



# *via pacis*

*Newsletter of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community*





# Who's Afraid of Y2K?

by Beth Preheim

Y2K is coming, what's a Catholic Worker to do? Let's see, at our Catholic Worker it seems as though we could get along without computers: We have no need to bill anyone for our "services" — we offer that up freely. We have no investments in the stock market. We rely on the kindness of others to sustain us. We have a food pantry in the basement; so we could make it through maybe a month without going to the grocery store. Sounds like we'll do okay.

But then again, maybe not. In a typical month we see hundreds of people who come to us with various needs. And we are completely dependent, like most Americans, on the utility companies for heating, water, and electricity.

Well, what's the problem anyway? The pundits are having a field day with predictions about what will happen with all the computer systems on January 1, 2000. The public responses range from shrugging it off to apocalyptic preparations for impending doom. We're all sure to be tired of the subject by the time the drama unfolds next year.

If you've heard a lot about Y2K (code for Year 2,000) and are unclear about exactly what the problem is, here is a brief explanation:

Many computer systems for banking, insurance and medical billing, tax systems, etc. were written with dates where the year is abbreviated to the last two digits, i.e. my birthday: 05/08/63. If a computer is calculating my age, it will say that in May I will be 36 (99 - 63 = 36). And next year I will be negative 63 (00 - 63 = -63).

It sounds relatively easy to fix, except that these date codes were written into billions of lines of computer programming that keep all the systems running. In many cases, all the individual lines need to be examined for this problem. There simply isn't enough time and human resources to do that. And most systems are so complex that it is very difficult to just start over with new programs.

So maybe many computer systems won't operate properly next year when the date rolls over to 2,000. By now we have all had an experience or two of trying to deal with government or business when "the computers are down." The Y2K problem means the computers could be down in a big, big way.

Regardless of what happens on January 1, 2000, the Y2K problem offers us in this present moment an

opportunity to reflect on our lifestyles and our relationship to the web of systems needed to support that lifestyle.

## Y2K as an opportunity



The Y2K problem has already cost millions, perhaps billions of dollars to government and industry. Yet, it presents a paradox of opportunity — if we choose to take it. Whether in the end it will be the collapse of civilization as we know it or a small blip in the frenzy of Wall Street trading, a flicker in the lights or a power outage for a day, three weeks without access to the ATM machine . . . regardless, the opportunity is in the present.

The opportunity I'm referring to is the wake-up call, a canary in a coal mine. The Y2K problem so clearly illuminates the folly of our increasing dependence on technological systems. This wake-up call should cause us to examine our consumption patterns and our relation-

ship to the systems that provide the core basics of life: food, transportation, energy systems.

## The problem of size

The essence of the computer problem lies in complex, computerized bureaucracies. Most of our systems are characterized by a corporate model: centralized, computerized, complicated. And when it all works, we experience all those things we, as a society, have come to love and respect: speed, instantaneous access, ease. Besides making us more ill-mannered and impatient, we are also more vulnerable.

Ever notice how nature is slow, inconvenient, and unpredictable? Local food systems can't easily provide us strawberries in January. But they can provide a food system more in harmony with nature. Most

generate their own power from the sun rather than receiving it from an electric company. The potential computer problem shed light on the vulnerability of the electrical grid system which led to the development of cheaper and better solar equipment.

pollution. In the last few years, thousands of small-town banks and independent grocery stores have closed. Small, independent book stores and publishing companies are folding right and left. For example, the manager at the bookstore at the University of South Dakota said he used to order books from about 200 publishers a year. Now he orders from six.

Does it really matter? I say Yes! If only for the sole fact that the concentration of power does not promote stewardship.

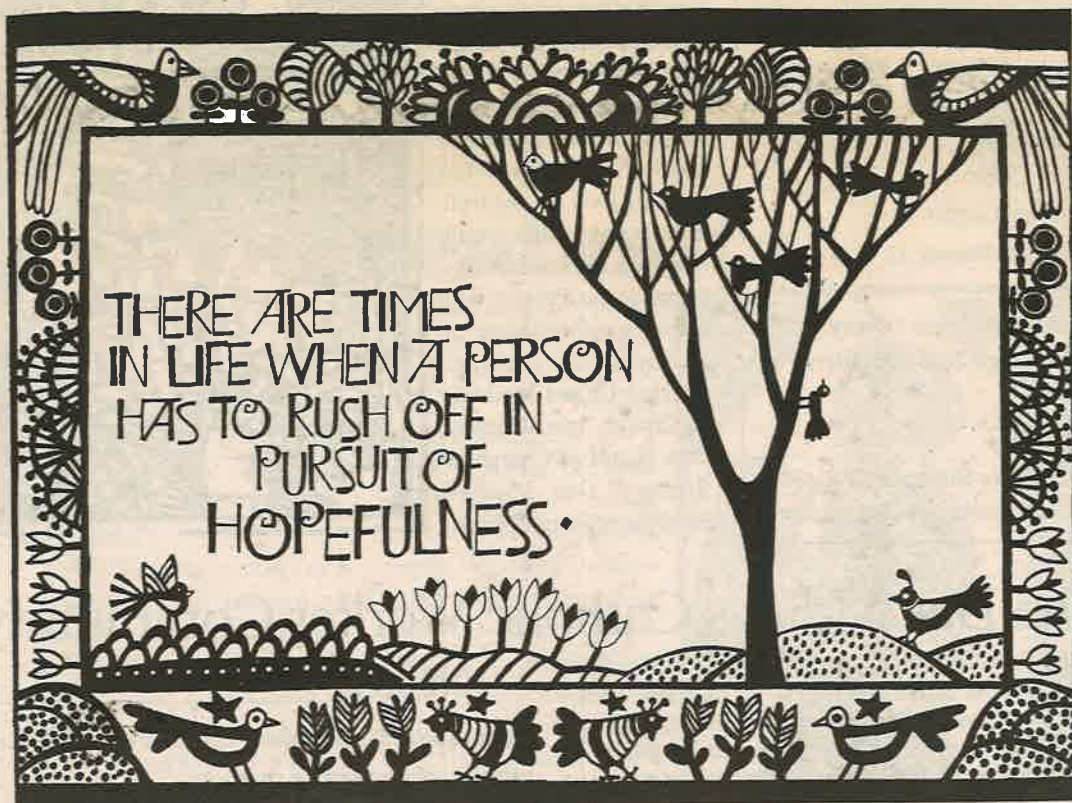
I see this phenomenon at work in my own life. When I lived in rural South Dakota, I had no trash service. For each item that came into my household, I had the following choices: use it up, re-use it, compost it, burn it, recycle it, pile it behind the back shed, or haul it 50 miles away to the landfill and then pay a fee for disposal there.

