

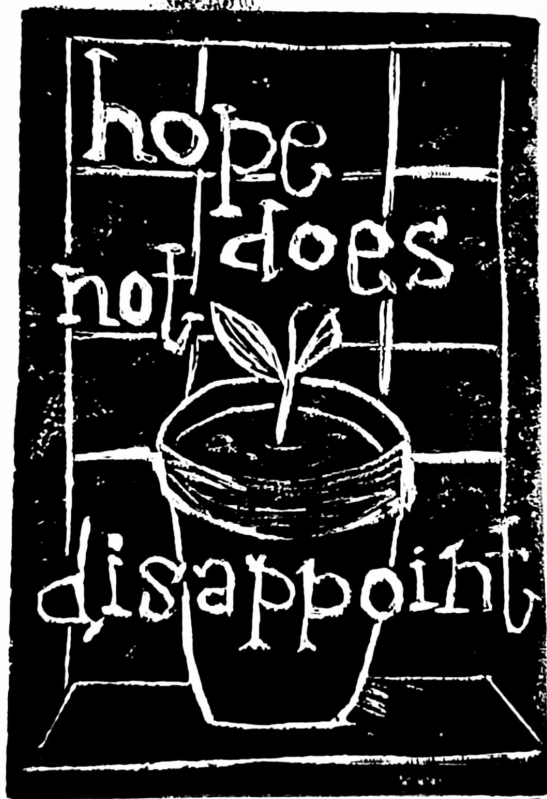


THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE

AUGUST 2025

VOLUME 15 ISSUE 2



Pilgrimage of Hope

by Dennis H. Cremin

This summer as I was reorganizing my office at Lewis University after the busy semester, I came upon a plastic wristband that said in Latin Iubilaeum A.D. MMXXV Peregrinantes in Spem (translation: Jubilee A.D. 2025, Pilgrims in Hope). The wristband is a memento from a January Social Justice Pilgrimage, led by Venus Wozniak from Lewis's Center for Mission and Ministry, Steve Nawara, Professor of Political Science, and myself. Working with the Office of Study Abroad, we recruited 14 students to travel to Italy from January 1 through 11, 2025 to visit Rome and Assisi.

Students on the travel study ranged from first-year students

through one student in his last semester. They had majors in aviation, computer science, and nursing, among others.

We were drawn to Rome, in part, by the Jubilee year. This is a significant Catholic event that occurs every 25 years. It is a period of spiritual renewal to those who visit designated churches and participate in specific religious practices: sacramental confession, holy communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Pope. It also includes the opening of Holy Doors in the four major basilicas in Rome. Pope Francis inaugurated the Jubilee by opening the Holy Door at Saint

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What do You Believe?

by Venus Wozniak

What do you believe?

... in Christ, our life is a mission! We are mission, because we are God's love poured out, God's holiness created in his own image. Mission, then, is our own growth in holiness and that of the whole world, beginning with creation (cf. Eph 1:3-6). The missionary dimension of our Baptism thus becomes a witness of holiness that bestows life and beauty on our world.

Pope Francis to the Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies

June 1, 2018

Do you believe in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth?

I do.

Do you believe that you were made by God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth?

I do.

Do you believe that I was made by God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth?

I do.

These are the baptismal promises that you or your parents, in your honor, espoused on the day of your adoption. The second two are an exposition of what you are actually agreeing to. There are many implications that flow from taking on these beliefs.

The first day of my first trip to Negros Occidental in the Philippines was easily the most challenging. I was part of the leadership team for 21 college students. We had been traveling for over 48 hours with limited sleep. We arrived at our accommodations, a retreat center at the University of St. LaSalle in Bacolod, dropped off our luggage and then packed back into our jeepney for an hour ride to a seaside village where the Diocese of Joliet had built homes over the previous 9 years.

When we arrived in the village, we were greeted with cheers, hugs, kisses, flower wreaths, and flower bouquets. Each missionary was escorted to a small village schoolhouse by a Nanay holding one hand and a child holding the other. Even as an extreme extrovert, this was far outside of my comfort zone. I was absolutely distrustful of this radical hospitality I was experiencing. Could this possibly be sincere?

