

Who We Are:

Scott Albrecht, Former Chaplain, U.S. Military and Third Order Franciscan, BA, MA in Applied Theology, Faith Based Peace Activist. Scott and his wife Maria have accompanied homeless men and women at various times over the past 17 years. Maria Albrecht, IT Manager, Third Order Franciscan; PGCE and a Diploma in Compassionate Ministry from the Diocese of Chicago in the USA. The Albrecht family consists of Scott and Maria and their children, Shoshannah, Christian, Justin and Francis. We currently live with two full-time Interns, Mirjam Johansson and Anna Blomgren, both from Sweden. They bring with them many gifts and skills which are greatly appreciated.



The Albrecht Family: Scott (holding Bertie), Justin, Maria and Francis.

What We Do:

The Catholic Worker Farm takes its inspiration from the international Catholic Worker movement founded by Dorothy Day in New York (1930's). The Catholic Worker seeks to live out Catholic social teaching through practicing the Works of Mercy. "For I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me into your house..." The CWF provides full-time accommodation, food, English lessons,



counselling and other services for 8 destitute (without access to public funds) female asylum seekers and their children, at no cost.

All of the women are street homeless and are referred to us by the Red Cross, Jesuit, Notre Dame and Praxis Refugee Services. We have also received women from Advance for Women, The Helen Bamber Trust (for victims of torture) and The Poppy Project (for trafficked women). We live with our guests full time and share common living areas. Our guests are not required to pay for this and we only receive women who are not entitled to government funding, state benefits or to work. We are not salaried or stipended but rely on Maria's income and donations; supplementing our expenses from our personal savings when necessary. We work to maintain a large organic garden and Veg Box scheme to help sustain our household.

C.W. FARM NEEDS —

- Financial donations to sustain and increase our work
- Food, especially juice, milk, cheese, butter, cooking oil, sugar and flour.
- Toilet paper,
- Help in the garden, cleaning, cooking or DIY
- People to engage in Vigils, participate in "Round Table Discussions"
- Prayer—Without this, all the rest is useless

Roundtable Discussions

Every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month, 7.30pm. Call 07983477819 for more details.

Binding the Strongman

A radical study of Mark's Gospel. Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month, 7.30pm. Call 07983477819 for more details.

Advent 2009



"Love in all Sincerity"

The Catholic Worker Farm

A Community of the London Catholic Worker

Lynsters Farm, Old Uxbridge Road, West Hyde, Hertfordshire, WD3 9XJ
Hm. 01923 777201 Mob. 07983477819 Web Site: www.thecatholicworkerfarm.org
E-mail: thecatholicworkerfarm@yahoo.co.uk

IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY ROOMS

"The cry of the poor" has never been as loud as it is now.

At first, and after each phone call, when the Red Cross mediated the plea of a poor woman with *no recourse to public funds* I wept. These women were not entitled to Housing Benefit or employment and therefore accommodation – excluded even from night shelters. I had been told by the Red Cross key worker that she had tried approximately 50 places for the Congolese woman to rest her head.

One of our newer guests gave me a list of accommodation providers for destitute women which they received from another asylum service provider. I expected to see many houses, many rooms listed. There were of course The Sisters of Charity, there was also another shelter which; although I couldn't remember the name I knew should, then there was our sister community Dorothy Day House and finally there was us. How deeply disturbing this was to see. It put us in context. How often I have had to respond to The Red Cross's telephone calls with the words, "I am really sorry but we have no room".

The words I speak so often make me feel like the Innkeeper at the time and place of the Holy Family's exile from their homeland, the word "no" actually creating poverty history. I think of Mary's *Fiat*, always a "yes", always a "let it be done" to God and for us poor ones. When reading Matthew and Luke's narratives we would like to think of ourselves as either Joseph or Mary carefully walking the rugged path to Egypt, protecting, listening, following, guiding, and searching for that sheltered accommodation. Instead I feel ashamed that I am not more like Christ who said to his disciples, "In my Father's house there are many rooms. I, like most people, turn my back on the poor. *Cont...*



Cont...

So now I turn to an older cultural context. Therefore a few thoughts about Pharaoh and Caesar are appropriate. The word Pharaoh, meaning "Great House", later came to signify kings. Pharaoh oppressed the Sons of Israel and God heard the cry of the Hebrew slaves. While Moses was raised in the House of Pharaoh he soon left and became the liberator of the Hebrews. Many wanted to return to Pharaohs house and the land of Egypt.

The Caesars were also a house, a family branch of the "Iulian" clan, supposedly descendants of Romulus and Remus the founders of Rome. The Gospel echoes a few of the Caesars demands upon the first century Judeans'. "Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.", "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee." The New Testament writers set the readers up for the inauguration of a new kingdom in the context of the old, Gods reign.

