



THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE

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Fragile Sandals

by Antoinette Baier

I dare you to walk a mile in fragile sandals. Sandals that have blood stains and are covered in sand. Sandals with calloused and blistered toes reaching over the top and touching the earth. Sandals with worn leather straps hanging on by a thread. Imagine these fragile sandals and the type of person that may be wearing them. Perhaps it is a baby born of a teenage mom. Or is it a small homeless boy in a frightened refugee family? Maybe it is a prisoner that is sentenced to a violent death.

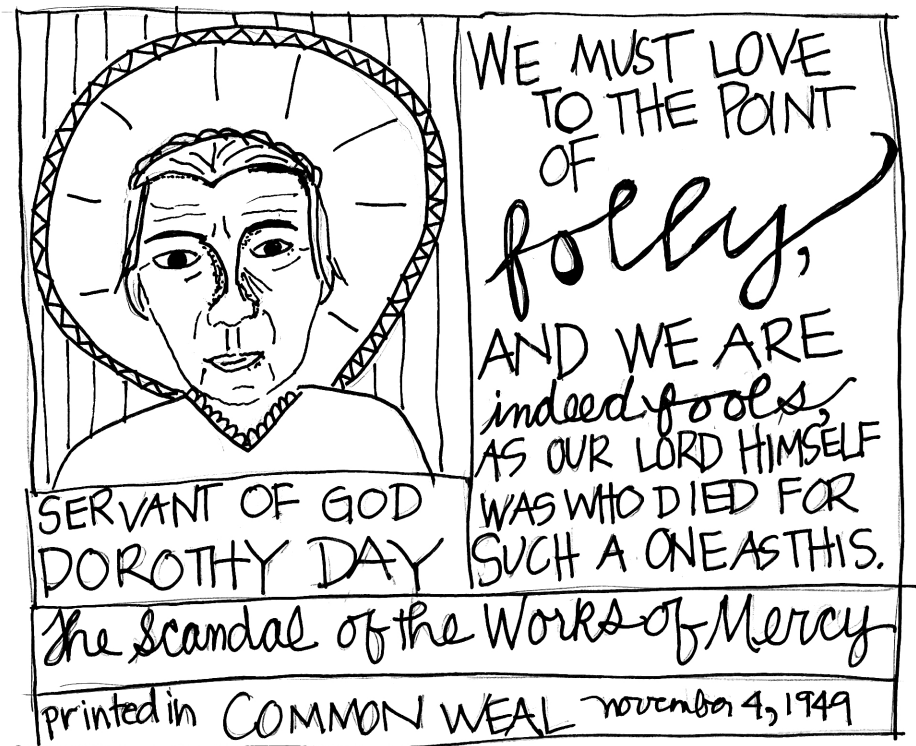
These fragile sandals that are described belong to Jesus and this was His story. These very stale and fragile sandals are on the feet of millions of Christs suffering today. As Christians, God

commands us to live out the Works of Mercy: feed, clothe, give drink, visit, comfort and bury those who are wearing these fragile sandals. And then God takes it a step further by giving us The Great Commission; to go, teach, baptize, obey and make disciples of them. We are called to accompany their fleeing or dragging feet on their terrifying journey.

So, why don't we?

Fear. Fear is the Devil's favorite toy; he easily grabs it and manipulates it to disfigure the face of Christ. Now, I'm not saying that

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Getting it Right in Here and Out There

by Abbot Austin

There are two sides of human experience: the inside and the outside. There is what is in here and what is out there.

“In here” refers to what is or goes on inside myself. It includes thoughts and feelings, wants, wishes, and emotions. Among these, there is a deep longing. There is a restlessness inside of us that the saints have noted. Perhaps most famously, St. Augustine spoke of it, saying that our hearts are restless until they rest in God.

How do I answer this restlessness, this lack of satisfaction that is in here, inside myself? One way -- the wrong way -- is by becoming

self-centered. I just care about myself, about answering the desires I have, and I forget about what's out there.

