



# THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE

DECEMBER 2017

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 1

## Your Holy Family

By Venus Wozniak

Christmastime when I was a little girl meant big family parties where I could play with my cousins for what felt like forever! We would get lost in our play and fun. And when our parents would come to retrieve us for long drives home we couldn't believe that much time had passed. True timelessness.

As in many families, time passed, arguments had been had, grudges were held and the Christmastime parties weren't so big anymore. Someone had withheld their presence from the gathering. Feelings had been hurt. Mean words were shared. Gossip. Backbiting. Those Christmastime parties lagged on. Time couldn't go fast enough.

\*\*\*

Imagine that first Advent: Mary, completely relying on her faith and the visit from the Angel Gabriel; Joseph, her betrothed, preparing to divorce her quietly. It was with the gentle nudgings of the Holy Spirit, an impressive visit from an angel, a few intense dreams that set this couple right. Their start was definitely not perfect, or ideal. In the midst of all of the uncertainty and fear I am sure that Mary and Joseph didn't feel particularly saintly. But all that went down led to the creation of a Holy Family.

\*\*\*

"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst."

-Jesus

Matthew 18:20



Jesus is there in the midst. Jesus is there in the middle of family. As family we frequently forget that we are indeed gathered in the name of Jesus by our vows: Baptism, Eucharist, Marriage. Jesus is right there with us in the middle of family life. His very presence is what makes us holy. The fact that He is there with us - in the moments of family fun where we get lost in timelessness and that He is there in the moments of family struggle where time can't seem to go fast enough - is what makes us holy.

\*\*\*

Here at Nativity House we talk about family a lot. We live intentional community. Our community is made up of Justin, Gracie and I (a family); two staff members (Sarah and Annemarie); and two expectant guest moms. Each of us come to this community with varying experiences of family. Each of us has our stories of joy and our stories of struggle.

In this community we share our experiences of family. We laugh. We cry. We get angry. We rejoice. We heal.

Jesus is here, in the midst.


\*\*\*

Here is the challenge.

Jesus was there in the midst of Mary and Joseph in what was a very scary and tumultuous time for that Holy Family. No doubt that there were many moments of rich joy, deep sorrow, righteous anger, intense celebration. Jesus' presence was the impetus for holiness. Mary and Joseph only had to be willing. They were. It sounds so easy.

Just be willing and open to His presence.

Jesus is in your midst. Your family is already Holy.

This Advent and Christmas Season Jesus wants to show you His Holy Family is your Family. All of the joy, struggles, anger, celebrating; while it is a mixed bag it is rich with experience. Through it all, Jesus is there. Our families in all their complexities at times seem least likely for the Holy Family award. But the Good News is that by your family's very inception it is. 

*Venus is the Director of Faith and Formation at Saint Dennis Parish, and the Director of Nativity House.*


*She can be contacted at: [venusad@nativity-house.org](mailto:venusad@nativity-house.org)*

## A Reflection on Catholic Social Teaching

By Giselle Nevarez

The principles of Catholic Social Teaching are the guides as to how to treat human beings with dignity and strive for the overall common good in a society. The seven themes instruct us as to how to deal with oppression, social organization, issues of wealth distribution, and just about any social justice concern. The option for the poor and vulnerable is a moral test that measures how our most vulnerable members of the society are surviving.

Our society is divided between rich and poor. As followers of Christ we are forced to realize the fights that those struggling in our society face and to put their needs before our selfish interests. All human beings are created in God's image. As a society we should not force any of our brothers and sisters to live in poverty when many of us are enjoying success. We cannot claim to be the "land of opportunity" and the country with the "American Dream" when so many of our citizens lack basic needs such as food, clothes, shelter, health care, and education.

