

Mason Street Musings

A light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Last week, Claire and I went to Temple Beth Abraham in Canton, Massachusetts, to listen to Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, a doctor from Gaza and tireless advocate for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. In January 2009, Dr. Abuelaish, a recent widower, saw three of his eight children and a niece blown apart by two Israeli tank shells. Bisam, Mayor, and Ayya had been educated in their father's ideals of forgiveness and understanding. To honor them, Dr. Abuelaish continues to speak for the need for true reconciliation.

My heart ached for this visibly grieving man who responded with loving patience to each of the audience's questions, many of them accusatory and ignorant. Even while my own hands shook with fury at the insensitive comments, I thought of Jesus, who forgave his mockers, torturers, and killers. Yet Dr. Abuelaish did not back down from his core message: that until we walk in the shoes of the others and can honestly understand their suffering, there will be no peace. Humbled by Dr. Abuelaish's example, I realized how far I have to go as a Christian.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. This season, I am continually reminded of the seemingly impossible reality that the Son of God chose to come into this world vulnerable and poor, and to leave it beaten and broken. And yet, the immediate suffering of today's poor can be such a repulsive sight to me that I would often rather ignore it, especially when I feel

powerless to fix it.

Living here on Mason Street, however, where our doors are always open to whom-ever needs a bed, makes it more difficult for me to turn a blind eye to others' misery.



Last week, we welcomed a sweet, freckly-faced, eighteen-year-old girl who told us that her favorite subject in school was English and that she loved the novel **Pride and Prejudice**. She also told us that since she was three, she had bounced from foster home to foster home because "nobody ever wanted to adopt me." Since the age of thirteen, when she was first forced into prostitution, "Emily" has continued to sell her body in order to feed her addiction to crack-cocaine. Her most recent dwelling was the home of a pimp, who twisted her ankles and threatened to kill her if she quit. However, since she won a full scholarship to begin studying at an out-of-state college

in January, Emily decided that she wanted to make a change in her life and fulfill her dream to earn a degree in early childhood education. Wanting to keep her safe over the weekend until we could advocate for a more stable environment on Monday, we imposed a strict curfew. Despite our efforts, Emily managed to use enough drugs Saturday night to induce a violent seizure that landed her in the emergency room. Realizing she had no other place to go upon her release, we took her back on Sunday, and Monday helped secure her a place in a drug rehab. Realistically, her chances of success are slim. Still, we pray for her, and try to love her in our imperfect way.

The lives of those discarded by society often do not have happy endings. But these are the people among whom Jesus came to live. He was born to be a bright light shining in the darkness. A light for justice, mercy, and radical compassion.

This must become our mission as well—to bring light into darkness. Thank you for all of your prayers and generous financial and material support that enables us to offer warm beds, warm meals, and warm hearts to those who would otherwise be out in the cold.

This Season, we draw strength from knowing we are not alone in the darkness—that Christ, our light, has come into the world. Let us welcome Him again: **O Wisdom, O Adonai, O Root of Jesse, O Key of David, O Rising Sun, O King of Nations, O Emmanuel**—we are waiting. Ω

Brenna

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THE CATHOLIC RADICAL



"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed..." Peter Maurin

December/ January 2009-2010

Price: For whatever it's worth

Scrooge and the Jobless Recovery

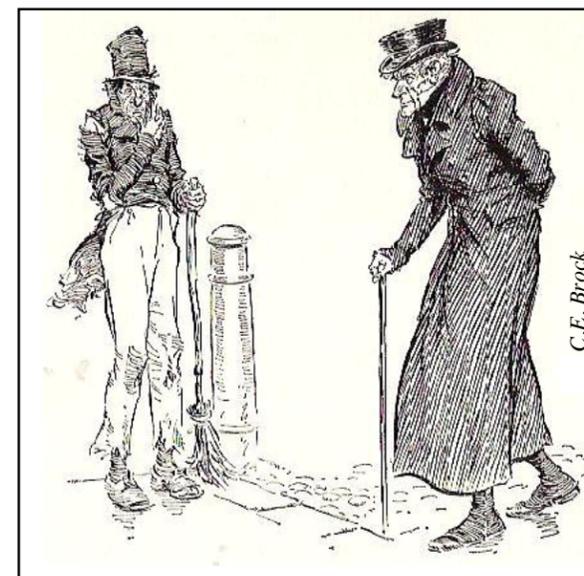
By Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Ebenezer Scrooge was a businessman whose single employee, Bob Cratchit, a married father of four, worked for near starvation wages. In the opening pages of Charles Dickens' **A Christmas Carol**, we learn that Scrooge believes he is over-taxed by the government and "cannot afford to make others merry." He doesn't see himself as a miser, but as a victim of a bad economy. When Cratchit makes even the most modest suggestion of better working conditions (an extra lump of coal on the fire, a single day off a year...), Scrooge threatens him with unemployment.