But this doesn't work. We cannot satisfy what is in here, unless we learn to deal correctly with what is out there. Said another way: to get things right in here, you have to get things right out there.

Our human nature itself testifies to this. Our eyes and other senses are directed out there to the world around us. Also is our intellect -- it looks out there and scans the

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Slavery is Not Dead

by Erik Olson

Erik wrote this after reflecting on a roundtable at NH entitled Slavery is not dead: A conversation on Human Trafficking on January 16 2020.

According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, in the United States, there have been over 62,000 cases of confirmed human trafficking in just over the last ten years. In the over 4,585 cases reported last year, 3,566 were victims of sex trafficking, 525 were for labor trafficking and 494 were not specified. Venues for labor trafficking included agriculture, restaurants, and domestic work while venues for sex trafficking included massage

parlors, escort services, and pornography sets. One third of trafficking victims were under the age of 18. Women made up the vast majority of cases and citizens and foreigners were surprisingly about as likely to be victims. This is strictly confirmed cases in the United States. Globally, there are an estimated 20-40 million trafficked persons. An estimated 20% of that figure is sex trafficking alone.

The phrase “human trafficking” softens what is more accurately described as “human consumption.” Part of the demand

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Letter from the Directors

Dear Friends of Nativity House,

I am writing from the Nativity House dining room table on a sunny, fair Lenten day. I have views of our dormant garden, frolicking goats, and insect hunting chickens.

Our Nativity House CSA seedlings have been started in two area greenhouses by friendly volunteers. The hope of planting seeds in the dead of winter is joyful and comforting. We are looking forward to some new harvest items this year: Jerusalem artichokes, currants, potatoes, and rhubarb to name a few! Last year's growing season and garden community was abundant. Many of our member families will be joining us again for another growing season. As always we are hoping for 2-3 new member families this year.

Our friendly beekeeper and farm expert, Erik Olson, has just confirmed that our beehive has survived the winter. We will be expanding our apiary this year from one hive to 4. We will also have goat kids this spring. Nativity House will be the land of milk and honey this summer for sure!

Some other very exciting news is that Nativity House welcomed our sixth baby to the community. Brayden Michael was born on January 30 at 10:36pm. He weighed in at 7 pounds 2 ounces and 21 inches long. Mom and baby are doing well. Your prayers for single mothers braving motherhood are greatly appreciated.

In January we hosted a roundtable discussion raising awareness of Human Trafficking. Sr. Peggy Quinn, Franciscan Sister from Joliet led us in a conversation around notions of how our hearts and minds need change so as to create a world where human trafficking is not an epidemic. In February, Nativity House hosted a viewing of the new Dorothy Day documentary by Martin Doblemeir, *Revolution of the Heart*. These community conversations are always rich.

We are looking forward to welcoming new staff over the next few months. If you know anyone who would like to join us in intentional community, farming and supporting expectant mothers send them our way!

Peace, love, and prayers to you and yours,

Venus & Justin Wozniak

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

Past issues are online at:

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

About Nativity House

Nativity House serves as a house of hospitality 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

Postal mail should be addressed to:

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

We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

Fragile Sandals

these aren't real fears. I fear my family and I getting physically hurt. Others fear their job security. Many are afraid of offending their family and friends. Everybody fears war. And some are afraid to lose their comfortable lifestyle. All of these are real. When Catholic Worker Founder and Servant of God Dorothy Day was giving advice to her friend that had her wallet stolen by a homeless man she had helped for the day, Dorothy said this, "But these things happen for our discouragement, for our testing. We are sowing the seed of love, and we are not living in the harvest time. We must love to the point of folly, and we are indeed fools, as Our Lord himself was who died for such a one of this. We lay down our lives too when we have performed so painfully thankless an act, for our correspondent is poor in this world's goods. It is agony to go through such bitter experiences, because we all want to love, we desire with a great longing to love our fellows, and our hearts are often crushed at such rejections." The reality is, such things or maybe even worse things are going to happen...but it should not stop us.

