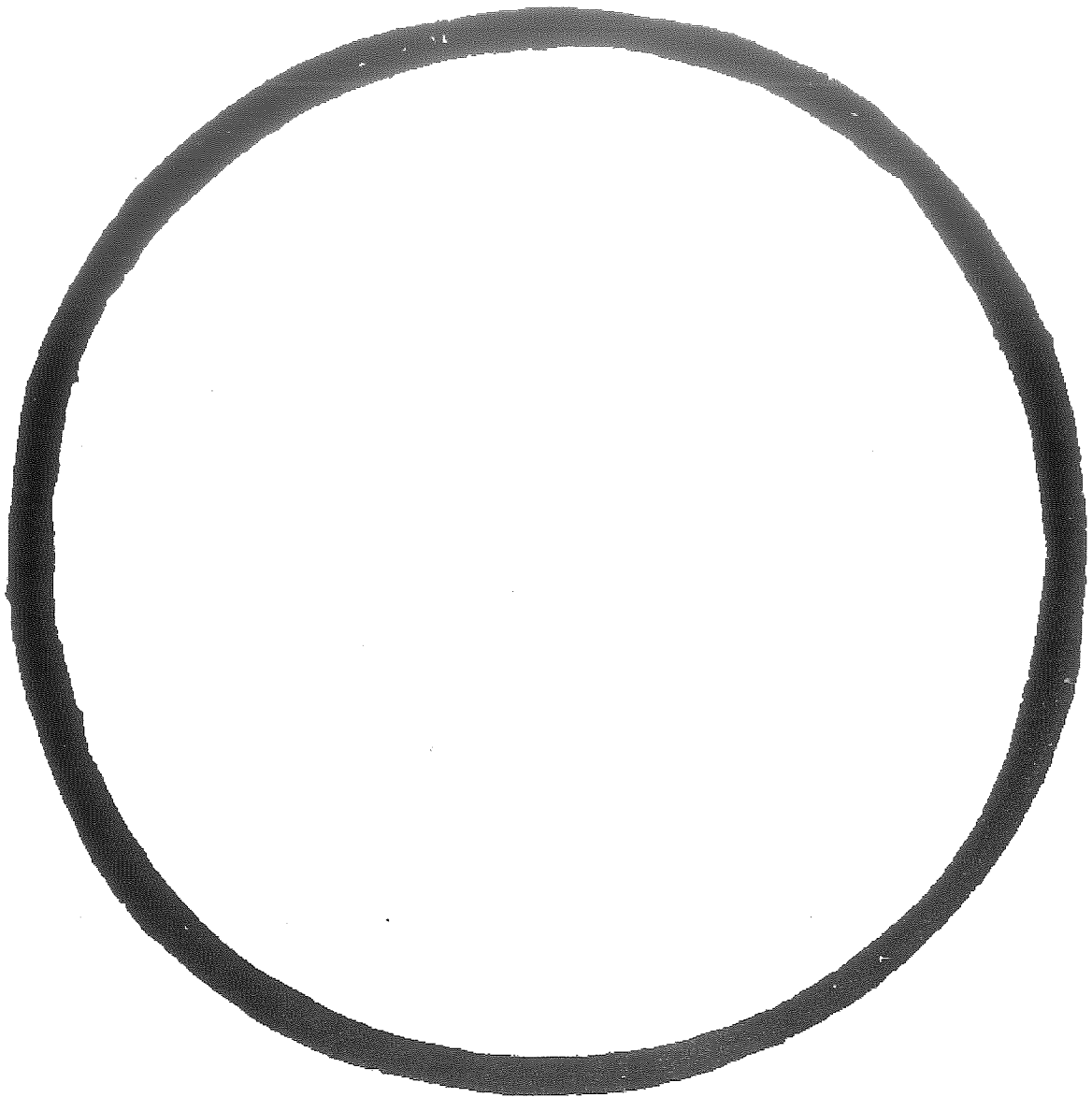




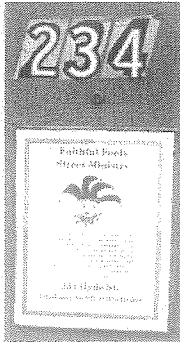
Fools Fables

Volume III, Winter 2001



Searching for Meaning

REFLECTIONS



Calling all Fools!

