Dear Friends,

It has been more than five months since the last issue of The Sower was published and our intention to put out a quarterly newsletter is once again unrealized. I look back at the last issue back in March, when Betsy wrote this column and feel daunted by the task of relating even a little of what has transpired since. Then Betsy reported starting seeds, “onions and leeks and celery are growing under lights inside” and mentioned, “Brian is on his way home from a visit to our Afghan Peace Volunteer friends in Kabul.” As I write this is August, those onions are curing on screens on our front porch and I am preparing to make another visit to Kabul in a few weeks.

I was home for some weeks to start the planting before traveling to New York City to join colleagues with Voices for Creative Nonviolence and the Catholic Worker and other friends for a witness against the US proxy war on Yemen that has induced a famine that threatens the health and the lives of millions there. Each day through Holy Week leading to Easter, we gathered with signs and banners and costumes at the Isaiah Wall across from the United Nations. Fasting from solid food all week in penance and in solidarity with the people of Yemen, with prayers, exhortations and street theater, we pled for just solution to the war and the siege, taking our message sometimes to the US and Saudi missions to the UN and to Trump International Tower.

From New York, I travelled directly to Las Vegas to help prepare for another week long protest, this one at Creech Air Force Base in the Nevada desert. This was the third annual “Shut Down Creech” event held in the Spring at the center of The US Air Force’s and the CIA’s drone assassination programs, called by Code Pink, Veterans for Peace, Nevada Desert Experience and Voices.

In the course of this event, Las Vegas Metro police arrested seven of us for the alleged crime, “disturbing the peace.” Considering the fact that uniformed military personnel at Creech are engaged in real-time combat by remote control, the base is an actual war zone and there is no peace there to disturb.

Although the District Attorney has chosen not to pursue this charge against us seven, I still might be able to use the classic retort of the late Catholic Worker resister Ammon Hennacy, “Judge, I was not disturbing the peace, I was disturbing the war!” Despite the absence of a formal criminal charge, no less than the Chief Judge of the Las Vegas Justice Court has taken an unusual and legally questionable step and has personally summoned me to see him on September 25. An anarchist myself, I note that

‘Dear Friends’ continued on page 6
THE LESSON OF DOROTHY DAY’S “COFFEE CUP MASS”

“All over the world — all the troubled, indeed anguished spots of the world — there Christ is with the poor, the suffering, even in the cup we share together, in the bread we eat.”

—Dorothy Day

By Brian Terrell

Dorothy Day’s biographer Jim Forest tells a story that I first remember hearing at a 1997 conference at Marquette University marking the 100th anniversary of her birth: “When a priest close to the community used a coffee cup for a chalice at a Mass celebrated in the soup kitchen on First Street, she afterward took the cup, kissed it, and buried it in the backyard. It was no longer suited for coffee — it had held the Blood of Christ. I learned more about the Eucharist that day than I had from any book or sermon.”

The story has since taken hold of the imaginations of many. It appears in newspaper articles, blog posts and sermons in various forms. In his telling of the story, published in 1998, Forest charitably presents the celebrant priest as a well-meaning innocent doing as he thought he was expected and who humbly learned from the experience.

In some of the retellings, the priest is exposed as an arrogant and disrespectful upstart acting with evil intent. As Our Sunday Visitor tells it in a 2013 article, for example, he was a “celebrity priest who flouted the Church’s norms.” The liturgical magazine, Magnificat, recounted the story in its Holy Week, 2017 edition: “Eyewitnesses report that, while preparing for Mass, the priest strangely asked Dorothy Day for a ceramic coffee cup. Thinking nothing of it, she gave him the cup, only to be shocked minutes later to see that same cup used as the chalice for the Mass. The priest, who was clearly having personal issues, celebrated Mass with the coffee cup and, after Mass, angrily threw the cup in the garbage and stormed off.” Magnificat adds a further salacious detail, hitherto unreported, that “Dorothy Day approached the garbage can and genuflected before it!” “People were horrified,” as indeed they should have been.

In each version, from the most to the least plausible, this story is recounted as the classic illustration of Dorothy’s reverence for the Eucharist and for her adherence to the ritual traditions and regulations of the church.

This story never rang true for me. First, the backyard at St. Joseph House on First Street — where I lived for some years in the 1970s and where the coffee cup is said to have been buried — is a tiny square of broken concrete where the garbage accumulates until pickup day. The soil” in this backyard is the detritus of coffee grounds, potato peels, broken glass and the composting feces of generations of feral cats. One sermon adds the small detail that Dorothy used “a small gardening tool,” but she would have required a pickaxe, if not a jackhammer, to do the job.