Here at the Catholic Worker it is so, so easy to put things in the dumpster and then forget about it. I'm well-meaning, but I'm not as good a steward as I was in South Dakota. That's why Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, emphasized so much that we need to create a society where it is easier for people to be good.

Fortunately, we do not have to come up with alternatives from scratch. Many people have already been moving in a direction to reduce or to eliminate the dependency on big corporations. We have some friends who have a house built into an earth berm. They pay \$50 per season to heat their home, while most people around them pay \$500 per season. The Catholic Worker in Columbia Missouri has a solar hot water system that has taken care of the 30+ people in the household for the last 15 years and has saved them thousands of dollars.

Many people are now forsaking large businesses, in order to support small, independent businesses — even if it ends up costing them more money. According to results from one survey, about 20 million people in the United States are striving for lifestyles of voluntary simplicity.

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Text by Jean Giono from *The Man Who Planted Trees*  
Design and lettering by Jody Richards

ship to the systems that provide the core basics of life: food, transportation, energy systems.

As the vulnerabilities become apparent, whole new businesses are springing up to cope with the impending disaster. And if in the end Y2K becomes a non-story and our lives go on as usual, it will be in part because of the doomsayers who pointed out the potential disaster and spurred on all the adjustments that are being made.

This Y2K scare, this opportunity, has already brought about some positive changes. It really has kick-started the solar energy market. Now about 140,000 households

organic gardeners and farmers realize that they will never have as big a yield as the grower using commercial pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. They also will never have as big a disaster: crop failure or environmental degradation. In the same way, solar power may have limitations, but it can never produce the catastrophes that nuclear power can.

Big corporate systems may provide us with endless choices, services, options. But they also create dependency, a loss of flexibility to changing environments, a loss of responsibility to local communities and a potential for large-scale

## Come hear about the Minnehaha Free State

the Minneapolis campaign and encampment to stop the rerouting of Highway 55 through a working class neighborhood, a city park, old growth oak savanna, the last remaining coldwater spring in the Twin Cities, and sacred sites of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community.

Thursday, March 25  
7:00 p.m.  
Ligutti House  
1301 8th St., Des Moines

Speakers: Matthew Smucker and Marshall Day,  
Minnehaha Free State activists

Smucker and Day were among those at the encampment who, on Dec. 20, at 4 a.m., were attacked by 600 state troopers. The police used tear gas, pepper spray, assault rifles, sniper units and helicopters against the activists. The two will speak about this event and the future of the campaign.

For more information: DMCW at 246-9887  
or 243-0765

See story on Minnehaha Free State on page 7

Please join us for  
*Friday Evening Liturgy*

7:30 p.m.


Dingman House, 1310 - 7th St.

Celebrate the Eucharist and spend time with friends

### Announcement!!

We will not have mass on April 2 (Good Friday) or April 9 (Bishop Dingman Peace Award Dinner)

Following liturgy on the second and fourth Fridays from now until the end of May, we will host a musical jam session that we've dubbed "The After-Mass." Please join us for this festive occasion.



Lakes and Prairies Life Community  
Annual Gathering

Date: April 30 - May 2, 1999

Place: Sugar Creek Bible Camp,  
Ferryville, WI

Info: DMCW 246-9887

*Bishop Dingman Peace Award Dinner*

Friday, April 9, 1999  
St. Joseph Educational Center  
1400 Buffalo Road, West Des Moines, IA

Schedule:  
Social at 6:00 p.m. in the Bishop Dingman Library  
Dinner at 7:00 p.m. in the Dowling High School Cafeteria  
Tickets: \$30

This event is a fundraiser for Catholic Peace Ministries (CPM)  
Call CPM, (515) 255-8114, for more information or to buy tickets



## El Salvador Solar Development Project

In the Fall of 1998 Hurricane Mitch devastated the infrastructure of Central America. It brought home the fragility of the land and the need to develop alternative fuel sources to slow down the deforestation that has taken place there over many years. The El Salvador Solar Development Project is designed to facilitate the use of solar power for cooking food, drying fruit and vegetables, and charging batteries. Additionally, the Project will focus on reforestation.

Sponsors include: Gatchel United Methodist Church, Iowa Conference Board of Church in Society, Des Moines Presbytery Social Minis-

tries Task Force, Catholic Peace Ministries, Wallace House Foundation, and the Parish of St. Joseph in Berlin, El Salvador.



### Commissioning Service

for Rev. Robert Notman-Cook,  
Tammy Less, Kent Newman  
and The El Salvador Solar  
Development Project

- ☉ 3:00 p.m.
- ☉ Sunday, March 28
- ☉ Gatchel United Methodist Church  
1909 MLK Jr Pkwy  
Des Moines IA
- ☉ Refreshments & a presentation on the El Salvador Solar Development Project will follow the Commissioning Service
- ☉ For more info: (515) 288-7775

## → The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community ←

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, seeks to practice the Gospel Works of Mercy in our daily life. We are committed to nonviolence and voluntary poverty. We engage in activities that foster justice, and we directly serve our neighbors by opening our home for those in need: of food, of clothing, of a shower, or of conversation.

We open our house five days a week and welcome others as guests in our home. Dingman House, 1310 7th St. is open from noon - 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We are closed on Mondays and Wednesdays.

### → How You Can Help

We rely on the generosity of supporters for the funds and materials needed for the hospitality we offer. The members of the community also offer their work as volunteers without pay. Since we are a community that opens our home to others, we do not seek non-profit charitable status from the IRS. We do not receive grants from foundations or any government money. Donations to our work are not tax-deductible. Instead, we ask you to give donations of cash, food, and other items as an act of personal sacrifice.