Those who have their basic needs covered have the responsibility to work towards justice for those who don't. It's about time we stop ignoring the injustice going on in our community and fully act upon changing the world we live in. It's as simple as giving someone your meal, paying for someone's meal, donating your clothes instead of throwing them out, and just giving a dollar to those asking for it. You can help by serving the poor, teaching the uneducated, helping those with mental illnesses and those of old age. Simple small acts like these make a huge difference in someone's daily life, so we need to ask ourselves why the richest nation in the world is allowing its citizens to live in such standards where one doesn't always receive the help they need from their neighbor. 

*Giselle is a student at Lewis University. She visited Nativity House for a service day as part of her formation to become a Catalyst retreat leader for her peers.*



## 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 Nativity House. Submissions are accepted from readers everywhere.

To contact us, email us at:

[newspaper@nativity-house.org](mailto:newspaper@nativity-house.org)

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. 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.

To connect with us, please email Venus Wozniak at:

[venusad@nativity-house.org](mailto:venusad@nativity-house.org)

Postal mail should be addressed to:

Nativity House  
17141 W. 143rd St.  
Lockport, IL 60441

We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

## Am I Making

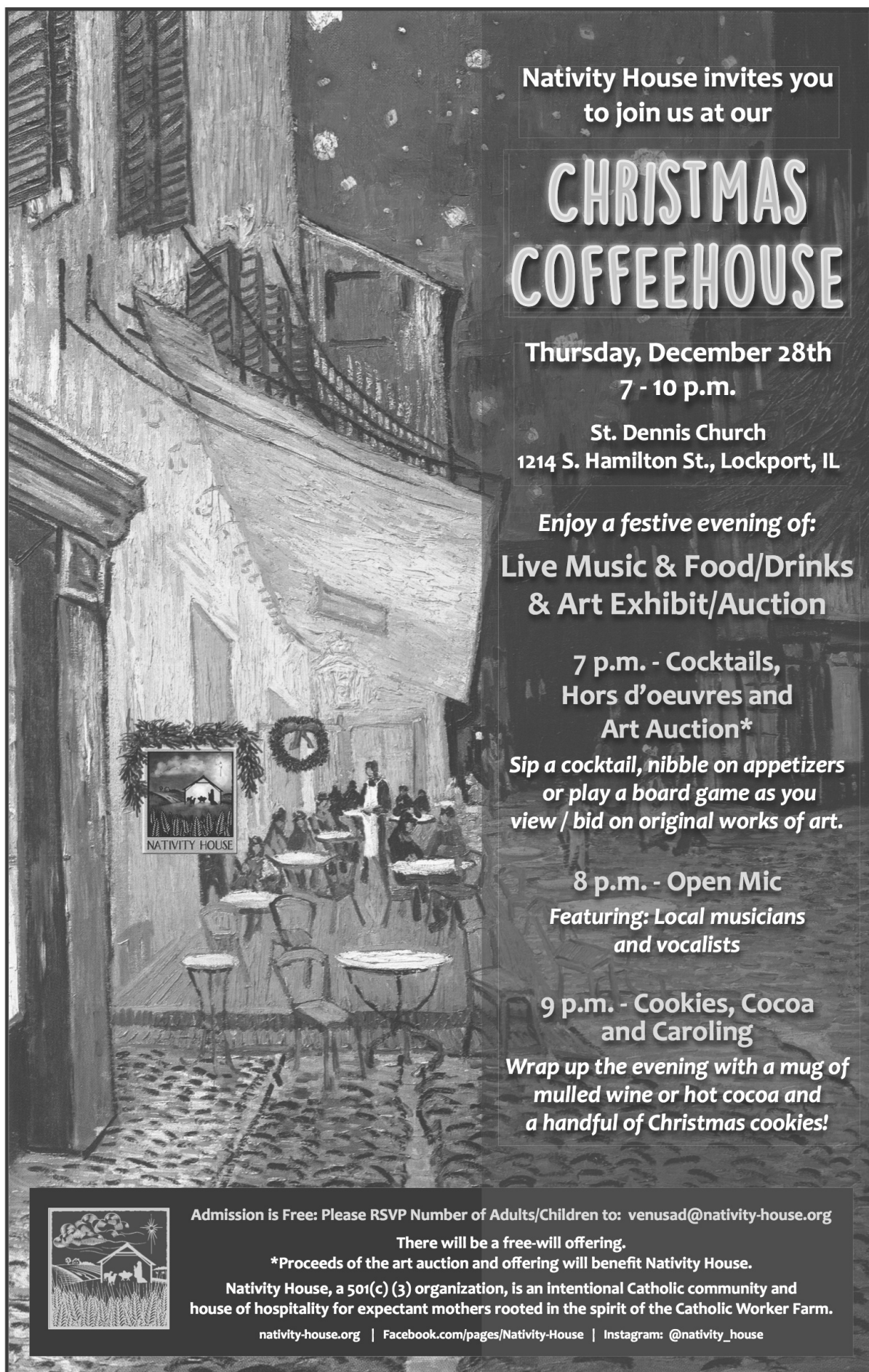
### A Difference?

