gold. It can even send souls to heaven." His adventure was based on greed, the accumulation of wealth...capitalism. Indeed from the arrival of Columbus to this very day the major factor in the genocide of indigenous culture in the western hemisphere has been capital. Whether its gold taken from the Aztec, hardwood from the Amazon Indians, coca from the Andean tribes, uranium from the Hopi and Navaho or bananas from the Mayan/Guatemalan land...the motive is the same...economic imperialism. Nothing has prevented this endeavour, not even its genocidal consequences. But how is it that this was/is all allowed to happen?

In any empire that exploits you always need priests to theologize and bless your activities. Dolores LaChapelle explains the background of which this theology was born:

"When the catholic sovereigns, as they called themselves, unified Spain in 1492, the Inquisition was revived. The primary targets were Jewish converts, who by their skill and commercial acumen had amassed considerable fortunes and converted Moslems who were still suspect. At least a quarter of a million Jews survived the Inquisition; those who did not convert were exiled in 1492. When Spain began conquering the New World, this zeal to garner souls for Christ continued unabated as the priests marched right along with the armies. One Spanish chronicler notes that, although they had killed thousands in a particular battle, it was no loss because they had baptized many before they died - thus more souls were saved for God. Conquering of the land thus became a religious crusade for the 'greater glory of God'." (3)

So as we can see throughout all this blood-stained history the church has been nothing short of bed-fellows with the state in pillaging the people and the land of the "new world". Even today we see the likes of Oral Roberts in Guatemala trying to convert mayans by imposing his brand of religious imperialism.

There are other disgusting motives which make up our disgraceful past. One is that it is no coincidence that all of these victims of our economic and religious imperialism are darker skinned than us. Racism is a thread woven through our entire heritage. The other appalling element of our history of colonialism is what Alfred Crosby entitles in his

book: "Ecological Imperialism - The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900". We are still only discovering the evils of our arrogance towards non-human life in this hemisphere. Our utter exploitation of bio-regions and its life, if anything, will eventually be our demise.

But even all this talk about recognizing our past is not enough for true repentance. Surely we can not undo history, but this is not only relevant to the past. We must talk and act on the present and for the future. John the Baptist says, "If you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruits." So what might be some appropriate fruits? Lets keep in mind that if some reconciliation takes place between us and the native people a clearer picture will appear in regards to concrete solutions.

Obviously we need more education and research done in regards to this history which has been hidden from most of us. We must shatter the myths around the discovery of a "new world" and name it an invasion. We must denounce the premise that this country was founded on freedom. It was founded on genocide. We need to learn more about our local tribal traditions and culture. You can not reconcile with people that you know nothing about. We can be writing individual and collective letters of repentance that will eventually be delivered to a local representative of the native community. We can offer resources to indigenous people who are in need, even be willing to share or give back land. Work to restore and reappropriate land for their needs....culturally and spiritually - reservations do not provide either. Plus we must work diligently to confront and resist the Church and States' continual assault on native people. But even on top of all of that maybe the most important thing we can do is to learn from and assimilate their passionate respect for mother earth. If there is to be any future we must heed the words of Chief Seattle and believe that, "...the earth does not belong to humans, rather humans belong to the earth".

bekaade and debwed

be peaceful and speak the truth
(west michigan native dialect)

notes:

- 1) Noam Chomsky, "The Manufacture Of Consent".pg.1
- 2) ibid. pg.2
- 3) Dolores LaChapelle, "Sacred Land, Sacred Sex, The Rapture of the Deep".pg.39.

* i would strongly urge people to read Kirkpatrick Sales' "The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy"

What good is it ?

Love
your enemies
Pray
for those who hate you

what good is it
if you love
only those
who love you
Even the evil ones do that
what good is it ?

Even the Conquistadors did that
even Columbus did.

Even
the U.S. Cavalry did that
even Custer did.
what good is it ?

Even
the Nazi's did that
even Eichmann

Even
the death squads
do that
even D'Abuison
what good is it ?

Even
the KKK does that
even the CIA
and the Pentagon

What good is it ?
What merit is there in that ?
What kind of integrity is that ?

Even
the Church
does that ???

What good is it ?
To
pray and Love.

JUBILEE in the YEAR of the QUINCENTENARY

Oct. 12

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has chosen me to bring
good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty
to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free the oppressed
and announce that the time has come
when the Lord will save his people."

Luke 4:18-19

There has been debate over the years as to the specific meaning of Jesus' reading of this prophetic text from Isaiah. The overwhelming amount of recent scholarship would agree that this statement of Jesus in Luke is a fundamental point of departure. The text is a mini version of the life and ministry of Jesus, i.e. the reign of Yaweh...the Jubilee year. Another question raised by scholars is the historical authenticity of such Jubilee implications uttered by Jesus. Did the Israelite community ever embrace the precepts of the Jubilee? It is not my intention or my interest to prove to you whether or not it has ever been tried, because just like the resurrection it is not something I can prove, rather it is something I believe.

I could also talk about the radical implications of the Jubilee for the Israelite community or for the listeners of Jesus, but I am not interested in providing that sort of information. The following texts have already adequately spoken to those issues: "Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee", by Robert North SJ., chapter 3 of "The Politics of Jesus", by John H. Yoder, and "Jesus, Liberation and the Biblical Jubilee" by Sharon Ringe.

What continues to enter my mind is what would the Jubilee look like, how would it impact us, if we were to implement its principles here in the U.S.A.? Indeed, it is a Herculean task, but if we are serious about ushering in the reign of Yaweh, these fundamental values can not be ignored. Regardless of their historical authenticity we must be willing to live the Jubilee for it to happen. And the call to proclaim an acceptable year is not conditional. We can not say, I will do it only if the rest of you join in. It is a call to view life, to live life in a different way. As we shall see, the Jubilee is not a fashionable approach to modern life, but it seems to be a hopeful agenda during the year of the Quincentenary.

Basically there are four general elements of the Jubilee year: 1) leaving the soil fallow, 2) the remission of debts,

3) the liberation of slaves, 4) the return to each of his families property/land. The purpose of the rest of this article is to discuss each of these principles as they relate to 20th century America.

"You shall not plant your fields or harvest the grain that grows by itself or gather the grapes in your unpruned vineyards. The whole year shall be sacred to you...."
Lev. 25:11-12

An initial reaction to this style of agri-culture might be that people would starve, because too many people depend on the food grown in this country. This is utterly ridiculous, since a fair portion of the arable land in this country is used either for export crops or for animal feed. Certainly it would create some general hardships for certain sectors of society, but remember the poor of the land are allowed to glean from the fields what does come up during the fallow year. I can assure you, as a gardener, that plenty of volunteer crops will grow in spite of the lack of human intervention. The hardships that would be created would be with those who are involved in agri-business. The sector of our society, those who grow food for profit, who use food as a weapon, will feel the crunch of a fallow year (this of course may mean our refusal to buy their products, since it is not likely they will not plant).