### → Needs

We have several new projects started as well as ongoing efforts. This is a partial list of the items we could use:

- Food Pantry: canned & dry goods, coffee, tea, sugar
- Personal items: razors, deodorant, shampoo, toothpaste, diapers, women's hygiene products
- Household items: dish soap, laundry detergent, paper towels, large trash bags
- Sock exchange: new or used white athletic socks, a large plastic tub with a lid to serve as a laundry basket
- Community garden: used gardening tools or hose
- Clinic: over-the-counter medications, bandages, gloves
- Home Repair: used paintbrushes, scrapers, an aluminum extension ladder
- Haircutting project: a plastic barber cape

### via pacis

Newsletter of the Des Moines Catholic  
Worker Community  
PO Box 4551  
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(515) 243-0765

**Bishop Dingman House**  
1310 7th St.  
(515) 243-0765

Community members  
Merèdith Bruns  
Jerry McDermott  
Mike Thompson  
AnnaMarie Waltner

**Msgr. Ligutti House**  
1301 8th St.  
(515) 246-9887

Community members:  
Ed Bloomer  
Beth Preheim  
Norman Searh  
Michael Sprong

**Lazarus House**  
1317 8th St.  
(515) 246-1499

Community members  
The Dawson-Ngamo family: Carla, Richard,  
Julius, Joshua and Jordan  
Irving Schroeder

## Community

## NEWS

by Carla Dawson-Ngamo

Hello, once again I have put off writing this article until the last minute. It's not that I don't have anything to say. The issue is finding the time to sit down and get my thoughts in order. I have been extremely busy with work, my three sons and the hospitality house all needing my attention for one thing or another. Sometimes I feel like four people all moving at an extremely fast pace. Besides being very busy, I'm on the mend. I took a fall in February, but I'm recovering well. Thanks for all your prayers. Now on to more pleasant happenings.

Ed, the DMCW rock, is planning a much deserved break—a visit to his mom's in Louisville, KY. He has been experiencing a slight shortness of breath, but says that he's feeling better. Tests at the VA clinic show that his heart checks out great ... a real relief. Please keep him in your prayers.

Norman has been taking woodcarving classes. He really enjoys it. He's been showing our community movies on Sundays. He is going to be taking Ed to visit his mom.

Beth, Michael and AnnaMarie have made a great adjustment

to life at the Worker. Beth and Michael have really been a visible presence in the neighborhood when they're out walking Flanders, their big, black Bouvier puppy.

Beth has started a hair cutting project, a sock exchange project, a health clinic project and a clothing room project. She is very committed to health care issues. She is a much needed asset to our community. Her calm, caring ways have a way of soothing even the most angry soul. Beth took a break in February to visit her sister who just got back from Bolivia.

Michael Sprong is a very needed help and it is great that he has ties to the community. He has been busy editing two books, doing the Gods of Metal Plowshares newsletter and taking the early shift at the house. Not to mention picking up donations, going to pick up potatoes and produce. Thanks for all your extras. Michael is also the lucky one who gets to pick up Fr. Frank from Yankton on March 19.

Meredith has been busy updating the mailing list for Criminal Justice Ministries. She has quit her job at Java Joes. She is trying to get back into her art work.



AnnaMarie had a very frightening experience when a guest became angry and broke out two of our windows. AnnaMarie went to Kansas for the Intercollegiate Peace Conference and also to visit some friends. Her job at the coffee shop in Mercy Hospital is going well, and in March she is going to visit South Dakota and attend a festival. She is much more aware of people's traits now that she's got her feet wet.

We have a new community member: "Medium" Mike Thompson. He's been a guest for awhile, but now he's taking weekend shifts which has been a Godsend. Mike has been doing great with pitching in where he is needed. We are blessed to

have him with us.

Julius has been doing great. He's keeping his grades up and playing basketball. He's looking forward to spring break. He is a true testament to what the Worker community can do with a young person's life.

Joshua is doing much better at school. His teacher, Mrs. Wallace, has been very instrumental in getting him some extra help in reading. Joshua has had a couple practices on his Little Scarlet's AAU basketball team. He still wants to play hockey. I'm trying to detour that idea. He has still been drawing some very interesting pictures. His eye for details is very amazing. We hope he will keep that light growing.

Jordan, the youngest Cath-

olic Worker, is always on the cutting edge. What with phrases that an adult would say or the compassion he shows to his classmates. He will be starting his second season as a baseball player. He is really looking forward to playing.

Richard is near graduation from Grandview College. He will be pinned April 23rd. This is a very exciting time. Richard has given more than most to his dream of getting a nursing degree. We are all very proud of him. I would like to thank everyone who has kept him in your prayers. Thank you for everything.

Now on to Thank Yous. First, we offer humble thanks to all who support the Worker community and who work to help our fellow human beings. It is not always easy to give of your time or talents and you might not think we notice, but we do.

Thanks to the Des Moines Area Religious Council food pantry for keeping us supplied with personal items and canned goods. Thanks especially to director Sr. Sandy.... She is a cut above. If you want to donate to DMARC pantry, contact Sr. Sandy at (515) 277-6969.

We would also like to thank the Grinnell students who give up their early Saturday mornings to come and do numerous tasks at the house. They are a great asset to their school and to their families. We are always glad to have them visit. Keep up the good work.

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart parish in Ankeny has been very generous to us. They supply much of the food pantry stock. Gracias to them.

There are so many individuals, churches, and groups whose ongoing support helps our community do what's needed. We are pleased and thankful to count you in our family. Please keep us in your prayers. Because without everyone's help we would not be able to continue our ministry. Happy Spring! Remember without the snow and cold of winter there would be no flowers of spring.

## Norman's Whereabouts



by Norman Searah

I just got done taking some veggies to the Titan Tire strikers. I've been taking food to them for some time. Before the strike at Titan, there was the Firestone strike where besides food, I took stuffed animals. There was UPS, again some food and toys, and before that, the independent truckers strike.

I know what it's like to be on strike. I remember way before I became a Catholic Worker, I worked for Worcester Press Aluminum in Worcester, Massachusetts where I was first a lathe operator, then a material handler.

I recall we went on strike twice. We had a good union that tried to help us, and we as workers helped the company. We wanted a better day's pay for a good day's work. We also wanted better benefits, insurance and a health plan.

I worked for other companies before and after Worcester Press Aluminum. I

recall a lot of people that I worked with. When you've work together for a long time, you become family. You learn about the lives of your fellow workers: their joys, their pains and their hurt which often are also yours.

Now that I'm working as a dishwasher, I'm relearning things that I forgot. I'm finding that as much I support the poor and homeless, I also need to support those at my workplace who are struggling for a better life, not just for themselves, but also for their families and others.

I would like to say "Thank You" to all of you who have supported the Catholic Worker throughout these years, and I pray that you can continue. Thank you.

I have a project going, or I should say I'm working on a couple which I would like to share with you. One of them is taking food to the strikers. Another is buying books about the Catholic Worker and giving them to groups and people in order to help them understand more about the Catholic Worker. I also give books to libraries and schools.

