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Ordinary Time  
Moving into Lent  
February 2025

# Magnificat



*Now, Master, you can  
dismiss your servant in peace*

Dear Friends,

Birmingham has wavered from very cold winter to very warm spring in the last few weeks. Today is spring, and we hope it will last a while for the benefit of our friends on the streets. Our minds and hearts are sad, though, watching what's happening with the new administration. We don't endorse any political party, and we have major disagreements with both the Republicans and the Democrats, but the current administration is beyond all bounds in its attempts to roll back protections for vulnerable people, for the environment, and for poor folks. There seems to be no mercy at all and, in what amounts to a coup, no attempt to observe the Constitution or any form of government. Perhaps this is the fall of the US empire. As expected, it's the vulnerable people who suffer first.

Mary's House, meanwhile, continues. We are again meeting with possible guests to see if what we can offer meets their needs. We're still vigiling with our array of signs for peace and justice - we've added "no mass deportations" and a few more signs calling for an end to the occupation of Palestine.

We still help with the street meal on Sunday afternoons, and that's a high point for those of us who can make it. It's a very simple, pop-up type hot meal, made at home by one of us. We also make lunches to give out for later, although I notice that many people eat them right then. And we have socks (thanks to Woodlawn UMC and 'Socktober'), underwear, toiletries, and whatever warm things we can find to share. No forms to fill out, no tests, just serving whoever comes until we're out of supplies.

We get to know some of the folks because they come almost every week. Some of our friends are actually housed, but once they pay for their housing they can't afford to eat. Housing is getting scarcer and more expensive, so more people are being forced onto the streets, or friends' couches, or the backseats of their cars.

This is a serious time. Please read what we're sharing and help in whatever way you can to resist the hateful trends in power today. And please consider coming to our retreat with Alan Storey, which will be a source of strength and inspiration for us all.

*God's peace,  
Shelley D*

## LENTEN RETREAT WITH ALAN STORY

### MARTIN LUTHER KING FOR OUR TIMES

7 PM FRIDAY APRIL 4 TO 8:30 PM SATURDAY APRIL 5

#### A Letter From Alan:



Friends, I am so looking forward to being with you in April. As you know, April 4 marks the day of Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968. A Good-Friday-kind-of-day where the powers fearfully and greedily collaborated to kill the Dream of a just and merciful world by killing an enfleshed incarnation of the Dream. They did not believe that "truth crushed to earth will rise again" or that "no lie can live forever."

Exactly a year before MLK was killed he spoke at Riverside Church on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1967. I hold this speech entitled 'Beyond Vietnam' as sacred text. It is as important today as it ever was. The warnings and promises remain. For this reason on the first evening of our retreat, on the 4<sup>th</sup> April, we will engage this sacred text together and for the rest of the retreat we will be marching arm in arm with King, the biblical text, and our context today.

I have been asked by a number of people in the States: "What must we do now that Donald Trump is president?" In reply I invite them to remember the date of the inauguration.... It took place on MLK Day which is a massive hint on what we must do now. First, we must remember that we are not living in Trump world. We are living in God's world. We are not living in the days of Trump but rather in the days of MLK. Second, we all need to study MLK principles and practice what he preached. The world groans for the followers of non-violence to be revealed. (This would be true if a Democrat had been inaugurated as well.) MLK said as much in multitudes of his speeches, that both Red and Blue had fallen short of the glory of justice and mercy.

In a number of MLK speeches he would end with these words of en-courage-ment. Inspiring people to "keep moving amid every mountain of opposition. If you will do that with dignity the historians will have to look back and say, "There lived a great people". Get it? There lived a GREAT people. We can be a Great people AGAIN.

Calm and courage to you all. See you on April 4<sup>th</sup>.

Alan

Rooted in the South African context, Alan is a storyteller and facilitator of personal and political change. A Methodist minister for 33 years who lived off weekly words he is now exploring silence, stillness and solitude - while writing. He has just finished *The bell, banners and blasphemy*. His lifelong work remains the experimental practice of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. His hope is to help "heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights." (Preamble to the SA Constitution)

Alan's book will be available at the retreat.

Place: Avondale United Methodist Church, 500 40<sup>th</sup> St. S, Birmingham 35222

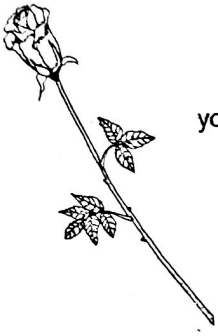
To register: email [shelleymdouglass@gmail.com](mailto:shelleymdouglass@gmail.com)

Cost: \$65 for the retreat including meals; plentiful scholarships available

Lodging: those who are willing to sleep on the floor can stay at the church; there are showers available there. Please let us know if you plan to stay there!

IMPORTANT: NO DROP-INS DURING THIS RETREAT; EACH SESSION BUILDS ON THE LAST ONE.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY / OR WATCH DR KING'S /



"Love has never been a popular movement. And no one's ever wanted, really, to be free. The world is held together, really it is held together, by the love and the passion of a very few people. Otherwise, of course, you can despair. Walk down the street of any city, any afternoon, and look around you. What you've got to remember is what you're looking at is also you. Everyone you're looking at is also you. You could be that person. You could be that monster, you could be that cop. And you have to decide, in yourself, not to be."

