



THE VISITATION

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Mercy-Building in a Wall-Building Culture (thoughts on the November Roundtable)

By Hannah Kubiak

This November we hosted a roundtable discussion at Nativity House on the topic of “Mercy-Building in a Wall-Building Culture.” Visiting panelists from the South Bend Worker, Lewis University, and an upcoming Catholic Worker in Gary, Indiana discussed the different kinds of isolation that exist in our world, and ways that we can connect with other people.

One of our panelists, Elias Crim, spoke to us about common good and solidarity, both of which are very much in demand right now. Our world has become more privatized, when there used to be a “commons,” for people. Elias used the example of people who used to go jogging in the park, but now have a membership to an exclusive gym. One of the



results of privatization is that individuals in a community feel no responsibility or pride for their neighborhood, because the

opportunity to participate in its growth has been taken away from them. Children exemplify this kind of behavior perfectly. A child who

paid for his own bike with money he earned shoveling snow is much more likely to take special care of that bike than a boy whose parents bought the bike for him. In the same way, individuals who are empowered to make their neighborhood a good place to live will rise to the challenge and care more about the result of their work. Communities work much better when as many people as possible stop watching through their windows and come outside to build instead.

Our panelist from the South Bend Worker, Jess Keating, shared her experiences of working in the pro-life movement. People on the pro-

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The Crucible of Motherhood

by Claire Fyrqvist

Several months ago, Jessica Keating, Program Director of the Office of Human Dignity and Life Initiatives at Notre Dame, delivered a lecture in the Institute for Church Life's Dante lecture series in which she used the phrase “the crucible of motherhood.” This phrase struck me as singularly important and true. The image of refinement by great heat and intense struggle seems apt for a vocation initiated by excruciating pain and physical endurance well beyond the actual act of giving birth. I've also come to see, particularly in this election season,

that words matter. A LOT. After three long pregnancies and three natural births of three very large children, I'd like to see those defending the lives of innocent children in the womb use more language empathizing with the mother herself. Women need to be able to say in one breath how difficult and even awful parts of pregnancy, birth, and motherhood can be while also affirming the infinite value of the prenatal child and his or her absolute right to life. The dignity of the person depends so very much upon the words used to

describe or define or defend. And the dignity of two persons is at stake when the question of abortion is raised: the mother's and the child's.

As a pro-life feminist, I see advocates on both sides of the abortion debate talking past each other to an astounding degree. At first I blamed the pro-choice camp for having a sizable blind spot, namely the human fetus in the womb essentially eclipsed by a woman's “right to choose.” I wrestled unsuccessfully for months trying to genuinely understand the mindset of someone justifying—even embracing—the heinous act of

abortion. But then I realized that the pro-life movement also had an enormous blind spot: the expectant mother and really any woman staring down the possibility of pregnancy and motherhood: regardless of her circumstance, she better bring a child into the world and stop whining about it. This is her sacred duty and it is unconscionable to question her role. I started to see why a pro-choice friend had made a biting remark about women not being “incubators for society.”

When going through my own

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Dorothy Day: Reflections During Advent

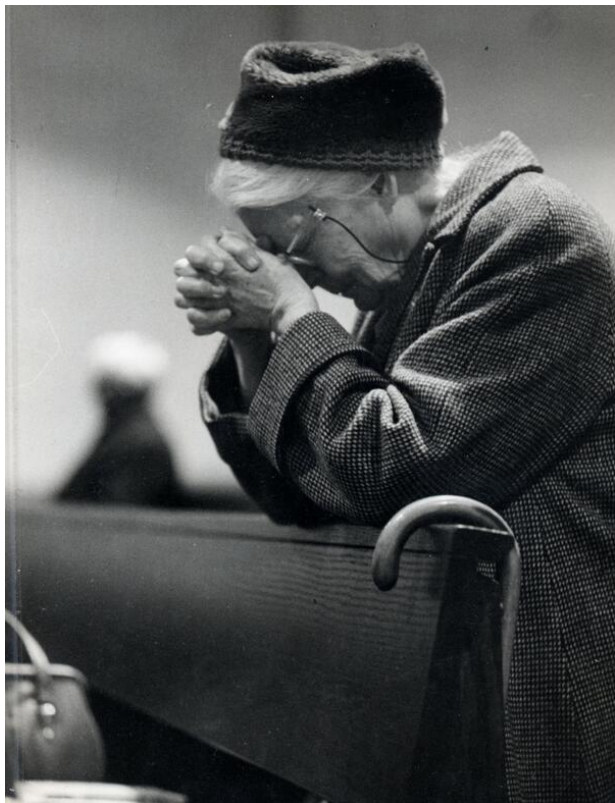
Part One: "Searching for Christ"