On November 6, 2009, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the unemployment rate had climbed to 10.2%, representing 16.4 million Americans, double the number of jobless when the recession began in December 2007. The government also reported that an additional 808,000 people had become "discouraged workers," those "not looking for work because they believe no jobs are available for them." Perhaps most alarming in terms of race relations and future prospects, the unemployment rates for blacks was 15.4% and 25.7% for all teenagers.

The October 11, 2009 *Sunday Telegram* headline read, "Area's jobless are braving a grueling hunt." In the past year, the number of unemployed people in Worcester County rose from 27,168 to 45,722, an increase of 68%! Fred J. Barry

II of Oxford, Massachusetts, told *The Telegram*, "Since the Depression, this is as bad as it's ever been. No doubt in my mind. Anything I approach, there's got to be 75 to



"No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle."

100 applicants." Things are even harder here in Worcester, where the unemployment rate is 10.8%, almost two percent higher than the state average.

Here at Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker, we experience the downturn from the point of view of the new homeless, who either lost jobs or had wages and hours cut to the point where they could no longer afford to live on their own. It is also difficult not to notice the many shuttered businesses around town. Times are hard indeed.

All this bad news for workers is that much harder to bear after the government spent nearly a trillion dollars to bail out

Love Lesson

by Dorothy Day

Editor's Note: The following is taken from The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day, edited by Robert Ellsberg. It was written by the co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement on February 26, 1961. Dorothy Day was born on November 8, 1897 and died in 1980. Her friend Michael True has suggested that the anniversary of her birth be a day to celebrate her extraordinary witness. We concur and will try to do so beginning in 2010.

My heart is wrung by the suffering of the world and I do so little.

There was a picture in *Newsweek* of a dozen starving babies in the Congo, one tiny little one with his face in his hands. Terribly, terribly moving. The only consolation is that God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. But woe to us who caused those tears. We white ones....

It seems to me that one of the happiest lessons in the Gospel is that of love. That we are told to love one another and to show that love by giving. And that love becomes more like that of God when we see Jesus Himself in those around us, as the apostles did on Mount Tabor, when the celestial light faded, and "**they saw only Jesus,**" most lovable. They loved, because He first loved them, and even in those three, there were the sins of the world—they would deny Him, desert Him, at the end, and the weak of faith and the greedy of the first place, while He was still with them.

He taught them about love, about loving. The prodigal son, the sick, the leprosy, the privileged, the tax-gatherers, the sinners, those in prison—in other words, loving the unlovable, naturally speaking.

Some people think the most important task of the Catholic Worker is "Peace," to clarify thought about modern war, man's

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RADICAL

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The Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and promoting peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome your letters, poetry, articles, and art work.

Love Lesson

(Continued from Page 1)

freedom and the use of force; other people go deeper and say voluntary "Poverty" is the answer; others say "Providence."

But truly "Love" is the reason for it all. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who calumniate you, and to him who strikes thee on one cheek, offer the other also, and from him who takes away thy cloak, do not withhold

thy tunic either. Give to him who asks of thee, and from him who takes away thy goods, ask no return."

So here we are begging again, for the Catholic Worker family, which is made up of the lame, the halt, the blind, for the mentally afflicted, for all those suffering the long loneliness which is life....

It is a mystery to me, and always will be, how we keep going—these 28 years, with nothing in the bank, and debts piled high. But we survive, and since where love is, God is, and God is Life, we can truly be said to truly live. Ω

Easy Essay

by Peter Maurin

Editor's Note: When Maurin wrote his essays, male pronouns were typically used to signify all human beings. In this instance, we replaced them with feminine pronouns.