One of the major problems today with how we grow food is, we allow someone else to do it for us. Historically these food growers are becoming fewer and fewer and the style of farming is becoming more and more technologized. Soil erosion in this country happens because we allow it. Pesticide use and fossil fuel based fertilizer dependency exists because we allow it. Agri-business exists because we allow it. A fallow year would call all of this into question because it would force us to look at the fundamental issue of how food is raised in this country. A fallow year would be a radical departure from agri-business because it would call us to develop real agri-culture. Here Wendell Berry says:

"A healthy culture is a communal order of memory, insight, value, work, conviviality, reverence, aspiration. It reveals that human necessities and the human limits. It clarifies our inescapable bonds to the earth and to each other. It assures that the necessary restraints are observed, that the necessary work is done, and that it is done well. A healthy farm culture can be based only upon a familiarity and can grow only among a people soundly established upon the land: it nourishes and safeguards a human intelligence of the earth that no amount of technology can satisfactorily replace." (1)

A fallow year reminds us that we are not in control of the land. Yaweh is. The fruits of the earth are gifts of the earth, not commodities to enhance our greed. More of us would

need to become apart of real agri-culture.because a fallow year calls into question our relationship with the earth. This transition.of course.will seem more realistic once we discuss the 4th principle of the Jubilee(returning of land).

"...you are to cancel the debts of those who owe you money. This is how it is to be done. Everyone who has lent money to a fellow Israelite is to cancel the debt;he must not try to collect the money;the Lord himself has declared the debt canceled."

Deut. 15:1-2

If you are a banker,mortgage broker.insurance agent.or anyone in the business of giving loans(debt sales).to people for profit.this text will not improve their career. Our government will no longer be able to hold 3rd world nations hostage nor its own citizens by keeping them in economic bondage. The cancellation of debts would basically do two things. It would bring alittle more economic equality into the system.as well as.give people economic stability that would free them to act conscientiously. Any empire or imperialistic economic system knows that one way to control people is to keep them in economic bondage. If people live to make payments they will not act with integrity nor become involved in the political process. People will not have time nor take political risks if they are held to a paycheck. The cancellation of debts would not only relieve many people of anxieties.it would also grant them more liberty to question the economic dis-order. It is no wonder.during the Jewish uprising in 66-70 c.e..that the rebels burned many of the archives which housed records of debts.(2) Cancellation of debts would call us to question an economic system based on profit and greed. Debt remission would move us to an economy based upon sharing,mutuality.and needs.not on monetary tyranny.

"If a fellow Israelite living near you becomes so poor that he sells himself to you as a slave,you shall not make him do the work of a slave."

Lev. 25:39

People may look at this Jubilee statute and say it no longer applies....slavery has been abolished. Slavery is alive and well in America.it has just taken on "legitimized" forms. Migrant workers who labor in the fields for low pay are wage slaves. Elderly people who are no longer "productive".are forced to live in institutions as age slaves. Children who continue to be abused and have no legal voice are also age slaves. Women who continue to be used to sell products are gender slaves. Minorities who.because of their skin color.are relegated to living in the ghetto are economic/race slaves. The freeing of slaves fundamentally says that people can no longer be objectified. The freeing of slaves ushers in a new social order which says that people

are equal. Domination of one group of people over another can no longer exist.

"During this year all property that has been sold shall be restored to the original owner or his descendants..."

Lev. 25:10

This last statute of the Jubilee is fundamentally the one, I believe, that will allow for all the others to happen. It could be said that those who control are not the ones with the most money or the most military power, but those who control the land. Empire building has always been based on acquisition and control of land. To guard against constant monopolizing of land the Israelites knew that land must be given back to its original owners/inhabitants.

This fourth statute is a profoundly sobering challenge in the year of the Quincentenary. The 500th anniversary of the invasion by Columbus/Europe of the western hemisphere seems to me to be the Jubilee of Jubilees. What better time to implement Yaweh's call to a new social order. The Jubilee was not some static revolutionary idea, it is a guard against monopoly, a way to give back to those who have been dealt injustice. Leaving the land fallow, in order to respect the earth, would give native Americans hope that the white man has finally become enlightened. Now maybe we will have a relationship with the mother earth and cease from raping her. Giving back native economic independence would be a way of cancelling all debts for them. Refusal to view them as savages and primitive would free them from being the slaves we have made them for the past 500 years. Finally we will see that their culture is in many ways a more mature way of living and that we have also been slaves of our own making. Giving back the land that was once inhabited and respected by them would be the only real act of repentance worth its weight in this year of the Quincentenary. It would be an admittance, finally, of our arrogance, our theft, our greed, our total disregard for the hundreds of treaties we signed with them in bad faith. Anything short of this land repentance would not do it, I'm afraid. We can have all the politically correct observations of Columbus day we want, but it will never change anything save living with our consciences. The Israelites understood all too well that charity and welfare systems have nothing to do with justice. The Jubilee is called for by Yaweh with a community of people who were ex-slaves, those who knew what it meant to be landless, objectified people.

This all sounds good you say, but it is not likely that the government or the institutional church will blow the shofar. Exactly! The Jubilee is not a program designed for those concerned about capital, but those who have a commitment to covenant. We have to be responsible for our own lives and communities. We have to sound the ram's horn and begin the new covenantal adventure. Obviously this is not a popular

undertaking and is precisely why Jesus suffered capital punishment....he was threatening the very fabric of social domination of his day.

This all has to start somewhere. It must start with us. The odds may seem impossible, but here Walter Brueggemann offers us some insightful hope:

"The word Jubilee comes from "yabal", ram's horn, a term that occurs frequently in Leviticus concerning the practice of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10, 11, 12, 15, 28, 30, 31, 33). The other word use is shophar, also horn or trumpet (Lev. 25:9). These two words refer to the ram's horn that Israel used as a signal to execute its radical social vision in concrete economic ways by acting decisively against the monopoly for the sake of the human community.

In Joshua 6, a very different kind of narrative, the "yabal" is used in v. 6 and the "shophar" in vv. 4, 5, and 20. That text reports the liturgical act whereby Israel goes around the great walled city of Jericho seven times--and the walls fall down. Jericho was a very old, powerful, and formidable city. Its archaeological remains witness to a monopoly of wealth that must have been achieved and sustained by slave labor. It surely represented a concentration of military power against which Israel's social vision had little concrete chance. Is it coincidental that the sound of the Jubilee (yabal, shophar) is the sound that destroys the walls, breaks the monopoly, and makes covenantal life possible? In the face of walled cities, Israel acts with a Jubilee, and the walls of monopoly come tumbling down. In at least this one narrative, even the walled-in monopoly cannot resist the Jubilee of Israel's covenantal faith." (3)

Whatever it was that brought down the walls of domination, liturgy played a part in it. We must announce and celebrate another reality in spite of how large and thick the walls are. Only when we envision another reality will the old world order come tumbling down. The Hopi believe that we are in the last stage of human history. It is a time when we will make it or cease to exist. Let us envision the world in such a way that will remove all walls that enslave us and keep us separate from one another. Let us, with Yaweh "create a new heaven and earth - so wonderful that no one will even think about the old anymore. Be glad, rejoice, forever in my creation. Look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness, and her people shall be a joy!"