Every day at the Catholic Worker Farm when we gather for meals we say the Angelus before asking God's blessing on us and the food we eat. And it rejoices me to hear all the men, who are in the majority, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy Word," and repeating together that marvelous and yet terrible prayer,

"Pour forth we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ was made known by the message of an angel, may by His passion and cross be brought to the glory of His resurrection." This Incarnation came about by Mary's consent, she "through whom we have received the author of life."

So Advent must begin with Mary, who presents us with the infant Christ. "The flesh of Jesus is the flesh of Mary," St. Augustine wrote. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

When I go to the crib this year I will think, as I always do, that we are not dependent on the governments of this world for our safety, but "the government will be upon His shoulder." This baby cradled in a manger, this boy talking to the doctors in the temple, this youth working with St. Joseph as carpenter, this teacher walking the roads of Palestine, "Do whatever He tells you," Mary told us.



About The Visitation

This newspaper, *The Visitation*, is a publication on topics of social justice, spirituality and theology. It is published four times a year by the Nativity House. Submissions are accepted from readers everywhere.

To contact us, email us at:

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Past issues are online at:

<http://www.nativity-house.org>

About Nativity House

Nativity House serves as a shelter for first-time mothers in need of residence in the southwest Chicago suburbs. The Nativity House operates an on-site community supported farm (CSA) that provides nourishment for the Nativity House and the greater community. Overall, we envision a healing environment focused on the dignity of each person, the dignity of work and stewardship of the earth.

Nativity House is administered by a board of directors and an advisory committee of individuals with a broad range of experience. Nativity House has formed positive relationships with relevant local organizations that are extremely helpful in carrying out the mission of the house. Nativity House was recognized as a public charity in August, 2011.

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We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

Crucible of Motherhood

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crisis of motherhood at various stages of my pregnancies or post-partum recoveries, I came to see that we as a pro-life community have not adequately championed, at least rhetorically, the needs and rights of the woman burdened by unexpected or unwanted pregnancy. I'm not sure we've even championed sufficiently women who have wanted and expected pregnancies. I cannot overemphasize how much motherhood asks of a woman. There is no greater act of laying down of one's life for another than bringing a child into the world and raising her.

On the other hand, it is not helpful to be angry and blame-casting about the biological inequities that are present between men and women. Clearly women are gifted and burdened uniquely with the capacity to bear, birth, and nurse children. This creates an obvious disparity between men and women that honestly can seem a bit unfair at times, but instead of trying to deny this reality or level the playing field by sacrificing the lives of children hanging in the balance, it is vital to acknowledge these differences and take a serious look at what women should be granted by way of physical, emotional, and spiritual (not to mention monetary and social) support.

Because we don't always talk squarely and lovingly about how truly difficult and isolating pregnancy, birth, and the post-partum "4th trimester" can be for women, we're facing an almost insurmountable language barrier in the abortion debate. One party demands rights for the child and one party demands rights for the woman. I'm not sure rights are

really the thing at all. Out of the context of the individual woman's need for support, love, friendship, and care during the singular event of conceiving and bearing a child into the world, the passionate battle cries make almost no sense.

Upon receiving the potentially terrifying news that I am pregnant in x, y, or z non-ideal circumstance, would I really find phrases like "my body my choice" or "get your Rosaries off my ovaries" empowering? Or would I really be moved by such mantras as "Smile, your mom

"The dignity of the person depends so very much upon the words used to describe or define or defend. And the dignity of two persons is at stake when the question of abortion is raised: the mother's and the child's."

chose life" or "It's a child not a choice"?