By Sr. Emily Brabham, OSF

This is a question that is asked repeatedly both out loud and to ourselves when we are involved with direct service. Am I making a difference? Does it even matter? The quick answer to that is yes! Often our own desire to make the world a better place motivates us to direct service. This service in turn appeases our conscience and makes us inevitably feel better about ourselves. Aren't I great? I spent these two hours doing something I wouldn't normally do with people I wouldn't normally talk to! This difference is superficial and actually benefits the person doing the serving. Often you hear teachers say that their students taught them more than they taught their students.

It is often said about service, "we don't do it because of who they are, we do it because of who we are." This statement is a false dichotomy. In reality, if we are living the teaching of human dignity, we are doing it because of who they are, a beloved child of God. If we are to truly be in communion with one another, it involves the messiness of relationship. Relationships are what matters. When someone is experiencing great suffering, sometimes the only thing we can do is suffer with them. That is the authentic expression of relationship. We can't fix it, yet we can be present. Addressing underlying issues that cause systemic injustices is what Catholic Social Teaching is all about. Sometimes the suffering has nothing to do with a systemic injustice and all we can do is give the gift of presence. That gift recognizes that that individual is a person of profound worth. It does make a difference, especially to that one person.

*continued on page 7*



Nativity House invites you to join us at our

# CHRISTMAS COFFEEHOUSE

Thursday, December 28th  
7 - 10 p.m.

St. Dennis Church  
1214 S. Hamilton St., Lockport, IL

Enjoy a festive evening of:  
**Live Music & Food/Drinks & Art Exhibit/Auction**

7 p.m. - Cocktails, Hors d'oeuvres and Art Auction\*

Sip a cocktail, nibble on appetizers or play a board game as you view / bid on original works of art.

8 p.m. - Open Mic  
Featuring: Local musicians and vocalists

9 p.m. - Cookies, Cocoa and Caroling  
Wrap up the evening with a mug of mulled wine or hot cocoa and a handful of Christmas cookies!

Admission is Free: Please RSVP Number of Adults/Children to: [venusad@nativity-house.org](mailto:venusad@nativity-house.org)

There will be a free-will offering.  
\*Proceeds of the art auction and offering will benefit Nativity House.

Nativity House, a 501(c)(3) organization, is an intentional Catholic community and house of hospitality for expectant mothers rooted in the spirit of the Catholic Worker Farm.

[nativity-house.org](http://nativity-house.org) | [Facebook.com/pages/Nativity-House](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nativity-House) | Instagram: @nativity\_house

## December

An Advent Meditation  
By Dorothy Day

*On Pilgrimage, 1948*

The winter before Tamar was born, we lived in a little apartment on West Street looking out over the Hudson River docks which was as sun-filled as the chapel in which I meditated. And on the doors of that little apartment, down the street from St. Christopher's Church, in an apartment over a tavern, there were those holy words enclosed and tacked upon the doorpost inside that house. I was strangely

moved when it was explained to me by a Russian Jew, a Communist, what it meant. I understand one can find many an apartment in New York, and doubtless in many of our cities with their large Jewish populations, with such small metal containers, hanging unnoticed by the door frame. I feel like going to one of the Hebrew stores on the East Side and purchasing one so that hereafter, always, it may hang on the door of my house. We need these reminders.