There is another type of fear that many experience. It is the fear that they are not equipped, that they cannot possibly have the tools or words to change someone's life. This is another lie that Satan masterfully advances. But our God reminds us in Jeremiah 1:7-8 to "...not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you." With the Holy Spirit living inside you, you can not only move mountains,

but also repair fragile sandals. From conception to natural death, it is our allegiance to God to take care of the least of these. Dorothy Day, the same person who said, "Everything a baptized person does every day should be directly or indirectly related to the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy," also had an abortion. Dorothy has worn fragile sandals herself and by God's grace and mercy was able to turn her life around and return the favor to so many. As Catholics, we must take a stand to be pro-life. Pro-life does not end at birth. Pro-life is taking care of a person their whole life. Through valleys and over mountains, in mud and at the border, locked up, hospitalized, or sleeping in their car. These are the fragile sandals that Jesus wore, that Christs are still wearing.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) there are 125,000 babies that will be aborted today. Yale University proved there are no less than 150 million people that are homeless today. AP News says that around 700 people will die of gun violence throughout the world today. United Nations research suggests 30 million people are refugees today. SOS Children's Villages estimates there are 153 million orphans today. These insanely large numbers are unfathomable. What is even worse is that they're not numbers, they are all individual people, people God created in His image with a soul and a purpose to know, love, and serve Him. Pope Francis and I agree, these are all pro-life issues. They are the complete opposite of Works of Mercy, they are Works of War: seizing food supply, destroying homes, scattering families,

inflicting wounds, contaminating water, and killing the living.

However God is calling you to fight these injustices, say yes. Write protest signs and participate in the March for Life. Befriend a homeless student at your school and have them over for dinner. Adopt. Volunteer to help a refugee apply for a job. Raise saintly children and immerse yourself in a radically holy marriage. Christians need to show the world that we see Christ in all these people wearing Jesus' fragile sandals. Bravely be pro-life, in a world and country that is not.

Because of the Lord's persistence, humor and might, He has chosen my husband and me to host homeless/refugee families. We are newly recognized as a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality, called Sacred Tent. This is our pro-life call to action. As your

sister in Christ, I ask, what is yours?

We cannot let fear stop us from acting upon the Works of Mercy. God is so in love with you that he will not let anything harm you. He promises joy, peace and best of all, the Kingdom of Heaven when you live out the Beatitudes. So, I dare you, be brave, fall in love with Christ, and restore a pair of fragile sandals.



Toni Baier is a wife to one, mother to three (for now), and a chicken mom to four. She is a nurse, parishioner at Holy Trinity in Westmont and a Catholic Worker who is on an adventure to fall more deeply in love with Christ.

On God's Love for all Creatures

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH: HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

...For when God wished to create the world he bent down in the tenderest love and foresaw every need, just like a father preparing an inheritance for his son. In this way he carried out all his works in a great burning fire of love. Thus all creatures in every species and form acknowledge their creator, because LOVE is the PRIMAL STUFF from which every creature was made...

written in a letter to ABBOT ADAM of FEBRACH 1166AD

St. Gianna Beretta Molla *continued from page 8*

then suddenly bed rest for bleeding, I made the decision to name our baby girl Gianna. I wanted to entrust her to my friend. I prayed daily for God to help me trust despite the way I was feeling inside-afraid. A neighbor came by one day shortly after we had decided on a name while I was on bedrest, and gave me a St. Raphael the Archangel holy card. I read the card out loud, "Raphael, medicine of God". That's when I knew her name would be Gianna Rafaela. A week later on September 28, I was rushed into an emergency csection for a placental abruption. I didn't even hold or see Gianna for 24 hours postop because of both of our conditions, it was one of the worst moments of my life. I begged the staff to bring her to me and they finally did. There was so much relief when I finally held my child in my arms, and knew she was with me.

