



Casa Alma, the Charlottesville Catholic Worker

Houses of hospitality and a sustainable living center

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~ FALL 2011 NEWS ~

ADVENT SABBATH

When did we all get so busy? Regardless of the season (but especially now) it seems as though there just isn't enough time. Our days are filled with the motion of worthy activities, concern for world events, work, commitments, and obligations to others.

Here at Casa Alma, like many other households, we could be constantly busy. There is always something needing to be fixed, cleaned, planned or completed. There are daily tasks to fulfill, and someone is always needing accompaniment or care. It's easy for us to slip into a daily rhythm which wears us down, overlooking our own needs for rest and stillness, spent in the conscious presence of the Divine. We need to rediscover and observe the Sabbath.

So we call out to all of you who are stressed or overworked, all who are yearning for silence and stillness, and all who wish for time to rest and relax, to celebrate life with friends, to create, play or nap.

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COMMUNITY AT CASA ALMA

Two seasons have passed since our last newsletter, and in that time the Casa Alma community has continued to grow. From first-time visitors to live-in volunteers, to new sponsors, our circle of community is expanding, thanks to God's grace.

At the center of our circle are resident community members and live-in volunteers. This summer we said goodbye to residents Yeimi and Moises, who were our first guests in our first hospitality house. In a wonderful turn of events, Yeimi became engaged and has happily moved in with her fiancée's extended family. Yeimi says, "Gracias a todos que me ayudaban cuando lo más necesitaba." (*Thanks to all who helped me when I needed it the most*).

This summer, Casa Alma was blessed by the presence of our first live in volunteers, Christine and Claire Hitchens. Throughout their time with us, we had a taste of the "beloved community" through our shared work on the hospitality houses and gardens, weekly community meals, and times of prayer and reflection.

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Laura, Ella, Steve,
Anna and Emily Brown



Yeimi and Moises



Claire and Christine

What we do:

Casa Alma, the Charlottesville Catholic Worker, is an intentional community providing housing and community support to families and individuals in need.

We sponsor times of prayer, reflection and learning, and live simply and sustainably.

We promote peace and justice in our local community and beyond.

ADVENT SABBATH *continued from pg.1*

Join us in observing the Sabbath this Advent! Instead of remaining content with the moments of rest which happen to emerge amidst our busy lives, join us in committing to set aside time each week for rest and renewal in God.

After some thought and reflection, Steve and I have decided that our Sabbath will have the following qualities: it will last 24 hours, during which we will refrain from making purchases and running errands, using the computer (freeing us from paid work, administrative tasks, and emails), and any extra cleaning or organizing of the house.

We will be open to spending our time in prayer, games, play, reading, music making, and sharing with family and friends. We will engage only in “work” which brings us joy such as spending time in the garden or cooking a special meal. We will avoid driving as much as possible, and be sure to spend time outside. We’ll mark the beginning of our observance of the Sabbath with prayer and reflection and conclude it in the same way.

We invite you to envision what your Sabbath would look like. What type of work would you refrain from? What would you be free to enjoy? Perhaps you might prepare for the Sabbath with a day of fasting or another spiritual discipline? Whatever the case may be, we invite you to commit to observing the Sabbath in a new way with us throughout Advent.

We’ve set up a new website: www.sabbathsharing.org for the sharing of ideas and practices, words of encouragement, struggles, and reflections on the moments of prayer and intimacy which emerge.

Visit the site to join us in a Sabbath observance, or just to find inspiration and encouragement to move toward a Sabbath practice in the future. Let’s join together in our intention to find rest and renewal before God.



www.riniart.org



“Sabbath is about renewing ourselves before God, whose work for peace and justice we are about. It is an opportunity to remember whose world we are struggling to create.”

~Jane Vennard, *Embracing the World: Praying for Justice and Peace*



“The sabbath is a time to abstain completely from everyday work.

It is a time to relax mind, body, and soul in order to be filled, nourished, and freed from worry about how one is doing.

Sabbath...is not running away from life and its problems; it is an opportunity to receive grace to face them.

It is a time to rely on God, a time to let God be God in one’s living.”

Church of the Brethren
Guidelines for Sabbath Rest

SABBATH AND ACTION

Casa Alma's monthly open houses are a wonderful opportunity to practice the Sabbath. Each first Sunday of the month, Casa Alma is open from 2:00-5:00pm to receive visitors, give tours, and answer questions about the Catholic Worker movement.

There is no formal schedule, just casual time for conversation, sharing a cup of tea, and welcoming the moment together. We invite you to join us for this relaxed time to share God's work at Casa Alma, and to get to know the people who are gathering into a community here. No RSVP is necessary.

Refreshed and nourished by our times of Sabbath, we have renewed energies for work and service. At Casa Alma, we work steadily to transform the land we steward into productive gardens and the once-neglected homes into houses of welcoming houses of hospitality.

All are welcome to join us for service days on the third Saturday of each month. All ages are welcome and no special skills are needed. Weather permitting, we work outdoors. If you'd like to bring a group, let us know!

Upcoming open house dates:

1st Sunday of each month
from 2:00-5:00pm

**December 4,
January 1 (for the new year!)
February 5, March 4.**

Upcoming service days:

3rd Saturday of each month
from 2:00-5:00pm

**December 17, January 21,
February 18, March 17.**

Become part of our extended community by sharing your time with us. We hope to see you soon!



FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR CASA ALMA

1. Bring a friend or colleague to one of our open houses, or arrange another time to visit. Help us to develop a diverse and inclusive community where all are welcome.
2. Donate non-perishable foods for our community meals and for our guests. Rice, dry black or red beans, pasta, canned tomatoes, granola, oats, nuts, and dried fruit would be most welcome. Drop items by 911 Nassau Street anytime—just leave bags on the front porch if no one is home.
3. Join an informal planning committee to coordinate our annual open house this spring (end of April or beginning of May). Bring your enthusiasm, grace for hosting, organizational talents, or willingness to do things in the background. Contact Danielle Culpepper (d—) or Laura Brown if you are interested.
4. Pray for us. In particular, we seek to be attentive to and guided by the Holy Spirit in all that we do.
5. Read about Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement. Share your thoughts and reflections with us and with others, to enrich and enliven the practices of Casa Alma, and others seeking to live the Gospel.



ABOUT THE CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT:



The aim of the Catholic Worker movement is to live in accordance with the justice and charity of Jesus Christ.

This aim requires us to begin living in a different way. We recall the words of our founders, Dorothy Day, who said, "God meant things to be much easier than we have made them," and Peter Maurin who wanted to build a society "where it is easier for people to be good."



Reflections from Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, co-founders of the Catholic Worker Movement

From Dorothy: We need a new economics with a strong emphasis on institutions on the land, decentralization, more study as well as more laboring at meaningful work. Small industries and hospices on the land mean more employment. There is no unemployment on the land, Peter used to say.

This morning I was feeling the need of words of joy in the face of the world situation, and the political situation in this country. (I must give up reading newspapers in order to avoid any bitterness when I witness the destitution in our cities, the lack of housing, the humiliation of the poverty stricken, and on the other hand, the arrogance of some men of wealth. "Woe to ye rich!")

St. Thomas said once he learned more by prayer than he did by study, and it is only prayer that will give us a full life of joy, a word which Bernanos and C.S. Lewis alike took as meaning more than happiness.

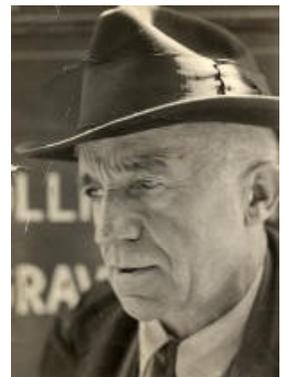
A deep, abiding joy can only be ours if we emphasize the "primacy of the spiritual," a phrase which Peter Maurin loved. We must grow in faith, in our spiritual capacity to "do all things in Him who strengthens us," even change the social order so that wars will cease and it will be easier to be good, to keep our sanity, be **whole** men, holy men, and truly love one another.

Dorothy Day library on the web at:
www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday

From Peter:

The Catholic Worker is communitarian.

A Communitarian is a fellow who refuses to be what the other fellow is and tries to be what he wants him to be.



www.catholicworker.org/roundtable/easyessays



CASA ALMA BY THE NUMBERS

Our vision: Casa Alma seeks to inspire and support the transformation of individual lifestyles and social structures toward **justice:** right relationship with the Divine, among people, and with the natural world.

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE GIFTS

Both the Church of the Incarnation and Virginia Organizing accept tax-deductible contributions on behalf of Casa Alma.



Online: www.incarnationparish.org.
Click on “About/Donate” and designate
your gift to Casa Alma.

Set up a regular sponsorship online,
or contact Steve Brown, parish
Bookkeeper, at (434) 973-4381 x101.

Checks may be made payable to the
Church of the Incarnation
with “Catholic Worker” in the memo line.

Checks may be placed in the
offertory basket or mailed to the parish:
1465 Incarnation Drive,
Charlottesville VA 22901.



Online: www.virginia-organizing.org
Click on “Donate” and designate
your gift to Casa Alma.

Checks may be made payable to
Virginia Organizing with
“Casa Alma” in the memo line.

Set up a regular sponsorship online or contact
Sally Bastian, Grassroots Fundraising
Coordinator, at (434) 984-4655

* Virginia Organizing is officially registered with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, PO Box 1163, Richmond VA 23209. You can write to this department for all relevant financial statements and procedures regarding the solicitation of contributions. Your donation is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

COMMUNITY NEWS *continued from pg. 1*

Claire and Christine also brought together an ecumenical group for prayer and reflection on “Christianity, Creativity and Creation” through a roundtable discussion series held at The Haven at First and Market. If you missed the group and would like to explore the intersection of faith, creativity, and ecology, let us know and we’ll send some resources your way.

At the end of the summer, our extended community gathered to celebrate Casa Alma’s inaugural mass. Fr. Gregory Kandt led the celebration of the mass, which opened with the singing of the “Canticle of Creation”. It was particularly fitting, as our singing was quite nearly overpowered by the fervent buzzing and chirping of a host of cicadas in the trees above.

Throughout this fall, Casa Alma hosted a Friday supper series, gathering a lively group for weekly pot-luck suppers and community building. Scott Claassen was a recent guest speaker, sharing time with us in the midst of his year cycling across the country. Scott is traveling “to initiate dialogue about the relationship between neighbor love (agape/caritas) and ecology.” (more on his website carbonsabbath.org). Look for announcements for our Spring Supper series, next March.

Finally, we are nearing the completion of the repairs on the second house of hospitality, hosting short-term guests this month, and preparing for a new live-in volunteer and guests for January. Thanks to God’s grace and the wonderful support and encouragement of a our extended community, Casa Alma is becoming a thriving place!

WISH LIST

- Prayers
- Grocery cards or non-perishable foods (pg. 3)
- Hand-held trowels and weeding tools
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In photo: APO Service Fraternity with Casa Alma community and volunteers.

Special thanks to APO, Al, Bill, Carroll, Hunter, the Lee family, Kristen, Owen, Rebecca, and UVa Catholic Student Ministry for their work this fall on the houses and gardens!

Charlottesville Catholic Worker
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