Isaiah 65:17-18

notes:

- 1) "The Unsettling of America, Culture and Agriculture" by Wendell Berry, pg. 43.
- 2) "Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: popular movements at the Time of Jesus", by R. Horsley and J. Hanson, pg. 211.
- 3) "Interpretation and Obedience", by W. Brueggemann, pg. 281.

ALL SAINTS DAY

Nov. 1

Re-Membering the Dead

I'm sure that for most of us Halloween is a time for us to dress up, eat candy and tell ghost stories. In its origins, however, Halloween (Samhain) was celebrated because it was the witch's New Year. When I say witch I mean people whose spirituality revolves around creation...its an ancient goddess tradition.

On Halloween they sat out a plate with cakes and wine and a lighted candle as an offering to their beloved dead, then they spent time recalling the memory of friends and loved ones who have died. It is interesting to note that here we find the birth of our Feast of All Saints. The church designated the day after Halloween as All Saints day as a reaction to the ancient Goddess religion. In fact, the whole liturgical calendar was created in response to many of the old religion feast days. (see the appendix to Dolores LaChapells, "Earth Wisdom") This was in part due to Rome's effort to "win over" the pagan folk (Pagan-Latin for country dweller).

The creation of All Saints day, however, was not a bad idea. Why should we not remember the dead? We are constantly reminded in the liturgy to pray for the souls of the faithful departed. As a resurrection people we must not only re-member special saints or friends and relatives, although they are important, but all those who have died throughout history. We should especially re-member the countless masses of people who, in reality, suffered to make history.

And what can we say of them? One thing we can say with certainty is that in their suffering and their grief, in their joy and their fear, they called out to Yaweh, imploring her for intervention. By re-membering the dead we become part of a great historical solidarity. But why should we pray for these faceless dead? Johannes Baptist Metz was once asked that question in reference to the horror of the Nazi death camps. His response was, "...we can and should pray for the dead after Auschwitz, because even in Auschwitz, the hell of Auschwitz, they prayed".

As a resurrection people it would be egotistical to question the purpose of re-membering the unknown dead. Must it serve some purpose in order to be meaningful and necessary? This surely is what humanity should be about. It helps us to face "God" and eternity if we remind ourselves continually of the dead, offering their reality in faith, hope, and love. Karl Rahner said, "When we recall the dead they take us to a certain extent into their sphere, drawing us into their silence, they dispel the noisy bustle of the world and enable us to face the events of our lives with calmness which makes it possible for us to pray."

Prayer certainly requires the silence of solitude and is intensified rather than diminished when we withdraw slightly from the everyday world to think of the dead, anticipating our own death - as far as possible - as the release through which God is finally revealed to us."

There is no doubt in my mind that what Rahner is saying here is true, but it would have done him well to listen to his own words. More importantly it would have done others well if he had listened to himself. To think of the dead is not enough...to be in solidarity with the dead (especially the nameless masses who suffered to make history) means to not let the senseless deaths continue on with the living. This is precisely where Rahner failed to incarnate his own words. His silence contributed to the death of countless Jews who now make up a scandalous history, i.e. death camp victims.

On Nov. 1, 1988 I was living and working in Guatemala as a non-violent escort for civilians receiving death threats from U.S.A. sponsored death squads. On All Saints day, I was at the GAM office (Mutual Support Group) an organization of people who have family members disappeared. It is here that my understanding of prayer for the dead was profoundly effected. These peoples lives were centered around the task of finding and re-membering the dead. That day I watched them plan and organize strategies with the constant wall covered reminders of the not forgotten dead. I would like to close this reflection with excerpts from my journal of that day in Guatemala.

"...what is at the heart of this day is to be at one with the dead, not because we had a relationship to them but because we still have one. Our relationship is a responsibility of sorts. We have the unending responsibility of not forgetting the dead...which is to say that we must never forget how they died and why...which is to say that we must not allow people to die in such a manner again. to re-member the dead is to create solidarity with history, to express our oneness to the human community: past, present, and future. It is to take ownership of the past, participation in the present, and responsibility for the future. A constant vigilance...for the saints of all ages. Let us not forget and we will not be forgotten....RECUERDO !!

FEAST of MARTIN of TOURS

Nov. 11

For many people of the Christian faith, the question of military service is not one that causes much reflection. I say this because in a recent study over 50% of the men and women in the U.S.A. military are Christians. In this reflection I do not intend to argue any points by referring to the U.S.A. bishops pastoral on War and Peace, nor am I likely to spout verses from scripture about the incompatibility of military life and following the witness of Jesus. People will too often say that "Jesus was God and therefore was perfect, I am not, so I do not have to love my enemies." Instead, I would like to share an account of the conversion of Martin of Tours. This, I submit, might seem more "realistic" to some readers.

According to his biographer, Sulpicius Severus, Martin had been forced into the army by his father at a very young age and had actually served for more than 20 years before he decided to give up his military career and devote himself unreservedly to the life of the spirit. Sulpicius gives us a very dramatic description of events surrounding his decision. The year is 365 C.E.

"Meanwhile, when the barbarians were invading the provinces of Gaul, Julius Caesar, collecting his army at the city of the Vaugiones began the distribution of a donative to his troops. One by one the soldiers were called forth in the customary manner until it was Martin's turn. At that point, thinking it was an appropriate time to be mustered out of the service...for he did not think it fair to accept the donative if he were not going to stay in the army...he said to Caesar, 'Up to the present I have served in your army, permit me now to be a soldier of Christ; it is not right for me to fight.'"

"On hearing this the tyrant went into a rage and said that Martin was withdrawing from the service not because of religious scruples but from fear of the battle that was about to take place the next day. Rather than being daunted by this kind of intimidation, Martin became even more determined and said, 'If my action is ascribed to craven fear rather than to faith, tomorrow I will take up my position at the front line without my arms. There, without helmet or shield but protected by the sign of the cross, I will in the name of the Lord Jesus break through the enemies ranks without suffering injury.'"

"An order was given for him to be placed under guard so that he might have the opportunity of living up to his proposal by being exposed to the barbarians without his armor. The next day the enemy sent a peace delegation and surrendered with all of their property."

For Martin being a Christian and a soldier was

scandalous. Martin was not alone however, on this matter. Up until the Edict of Milan in 312 C.E. the church outright denounced military service. Participating in war was in conflict with the message of Jesus.