A personalist is a go-giver, not a go-getter. She tries to give what she has, and does not try to get what the other fellow has. She tries to be good by doing good to the other fellow. She is altro-centered, not self-centered. She has a social doctrine of the common good. She spreads the social doctrine of the common good through words and deeds. She speaks through deeds as well as words, for she knows that deeds speak louder than words. Through words and deeds she brings into existence a common unity, the common unity of a community. Ω



Sherwin Tjia



Thomas Nast

Welcome Gifts

Editor's Note: Since we started following the lead of many Catholic Worker communities which publish specific lists of practical items they need, we have been blessed by various people who have dropped off precisely the kind of things we need. Now, when we address and stamp an envelope, eat a piece of fruit, or open a bag of beans, we think of those "Santas" who went out of their way to bring their gifts to Mason Street. As Peter Maurin predicted, we experience the grace of personal contact as a magnifying agent for love and gratitude. Thank you!

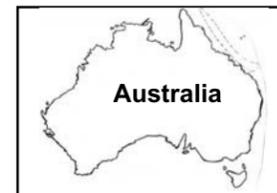
- hypoallergenic pillows
- Christmas postage stamps
- gloves, mittens, and scarves
- winter boots and hats
- erasable ink pens
- scotch tape and packing tape
- recycled envelopes (all sizes)
- large City of Worcester trash bags
- cloth laundry bags
- umbrellas
- environmental laundry detergent, dish soap, and toilet paper
- Murphy's Oil Soap
- shampoo and bar soap
- olive and cold-pressed safflower oil
- sugar and honey
- oranges, apples, and fair trade bananas
- canned tomato products (all kinds)
- organic white and whole wheat flour
- ketchup, mustard, and salad dressings
- plain whole milk yogurt
- brown rice, white basmati rice
- orange juice
- butter, cheddar and parmesan cheese
- dried and canned beans
- firm tofu
- organic vegetables

did some actions at the latest war-games (joint US/Australian) near us — and have a court case in October (nothing too serious). Jim and Cully (a young friend) ended up trespassing in the live-fire zone for two days — and six in the training area as well — but walked out when they were sure the live firing was over.

We're visiting a farm with a working bio-gas digester in the hope of rejuvenating ours, which only worked briefly.

At the moment we have run out of water in the top tank, so we have no running water in the house. It's drag for us, but also helps us realize a bit of what three-fourths of the world's population is living. We heat water on our wood-fired stove or gas cooker, and jug water over ourselves to wash.

...We really appreciate your consistent life vision. We think it's a hard, but important one to walk. We have found that being strongly against war as well as abortion and other violent solutions to our problems has



given us a forum to present our views to both sides over time, when they wouldn't have paid heed to the opposite view otherwise, (that is; presenting pro-life views to anti-war protesters; and pacifist views to pro-lifers who support war). We currently have a "letter debate" on war and abortion in our local Catholic newspaper.

It was fun reading about the raccoon/skunk fight. We had a duck/duckling/carpet snake altercation a couple of nights ago which ended up with Jim getting a snake bite, and a hilarious drive down the mountain with our 16-year-old screaming holding a bagged snake which was jumping and trying to get out of her hands.

God bless and keep you strong in faith and surrounded by friends,

Anne Dowling
Peter Maurin Farm
Dayboro, Australia

Think globally and act locally! Thanks Patrick [for your article on JROTC military training in the Aug/Sept Catholic Radi-

cal]... The Prophet Isaiah, who foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, also correctly told us: "Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4). The word of God further tells us through Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5: "For though we live in

the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not carnal. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." Militarism is outdated and for losers. Violence only begets more violence. Most of these messed up people in shelters, hospitals, and the streets of America are war veterans who have killed and maimed. These high school kids are still being lured with goodies that have no benefit to their short lives at all! Talk of collateral damage, my sister has a permanent physical scar running across her neck, coupled with mental stress she received as she happened to work next to the US Embassy bombed in Nairobi in 1998. My village is 10 minutes from President Obama's grandmother's village.

CR. I know it takes a lot to reach the villages in Africa and elsewhere. May the Lord continue to bless you.

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Daniel Omondi
Siaya, Kenya

Your newsletter said Worcester is the second biggest city in New England. I think Providence, Rhode Island is.