Things didn't get easier after little Gianna was born, there were quarantines before surgery and after. There were more appointments and echocardiograms and hospital admissions. I had my own recovery to do from a traumatic delivery, and then at 3 months her open heart surgical repair. Looking back I know the only way we made it through as a family during that time was our faith in God and our special saint. St. Gianna is quoted in her biographies as telling her husband before she died, "Pietro, I was already over there (heaven) and do you know what I saw? Some day I will tell you. But because we were so happy, we were too comfortable with our marvelous babies, full of health, and grace,

Easy Essays:

What Makes Man Human

by Peter Maurin
(1877-1949)

To give and not to take

that is what makes man human.

To serve and not to rule

that is what mans man human.

To help and not to crush

that is what makes man human.

To nourish and not to devour

that is what makes man human.

And if need be

to die and not to live

that is what makes man human.

Ideals and not deals

that is what makes man human.

Creed and not greed

that is what makes man human.



JOIN US IN THE GARDEN!

Nativity House - Growing Season 2020

workdays begin Saturday, March 28, 9-11am



WHY JOIN A CSA?

(Community Supported Agriculture)

- Go green! Fresh, local, organic produce grown by you
- Save money! \$330/220 for fresh fruits & veggies (mostly organic) May - September
- Make new friends! You will quickly find that there is no better way to grow your food except in a community!

FOR MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT VENUS
VENUSAD@NATIVITY-HOUSE.ORG

**\$330 for a share;
\$220 for a 1/2 share**

carrots * raspberries * onions * apples *
spinach * green beans * eggs * tomatoes *
asparagus * popcorn * cucumbers *
pumpkins * strawberries * Lettuce * basil *
summer squash * cilantro * rhubarb *
honey * goat milk (NEW) * and more

**SIGN UP FOR THE 2020 SEASON
NO LATER THAN JUNE 1**



with all the blessings of heaven, they sent me down here, to suffer still, because it is not right to come to the Lord without enough suffering." I think back on her words, and how it relates to so many of the anxieties, sorrows and goodbyes we have had in our own lives. The hope of Heaven and God's awareness of this hard work of living His plan for us, makes a little more sense with love and Heaven behind it.

This time of year, I will always think of two saints. St. Valentine and St. Gianna, for different but similar reasons. I will always think of hearts, and how my heart changed too, because of my daughter's broken and beating

heart. And the gift of God's saints to us, to walk alongside us in suffering.



Nikki has worked in OB as an RN for 17 years. She has been married to Jose for 15 years and they have 5 children.



NATIVITY HOUSE SEEKS STAFF

*Are you passionately Pro-Life?
Seeking a year of service?
Eco-justice minded?*

Nativity House is an intentional Catholic community and house of hospitality for expectant mothers rooted in Catholic Social Teaching in Lockport, IL.

We are seeking interns!
Full time and part time positions are available.

Job Description

- Living at Nativity House and participating in Intentional Community
- Monthly Stipend, Room and Board, Health Care Benefits (for full-time staff)

Tasks include

- **Hospitality:** Caring for the specific needs of 1–2 guest moms
- **Community Living Tasks:** managing house, cooking rotation for community meals, community laundry
- **Community Farm:** participation in community work days, caring for animals – chickens, goats, cats, dog
- **Newspaper Editor:** formatting, writing, delivering our quarterly publication *The Visitation*
- **Community Events & Fundraising:** help plan 2 fundraisers per year; help plan community events Holy Mass & Roundtable Discussions
- **Spirituality:** participate in morning & evening prayer; commitment to personal spiritual growth

*For inquiries contact
Venus Wozniak
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Getting it Right in Here and Out There

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world about us, trying to make sense of it and to understand it.

Our faith also teaches us that we cannot neglect the world out there, if you are going to be satisfied in here. Consider the gospel story we just heard of the man with the withered hand. I imagine him keeping that withered hand close to himself. But Jesus tells him to stretch it out and that's how it is healed. Just so, we find healing within us when we stretch out to engage properly what is outside us.