It's time to rush in.
Folly is upon us and we
need new tricks....or
how about some tried
and true old ones. Let's
trade wisdom. Bring out
your tools. Building up
doesn't seem to be
working. Somebody has
knocked down the
blocks that scrape the
sky. Get ready to scratch
and dig in the debris.

We're searching for
MEANING. It could be
in your hip pocket. We
don't know exactly
where it is. In fact we
don't "know" anything
really. It's probably
pretty obvious.

—Kay

Liberty and Justice for all?



*It seems obvious
to me that right
action must come
from a place of
understanding the
universal value of
(human) life.*

Terrorism...the country is on alert...

We have never experienced this
before? What about abortion
clinics, school shoot-outs, the KKK,
the bombings of 4 young girls in an
Alabama Church, Halloween
cookies filled with razor blades,—
my daughters—afraid to walk on the
streets of our city at night for fear
they might be raped or murdered?

And what about the terrorism
within? My loved ones' fears that I
might turn and yell at them, make
them ashamed, hit them with some
kind of verbal or emotional abuse?
What's inside the mind of a
terrorist? Am I really a stranger to
this? What if there is no other?

I am no stranger to fear of
terrorism. I am also no stranger to
terrorizing, to becoming the
instrument of fear for my
children, my lovers, my cohorts.
And although I have not struck out
physically, have not murdered
anyone, I've wanted to. Is it really
such a small step to terrorizing a
nation? The world?

—Martha



...One of the most profound effects of Street Retreats is a reduction in feeling the sense of "otherness" experienced by people living in and out of the Tenderloin...



One nation under God?

Indivisible?

How can it be?

Felt sort of detached the first 5 days and wondered if something was wrong with me. Didn't watch much TV at all. After taking in some information from KQED Sunday evening, woke up

Monday morning with the realization that a lot of people elsewhere in the world have been living with profound fear in their daily lives. I've

known for years how much I wanted the world to be different, but I never realized how really bad it has gotten. It took the proximity and the magnitude of the 9/11 occurrence for a voice

way down deep inside me to start SCREAMING at the top of it's lungs—"NO!!!!!!!" to terrorism.

There is such immense, aching grief in my heart as I realize the level to which man's inhumanity to man. How can it be?...

How can it be?... How could we, as human creatures on this earth, have let matters go this far? How? And what do we do now to turn it around? Oh, please, by all that is sacred, there must be a way.

—Barbara

Stop! Please Stop!

When the mountains and breezes and stones and ants and stars began to argue about who God was, Old Turtle said, "STOP!" When the people of the world began to argue about who knew God and where God was and whether God was; and when the people misused their powers and killed one another and the forests and rivers and oceans and the earth itself, there came the voice once again. "Please, STOP." The people began to listen and to hear as the mountains and oceans and stones and breezes and stars tell them of their experience of the One some name "God." Old Turtle smiled.

Stop! Please Stop! is what I heard within me and around me as I lived in Nicaragua and witnessed the growing impoverishment of the people and their earth because of ongoing acts of war and endless injustice by the government of the United States.

Stop! Please Stop! is what I hear within me and around me as I witness the inhumane attitudes and policies, which force working poor families, mentally ill men, women and youth, and fixed income elderly to live in the streets or in single-room-occupancy hotels. Many of them are those who suffer still after fighting in our country's wars.