Jerry Fong
El Monte, California

Editor's Note: The 2000 census listed Providence as a larger city than Worcester by 970 people, but the 2006 population estimate for Worcester was 175,898 while Providence was only 171,557. Hartford is the next largest.

Catholic Worker Calendar

December 17 & January 21—Ta'anit Tzedek: Jewish Fast for Gaza Prayer/Vigil: Please join us in a Jewish prayer for an end to the Israeli siege on Gaza. Noon-1 P.M. In front of the Worcester City Hall on Main Street.

December 4 & January 8— Vigil Against War and Abortion: Please join us for a monthly vigil starting outside the US military recruiting station on Park Avenue and ending across from the Planned Parenthood building on Pleasant Street in Worcester. Noon to 1 P.M.

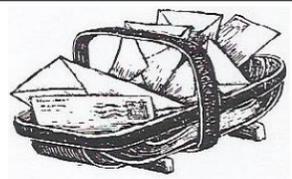


Ade Bethune

December 7, January 11 & 25— Mass: Join us in prayer and song at 7:30 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

December 20—Christmas Carolling and Party: Please join our annual trip to a nursing home and our neighbors with songs of Christmas cheer. Gather at 5:30 P.M. 52 Mason Street.

For more information on any events, please call: 508 753-3588.



Kathleen Edwards

Dear Brenna,

...I really enjoyed your article on anarchism in the [Oct/Nov] CR. There is such a rich tradition of thought and action there that is mostly unknown by most Catholics and Christians. Keep getting the word out. I was a friend and student of Ivan Illich for many years and I think he would place himself within that tradition....

Gene Burkart
Waltham, Massachusetts

Dear Brenna,

I read your article on anarchism and had the following reaction:

- It's long been a cherished concept of the Catholic Worker movement.
- It has spawned and encouraged uneasiness and even resistance to the nation-state.
- This has evidenced itself to me, as a supporter of victims of clergy and bishop abuse, in a certain desire to claim that representatives of the nation-state are a preferred subject of focus in the area of abuse.
- The reference to the principle of subsidiarity as the foundation of anarchism as an approved principle by the hierarchy of the RC church strikes me as a profound contradiction. I say this because the hierarchy has never applied this principle to its own organization and its operation. That organization is essentially a monarchy with all important decisions and authority reserved for those at the peak of the institutional pyramid.
- That such authority is being weakened as increasing numbers of Catholics are taking their religious theology and practice into their own subsidiarity does not change the rigid structure of the RC monarchy.
- That the simplistic tenets of Peter Maurin's original vision are relevant to a small, remote rural community as opposed to their application to the much larger, more complex and more sophisticated society of the developed world would be the subject of a future response.

I do agree that anarchism does receive a bad and uninformed rap. The cartoon in the

editorial page of a recent *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* showing a rowdy lout of the sort that inhabits the Worcester Common with an anarchism tattoo on his bare shoulder is representative.

Dan Dick
Worcester, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: We recommend Marc Ellis's Peter Maurin, Prophet of the Twentieth Century and we point out that more Catholic Workers are embracing Maurin's belief in personalism and the need for a green revolution than ever before. We recognize that the Catholic Church is hierarchical and that many anarchists oppose it for that reason. We remain Catholics because we see the Church as a positive, voluntary association which ultimately must lead through persuasion.

Claire and Scott,

Such an inspiring issue of CR, the interview with C.O. Joshua Stieber—how he created a peace-making path while serving in the military by determinedly working with opportunities and people right under his nose every day, without indulging in grandiose plans to end all war and bring about world peace—as a Miss America contestant might promise to do (even I can do that, I thought, try to create peace in each encounter each day); and the insight you share from Graham Greene's seeing divinity in every human being "bad" and good alike, and God even in a spider web at dawn in Joan Huber's beautiful poem.

I marveled at the diversity in this issue. Then I thought, diverse but really very simple—God in every person, every thing, every moment if we just pay attention and act accordingly.

Ed Stevens
Wayland, Massachusetts

Saludos, Scott and Claire,



¡El Señor esté con todos en Mason Street! ...[June] began what is called the Honduran crisis. The people are divided, probably as never before. But not equally. The majority, as far as I can tell, think "good riddance" to Señor Zalaya. He

was a populist-type of president, and so he cultivated the allegiance of the kind of people who march noisily through the streets from time to time, defacing every wall they pass with accusations, threats, blasphemies, communist slogans, etc.... The immense walls of the Cathedral are favorite sites to express their anger. And the Cardinal has become their most hated enemy, he who has done more for the poor of Honduras than anyone in memory, perhaps in Honduran history.