To be honest, I think both sides of the slogan war could potentially be quite alienating to the woman who is faced with the stark reality of maintaining her pregnancy or seeking abortion. Yes, the rhetoric can be persuasive to ideologues arguing in a vacuum. But on the ground, in the clinic office when a woman is told she does indeed have a viable pregnancy, what is actually needed is real kindness, an accepting presence, concrete support, and a strong "This will be really hard but you can do it—and I'll help you."

I hated being pregnant with my third child. I hated almost every minute of it. I don't vomit every day like some of my pregnant

friends, God bless them. And I wasn't on bed rest or anything else nearly as debilitating. But I still did not want to be pregnant for nine months. I could not wait for the day that I would no longer be pregnant, when I could sleep on my back again and not feel aching pain every time I bent over. I still am looking longingly at the day when I will not be breastfeeding and I can more definitively say that my body is my own. I am currently not my own. My food is also my daughter's food. My body is often her resting place and her only means of transport. She is utterly helpless without me for the

and birthing a child is an occasion for elder and younger women to gather round in community. We have few if any rituals pointing to the centrality of this act to the very existence of our society. Instead, we have popularized birth as an act of choice, trendy and controlled, like the local food movement—dabbled in by the intelligentsia when it is convenient and lauded. The words surrounding this "choice" make it sound like parenting is totally great when wanted and totally terrible when unwanted. That is not how it is at all. It is always totally great and totally terrible.

Plenty of very pro-life, very strong women I know do not like being pregnant and they dread birth. There are others who love these experiences and draw strength from them, but let's support women regardless in every way possible. Let's use words like "hero" and "bedrock" and "rock star." Because she always is. Let's celebrate the child's life and all the good that he or she brings to the world simply by existing. Because life is always worth it. Because human dignity depends upon it.



Claire mothers three rambunctious children and four chickens alongside her husband in South Bend's Catholic Worker neighborhood. Having spent several years working in the pro-life movement, she now seeks to integrate human dignity and the defense of all life in the context of radical home making.

We need to say this. We need to say it a lot so all women know that it is true. It is also true that my daughter has infinite worth and unrepeatable dignity and value. She is her own person who must be protected and cared for regardless of how I feel. But I'm allowed to feel terrible sometimes. In fact, allowing women to feel terrible and supporting them regardless makes it a whole lot easier.

We do not live in a matriarchal society where the act of bearing

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of the Americas

By Edith Avila Olea

Our Lady of Guadalupe holds a powerful image of healing and restoration to the Mexican community. This is the story we need to focus on in this season of doubt and hope.

For those who don't know anything about her miraculous story, I invite you to reflect on the promise she makes to the Mexican people. Her faithfulness is so strong that there is a Mexican saying describing the instant love amongst our Mother and her children of Mexico. "With just being born in this country (Mexico), you are a Guadalupano(a) for life."

Let's rewind the clock back to 1531. Our Lady appeared to a simple, native known as Juan Diego. She asked him to visit the Bishop of Mexico inquiring that he build a church on the hill in which she appeared.

Juan Diego begged the dark-skinned lady to ask someone else, someone who had power. How was a "nobody" going to ask the bishop to build a church?

Despite his plea, Our Lady convinced him to go. It took a few visits for San Juan Diego to persuade the bishop. Finally, the bishop told Juan Diego to ask for a sign from the lady.

Juan Diego told the lady the bishop's request. She told him to come back the next day and she'd have the sign ready.

Unfortunately, Juan Diego received news that his uncle was very ill. With great regret, he actually avoided the route and sought another way to go find

some medicine for his uncle. Regardless, the lady appeared to him and promised him that his uncle was going to survive. At that instant, his uncle's deathly fever disappeared. This was a very crucial moment of confirmation of the divine plan.

Juan Diego then visited the hilltop to find the promised sign. In the middle of winter, the mountain was covered in blooming roses of all colors. He picked them up and carried them in his cloak to visit the bishop.

When Juan Diego visited the bishop, the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to the Bishop imprinted on the cloak. The Bishop and the people in the room, all knelt in veneration at the sight of this image.

