

The SERVANT SONG

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To Silence a Divine Voice?

by Brayton Shanley

In December 2016, I spent some time at Standing Rock, in North Dakota. I felt called to the Lakota led nonviolent witness against the oil pipeline going through sacred tribal lands of the native people residing there. Around the sacred fire a tribal leader spoke of a prophecy: “It will be the 7th Generation, our young Millennials, who would save our Mother and her inhabitants from the doom of our human plunder.” This absolute trust the native elders expressed in their young ordained them to direct humans away from the brink of human extinction and halt the demise of our planet.

Two years later, I watched a Ted Talk by Greta Thunberg, a fourteen year old Swedish girl, with penetrating eyes and a fierce, but steady truth. She methodically beat an urgent drum, stating: “Humans have catastrophically changed the climate. When I was ten years old, I began hearing from media reports that the planet was warming due to the burning of fossil fuel. If the world’s people kept burning 100 million gallons of oil every day, extreme weather and warming could make the planet uninhabitable in 30-50 years.” Every riveting word felt true. “If current warming continues my life as an adult may not be livable and certainly my children will not survive. And I saw no adults doing anything to respond. It was like we were ignoring a world war that was happening all around us.”

I was certain that I was hearing a 7th Generation Prophecy predicted by the elders at Standing Rock. No writer or activist, not even Bill McKibben, or mentor to many, Wendell Berry, could prophesy as Greta has. Why? She speaks her truth simply and directly with words that all who hear them understand the gravity we face. Her anguished authority comes through her 14 year old innocence. She and future children, have no future.

Like those of a prophet, Greta’s words burn. They are aimed directly at adults whose modern excesses have brought us to the brink of end times. She continues: “We don’t need any more climate scientists. We know we are making the planet uninhabitable. But the people who run the world politically and economically... the average person... do nothing?”

How Did We Get To the Brink?

Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the 1800s our delicate, breakable earth has been under attack. Thomas Berry writes that “the entire effort of the industrial society is to transform the natural world into total subservience; and the people find themselves caught between a dissolving industrial economy and a ruined natural environment.”

Bill McKibben has recently published his latest book, “Falter”, which sounds like the “final alarm.” His subtitle? “Has the human game begun to play itself out?” All corners of the environmental movement are now talking human extinction. “So far,” McKibben writes, “we (humans) are uniquely ill-prepared to cope with emerging challenges. So far, we are not coping with them.”

2020 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Earth Day. I was a senior in college at that time, and I still remember the shock of what I heard. Biologists and earth scientists presented serious data that showed that the



D. Roberts Kirk

chemical poisons of modern technology had caused lethal harm to our air, soil and water systems. Some claimed, even then, that the damage was irreversible. But, it was not until Earth Day, 1990 that the fact of climate science began to penetrate our defenses: “The planet is warming, ruinously from the burning of fossil fuels, trapping carbon dioxide in a greenhouse effect.”

In spite of this updated, dire news, there was no political about face, no radical call for a life style change in people. On February 2, 2007, the definitive finding was released. An international consortium of climate scientist agreed that dangerous global warming is a scientific fact.

Even if we never burned another fossil fuel, the atmosphere would continue to warm. The major cause? Humans and their lifestyle. Still no clarion call for revolutionary change from Washington or Main Street, USA. In October, 2018, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published a “doomsday report.” It stated that at the 2015 Paris Climate Talks, the participating governments set a mark: we must hold temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The IPCC report warned we might surpass this lethal 1.5 degree mark by 2030. The tides will begin to rise several feet: lethal weather patterns will be more deadly and common. Hence, the 2020-30 decade becomes our last real chance. “If we do not take action,” the IPCC report states, “by the end of the cen-

tury, human cultures may not survive.”

The report’s challenge is daunting: reduce the carbon footprint by 40% in the next ten years. Then the following ten years, another 30% reduction. By 2020, the most radical reinvention ever of how humans live must begin or we die slowly along with most of the natural world.

Climate change deniers, Trump and petroleum corporate America, are on the political throne. A majority of Americans continue to parade like lemmings off the cliff of do-nothing, patterns that will insure our human extinction.

Survival now becomes a risky wager. McKibben offers only tentatively: “It’s possible...an outside chance.” He observes: “A writer doesn’t owe a reader hope—the only obligation is honesty.” We owe Bill McKibben a deep debt for this honesty about the growing threat of climate change since his 1989 reality check volume, “The End of Nature.”

McKibben is also a Christian. As Christians we are people of hope. So now the question is: how to hold to the truth of climate change while maintaining ultimate hope...though we know the facts. A true Christian hope does not bank on the optimism of good odds. The truth as it relates to this environmental crisis relies on a faith that confesses the carbon footprint doom of our materialistic society, but remains grounded in the hope that the God of mercy created us to survive. It is never too late to

wake up to a power greater than ourselves.

Crucifying the Sacred

Chief Arvol Looking Horse reminded us when he spoke at Agape, “We use Mother Earth as a resource instead of ‘the Source’.” In our greed-driven privilege we have deformed nature, sacrificed our humanity and most profoundly of all, lost our living sense of the sacred. In our passion to dominate all other forms of life, we deny their sanctity. Creation is no longer a “thou” but an “it” to be exploited for our own gain. The presence of the God of life appears increasingly absent to us modern world people. Do we intend to survive this climate change Armageddon without God’s powers of love and protection of all life?

The Creation Story in Genesis speaks to our divine origins: “God saw everything God made and indeed it was very good” (1:31). 13th century Franciscan mystic Angela of Foligno spoke to Genesis with an ecstatic new image: “This world is pregnant with God.” By the late 1800’s mystic scientist Teilhard de Chardin, elaborated on Angela’s vision naming the created world as the “Divine Milieu.” He wrote: “When Jesus died and rose from the dead, he drenched the entire universe.” His resurrection was cosmic. As we harm the bio-systems of our sacred planet, we crucify the cosmic Christ who is present in all creation.

Our frantic race to ruin in this post-modern world threatens not only humans but also the natural world’s plants and animals. By 2050 we may lose 30 to 50 percent of all wild animals. To destroy wantonly a species is to silence The Divine Voice. The language of our earth is the language of God. Do we recognize that primal vibration? Do we hear our mother tongue? Will we protect that voice?

In spite of our wantonness, our Sacred Universe, and our earth, our intimate but temporary home, are part of the Divine Plan. Since the first Christians tried to make sense out of Jesus’s coming, Paul’s letter to the Colossians foretold: “He was the first-born of all creation. In him all things were created in heaven and earth ... in him all things hold together...all things are reconciled through him.”(Col. 1:15-20). In God, all things are reconciled through Jesus. Our life on this sacred terrestrial globe is beginning to appear defeated. We find ourselves profoundly unreconciled, at war with ourselves and our earth.

Franciscan St. Bonaventure wrote in medieval times, but translates Jesus for today’s crisis times: “The Incarnation is the center of creation.” The Jesus story we know is the historical, biblical Jesus. Can we experience this Jesus, resurrected and exploding outward; filling our earth, drenching the universe with divinely inspired non-injurious, nonviolent love? If we can, we will return to the sacred source of all life, reconcile with all life forms, surrender our deadly ways of domination and live.

If Not Extinction, Then What?