I wince and cringe and groan when I read in the US press the foreign version of what has happened and is happening here. As John Dulles once said, the US does not have friends, only interests. And [Venezuelan President Hugo] Chavez would seem to be their preferred friend over poor Honduras at this particular time.

In Brenna's article on Gaza, a beautiful Israeli woman who seeks alternatives to the conflict says, "I can't begin to compare our suffering to that of the Gazans..." I think the same way, especially after reading that article, and learning of the misery of many people in other countries. I continue to cry over Honduras, but then include the rest of the world in my lagrimas [tears]. The USA might be the country most to be pitied. Brenna's insertion in the story of the prolonged pause for prayer has rekindled my faith in the power of prayer for **mercy** for us and for the whole world....

Father John Wallace
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Dear Scott & Claire,

We are sitting in our home watching a Sugar Creek (Midwest US) CW retreat film, and it occurred to us that we hadn't thanked you for the DVDs you sent of the national CW gathering. So **Thank You**—it was great to feel a connection with you all, as we're so isolated here in country Australia....

We have a close relationship with the New Zealand Catholic Workers (there's a lot more of them than us)—seven of their young people have come and stayed with us over the last few years, and our two eldest daughters are heading over to visit them this Christmas. Another two are possibly helping to establish a community in Spain at the moment!

[My husband] Jim and Ciaran [O'Reilly]

200 Years In Afghanistan

reviewed by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

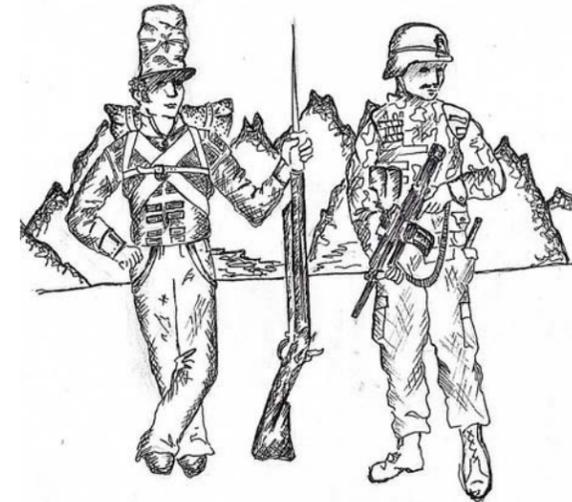
In Afghanistan: 200 Years of British, Russian, and American Occupation, by David Loyn, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2009.

At this writing, President Obama is weighing options for US policy in Afghanistan. Under pressure from Republicans and conservative Democrats, the president announced on October 5 that a military withdrawal from Afghanistan was "not on the table." According to the October 28 *New York Times*, President Obama's only consideration now is "where and how to deploy more troops." He is not dissuaded by record casualties or by the corrupt, unpopular, and inefficient Afghan government. He appears unconcerned that a debt-ridden US Treasury is spending \$180 million a day on Afghanistan without a US exit strategy.

Most important of all, President Obama and hawkish members of Congress appear to be surprisingly ignorant of the history of occupation in Afghanistan. To alleviate that deficiency, I highly recommend they read David Loyn's book, **In Afghanistan**. In just 230 interesting pages, Loyn combines history with his own considerable experience as a reporter for the BBC in Afghanistan and Pakistan to make a convincing case that foreign occupations of Afghanistan are doomed to fail. According to Loyn, the only substantive difference between the British, Soviet, and US occupations is the length of time before the invaders admit defeat. Citing historical and contemporary examples, Loyn demonstrates how lives are being sacrificed pointlessly today. He shows how British, Russian, and NATO military campaigns to impose friendly Afghan regimes drive the Afghan people to embrace independence movements led by reactionary and xenophobic Islamists. An October 27, 2009 demonstration in Kabul, where 1,000 Afghan university students burned President Obama in effigy, validates Loyn's pessimism.