There were 14 Caesars in Rome and 332 known Pharaohs in Egypt. In the past few century's the Kaisers and the Tsars or Csars considered themselves heirs of the same kind of imperial legacy. Recipients of a tradition of violence and oppression; legitimated by religion.

"The cry of the poor" has never been as loud as it is now. Can we hear it in our own cultural context? Can we hear the cries of the oppressed; those 15-20 million people in debt bondage, or our 2.4 million brothers and sisters who have been sex trafficked? Can we see our 9.8 million friends that are enslaved and exploited by private agencies or our 2.5 million children who are forced to work by the state or by rebel military groups? Can we feel the crushing blows of a domination system like that of the Caesars Dynasty? Are we living comfortably in the House of Pharaoh or perhaps safely under the umbrella of the latest Empire? I know that I am.

Whether it is in Pharaohs courts or in Caesars household there are not many rooms for the poor. And when there are, they will always be filled with the rich, the next in line or those who can give good payback.

"Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid." But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the

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Picture of Dorian Gray", for RM7.90 or a Dover Thift edition of Nietzsche's "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" for not much more. So whether one is looking for a good story with excellent quotes or a serious piece of philosophy, the door is open as long as one says "No!" to overpriced beverages!

And if the books at regular bookstore chains seem too expensive -- because they often are -- it is time to hunt for second-hand stores where one can get excellent bargains and own a book with a history beyond simply being rolled off the press some weeks or months ago before being shipped around and placed on a nice shelf in Borders. A friend of mine recently bought a early 20th century hardback copy of Pride and Prejudice for a mere £2.50. The ideas and enjoyment imparted to previous readers of the book form a beautiful genealogy.

Better still, just join a library and read the books there free or almost for free. The money you save from buying beverages will pay for your transport and membership dues.

Once again, I'd like to emphasize that I'm choosing 'beverages' as the target merely as a polemical device. This idea applies to all forms of unnecessary spending, whether on food, clothes, electronics or whatever. I do, however, wish to retain 'books' as the singular alternative to these frivolous manifestations of consumerism.

A revolution in ideas starts with the action of refusing to be a thoughtless consumer and instead choosing to pick up a piece of writing that has the power to change one's thoughts, perspectives, and even one's entire life. As I wrote not too long ago, "Revolutions / they change the way one acts / and consequently how one thinks."

Let's revolt against a robotic life of one-dimensionality!
Let's begin to lead examined lives!

Recommended Reading List.

- Jesus the Rebel by Fr John Dear.
- Passion for Peace by Thomas Merton.
- Binding the Strongman by Ched Myers.
- Loaves and Fishes by Dorothy Day.
- Engaging the Powers by Walter Wink.
- Mutual Aid by Peter Kropotkin.
- Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger by Ronald J Sider.

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Knowledge Not Caffeine!

Books Not Beverages: A Call to Action!

Soo Tian Lee

In the past decades various movements have sprung up to highlight the bankruptcy of focusing one's attention on a particular thing to the detriment of another which is far more beneficial. The most famous ones include Food Not Bombs and Homes Not Jails.

Today, however, a new movement is needed. The battlefield in which this fight takes place is the world of consumerism, that is, the realm of how we spend our money in daily life. The symbolic target of my critique are corporations that serve hot and cold beverages either at prices which are ridiculously out of the reach of anyone but the middle class and above -- as in Third World countries like Malaysia -- or at prices which seem reasonable but in reality add up to a large sum of cash flowing out of our pockets -- such as in the West. So in essence I am taking aim at Starbucks, Costa, the Coffee Bean, Café Nero, and their ilk.

My argument is simple: if we spent the money we use to purchase beverages on books, we would gain so much more.

Some of us purchase such drinks on a daily basis, for example on the way to work or university. Imagine what would happen if we said, "No, I will not have a Cafe Latte at the Costa on Marchmont Street today, but I'll instead walk across the road to Skoob Books and spend the money saved on a nice second-hand book in the bargain section."

Statistical diversion: A latte at your average Costa outlet costs at least £2, and the books at the bargain section of Skoob are all £2 and below. I bought a copy of *Pride and Prejudice* for 50p.

Yes, coffee can give one pleasure in life. All addictive things are like that. But instead of getting hooked on caffeine, one should cultivate a love of literary beauty, knowledge and wisdom.