On my most recent trip to the Philippines, it was after a 4-year hiatus due to the pandemic. Our group was much smaller. We had nine students with us. At the end of our trip, as we were processing the experience and preparing our goodbyes, we were sitting in silence, pondering the question,

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Letter from the Directors

Dear Friends of Nativity House

Greetings from the farm! This steambath of a Midwestern summer has been a challenge for all of us and we hope you all are staying cool. Nativity House is a very busy place in the summer, with many visitors, volunteers, and ongoing projects. We have been racing against the seasons and the weather to keep up with the garden and animal activities. This has been a busy time for guest mom applications, and we have had many calls and a few interviews. We are appreciative of our partner organizations that continue to help these new moms find the resources they need. Hopefully we will see a guest mom move in over the next month.

This was the best ever year for goat kidding, and we now have six new goats. We received a strong showing of support for this, as many volunteers helped us build new summer housing to support the young animals. We built three goat hutches, small temporary shelters to keep the kids isolated from the main yard during their early development. By the fall, we will be able to integrate them back into the full flock. This was a collaboration with many volunteers that helped assemble them, largely from donated scrap materials. The goats seem to love them and spend much of the time there in the shade. Our trees and vines are recovering from last year's cicada cycle. We lost one cherry tree and half of an apple tree, but the fruit this year has more than recovered. We are expecting an exceptional harvest of apples, pears, and grapes very soon.

Over the winter, we hosted events so that people could stay connected to the house. One highlight was a discussion about Venerable Augustus Tolton, an Illinois priest. This was generously led by Brother Michael Phipps, a Christian Brother who was visiting Lewis University. This discussion covered part of the history of Tolton, which is relevant to us living in the Chicago area in which Fr. Tolton served.

We have enjoyed the presence of many college volunteers that have helped with the animals and other outdoor projects here this summer. In particular, Augusta has joined as a part-time intern and jumped in by editing this issue! She filled in as Krista, our full-time intern, attended the Jubilee of Young People in Rome with Pope Leo XIV. As we continue our intake process here at the house, we ask you to continue to pray for all moms contemplating bringing life into our world. We know that they need more strength and support than any of us can provide.

Peace and all good,

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:

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17141 W. 143rd St.
Lockport, IL 60441

Donations may be made at paypal.me/nativityhouse

We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

Pilgrimage of Hope

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Peter's Basilica, which was built over the tomb of Saint Peter.

When we first discussed pilgrimage with the students, most had only a vague understanding of the term. As we conducted our orientation on campus, we talked about pilgrimage as an activity that almost all cultures engage in. It involves making an intentional journey that usually includes walking long distances to a chosen destination.

One of the best-known pilgrimages is the one to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Hajj attracts well over a million people each year. It is a required religious duty for all physically and financially able Muslims to undertake at least once in their lifetime. Within the Christian tradition, many are familiar with the Camino de Santiago or Way of St. James. It is comprised of a network of pilgrimage routes that lead to the tomb of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. In Japan, a pilgrimage to sacred sites is called *junrei*. It is associated with both Buddhist and Shinto traditions. One of the most well-known is the Shikoku 88 temple pilgrimage, which involved visiting a number of sites. Travelers take this journey for a number of reasons, including religious faith, personal reflection, or physical challenge. A pilgrimage is typically divided into three segments: preparation, journey, and return.

Preparation: Some of the program orientation was pragmatic with information about ATMs, European electricity plugs, and tips to combat jet lag. We also visited Santa Alberta Chapel on the Lewis University campus to "read" the church, stopping first

to analyze the façade. Once we entered, we stopped and examined the relic of John Baptist De la Salle, in this case a small bone fragment in a framed reliquary. De la Salle founded the Brothers of the Christian School in the 17th century. These Christian Brothers, as they are commonly known, sponsor Lewis University. We let the students know that we would see many relics on our pilgrimage. We made our way to the sanctuary and pointed out the lectern (ambo), altar, and tabernacle. We also noted the difference between a cross and a crucifix, which allowed us to discuss the significance of these elements related to the celebration of mass.