- James Baldwin

## Love Has Never Been a Popular Movement

This quote came to me by way of Instagram, an old black and white clip of James Baldwin in conversation. I think about it a lot. Ahead of Valentine's Day, you would think that love is the most popular movement with red hearts and candies decorating stores everywhere. But turn on the television or open the news, and you will find something different altogether.

If I walk down the street of my city today, maybe I would see an ICE agent hauling away a migrant with television cameras looking on. To listen to Baldwin, I should remember that this is also me. I could be that ICE Agent. Or I could be that migrant in handcuffs. Or maybe I would be the one with the camera, collecting footage enough to make a good paycheck. Or maybe I could be the news anchor celebrating the footage in the name of "justice".

Do we really want to be free?

I don't know the exact path to that kind of freedom, but I know we can't get there alone. If the world really is held together by the love and passion of a very few people, it's hard to believe they are working in isolation. Because one cannot sustain the kind of love and passion that hold the world together alone. They're likely clustered in small groups, like the one at Mary's House.

I stumbled into Mary's House in 2016, overwhelmed by how our country could have gotten so much smaller and meaner. Little did I know the heartache the pandemic and election cycles ahead would bring!

Throughout, it has been the community at Mary's House that has kept me going, keeping my heart from also becoming smaller and meaner. Sure we can despair, but there are hungry people to be fed. Things can seem hopeless, but there's a bedroom that needs to be readied for a new guest.

I can't claim it's our love and passion holding the world together. We may not be doing a good job, if that's the case! But together we are refusing to participate in the forces that are tearing the world apart, and we build up the bits we can. Together. We keep a flicker of hope alive, and our door is always open to anyone that might stumble in.

Ashley McCormick



**Ashley McCormick** is a board member of Mary's House. She currently lives in Leeds, AL with her husband and four children. Ashley writes a Substack newsletter called Back to the Garden where she writes about her beloved garden: [backtothegarden.substack.com](https://backtothegarden.substack.com)

## Our Manifesto Is The Sermon On The Mount.

Jesus led a movement. The manifesto of his movement was the Sermon on the Mount. (Or the Plain, depending on whether you're reading Matthew or Luke.) The manifesto begins poetically, with the Beatitudes. 'Happy are the poor, the mourners, the meek, those who hunger for justice, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers' - it sounds lovely. 'And those who are persecuted for following this way.' Wait, what?? Why would anyone persecute those blessed happy people who are meek, who hunger for justice, who want peace?

Read the fine print! The followers of this way are supposed to love their enemies, do good to those who hate them, and pray for those who mistreat them. While holding that attitude, they're supposed to resist any evil being done, resist with creative nonviolence. (See Walter Wink, *Jesus in South Africa* or *Engaging the Powers*) Besides that, they're supposed to share open-handedly with anyone in need, and to trust Providence for what they need themselves. Oh - and not judge! (That's really hard right now.) Don't judge, or you'll be judged. Remember that your own failings cloud your vision of others' faults. And show mercy. They're supposed to show mercy to others.

How will they be judged? Check the end of Matthew 25: "Whatever you did to the least of these, you did to me."

That's our manifesto. To the best of our ability we will

Protest and resist anything that violates the human dignity of our sisters and brothers: deportations, encampment sweeps, dehumanizing legislation, and so on.

Protest and resist the use of violence through military power against our citizens or those of other countries.

Share resources with our friends on the street and support efforts to uphold human dignity for everyone and work to build community in any way we can.

Shelley D  
for Mary's House

## CATHOLIC WORKER ROOTS

In her book *From Union Square To Rome* (1938) Dorothy wrote:

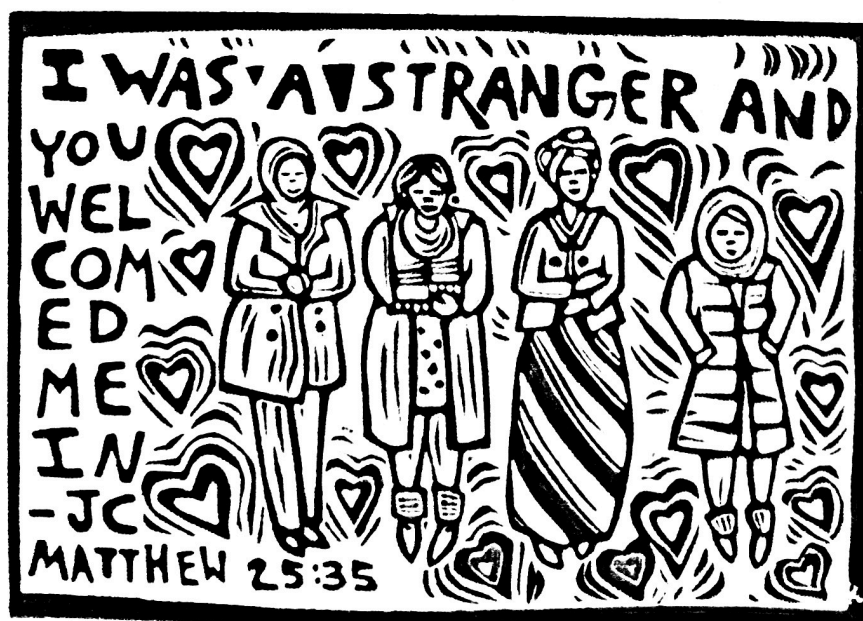
My criticism of Christians in the past, and it *still* holds true of too many of them, is that they in fact deny God and reject Him. "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt 25:40), Christ said, and today there are Christians who affront Christ in the Negro, in the poor Mexican, the Italian, yes and the Jew. Catholics believe that man is the temple of the Holy Ghost, that he is made to the image and likeness of God. We believe that of Jew and Gentile. We believe that all men are members or potential members of the Mystical Body of Christ and since there is no time with God, we must so consider each man whether he is atheist, Jew, or Christian.