Also, along with many of her generation who lived through the Great Depression, Dorothy had a deep aversion to waste, and it is hard for me to imagine her sacrificing a perfectly good coffee cup to any scruple, no matter how deeply ingrained.

Dorothy’s “On Pilgrimage” column published in The Catholic Worker in March 1966 is often cited as the authority behind this story. “I am afraid I am a traditionalist, in that I do not like to see Mass offered with a large coffee cup as a chalice,” she wrote. While Dorothy did express her discomfort about the use of a cup at a Mass said by a visiting priest, she did not write about burying the cup. By her own report, Dorothy did not actually attend this liturgy herself but only heard about it later: “I was not there when this happened though twenty of the family of the Catholic Workers were there.”

Articles and books about Dorothy Day often cite her words “I am afraid I am a traditionalist” to summarize and, I think, oversimplify her liturgical sensibilities and her submission to church authority. She was a radical in issues of war and peace and labor and the distribution of wealth, this narrative goes, but always a traditional Catholic, holding firmly to the rules of the church and especially intolerant of innovations in worship.

I read her words from 1966 differently, and I take Dorothy at her word that she was “afraid” that she was a traditionalist. Far from digging in her heels and making a stand for the old accepted practices, Dorothy was speaking confessionally. She was not boasting of her traditionalism...
as a virtue, but was admitting a weakness for the familiar that she was not entirely proud of.

Read in context, “I am afraid I am a traditionalist, in that I do not like to see Mass offered with a large coffee cup as a chalice” speaks of a moment of truth, a spiritual growth spurt even so late in her life. While acknowledging her distress over this fracture of the rubrics, Dorothy tells in wonderment of the realization it brought her: “And yet — and yet — perhaps it happened to remind us that the power of God did not rest on all these appurtenances with which we surround it. That all over the world, in the jungles of South America and Vietnam and Africa — all the troubled, indeed anguished spots of the world — there Christ is with the poor, the suffering, even in the cup we share together, in the bread we eat.”

Not a scandal to be buried, the “Coffee Cup Mass” was an epiphany, a revelation and a liberation that Dorothy celebrated with gratitude.

As a Catholic who received his first Communion in 1963, I have vague memories of the changes in the Mass, most notably turning from the use of Latin to English and turning the altar around so the priest faces the people. I remember the resistance of my elders who later grew to accept and even celebrate these innovations as bringing them closer to the God they worshiped. As evidenced in her columns and diary entries, Dorothy was clearly of this number.

Since turning 60, I am increasingly aware of what nostalgia means. I find myself apologizing to younger people that I work with for exalting the “good old days” and having to explain that my attachments to the past are not criticisms of the way they are doing things now. I am realizing that I can painfully long for past times and still rejoice in the new and perplexing things popping up all around me.

Some unreformed traditionalists claim Dorothy Day to their side, citing her nostalgia for the old style of Mass and for the old disciplines of the church. But she could also rejoice in the new, as she wrote in her diary in 1967, “This morning Mass at ten at Good Shepherd chapel at Croton… The participation of the people is so easy and natural. One cannot conceive of the old silent Masses, often a half hour of dreaming and distraction.”

Likewise, she could talk about missing seeing the nuns in their habits and yet praise the courage of those sisters who could detach themselves from such externals, all without contradiction. “Change may mean growth but it hurts,” she wrote in 1977, and Dorothy had extraordinary courage to embrace change, even at a personal cost.

The common narrative of Dorothy’s lack of enthusiasm for liturgical innovation is further challenged by her diary entry of Jan. 8, 1972, a few years before I knew her: “Allen Ginsberg came in tonight. … Attended Vespers. Ten in the dining room sang mantras, some of which involved us all — Hare Krishna went into Jesus, Mary, then Virgin Mary, then a litany asking prayers for all. … We’ve all sung better since he was here.”

One of those who perpetuated the myth of Dorothy as an unapologetic traditionalist was the late Cardinal John O’Connor, who as archbishop of New York launched the cause for her canonization. “Dorothy Day,” he said in a sermon in 1998, “would not permit a priest to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in one of her houses unless fully vested.”

I was part of the Catholic Worker community in New York for four years up to 1979, the year before Dorothy’s death. During that time, Mass was celebrated at least twice a week by various priests and almost daily for a long stretch when a priest lived with us. Never once did I attend a Mass at our houses celebrated by a “fully vested” priest. Some priests might put on an alb and others not, but even a stole was not a standard requirement. If Dorothy minded this, she never complained about it to my knowledge. She had long before come to understand that “the power of God did not rest on all these appurtenances with which we surround [the Mass],” a truth that it seems the cardinal went to his grave without grasping.