However, after Constantine gave his blessing to Christianity the church became complacent, compromised its witness and assimilated much of the Roman legal/imperialist system and status. Within one hundred years the outlook on military service went through a radical change. Before 312 C.E. you could not be a Christian and participate in the military, after the beginning of the fifth century you could not be in the military unless you were a Christian. Since then only a few "saints", like Martin, or disobedient people have chosen to disarm and embrace the life of Christ.

It is ironic that today in the secular calendar, people in the U.S.A. celebrate Veterans Day. Many baptized Christians will celebrate this holiday with pride. However it is interesting to note that in the early church those who were preparing to become baptized had to denounce the military life. Hippolytus of Rome, writing in the third century about preparation for the baptism, says, "A catechumen or member of the faithful who wants to join the army should be dismissed (from the church) because he has shown contempt for God." (Apostolic Tradition)

Why is it then that we baptize people in the name of Christ, confirm them, and then bless their entrance into the armed forces? Martin of Tours denounced his life in the military to become a Christian. Today, Christians denounce their life in Christ to become soldiers.

Pray for us Martin

LEAVE THE LEGIONS
OF ROME
BEHIND



a funeral for thousands

i went to a funeral
singular procession
shovel in hand
Cuzcatlan(Land of Richness)
payment for death
a tax dollar wake
last rights
are first rights

Cuzcatlan
dig the grave
dig the grave
altering the soil
"my lawn"
not "my lawn"

Cuzcatlan
bury the dead
dying
dead.conscience
death

funerals....should take place
in public.

MAINTAINING OUR WAY OF DEATH

Feast of the Jesuit Martyrs

Nov. 16

"When the people of North America drink coffee, they are drinking thousands of drops of blood of indigenous and campesino workers in Central America. To continue drinking this coffee means to contribute to the ongoing suffering of the Central American people."

Salvadoran Coffee plantation worker

"Dec. 5, 1989 - Mario Roberto Alvarez, 31 years old, Santa Ana general secretary of SICAFE (Salvadoran Coffee Industry Union), shot six times and severely wounded. A man in civilian clothes checked Alvarez's identification at gunpoint, said, 'you're the one' and shot him."

Since the assassination of the six Jesuits, their cook and her daughter, there has been an international effort to boycott Salvadoran coffee. Great strides have been made to educate people about the boycott, in order to pressure the Salvadoran government to negotiate for peace. Several labor unions (both Salvadoran and American) have endorsed the boycott. The longshoremen are refusing to unload Salvadoran coffee on the west coast. Major universities and religious organizations are also participating in the boycott. Even some major food chains have pulled Folgers coffee off the shelves as a protest against the repression in El Salvador. Numerous cities have begun campaigns to inform the American public of the consequences of coffee consumption as an additional political tool to fight the continued U.S.A. support of the death squad government in El Salvador.

While all this attention has been given to the legal drug, coffee, another addictive substance, cocaine, has also captured the attention of the American public because of its devastating effects on our communities. In fact, not only is the U.S.A. the world's largest consumer of coffee, it also owns that status for cocaine. It is my opinion that these two addictive substances have a similar history, in that our consumption of both have determined the political, economic, and social fate of millions throughout Latin America. As a case example let's look at El Salvador and Columbia.

Both countries have a long history of poverty and social unrest, where a minority of the people control a majority of the land for non-food export cash crops. El Salvador has lost 74,000 people in the last 10 years to a civil war and U.S.A. sponsored death squad killings. Since 1947, Columbia has lived almost permanently under a state of siege, and by 1988, more than 10 persons were being murdered daily for ideological

Reasons, reaching a total of 3,011 documented political assassinations and countless others that were never reported." (1) The U.S.A. government has funded the repression in El Salvador for numerous years (in spite of the fact that it has brought no change) under the guise of protecting that region from the spread of "Communism". In recent years the U.S.A. has sent millions of dollars to the military in Columbia to supposedly fight its war on drugs. We even have been patrolling off the coast of Columbia with U.S.A. aircraft carriers. This new policy which began in 1986 when Reagan signed a secret directive establishing international drug trafficking as a national security threat, (2) and administratively continued last year when Bush signed a national security directive permitting military advisors to work in the drug producing zones... (3) This intervention has provided additional protection to the drug elite who now own 1 million hectares of land in Columbia, second only to coffee. In El Salvador U.S.A. military aid supports people like its president, Alfredo Cristiani, a major coffee plantation owner (who married the daughter of another prominent coffee family), as well as Orlando de Sola, a key coffee who financed Roberto D'Abuisson and the ARENA party. In an Aug. 11, 1989, New York Times article Sola states that "the tens of thousands of Salvadorans killed by right-wing death squads were communist stooges who deserved to die".

Indeed anyone who speaks out on behalf of unionizing or land reform are promptly targets of political assassination. Since 1980, 45 SICAPE activists have been murdered and three have been disappeared. Apart from the military repression the working conditions that Salvadorans are subject to truly incarnates the above quote that 'drinking coffee is like drinking the blood of the People'. The following is a testimony of a Salvadoran coffee worker now in exile, about the conditions of a coffee plantation:

"During the annual coffee harvests in El Salvador, men, women, and children come from far away to work in the coffee fields. We work 8 hours a day in the hot sun and just sleep under the coffee plants at night. There are no outhouses and no running water... at noon, they give 2 tortillas to the men. The women and children don't get any food... because the children are very hungry, they suck on the sweet tasting coffee, covered with pesticides... they get dysentery. A lot of children die. They are buried in the cemeteries at the coffee fields. The supervisors are very cruel to the people... if you break a little branch or spill coffee on the ground, the supervisors scold you and deduct it from your pay, which averages \$2.40 per day. No matter how much we work, we end up with almost nothing. Its only day to day survival."

These are the direct results of our consumption or what Dolores LaChapelle calls "addiction capitalism" (4) commodities consumed that because of their addictive

qualities mitigate their continual repressive/exploitative cultivation.

Coffee and cocaine are both drug commodities that demand continual consumption. Most people would agree that not giving up cocaine would be admitting addiction, but ask the same of coffee and you get an entirely different answer. In fact many people, even in the peace movement, find it difficult to give up coffee or will flatly deny its political consequences. Ann Wilson Schaef, in her book "When Society Becomes An Addict" states simply that "an addiction is anything we are not willing to give up and addiction is progressive...it will lead to death unless we actively recover from it." In regards to coffee (and cocaine) these two premises are interwoven, since coffee is something that we do not need and are not willing to give up, but also because the continual consumption of it will cause death...death to Salvadorans who are victims of our addiction capitalism. This consumptive attitude is strengthened because we live in an addictive society/system. Here again Schaef says, "An addictive system is a system that calls forth addictive behavior. The individual begins to operate out of an addictive process. An addictive system is a closed system in that it prevents few choices to individuals in terms of roles they may take and directions they may pursue." (5) Most coffee corporations (legal drug pushers) have such a sophisticated way to make you believe with their seductive advertisements that you indeed do need their drug. Thus we are slowly led to believe, through addiction and addictive systems, that we are no longer responsible for our lives, or the lives of others.