“We are in the early years of the Ecozoic Age,” Thomas Berry writes: “The Great Work of Ecological Restoration.” Everything in life begins with a design. If we want to restore and reconcile ourselves to this magnificent Earth, we must

Stopping Short of Emmaus

by Suzanne Belote Shanley

Recently, I read a critique by Alexandra Fuller of memoir as a literary genre: “Most memoir material is best saved for the shrink’s couch. ...In order to balance its innate narcissism, a memoir ought to instruct.” I read these words at a time when Brayton and I had recently reviewed the first published copies of our retrospective on forty-two year peacemaking history, “Loving Life on the Margins: The Story of the Agape Community.”

During the writing process, we tried to stay away from shrink-couch revelations and “innate narcissism.” At the same time, I had to acknowledge that a modicum of self-revelation with a little narcissism thrown in, are inextricably linked to any writing that is even remotely autobiographical.

Finding one’s own voice is the touchstone of any writer’s self-understanding though, at times that interior voice remains inaudible and unarticulated. Writing this book entailed searching for and finding my voice and articulating it as my soul’s journey, an anguishing endeavor.

A central truth in completing this book was that as conflicted as I had been throughout the writing process about characterizing my inner life, I always knew that such disclosure was, to some degree, inevitable and mandatory. Without intimacy, there would be no narrative, no book, no life, no way to integrate personal and community past and future. Relationships are treasured expressions of the depth of human encounter.

Fuller says that a memoirist must “write down her experience with as much art and truth as she can muster.” (NY Times Book Review, 4/21/19). Therefore working from the premise of writing as a sacred trust, I considered sharing the personal details of my life with others as a holy, excruciating effort, a three year process.

In my co-authoring of this book with Brayton, I had set my writer’s heart on making public aspects of my personal history, no matter how painful. I learned as I wrote that praying for and placing trust in the reader was a grace given and received.

My belief in friendship with Christ has always been the starting point for me, believing in this cosmic intimacy as it radiates out to embrace others, ultimately pointing to the building of beloved community. Shared friendship with Jesus, intimacy of heart and mind, are intrinsic to the gospel and to my own personal travels on this planet. Luke’s depiction in Acts of the Apostles, of Jesus’s friends’ hearts beating for and through each other has been a model of how I view my own tribal ties with the Jesus story.

So in the writing of the book, I grappled these questions: How does a book such as “Loving Life on the Margins” fit within literary definition or genre? If not a memoir, what is it? Community history? Narrative of nonviolent lineage? A spiritual journey of a soul? How does one describe a book about gospel-based discovery of a “new” non-biological family that is autobiographical, but also relates to early expressions of Christian Community?

At Agape’s opening in 1989, Mike True, recently departed friend, author and nonviolent historian, observed in his remarks that Agape shared a lineage with gospel-based, activist communities through the centuries and put Agape on a continuum that included a Hopedale, Massachusetts community begun by a Unitarian minister, Adin Ballou, who, in 1831 lost his preaching license because he had become a prominent American proponent of pacifism, socialism and abolitionism. According to Mike True, Agape was on this continuum.

A fellow traveler with Agape for over 30 years, Fr. John Sullivan, a Lasalette

priest, responded to my query of “What do we call this book?” which he had just finished reading, with this observation: “‘Loving Life on the Margins’ is a lens on the history of nonviolence.” As lofty and potentially self –congratulatory as John’s reaction felt, it did begin to solidify a

Francis” preceded our book by a year, and to attend a presentation by Jim Robinson, a PhD candidate in Theology at Fordham. Jim, a member of Agape’s Mission Council, was to deliver a paper that included comments on his time at Agape in light of writings by Thomas Merton and Rosemary

to turn back to Jerusalem. “Hearts burning,” they stopped their journey mid-way and, returned, undefeated, having eaten with Jesus, whom they thought was dead, to Jerusalem “where they found the eleven and the rest of the company assembled.” (Luke 24:33)

My setback, although excruciating on multiple levels, offered me a new way of seeing. My foot was literally broken, and in many ways, so too was my spirit. I yearned for a heart that would burn with proximity to Jesus, more Easter spirit of rebirth; Instead, I was feeling neither risen with Christ nor joyful. Or so it seemed, until Easter Vigil at Agape, and my return that day from the hospital, to drive up long and winding Agape driveway.

Alone in Brigid House while the Agape liturgy was proceeding with the gathered community of about forty people, uncomfortable and in pain, I resigned myself to a return to Lent. I was stuck, frozen. All I could think of was months of recovery. And then Jesus appeared, once again. I did, in fact, recognize him in the form of fifteen Agape souls, who, were on a secret evening mission, from Francis House to Brigid House.

Some of Agape’s Easter vigilers had decided to surprise me after Mass, with a candle-lit procession from Francis House, to my bed in the living room of Brigid House. Led by Alicen Roberts, a Smith College freshman, when she came to Agape and currently a theology grad school student at Yale, the gathered worshipers serenaded me in a mission that Alicen called Easter Caroling.

As these exultant beings with hand-held candles walked in the door, I made out the strains of “Christ is Risen from the Dead.” One by one, my friends took position in front of the Brigid House wood-burning stove, lighting up the darkness, their hearts and faces aglow basked in their light. My frozen places began to melt. Self-pity, fatigue, depression, lifted. My gloomy heart was like a starter box of kindling wood, waiting for the match.

The Christ bearers enveloped me in an aura of healing as each of them embraced and hugged me, emotion and friendship pouring over my inert leg and soul. I couldn’t help but think of the words of poet, William Blake: “And we are put on this earth a little space that we might learn to bear the beams of love.” In my depleted state, I was learning to bear the beams of love.

Jesus could well have been speaking to me when he said to the disciples: “What little sense you have.” After all of these years counting on community, I didn’t have the sense to know that community was manifesting right before my eyes.

Agape life in a wheelchair, now took on a new meaning: what I had been lamenting as reversal and defeat was in fact a return. I had returned to the place of my beginnings, my Agape home, just as the disciples were turned back to Jerusalem, their center. Community is my center. My friends had rolled away the stone of my defeat. These faces, these lives, became the truth, afterglow and fruition of writing the book “Loving Life on the Margins.”

I was reading and turning the pages of my own book sitting there with a cast on my leg, and the characters in the book, my friends, were standing right in front of me.

When, as the book’s title suggests, we live and love on the margins, we do not walk alone. Jesus walks with us, although at times, we are “restrained from recognizing him” (Luke 24:16) by our own obtuseness. I couldn’t walk, but I could see before me, I wasn’t alone. With shimmering truth and light, I felt the words my family sang as my own: “Christ is Risen! Don’t be afraid. You are not alone.”



Photo credit: David Legg

EASTER CAROLERS FROM THE LEFT: ALICEN, GRACE, DEBBIE AND KATHLEEN

non-memoir description for “Loving Life on the Margins.”

We hoped to illuminate our motivation in writing: to bear witness to that lineage that Mike True spoke of back in 1989. The idea of our book as a memoir was singularly unappealing to me, given all of the secular literary commercialization associated with this form, with sometimes shallow, self-serving records of personal aggrandizement such as of the plethora of such books put out by the twenty-plus democratic presidential candidates.