Loyn does an excellent job of making a

complex history understandable and interesting. For example, he corrects the romantic perception of Afghan "freedom fighters" created by Tom Hanks' movie *Charlie Wilson's War*. Loyn exposes Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leading recipient of US military aid during the 1980s and 90s, as a cruel tyrant who ordered his forces to throw acid in the faces of women who were not fully veiled. Loyn digs deep



Grace Duffy

for the truth about the Taliban and bin Laden, tracing a major part of their extremism to US policies. He was the only foreign correspondent in Kabul when the Taliban took over in 1996. He spares no punches and exposes myths that keep today's war going. Loyn interviews people like British Captain Leo Docherty, who said in 2006, "the time spent [in Afghanistan] now seems to have been an egotistical folly.... Violence will surely breed more violence, until the whole thing is beyond our control." With greater historical awareness than most people in Washington today, Docherty calls the NATO campaign, "a tragic replay of Soviet clumsiness" in a country where corruption is deeply entrenched. Loyn's book is informational without being rhetorical. The conclusions are supported by facts authenticated in a 20-page bibliography and index of sources.

Loyn describes how English prime ministers and Soviet premiers hung on in Afghanistan long after military advisers favored withdrawal because capitalist and communist leaders alike were afraid to lose face at home. One thinks of the Vietnam War, which could have been ended in 1968 with the identical terms the US accepted in 1975, were it not for politicians who feared being called "weak." Without ever setting foot on a battlefield, politicians gain reputations as "tough guys" by ordering others to soldier on pointlessly. During World War II, when Winston Churchill boasted, "We will fight them on the beaches....," he might as well have said, "You will fight them on the beaches," because he was not going to be in any more deliberate harm's way than President Obama is.

But informed Americans can help politicians find the courage to end the US military misadventure in Afghanistan. Consider Matthew Hoh, a US Marine veteran of the Iraq War, who resigned from his diplomatic post in Afghanistan in September because he "had lost understanding and confidence in the strategic purposes of the United States' presence in Afghanistan." In his letter of resignation Hoh concluded, "To put it simply: I fail to see the value or the worth in continued US casualties or expenditures of resources in support of the Afghan government in what is truly a 35-year-old civil war."

In 1808, Britain's first envoy to Afghanistan, Mountstuart Elphinstone, said that even if England could conquer the country and introduce a friendly leader, "maintaining him in a poor, cold, strong, and remote country, among a turbulent people like the Afghans, seems to me to be hopeless." In 2008, a local Taliban commander told Loyn, "We gained our freedom from Britain 160 years ago, and should remain free. We don't accept the claim that [Britain and the US] are here to rebuild our country. They have done nothing for us." David Loyn's **In Afghanistan** argues convincingly for keeping foreign troops *out* of Afghanistan. Ω

Jobless

(Continued from Page 1)

banks and investment companies, arguing that the expenditure would ultimately benefit Main Street. But *The New York Times* reported on September 5, 2009, "Many experts envision a jobless recovery in which the economy grows but job losses persist." Indeed, the stock market has bounced back from a six-year low of 6,547 on March 9 to the 10,015 mark on October 14. Profits are starting to climb again. Why does this not translate into jobs?

Chief global economist at Decision Economics, Allen Sinai, told *The New York Times*, "I don't think businesses will hire back anytime soon. Companies are rewarded by the stock markets for not hiring and keeping their costs down." Indeed, despite increased US factory production in August, manufacturing cut 63,000 jobs. Not only are there fewer jobs for American workers, but many of those still employed are now being asked to do more for the same pay, all of which increases profits.

Schemes to make more money during hard times are shockingly cruel, but only an extension of recent trends. The Commerce Department reported on March 29, 2006, that "US corporate profits have increased 21.3% in the past year and now account for the largest share of national income in 40 years." *Market Watch* noted the next day that "Profits have been so high because all the benefits from productivity improvements are flowing to the owners of capital rather than to the workers." They noted that real wages that year were the lowest since 1966. In an August 13, 2009 article, *The New York Times* columnist and Nobel Laureate, Paul Krugman, included a US income share graph which highlighted massive redistribution in wealth beginning with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. The Office of Social Justice for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis noted this increasing concentration of wealth in a March 1, 2004 statement which pointed out that the richest 1% of Americans own more than the bottom 90%.