The beauty of being responsible in the Neighbor to Neighbor coffee boycott campaign is that not only will we be recovering from an addiction but most importantly we will be helping in the liberation of the people of El Salvador and possibly all of Latin America. I strongly urge you to contact your nearest Neighbor to Neighbor office and find out ways to become involved in the boycott. The way we live, determines how others will live!

notes:

- 1) NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America) Vol. 23, no. 6 "Columbia Cracks Up" pg. 30.
- 2) NACLA ibid. pg. 9
- 3) NACLA ibid. pg. 10
- 4) Dolores LaChapelle, "Sacred Land Sacred Sex", pgs. 48-51.
- 5) Ann Wilson Schaef, "When Society Becomes An Addict", pg. 25.

Other good sources are "Cocaine Politics" by Peter Dale Scott, and Jonathan Marshall and a video called "Crack, Covert Wars and the Constitution" by the Christic Institute, 1324 North Capital St. N.W. Washington D.C. 20002.

Neighbor To Neighbor : 236 Massachusetts Ave. Suite 608.
Washington D.C. 20002 - phone: 1-800-366-8289.

no thanks
i don't care
sorry
get away from me
keep the wetbacks out!

bullets rip the body
after hanging her by her breasts
rubber hood
tightens
gasping for air
son communistas
amenazas contra del gobierno

we have no free passes
nor flowers
only angst
disgust
rage

Christina Gomez
school teacher
corpse shows signs of torture
bullet ridden

\$1.5 million a day
if you pay taxes
and you do.
you pay for
rape
maiming
torture
murder

Los Madres de los desaparecidos
stand
wait
clutching photos
your tax dollars

El Salvador
The Savior
Crucify her!
Crucify her!

FEAST of CECILIA

Virgin and Martyr

Nov. 22

"My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain!
Oh the walls of my heart!
My heart is beating wildly,
I can not keep silent..."

Jer. 4:19

In the fifth century a basilica was dedicated to Cecilia, a martyr, because of the large number of Christians who venerated (from the Latin root, "venus", to love) her. Better known as the patron saint of music, Cecilia was born into a wealthy family during the third century. She renounced her wealth at an early age and became married to a man named Valerian. This was during the reign of Emperor Decius, the first emperor to initiate a general persecution against the Christian community.

Valerian was a humble man, who with a partner, was responsible for burying the martyrs of their community. One would presume that this was a simple task that merited little risk. The empire had a different view. Both men were arrested for subversion and executed. The empire knew that the martyrs were revered people amongst the Christian community. To allow them to take care of the bodies and place them in special places was to encourage and foster a spirit of dissent. The martyrs were models of Christian obedience, which meant they disobeyed the violent laws of the state. To allow public remembrance of the martyrs would create anarchy.

So one would think that such actions taken by the state would deter (from the Latin root, "deterio", to terrorize) others from further such activities. Cecilia had other ideas. Days later we see her at the grave of her husband...mourning. She too was arrested and beheaded for this act of treason.

This no doubt all seems so very strange and foreign to most of us. I have not heard of anyone being arrested for attending a funeral in this country or for putting flowers at the grave of a loved one. So why would Cecilia's mourning merit such repression?

One thing that the empire can not and will not tolerate is public grief. People can be sad and express anguish all they want as long as it is done behind closed doors. What the empire fears is when the grief and pain are brought into the public arena. To publicly express pain is an act of subversion against the state. It is the highest form of criticism. It is, as Walter Brueggemann states, "...an announcement of the end of the royal (imperialist) management." This is exactly the ministry of Jeremiah, to articulate the pain of the people as a way to bring an end to the management

of the status quo.

The empire will even allow you to know you are oppressed, they just don't want you to say anything about it, especially not in public. And they will keep you quiet by numbing your consciousness. Whether its the games in ancient Rome or T.V., fashion, and professional sports in the U.S.A., the empire has ways of keeping our mind off of pain. Thats why its so difficult to break through the psychic numbness in this culture. We are constantly being bombarded with distractions and affirmations that life is good, there are no problems here. We are too removed from the pain of the people. That is why i believe that part of the vocation of the Christian community in the U.S.A. is to creatively and publicly articulate the pain of the world, which is the pain of God.

One of the most effective examples of this royal criticism is from groups of women in Latin America called Los Madres de Los Desceparecidos, the Mothers of the Disappeared. These are women who have lost children or spouses to the violent government policies where they live. Because of this they have banded together to publicly proclaim their pain by holding pictures of loved ones who have disappeared in the plaza or in front of government buildings (some groups bang on pots and pans to draw more attention). This simple act of protest has generated a tremendous amount of response and has provoked the respective governments to tremble in their zapatos (shoes).

Recently some of us awkwardly attempted to express the pain of the victims in Central America. We gathered in front of our local federal building to erect a shelter that symbolized the local effects of an insane foreign policy: homelessness. We also planted crosses and dug a grave to dramatize the immense suffering being brought about through our life-styles and tax dollars. The response was predictable...there was none. It seems that in our culture there is this pathological fear that exists when it comes to confronting death, especially death we have perpetrated. Even more so it became evident that to publicly mourn is not only scandalous but utterly contemptible. In our "feel good" society grief is not acceptable.

It has become increasingly clear that in order to challenge and dismantle the state, the believing community needs to take to the streets to publicly articulate the pain of the world. If not, we will only fall into deeper levels of despair and powerlessness amidst this looming global-cide. We must, like Cecilia, be willing to publicly mourn even under pain of death, so that new life may be born.

Mourn with us Cecilia

FEAST of CLEMENT of ROME

Bishop and Martyr

Nov. 23

"We have done this that you may know that our whole care has been and is directed to your speedy attainment of peace."
I Clem. 63:4

These are the closing remarks attributed to Clement of Rome, a person we celebrate this week in our festive liturgical calendar. Little is known of Clement, and when he is referred to in "church" circles it is usually in the context of ecclesiastical authority on papal lineage. Clement is even referred to in the calendar as "pope" and third successor to Peter as bishop of Rome. I beg to differ with those who put together this calendar. The term pope was not used consistently by the church until late 3rd and early 4th centuries. The title "Pontifex Maximus" (Supreme Pontiff), however, was very familiar to the early Christians, not because it was the title given to church leaders, it was a title attributed to the Emperor of Rome.

Christians were not using that title for the bishop of Rome until the Constantinian takeover in the 4th century. Of course, after that period, the ecclesiastical elite adopted everything from the Roman Empire and inserted it into Christian belief and practice...making belief in Jesus a legislative duty rather than an experience of love and truth.