When the world is too much with us, how wonderful to think on these things, to let the mind rest on these things, to rejoice in these

words: God is Light, Infinite Beauty, Goodness, "for there is no good save only God."

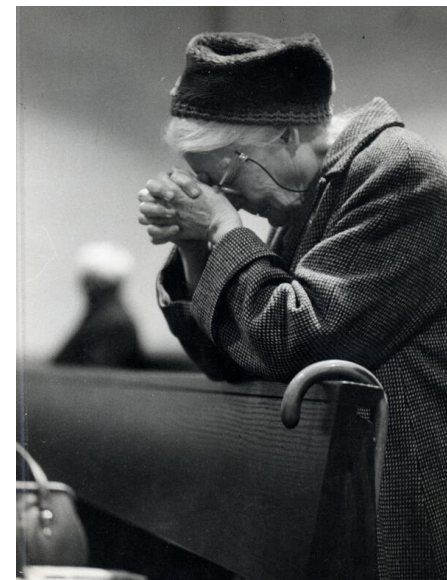
One very dreary, dark morning a year ago, when the dark, cold mist hung like a slime over the streets and tenements around Mott Street, I had been at Mass down at Transfiguration Church, where there was a mission going on. The priest gave a very good homily on the commandment "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Each day he was talking on the commandments, one by one.

In his talk he said that any murmuring against God could be included in the violation of this commandment. He talked of "acceptance" of the will of God in whatever the day brought forth. His talk emphasized the virtue of abandonment to Divine Providence. He even brought in the weather.

And yet as I left the church and stopped to exchange some words with a neighbor, my first words were "Miserable weather, isn't it?" I was immediately conscious of my lapse and laughed at myself as I went down the street.

But it is true that most of our complaining can be construed as thoughtless complaining against God and His Providence. I remember reading once in Romain Rolland that we Western people have lost the beautiful quality of acceptance. Many writers on the East have talked of the philosophical calm and "acceptance" of the Eastern, the Oriental, in the face of heat and cold, disaster and suffering.

Cynically, our Westerner may say that is why they do nothing about poverty and filth and disease. Many of our soldiers were



disgusted rather than pitiful at the poverty they saw everywhere, as though it came of choice and sloth. I have heard them express themselves so in regard to our own South. Certainly we Westerners have poverty, filth, and disease side by side with our wealth and comfort. I do not think much of that wealth and comfort, that shining civilization of gadgets and electric lights and skyscrapers, radio and movies. There was the ancient city of Ur out of which Abraham came. I like to turn my thoughts back to Memphis, that great city of Egypt, and Babylon, whose walls extended for forty miles in circumference. And there the Jews sat and wept when they remembered Zion, Jerusalem the golden, so many times razed to the ground.

"Praise the Lord, O my soul. Let all that is within me praise His holy name."

No matter what happens, it is possible to praise, and it is impossible to praise God without that swelling of joy within the breast.

And people! What about people – the evil that men do? I think of Sister Peter Claver and her saying that women's job is to love.

*continued on page 5*

### *Easy Essays: Share Your Wealth*

by Peter Maurin (1877-1949)



***God wants us to be our brother's keeper.***

***To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to instruct the ignorant, at a personal sacrifice, is what God wants us to do.***

***What we give to the poor for Christ's sake is what we carry with us when we die.***

***Jean-Jacques Rousseau says: "When man dies he carries in his clutched hands only that which he has given away."***

One summer Sister Peter Claver was rebuilding an old farmhouse over in Jersey which was going to be used as a retreat house for Negroes. The place was a wreck – it had not been used for years – and there was work to do in roofing it, painting it, [and] repairing it, and Sister had no money. She came to the Catholic Worker [house] and asked if anyone wanted to work for God. She had to beg for every scrap of paint, shingle, and lumber she put into it, getting what she needed week by week.