I recently took a road trip to Iowa City and to Sugar Creek, Iowa. I dropped a load of books off at the public library in Iowa

City and then dropped a case of cups at Sugar Creek where the Midwest Catholic Worker communities gather for a retreat each year. The local people there have treated us with kindness and respect. We have done the same by cleaning up after ourselves. I thought that I would go an extra mile by giving them a case of good coffee cups. I'm planning on revisiting Sugar Creek because I've got another case of cups, maybe two cases.

Sometime around Easter I've got a road trip to take Ed Bloomer home and then pick him up the following weekend. I plan on dropping the cups off on my first trip back.

To improve on my wood carving, I'm taking wood carving classes.

I still work around the community and at the food giveaway on Saturdays. I'm also into bagging dry goods into small ziplock bags.

I'm still working on my diabetes. There's still a lot that I don't understand and somethings that I can't believe that happen.



I'm thinking about painting my small room. I haven't figured out a color.

Sometime ago I bought I TV with a built in VCR and I show movies on Sunday nights. So far I've shown Amistad and another movie.

Well, I thank you for your time.

# Who's Afraid of Y2K?



Continued from page 1

## A Lenten Millenium



For Christians, there is no better time to reflect on our lifestyles than during Lent. This is the time we remember Jesus' spiritual retreat in the desert, a time when we forsake something in preparation for Easter which in its own right is cataclysmic, but then, in conclusion, joyful.

Lent comes with a particular irony: In "giving up" we seek renewal. We forsake a short-term pleasure for that which can provide more long-term satisfaction. At the very least, the joy of Easter lies in contrast to the temporary deprivation. Our lives seem more abundant after we have foregone creature comforts. I have yet to hear of someone giving up something for Lent that in the end doesn't lead to their improved health — whether mental, physical, or emotional. (Although every year my husband says he's going to give up "giving up" for Lent; but he has yet to do that.)

The traditions of Lent come from the example of Christ who, following his baptism, spent 40 days on a spiritual retreat in the desert. He came out of the experience radically changed and ready to start a controversial and compelling ministry culminating in public demonstrations in the street (Palm Sunday), trial and execution.

In the desert Jesus is faced with the temptations that are constantly before us: 1) satisfying physical pleasure at the expense of spiritual needs, 2) seeking worldly power and 3) testing the power of God to save us from

foolish acts. (See Frank Cordaro's article, "Christ Tested in the Desert," on page 5.)

Jesus' response to these temptations flies in the face of conventional wisdom as do many of his other teachings: The first shall be last; those who give up their lives shall gain eternal life.... The Gospel teachings and the example of Jesus are paradoxes of truth from which we easily stray.

It is difficult, but necessary to believe that hardships that come our way can pose as opportunities for transformations that move us closer to building the Kingdom of God on earth. Perhaps in the aftermath of computer system crashes, we might have, at the least, a forced fast from our orgy of consumerism.

### — Temptation #1 — Turning stone into bread, the temptation of consumption

First World citizens (and those in developing countries who seek to emulate us) have often been described as individuals suffering from excessive material well-being while remaining spiritually bereft. Victor Frankl, author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, found that many people have an absence of a sense of meaningfulness. He called this an existential vacuum: "A statistical survey recently revealed that among my European students, 25 percent showed a more-or-less marked degree of existential vacuum. Among my American students it was not 25 but 60 percent." He went on to report that other research showed that alcoholics "suffered from an abysmal feeling of meaningfulness" and of the drug addicts studied, "100% believed that

things seemed meaningless."

For many years the campaign slogan "reduce, reuse, recycle" has been the proposed answer for our excess consumption and the problems it creates. We may be doing well with recycle and maybe even reuse, but reduce has been slow to catch on. Excessive consumerism is still touted as good for the economy and thus by extension for the individual. We are told that spending is good; it creates jobs.

The clearest example is that of clothes — often a powerful expression of self. Most Americans purchase clothes and shoes on a regular basis and at cheap prices thanks to an industry that exploits overseas workers by paying them only a fraction of the U.S. minimum wage. When our closets are jam-packed with clothes, we send them off to our favorite "charity."

Yet, second-hand stores and relief organizations in the United States are so over-loaded that literally tons of clothes are baled and sold to recycling companies who then process them into rags or sell them cheaply to other countries. Currently the market for recycled clothing is so saturated that the price per ton doesn't cover the cost of processing and shipping. And so we fill up our closets, we fill up warehouses, and we keep consuming. It is well-dressed gluttony.

### — Temptation #2 — Embracing the powers that be, the temptation of tyranny

Aside from issues of material comfort, our dependence on technology for security (our embracing of worldly power), represents another potential computer disaster. For example, an AP story (2/3/99) reported that "Russia conceded ... it needs up to \$3 billion to tackle the year 2000 computer glitch . . . and appealed to the U.S. to help fix computers that control stockpiles of nuclear weapons." Sound scary?

Now, more than ever, it is time to dismantle and to abolish nuclear weapons and the nuclear power industry.

We are totally addicted to and dependent upon military might, partic-

ularly nuclear weapons, to secure our lifestyles, to protect the haves from the have nots.

Addiction to the military has such a firm grip that people in the United States nearly universally support its existence and its activities without question. The U.S. military and the intelligence agencies routinely engage in covert and not-so-covert activities of violence in an effort to ensure our supply of resources needed to support our way of life.

Many pages of the *via pacis* have been dedicated to these issues. However, I'll add one more point here. Like an addicting drug, the dependence on military and police entities can turn inward, destroying the user — a point that modern-day Y2K prophets make: If the system of services breaks down, the U.S. government could impose martial law with a subsequent erosion of civil liberties.

### — Temptation #3 — Should God save us? The temptation to avoid responsibility



In the wilderness, the devil tempted Jesus by suggesting that he jump off the top of the temple to show that God would save him from the fall. (Are we tempting God to save us from the computer crash?)

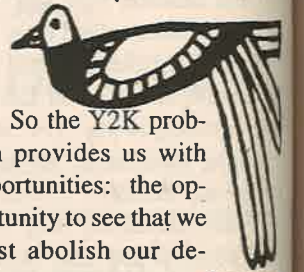
Jesus responds: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test," a reference to old testament scriptures (Deut. 6 and Ex. 17) where the people were complaining of a lack of water supply and their suffering in the journey through the desert.

So we do not need to be shielded from the desert experience, from suffering, from a disruption in the supply of water. We do not need to have lives of comfort and ease.

Instead, like Jesus we can be led by the Spirit, not knowing what will become of us, into the wilderness and discover our capacity for holiness. Instead of being absorbed by fear and trepidation of the "apocalypse" that would follow Y2K, we can focus on Jesus' pronouncement that "the Kingdom of God is at hand." And when, after times of distress, we come through to the other side, we can follow in the example of Christ by living a life of voluntary poverty that is controversial and compelling, by abandoning conventional wisdom, by breaking the rules in service to others.