This was not just a sign for the bishop, but for the world. The story carries its power not just in the fact that she appeared, it's how and when she appeared.

If you take a look at the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, you can study her miraculous image. She appeared as an indigenous lady covered in symbolism.

She appears in the aura of the sun, her mantle is covered in stars and she is stepping on the moon. The stars are the alignment of the stars that night. Her dress is covered in flowers. This imagery is a direct connection to the Lord of all Lords, Lord of light and darkness, Lord of the universe, maker of the heaven and Earth.

You'll notice that her hair is down reminding us of her

virginity and a black ribbon around her waist reminding us of her pregnancy. Actually, the flowers on her clothing are made up of three petals, except for the one where her womb is. This four-petaled flower, shaped like a cross, also illustrates her bearing a child.

Her skin tone is mestizo, both native and Spanish. Her hands are together as in prayer signifying unity in a broken nation. One of her hands is darker than the other calling the natives to unify and reconcile with the Spanish.

On her neck appears a pendant and below her feet an angel illustrating her royalty. Like the natives, she appears humbly. Her eyes are looking down to her children. This vision reminds us her reverence to God. Even the colors that adorn her image confirm her loyalty to God of Gods. Every detail of this image is a symbol to the natives. This is how she shows her love of her suffering children.

Now, let's move forward with the living miracles of her love. There have been several attempts to destroy the image, including a few bombings. One of the bombings was left in a bag right under the image. It destroyed everything in sight, but the image stayed in complete tact.

There are countless miracles on this image and because of this image. She carries the Lord's powerful love to a lost people. Maria appeared to a people being stripped of their identity, abused



and used by sin. It was because of her love that Mexico was able to find peace again.

This is the image that I look at every night. She appeared to the lowly, the poor, the forgotten nation. I am reminded that she walks with me in this valley of tears. She understands the fear of a lost people and draws people back into comfort.

Every year, December 3rd starts the novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe. We pray for peace, unity, trust and guidance. Today, I am still praying for the suffering in Mexico, but I now add the suffering of the world to that list. We cannot settle to fall apart. We must remind our leaders to hear the voice of the lowly, the poor, the forgotten. Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!



Edith is a Parish Outreach and Board of Young Professionals Coordinator at Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Joliet.

Unconditional Mercy (A Reflection in Prison Ministry)

By Victoria Hathaway

I, like so many people across the United States Thanksgiving week, found myself in a very serious conversation with my sister: “Ok, I’ll bring the pumpkin pies. Will your in-laws be there? I can make one for them too. Mom can make the green bean casserole. Will your husband be making the turkey again?”

The holidays have a way of reminding us about the human need we share for community. Sharing a meal with others seems to be at the heart of what makes us human. It allows us to talk with others, share ideas with others, laugh with each other, and feel support from each other.

When we are at a meal with others where those things don’t happen, we feel like something is wrong. In my experiences, I’ve only encountered one meal where I felt this way. A meal that was designed to make those sharing in the meal feel less than human: lunch in a state-operated prison.

In 2014, I was invited to help out at a retreat for inmates at the Westville Correctional Facility, in Westville, Indiana. A deacon in my diocese invited a young adult group I participate in to help out at their annual retreat. During his invitation, the deacon reminded us that those we would be serving are often thrown

Easy Essays: Works of Mercy

by Peter Maurin (1877-1949)



The best kind of apologetics is the kind of apologetics people do not have to apologize for. In the first centuries of Christianity pagans said about Christians: “See how they love each other.” The love for God and neighbor was the characteristic of the first Christians. This love was expressed through the daily practice of the Works of Mercy. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to instruct the ignorant at a personal sacrifice was considered by the first Christians as the right thing to do. Surplus goods were considered to be superfluous, and therefore to be used to help the needy members of the Mystical Body.

away and forgotten by their families. I couldn’t say no to that.

When the day of the retreat arrived, my stomach felt like it was doing flip flops. I was nervous to experience something so new to me. We entered through three sets of locked doors that made a loud “clank” when they shut and locked. We were escorted through a large campus to the gym where we were going to have the retreat. The men started to file in and we greeted them as if they were parishioners at a parish retreat. The men signed in, using an identification number rather than their name, and made their way to the small group tables. We introduced ourselves, made small talk, and went over the schedule.