September 11th brought home to many of us in the U.S. a magnitude of suffering that our government's policies and actions have caused throughout the world. For decades there have been cries to, "*Stop! Please Stop!*" by many nations and the earth itself and we have not heard. All our voices must now come together to say, "*Stop! Please Stop!*"

And Love

—Carmen

*And to the republic
for which it stands?*

I looked for the enemy and it is I

The terrorists destroyed people and buildings in New York, Washington DC and Pennsylvania. I walked the streets on a Street Retreat September 15th. I see the devastation of humanity before my eyes as I walk the streets of San Francisco. These people are not being destroyed by terrorists but by the terror of drugs, alcohol, mental illness and by our society's blindness to their situation and our unwillingness to acknowledge their presence in our lives. We cannot close our eyes and ears to the terrorist devastation. We do close our eyes and ears to the devastation of homelessness, perpetuated not by those outside our borders but by those who are of the same country, state and city. "I looked for the enemy and it is I."

As I walked the streets I prayed—could we have a week or two where national and local news was focused on the devastation of homelessness with as much compassion? Could we interview the individuals who are homeless and hear their stories and see their individual faces? Could there be a national compassionate movement to raise the millions of dollars needed to provide housing, shelter, medical and mental health care for our brothers and sisters who live with the terror of death and survival each day? Could we see that they are us and we are them?

This I pray.

—Susan

An Invitation to "Practice"

We speak of Faithful Fools Street Ministry as being a "practice." It is a practice of love and service. It is this practice that is at the heart of the street retreats; of the copy business; of the daily accompaniment of people; of regular times of reflection; of standing as witness at City Hall; of our presence with people and in a neighborhood that are labeled "bad" and "unsafe;" and of providing a space for the artists' soul to discover its expression.

Rachel Naomi Remen has written in her book, *My Grandfather's Blessings*, a reflection that inspires us in our practice of service. We share a portion of it with you. "Service rests on the basic premise that the nature of life is sacred... Fundamentally, helping, fixing, and service are ways of seeing life. When you help you see life as weak. When you fix, you see life as broken. When you serve, you see life as whole. From the perspective of service, we are all connected. All suffering is like my suffering and all joy is like my joy...Service goes beyond expertise. Service is another way of life. Service is a relationship between equals...In helping, we may find a sense of satisfaction; in serving, we have an experience of gratitude... When we serve, we discover that life is holy... Service is closer to generosity than it is to duty...Over the long run, fixing and helping are draining but service is renewing. When you serve, your work itself will sustain you, renew you, and bless you, often over many years."

We invite you to "practice" with us. Making a street retreat, driving someone to an appointment, making copies, playing with children, shadowing a youth on a street retreat, serving a meal, acting in a play, updating the data base, painting walls, addressing envelopes or sitting in reflection together, is done with a commitment to practice love and service as a whole community out of a place of generosity.

If you are interested in meeting with one of the Fools please call us at 415-474-0508 or e-mail us at faithfulfools@value.net.

"The fool is a marginal person—one who stands on the edge of the market place and comments on the human and divine condition through stories, song, puppetry, mask, silence..."

That does not preclude the fool from being human.

The fool must listen carefully to each nuance and observe each moment of the human dance...

...For play and replay in the mirror of exaggeration."

Ken Feit

"We must be the change we wish to see in the world"

—Mahatma Gandhi

THE FISHER KING...

Remember the fool in the story of the Fisher King? He wandered into the castle and found the king, who had been wounded by reaching into a fire for the Holy Grail, a symbol of God's divine grace. The fool didn't see a king. He only saw a man alone and in pain. He asked the king, "What ails you friend?" The king replied, "I'm thirsty, I need some water to cool my throat." So the fool took a cup from beside his bed and filled it with water and handed it to the king. As the king began to drink, he realized his wound was healed. He looked at his hands and there was the Holy Grail, that which he sought all of his life. He turned to the fool and said with amazement, "How could you find that which my brightest and bravest could not?" The fool replied, "I don't know. I only knew that you were thirsty." Meaning could be found anywhere or everywhere.



Of the United States of America?

And don't forget to put on your mittens.