Journey: the students quickly bonded on the flight that included a long layover in Germany. They arrived in Rome and transferred by bus to Casa La Salle, which is the "hotel" side of the Generalate – the "mother house" of the Christian Brothers. We made great use of our home base. We had a chance meeting with Br. Hector Hernan Santos Gonzalez, FSC, Vice Chancellor, and Iman Saca, Ph.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs, of Bethlehem University. Dr. Saca discussed the challenges of students getting to campus from nearby Jerusalem to enter the West Bank. We also toured the archive, the Lasallian Museum, and the Sanctuary of De la Salle chapel, which has a large reliquary with most of the saint's remains.

Walking is a key component of pilgrimage. On the first full day in Rome, students sojourned from the Flaminio gate on the north side of Rome to St. Peter's Basilica. Along the way, the pilgrims learned about St. Peter,

Nativity House's 11th Annual
**Farm to Table
 Celebration**
 Saturday, September 6, 2025
 4pm Mass
 5pm Mingle on the Farm
 6pm 5 Course Farm to Table Feast
 7pm Live music & Auction
 Register here
 or visit bit.ly/NHFarmtoTable2025

St. Paul, and St. Agnes, all martyrs, who died for their Christian beliefs. As we made our way, I encouraged the students to "read the historical landscape." This includes an analysis of sites. We learned to really look at the sites and raise questions. What do they see? Are there any interpretive signs – what do they say?

2025 being a jubilee year, we entered through the holy doors of St. Peter's Basilica, Saint Paul's Outside the Walls, and Mary Major. Most students visited Saint John the Lateran on their own. These are the four holy doors in the city. For many students, attending the Epiphany mass on January 6 at St. Peter's Basilica was a highlight. They enjoyed hearing the choir and the prayers

in different languages. The students were delighted to see Pope Francis, may he rest in peace, pushed in a wheel chair up the center aisle greeting the faithful after the mass.

The power of sacred spaces was made evident to me in a separate trip just two weeks later, when I participated in the orientation for Lewis University's LUCE Spring 2025 semester program in Rome. It was a Saturday evening; the students were tired and already full of experiences. We paused for a photograph in front of the larger-than-life sculpture of St. Paul in the entry courtyard. The students were excited to enter through the Holy Door, and as we made our way towards the

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Pilgrimage of Hope

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entrance portal, we joined a group of about 50 people processing behind three priests and two guitar players. As they began to sing, we joined the procession, entered the expansive basilica, and half of our students burst into tears. I saw awe in their faces. Later, upon reflection, some related that they felt a connection to something larger. A few wept openly for 15 or 20 minutes. We were all swept up in this moment - the music, the architecture, and the many steps: it all combined to provide a threshold to the divine.

In the January term, we traveled by train to Assisi and boarded a public bus to Piazza Matteotti. We then walked down into the hill town to learn about St. Francis and St. Clare. It was the natural beauty that first captivated the group. Then, the students learned about the voluntary poverty of the medieval saints, who embraced the marginalized and lived lives inspired by Jesus.

Yet, it was upon visiting Saint Mary Major and the tomb of Blessed Carlo Acutis that the

students were filled with emotion. Carlo was just 15 years old when he died of leukemia, and he will be the first millennial to be canonized later this year. The students viewed his remains through glass panels, looking ashen as they gazed upon a contemporary with his brown curly hair, sneakers, jeans, and hoodie. The students seemed to have a sense of their own mortality. It was one thing to see the 13th century remains of St. Clare, but it was another to see those of a young man who used social media to share his passion for sacred spaces and eucharistic miracles.

Return: The third component of Pilgrimage is about the trip home. What stays with you? How might you have been transformed? For some, the journey sparked a spiritual renewal or a desire to consider the sacred. For others, it was the spirit of adventure, with new ideas, modes of transport, and small purchases. I'm grateful to have walked this pilgrim's way, and I'm wearing the bracelet this summer to be mindful of our shared pilgrimage.