Two of our men volunteered. Both of them were men who drank, one steadily, the other periodically. John, who drank steadily, went out to Jersey for the summer and never touched a drop for the months he was there. Hugh went out and worked hard, but again and again was tempted and fell. In addition to his other work, he carved a huge beam which separated the sanctuary from the pews in the room they made into a chapel, and he made a crucifix. He had learned these crafts at the Catholic Worker house.

Sister never became discouraged in her loving charity. She loved these men and brought out the best in them. I've been inclined to attribute that loving warmth of Sister Peter Claver to the fact that she is half-Jewish and half-Irish. It is in her nature to be warm and loving, to see the good in others, I argue to myself. But true it is, she forgives seventy times seven, she sees always the good in the other, she sees a man as made in the image and likeness of God, a temple of the Holy Ghost, the brother of Christ.

Oh, the joy there is in that warmth and love. Bernanos wrote, "Every particle of Christ's divine charity is today

more precious for your security – for your security, I say – than all the specie in the vaults of the American government."

Advent is a time of waiting, of expectation, of silence. Waiting for our Lord to be born. A pregnant woman is so happy, so content. She lives in such a garment of silence, and it is as though she were listening to hear the stir of life within her. One always hears that stirring compared to the rustling of a bird in the hand. But the intentness with which one awaits such stirring is like nothing so much as a blanket of silence.

Be still. Did I hear something?

Be still and see that I am God.

Zundel, in *Our Lady of Wisdom*, has some beautiful passages on silence:

Do we understand at last that action must be born in silence, and abide in silence, and issue in silence, and that its power must be an emanation and the radiation of silence, since its sole aim is to make men capable of hearing the Word that silently reverberates in their souls?

All speech and reasoning, all eloquence and science, all methods and all psychologies, all slogans and suggestions are not worth a minute of silence in which the soul, completely open, yields itself to the embrace of the Spirit.

In solitude Christ speaks to the heart, as a modest lover who embraces not His beloved before all the world.

In silence we hear so much that is beautiful. The other day I saw a young mother who said, "The happiest hour of the day is that early morning hour when I lie and listen to the baby practicing sounds and words. She has such a

gentle little voice."

St. James says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." And how much more women need this gift of silence. It is something to be prayed for. Our Lady certainly had it. How little of her there is in the Gospel, and yet all generations have called her blessed.

Behold, how small a fire, how great a forest it kindles. And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity. The tongue is placed among our members, defiling the whole body, and setting on fire the course of our life, being itself set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird and serpent and the rest is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But the tongue no man can tame – it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With it we bless God the Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made after the likeness of God. [James 3:5-9]

To love with understanding and without understanding. To love blindly, and to folly. To see only what is lovable. To think only on these things. To see the best in everyone around, their virtues rather than their faults. To see Christ in them.

Many people think an examination of conscience is a morbid affair. Péguy has some verses which Donald Gallagher read to me once in the St. Louis House of Hospitality. (He and Cy Echele opened the house there.) They were about examination of conscience. There is a place for it, he said, at the beginning of the Mass. "I have sinned in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault." But after you get done with it, don't go on brooding about it; don't keep thinking of it. You wipe your feet at the door of

the church as you go in, and you do not keep contemplating your dirty feet.

Here is my examination at the beginning of Advent, at the beginning of a new year. Lack of charity, criticism of superiors, of neighbors, of friends and enemies. Idle talk, impatience, lack of self-control and mortification towards self, and of love towards others. Pride and presumption. (It is good to have visitors – one's faults stand out in the company of others.) Self-will, desire not to be corrected, to have one's own way. The desire in turn to correct others, impatience in thought and speech.

The remedy is recollection and silence. Meanness about giving time to others and wasting it myself. Constant desire for comfort. First impulse is always to make myself comfortable. If cold, to put on warmth; if hot, to become cool; if hungry, to eat; and what one likes – always the first thought is of one's own comfort. It is hard for a woman to be indifferent about little material things. She is a homemaker, a cook; she likes to do material things. So let her do them for others, always. Woman's job is to love. Enlarge Thou my heart, Lord, that Thou mayest enter in.



