

JEREMIAH'S STUTTER

A PUBLICATION OF MARY HOUSE CATHOLIC WORKER

VOLUME V Number 3

December 15, 1995

PEACE ON EARTH

Having converted from a faith that poses as many questions as it purports to answer, I am as fascinated as much by what the Nativity story does not tell as for what it does tell.. For instance, did the shepherds, considering their lowly status, receive a hearty welcome from Joseph and Mary, or was the Holy Family, like the rest of us, concerned with what the neighbors might think if a bunch of ruffians showed up at the doorstep? What happened to the sheep? Didn't Mary object to their presence, or did they run wild in their pastures?

Mary has remained problematic to me all these years. How could she maintain her composure when those wise men showed up with myrrh, which is used to embalm the dead? And when the family was on the run, did she have panicky moments, and did Joseph? The Gospel narrative belies the appearance of squeaky clean, nicely clad plaster saints. These were real people who suffered a lot simply to bring Baby Jesus into the world and to keep him alive.

As we conclude five years of service through Mary House, it only is natural to reflect on our experiences in light of the Good News, despite the fact that Bad News seems the norm. The fact is, during these years, I have seen Jesus born, honored, and maltreated much as at the original Nativity.

One summer I saw Jesus born when a Central American couple with a tiny baby was living without identification in the courtyard of the First Baptist Church. The teen mother met people from St. Mary's and St. Thomas More parishes to receive food which made her strong enough to nurse her baby.

I see him reborn continually when immigrant people from México and Central America arrive with the clothes on their backs to find work to support their families or to find refuge from oppression and danger. Like the Holy Family, they are escaping to a place where they are not necessarily welcome.

I have seen Jesus born among us when the poorest of our brothers and sisters recognize Jesus in those new to the streets. They visit with these newcomers, share their blankets, food, and vital survival information.

These men and women remind me of the shepherds, who

were the first people to be told of Jesus' birth – men who had a status akin to drug dealers and crack addicts today – and the shepherds dropped everything and went to see the Child. Then, in a society which practically invented political correctness, they went around telling people some pretty volatile things if the authorities found out, as we discover when the wise men came on the scene. Since shepherds were not very influential or wealthy, were these men killed or imprisoned for their message of hope, or were they simply ignored, like street people are today.

I see men and women who live in houses come to the streets and winter shelters much as the Magi, with their gifts of presence and goods, and return to their communities with the message that Jesus is born among us, in their hearts and in the hearts of those they serve. Sometimes, they share, that message is not understood or ignored, and sometimes it is embraced and the circle of love widens to enfold more people.

Peace on earth has become a cynical misnomer, as "peacekeeping forces" invade Bosnia loaded to the teeth with weaponry. The birthday of a poor child has become an excuse for gluttony and greed as more people in this country go homeless, unemployed, and hungry. (In this county alone, over 20% of our children are hungry today.) This is not the Good News.

The Good News happened like this: God chose to bring Jesus, the Christ, into this world through a teen mother, unwed at his conception, in a town where they were strangers and transients, welcomed first by the ostracized and then, when noticed by the powerful, forced to escape to another land where they were unwelcome and no doubt undocumented. It is as if, in 4 B.C., God Almighty had read the headlines of the *New York Times* for today, and prescribed an antidote, if only we have ears to hear and eyes to see.

God has confounded our notions of peace and power and security through a little child, and the love of his unconventional parents and strangers. May this holy season confound us all.

Lynn Goodman-Strauss

The **Works of Mercy** were formulated by the 14th century Church as those acts which are commanded or modeled by Jesus and are therefore incumbent upon all Christians. They are Spiritual (*Mt. 5*) and Corporal (*Mt. 25*). **The Spiritual Works of Mercy are** + to pray for the living and the dead + to instruct the ignorant + to counsel the doubtful + to admonish sinners + to bear wrongs patiently + to comfort the afflicted + to forgive offenses. **The Corporal Works of Mercy are** + to give comfort to the sick + to feed the hungry + to give drink to the thirsty + to visit the prisoner + to welcome the stranger + to clothe the naked + to bury the dead. The following schedule is how Mary House volunteers and co-workers attempt to live the Works of Mercy:

MARY HOUSE CATHOLIC WORKER SCHEDULE: CHRISTMAS 1995

Hospitality continues in Mary House, on freezing nights, and at Work Corner

Nov. 15-Dec. 20	Daily	Streets, Soup kitchens, Work Corner, etc.	Distribute, mail Xmas cards
+++ Someone from Mary House strives to be at the Work Corner everyday but Saturday, on which we observe the Sabbath +++			
Third Thursday	7 p.m.	Mary House Catholic Worker	Mass
December 23, <u>Saturday</u>	9:00 a.m.	Convene at Mary House, call for address	Birthday party for Jesus
January 1	3 p.m.	St. George's Church	Birthday party for Jesus

Mary House Catholic Worker P.O.B. 684185 Austin, TX 78768-4185 512/472-6254

It is no use saying that we are born two thousand years too late to give room to Christ. Nor will those who live at the end of the world have been born too late. Christ is always with us, always asking for room in our hearts.