Dennis H. Cremin is Professor of History at Lewis University.

Easy Essays: by Peter Maurin
(1877-1949)

What Makes Man Human

To give and not to take,
that is what makes man human.

To serve and not to rule,
that is what makes 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.



My Summer with Nativity House

by Augusta Harris-Patel

I learned about the Catholic Worker Movement and Nativity House when Venus and I first discussed the possibility of me being an intern for Summer 2024. Long story short, that did not happen. It wasn't the right time. Fast-forward to May 2025, Venus posed the subject again at what felt like the perfect time. I was stressed about what my Summer would look like. I knew I needed a second job, but didn't know where I could work. I accepted the offer immediately, although I can't say I understood what Nativity House really consisted of until I started my internship this Summer.

On my first day, not knowing what to expect, I met Krista and got straight to work with her. I got to know her as we picked cherries and strawberries, some really exciting, new experiences for me. We ended the day with a whole bucket-full of each! A less exciting, but also new experience was cleaning the chicken coop that day. Truly, this internship has provided me with numerous new experiences, from planting seeds to watching mother goats raise their kids. After having the opportunity to explore some of what growing food and caring for animals really entails, I've learned it can be quite a load. It takes the hands of many.

Every single week, through Nativity House, I have been meeting new people. Together, we pull weeds, harvest fruits and vegetables, and do anything else needed for the farm every Saturday morning. The crowd looks a little different every week,

but a recurring theme I've noticed is that everyone comes prepared to work. We work on the farm to feed ourselves and each other.

As we work beside each other, I get to hear about their lives. Their travels, projects, goals, families, and much else. It's been a pleasure getting to know so many different faces and hearing about the pieces of their lives they choose to share. In working together, we come to know and care for each other, and a community is built. Throughout our Saturdays, everyone checks in on each other to see what's new, as is normal, but something I find special is how I hear the people share their expertise with others in need. Advice coming from their professional and personal lives, typically completely unrelated to the regular weed-pulling at hand. Not only are these people sharing their hands and time to feed one another, but they are also sharing their knowledge and experiences to serve each other.

On Tuesdays, we tend to the farm at St. Procopius Abbey. It's much of the same. It takes a community to care for the farm. The crowd is a little different every week. Tasks are split up, but we work together. We check in on each other. We share laughter. We learn about each other. We learn from each other.

I've personally shared concerns with these groups about my health, travel planning, and career. Upon sharing my concerns, it was striking to hear how many people have already been through the same things or have connections that can help, and how ready they are to guide me. I've seen others express completely different concerns, eliciting similar

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My Summer

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responses from these communities. Without being a part of a community, it is too easy to feel alone in our struggles and forget that others understand what's going on in our own lives and are willing to share what they know can help.

Although I wasn't too sure what I was getting myself into when I decided to join Nativity House for the Summer, I find myself honored to serve others and blessed with new connections this internship has brought me. I now understand that at its core, Nativity House is designed to foster community because we need each other's hands and minds.



Augusta Harris-Patel is a summer intern at Nativity House.

Pope Leo

by Carrie Ankeny

"Peace be with all of you." These are the first words Pope Leo XIV greeted the world with on May 8. "Peace be with all of you." Sit with his words for a moment.

Before and during the Conclave there was constant conversation about who the next Pope would be. What country will he be from? What language will he speak? Where will he live? And the list went on. I had to work hard at not joining this rhetoric. I wanted to hold carefully what the conclave is – a very prayerful time and an invoking of the Holy Spirit. I tried to pray with and for our Cardinals as they too were in this space of holy waiting and discernment.

Then, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost O.S.A. stepped onto the Loggia of Blessings as Pope Leo XIV.

Pope Leo XIV is the first American-born Pope. The first Augustinian Pope. He's the first modern Pope to have living siblings. He holds citizenship in Peru. He's fluent in five languages. He's traveled to over 40 countries ministering to God's

people. He's the first Pope to have attended a White Sox baseball game, enjoyed a Chicago pizza, and grabbed a coffee from Wawa in the suburbs of Philadelphia.