## The Kingdom of God is at Hand



So the Y2K problem provides us with opportunities: the opportunity to see that we must abolish our dependence on nuclear weapons and the nuclear power industry, the opportunity to resist the temptations to look out only for our physical comfort, to resist putting faith in worldly power, the opportunity to liberate ourselves from materialism.

So, what if we do have a time of chaos, food shortages, lack of access to bank accounts, power outages, no heat in January?

■ The world tells us: *stockpile food (store up treasures on earth)*

The Catholic Worker responds: *share what you have (loaves and fishes)*

■ The world tells us: *close down bank accounts and hide your money*

The Catholic Worker responds: *sell what you have and live in solidarity with the poor*

■ The world tells us: *build your own fortress*

The Catholic Worker responds: *build the beloved community.*

And so we await the New Year with anticipation, trusting that the spirit of community will guide us through, trusting that the paradox of "in giving we shall receive" will hold fast for the next thousand years.

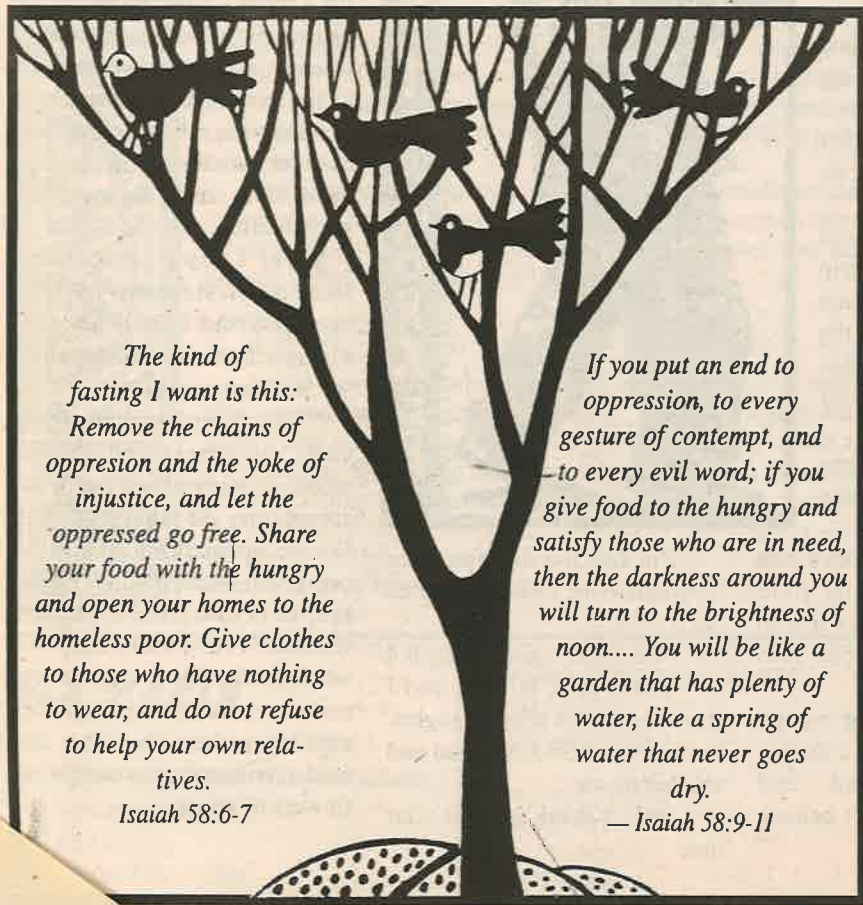
In this time of Lent, in anticipation of Easter, we trust that the spirit of both giving and giving up will lead us to greater spiritual growth, that the example of Jesus and his ministry is a poignant, practical guide for our lives.

"The religion and the environmentalism of the highly industrialized countries are at bottom a sham, because they make it their business to fight against something they do not really wish to destroy. We all live by robbing nature, but our standard of living demands that the robbery shall continue.

We must achieve the character and acquire the skills to live much poorer than we do. We must waste less. We must do more for ourselves and each other. It is either that or continue to merely think and talk about changes that we are inviting catastrophe to make.

The great obstacle is simply this: the conviction that we cannot change because we are dependent on what is wrong. But that is the addict's excuse, and we know that it will not do...."

— Wendell Berry



The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives.

Isaiah 58:6-7

If you put an end to oppression, to every gesture of contempt, and to every evil word; if you give food to the hungry and satisfy those who are in need, then the darkness around you will turn to the brightness of noon.... You will be like a garden that has plenty of water, like a spring of water that never goes dry.

— Isaiah 58:9-11

Written Reflection on Matthew 4

# Christ Tested in the Desert

Frank Cordaro

was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1)

the first Sunday of Lent the Gospel Lectionary takes us just before the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. It picks up Matthew's story right after Jesus' baptism by John and the "special effects" commissioning by His Father. The Holy Spirit leads Jesus to the desert to be tempted by the devil.

Deserts are isolated and quiet places. Deserts are where life is lived sparsely. It is traditionally a place to go to get away from the life of the city — a ready-made place for spiritual retreats, a setting best suited for dealing with one's self, with God.

The account of Jesus' retreat to the desert is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. All three say it lasted 40 days and nights, corresponding to the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the desert before entering the Holy Land. Matthew and Luke record the first three temptations, differing in their ordering of the first and third.

It's not hard to understand the need for a retreat at this point in the story. It was a chance for Jesus to "get his act together" before starting his public ministry.

Each one of the three temptations covered in Matthew and the other accounts will come back later on in the story, in the context of his public ministry. By extension, each of the temptations will plague his disciples and the Church that follow in his footsteps.

When Jesus says, "I am the Son of God, command these stones to turn to bread" (Matt. 4:3)

Jesus was fasting throughout the 40 days in the desert. He was understandably hungry. He was tempted by the devil to use this legitimate physical need to tempt Jesus to choose to fix to his physical hunger. He could turn these stones into bread with no trouble. He has the power. Later on in the story, he feeds thousands with much less than all temptations, there is some level, a legitimate need. Jesus was physically hungry. Why not fix the problem?

Jesus chooses not to succumb to this, the first temptation. He responds to the devil by quoting a verse from the book of Deuteronomy: "Not by bread

alone are people to live but on every utterance that comes from the mouth of God."