Any fears or anxieties I had quickly faded as we began the retreat in prayer and fellowship. The theme of the day was “God’s Mercy.” We spoke about what Mercy meant for us as Christians, about how God gives it to us freely and how God is always there waiting for us to embrace us with loving arms. The men at my table were wonderful. They participated in conversations and were helpful if we had questions about the prison.

When it was time for lunch, we were going to eat with the men in the prison cafeteria. As the men started to line up, we were told to do the same. The men on either side of me were shocked. As we were walking to the cafeteria, one of the men told me why they were so surprised we were coming with them. “No one ever eats with us. They bring their own food. They don’t come with us. You are the first.” I felt humbled to share that meal.

When we came back to the retreat, we continued with our conversation about God’s Mercy.

One of the men in our small group had been very quiet all day, not adding much to the conversation. After one of the talks, he started shaking his head. I asked him what he was thinking. “Why would God forgive me? I keep messing up. I’ve messed up so many times. Why would God forgive me?” I couldn’t help but smile. “Because God loves you. God loves all of us. He loves us when we mess us and are sorry for it. God loves us when we feel alone. God loves us when we ask for help. God forgives you because he loves you.”

As we were leaving, one of the men in my group asked what we thought the day was going to be like before we had met them. I thought a second and responded honestly. I had stereotypes about what a prisoner was. I had seen movies and television shows about prison and had expected the day to be like what I had seen. I was wrong. I was able to share my faith and learn more about God through what the men in my small group shared. Before they left, the men thanked us and shook our hands. The same thing I heard over and over again was “Thank you for being with us.” Through sharing a meal and sharing our stories we were able to see each other and to be with each other. We encountered each other and helped each other grow closer to God. Through the sharing of a meal, we gave people who are often forgotten dignity and community that they tend not to receive.



Victoria is a behavior therapist working with individuals with cognitive disabilities on northwest Indiana. She currently serves on the leadership team for the Diocese of Gary Young adult Catholic Outreach Ministries.

A Reflection on Juan Diego

By Venus Wozniak

Over the summer our family was blessed to take a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. I was surprised to discover that it is not just a single church but an entire complex of many holy places. Our guide methodically directed us through each church onsite in chronological order.

Upon coming down the hill where the first and second apparitions occurred there was a small chapel called Antigua Parroquia de Indios (Old Church of the Indians) It was given this name because it was built on the site of Juan Diego's hermitage. He lived close to the original basilica so that he could care for the miraculous painting of Our Lady. When we entered the small church Juan Diego's presence was palpable. I wanted to stay in the presence of this holy man. I was left with a longing to get to know this man who Mary cared so deeply for. He was a simple man, a peasant. Mary

called him, "Juanito, dearest Juan Diego."

Mary entrusted Juan Diego with an enormous task:

I want very much to have a

little house built here for me, in which I will show Him, I will exalt Him and make Him manifest. I will give Him to the people in all my personal love, in my compassion, in my help, in my protection:

because I am truly your merciful Mother, yours and all the people who live united in this land and of all the other people of different ancestries, my lovers, who love me, those who seek me, those who trust in me. Here I will hear their weeping, their complaints and heal all their sorrows, hardships and sufferings.



Mary chose Juan Diego, a simple, peasant man, and prepared him to do a great work. He delivered her message; she would always be with those who suffer. His faith has brought comfort to generations and was a catalyst for strengthening faith, not only for Mexico and Latin America, but the whole world. St Juan Diego, Pray for us.



Venus is a wife, mother, and Director of Nativity House. She can be contacted at: venus@nativity-house.org

Mercy-Building in a Wall-Building Culture

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choice side of the issue often claim that being pro-life means caring for the unborn child more than for the mother. There may even be accusations that pro-life people don't care about the mother at all. This should not be the case. A woman in a crisis pregnancy finds herself isolated in so many ways, but she and her child are never isolated from each other, and they should both be respected equally by all of us.

