

# On Line and On Point

**MARY MOTHER OF JESUS INCLUSIVE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY**

[marymotherofjesus.org](http://marymotherofjesus.org)

## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN

To ask what it means to be human strikes at the fabric of the soul. The problem with trying to define what it means to be human is that we now take so much of the inhuman for granted. We confuse the meaning of the words “natural” and

“human,” make synonyms of them. War is “natural” they tell us. Violence is “natural,” they argue. Self-aggrandizement is “natural,” they maintain. What they do not say is that just because something is “natural” does not make it human.

Humanity goes in and out of focus, blurred always by the “natural” and unconscious of the spiritual that magnetizes it.

But I have seen humanity. I knew its face even when I cannot define it. It is blazoned in my mind. It measures my character and condemns my disregard. Anything less than these images disappoints me to the core.

I have a picture in my mind of nuns putting flowers in the gun barrels of Filipino soldiers in Manila who then refused to shoot into the crowd. I still hold in my heart the sight of a young man in Tiananmen Square standing in front of of a moving tank that then turned back. I



carry the image of men carrying a lone survivor out of a tangle of earthquake wreckage on a swaying overpass that then collapsed. Every time these images flash before my mind I remember that to be human is to give yourself for things far greater than yourself.

I have a memory, too, as a twelve-year-old of crying silently but bitterly, face down into my pillow on the living room floor. That day, my bird, my only life companion, had disappeared up an open flue in our apartment wall. There were visiting relatives in the house, in my bedroom, whom I

knew were not to be disturbed. The needs of the guests came first, I had been taught. But when the house was safely dark, I let the pain pour out, not simply for the loss of my dearest possession but also in sorrow for my own carelessness in his regard. Then, suddenly, I felt the covers around me tighten. My mother had gotten in on one side of the mattress, my father on the other, and together they held me all the long and empty night. I learned then that being human meant to enter into someone else’s pain.

So what do I believe in? What do I define as human? I believe in the pursuit of the

### **Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community Mission Statement**

We are a Christ-centered community of equals, consisting of women and men, ordained and non-ordained, empowered by the Spirit whose mission is to worship, to serve, to promote compassion, justice, peace and care for creation. Come join us.

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spiritual, in the presence to pain, and the sacredness of life. Without these, life is useless and humanity is a farce.

To be human it is necessary, perhaps, to think again about what matters in life, to ask always what is, is. To be human is to listen to the rest of the world with a tender heart, and learn to live life with our arms open and our souls seared with a sense of responsibility for everything that is. Without a doubt, given those criteria, we may indeed not live the “better life,” but we may in the end, at least have lived a fully human one.—*Joan Chittister*

**OFFERINGS**—If you have made a recent donation to our community, we thank you for your generosity. We are most grateful for your demonstrated care and concern. Thanks so much. Please remember to make your regular donations to MMOJ by sending your check to MMOJ % St. Andrew UCC, 6908 Beneva Road, Sarasota. FL 34238.

**Remember:** MMOJ continues to donate 5% of all received offerings each month to Outreach, which will continue to focus on real issues of food and hunger in our surrounding communities.

**OUTREACH**—The current recipient of our offered financial support is All Faiths Food Bank of Sarasota [AFFB] in its task of providing food for hungry and needy families and children.

When you donate to All Faiths Food Bank, your gift provides meals to children, families and seniors in our community. AFFB is proud to say that 92 cents of every dollar donated goes directly to hunger-relief efforts. Please be generous with your offerings.

**NOTE—[repeat]**—OLOP featured two book reviews two weekends ago. We received a number of responses to our offerings. We would feature more if you choose to offer suggestions.

## MOVIE CORNER

The movie, **Allied**, starring Brad Pitt and Marion Cotillard provides a very well acted look at the complicated subtleties of war. Set during World War Two, it is the story of a Canadian intelligence officer and a female French Resistance fighter who meet in North Africa on a deadly mission behind enemy lines. Although a factionalized story it is supposed to be based on true accounts. One review referred to it as having “a filmic DNA with Alfred Hitchcock’s *Notorious*, a bona fide classic of the spy genera, and succeeds as a combination of truth, fiction, and the unknowable fog of war that falls in between.” This 2016 film is currently streaming on Amazon Prime. —*Beth Ponce*

Send your suggestions for movies to watch, to [ponce.beth@gmail.com](mailto:ponce.beth@gmail.com)

**HOW DO I HOPE?**—[from our home]—It’s here Jim and I will probably live out the rest of our lives. It’s here that the world events will affect us, here that climate change impacts us, here that the systemic injustice hits home, and here that nuclear war may find us out. That’s true for all of us, of course. The place we call home is the place where theory meets reality. Whether we live in a track-side, underserved neighborhood [where we live] or a suburban one with well-paved streets and kept-homes, we are part of this interlinked world. The current horrific war in the Ukraine is a clear example, with global gas and food prices

**STAFF**—*Russ Banner, editor; Joan Pesce, Lee Breyer, Anna Davis, text review; Beth Ponce and Dotty Shugrue, features*

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rising, starvation increasing, and the overarching threat of nuclear war. Behind the obvious effects are the corporations making huge profits from sales of arms, oil and gas and the jockeying for global power which has united this powder keg.

The fact that our neighbors can no longer afford gas to get to work or food to feed their families, that hunger continues to invade the suburbs, and that we all watch the news nervously for word of war abroad and civil unrest at home—makes obvious that we are all living in a web of relationships. It is often a web of death, but it can also be a web of life.

The difficulty lies in recognizing the terrible realities without losing all hope. I love the point that Rebecca Solnit makes, that regardless of all the predictions, the future is uncertain and in that uncertainty lies hope. Uncertainty allows us to throw ourselves into working for a future, for life for the planet and its people. Uncertainty gives us just an inch of leeway to make a difference.

I know a group of women who have decided to learn everything they can about natural healing, survival skills, growing food and so on—so that they can nurture life when our systems crash. I know people who are planting gardens in the city to grow food in “food deserts.”

There is a program in one of our neighborhoods that helps young people train for meaningful work and also helps them to home ownership so that they are

invested in their neighborhood and want to improve it.

At least 86 nations have signed the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons even though the nuclear nations have not signed. A group of

religious leaders goes to Ukraine to pray with the people there for peace. Work continues to address climate catastrophe, world hunger, to call for negotiations over Ukraine, to build peaceful mechanisms for conflict resolution.

None of these initiatives is guaranteed to

work. Each of them is conducted against overwhelming reality of brutal war, wild storms, flooding, heat waves, systemic injustice and all the other evils of our time. Each of them counts on that uncertainty: maybe things could change. Maybe the worst could be averted. Maybe life can continue and people can thrive. Maybe...Because the future isn't certain.

Dorothy Day says, *“The sense of futility is one of the greatest evils of the day..."*

*People say, ‘What can one person do? What is the sense of our small effort?’*

*They cannot see that we can only lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible only for the one action of the present moment.”*

Hope is the discipline of acting consciously and responsibly in the present moment in spite of our sense of futility, in honor of the uncertainty of the future. So be it.—*Shelly Douglass*



Shelly and Jim Douglass in Birmingham, AL