Herman Melville said:

There is sobbing of the strong/And a pall upon the land.

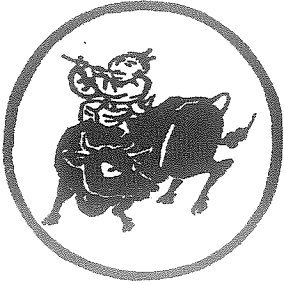
But the people in their weeping/Bare the iron hand.

Beware the people weeping/When they bare the iron hand.

People are hurting and very nervous, so be gentle, But don't be cautious with your own foolish weapons because there needs to be a great deal of singing and dancing, in the streets and in our castles. Rumi told us "Out beyond ideas of wrong doing and right doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there."

We invite you to send us your reflections.

FOOLS' HAPPENINGS



THE WITNESS

Based on the ten Ox-herding pictures of the ancient Zen Buddhist teachings, The Witness follows the journey of a young woman onto the streets, who comes to understand that she must look at the assumptions of her own mind before she can enter whole-heartedly into the community of all living beings.

The Witness has been co-created by Martha Boesing, writer and director and Anna Brown Griswold, actor. Martha Boesing was the founder and Artistic Director of At the Foot of the Mountain theater in Minneapolis and has written and produced over 40 plays in her almost 50-year long theater career. Anna Brown Griswold has worked with at-risk children and teenagers both here and in Nepal. She holds an MA in Buddhist Studies and Performing Arts from Naropa University in Boulder, CO.

This performance about retreats of the Faithful Fools Street Ministry in the Tenderloin in San Francisco is a 45-minute, one-woman show that can be performed almost anywhere: in your home, church, your meeting hall. The play is available to tour. Please call the Fools Court for more information 415.474.0508.

I pledge allegiance to the flag?

STREET RETREATS

A FOUR-DAY STREET RETREAT

March 17th—March 20th, 2002

"When you bear witness you go with no pre-conceived notions about what you'll see and what will happen... Bearing Witness means to have a relationship... Out of bearing witness, out of relationship, a healing arises."

Bearing Witness, by Bernie Glassman

The Faithful Fools invite you to make a four day retreat on the streets of San Francisco, March 17th—23rd, 2002. If you are interested in knowing more about this retreat please call us at 415-474-0508 or e-mail us at faithfulfools@value.net.

2002 STREET RETREATS

December 15th 2001

January 19th

February 16th

March 17th—20th

March 23rd

April 20th

May 11th

June 15th

FEES & DONATIONS

We ask for a donation of \$45—\$200 for the retreat and the ongoing work of the Faithful Fools. If that is not within your means, please give whatever you can even if that be a smile or the tip of your hat. Please call Kay or Carmen at 415.474.0508 for information.



Faithful Fools Street Ministry

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MISSION STATEMENT

We are called to a ministry of presence that acknowledges each human's incredible worth. We seek to meet people where they are without judgment through the arts, education, advocacy and accompaniment. We participate in shattering myths about those living in poverty, seeing the light, courage, intelligence, strength and creativity of the people we encounter. We discover on the streets our common humanity through which celebration, community and healing occur.

PARTICIPATE AT THE FOOLS COURT

THE FOOLS' COURT is a place of meeting, a place of refuge, a place of creativity, a place of safety, compassion and healing for many people. We ask you for your support and collaboration. Funds are needed for daily accompaniment of people; arts program; and the building.

\$334,000 is needed to pay for the building.
To pay the loan this year will save us \$150,000 in interest payments.

We need \$10,000 to replace windows and doors and paint the building. We have received a 50% matching grant for façade improvement work.

Support us:

- donate a vehicle
- donate clothes to Community Thrift
- volunteer your talents
- make a financial donation
- make a monthly pledge
- host the play, *The Witness*
- make a street retreat
- invite Fools to speak

Call Nana at 415-673-1027 or Kay and Carmen at 415-474-0508 for more information.