Birthing a Book

The huge Fed-Ex truck delivered several cardboard boxes full of “Loving Life on the Margins,” which arrived at the community during Lent. With its fresh green cover, enhanced by an iconic photo of the community’s 25th anniversary, by Agape member, photo-journalist, Skip Schiel, the book provided an anticipatory taste of Easter—time to celebrate. Nevertheless, my on-going self-consciousness about publication was significant enough that I didn’t quite feel like cracking open the champagne. Instead, I was stuck in a repeated interior monologue: “Did you really write this? Now what?”

Reservations or not, sheer relief filled me --40 years of Brayton and my life jammed into 300 pages—done. A handful of photos from thousands, at long last—done. The methodical work on sales and promotion lingered like an approaching storm, along with the crucial question: How would our labor of love, the birth of our shared history, be received?

Unexpected Reversal

All of these ruminations came to a shocking halt when, in one of those split-second life reversals, I tripped on the last step at Brigid House’s stairwell and fractured my right foot in three places. Before the blinding pain, I can remember thinking. “Oh no! This is bad!”

That cry emanated not only for the shattered bones, but also from the distress of knowing that this would be the end of a much-anticipated trip to Fordham University scheduled for the next day and for which I was preparing.

Brayton and I had planned to meet with graduate students, a Jesuit priest friend, Fr. Tom Massaro, whose recent book, “Mercy in Action: The Social Teachings of Pope

Radford Ruether. The most crushing blow was not meeting my life-time inspiration, feminist theologian, Elizabeth Johnson CSJ. All of these plans, over in a split second.

Excruciating pain during and after hospitalization and surgery coincided with the urgency of what would now happen to the book. It seemed that our late-in-life baby would be orphaned for at least three months...no little desolation. Instead of a grad school luncheon and travel I was faced hospital beds and nurses’ call buttons.

Consolation on the Way

Returning to Brigid House to occupy a makeshift hospital bed in the middle of the living room, after ten days in the hospital and rehab, a Marist priest friend whom we had known from our early community years, Fr. Paul Frechette, visited Agape. We reveled in shared memories of thirty years ago, our parallel history and people we knew in common, as well as stories of Paul’s life as a missionary and his current post as the Provincial of the Marists in the US.

Paul offered Mass, while I sat in bed, damaged leg held aloft in a crudely constructed cast. His shared homily highlighted a book he was reading, “The Passion at the Cross” by Ronald Rolheiser, a commentary on Luke’s gospel and the Road to Emmaus. (Luke 34:13-35)

The familiar passage recounts that while the disciples were on the post-Resurrection road to the town of Emmaus, “seven miles away from Jerusalem. ...discussing as they went all that had happened,” the resurrected Jesus appeared to them. At long last, with the breaking of bread, “their eyes were opened and they recognized him.” (Luke 25)

Paul referred to Rolheiser’s comment that the disciples were miserable, dwelling in “frozen places,” emotionally and settling for a “life without enthusiasm. ... with joy frozen.”

I related. My “frozen place,” confined to a wheelchair when I was supposed to at Fordham University, led me to dwell consolately on my predicament; that is, until Jesus appeared in the form of nurses and aides responding to my every need around the clock.

Eventually, Jesus tells the disciples to abandon their plans to get to Emmaus and



Loving Life on the Margins: the Story of the Agape Community

by Suzanne Belote Shanley
and Brayton Shanley

Reviewed by Thomas Lee, PhD,
retired professor, St. Anselm College

Suzanne and Brayton Shanley's compelling book, *Loving Life on the Margins: the story of the Agape community* goes far beyond a chronological record of the labor-intensive founding and nurture of Agape, their unique home and community.

It begins with the moving story of the struggles of a young idealistic couple, caught up in the turbulent social upheaval surrounding the Vietnam War and disillusioned by the inadequate responses of their hierarchical Catholic Church to this government-sanctioned horrific violence - and their dramatic answer to these crises.

The 1970s were a tumultuous time of social upheaval. In addition to the ongoing war, marginalized peoples - women, Native and African Americans, and sexual minorities - demanded their equal rights, while political conservatism emerged as a new force on the political right.

The Shanleys, both raised in a traditional Catholic faith, were challenged to chart a course for their lives together that would answer their deepest convictions. How to follow Jesus towards a right relationship with the created world? In the light of their creation by God, who were they and how should they live? Their answer would evolve, after years of effort, into a life of joyful sacrifice and determination, nurtured by prayerful action, and would lead to Agape - an idea, an ideal, and ultimately a peaceful community in the quiet woods of western Massachusetts - a haven based on a "non-acquisitive...other-centered faith in the Nonviolent God of Love."

The narrative skillfully and engagingly moves the reader along by the authors' alternating contributions to the text, as they each add their unique perspectives regarding the growth of their dedication to a life of loving sacrifice.

By the 1980s, Suzanne and Brayton, having dived headlong together into the world of social activism, came to understand



Photo credit: Claudia McNeil

that for them, this ideal of *agape* - transformative, unconditional, self-giving love, as expressed by the life and teachings of Jesus - would require far more than they could express in a "standard" life of ordinary affluence. Convinced that the nonviolence of Jesus was expressed in Gandhi's principle of *Ahimsa* - nonviolence in thought, word, and deed - they began to envision a peace community centered around a new kind of Catholic faith.

The practice of this faith, rather than the traditional hierarchical, male dominated Roman Catholic tradition, would have to be vivified with a new energy - the realization that to follow the example of Jesus they would have to dedicate their lives in a giving love of others and of Creation itself. How to do that? The answer would ultimately be the founding of Agape, their home in the quiet woods of Hardwick, Massachusetts, now celebrating more than three decades of loving, peace-centered hospitality - a sacred space of respite and a retreat that would inspire thousands over the years to reconsider the role of violence in our lives in the light of Jesus' example.

Their lively narrative relates the story of how, in the early years of this progression towards Agape, Suzanne and Brayton began to

bond with other peace people. Co-founding *Ailanthus: A Nonviolent Witness for Peace* in Boston with an interfaith group of friends, they shared their social activism with Quakers, Pax Christi, the Buddhist Peace Pagoda, the Catholic Worker community and others, portending what would be a lifelong integration of their lives with those of other faith traditions.

Moving on to Brockton, MA they joined the growing household of the family of Charles McCarthy, a Melkite priest and radical pacifist. There, the Shanleys expressed their convictions by reaching out to young people, from junior high to university students, honing the message of Gospel-based nonviolence that they would carry unflinchingly throughout the succeeding years.

Suzanne and Brayton first met in 1974. Their next thirteen years together were filled with activism marked by steadfast resistance to the prevailing institutions of violence, leading at times to arrest and even jail. Their actions were grounded in, as Brayton has expressed it, the foundational principle that "Love is the law of being." Now they were ready for the next step, a daunting move "back to the land" that would co-create Agape, that place of "mystical stillness."

Loving Life on the Margins: the story of

the Agape community relates how two city-bred neophytes managed (somehow) to carve out their current community from a forest, beginning with Brayton's first intrepid march into those wooded acres, equipped only with an unfamiliar chain saw. The succeeding years have been a litany of labor, immensely challenging, and always directed by the realization that whatever the Shanleys and their generous friends and volunteers fashioned would always be a material expression of their ideals.