Pope Leo was born and raised in Dalton, IL, in 1955. He attended Minor Seminary in high school and studied Mathematics at Villanova University. During this time he discerned a call to the Augustinian order, professing his solemn vows in 1981, and was ordained a year later. He received his theological education at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He served as the Bishop of Chiclayo, Peru for eight years, and one year after was created Cardinal.

The Augustinian order is geared to service of the other, spiritually and materially, bringing to life the first words of St. Augustine's Rule "one mind and heart on the way to God." I earned my master's degree in theology from Villanova University. I never thought I would be able to say, "I attended the same university as the pope." A number of my friends are very close friends of his. We've most likely prayed in the same sacred spaces on campus. We've been formed by the same order. All of this, and more, causes me to pause and reflect – why does this matter? I've realized it invites me to see Pope Leo as a person and acknowledge his humanity. More importantly, it invites me to see Jesus's humanity all the more.

I am still struck by the pictures of then Bishop Prevost in muddy boots, walking through flood waters in a flooded town of Peru, and of him serving food to those affected by the disaster. Is this not what my faith calls me to? To be one with the people of God? If God has called Robert Prevost to serve and love God's people in

such a way, how is God calling me to serve and love God's people? Pope Leo has already demonstrated the importance of imbuing God's love in small ways to everyone we encounter.

Pope Leo has made it clear in just the few months of his papacy, that Christ calls us to care for those in need. He chose the name Leo giving a clear nod to Pope Leo XIII who gifted the Church with his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* on Capitol and Labor in 1861. He's vocalized a number of times concerns surrounding AI. He's begging us to see the humanity in one another. He's begging us to see Christ in one another.

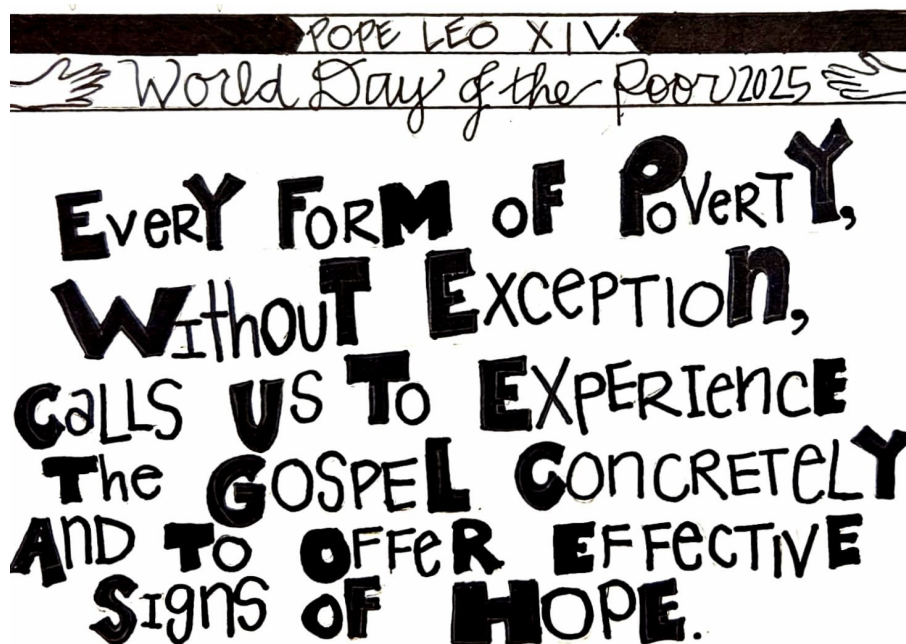
Again, his first words to the globe were, "peace be with all of you." Let us not shy away from the meaning of this! There are dozens of wars going on around the globe. There is discord within our own nation. There is strife at home. Instead of turning our swords into ploughshares, we are turning our ploughshares into swords. How can we strap on our boots and wade in muddy waters with those in need?

As we continue to journey as a people, let us hold fast to Pope Leo's greeting and be people of peace. Peace in our hearts. Peace in our homes. Peace in our world.