Thus, you have to stretch out to God. Now, relating to God is a special case, for not only is He out there, but also He is in here. God is closer to us than we are to ourselves, as St. Augustine says. But God is also out there as the transcendent Other. We have to go out to Him by loving Him rightly, if we are to be satisfied in here.

Among the things out there that we must deal with correctly are other human beings. Dealing with them rightly is an especially important part of satisfying what is inside us.

This is indicated by the second greatest commandment, to love

your neighbor as yourself. It points to what I'm trying to say.

The commandment contains two loves: the love of the neighbor and the love of oneself. The love of the neighbor brings us out there. Loving oneself concerns what is in here. And both go together. The commandment speaks of an identification between myself and my neighbor, so that loving my neighbor and loving myself are related.

We can understand this commandment to mean that I must first love myself before I can love my neighbor. That speaks an important truth. But it is also true that I learn to love myself by learning to love the other. It's by learning to love the other that I learn to love myself.

So, what we are doing here is loving the other in the womb -- for that child's life is especially under attack. In doing so, we learn to love ourselves more truly.

We can put this in terms of the inherent value of a human being. The baby in the womb has inherent value. Pro-abortion arguments sometimes say that unless the child can survive on its own, that is, be viable, it does not have a right to life. It's as if the child must do something to deserve its value.

But the value of human life is inherent. You don't need to earn it; you have it simply by being human.

Now, if you can see that in the other who is unborn, you can see it in yourself. You might have a hard time recognizing your tremendous worth. You might doubt that you are valuable beyond telling. You might think, "What have I done, to be so valuable? I am not as athletic or as smart as so and so."

But your tremendous worth is not about what you have accomplished. It comes from being a human being. If you can see that the unborn child has this tremendous value even though the child hasn't done anything besides being human, you can see it in yourself. By learning to love the unborn child as having tremendous worth, you learn to love yourself as having tremendous worth. Stretching out in love to the unborn child, you find peace in here.

Or consider the Church's teaching about the death penalty. It should be avoided unless strictly necessary to protect society and the argument is that it's not necessary in our modern society. This teaching is based on the inherent value of the human person. Even when a human being

has done heinous things, he does not lose his value. That value is inherent to being human. It cannot be forfeited by our bad actions.

Loving the criminal also teaches us to love ourselves. Perhaps we have not done a heinous crime, but sometimes we do bad things. In turn, we loathe rather than love ourselves. But no matter what you do, you still have tremendous worth, you are still of great value. Seeing that in the criminal, you can see it in yourself, and love yourself.

The truth be told, you are amazing. You have a value beyond telling. You don't earn that, you can't forfeit it or opt out of it. It belongs to you as a human being. See that in the other and you can see it in yourself. Love it in the other, and so learn to love it in yourself. Stretch out there to the other, and save yourself in here.

This is the culture of life we are trying to build. It brings blessings to the inside and the outside of human experience.



Abbot Austin Murphy is the superior of the Benedictine monastery of St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle, IL.

This year the Lord grants us, once again, a favourable time to prepare to celebrate with renewed hearts the great mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the cornerstone of our personal and communal Christian life.

...Putting the paschal mystery at the center of our lives means feeling compassion towards the wounds of the crucified Christ present in the many innocent victims of wars, in attacks on life, from that of the unborn to that of the elderly, and various forms of violence. They are likewise present in the environmental disasters, the unequal distribution of the earth's goods, human trafficking in all its forms, and the unbridled thirst for profit, which is a form of idolatry.

FROM THE MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE FRANCIS FOR LENT 2020



Slavery is Not Dead

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for human consumption is the belief that all that exists is material or “materialism.” In such a world view, there is simply no such thing as “intrinsic value” or “objective human dignity” because in this analysis, it is all just atoms and chemical reactions. Christ, however, calls the human person the “Imago Dei” and gives him/her intrinsic dignity. The scriptures, and the church, say that the trafficked sex worker, migrant farmer, domestic helper, or porn star are filled with profound intrinsic dignity and that we ought to treat everyone as an “image” of God. In order to confront “human consumption” we need to oppose materialism and understand that our dignity comes from God, being made in his “image”, and not from the declaration of governments or society that may revoke said dignity when convenient.