## A Reflection on Care of Creation

By Rachel Seiberlich

Creation is such a beautiful and special gift given to us through Christ. Everything is unique, and everything seems to be in abundance. In a world that is beginning to favor single-use items out of convenience, it is becoming increasingly important to remember that these resources are not unlimited, and that the resources we have can be used in a variety of ways.


In September, I visited the Nativity House with a group from Lewis University. This group is leading a retreat known as Catalyst in January. Catalyst is a social justice retreat that helps students become aware of social justice topics from both a global and local scale. The goal of this retreat is to help its participants realize actions they can take to be catalysts of change in their communities.

To prepare for leading this retreat, our small group is learning about and reflecting on the Catholic Social Teachings. There are seven principles, but we are focusing primarily on preserving human dignity, our rights and responsibilities as Catholics, and care of creation. While all three of these principles are clearly being lived out at the Nativity House, the one that stood out to me the most was care of creation.

According to the United States Council of Catholic Bishops' website, care of creation is described as: "Respect for human life means respecting all of God's creation. We must re-engage with our environment and take responsibility for it; live sustainably, live so that there are enough resources for everyone." The Nativity House promotes sustainable living in countless

ways. One of these ways is by having a community garden, where people can buy a share of the garden and then grow and keep their own fruits and vegetables. Community gardens are incredibly beneficial. These gardens provide easy access to fruits and vegetables, promotes community between the gardeners who share the land, reduces food miles (the fuel used to transport food from producer to consumer), and encourages composting.

Another way the Nativity House lives sustainably is by being conscientious in the kitchen. While we were preparing lunch together, we were aware of what could be recycled, what could be composted, what should be thrown away (there wasn't much!), and lastly, the amount of water that was being used. No one ever left the water running, cloth towels were used instead of paper towels, and almost all of the scraps we had were added to the compost bin.

Seeing the community garden and preparing lunch at the Nativity House was an enlightening experience for me. It showed me how easily sustainable living can be incorporated into daily life, and how simple it truly is. No major lifestyle changes are needed to take better care of creation, only small decisions and a commitment to those decisions are needed to make a difference. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to witness the ways that the Nativity House lives simply and takes care of creation, and I hope to not only live similarly, but to also tell about this experience to others while on Catalyst. 

*"Creation is such a beautiful and special gift given to us through Christ. Everything is unique, and everything seems to be in abundance."*

*Rachel is a student at Lewis University. She visited Nativity House for a service day as part of her formation to become a Catalyst retreat leader for her peers.*

## Solidarity

By Latimer Ferrel

I believe that we all are called to create a just world. Nativity House is unique in that it offers accommodations for mothers for a good amount of time. They have a quaint housing model that emphasizes communal living. They take on a few single mothers who are unable to find the support they need. The women are asked to identify key goals they feel they have to meet to feel comfortable enough to take care of themselves. The staff helps them out with their goals, and once they have completed them- they leave the Nativity House stronger, and better. These people who really have no personal obligation to take on these mothers show how much goodness can be created through these types of endeavors.

Several other volunteer groups come by, Lewis' Catalyst leaders included, to help out with expansion and maintenance. I have only been to the Nativity House a couple times, but I think that it offers a glimmer of concentrated hope every time I do come volunteer. This time around we were tasked with bonfire duty. It involved taking up some of the remaining

branches that laid in the front lawn, and bringing them around to the back. Along with that we also moved some fences to the outskirts of the property to make room for the goats. Afterwards we went into the kitchen, where their trademark vegetarian chili was being prepared.

It was during the discussion that followed that I began to piece together this moment in time with the grander scope of what solidarity meant. Nativity House is just a house with open doors; they are meant to shelter and support individuals who don't have a strong enough support system in their lives. But what really gets me inspired is that around the world there are safe havens for disadvantaged people. It is this type of behavior that creates hope for the world. To take on the struggles that another person is having, and making them your own requires empathy, kindness, and a resolve to make the world a better place. Our individual actions are merely droplets falling into the flow of time, but that does not mean that they cannot have profound effects.