As a "seamless garment", Agape grew into a tangible statement to all who visit there that one's daily life ought to be a reverence for and a cooperation with God's physical Creation. Pope Francis, in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato si*, maintained that "the core of what it means to be a Christian" is "to care for nature." That is a message seldom heard from preachers' pulpits, but it is lived at Agape- off the grid and sustainable, all the while charged and sustained by a daily rhythm of prayer and meditation.

My wife and I have known Brayton and Suzanne Shanley and their daughter Teresa for many years, and have been enriched by their loving hospitality, always rooted in "love, compassion and mercy." In their book's final chapter, they ask "How do we at Agape set our sights on the next twenty years? Who among the younger generations will step up to lead communities like ours into the unknowns of future consciousness?" We ask this same question, along with them. Will they be among the readers of this compendium of love for each other and for the world - an extraordinarily clear, forceful, and thought-provoking work that should be read and pondered by all?

Thomas F. Lee, Ph.D. taught in the Biology Department at Saint Anselm College for 35 years. His books include Battlebabe: Selling War in America, a "dictionary of deception" about the language used to hide the grim realities of militarism, and his recent novel, In The End, a murder mystery centered around the current controversies in the Catholic Church.

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Comments on *"Loving Life on the Margins: the Story of the Agape Community"*

Arun Gandhi, Founder-President, Gandhi Worldwide Education Institute, Rochester NY

"I was reminded of my grandfather, Gandhi's, *My Experiments with Truth*, the story of how he transformed his life. This book is a testament to the fact that what Gandhi did in India can be replicated around the world."

Nancy James, a co-founder of Agape, along with her husband Steve, have spent 35 years in Haiti as medical missionaries

"For those who are struggling to find deep meaning in life, this book is fresh water to a dry, parched spirit."

Daniel Marshall, Catholic Worker historian.

"Brilliant, far-reaching, rooted ... a treasure. A handbook."

Fr. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy, internationally acclaimed teacher of Christian Nonviolence

"*Loving Love on the Margins* is a work of love about two lives of love, a work that in reality took over forty years of days and nights, of minutes and seconds, for Suzanne and Brayton to compose. It is a wonderful encapsulation of a resolute witness to nonviolence, mercy and love of enemies as a Way of life, as a Way of being, and not just as nice idealistic thoughts or as mere political tactics. It deserves to have avenues of circulation in the Church and in the secular society that will permit it to be read by more than "the usual nonviolent suspect."

Carolyn West, a senior instructor at The Center for Mindfulness, Worcester, MA.

"Everything and everyone is included here...room for it all...a Buddhist teaching that brings me comfort and ease."

Thomas Massaro, S.J., Professor of Moral Theology at Fordham University

This stunning volume recounts four decades of a fascinating life journey, relevant and instructive to so many hearts yearning for a fearless pursuit of religious conscience and ethical ideals. It is about the loving embrace of faith-filled companionship, radical nonviolence, environmental sustainability, simplicity of lifestyle, generous solidarity with those who are involuntarily poor, artistic beauty, and prayerful community life.

William Neal Moore, Pentecostal Minister, spent 17 years on Death Row in Georgia

"*Loving Life on the Margins: The Agape Community Story* follows the command of Jesus to take the gospel to the entire world. This book will show you, the reader, how the gospel is lived in this day and time."

Mary Evelyn Tucker, Co-Director of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

Suzanne and Brayton called out the destructive effects of the nuclear arms industry and have woven together environmental and social justice concerns even before the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si* called this an integral ecology. They held to nonviolence in their activism, not an easy task in the face of such widespread abuses of power and privilege.

Frida Berrigan, author of "It Runs In The Family: On Being Raised By Radicals and Growing Into Rebellious Motherhood"

"Feeling hopeless? Isolated? Overwhelmed? This book is the antidote, an honest, inviting and inspiring portrait of A CENTERED life at the margins!!"

If you are interested in hosting a book signing and thematic talk, this summer or fall, please contact Agape: peace@agapecommunity.org • 413-967-9369

Restoration Begins with Rest

by Hannah Baker,
College of the Holy Cross

Restoration begins with a simple word, made up of four letters: rest. We see it in the spelling of the word, and we hear it in the pronunciation, but so often we completely overlook its presence in the larger word. More importantly, we miss what it can tell us about the act of restoring something. In order to experience restoration, we need to start with the simple concept of rest.

I was recently fortunate enough to spend a night at the Agape community with other members of the College of the Holy Cross's interdenominational community. The theme that we had chosen for our retreat was "Restore," a singular word selected as a topic to be considered and thought about more deeply throughout the week-end. What I had not expected though, was that it would be something that I actually experienced on a spiritual level during the 24 hour retreat.

As a praise and worship leader in Holy Cross's interdenominational community, I was part of the planning team for our annual retreat. Initially, I was disappointed to find out that Holy Cross's retreat center had been completely booked for the academic year, and that our community would not be going there. I felt as if we would not be able to have a good retreat if we could not go to the retreat center that was owned and operated by Holy Cross,

itself. It's definitely safe to say that I was very caught up in the specific details -- the where and the when -- and that I had lost focus of the reason for having a retreat in general -- the why.

The reason that our community sought to hold a retreat -- and the reason that I later understood was why we had selected the theme "Restore," -- was that taking time to slow down, reflect, and provide rest for the soul, is incredibly important to spiritual health.

In a world that encourages nonstop busyness, it is easy to work ourselves to exhaustion and say 'yes' to unending lists of responsibilities. Many view taking time for stillness as unnecessary and a waste of time. I am frequently guilty of falling into the trap of believing that time to myself is a luxury rather than a necessity that nourishes the well-being of my spirit.

Upon arriving at the Agape community, I was amazed by how quickly I felt completely at peace. Within five minutes of our arrival, I instantly felt relieved of the many stressors I had been dealing with back at school.

Agape team members met us right away with friendly smiles and welcoming hugs. I knew instantly that this retreat was going to be exactly what my spirit had been



Hannah at the Quabbin Reservoir

craving. This feeling that an enormous weight had been lifted from my shoulders was one that I experienced only on occasions that were few and far between.

"Simplify, simplify, simplify," as quoted by Henry David Thoreau, was a phrase

that echoed in my mind throughout the duration of my stay at Agape. I focused on really leaving behind the things that had been weighing me down.

It was not just enough that I had left my homework on campus and turned off my cell phone at the beginning of the car ride to Agape. In order to be present in the many beautiful moments that I experienced at Agape and gain as much from the retreat as possible, I needed to really be intentional about freeing my mind of these stressors. Doing so allowed me the headspace to direct my attention back to God, something that I had not been very good about for too long a period of time.

Restoration begins with a simple word, made up of four letters: rest. In some cases, physical rest -- like getting enough sleep -- is enough to restore different aspects of our being. It is important that we do not limit our rest to the kind that we experience physically, though.

What I found at Agape was a kind of rest that came from being reminded of where I need to make sure my priorities lie, and then taking the step to actually let go of things that had been keeping me from looking to what is really important in life.

For Future Agape Interns: 3 Things to Remember

by Natalia Luna

From March to May 2019, I lived and worked alongside Dixon, Brayton, and Suzanne as an intern at the Agape Community. Partially out of necessity and partially on a whim, I left my life as a student at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester and began a journey far removed from anything I've experienced before.