May we all pause and pray for our Holy Father as he shepherds us all to be people of peace.



Carrie Akney is a Certified Catholic Campus Minister by the Catholic Campus Ministry Association and serves as Director of Campus Ministry at Benedictine University



What do You Believe?

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“What will you take home with you from this experience?”

I have never been loved like this before, said one student. They don’t even really know me, but they love me, said another. I don’t even deserve it!, said another. And I thought to myself, and I try to return that love in full, but it somehow feels wanting.

This last year, I was asked to take over teaching the Christian Social Teaching course at Lewis University. Two semesters of teaching an upper-level theology gen ed was fascinating and full of eye-opening conversations. My classes were composed primarily of juniors and seniors, ages 20-25. The majority of them were raised Catholic. Many of them were not practicing any faith, but they espoused belief in God. Some had left any kind of organized practice of faith as it didn’t fit into their current lifestyle.

Through class discussion, I learned that many of our students turned away from religion for two main reasons: the hypocrisy they witnessed or being hurt by someone’s forceful misinterpretation of the rules and regulations. All of them were in the course to check it off their list and get closer to achieving their college degree.

Challenge accepted. My plan was to present the themes of Catholic Social Teaching: dignity; solidarity and the common good; subsidiarity; rights, duties and participation; preferential option for the poor, care for creation, etc - and then listen to their feedback on the faith that espouses these

beliefs and doctrines.

We began with the scriptural foundations of Catholic Social Teaching and God’s Plan for Salvation. Our dignity flows from being made in the image of our creator (Genesis 1:26.) We were created by love, for love. We have the gift of creation to prove that. There was perfect unity in the garden: unity of all of creation, of God with His creation, of Man and Woman. Original sin entered the picture in the form of a snake, espousing questions that led to doubt. The original sin was believing the snake’s lie that God, our Creator, did not actually want us to be like Him.

The result of the sin is doubt of who we are - God’s children, made in His image - and actions rooted in the disordered desire to be like God. (Genesis 3) This is the catalyst for the need for a Social Doctrine. This is where we get the blueprint for God’s plan for our Salvation and the full restoration of all of Creation. Scripture is a documentation of God offering redemption of the relationships to full unity through Covenant and humanity continuously falling just short. We broke down Jesus’ call for the Works of Mercy in the Parables of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25) and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10).

As a class, we then moved into the modern interpretation of the need for redemption, unity building, and what we are called to. We delved into the modern Papal Encyclicals of Leo XIII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict IVX, and Francis. From there, we looked at some of the

important statements by Christians on the current state of our social systems. Our conversations were rich with deep questions and cries for us to do our part to make the world a better place. *What actually is our responsibility?*

As it is for many educators, I was learning right alongside the students. I was presenting a worldview I am deeply passionate about. In the very least, due to my passion for the subject matter, the class was engaging. Few fell asleep in class. My goal of engaging and invigorating Christians who had fallen out of practice was met. But something was nagging at me. Something was moving in me. There was a day in class that I posed a question: *What is one of the best ways to get to know Jesus?*

This was the day after we spent discussing the Parable of The Sheep & Goats at length. This is where the Corporal Works of Mercy come from. This is where we serve Jesus in human form: *when you did it for the least of these, you did it for me.* Why is this so important? This is where we actually get to look in the face of another human and gaze into the eyes of Jesus. We can build a relationship with another human and learn something about the heart of Jesus.

A few weeks ago, someone challenged me, “Catholic Social Teaching is not just about the works of Mercy?” Absolutely it is not just about the Works of Mercy. Catholic Social Teaching is a set of definitions and social doctrines laid out by our Popes

over the last hundred years or so, bemoaning the many social evils that many of us have been privy to and even complicit in. But all doctrine of our faith is built on the foundational notion that God is longing for our return to him. And the stories of the communion of saints are depictions of what happens when we answer the deep desire to know and love God. A lived relationship with our Creator moves us to action. The outpouring of love can’t help but continue to be outpoured. *We have to do something.*

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

I do.

who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death and was buried...

He is a human. He suffered.

I do.