In light of the fantastic amount of money that is increasingly being transferred to the super rich, who undoubtedly have the big-

gest voices in Washington, it should come as no surprise that the government's response to the Recession has been what former Labor Secretary Robert Reich now calls "socialism for the rich." Indeed, the view from outside the US is all too clear. Writing for the British paper, *The Guardian*, Joseph Stiglitz said on June 12, 2009, that the US had adopted a "new form of ersatz capitalism, in which losses are socialized and profits privatized." Reckless corporations were bailed out to enable them to pay grotesque managerial bonuses and dividends. Stiglitz concluded, "In truth, this is not socialism, but an extension of long-standing corporate welfarism. The rich and powerful turn to



Robert McGovern

the government to help them whenever they can, while the needy individuals get little social protection."

Are there any antidotes? Robert Reich argued in the January 26, 2009 *Los Angeles Times* that the US needs unions to restore middle class prosperity. He reminds us that in 1955, more than a third of working Americans were unionized, while fewer than 8% are represented by a union today, and that "less bargaining power results in lower wages." Reich points out that while corporations were enjoying unprecedented profits between 2000 and 2007, non-union wages fell behind the rate of inflation. Typical families hid their declining fortunes by going into debt. Reich says, "According to the Department of Labor, workers in unions earn 30% higher wages and are 59% more likely to have employer-provided health insurance than their non-

union counterparts." Reich cites a recent poll saying 57 million workers would like to unionize, but that current laws make it easy for employers to stop them. He challenges the government to pass laws to make unionization easier and to increase the penalties for the mistreatment of American workers.

As Catholic Worker personalists, we certainly support the persuasive power of unionization, but are not convinced that economic justice is simply a matter of legislation. We are drawn to Dickens' parable of Ebenezer Scrooge's conversion. Although the threat of Hell is part of the equation, the bigger draw for us is Scrooge's growing awareness of all the joy he has missed by hoarding his money. When we are in the grip of wealth, we forget that Jesus' message of service to the poor is good news. Too many preachers, anxious not to offend wealthy donors, soft-pedal Christ's message that it's hard for the rich to enter paradise. They mistake an invitation to change for a threat of exclusion.

Ecclesiastics (4:1-11) sums it up beautifully: "My child, do not refuse the poor a livelihood, do not tantalize the needy. Do not add to the sufferings of the hungry, do not bait a person in distress. Do not aggravate a heart already angry, nor keep the destitute waiting for your alms.... Gain the love of the community.... Save the oppressed from the oppressor, and do not be mean-spirited in your judgments. Be like a parent to orphans, and as good as a husband to widows. And you will be like a son or daughter to the Most High, whose love for you will surpass your mother's."

The elation of the reclaimed Scrooge is not fiction. It is God's promise to all of us who share our wealth. The love of the community and of God can never be attained through greed. Let this Christmas be a reminder for us all that the rapacious economic road that the rich in the United States have been walking is a road to misery, not only for those they shortchange, but for themselves. After all, wasn't the Cratchit family, even in its poverty, happier than Scrooge? Let the good news be proclaimed, "Generosity, not greed, is the greatest good." Ω

Gaza Examen

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

Three things always rise," a Palestinian filmmaker once told me, "the sun, the moon, and the truth." I have often thought of his words while reading various reports about the Israeli three-week assault on the Gaza Strip. Like most governments at war, Israel wanted to shield the details of its Operation Cast Lead (OCL) from public purview, denying journalists access to the Strip during the conflict and refusing to cooperate with human rights monitors investigating its aftermath.

But Gaza has been a difficult story to conceal as reports about the conflict keep spilling out. There have been at least a dozen so far including two from Amnesty International, five from Human Rights Watch, and several from Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations. In September 2009, Breaking the Silence, a group of Israeli reservists, published revealing testimonies of 30 Israeli combatants who participated in OCL. In October, the UN published the findings of its inquiry led by South African jurist Richard Goldstone, and the most recent issue of *The Journal of Palestine Studies* (JPS) includes analyses of the Israeli and Palestinian arsenals.