You ask do we really believe it, when we see our fellows herded like brutes in municipal lodging houses, tramping the streets and roads hungry, working at starvation wages or under an inhuman speed-up, living in filthy degrading conditions. Seeing many Christians denying Him, hating Him in the poor, is it any wonder a heresy has sprung up denying Him in word and deed?

The first commandment is that we should love the Lord our God. We can only show our love for God by our love for our fellows. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not?" (1 John 4:20)

Quoted in *Dorothy Day: Spiritual Writings*, selected & introduced by Robert Ellsberg; Orbis, 2024

Dorothy wrote this in 1938 and her language reflects her time. I didn't try to change it.



Sarah Fuller



## WE ALWAYS HAVE NEEDS



We need your prayers these days especially! For justice, for peace, for hope, for our guests, for our friends on the street.

We need money - for house expenses, for food and toiletries for our friends on the street, for the occasional motel room for people we can't accommodate at the house, for all kinds of unexpected needs.

In-kind donations are also welcome! For once we have enough toilet tissue, but we need paper towels and napkins. We especially need supplies for the street meals: variety packs of snack size chip bags, individual servings of fruit cocktail, individual servings of pudding or other desserts like cupcakes, cookies, etc. Also gently used clothing - T shirts, jeans/slacks, sweatshirts, warm clothes, twin size blankets, sox and shoes, small sizes of toiletries, and baby wipes, preferably the 50 piece Parents Choice kind which sell for a buck a package.

We thank you for your generosity which keeps us going! Thanks to our regular donors, our once-in-a-while donors, those we know and those we don't know, and those who help with the meal on the street in person or by donating food and supplies.

Thanks to St Peter's and St. Mark's for their ongoing support. Thanks to Woodlawn UMC for all the socks, and thanks to St Peter's Human Concerns Committee for all the blankets.

Special thanks to Sarah Fuller for the use of her art work.

Mary's House only works as a community - none of us could do what we do without all of us. Thank you!

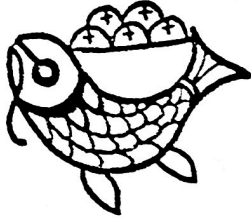
AND JOIN US:



If you'd like to help with the street meal by preparing lunches, donating supplies, or helping to serve, please email [shelleymdouglass@gmail.com](mailto:shelleymdouglass@gmail.com).

To vigil with us, just come to Five Points South on Wednesday morning at 7:30 or Saturday evening at 5 pm. We have signs to share.

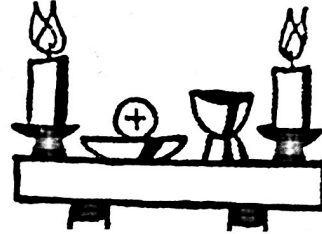
To vigil against the death penalty, join us any time from 4:30 to 6pm on any execution day, at Arrington & Woods N. We have signs to share.



## PRAY AND ACT WITH US

FIRST FRIDAY MASSES, 6:30 pm followed by potluck supper & conversation; everyone welcome. We have lots of toys for kids! Bring a dish for the potluck if you can.

February 7, Fr Hugo Esparza CP celebrates  
March 7, Fr Joe Culotta celebrates  
No Mass April 4 - join us for our retreat  
May 2, Fr Phil Paxton CP celebrates  
June 6, Fr Frank Muscolino celebrates  
July 4, Fr Joe Culotta celebrates



VIGILS FOR PEACE & JUSTICE, every Wednesday from 7:30 to 8:30 am and every Saturday from 5 to 6 pm, at Five Points South in Birmingham  
Vigil against the death penalty on the day of any execution, 4:30 to 6 pm at the corner of Arrington and Woods North (by the art museum and county courthouse), Birmingham.

LENTEN RETREAT: 7 pm Friday April 4 - 8:30 pm April 5<sup>th</sup>  
ALAN STOREY will lead us in exploring Dr Martin Luther King's lessons for today's difficult times. See inside for more information.

Mary's House  
2107 Ave. G  
Birmingham, AL 35218