For anyone who is curious about living a life of Christian nonviolence, interested in environmental sustainability, or simply unsure of what they want but feel drawn to Agape, I cannot recommend this internship enough. It's a tremendous learning experience that I don't think I could have achieved anywhere else.

With that being said, this isn't a normal internship by any means. You enter a partnership at a structured community that has been established for over 30 years. No matter your experience, there are bound to be some learning curves. These challenges encouraged me to deeply reflect on my hardened habits and how I was used to interacting with others. Ultimately, I noticed how small changes to be more considerate in community living improved even my relationships outside of Agape.

Here are three practices learned over the duration of my stay that I recommend to new interns in order to embrace Agape to the fullest and make the most of their time at this truly unique and spiritual place:

1. Be Humble

Ego has so many names and faces. For me, ego manifested in fierce and hasty independence. I would act first and ask questions later, often creating sticky situations and mixed emotions that could've been avoided just by pausing to ask. Life became so much easier once I began to surrender my will, listen to what others needed, and most of all, ask for forgiveness. It gradually became more and more clear that my need to act alone was unnecessary. Despite what I had internalized, we are never alone in

this existence. What makes Agape a loving sanctuary is our willingness to sacrifice this harmful piece of ego in order to live in harmony with one another.

2. Slow Down and Listen

Much of community living is quieting yourself and intentionally listening. I didn't realize how easy it is to be inconsiderate with the words of others. Too



Dixon and Natalia with his pizza

often I've been neglectful by hastily brushing them off to get my point across or letting my mind wander while others spoke. Use this retreat from a fast-paced world to practice the art of slowing down and really listening those around you. In addition to slowing down to hear people, I encourage you to open your ears to the natural world. Part of the wonder of Agape is its positioning near the Quabbin Reservoir. Listen to the chorus of songbirds, listen to the babble of the stream—and when the earth is cold and barren—listen to the stark, glorious silence. There is beauty all around you, absorb as much of it as you can and treasure it in your heart. It will bring you peace like none other.

3. Trust in the Process

"Are you a neophobe or a neophile?" This is a question Dixon has asked me a couple times in reference to his delicious (often adventurous) cooking but it's a question that anyone set on coming to Agape should ask themselves. Agape is truly a place unlike any other. With its daily work structure, the geographical and technological remoteness, even in its founding on the principles of a nonviolent, unconditionally loving Jesus—it's radical to say the least. It was a lot to process at first. I came to Agape at a time of great uncertainty. I was anxious and grieving, but I had a sense that I could make things work, so I put my trust in a community I knew little about. That trust allowed me to overcome a rocky adjustment period and ultimately find the consolation I didn't know I needed. After years of being "stuck" in my spiritual life, I found my heart opening up to God again. Your consolation may look completely different than mine, it most likely will. But to reach that point you must stick with it.

Natalia came to Agape as an angel, hovering over the community with brooms and mops, assisting with all tasks, never complaining, always present to need. She has returned to Chicago, but we will see her again on Francis Day!

New Beginnings ... or ... Spring Has Sprung

Background: Nicole Braithewaite-Hunt, who was a major contributor, to the past two Francis Days, with her sisters and brothers in the Worcester Inter-Tribal Indian Center, is of Blackfoot and Tuscarora Native American lineage. Nicole contacted Suzanne to see if Agape would host a women's retreat weekend, Women Gather. Suzanne, her daughter Teresa, Agape member, Kathleen Legg and Agape intern, Natalia Luna, all participated in the weekend, full of solidarity and learning for all. What follows are the observations and prayer of one of the women who gathered, Parlee Jones.

by Parlee Jones

I was blessed to be invited to the first Women's Gathering at the Agape Center in Hardwick, MA in March, a gathering to learn about and to celebrate First Nation culture with a Full Moon Ceremony and other teachings with Grandmother Nancy and Sister Nicole.

Grandmother Nancy is a Sundancer and a Sacred Pipe carrier, acknowledged as an elder and a grandmother in her communities in Canada, where she was given instruction to bring out and share certain teachings. Grandmother Nancy is a well-known storyteller, sharing legends from many different Nations.

Grandmother Nancy assisted us as we remembered that native women traditionally wore skirts, and we spoke on why tradition is so important. It is up to us to help



Native Women Gather at Agape with Parlee Jones, far left

guide our youth and help them see that they are loved and needed. We also remembered our elders and made sure they are loved and are needed to share their knowledge before it is lost.

We started with a sage smudge to cleanse ourselves of negative energies and to start the weekend with a clear mind and heart.

We broke bread together, for there is always plenty of good food when Women

Gather. We learned the Algonquin Water Song, and I learned that there are many women's water songs from different cultures, and all have a deep meaning.

Grandmother Nancy met with elders in Canada and they were unified in agreement that a video of the song should be made to hasten the teaching and widen the circle of women singing it because of the increasingly grave dangers our waters are facing. (www.singthewatersong.com).

Water is our planet's bloodline and we all need water to survive. It is our duty as stewards of this planet to protect the water. We also learned two other water ceremonies. We also dug a little deeper to check in with ourselves and I have accepted the fact that I am an older ... not yet an elder.

Indigenous people all over the world have teaching and foundations on all these principles. I am going to focus on my healing, focus on fine-tuning my superpower, which is coming from a place of love. I will truly become that INSTRUMENT OF PEACE!!!

Parlee's Prayer

Great Creator:

Thank you for allowing me enlightenment and love this past weekend, and for meeting new sisters.

Thank you for assisting us in acknowledging men and their importance in our lives and for the journey of our Ancestors.

We must protect and love Our Planet, Mother Earth and all the four-legged and two-legged creatures, and those that fly and swim.

It is our duty to protect the water, and all living beings. We must lead with a grateful heart.

Parlee is a community activist in Worcester who enjoys writing.

Jail, an Unusually Noisy Monastery

by Mark Colville

A member of the Kings Bay Plowshares 7, Mark turned himself back into the Glynn County Jail when on December 11th, 2019, after surgery in his home state of CT. Judge Cheesbro accepted a motion to return the bail money that was posted on Mark's behalf. What follows is an excerpted account of that experience.

It has never been my custom to allow the federal government to indulge the fantasy that supervising me is a legitimate use of their time or resources. Magistrate judges Baker and Cheesbro have clearly seen fit to use bail, house arrest, curfews, and ankle monitors as preemptive punishment for the accused.

I opted to accept these bail conditions on an emergency basis, when it became clear that the Glynn County Jail was not terribly interested in allowing me access to adequate medical care after a diagnosis of skin cancer. After two successful surgeries, I've been given a clean bill of health.

It's obvious that this governmentally-imposed obedience-training program amounts to nothing but another form of imprisonment, one for which the accused does not receive any credit toward an actual post-conviction sentence. This has become a scandalously common abuse of the Bail Reform Act in courtrooms all across the country.

Personally, the daily practice of voluntarily cooperating in my own captivity has also imposed a strange sort of existence, one in which I find it difficult to fully engage in life and relationships in the ways I'm accustomed to doing so. It's an unhealthy dynamic that has only become worse since the reason for my decision to take bail no longer exists, and the court's lack of integrity imposes the responsibility on me to make that dynamic change.

From the beginning, my participation in the Kings Bay Plowshares action was an act of contrition for complicity in the sins of nuclearism and empire. I've regarded



any incarceration as penance for those sins. But the jail has also been for me a place of ministry, personal faith-development, and formation of conscience. It provides the incredible daily privilege of walking with Jesus in the person of the prisoner, and of seeing the world the way He did: from the perspective of the bottom.