A consumer “culture” will also inevitably lead to human consumption. A consumer culture is one in which the primary way to celebrate life becomes consuming rather than communing. Christ and his church call us away from consumerism precisely because it leads to human and global exploitation and away from communion with each other and with God. If, as St. Augustine says, “our hearts are restless until they rest in you,” any attempt to fill our infinite desire with finite goods will simply never leave us satisfied and allow us to justify all manner of depravity in an attempt to fill that void. “Human consumption” stops when the desire for consumption itself is satisfied by God alone.

In order to combat human consumption, in all its forms, there is certainly a place for “raising

awareness.” Warning signs that someone is being trafficked include, but are not limited to, the following: not being allowed to go out in public alone, avoiding eye contact, avoiding authority figures/law enforcement, having scripted social interaction, having unexplainable injuries/tattoos, or lacking any official identification documents. Please visit www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign for a complete list. The hotline to report a suspected case is 1-888-373-7888.

There may even be a role for the government with-regards-to policy, policing, and legislation, but I want to go beyond these. The only real solution, as far as I can tell, is a conversion of heart, at the individual level, to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. It makes no sense to condemn corporations for outsourcing labor to countries known for exploitation without taking a look at our own contributions to the demand for ever more and ever cheaper goods.

Our demand for raspberries in January, the latest technology for cheap, and dollar store trinkets, all have labor implications. The movies we watch, songs we dance to, and restaurants named after female anatomy can all contribute to a culture that sees the human person as something ultimately consumable. When sex is used to sell, it is ultimately someone who is sold. While we should never judge persons as they stand before God, we are obligated to judge behavior that ultimately seeks to consume or exploit the dignity of the individual no matter the degree of social approval such action has.

Over the last century, the Popes have condemned many economic-social systems as fundamentally evil because they subordinate the natural rights of the human person to the will of the state or

marketplace, permitting all sorts of exploitation in the name of a perverted sense of freedom. Distributism is an economic model of social justice of which people like G.K. Chesterton spoke highly of while Dorothy Day applied it to her development of the Catholic Worker movement. Essentially, distributism is about living lives of interdependence, while still maintaining the natural rights to personal property and widely distributed means of production. It is therefore not very “efficient” at maximizing GDP. This is why it is so essential to evangelize by living lives of extraordinary love. Such a model works but it simply cannot be imposed.

Society can’t change if individuals don’t. Margaret Thatcher once said, “There is no such thing as society.” She later clarified her meaning when she said, “Society is not an abstraction, separate from the men and women who composed it, but a living structure of individuals, families, neighbors and voluntary associations.” Jesus, despite what many want to think, simply didn’t leave us a national economic plan or preferred style of government. He pointed out where social institutions errored, but didn’t present an alternative at the macro level. His solution to “human consumption” in his own time, and ours, always seems uncomfortably personal. Personal repentance and mastery of our passions.

One Lenten tradition that offers a solution to the problem of human consumption is fasting. The real kind. Not a type of fasting where you “do some thing good instead” or where you give up something you should stop doing anyway but actual traditional fasting whereby one voluntarily, for a time, gives up something good.

The Church has long understood that our reluctance to deny

ourselves everything we want is a major obstacle on the path to holiness. It need not be draconian, but the practice of not giving ourselves what we want, even when it is a good, provides a bulwark of protection against wanton consumerism. The results of rejecting her wisdom are evident in the way we treat the environment and each other.

Another tradition is alms giving. Serious financial sacrifice to causes, preferable with people we actually interact with, loosens the grip of materialism. Finally, prayer is what orients us away from ourselves and onto another, either God himself or our neighbors, which shifts our focus from what we can consume, to one with-whom we can commune.