When we engage in the Works of Mercy we are invited to conversion. A relationship is built. A woman seeking abortion is no longer the product of demonization. She is a woman who has no support. She is afraid of bringing a life into the world because of the abuse she has endured, because of the lack of housing she is currently experiencing, and because of the systematic dismantling of family systems in our society. This new relationship helps me enter into suffering in a new way. Jesus definitely has something to show us and teach us about suffering. The suffering of Jesus on the cross is lacking if it is only one-dimensional.

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What do You Believe?

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Pope Francis offers thought on this quandary in his final encyclical:

This Christian message is attractive when experienced and expressed in its totality: not simply as a refuge for pious thoughts or an occasion for impressive ceremonies. What kind of worship would we give to Christ if we were to rest content with an individual relationship with him and show no interest in relieving the sufferings of others or helping them live a better life?

Would it please the heart that so loved us if we were to bask in private religious experience while ignoring its implications for society in which we live? Let us be honest and accept the word of God in its fullness. On the other hand, our work as Christians for the betterment of society should not obscure its religious inspiration, for that in the end, would be to seek less for our brothers and sisters than what God desires to give them. (Dilexit Nos, 205)

With God, it is always *both and* justice without Jesus is disordered. It can even be violent and undignified. Actually, Justice

without Jesus is just revenge. My personal relationship with Jesus is not just between me and Jesus. These belief statements that we espouse imply that we are engaged in a relationship with our God and His Son, Jesus. On the surface, Jesus is a man who hangs out with the deplorable of society: smelly fishermen, day laborers, traitors, prostitutes. He speaks in riddles and parables. He is also frequently upsetting the religious leaders in his own synagogue and temple. And He claims to be God, and He is in a very intimate relationship with His God, that He dare call, *Abba*.

It might be challenging to identify with or even build a relationship with this guy. This is why the Works of Mercy are so important. They are practical and tactile. They make Jesus incarnate in the World. The Works of Mercy, or for simplification, Friendship with the Poor is a direct answer to God's full restoration of the unity of creation. Building relationships with those who Jesus claimed not just as his own, but as Himself. *I am*.

Have you ever actually gazed in the eyes of another human for more than 5 seconds? It is pretty

uncomfortable. Is it uncomfortable because of what we see or what we fear the other might see in us? *Yes*. With God, it is always *both and*. In the experiences of mission mentioned at the start of this article, there was the same level of discomfort. We were fully accepted, loved, and seen. These moments of radical hospitality evoke feelings of complete acceptance and love, when we are positive we don't deserve it. And unfortunately, most of us have never felt it. This is why the gaze into someone else's eyes is so painfully difficult.

Do you believe...

that you are made in God's image?

that I am too?

that being made in God's image makes both of us lovable beyond imagining?

what Jesus said?

that when we do it for the stranger, we do it for Him?

Do you believe it?

We say we do. Each and every Sunday, we say we do. And our young people are shying away from us because we say we do, but we don't live like we do. This is why Pope Francis said that the Works of Mercy performed authentically are very attractive. We have been created by love, for love. As Pope Francis says, you and I are God's very love poured out. We are made to out pour ourselves. We are made to cooperate with God in the realization of His Plan for Salvation. We are made to aid in the full restoration of the unity of all of creation. We are made to gaze into the eyes of Jesus. We are made to find His eyes in the eyes of those whom He calls His own, which He calls Himself. We are made to let the gaze capture us and move us to action. We are made for this.



Venus Wozniak and her husband, Justin, are the founders of Nativity House. She also serves as the Associate Director of Mission & Ministry at Lewis University. She can be reached at venusad@nativity-house.org

You Did not Have a Home

by Rich Mullins

No You did not have a home
There were places You visited frequently
You took off Your shoes and
You scratched Your feet
'Cause You knew that the
whole world belongs to the meek
But You did not have a home
No You did not have a home

So You did not take a wife
There were pretty maids all in a row
Who lined up to touch the hem of Your robe
But You had no place to take them so
You did not take a wife
No You did not take a wife