Christie Billups, a professor at

Lewis Univeristy, shared her experiences from sixteen years of prison ministry, and how it had helped her to connect with people who are different from her in almost every way imaginable. While it's not unreasonable for people to serve a sentence for their crimes, going to prison often means a lifetime of isolation for people, even after they are released. Prisoners are truly boxed in with no way of reaching out, isolated from friends and family. Many of the people they knew outside no longer want to have a relationship with them. In fact, many prisoners are reluctant to

get out because they have friends in prison but no one on the outside seems to care. Fear of the unfamiliar outside is often a motivation for repeat offenders. In that way, prisoners aren't so different from those of us who stay in our familiar neighborhoods or homes for fear of being judged or made uncomfortable. Visits or letters from people who start out as strangers are often the only connection a prisoner has with someone else.

Even people who live in the world are isolated from each other, and need to be able to find some way of reaching out and making

"commons." Regardless of where we live or what we believe, the really important walls are built inside our minds. In a world that has always feared difference to some degree, it is very important to make connections with people who are different from ourselves. Making those connections enriches our experience and makes us more understanding and compassionate.



Hannah is an intern at Nativity House. This article was originally posted on the Nativity House blog: nativityhouse.wordpress.com

Building Community in a Disconnected World

(A reflection on ministry and service)

by Caitlyn Quinlan

Our world is full of so many people who are different in their own ways. Everyone has a unique personality- there are people who come from different backgrounds, with different religious views, political views, different morals, and so much more. What are we, as children of God, supposed to do with this fact?

Catalyst is a social justice retreat at Lewis University that is hosted every January at the Brother David Darst Center in Chicago. During the fall semester, we, as student leaders of the retreat, spend a significant amount of time building community with each other during weekly team meetings, community engagement projects, and discussions about Catholic Social teaching and other prominent social justice issues.

This fall, during one of our weekly discussions, we learned about “The call to family, community, and participation”- one of the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Spending time with the Catalyst leadership team this fall has been a strong and consistent

reminder of the call to build community.

That call to community was embodied in early September, when we spent the day at two group homes run by Trinity Services, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing in-home living for adult men with cognitive and physical disabilities. During our day at the group homes, we didn't build a deck, clean the house, or cook a meal. We simply spent the day building community.

In a world full of so much individualistic and me-first thinking, we need more people who are willing to open their hearts and homes to other people. Whether it was sitting with the men while they ate lunch, watching T.V, or talking about their favorite things to do, it felt like we were part of a true community.

This sense of community should be appreciated and valued by everyone lucky enough to experience it. And, as children of God, we need to work towards creating this sense of community at all levels of society- opening our hearts to the ignored,

mistreated, and marginalized. This is what God hopes for us.

This experience made me think of all the biblical stories you hear as a child- The last supper, where Jesus broke bread with his disciples; Mother Mary and Mary of Magdalene expressing undying loyalty for Jesus as he was nailed to the cross; and the countless other stories about Jesus's life and ministry. These stories are a constant reminder that the love we have and show for one another is pivotal in living a faith-filled life.

Our retreat team for Catalyst has

spent the past 3 months building a community that loves and encourages one another. Our hope is for that love to carry on in our hearts during our retreat in January. We will take the examples provided to us, like the example of the people at Trinity, or at the Nativity House, to help make sure that all our retreatants feel part of the community that we share on the retreat.



Caitlin is a junior at Lewis University and serves on the university Catalyst Team.

POPE * FRANCIS
on the feast of All Saints NOV. 1, 2016

Blessed are those who remain faithful while enduring evils inflicted on them by others and forgive them from their heart

Blessed are those who look into the eyes of the abandoned and marginalised and show them their closeness.

Blessed are those who see God in every person and strive to make also discover him.

Blessed are those who protect and care for our common home.

Blessed are those who renounce their own comfort in order to help others.

Blessed are those who pray and work for full communion between Christians

ALL THESE ARE MESSENGERS OF GODS ME ROY AND TENDERNESS!

Upcoming Events at Nativity House:

Farm Craft Fridays, 7-9pm.