Well, back to Clement. He wrote his famous epistle to the church in Corinth around 93-95 C.E. According to most scholars, the main thrust of Clement's letter is to admonish the church in Corinth to settle their differences and seek the way of peace, as related in the closing sentence of his letter, which appears at the beginning of this reflection. In the beginning of his letter, Clement expresses that he would have written sooner, but there had been "...sudden and repeated calamities and misfortunes which have befallen us." He then goes on to give reference to certain examples of those who have persevered, even unto death. Peter and Paul were the first examples cited by Clement, who also includes a description of their sufferings for the faith. Clement also mentions the names of two women, Danaids and Dirces, who also suffered, "frightful and unholy indignities."

Since the description of Christian perseverance is articulated at the beginning of his letter, in light of the fact that it is an admonition to unity, one might be led to believe that Clement is warning the church in Corinth that persecution will be soon at hand. Indeed, the church in Rome may already be facing such persecution by the Emperor Domitian. In 95-96 C.E. Domitian, the Pontifex Maximus, was said to have unleashed a brutal attack upon the Jews and Christians. Clement himself is said to have been a martyr at

this time.

At this point, it is noteworthy that Clement does in his letter tell the church in Corinth to submit to the governing authorities, something very reminiscent of Paul's statements in Romans 13. It is difficult, however, to distinguish what is meant by submission. Neither Paul nor Clement seemed to have been very submissive to the Pontifex Maximus....if they had been, why did Paul spend so much time in jail and why were both of them martyred?

At the time of Clement there were three offenses that Christians committed which were punishable by death. They could refuse to burn incense to the Roman Gods, refuse to participate in the Roman military or refuse to call the Emperor "Dominus et Deus" (Lord and God). I submit that the Christian community, by enlarge, did not submit. It is my constant opinion that the early church refused to participate in the violent idolatry of the Roman state. They instead opted to be witnesses of the "Pax Christi", the peace of Christ, and not the "Pax Romana", the peace of Rome.

in vigilant hope
pray with us Clement

FEAST of DOROTHY DAY

Nov. 29

"Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable"

"Then Jesus said to his host, 'When you give a lunch or a dinner do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your rich neighbors...for they will invite you back, and in this way you will be repaid for what you did. When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind; and you will be blessed, because they are not able to pay you back. God will repay you on the day the good people rise from the dead.'"

Luke 14:12-14

It is ten years since the death of Dorothy Day. I am sitting next to our wood stove trying to discern the meaning of hospitality in my life and how it has been influenced by Dorothy. The opening text from Luke helps put into perspective that somehow hospitality to the marginal...the victimized of our society, is intricate to a life devoted to the reign of Yaweh. The text doesn't say hospitality to the marginal is the vocation reserved for those who are on the Christian Service Committee, or something you should do for the holidays to get you into the spirit of things. The text from Luke is another one of those "kenotic" admonitions that stem from the Torah and comes to Jesus through the witness of the prophets that says...help the ones neglected by society and there you will find God.

Unfortunately not many of us may be familiar with this text...most likely due to the church's frequent skimming over of such pronouncements. This is a reality that Dorothy was always hip to and because of that it brought an occasional condemnation, if you will or won't, from her coming out of years of service to those invited to the divine bash.

"There are days when I want to stop all those poor people, giving their coins to the church, and tell them to march on the offices of the archdiocese...tell all the people inside those offices to move out of their plush rooms and share the lives of the hungry and the hurt. Would Jesus sit in some big, fancy, air-conditioned room near the banks and the department stores where the rich store their millions and spend their millions? Would he let himself be driven in big black limousines, while thousands and thousands of people who believe in him and his church are at the edge of starvation? Would he tolerate big mansions and fancy estates and luxurious traveling, while people come to church barefooted and ragged and hungry and sick, children all over the world? In my mind there is only one answer to questions like those: no!"

OK, so we offer hospitality to the disenfranchized...is

it enough that we are repaid on the day that the good people rise from the dead? Years ago i would have said yes...this is where we find Christ, in the giving of hospitality and thats enough. But giving hospitality is more than that. In fact, it is not just an act of giving but even more so an act of receiving. Luke clearly portrays this seemingly backward outcome of hospitality in his story of Zacchaeus.

"Jesus went to Jericho and was passing through. There was a chief tax collector there named Zacchaeus, who was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a little man and could not see Jesus over the crowd. So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus who was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus, 'Hurry down Zacchaeus, because i must stay in your house today.' Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy. All the people who saw it started grumbling, 'This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner!' Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor and if i have cheated anyone, i will repay her back four times as much.' Jesus said to him, 'Salvation has come to this house today, for this man also is a descendent of Abraham. The son of man came to seek and save the lost.'"

Luke 19:1-10

It would appear that Zacchaeus, the one giving hospitality (although Jesus initiated it...which is the way it happens often, people just show up at your door) is the one most affected by the encounter. For no clearly stated reason he decides to give half his belongings to the poor and pay back four fold the ones he had swindled money from. This alone, without explanation, is enough of a radical jesture to melt your credit cards. However, after consulting a litany of recent scholarship we find that such actions taken by a tax collector was an even more outrageous act. Tax collectors were folk who not only scammed you financially but did it on behalf of the foreign occupying government. Tax collectors were so hated they were grouped with the ritually unclean...listed right after camel-drivers. And Zacchaeus was one of the ring leaders of such company. Where i come from he could be likened to a top Amway executive. One interesting note in regards to Zacchaeus' four fold payback is that that amount was normally required of robbers. Could it be that he (or Luke) is admitting to his criminal behavior in spite of the fact that it was legally legitimate to be an extortionist? Which is to say that he got away with it, with little resistance.

So is this just another quaint conversion story that Luke wishes to communicate to us or are there other motives? Personally i think Lukes intends to go further. i only come to this conclusion not because the greek translation aides the exegesis or because i have cross referenced all hospitality texts from the prophetic tradition, but because i

have been apart of hospitality experiences for numerous years. When we participate in the act of hospitality we encounter the homeless Jesus, the hungry Jesus, the "abnormal" Jesus...and the Jesus from out of town. It is we, the Zacchaeuses who are radically transformed, and not because our theological mind tells us this is Christ but because the pain and the compassion experienced rid our hearts and minds of all rationalized baggage. Everytime we offer hospitality, whether its a homeless family or a woman who has been physically abused and then is stuck with total responsibility for several children, i realize how good i have it...how secure my life is. These encounters always call me to question my own economic life and how it relates to the perpetuation of these social infernos, but even more so these encounters reveal, with two-edged sword accuracy, the relationship between our nations obsession with militarism and its total disregard for the majority of the people. Everytime i step into a courtroom because i dared to speak out against our nuclear and interventionist lunacy i am no longer there just to uphold some moral principle but because i have been wounded and sickened by the people our government has turned a blind eye to. This is a fundamental reality that Dorothy Day taught me, to be disgusted and outraged by. When our nation spends scandalously more money on weapons systems and third world intervention than we do on meeting the basic rights of housing for all Americans, something is definitely wrong.