It's a lot like being in an unusually noisy monastery where all the monks have tattoos and share a fondness for the F-word! Of course, Christmas can be a very lonely and desolate time for people in jail, especially those who don't enjoy the constant support of family and friends on the outside as I do. So returning to jail before the holidays seems like a useful and appropriate sacrifice to make. With this in mind, there are no misgivings or mixed feelings about going back to Glynn County Detention Center, but rather a sense of rejoicing that, as Dan Berrigan liked to say, one has the freedom to go to jail.

This Tuesday I will show up at the Glynn County Detention Center for another

undetermined length of time. Luz, my wife, and I agreed to do this mindfully. We are reaching hands of solidarity toward our extended global family members who are now at this country's border facing atrocities and uncertainties far beyond whatever hardships we might be obliged to bear.

From the inside, I find the real horror of all this in its utter normalcy. Sometimes it takes a rigorous act of the will to maintain a personal relationship with reality. I'm living in a place where hundreds of people accused of low-level and/or nonviolent crimes are being held indefinitely, under maximum security conditions, having neither been granted due process, nor convicted nor sentenced.

The presumption of innocence is, quite literally, a punchline. The totalitarian culture of coercion that dictates every aspect of life in a maximum security jail has essentially chewed up and swallowed the "justice system" here, such that it is not honestly possible to even use that term without the disclaimer of quotation marks. Broken

families bear a terrible burden, some driven from poverty into destitution. The racial bias could hardly be more obvious. Yet it all seems to function beyond significant public notice, and has nothing to do with questions of morality, necessity, or service to the public good.

Of late, I've grown convinced that it couldn't be more fitting for the Kings Bay Plowshares to have been swept up and tossed into a human dumpster such as this.

Mark Colville is a founding member of the Amistad Catholic Worker Community and house of hospitality in New Haven, CT where he lives with his wife, Luz Catarineau and a circle of friends who are dedicated to the daily practice of the works of mercy, prayer nonviolence, environmental justice and promoting human rights and dignity for all. They have raised six children together at Amistad House and are grateful for financial assistance. (amistadcw.wordpress.com)

Global leaders, activists and scholars, including Nobel Peace Prize-winning South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Daniel Ellsberg and Noam Chomsky, released a petition addressed to U.S. Attorney General William Barr demanding all charges against the Kings Bay 7 be dropped immediately <http://www.twitter.com/kingsbayplow7>

Trial update, excerpted from Catholic News Service, April 29, 2019:

Magistrate Judge Benjamin Cheesbro of the Southern District of Georgia ruled on April 26, 2019, that the defendants failed to show that the government violated their rights under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and that the activists could have pursued other means to carry out their protest rather than illegally entering the Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in Georgia.

Bill Quigley, a law professor at Loyola University New Orleans who is pro bono legal representative for the seven has filed an appeal.

Michael True, a Tribute

by David O'Brien

Michael True, Worcester peacemaker, poet, historian, interfaith organizer, teacher of English and model Worcester citizen is gone. He passed away on April 28 in Minneapolis where he and his wife, Mary Pat moved just a few weeks ago to join three of their six children who have settled there.

Mike and Mary Pat were among the very first persons my wife Joanne and I met when we arrived in Worcester fifty years ago this fall. Almost before we unpacked Mike had updated us on local peace actions and drawn us into the ecumenical "floating parish". We learned that this open-ended community had succeeded the legendary "Phoenix" storefront as home to local social activists--and lots of children.

From that period of crisis around the Vietnam War through the Plowshares and nuclear freeze movements to the 21st century resistance to unwise wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Mike was consistent and courageous, the heart and soul of Worcester's peace movement.

Sometimes he stood with a few Catholic Workers in lonely witness at Lincoln Square or outside a weapons research building in the suburbs. At other moments he was joined by larger crowds who agreed that one or another war was wrong even if they did not yet share Mike's conviction that nonviolence was the surest way to a just peace.

In later years as leader of the Nonviolence sector or the International Peace Research Association he traveled the globe working for peace, teaching in China, lecturing on many trips to India, even once speaking on nonviolence in North Korea.

Mike's peacemaking work was far from his only contribution to our communities. He was always engaged with religion, across many denominational boundaries. He enthusiastically assisted the draft counselling work organized by the city's



Mike True in middle

Photo by David Legg

Michael True, friend of Agape

by Suzanne Shanley

Mike True gave an inspiring keynote talk for the opening of the Agape Community in Hardwick, MA in 1989, before a gathered crowd of about 400 people including Catholic Worker Tom Cornell, and then Bishop Timothy Harrington of the Diocese of Worcester, founder of the Georgetown Peace Center, Fr. Richard McSorley SJ and Fr. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy, Agape co-founder.

Mike placed Agape and many Catholic Worker communities, in the lineage of Adin Ballou and the Hopedale Community, and gave us the momentum we all needed that day, to feel part of a living, historic reality.

After that, Mike came to every Francis Day that he could attend, sup-

portive as always from our early years together. He sent letters and books from India, and we were drawn even closer by my friendship with Denise Levertov, whom Michael also cherished. The line from Denise's poem, "Making Peace", became the title of one of his most loved books, *An Energy Field More Intense than War*.

Right until the last correspondence and conversation with Michael, he and I constantly referred to Denise's poetry. At a Catholic Worker anniversary gathering last year, a young man stood up to say that the best book he ever read on peace was, indeed, *An Energy Field More Intense than War*.

Presente Mike. Thank you for your steadfast courage and sacrifice in the name of nonviolent love.

Catholic, Protestant and Jewish leaders.

Later when his Catholic church backed away from ecumenism Mike lent support to local Catholic Workers and drew on his close relationship with the American Friends Service Committee. Along the way he began to attend services at the local Friends Meeting. He helped lead an interfaith dialogue in Worcester schools, and later he co-founded The Center for Non-violent Solutions which offered training in conflict resolution skills to students and faculty of local high schools.

Mike loved to break open the long ignored history of Worcester revolutionaries, abolitionists, labor radicals, peacemakers and poets and writers. He wrote several books about local and national peacemakers and justice seekers and his comprehensive *An Energy Field More Intense than War* is a classic study of literature and non-violence. It is safe to say that Worcester's many superb colleges never had a professor who more fully embodied the idea that scholars and teachers have important public responsibilities.

Mike True loved Worcester. Alone with a picket sign or alerting us in a newspaper column, he seemed like a prophet, but in this case a prophet who was also a good neighbor and an excellent friend. He deserves after a lifetime of service to now rest in peace. The rest of us might wonder about how we can honor his legacy. Perhaps by raising a few Mike True-like questions about spending a trillion dollars modernizing our nuclear weapons, or about our inability to find a few dollars here in Worcester to support conflict resolution training in our schools. Mike took it for granted that most of us want to do better than that. That confidence in the rest of us was and remains a gift for which we who knew him are forever grateful.

David is a devoted friend of many peace communities and also Professor Emeritus, College of the Holy Cross.