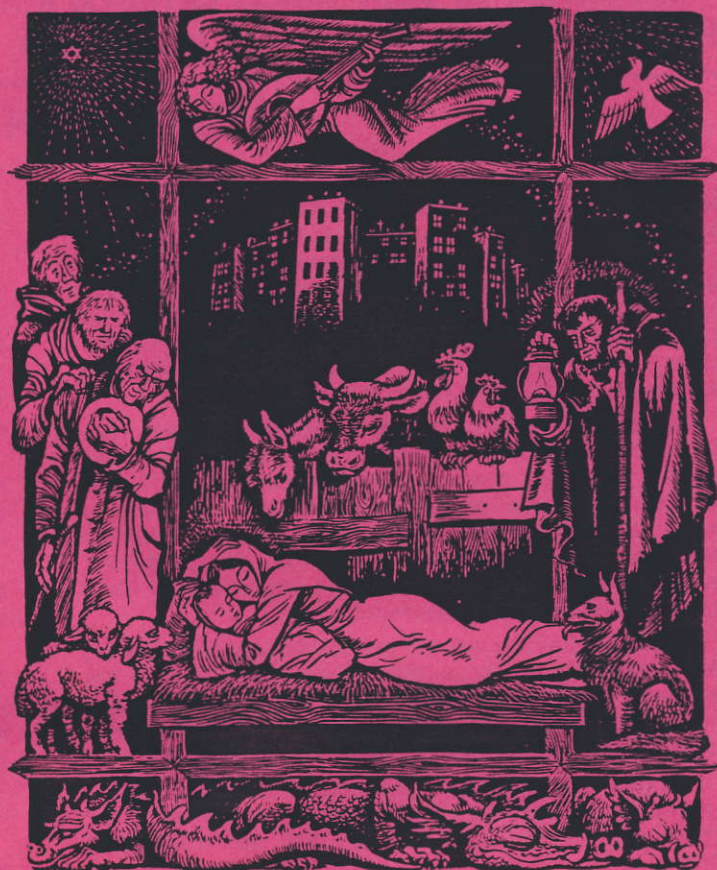
...All that the friends of Christ did for Him in his lifetime, we can do. Peter's mother-in-law hastened to cook a meal for Him... Matthew made a feast for Him, inviting the whole town, so that the house was in an uproar of enjoyment, and the strait-laced Pharisees - the good people - were scandalized.

The people of Samaria, despised and isolated, were overjoyed to give Him hospitality, and for days he walked and ate and slept among them. And the loveliest of all relationships in Christ's life, after his relationship with His Mother, is His friendship with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus and the continual hospitality He found with them...

If we hadn't got Christ's own words for it, it would seem raving lunacy to believe that if I offer a bed and food and hospitality to some man or woman or child, I am replaying the part of Lazarus or Martha or Mary, and that my guest is Christ. There is nothing to show it, perhaps...

We can do it too, exactly as they did. We are not born too late. We do it by seeing Christ and serving Christ in friends and strangers, in everyone we come in contact with.

(Dorothy Day, "A Room for Christ," *The Catholic Worker*, December 1945)



CHRISTMAS 1954 + + + FRITZ EICHENBERG

*Tomás
Lynn
Evelyn*

All of us at Mary House wish you and yours a very holy and happy season. We give thanks for you especially during this time, and pray for God's blessing for you. C Hoban 1996 Rogae!

MARY HOUSE CATHOLIC WORKER

The Catholic Worker, a movement of Christian communities which follow the injunction of Our Lord to bury the dead, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome and shelter the stranger, comfort the sick, and visit the prisoner, was begun in 1933 by Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day. We are not tax exempt. The Works of Mercy we offer depend on the charity of our brothers and sisters who wish to assist in this work with no other reward than Christian gratitude. Your charity is requested in two ways: through prayer for our work and for the many people we serve, and through your donations of presence, food, clothing, furniture, and money to the poor. All monies go into a common fund which is used to serve the poor directly. During this Christmas season, we especially beg prayers, alms, used winter clothing, and blankets, hats and gloves.

JOIN US JANUARY 20-21, 1996, for MARY HOUSE'S FIFTH ANNIVERSARY! (Details in January)

<p>JEREMIAH'S STUTTER A Publication of Mary House Catholic Worker P.O. Box 684185 Austin, TX 78768-4185</p>	<p>Jeremiah's Stutter Publisher.....Lynn Goodman-Strauss Editor.....Lynn Goodman-Strauss Contributing Editors.....Tomás Taylor, Helen, Dorothy Day Art Editor.....Fritz Eichenberg</p> <p>© Lynn Goodman-Strauss Sanders and Mary House Catholic Worker Community unless otherwise noted. Communities of Faith may copy without editing so long as they do not charge.</p>
---	---