The issue is one of hierarchy, what comes first. Jesus' purpose and mission are more than the meeting of physical human needs. His has a broader, more inclusive agenda. His mission is nothing less than the salvation of the human race, the making whole and restoration of creation, the reclaiming of God's rule over all creation. Meeting people's basic physical needs, especially hungry people, will always be a part of Jesus' mission, but it cannot be an end in itself.

The devil's first temptation helps Jesus see that he must not be short-sighted in his work. He can't let the legitimate physical needs of people, especially the poor and the hungry, whom he will call his blessed, override his larger, more comprehensive mission of proclaiming the fullness of God's Kingdom.

Let's be clear about this, Jesus feeds hungry people during his public life. He expects his disciples and his Church to do the same. But feeding hungry people is not a kingdom end in itself. Meeting both the physical and spiritual needs of people is what the kingdom of God is all about.

This first temptation truly speaks of the sins of our time. It is where the ideologies of communism and capitalism meet. At their core, both are based on crass materialism. It is at the heart of the addictive spirit that so plagues our modern age.

*If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down.* (Matt. 4:6)

Next, the devil takes Jesus to the highest place on the outer walls of the temple in Jerusalem. The devil tempts Jesus to prove his faith in his Father's love. Jump off this building and let's see if your Father will save you, says the devil. Would not the Father want to save Jesus? Isn't Jesus too important to the story to die now at the beginning of the Gospel? The devil even quotes a verse from the 91st Psalm to prove his case. (We learn that every scripture can be

used for evil purposes.)

Again, this is a temptation that has some basis in a legitimate claim. Are we not to trust our God? Would God abandon his faithful son? His faithful people? Yes, of course we can trust in God's love to save us, his faithful people. But it is not a

and they do nothing to get rid of them. They also believe that God is saving them and will continue to save them from these nuclear weapons. It's like they have thrown themselves off the temple wall and, having not yet hit the ground, fully expect God will intervene to save them. It isn't going to happen that way. God loves and respects us too much to intervene with the consequences of our own makings. That is what human freedom and responsibility is all about.

Jesus sees through this temptation. He answers the devil with his own verse from the book of Deuteronomy, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."

*All these will I bestow on you if you prostrate yourself in homage before me.* (Matt. 4:9)

For the third and final temptation, the devil takes Jesus to a lofty mountain peak and shows him all the kingdoms of

the world and tells him that they can be his to do with as he wishes. All Jesus has to do is give the devil his due and pay him homage in the bargain.

This temptation reminds me of the time I was ending a six-month prison sentence in the Minnehaha County Jail in Sioux Falls, SD. A local Presbyterian minister brought his high school church youth group into the jail to talk with me. We met in one of the jail's classrooms. I shared about my life, why I crossed the line at Offutt Air Force Base and why I was sent to jail. I talked about the nonviolent Jesus and the need for a resistance church.

At one point a student asked me, "If you were in a room with all the leaders of the world's nations, what would you say to them?" I told her, "I would tell them to quit their jobs because we can't do what needs to be done for God's kingdom from the positions they have." I then told the class, "The worst thing that could possibly happen for the advocates for the Kingdom of God is for a world super-power to adopt the Sermon on the Mount as their national agenda." That was not the answer the students expected to hear.

When the devil offered Jesus all the resources, power, structures and institutions of all the kingdoms of the world to use

as he saw fit, Jesus was given a similar, yet much more seductive offer than was put to me by the high school student's question.

Like the previous two temptations, this one has some legitimacy. Jesus' mission was to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Any kingdom, God's Kingdom included, is a social communal reality with its own set of rules, regulations, laws, structures and institutions to keep it going. Access to all the resources of the kingdoms of the world would help get the message of God's Kingdom into the whole world in a very short time.

So why didn't Jesus embrace the devil's offer? Because to do so meant that Jesus would have to prostrate himself in homage to the devil. This is something he would never do.

But what if the deal was made with no strings attached? What if the devil offered Jesus use of the world's kingdoms without the prostrate and homage clause? Such a deal is impossible to make because to embrace the ways of the worldly kingdoms is to already give homage and praise to the devil.

Every worldly kingdom in Jesus' time up to our own time is ultimately backed up by the threat and use of lethal power. It doesn't matter if the country is a democracy or a theocracy, communistic or socialistic, ruled by a president, prime minister, premier, king, queen, dictator or tyrant, governed by just laws or whim, whether it is a Christian, Jewish or Islamic based society; they all are ultimately backed up by their willingness to kill in order to maintain their rule.

This temptation is all about the means one chooses to reach the desired goal — the Kingdom of God. Worldly kingdoms and their violent means are a violation of this end. The one who proposes violent means to reach this end is in the devil's camp under the devil's rule. Jesus understood this and refused the devil's offer by quoting yet another verse from the book of Deuteronomy, "You shall do homage to the Lord your God; him alone shall you adore."

This is the temptation that the Church has succumbed to over the last 17 centuries. Ever since Christianity made its peace with the Roman Empire in the 300s, its proclamation of God's Kingdom has been diluted and deformed. With the world prepared to destroy itself in so many violent ways, it is imperative that Christians reclaim the essential nonviolent character and means of God's Kingdom message.



# 1998 Feast of the Holy Innocents Retreat and Witness at StratCom

From Dec. 26 - 28, 1998 nearly 40 people gathered in Omaha for the 20th annual Feast of the Holy Innocents Retreat and Line-crossing at StratCom Headquarters (formerly Strategic Air Command). The weekend retreat focused on themes of faith and the current application of the "rest of the Christmas story": Herod's slaughter of innocent children in an effort to kill the Christ child.

On Dec. 28, 30 people gathered at the main gate of Offutt Air Force Base, Bellevue, NE, to pray and to witness against the evil activities that take place on the base. Following a commissioning by the rest of the group, seven individuals crossed on to base property, were detained by Air Force security, issued ban-and-bar letters and released. Meanwhile, some of the other participants held signs and banners at the entrance of the base until those arrested were released.

Those who crossed the line are: Rev. John McCaslin, 60, Omaha, NE; Jaimee Trobough, 21, Omaha, NE; Rita Sherman, 54, Omaha, NE; Jim Durdin, 49, Clarinda, IA; Mike Elston, 45, Des Moines, IA; Rev. Jim Murphy, 45, Platteville, WI; and Beth Schrempp, 80, Omaha, NE.

The retreat and witness was sponsored by Lakes and Prairies Life Community - Omaha.