Eduardo rallying a group of college students about DACA

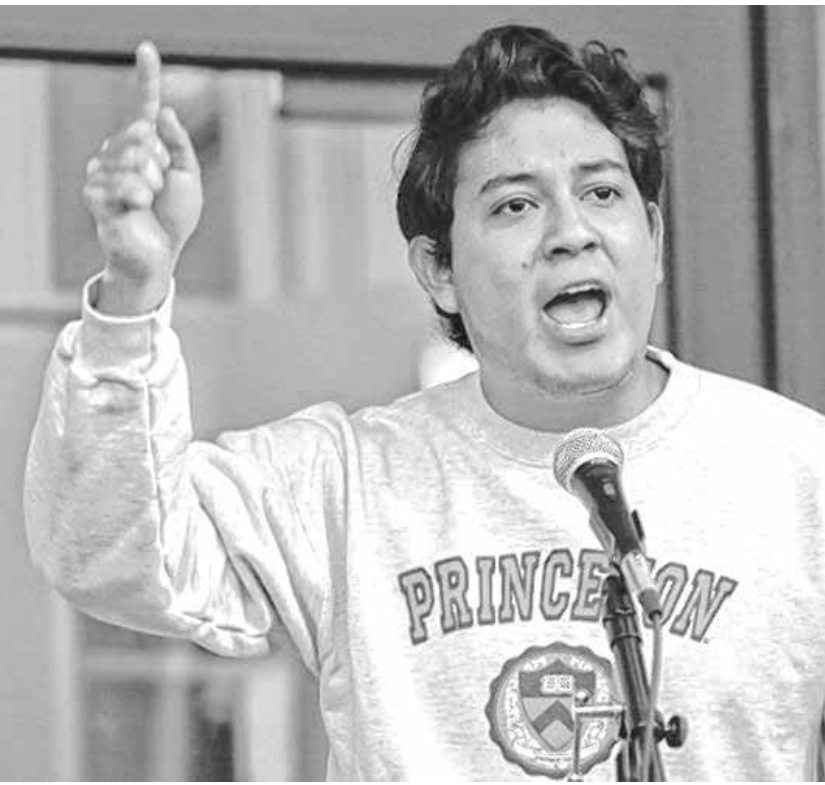
**The Case of Eduardo Samaniego:
Deported by ICE from South Carolina**
*Eduardo had been scheduled to speak at
Agape's Francis Day, October 6, 2018*

Background:

When Gabriella della Croce, the lead organizer at Pioneer Valley Workers Center in Northampton, MA, had arranged for Eduardo Samaniego to speak about his undocumented status in the US, he had already been a vocal and brave witness for voiceless college-age undocumented or DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) students in the country and in Western MA. We invited Eduardo to dinner at Agape along with an immigration attorney from Worcester, Alex Mooradian, who also spoke at Francis Day. Several days before Eduardo was to speak, Gabriella informed us that Eduardo had been apprehended by ICE, and asked if we would join the campaign for his release. Since that time, Eduardo went from 100 days in a detention center in South Carolina, 30 of which were in solitary confinement, to deportation to Mexico, after a minor infraction which has since been dropped, despite intense efforts nationally to delay this action.

Aria Killough-Miller, an Agape intern during this period, met Eduardo at an Agape dinner in preparation for Francis Day when Eduardo was to speak. Aria sent this letter on Eduardo's behalf while he was in detention.

I had the awe-inspiring opportunity to meet Eduardo at a dinner in late September at the Agape Community and to hear his story about his experiences in the immigration system which began, when, at age sixteen, Eduardo left



Eduardo rallying a group of college students about DACA

the nurturing care of his mother and grandmother to come to the United States. From the moment he walked through the door, Eduardo struck me with his politeness and eloquence. Although I was among the people hosting him, it was he who offered to pour me water.

Though living in a trailer park, facing rejection at the University of Georgia, and scraping by as a fast food employee, Eduardo has persisted in his dedication to this

country's educational system. From becoming valedictorian of his high school to serving as a trustee at his college, the hard work he has invested into the United States' educational system is not something to be taken lightly.

He has many professional ties to organizations large and small, from directing ministries at the Five Colleges in Western Massachusetts to working on policy for Washington. As a student of constitutional law, he knows well that cooperation with any and all upcoming legal proceedings will reinforce what hundreds of people who know him have testified: that he is a person of good moral character as evidenced by his dedication to working for the most oppressed inhabitants of his adopted homeland.

Some in his position might reject the United States' cruel treatment, but Eduardo's strong Christian faith has kept him turning the other cheek time and again. When this nation's law nearly forces him out of his home, he continues to speak calmly in support of his and other immigrants' rights.

Postscript: During dinner at Agape, Eduardo shared that he had been burned in a tragic accident while in the US and was hospitalized for an extended time with scars over 35% of his body.

We shared the plight of our sixteen year old friend, Omar Mahmood, who had sustained burns over 65% of his body after an American attack on his family car. Eduardo expressed his willingness to meet with Omar, a meeting which never happened: "I am humbled by your trust and I thank you for sharing about Omar. I would be very happy to meet with Omar. ... What he's been through touches my heart in too many more ways than I could possibly describe. Eduardo."

Voices

A response to “Words, Wordlessness and the Meaning of Despair” in the last issue of Servant Song

Thanks for putting into words what so many of us are feeling, making our suffering less inscrutable, overpowering, and easier to take measure of. The grace of suffering give us something profound to share with others as givers and receivers bringing us closer to them, strengthening our sense of mutual respect and identity. Can anguish and pain be gifts? The souls in Yemen have no joy to share. They do have agony and you have been touched by it, not a blessing anyone might choose, but profound. Does Jesus share His agony with us this way?

Bruce Jordan

I learned about sustainable living and the beauty of a simple life, eating a delicious vegetarian meal in the peaceful candlelit living room. It was refreshing not to have the distractions of technology during the memorable and genuine conversations that night. Standing under the night sky, I learned the value of silence. Getting my hands dirty while working in the garden made me feel alive. The silent walk through the woods reminded me of how sacred the earth is and how important it is to take care of it.

Matthew Pape, Springfield College retreatant

Servant Song and Abortion

We wish to bring up a question that always arises when we read Servant Song. You justly decry wide-spread apathy toward children in jeopardy when you write: “We struggle to give language to misery and innocent suffering.” Yet you never raise your voice in defense of innocent human life in the womb.

Three thousand unborn children are killed by elected abortion daily, 43 million in the United States since 1973. Not only are the innocent killed, but women are harmed emotionally and physically. Can you raise your voices in defense of the most innocent and vulnerable? Could we have a civil discourse on this issue?

Kathryn and Robert Swegart, Rome ME

Agape’s response: We at Agape don’t write consistently on abortion in Servant Song, yet we oppose abortion on the grounds of ahimsa, non-injury in thought, word and deed. We are grateful for the challenge.

We have a chapter on abortion and pro-life feminism in *Loving Life on the Margins*. As nonviolent Christians, we embrace reverence for life at all of its stages, including opposition to abortion, the death penalty, and war. A consistent life ethic includes violence inflicted on the environment and all living creatures.

We invite our readers to engage in inter-community dialogue on abortion. Please send comments to Agape.

Daily Trials in Haiti

by Nancy James

Haiti is once again in disruption through street gangs and road blocks, shutting the country down all last week. Steve and I drove alone from Port au Prince, after picking up our truck at the Nissan dealer/mechanic, spending \$4,000 for repairs. We stalled twice on our trip back needing to be pushed from behind to pop the clutch to get it going again. It was completely dark as we got over and down the mountain, driving on fumes until right before Limbe. We found another friend who sold and stored gallons of fuel at his house!