Dorothy’s devotion to the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist cannot be overstated. I remember seeing her spend hours on end in quiet prayer before the Sacrament in the chapel at Mary House and in our neighborhood church. But she was equally devoted to the real presence of Christ in the poor. The lesson on the Eucharist that I learned from Dorothy is that the soup line that served all comers each morning in our kitchen was as sacred a ritual as the Holy Mass. Both at Mass and on the soup line, she taught us, one intimately encounters the divine.

‘Coffee Cup’, continued on page 7
by Betsy Keenan

Some folks wonder, why a solstice party is our big social event of the year. Are we pagans? No matter who or what you worship, the sun shines on believer and unbeliever, rich and poor, righteous and sinners alike. We celebrate the longest day (or the longest Saturday anyhow as we nod to modern scheduling) with thanksgiving for the glories of creation, the great and mysterious gift of life. In many Christian places the “mid-summer's eve” fire is connected with the celebration of the birth of St. John the Baptist, herald of the “dawn from on high”-that “shall break upon those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death”. This year our party began on St. John’s day- situated on the calendar half a year away from the birth of his cousin Jesus.

Peter Maurin, laying the foundation of the Catholic Worker movement with Dorothy Day, brought to the newspaper and the community that formed from it a wide knowledge of the papal encyclicals of

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Canticle of the Sun
Francis of Assisi
his time and the lives of the saints. While Dorothy wrote in outrage about racial injustice, brutal conditions of labor, and inadequate housing, Peter preferred to point out a path from things as they are, to things as they should be putting these things in a Christian, moral context.

Peter was a relentless indoctrinator; a tireless talker and a believer in repetition. Speaking with his strong French accent he used simple words but sometimes with cryptic brevity. “Cult, Culture and Cultivation” all the early Catholic Workers knew, these were crucial for building "the new world in the shell of the old."

_Cult_-meaning liturgy and ritual and the spiritual dimension that give us common ground, and sustenance for the work, _Culture_-all the expressions of literature, music, craft and artistry that make a human community, and _Cultivation_ the connection with the land that feed us, that we should tend with care, that it may continue to nourish many others.

When we celebrate the solstice ritual helps us cement the awe we feel at the glory of summer’s return. Singing, dancing and conversation, mixing, meeting and mingling with new and old friends, and friends of friends, enrich us. Cultivation makes it possible. The fruits of the fields and kitchens shared with feasting sustain us for lonely, weary or frightening times ahead.

**Photos**

- page 4, our neighbor Don Ray delivers logs and branches he cut from a dead elm tree on his acreage that Brian assembled into a pyre.
- page 5, conflagration making the year’s shortest (Saturday) night as bright as day. Thank you, Rodger Routh for a picture of some of the solstice band.
Dear Friends,

Continued from page 1

often the people and institutions that show the most ignorance or contempt for the rule of law are police officers and judges. If their interest was law enforcement, the Metro Police would have joined us in shutting down the crimes perpetrated at Creech and its commanders would be the ones facing trial.

The months of May and June, except for short visits to the Voices office in Chicago and addressing a meeting of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Janesville, Wisconsin, I was with Betsy planting and cultivating the crops on the farm. On May 3, our milk goat Frida gave birth to quadruplets- a rare event all the more unusual and auspicious because each of the four kids are uniformly of good size and robust health. The chicks Betsy bought and raised in our family room, that we had hopes would rejuvenate our aging flock of layers, however, all were taken by predators soon after they were put in the hen house.

In mid-June, my talk in Janesville payed off, as Jan Stebbins who attended the event came to visit for a week with her friend, Kathy Holcombe. Jan and Kathy worked diligently each day and if they had not arrived to get the weeds that Betsy and I did not have the time to get to, the rich harvest that we are enjoying now would not have been so sumptuous. Together each day we worked, ate well, delved deeply into scripture and became friends. Kathy and Jan also helped us clean up the place for our annual Solstice party that Betsy writes about in this issue.

The last week of June I passed a most pleasant four days in Wisconsin’s Juneau County Jail. I was arrested by sheriff’s deputies at Volk Field, a National Guard drone training center on a warrant for neglecting to pay a fine from a previous protest there. My three cellmates were happy to welcome me as a fourth to play spades and when I got out I spent a few more days with family and friends in Madison.

July 14-16, I led a retreat for peace-makers at the breathtakingly beautiful Pyramid Life Center in Paradox, New York, on a lake high in the Adirondack Mountains. This retreat has a long history and had been led for many years by the late Father Daniel Berrigan. It was an honor to be asked to facilitate it and a joy to be able to examine with some good people the responses that these strange and dangerous times demand of us. Before coming home I spent a
couple of days visiting our son, Elijah, who lives in Buffalo, New York, and works at the public library there.

