

## House News, June 2008

This year our celebration of Holy Week and Easter involved hospitality, resistance and worship, just as it should in a Catholic Worker community! On the Wednesday of Holy Week we joined other Oxford peace people to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the illegal war on Iraq. We gathered in the city centre and held a silent witness to pray for the dead and hand out leaflets. We had large signs to show what we were about and received some good responses from passers by. On Holy Thursday Susan went to London to join a Voices witness on a walk through central London, calling for the arrest of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown for war crimes. The group was dressed as judges and carried a large banner. Again, the response was positive.

Daniel and Susan worshipped together and in their own churches during the Easter Triduum. On Good Friday the Oxford Catholic Worker community joined other Christians for the traditional Cowley Road Stations of the Cross. On Easter Sunday we had a celebratory lunch with our guests and other visitors.

On Easter Monday Daniel, Miriam, Susan and two friends of Susan's, Theresa and Caroline, went with thousands of others to Aldermaston to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first CND London to Aldermaston march. It was a great occasion, and some of the participants had been on the

original march. One of them, our friend Virginia Brookes, was there this time with her daughter and grandchildren.

We continue to be blessed by the presence of our three guests, who teach us so much about patient endurance. The room we have set aside for emergency use has been used, and we feel it was a good move to create such a space. The people who have occupied it have been in precarious positions and their courage again inspires us. More and more, our guests - long term and short term - are taking part in the life of the community by cooking for everyone and sharing household tasks. We even had our first community outing last week when two of our guests shared with us a typical Oxford experience, a punting trip on the River Cherwell. We invited everyone to join us but one guest had a hospital appointment and the other was practising a work of mercy, visiting the sick. The weather was grey and muggy but all the time we were on the river it was very peaceful, and the sun shone for about thirty seconds. Amazingly, as soon as we set off home the rain started and carried on all day!

The weekly sandwich distribution is a highlight of the week and we are happy to say that we are gradually building up a small team of local people to help out if one or other of us is away.

We are increasingly aware of the importance of having a meal

together each day, so that people can drop in to share with us. It also means that we can invite those who want to know more about St Francis House and the Catholic Worker. Over the past few months we have had several overnight visitors, friends of the Catholic Worker who happen to be passing through Oxford.

Each month we continue with our social evenings. We have celebrated St. Patrick and St. George recently, with poetry, music and anecdote, as well as watching the film *Millions*. In our Catholic Worker study evenings we have looked at some texts of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day which have inspired some interesting discussion.

At the end of April Clive, Daniel and Susan set off to join in the European Catholic Worker Gathering in Germany. We travelled to Brussels by Eurostar, where we met up with Martin from the London CW, and then by hire car to Dulmen to join the others. It was wonderful to share time, leisure, ideas, music and prayer with our German and Dutch Catholic Worker friends. Jim Forest, who wrote *Love is the Measure* (a biography of Dorothy Day), and who lived as a young man at the New York Worker, was the main speaker. His reflections on his time spent in community with Dorothy were revealing and inspiring and it was lovely to talk with him one to one. We had a tourist trip to Munster, a barbecue and a cabaret, at which you will be

happy to know the Oxford Trio gave a spirited rendition of *The Manchester Rambler*, accompanied by Clive on melodeon and Daniel on guitar. We didn't win but we were good!

On the Saturday a few people who were interested went with Chris to help out at the Kana soup kitchen in Dortmund. We peeled potatoes, set the tables and served the soup and coffee. It was very interesting to see how another project serving the homeless works, and Kana certainly offers a good service to those in need in Dortmund. Susan's most abiding memory of the day was the experience of sitting among a group of people speaking a language she did not understand and being unable to communicate. It made her even more aware of the difficulties asylum seekers have on arriving in a strange new country.

Have a peaceful, relaxing summer, one and all!