Nancy and Steve James are Agape co-founders and missionaries in Haiti for over 36 years

I never throw away copies of “Servant Song” I ponder over articles, i.e., summer/fall 2018, especially the Vision statement of the Elder-Spirit group. At 81 years old, I am working to “keep the fire burning”.

I empathized with your discerning Agape’s future, a prophetic and needed witness to our world. I take a sabbatical in spring in the Arizona desert for solitude and to unencumber my soul. Changes are all about us. We find our peace in the enduring love of our God. With fond memories and grateful prayers.

Sister Antonelle Chunka, an old friend of Brayton and Suzanne, a Felician sister, has been ministering to immigrants and prisoners for over 40 years in New Jersey



When Great Trees Fall

Great souls die and
our reality, bound to
them, takes leave of us.
Our souls,
dependent upon their
nurture,
now shrink, wizened.
Our minds, formed
and informed by their
radiance, fall away.
We are not so much maddened
as reduced to the unutterable ignorance of
dark, cold
caves.
And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed.

– Maya Angelou
Excerpted and dedicated to Great Soul
Friends of Agape who have died.

SILENCE | from page 1

pay the price. Starting today, we must put the well-being of our eco-system before our technology and mimic nature’s design. Nothing can be hurried; nothing hoarded.

How do we achieve this natural world design in the short ten to twenty year “change or die” time-frame? How to begin this Great Work, nothing less than the greatest challenge humans could ever have imagined facing?

Consider this:

As Americans let’s begin by putting ourselves on a ten to twenty year plan. By the end of twenty years, can each of us pledge to have eliminated our use of fossil fuel? Our summons to survival is known: In 20 years we must phase out all gas driven cars and trucks which totals 20% of our carbon footprint. Think of the internal combustion engine as the worst ecological mistake we ever made next to using oil at all. By 2030, can we take trains instead of airplanes? We now have the capacity to run trains, trucks and cars on solar electric-

ity and other renewables.

Pope Francis writes in Laudato Si, “Where profits alone count there can be no thinking of the rhythms of nature... climate is a common good.” Millions of us Americans must resist fossil fuel industries by withdrawing all economic support. Stop buying their product gets the quickest results. Gradually work through surrendering the fear and pain of giving up oil, gas and coal. 100 fossil fuel companies account for 70% of all greenhouse gases. Resist fossil fuel companies by changing yourself.

Beginning to feel overwhelmed? Turn to prayer; pray for supernatural courage; pray to the forces of good that are greater than you. Ask the force of Divine love to fill you with supernatural, God-enabled steadfastness to face the extinctions which we have helped to create. Do not be tempted to rely on your own will alone to survive. Simply, put we will not make it. Humans are at our best, not in denial or complacency, but in reality and extremity. We need to surrender our own will and let God work within. Keep praying. Pray for

miracles and miraculous powers to stand fast in spite of the odds. Our fears have said their prayers; now we must act in faith.

American rugged individualism and isolated self-contained nuclear families will not survive well by the twenty year deadline. We must begin (by 2020 at the latest), to escape the loneliness and isolation of mainstream American culture into more collective thinking, inhabiting shared living space. Start nonviolent ecological, intentional peace communities and movements.

Soon we will see our loner lifestyle is too carbon-spewing and expensive. As extreme weather continues, being isolated will be too dangerous. We must use solar energy to power our living spaces. Research indicates that 69 percent of our power could be solar, 18 percent wind by 2050. Begin now to find a way to afford solar. Painful sacrifices will wake us up. Remember the ten to twenty year window. It’s non-negotiable.

22% of all greenhouse gases are caused by animal farming and meat-eating.

Give up all meat consumption; lose excess weight and feel reborn as you assimilate the life force of plant foods. 60 billion animals are killed in the US every year; 55 billion for our food alone. Stop trapping these defenseless beings in slaughter house pens and force feeding them. Instead, be a friend to all animals. They are our companions in endangerment.

Educate, educate, educate—yourself and others. Read seminal books and learn from the authorities the current ecological wisdom. Memorize the facts and live the solutions. We cannot know how to change without the accurate data of climate science and the current condition of the planet.

As we begin together this historic campaign of human/earth survival, remember that it is a daily spiritual practice. Settle into feeling the awe of our own divine nature; learn to love all animal and plant life as we love ourselves. Experience landscape as space which is beloved and allow the raw sustainable rhythm of earth to evoke her true Divine Rhapsody.

In Memoriam: John Firman

Our community lost a good friend, John Firmin, whose partner, Dinah Starr, has been a dear friend for over 40 years. An excerpt from John’s obituary website: “John believed in importance of public service, his legal career focused in the areas of civil rights, consumer law and disability law. A vibrant presence, with a sense of adventure, and a love of life, John’s humor was ineffable, inimitable, ranging from the outrageous to the transcendent.” Memorial service for Cambridge Friends Quaker Meeting, Sat. July 27 at 2 pm.



Springfield College Students haul in wood during a May retreat on sustainable living



Olivia Coates, Brayton and Suzanne’s granddaughter (right) with Aza, as they make friends with newts after a rainfall on the Springfield College retreat:

Save the Date!!!

Agape’s 37th Anniversary

Celebrating 30 Years of Francis Day

Saturday, Oct. 5th—10 am

Book signing and reading from:
“Loving Life on the Margins”

by Brayton Shanley and Suzanne Belote Shanley

Solar Energy and electric car demonstrations:
Steve and Janice Kurkoski;
Talks on Climate Change;
Tours of Straw Bale House, garden, Hermitage.

Music by Fran Reagan and
Harry Duchesne and Agape Drummers

Panel: Young activists:
What is the future of Sustainable,
Nonviolent Community?

Bring brown bag lunch.
Rain or shine.

Co-sponsors Pax Christi,
Nehemiah Community; Just Faith;
Traprock Peace Center.

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Calendar

June 8: 9 am – 5 pm—Annual Agape Workday: “Come Back to the Land” ! Help us to get the wood hauled, split and stacked. We need to get the garden in to feed and nourish all who come to Agape. Bring your lunch and pot-luck offering.
Rain date: Saturday, June 15th...call Agape for details

June 10th: 7 pm. Book signing and Agape 40 year retrospective: Loving Life on the Margins: The Story of the Agape Community at Mustard Seed Catholic Worker 93 Piedmont St. Worcester, MA

July 27th: Memorial service for John Firmin, partner of Dinah Starr, Cambridge Friends Meeting, 2 pm

August 2-5th: Book signing and talks by Suzanne and Brayton at LaSalette Shrine, Enfield, NH, 410 NH Route 4A Enfield, MA.
Contact Fr. John Sullivan at the LaSalette Community for details: 603-632-4301.

Oct. 5th: 10 am – 5 pm: 37th Anniversary of Agape/30th Annual St. Francis Day.

November 9th: Pax Christi Fall Assembly, Northeast, St. John’s High School, Danvers, MA. Focus is on Environmental Sustainability and Laudato Si. Contact Charles Gobron for further details: 774-270-2442. Book signing of Loving Life on the Margins.