We are presently spending \$83 million a day to prepare for war in the Persian Gulf. According to a March 1990, Jobs With Peace fact sheet, the Pentagon plans to spend \$22 billion to build 524 more Trident II nuclear missiles, when our government could, with the same amount of money, renovate and completely modernize 1.3 million units of public housing. One thing i think that the faith community needs to do is to constantly make these connections and confront the government on its policies. This will be like plank and splinter politics unless there is a willingness of the church to open its doors in order for God to have a big feast. We can no longer hide behind morally sound treaties and letters that advocate institutional involvement, this has only resulted in unveiling our outrageous hypocrisy. Lets take the homeless to the rectories and Diocesan offices and let the spirit call the institution down from the trees of privilege.

Pray with us, Dorothy

envious anxiety

my cock is too small
my breasts too little
my tan lines piss me off

where the hell is the hair spray
i chipped a fucking fingernail
someone put a scratch on
my SAAB

this sucks.no booze.no weed.no tunes
at least you went to Florida this year
yeah.....but i didn't get laid.

Jesus Christ the Tige's lost
thats bullshit ref.he was fouled
have you seen this phone bill?
fucking gas prices are outrageous!
Damn it...its still raining.

in guatemala
woman
making tortillas
fewer these days
Pedro hangs from a tree.

FEAST of MARTYRED WOMEN

Ita Ford,Dorothy Kazel,Muara Clarke,and Jean Donovan

Dec. 2

"With ropes local campesinos pulled the bodies out. Jean and Ita were very badly bruised,and Jean's face had been crushed by the impact of the bullet that killed her. Dorothy's jeans were on backward;a campesino explained that the women had been found without their jeans on,and those who had found them had,for reasons of dignity,tried to dress them. At least two of the women had been raped.

At the graveside Robert White questioned the local justice of the peace,demanding to know why the deaths hadn't been reported. The mans answer was simple:'This happens all the time.'" (1)

"Any commitment to non-violence which is real,which is authentic,must begin in the recognition of the forms and degrees of violence perpetrated against women by the gender class men."

Andrea Dworkin

This is,in part,a confessional statement. To be apart of a white,male.European descendant group is at times not a very appealing reality. More times than not if one admits to embracing the Judeo-Christian tradition,it complicates matters even more so. The history of the church,in particular,is laden with incredible violence directed towards women. From doctrinal oppression to economic oppression,ecclesiastical violence to domestic violence;the harsh reality is that women have been subordinated to sub-human objects that have "only led holy men away from God." This blatant misogynist statement justified the continual theological and political rape of women throughout history as well as the genocidal acts wrought by the Inquisition. Two white,celibate men,dominicans,wrote a book called the "Malleus Maleficarum",the Hammer of the Witches,a theological guide on how to exterminate suspect women. Women were burned,drowned,hung,cut to pieces,as well as having hot pitch poured over them,because they refused to be dominated by men or they dared to express their spirituality in "unacceptable" ways. One must also acknowledge that some of these women were killed because they were ready to blow the horn on clergy who had been caught with their cassoks up.(For more information see the appendix in Starhawks,"Dreaming the Dark";also chapter 6 of Mary Daly's,"Gyn-ecology:The Metaethics of Radical Feminism")

This is,however,only part of the confessional statement. i must honestly and wholely confess my own complicity and participation in such acts. i grew up a product of patriarchy and have abused women in numerous ways,ways i learned well

from my family and from society. This is not to excuse my actions, only to point out that they did not happen in a void. So this is a public admission of the violence I have perpetrated against my mother, friends, work associates, and lovers.

In addition I must acknowledge the, for most, unseen horrors I have committed against women in other parts of the world through my lifestyle, consumption, and submission to U.S.A. foreign and domestic policies. This point I believe is so very important, in light of the feast day we commemorate today. The 4 women we honor were primarily in El Salvador to confront the incredible systemic violence committed against the people, by U.S.A. government policy, foreign investors, and the wealthy elite of El Salvador who benefit from this international penetration. Many of these people who are direct victims of these policies are women, who comprise more than 50% of the exploited work force. Many of the products we consume, wear, and "enjoy" are brought to us by the sweat and blood of women. Rigoberta Menchu, in her book describes the harsh conditions they work in:

"After my first day of picking cotton, I woke up at midnight and lit a candle. I saw my brothers and sisters faces covered with mosquitos. I touched my own face and I was covered too. They were everywhere; in peoples mouths and everywhere. Just looking at these insects and thinking about them started me scratching. That was our world. I felt that it would always be the same, always the same. It hasn't ever changed."

Recalling her little brothers death from pesticide poisoning, Menchu continues: "I was both angry with life and afraid of it because I told myself: This is the life I will to lead: having many children, and having them die, and having nothing to cure him with or help him live. Working in the finca was one of the earliest experiences, and I remember it with enormous hatred. That hatred has stayed with me until today." (2)

Indeed, because of pesticide exposure Guatemalan women have the highest content of DDT in their breast milk than any other place in the world. (3)

This systemic, economic violence is a life long form of rape, that has lasting emotional, physical, and psychological effects on women. Of course this is only one level of the violence that occurs. Central American women are subjected to the dominant machismo attitude implanted by the Conquistadors. In a sobering account of sexual violence directed toward women, a close friend Richa, has documented numerous cases in a report entitled, "We are all Responsible: Testimonies on Sexual Abuse in Central America." All too often we forget about the sinister element of rape that in many cases precedes death for these Central American women. Any discussion of Human Rights must include the reality of rape.