Birds have nests
Foxes have dens
But the hope of the whole world rests on the
shoulders of a homeless man
You had the shoulders of a homeless man
You did not have a home



And You had no stones to throw
Well You came without an axe to grind
You did not tow the party line
No wonder sight came to the blind
You had no stones to throw
No You had no stones to throw

So You rode an ass ' foal
Well they spread out
their coats and cut down palms
For You and Your donkey to walk upon
But the world won ' t find
what it thinks it wants
on the back of an ass ' foal
So I guess You had to get sold
' Cause the world can ' t stand
what it cannot own
and it can ' t own You
' cause You did not have a home



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



St. Lawrence: Martyr of Charity and Courage

Feast Day: August 10th

Patron of Librarians, Archivists, Comedians, and Cooks
by Kate Myroup

St. Lawrence is one of the most venerated saints in the Roman Catholic Church, known not only for his martyrdom but also for his unwavering faith, humility, and love for the poor. I personally had very little knowledge of his life up to this point, but after studying him I now have another saint friend, and by God's grace, I will strive to love the poor as St. Lawrence did. His feast day is celebrated on August 10, and he is recognized as the patron saint of the poor, librarians, and comedians—a reflection of his life of service and the manner of his death. His legacy endures as a symbol of Christian courage in the face of persecution and as a model of faithful stewardship.

Lawrence was born in the early 3rd century, likely in Spain, and later moved to Rome, where he became one of the seven deacons serving under Pope Sixtus II. Deacons in the early Church were tasked with caring for the material needs of the Christian community, including the distribution of alms to the poor. Lawrence quickly gained a reputation for his deep compassion, dedication, and administrative skill. Pope Sixtus II

held him in high regard and appointed him archdeacon, a position of great responsibility, particularly over the Church's finances and charitable outreach.

In 258 AD, during the persecution of Christians by Emperor Valerian, the Roman authorities targeted clergy and confiscated Church property. Pope Sixtus II was arrested and executed, and Lawrence, as a Church official, was ordered to hand over the Church's treasures to the Roman prefect. In an act of both defiance and divine irony, Lawrence distributed the Church's wealth to the poor, and then replied that the Church was indeed rich. "I will show you the valuable part. But give me time to set everything in order and make an inventory." After a few days he gathered a great number of blind, lame, maimed, leprous, orphaned, and widowed persons and put them in rows. When the prefect of Rome arrived, Lawrence simply said, "These are the treasure of the Church."

This bold gesture enraged the authorities. According to tradition, Lawrence was condemned to a

particularly brutal form of execution: he was roasted alive on a gridiron. In the midst of his agony, he is famously reported to have said, "Turn me over; I am done on this side," a statement that illustrates both his extraordinary courage and his sense of holy irony, which later earned him the patronage of comedians. He died on August 10, 258 AD, just a few days after Pope Sixtus II.

Lawrence's martyrdom had a profound impact on the early Christian community and contributed to the spread of Christianity in Rome. His fearless witness to the faith, especially his refusal to hand over sacred resources to a hostile government, became an enduring example of Christian fortitude and selflessness. In a society that valued power and material wealth, Lawrence's elevation of the poor as the true treasure of the Church challenged conventional values and testified to the revolutionary nature of Christian charity.

His legacy is also architectural: the Basilica of San Lorenzo fuori le Mura (St. Lawrence Outside the Walls) in Rome is one of the seven ancient basilicas of the city and is believed to contain his tomb. His cult spread rapidly, and he became one of the most universally venerated martyrs of the early Church. Many churches and institutions bear his name to this day.



St. Lawrence's life and death exemplify the Christian virtues of charity, humility, and courage. His decision to care for the poor in the face of deadly persecution reflects the Gospel values at the heart of Christianity. As both a historical figure and a spiritual model, St. Lawrence continues to inspire Christians to serve with love, resist injustice, and remain faithful even unto death. I hope that the story of his life and dedication to the poor can inspire each of us to live with radical self-denial as we give our time, possessions, and selves to those less fortunate than us. Let us ask God to change our perspectives, so that we can see those society often deems as worthless, as the true treasures they are.



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