However, most of us (especially in Malaysia) only enter such coffee chains on a very infrequent basis, and it is akin to treating oneself to a luxury. But bear in mind, a Venti (large) Cappuccino at Starbucks costs RM12. Pushing that away and taking a walk to a bookstore instead will allow one to get a nice Penguin classic, let's say Oscar Wilde's "The

lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

When we started the Catholic Worker Farm we discerned that we would only take in 3 homeless Asylum Seekers. We discerned wrong. We based our decision on fear rather than upon love. As time went on we took in 4, then, 5, then 6, then 7 and now 8 ladies. *Lord, in your Fathers House there are many rooms. Forgive us for the times that we have refused the poor. In doing so we have refused You our Lord and Saviour. Increase our love for those who suffer and are marginalised by ourselves and our government.*

Scott Albrecht



Thoughts from a Citizenship Class

Love is,
after all,
not such a
small or
unimportant
thing.

"...And when you're a citizen in a European Union country, you have the right to travel and stay and work in any country throughout the union." The women sitting in front of me are nodding in acceptance as I tell them this. They seem to be painfully aware of the fact. A mixture of anger and guilt rises in me; how can it be that our rights and opportunities are still so different depending on where we were born? Do I deserve to stay in England any more than these struggling asylum seekers

who are with me in this room? I try to reassemble my mind and getting on with the teaching on Britain's political governance, thinking "After all this is why I came here; anger about our unjust world and a desire both to struggle to amend the system and to care for its victims."

This happened an evening in September a few weeks after I came here from Sweden and started my internship at the Catholic Worker Farm. We had our weekly Citizenship Class, and doing this workshop on how Britain works and how it is to live here is one of our tasks as interns. During the past months I have probably learnt more from these classes than any of the ladies. We always first read from the "Life in the UK" book and then prepare a teaching session from a certain passage. It is also a challenge to make a workshop with people with so different experiences and knowledge of the English language and society. Despite this we have had many joyful and interesting moments together discussing the ways things work in Britain and sharing our notions and frames of reference.

I do find it a bit ironic that both Mirjam and I are coming straight from Sweden to teach asylum seekers about Britain. But it usually works out very well and the fact that I am also an

Give me a heart...

Lord Jesus,
While I sail on
Over the troubled waters of my life,
Give me the contentment of knowing
That I have, as a compass,
A heart that will bring me to love's harbour.

Give me a HEART OF POVERTY,
Able to love and open up and give myself
to others.

Give me a HEART OF PATIENCE,
Able to love and live in hope.

Give me a HEART OF PEACEFULNESS,
Able to love and sow peace in the world.

Give me a HEART OF JUSTICE,
Able to love and measure myself by the
standard of justice.

Give me a HEART OF MERCIFULNESS,
Able to love and understand and forgive
others.

Give me a HEART OF SENSITIVITY,
Able to love and weep without being
discouraged.

Give me a HEART OF PURITY,
Able to love and see God in everyone.

Give me a HEART OF STRENGTH,
Able to love and be faithful unto death.

Give me a HEART TOUCHED BY THE
GOSPEL,
Able to love.



"What we would like to do is change the world--make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. And, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, the poor, of the destitute--the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, in other words--we can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing we can do but love, and, dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbour, to love our enemy as our friend."

Dorothy Day

“Love in all Sincerity”

The Catholic Worker Farm

Lynsters Farm, Old Uxbridge Road, West Hyde, Hertfordshire, WD3 9XJ
Home 01923 777201 Mobile 07983477819

MONTHLY STANDING ORDER FORM FOR A COMMITTED GIVER

Please complete this form and return to:

The Catholic Worker Farm, Lynsters Farm, Old Uxbridge Rd., West Hyde, Herts, WD3 9XJ

Your Bank Information

To the Manager (Your Bank).....
Bank Address (in full)
.....
Your Sort Code
Your Account Number.....
Your Account Name
Your Roll Number (for Building Societies).....

Your Personal Information:

Name.....
Address.....
Town.....
County.....
Post Code.....
Telephone.....Email

Please accept this mandate as my authority to make the following **monthly** payment (Standing Order) of:

£5 _____ (Please Tick Here) £10 _____ (Please Tick Here)

£20 _____ (Please Tick Here) Other Amount _____

Total Annual payment £ _____

This is to be paid now and thereafter monthly. This replaces any previous instruction in favour of The Catholic Worker Farm until countermanded by me/us.

Beneficiary: The Catholic Worker Farm
Bank: Lloyds TSB
Address: Lloyds TSB St. Albans (309725)
Account Number: 00727903
Sort Code: 30-97-25

Signed Page:8 Date.....