"Ana Gundelupe Martinez, who was involved in the guerilla

movement in El Salvador, after being arrested: 'I was handcuffed down between the seats. The one who had hit me had not stopped insulting and handling me, threatening me with rape, as he sat on top of me. Their first means of pressure was sexual threat, and that is the principle torture used against women.' Upon arrival at the detention center: 'They began to take off my clothes and mouth all sorts of obscenities.' 'Who wants to mount her first?' 'With her, who wants to?' 'All the clothes, lieutenant?' 'Yes, everything. And take off these handcuffs, too.' 'They took advantage of the occasion to bang me around, as well as to feel my breasts, vagina, and legs while making all sorts of jokes.' The first night, in a cell: 'Each time the door was opened, I expected new physical torment, or interrogation, or worse, rape. I expected that because that is the first thing they think of doing to women.... Early in the following morning, two men arrived, and as soon as they got in, one said: 'We ought to fuck this whore. No reason why we can't do that.' 'Don't give me that shit, I'm the one who is supposed to be on guard. Help me hold her so she doesn't start to bawl.' 'No they are going to change guard soon, and the sergeant will come.' 'Hurry up, help me.' They bent down, grabbed my legs, and tried to pull them apart. One leg hurt badly but I resisted. When it seemed that it wouldn't be easy, they jumped me and began to feel me all over. I began to defend myself and screamed. He forced my mouth shut, which at least kept his other hand occupied. 'Help me you jerk, after all you can fuck her too.' At that moment some footsteps approached. 'Silence, it's the sergeant.' He got up, slapped me, and said, 'You got away this time, you lousy whore.' And so for the first night, I avoided being raped. For women, rape or the threat of rape, and all the feelings, ect.... those are the strongest kind of pressure to destroy your morale. With these murderous hands on your body, one feels an agony and repulsion like nothing else in this world. One knows full well what is going to happen, but the horror and the savagery remain anyway. These tortures which they inflict on both men and women allow them to touch the system of values, the ideology which ties sexuality to the dignity, honor, and virility of people. This torture doesn't satisfy itself with physical pain. It saps the very morale: by rape and other violence, they get at this ideological structure which cannot be touched by other means." (4)

From most reports it is conclusive that Ita, Dorothy, Maureen, and Jean were probably raped before they were shot and buried. The sobering reality in all of this is that we are also responsible for their deaths. Like all the other women who die violent deaths in Central America, it resulted from our purchasing tax dollars, and silence. The four women were victims of evil perpetrated by their own government and citizenry.

As a man I can not just attempt to be more inclusive with my language and relationships if I am to be an advocate for stopping violence against women. If I am to speak out it

must be total and not appease bourgeois interests, that seek to just obtain ordination for women. i would recommend to any men interested in seriously confronting the issue of violence against women to read John Stoltenberg's, "Refusing to be a man, Essays on sex and justice." In one essay entitled, "Feminist Activism and Male Sexual Identity", Stoltenberg makes some predictions of what men of "Conscience" will be doing in the next decade:

"Prediction: Many men of conscience will do very little or nothing.

Prediction: Many men of conscience will prefer to discuss their feelings.

Prediction: Many men of conscience will spend more time shopping for tofu than they spend reading the feminist press." (5)

While these predictions may be accurate, i for one refuse to comfortably accept the present dilemma. i am tired of white males determining the political and economic fate of women. i am tired of white, celibate (supposedly) men determine what women can do with their bodies. Mostly i am tired of my own silence in this midst of all of this.

notes:

- 1) "Sojourners", Dec. 1990 issue, pg. 12.
- 2) "I. Rigoberta" by Rigoberta Menchu.
- 3) "Roots of Rebellion: Land and Hunger in Central America" by Tom Barry.
- 4) "We Are All Responsible: Testimonies on Sexual Abuse in Central America", Edited by Richa. For a copy write to Richa at 448 Pleasant SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49503.
- 5) "Refusing to be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice", by John Stoltenberg, pg. 181-182.

A PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE

a kanjobal translation of psalm 126

When Yaweh brought us back to Guatemala.
it was like a dream!
How we laughed. how we sang
for joy!

Then the OAS said about us.
Yaweh has done great things for them.
Indeed Yaweh has done great things for us.
How happy we are!

Yaweh bring us back to our land.
the land the white man took from us.
Bring us back like the rain brings water
back to the Altiplano.

Let those who wept as they planted the cash crops
of the finqueros.
harvest their milpa with joy!
Those who wept as they went
out in toxic ridden cotton fields.
let them come back singing for joy.
as they bring home the ishim!

_Altiplano--indigenous word referring to the highland region
Finquero--plantation owner/exploiter
milpa--indigenous word referring to their own small plot of
land
ishim--kanjobal word for maize/corn

FEAST of LUCY

Virgin and Martyr

Dec. 13

Before i attempt to share with you some thoughts about this amazing womyn from Syracuse,i would like to clarify the title "virgin" which is attributed to this fourth century martyr.

We are ingrained to associate the term virgin with a puritanistic understanding that it foremost means one who has not had sexual intercourse. This view only seems to be a carry over from the many early church fathers who were tainted with a platonistic or dualistic view(usually meaning they viewed the flesh as evil).

Indeed the term virgin has a more positive and diverse meaning in scripture and history. In the Hebrew scriptures the term virgin has a more prominent meaning as one who is faithful to the will of Yaweh. For the early church,many of the womyn who are given the title virgin would qualify that by saying it wasn't a matter of sexual abstinence but rather they were not giving in to the patriarchal norm,which said you must be a wife. They were,as Mary Daly put it, uncaptured womyn or marriage resisters.

Well,on to Lucy(or Lucia,which means "light"). Lucy was born into a noble family,but her father died while she was an infant. When Lucy was old enough her mother sought to find her a suitor for her,which was the custom,but Lucy constantly resisted this notion. Her mother,Eutchia,grew sick one day so Lucy insisted they go to the tomb of Agatha,an already venerated martyr of the church. Her mothers illness left and upon this she said,"I will give you all of my belongings at death." Lucy insisted that she did not want the family wealth,nor to be married. Instead,Lucy pleaded with her mother to sell their property and give the money to the poor. Her mother conceded,but not without consequence. The man whom Lucy's mother had found as a suitor discovered this act of compassion. He became angry and accused Lucy before governor Paschasius of being a Christian,which at that time was illegal according to the Edict of Diocletian.

They arrested her and tried to persuade her to offer sacrifice to the \roman gods. Lucy said,"The sacrifice most agreeable to God is the relief of the poor." She was then tortured and finally killed by the sword in 303 C.E.(common era)

Many of us would do well to follow the example of Lucy by selling our property and giving the proceeds to the poor,although such an action today might be considered idealistic,communistic,or not practical,even though it was the practice of Jesus and many in the early communities.

Lucy is also another steadfast example of a rebel resisting the violence of the state. i use the term rebel not

because of personal preference, but because it has historical credibility. Diocletian was the Roman Emperor and was said to have unleashed the most brutal persecution against the Christians from 303-313 C.E. However, at the beginning of that period in 303 C.E. he announced a general amnesty for all prisoners except Christians, whom he called rebels.

Lastly, I would like to point out that it seems that what prompted the persecution of Lucy was her act of giving away her wealth and property to the poor. This is the act which prompted her suitor to turn her in. The "husband to be" felt threatened by her actions since it meant that he did not have power over wealth or body. This is utterly scandalous, so he seeks the assistance of the legal system which will not tolerate women having control over their bodies or their economic status....sounds familiar. Indeed, Lucy was a marriage resister and a resister of the patriarchal institution of marriage which allowed men to acquire wealth and property, in this case women were included as property. Lucy would have none of this. She dared to choose her own lifestyle, one comparable to that of Jesus. A lifestyle that allowed her to live in the freedom of God/ess regardless of social norms. Lucy was a woman to be reckoned with!

move us to resist
Lucy, sister of love