## Solidarity

*continued from page 4*

Accumulated acts of kindness are the catalyst for creating a more just, a more perfect, and kinder society. The Nativity House is a reminder of how Catholic Social Teachings are merits progressed by continued good acts.



*Latimer Ferrel is a student at Lewis University. He came to Nativity House as a volunteer as part of his formation to become a Catalyst student retreat leader.*


## Am I Making

## A Difference?

*continued from page 3*

Empathy, if practiced more, is contagious. Imagine a world where we could be empathetic to each person we encounter. That takes practice and would transform the world. But what about right now? We, as a community locally, nationally, and globally, just aren't there yet. So does it make a difference? There's that common saying, "I cannot change the world as one person, but I can change the world for one person." Sometimes the one world we need to change is our own. Transformation is difficult and lengthy. If we are truly transformed, our presence to individuals at any given time does matter, especially to that person.

Direct service meets the needs of an organization, group of people, or of an individual. This act does not absolve us, or our consciences, of what it means to make the world a better place. That moment of service must be allowed to

transform us into a people of compassion that make service a habit. If you are reading this, I am most likely preaching to the choir. So to close, I'd like to affirm each of you for all you do for the community. For helping make our community one of unity, for supporting the marginalized, and for giving your gift of presence to the Nativity House. This Catholic Worker House, in the tradition of Dorothy Day, focuses on what they can do to make that difference even greater. The challenge to each of us then is what can we do to make a greater impact because of Nativity House's example. They do what they can, so what can we do? Let us do all that we can in our little corner of the world. With great love, that impact circles outwards and has the power to change the globe. I close with the traditional Franciscan greeting, wishing each of you Peace and All Good! 

---

*Sr. Emily Brabham, OSF is the director of Campus Ministry at Lewis University.*

---

## Our Lady of Guadalupe

*continued from the back page*

back and as I was walking, I realized that my shoelace was untied. I simply stepped aside to tie my shoelace, and as I got up, there that fellow sister was, right in front of me. I simply smiled and began to share with her my heart, how sorry I had been for not being a true sister in Christ and I asked her to forgive me for not being the best version of myself toward her. It was then that I realized the power of a Mother's love for her children, especially the love of the Mother of God. The words of Our Lady echoed, "what else do you wish?"

Again, we may not have the impact St. Juan Diego had, but we are constantly called to be witnesses of God's love to those around us, with the guidance of Our Lady.

Most recently, about four months ago to be exact, I along with my husband received the Sacrament of Marriage. Prior to our marriage I would draw to Our Lady for guidance and peace, because of the Woman that she is, I knew I would find myself under her loving protection as I entrusted my vocation to Her. Her words would always speak to me whenever I became impatient with God's timing, "Are you not happily within my fold?" Now through the power of the Sacrament my husband and I both draw to her intercession as these seven years of our dating relationship and now four months of our marriage unfold- I look back and see her gentle hand guiding us as her children.

Together my husband and I have experienced the gentle lovingness of Our Lady of Guadalupe in our marriage. During the month of October we lost our little one of nine weeks to miscarriage. Again, the words of Our Lady echoed a message of maternal compassion; "I am the merciful Mother, the Mother of all of you who live united in this land, and of all mankind, of all those who love me, of those who cry to me, of those who seek me, of those who have confidence in me. Here I will hear their weeping, their sorrow, and will remedy their misfortunes." We very much grieved the loss of our baby, but at the same time we were able to surrender our child to its Creator. Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of unborn children,

so patiently reminded us that all things must return to God the Father. To this day, we give God the glory for permitting us to experience parenthood and know that God's plans and timing are ultimately perfect.