Alternatively you may send a cheque to the above address –

immigrant sometimes raises my sense of equality with the ladies here, despite the dramatic difference in our positions that sometimes becomes very clear. In fact, only the children in this house were born in the UK, the rest of us have come from different parts of the world. It gives me a special sense of community when everybody around the dinner table starts interrupting each other with “but in my country...”.

So, apart from all the gardening and anti-war campaigning and Bible studying that has also been very instructive and delightful, I must say that the most valuable part of my experience here has been the encounters and relationships with people. The stories of the women that come to stay here always touch my heart and sometimes what they’ve been forced to go through really makes me upset. Often I wish I was able to do much more to change things and to help them, when the only possibility is to show my love and care. But when I try to see it from the divine perspective, I feel that love is after all not such a small or unimportant thing.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. [...] And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Cor 13:1-3;13, NIV)



Anna Blomgren

Offsetting Indifference

"There is
no
Holiness
but social
holiness"

Each holding a bunch of red heart shaped balloons Christian Hunt and Alex Randall are walking the streets trying to convince people to join their campaign Cheatneutral.com.

The basic idea is about offsetting infidelity and is described on their website as follows: "*When you cheat on your partner you add to the heartbreak, pain and jealousy in the atmosphere.*

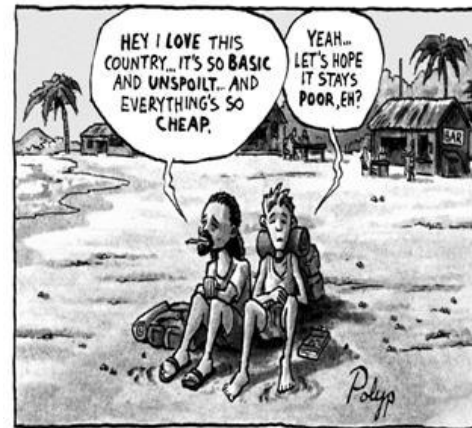
Cheatneutral offsets your cheating by funding someone else to be faithful and NOT cheat. This neutralises the pain and unhappy emotion and leaves you with a clear conscience." In other words you can either join as a project to get funding for being faithful or you can pay Cheatneutral.com to cheat on your partner and then Cheatneutral.com will pay someone else to be faithful for you. In this way the total level of broken hearts in the world doesn't go up.

The whole idea is thoroughly bizarre and – although real is still a joke, a joke which highlights the fact that Carbon Offsetting is also a joke. It is not difficult to make the connection and see the same absurdity in paying for the right to carry on emitting carbon.

It took me a little longer however to come to think of something we do which might be called offsetting indifference. We send money to charities so that they can care for destitute people for us. Convenient, isn't it? I don't think it is bad, but I do think there is something better. Jesus said "*You will always have the poor among you...*" (*John 12:8*) but they are not among us. This is not God's plan for a civil society. "*There is no Holiness but social holiness*" (*John Wesley*). They are dissociated from us both physically and mentally. To "buy away" the responsibility of loving my brothers and sisters is to make myself a disservice. I think that by letting the stories of their lives touch me a change in my heart can occur which I desire.

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Huddled up in my bed in the upstairs room of the Catholic Worker



Farm house pondering about life I can hear St Teresa of Avila's words echoing in my head "...to ascend to the mansion of your heart's desire it is not so important to think a lot, as to love a lot."

Sometimes going downstairs to see if any of our guests needs me requires a little bit of self sacrifice. However I have so far never regretted it when I've chosen to try to love instead of think. And I wonder if I, after all, may

need them more than they need me. Tired of my own thoughts, I want to learn to love more. I don't always find it easy, but as I am writing this I realise I cannot think of any better place to be in order to learn to love and strive to conform my will to the will of God.

Talking to one of our guests about her life all my problems and worries seem so silly and insignificant. When I share this with her I expect a response like "One should not compare like that, your problems may be important for you", but instead she brutally tells me "No, you have no problems". Sometimes understanding and compassion is not what I need to get a better understanding and to feel compassion.

I have always been taught that love is not a feeling, but when Jesus cured the man with leprosy (Mk. 1:41) he was "moved with compassion", some texts say "moved with anger". Curing the man was not something he did with indifference only because he knew it was right. In my experience, when I feel the love for another person swirling around in my body, it certainly helps me to see more clearly, to be more honest and to reach further. But lack of that feeling is no excuse for not acting in a loving way.

This community provides many opportunities of reflecting upon my own intentions. Sometimes I doubt whether I want to live with "the poor" because I love them or because I believe it is the right thing to do. But no matter what the answer is I guess I should continue for I don't doubt that God loves them immensely more than I do and he would never even consider paying someone else to do it for him.

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Mirjam Johansson