I missed the Ringgold County Fair for the retreat so did not enter my prize winning garlic (let someone else get a chance to win for a change) but Betsy brought home a bunch of blue ribbons for her woven goods.

As I write this, I am in the unusual position of waiting for Betsy to return home to Maloy on the train from Buffalo. I have been home for the past eight days with the gardens and the animals while she has been visiting Elijah, her sister Kathy and other friends in the place where she grew up. We will finish putting this newsletter together and get it to the printer and get to more serious gardening in the next days. There will be much to do here with harvesting and canning before I leave for Kabul in a month.

We appreciate that our life and work here is a privilege and a blessing. It is a rare thing, I think, to live so richly and yet so precariously. We are grateful to all of you who help on our way.

Wishing you all love and every blessing,

Brian

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“Food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul.”

Dorothy Day wrote those words in 1940 - and they are still true today.

In the Spring 2017 issue of The Sower, Betsy asked for co-workers - for ones to "share a slice or a soup pot full of this experience." Kathy Holcombe and I did just that last week.

Food for our bodies included freshly made goat cheese on homemade pizza; our souls were fed daily through morning devotions. Days were full of new sights, sounds, and smells - goats, chickens, and lots of cats; rain, blessed rain, falling on a metal roof - and always wind chimes; mint, dill, and chamomile, to name a few.

A week of manual labor, spent in a place of quiet beauty, and welcomed by very hospitable hosts - what better experience could one ask for? I'd strongly recommend such for everyone.

Jan Stebbins

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Coffee Cup

Continued from page 3

I met Dorothy Day almost 10 years after this pivotal and fraught “Coffee Cup Mass.” If she had buried a cup in our backyard to keep it from profane use, by my time I don’t believe the event would have raised enough concern to be remembered. I can’t imagine that it would have occurred to anyone present. Dorothy included, to do anything with the cup that had held Christ’s blood than to wash it and reverently return it to the cupboard for sacred use on the next day’s soup line.

That the “Coffee Cup Mass” or something like it happened is not a question. Day wrote of it and about its significance herself. Did she bury that cup in the backyard at First Street? This is highly unlikely. One day archeologists might settle the matter. In response to questions from the Dorothy Day Guild, raised in connection to testimony given in the case for her canonization, Forest has recently clarified that he “didn’t see her actually bury the cup and plate” but only that “she took the cup and plate and said it must be buried.”

Legends always grow up around the lives of heroes and saints, and some of these, even the most fanciful and impossible stories, still can point to and illustrate higher truths. I am afraid, though, that many of those who rejoice to retell the story of the buried cup draw a sharply different lesson from the “Coffee Cup Mass” than Dorothy herself did. Forest also reveals that the “offending” celebrant of this Mass was Jesuit Fr. Daniel Berrigan. It is this beloved friend of Dorothy who has often been so unjustly slandered in the pulpit and the press by those who also distort her message.

If the lesson of this story is not, as some say, that the line between the things that are sacred and those that are profane must never be crossed and that the rules around the sacraments and worship cannot be flouted, then what is it? What is the lesson Dorothy Day would have us learn?

She often paraphrased and made her own the words of St. John Chrysostom: “If you cannot find Christ in the beggar at the church door, you will not find him in the chalice.” She was also a student of St. Benedict, who in his Rule for monasteries insisted that all of the utensils of the monastery be regarded “as if they were the sacred vessels of the altar.”

What Dorothy learned from the “Coffee Cup Mass” was: “There Christ is with the poor, the suffering, even in the cup we share together, in the bread we eat.”
In Memory of Jerry Zawada, OFM, July 25, 2017

“What is a saint? A saint is someone who has achieved a remote human possibility. It is impossible to say what that possibility is. I think it has something to do with the energy of love. Contact with this energy results in the exercise of a kind of balance in the chaos of existence. A saint does not dissolve the chaos; if he did the world would have changed long ago. I do not think that a saint dissolves the chaos even for himself, for there is something arrogant and warlike in the notion of a man setting the universe in order. It is a kind of balance that is his glory. He rides the drifts like an escaped ski. His course is a caress of the hill. His track is a drawing of the snow in a moment of its particular arrangement with wind and rock. Something in him so loves the world that he gives himself to the laws of gravity and chance. Far from flying with the angels, he traces with the fidelity of a seismograph needle the state of the solid bloody landscape. His house is dangerous and finite, but he is at home in the world. He can love the shapes of human beings, the fine twisted shapes of the heart. It is good to have among us such men, such balancing monsters of love.”

— Leonard Cohen, Beautiful Losers