- Jan 20- Felted Garlands
- Feb 3- Soapmaking

Roundtable Discussion

Feb 17. Potluck at 6:30
 Discussion at 7:15
 Topic TBA



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For God Alone: Saint Anthony of the Desert

by Clare T. Walker

In the Roman Catholic Church, January 17 is the feast of St. Anthony of the Desert. He is sometimes known as Anthony the Great, and he is considered the father of the monastic tradition in the Church.

Anthony was born in Egypt around the year 251 A.D. He grew up in a Christian family, and received a good upbringing. He and his family were wealthy, and they lived in the lowlands near the Nile River Delta, where the Nile empties northward into the Mediterranean Sea.

Sadly, his parents died when he was a young man of eighteen or nineteen. Not long after this, he heard at Mass the passage from the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel in which Jesus talks to a rich young man who wants to know what he must do to gain eternal life. After some questions back and forth, Jesus says, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me."

This story cut Anthony to the heart—he sensed that the Lord was speaking directly to him. He was a rich young man, too, and he did not want to go away

dejected, like the young man in the story, who was so attached to his material wealth that he couldn't part with it, not even for a life with Jesus.

Anthony said "yes" in a radical way. He sold everything. With the money, he provided for the future care of his sister by setting her up in a household of holy women. Then he went into the desert and learned the monastic way of life from an older, more experienced monk. When he was ready, Anthony withdrew into sacred solitude for the rest of his life.

The words "monk," comes from the Greek word monos, which means "alone." The holy men and women of this time, known as the Desert Fathers and Mothers, sought to live for God alone and depend upon God alone in the desert. Their reputations spread and soon they were teaching others this challenging way of life. Perhaps Anthony's example inspired this saying of Evagrius Ponticus, a monk and desert father who lived from 345 to 399 A.D.: "Renounce all to gain everything."

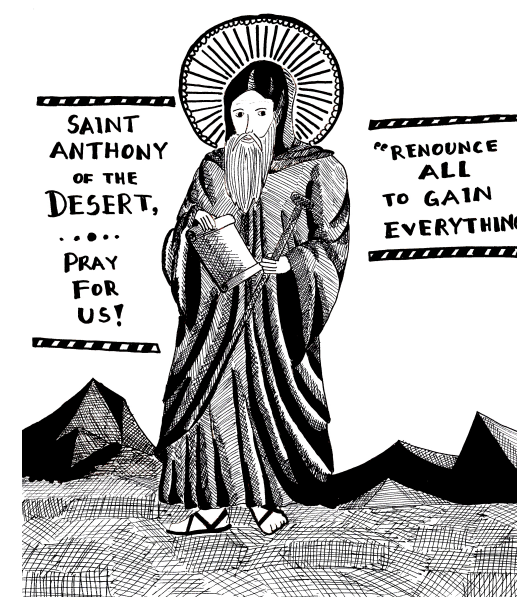
The Desert is an evocative image, because it speaks to us of

purity, of emptiness, of silence, of being stripped down to the very essentials of life. When St. Anthony went into the desert, he had nothing—no wealth, no comforts, no distractions. He had nothing but God.

In a way, the modern world is similar to the world Anthony fled. All the abundance of modern life in the technological world separates us from God by giving us the illusion that we don't need Him. In the midst of an overabundance of comforts, and distractions, the modern world is a spiritual desert, a wasteland where people struggle to find meaning.

Anthony found meaning in the spiritually fertile wilderness of Egypt. Where can we find it? Even if we are busy with many responsibilities, is there a desert place of silence and solitude in our hearts? Do we set aside a time when we turn everything off in order sense the Presence of the One who wants to be everything to us?

Anthony lived to be an old man—over one hundred years old. He died in 356 A.D. St. Anthony of the Desert, pray for us! May God give us the grace to live in single-hearted devotion to Him and Him alone.



Recommended Reading

The Life of St. Antony of the Desert by St. Athanasius

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection by Benedicta Ward

The Lives of the Desert Fathers: Historia Monachorum in Aegypto by Norman Russell

Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism by William Harmless
Monk Dynasty by John Michael Talbot



Clare is an independent author of fiction and non-fiction. She lives, writes, and gardens in Westmont, Illinois. Her website is www.ClareTWalker.com