*Feast of the Holy Innocents  
Witness and Line Crossing  
Statement*

Today on Holy Innocents Day, when the guiltless children were slaughtered by legitimate governmental authorities during the reign of King Herod shortly after the birth of Christ, we come here to the Strategic Command Headquarters because we recognize a similarity between that slaughter and the potential slaughter of so many innocents by the use of nuclear weapons — targeted from this very base by our own legitimate government authority.

We want to affirm that peace will be attained not by human arms, but by the power of God.

The recent bombing of Iraq depended so much on the weapons from this base; we want the world to know that we, as American citizens and Christians, separate ourselves from the actual and potential destruction of people and property.

### the Nuclear Resister



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### "Rise and Tell the People"

In 1986 Mordechai Vanunu, a former plutonium worker, revealed to the world through the London Sunday Times that Israel was secretly producing nuclear weapons. He was kidnapped by Mossad agents, returned to Israel, tried in secret, and sentenced to 18 years. He was held in solitary confinement for more than 11 years and remains in Ashkelon prison, Israel. Vanunu is the subject of an international campaign for his release.

For more info:  
U.S. Campaign  
to Free Mordechai Vanunu  
2206 Fox Ave  
Madison WI 53711

**ישוחרר מרדכי ואנונו**

**FREE MORDECHAI VANUNU**

## Voices in the Wilderness...

is a campaign to end the UN/US sanctions that are devastating the people of Iraq, particularly the most young and vulnerable.


The DMCW Community strongly supports the efforts of Voices in the Wilderness and we implore our readers to do the same.

For more information on the campaign, please contact Kathy Kelly, Voices in the Wilderness, 1460 West Carmen Ave, Chicago, IL 60640, (773) 784-8065.

For our part, the DMCW would like to start

collecting nonprescription medicines and basic medical supplies to mail to the Red Crescent in Iraq — in violation of the sanctions. If you would like to join us in this effort to break the law for the sake of innocent people, please contact: Michael Sprong at (515) 246-9887.

Also, each Wednesday at noon - 12:30 p.m. the DMCW and friends will be in the downtown Des Moines skywalks distributing leaflets calling for an to the sanctions. For information on how to join us in this worthwhile activity call: Beth Preheim, (515) 246-9887.



### END THE SANCTIONS AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ!

The Clinton Administration tells us that the people of Iraq are suffering at the hands of Saddam Hussein. Certainly, US citizens don't want to add to this suffering. Why then do we support the UN and US Government sanctions that keep innocent Iraqis from meeting their most basic nutritional and health needs?

Since 1991 over 700,000 children have died because of the sanctions. UNICEF reports that currently over 4,500 children die each month as a result of the sanctions. Surveys by UNICEF have found that almost one-third of Iraqi children are suffering chronic malnutrition. The UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs reports that "public health services are near total collapse - basic medicines, life-saving drugs and essential medical supplies are lacking throughout the country."

Add your voice to the growing chorus of individuals, religious organizations and civic groups calling for an end to the sanctions against Iraq.

Contact the White House (202) 202-456-2580 & your US Rep./Senators at the Congressional switchboard (202) 224-3121.

For more information: Des Moines Catholic Worker (515) 243-0765

**THE WEAPON THAT KEEPS KILLING**

The sanctions harm and kill the poorest, weakest and most vulnerable people in Iraq. No military or political objectives can justify a form of economic warfare that exacts such a civilian toll.

During the last month Des Moines Catholic Workers have handed out this flyer to over 1,000 people in Des Moines.

## Plowshares Update Gods of Metal Plowshares Sentenced

by Reba Mathern-Jacobson


The Gods of Metal Plowshares were sentenced on January 4th for symbolically disarming a B-52 at Andrews Air Force Base on May 17, 1998. Scaled to their past records, their sentences are: Kathy Shields Boylan, ten months; Ardeth Platte, OP, Carol Gilbert OP, Fr. Frank Cordaro, six months; Fr. Larry Morlan, four months. They were given credit for time served.

Judge Williams chose not to give probation or fines, realizing that the defendants would neither abide by probation or fines. Judge Williams did not adjust their guidelines for accepting responsibility or for the lesser harm provision, but did sentence them according to the lowest recommendation.

Friends and supporters gathered for an 8:30 a.m. vigil outside the federal courthouse in Greenbelt, MD where they learned sentencing would be delayed. Reportedly due to a mix-up in the clerk's office, there were no arrangements made to have the prisoners transferred to Greenbelt for sentencing until the error was discovered that morning. The 80 Plowshares supporters and friends who had gathered met at a local church to warm up, share stories about recent visits to Iraq and the West Bank, and to eat lunch. The women were sentenced at 2 p.m. and the men were sentenced at 4 p.m.

In her sentencing statement Gilbert said, "I am part of a resistance church. I won't stand by in silence and have the next generation ask: 'Why didn't you do anything?' ... I am not guilty. I may be a voice crying out in the wilderness, but there are others out there who hear that voice."

### Address Updates and Outdates



Kathy Shields Boylan  
Out: July 20, 1999  
C/O Dorothy Day Catholic Worker  
503 Rock Creek Church Rd  
Washington DC 20010

Fr. Frank Cordaro  
Out: March 19, 1999

Carol Gilbert, OP  
Out: March 19, 1999

Fr. Larry Morlan  
Released: January 15, 1999

Ardeth Platte, OP  
Out: March 19, 1999

## Minuteman III Plowshares Sentenced

On August 6, 1998 Daniel Sicken and Sachio Ko-Yin entered a Minuteman III missile silo in northern Colorado. Using sledgehammers and blood, they began to disarm and mark the nuclear weapon that has the power equivalent to 58 Hiroshima bombs. Calling themselves the Minuteman III Plowshares, Daniel and Sachio added their witness to the over 60 Plowshares actions that have taken place since 1980.

After a three-day trial that took place in Denver on November 4, 1998, they were convicted of sabotage, conspiracy, and destruction of government property. On Feb. 18, 1999 Federal District Judge Miller sentenced Sicken to 40 months in prison and Yo-Kin to 31 months in prison.

Daniel Sicken, in his sentencing statement, quoted the statement by 96 U.S. Catholic Bishops in which they said "Nuclear deterrence as a national policy must be condemned as morally abhorrent...."

Sachio Ko-Yin said to the Court, "Mr. [U.S. Attorney Bernard] Hobson is concerned that we show no 'remorse' for our action. It is my belief that our action was itself an expression of remorse over our nation's plans for a nuclear first strike."

Sicken will be transported to federal detention in Fox River, IL. Devens, MA and Yo-Kin will serve time at the federal prison in Allenwood, PA. Specific addresses are not available at this time.

For updates and more information, contact the Nuclear Resister, PO Box 43383, Tucson AZ 85733; nukeresister@igc.org.