This is a heavy topic and the full picture can seem rather glib. I am reminded, however, of this. In *The Lord of the Rings*, when all seems lost, Sam muses with Frodo, “How could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad has happened?” But he concludes that, despite the odds, they must continue to go on and continue their mission because of a radical belief that “There is some good in the world, and it’s worth fighting for.” Let us remember the wisdom of hobbits when fighting materialism, consumerism and human consumption.



Erik Olson teaches high school English and is a member of the Nativity House CSA. He also volunteers his time and skill as the Nativity House Beekeeper.



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



St. Gianna Beretta Molla (d. 1962)

Feast: April 28

by Nicole Jaramillo

Wednesday February 14, 2007, St. Valentines Day, I woke up and took a pregnancy test. Alone at home with my 11 month old daughter still in her pajamas I saw the positive result. I don't recall now how I was feeling at that moment then, but I do remember the feelings I had later that summer waiting for what seemed like hours, for the ultrasound technician to finish my 20 week scan.

I had just stepped away from my job as a labor and delivery nurse at a Chicago area hospital to take a new job closer to home in pediatric hospice. It was an eye opening job working in hospice, so many hidden families, with so many children with special needs. They were all working out their lives and loving their kids the best they could, and their fragile children were doing the same. I thought of them while I listened to my Ob/gyn tell me, "It looks like there is some narrowing of the pulmonary artery in the baby's heart, they need to recheck it in another ultrasound, don't worry though,

it's probably nothing." At that moment I didn't know how to respond, I thought of my patients, their mountains much bigger than mine, I thought of St. Valentine's Day, of hearts, and wondered what God was telling me. I went home worried, but held onto the doctor's words, "it's probably nothing".

I had to wait till I was around 30 weeks to have my follow up fetal echo, and that was when my husband and I found out that our daughter most likely had a complex congenital heart defect called Tetralogy of Fallot. Phrases like "quality of life" and "open heart surgery" came up in our discussions with the team taking care of me and baby, it was agonizing wondering what the future held for my child.

At that point I had been familiar with St. Gianna Molla, who had just been canonized as a saint in 2004, with a feast day of April 28, the day she died. I loved her story. Gianna was a deeply spiritual Catholic woman and pediatrician in Italy. She was

also a married wife, and mother to 3 little children. During her days on earth, Gianna was busy with life, work, volunteering, and heroically doing it all while having very uncomfortable pregnancies. While pregnant with her fourth pregnancy, she was diagnosed with a myofibroma of the uterus. Gianna had the option to terminate or have a hysterectomy to treat her disease. Courageously, knowing all the risks as a physician, she chose neither. She asked her surgical colleagues to instead attempt surgery to remove the fibroma while not risking her pregnancy. In fact, she commanded her husband and physicians, "to spare the life of the baby at all costs." They did as she asked, and surgery was successful. She delivered her daughter to term, but complications of sepsis from the earlier surgery arose and she eventually succumbed to them. She was only 39 when she died, leaving her husband widowed with 4 small children.

I knew her intercession had been attributed to many cures involving children, however, my relationship with this saint began to go much deeper than that during the rest of my pregnancy. Going forward, I found that carrying around the burden of my child's diagnosis and working in healthcare became a cross that many times I couldn't stand to bear one second more. It felt that there was never respite from



knowing, thinking, and talking to fellow nurses and doctors about details and risks about my child's diagnosis, everyday I was at work. My stress came out in tears and anxiety on a daily basis. To that end, I found a friend who it seemed could empathize in St. Gianna. I read her biography, and her family's recollections of her life. She was not just a mother who decided to make a life saving choice for her child, but she was a working mother, serving her community in the poor, worrying about her own health and her child's, knowing too much as a physician, loving her family, loving life, and loving Jesus. Many times I found myself driving to work exhausted physically and emotionally, and praying out loud, "Gianna if you could do this, so can I, please help me be brave, help me have the strength."

As the weeks rolled on, filled with appointments and more tests and
continued on page 4