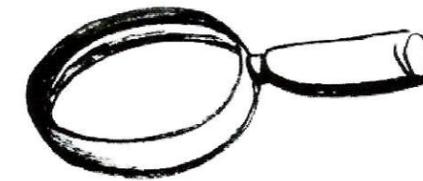
According to Amnesty International, 1,400 Gazans were killed during the three weeks of fighting, including 300 children. Thirteen Israelis died: nine soldiers, four of whom killed by friendly fire, and four civilians killed by Hamas rockets.

The Israeli campaign, made possible by high-tech, US-supplied weaponry, was waged in two phases—an air assault that began on December 27 followed by a ground invasion launched on January 3. According to the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), more than 100 tons of explosives were dropped on the Strip—a patch of earth, seven miles across at its widest point and 25 miles long—during the first nine hours of combat. *JPS* describes the invasion as highly-coordinated with infantry commanders able to call for air strikes from attack helicopters waiting on standby or from unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs or drones) already positioned overhead. At least a dozen drones hovered over Gaza throughout the conflict. "Action time was so quick," writes Michele Esposito,

author of the *JPS* document, "that Israeli intelligence reported that they could identify and fire air-to-ground missiles within 30 seconds of surveillance data being sent."

The IDF estimates it carried out a total of 1,500 air strikes during OCL. In addition to drones, Israel employed US-supplied F-16s to drop 500-1,000 lb. bombs, US-made AH-64 Apache Attack helicopters, and AH-IF Cobra helicopter gunships.

The arsenal available to ground troops was equally formidable. Drones, firing anti-personnel and anti-tank munitions, were typically positioned 500 yards ahead of infantry units, which were equipped with M16s, grenades, armored personnel carriers, tanks with



shells so precise they could fire into a window from a distance of 1.5 kilometers, and some 100 armored Caterpillar bulldozers, used to raze houses, neighborhoods, or orchards suspected of concealing weapons or entrances to tunnels. The *JPS* document notes Israel also deployed an array of "special weapons." These included white phosphorous, an incendiary weapon that causes deep chemical burn injuries similar to napalm, and flechettes, an anti-personnel device. Each flechette shell is packed with 5,000-8,000 razor-sharp, nail-like darts, four centimeters in length. When the shells explode in the air, they scatter the darts in a cone-shaped pattern 300 yards long and 90 yards wide.

For all its weaponry, war is ultimately a human endeavor. One is reminded of its psychological toll on combatants when reading the testimonies of soldiers in the Breaking the Silence report. The interviewees describe permissive rules of engagement. One recalls being advised by his commander to "not let morality become an issue.... Leave the nightmares and horrors that will come up for later, now just shoot." Several soldiers reported using "insane" amounts of fire power. Even with the high-tech weaponry, targeting was

imprecise. The massive bulldozing complicated navigation. Female soldiers, directing air strikes, resented that "all points of reference had been razed" and resolved their predicament by approximating coordinates. "Sometimes they'd bomb the house you were reporting, and sometimes not," a soldier said.

In "Letter from Gaza," (*The New Yorker*, 11/9/09), Lawrence Wright writes: "According to various international agencies, 14% of the buildings in Gaza were partially or completely destroyed, including 21,000 homes, 700 factories and businesses, 16 hospitals, 38 primary health-care centers, and 280 schools. Two hundred and fifty wells were destroyed, 300,000 trees uprooted, and large swaths of agricultural land were made no longer arable, in part because of contamination and unexploded ordnance."

And what of the Palestinian arsenal? According to Human Rights Watch, it was comprised of locally-made "Qassam" rockets and a small number of Soviet-made "Grads." The rockets were imprecise and therefore indiscriminate. During OCL, Palestinians rockets reached populated areas 40 kilometers inside Israel. Hamas and Islamic Jihad claim responsibility for most of the 820 rockets fired, which damaged a kindergarten, synagogue, and private homes. The Goldstone report notes that the rockets caused economic hardship as well as psychological terror. Many Israeli residents fled the region.

"If you regard people as your equals, you don't fire rockets at them and you don't bulldoze their lands," Goldstone said at Brandeis University on November 5. Many in the audience seemed hostile to Palestinian concerns, but Goldstone, a Jewish supporter of Israel, was unequivocal in his call to investigate the crimes of this war and stop dehumanizing the other. Listening to him, I thought of Christ tirelessly advising, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Goldstone's report has been roundly condemned in Israel and rejected by the US Congress and yet its findings and others are out there. We can't say we didn't know. Ω