# the catalpa tree

"may the axe be far away from you;  
 may the fire be far away from you;  
 may there be rain without storm'  
 lord of trees, may you be blessed;  
 lord of trees, may i be blessed."  
 -hindu prayer

## 'my god, the nazis have come to minnesota'

Meredith Bruns

In a peaceful December 20 morning a couple of hours before sunrise, they stormed in. They were in to take homes and to land. Six hundred national troops against 38 activists. Of those 38, some were inside homes, others were locked on land in basements. They all refused to leave. They refused to leave the state of Minnesota to any more sacred land. They refused to cooperate with a business and environmentally friendly plan to re-route Highway 55.

When did this nightmare begin? For the Dakota people it began 136 years before when several hundred men, women and children were forced into internment camps and ordered to march in Mankato. All but those who were reprieved at the request of missionaries and either exiled or imprisoned. The remaining 38 were hanged the day after Christmas, 1862.

The nightmare became real for others 40 years ago when the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) announced plans to re-route Highway 55 through Minnehaha Park, historic Camp Coldwater Springs and also through a residential area. The coalition of environmental and community groups continued to stop the reroute until the summer of 1998 when more radical forces be-

gan to take a stand. After gaining eminent domain over the homes that blocked its path, forcing residents to relocate, MnDOT geared up to begin demolishing on August 10. But they were beaten to the site by nonviolent squatters including folks from Earth First, the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community, and the American Indian Movement. This occupation bravely gave birth to the MINNEHAHA FREE STATE.

As stated in the "Minnehaha Declaration," the squatters established the Free State on the principles of nonviolence and group consensus.

They demand that all land use decisions be made by the communities that are directly affected by those decisions. They demand the preservation of all current green spaces. They demand the recognition of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota as a sovereign community and the repatriation of treaty land rightfully belonging to the tribe.

They promise that they will not voluntarily leave the site until the re-route of Highway 55 is canceled and the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota community is recognized as sovereign and all land claims are upheld.

Since the occupation on August 10, much has transpired. The site has flourished to include lockdown sites in all of the six houses where occupiers were prepared to plant themselves at

any threat of demolition. One man even perched himself on a 20 foot tripod, making it impossible to remove him against his will without serious injury. Eight were arrested protesting the disconnection of gas and water lines which brought in 50 cop cars and 100 cops in full riot gear. But the worst was yet to come.

On a peaceful December 20 morning a couple of hours before sunrise, they stormed in. Six hundred state troopers raided the nonviolent encampment with tear gas, pepper spray, assault rifles, sniper units and helicopters. Pepper spray was applied directly to peoples' eyes sometimes even after being handcuffed.

Press was denied all access during the raid. Many sacred items were destroyed in the process including a tepee and a sacred drum. And all the homes were bulldozed. As this was happening, someone was heard to say, "My god, the nazis have come to Minnesota!"

In the face of such a nightmare, the encampment still thrives through the tenacity of all involved. Though the houses are gone, occupiers stay in tents and self-made structures. They gather around the ever-burning sacred fire, defending their land, prepared to defend it to the bitter end. And they wait for proof that history is not repeating itself.

## ...a brief introduction

As 19 and 24 year olds in the movement, we are aware of the frightful state of affairs in this country and in this world. We are also aware of the few our age who truly see our common disaster. Here we humbly climb out on a catalpa tree limb and invite you to climb with us, to be a part of its life, its deaths and rebirths. We realize that certain aspects of life take acceptance as when a tree dies naturally. Yet we don't have to watch as it is uprooted by self-centeredness and greed. Issue after issue we will offer stories, thoughts, and reflections of ways folks our age seek to preserve our roots and climb the tree of life. Please climb with us.

peace, annamarie and meredith



photo by Dave Turnbow  
 Meredith Bruns (left) and AnnaMarie Waltner show their love and devotion to one of the catalpa trees in front of Ligutti House. It should have leaves soon.

**more info . . .** on the minnehaha free state, contact: big woods earth first at po box 580936, minneapolis, mn 55458, (612) 362-3387

## things to think about...

Home Depot; sure, they make cool things, but they are the largest user of wood from old growth forest! now really, who wants that in their house, unless it's the real tree!

...Burger King. who doesn't love a nice, fat, not too juicy hamburger every so often. As fast food restaurants go, the great BK is known for using beef that comes from the rainforest. can you say deforestation?

once again, our loving uncle sam is not keeping his word. the chemical weapons he left in panama and then promised to clean up before the year 2000 have been untouched and will remain so. he claims, of course, the forest is so dense. (thanks to casa cry)

build your own casket! instructions only \$9.95 from *homemade caskets* in california. (thanks to casa cry)

## reflections on the minnehaha free state speakout

by AnnaMarie Waltner

It was an evening charged with emotion: graphic descriptions of beatings endured by our brothers and sisters; of the raping of sacred land — which the U.S. Government has claimed as its own. It was also a night of hope; it was a night of connections made and of the promise that the circle would not be broken.

For four-and-a-half hours, speakers spoke and voices rang out in song — the songs of freedom, the songs of heritage.

Clyde Bellecourt, a long-standing member of the American Indian Movement (AIM) spoke of history repeating itself on that 20th day of December — frighteningly like the slaughters 136 years ago.

"The only difference ... is that they didn't kill us all," one man said.

Darlene, a member of the Mdewakanton Dakota tribe told us of the prophecies that may come to pass with the millennium.

Papa John Kohlstad expressed his disgust at the brutality demonstrated on that frigid December morning, and he was supported by a rousing agreement of ahos and amens.

Through apocalyptic thoughts we sat in hope for the future.

And all this was lost to the media.

"We've given you enough coverage!" they shouted. Yet people still don't know the truth.

The truth of the brutality, of the lengths our government will go to to stifle the radical ideas of those in our nation.

So be it.

The fight will continue.

The speakout held on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday was only the beginning.



*via pacis*

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**— Labor Rally —**

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**1 - 4 p.m.**

**Parade at 2 p.m.**

**2727 E Market**

**Des Moines IA**

For more info: United Steel Workers, 262-4935



Pathe Kollwitz

*It's a Party!*

***A Welcome Home Celebration  
for Fr. Frank Cordaro***

(Returning after six months in prison for  
nonviolently disarming a B-52 Bomber)

Saturday, April 10

Reception: 1 - 4 p.m., St. Anthony's School  
16 Columbus Ave, Des Moines

Party: 8 p.m. - ?  
Dingman House  
1310 7th St, Des Moines