St. Juan Diego was a simple and humble man. We too are ordinary people, though God is calling us to live extraordinary lives. Let the power of God shine amidst any circumstance and let us ask Our Lady to walk with us. As the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe approaches, my prayer today is for all to know God's presence in our lives and for the grace to ask for the guidance of Our Lady no matter what stage we are in as we walk with Christ. Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us. Know of my prayers.

Your sister in Christ,

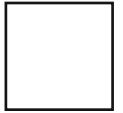
Elena 

---

*Elena is a dear friend of the Nativity House community and a frequent volunteer. Thank you for all you do!*



## THE VISITATION



*In this issue:*

- **Your Holy Family**
- **A Reflection on Catholic Social Teaching**
- **A Reflection on Care of Creation**
- **Solidarity**
- **Am I Making a Difference?**

Nativity House  
17141 W. 143rd St.  
Lockport, IL 60441

You could win this work of art, painted by a Nativity House intern, at our Christmas Party Art Auction, Dec. 28!

### Our Lady of Guadalupe

by Elena Ibarra

“Let not your heart be disturbed... Am I not here, who is your Mother? Are you not under my protection? Am I not your health? Are you not happily within my fold? What else do you wish? Do not grieve nor be disturbed by anything.” These are the words Our Lady of Guadalupe spoke to St. Juan Diego and continues to speak to many of us her children today. These are the exact words that I have clung to throughout my life as a teen, a college student, and now as wife and especially as a mother. Throughout life and in different points of our lives God calls us out of our comfort zone and challenges us to complete trust in his plan and timing. As children of God the first few steps can be exciting, but as soon as fear kicks in we look back and it's our Mother - Our Lady who is walking along side us.

Growing up as long as I can remember my family and I have celebrated Our Lady of Guadalupe on her feast day December 12th. Each year meant something different because it marked my growth in life and my walk with God. I look back and see how much Our Lady has been present and continually saying the same

words she said to St. Juan Diego, “am I not here, who is your Mother?”

In 1531, the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe to the indigenous people of Mexico was the moment that would change the lives of many throughout the world. St. Juan Diego was a simple and humble man, and all he wanted to do was take care of his sick and elderly uncle. Juan Diego, the seer of Guadalupe, was a recently baptised adult convert, aged 57, when Mary appeared to him in 1531 at Tepeyac hill, near Mexico city, formerly the site of a pagan temple. He was a widower, his wife having died in 1529. On his way to Mass on the 9th of December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception at the time, he saw an apparition of a beautiful young girl surrounded by light. She told him of her love for the people of Mexico, and asked that the local Bishop, Juan de Zumárraga, build a temple or church on that spot.

Juan Diego presented himself before the Bishop and explained Mary's request. Based on her words, Juan Diego then sought out the archbishop of Mexico City, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, to tell him what had happened. As



amidst one's own lack of self-belief. The story of San Juan Diego is a testament of the Power of God in our lives and the great power he has given us to be evangelizers of His love like St. Juan Diego. We may or may not have as great an impact as St. Juan Diego did, but in everyday life Our Lady is constantly calling us to seek God and be at peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ around us.

the bishop did not believe Diego, on the same day, Juan Diego saw the Virgin Mary for a second time (the second apparition); she asked him to keep insisting. After the second apparition, St. Juan Diego revealed an image of the Virgin on his cloak, known as the Tilma, which convinced the Bishop to build the church in her honor. Today millions visit the Basilica de Santa Maria de Guadalupe to see the sacred cloth and venerate Our Lady and Her miracle of the Tilma.

It is incredible to think of the people God uses throughout history to speak of his great Love,

As a teenager, I needed Our Lady. It was on her feast day that I came to realize how much I needed God's forgiveness. At that particular moment during the celebration of the Mass I came to realize I was putting down a fellow sister in Christ, instead of uplifting her. In prayer I asked Our Lady of Guadalupe that if this sister were to be put in my path that evening I would ask for her forgiveness.

It's almost humorous how fast God can answer our prayers. After my simple prayer, I remembered I had left something in the back of Church, so I made my way to the

*continued on page 7*