

Nothing's lost forever.

In this world, there is a kind of painful progress. Longing for what we've left behind, and dreaming ahead. At least I think that's so.

(Harper, in the final scene of ANGELS IN AMERICA, Part II)

Dear Friends:

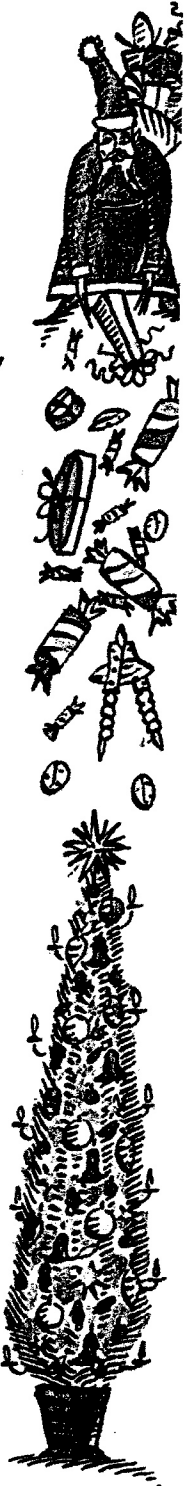
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The quote above seems a fitting epitaph for the year about to become history. I've spent a good part of 1994 looking over my shoulder with bitter/sweet nostalgia, but also looking ahead with a mixture of dread and dreams. It's been a year of laughs and tears, and of painful progress.

I began my leave of absence from the Holy Cross Community at the end of January and moved from Portland to Oakland. After finding an apartment, just below the Berkeley border, I began looking for work. My apprehension that this was not the wisest time to be seeking a job in social service in California could not have been more valid! Months of applications, interviews, follow-up conferences and then rejection letters took up most of the year. It was an education! (Some lessons, like the repeated ones in anxiety over finances, I would gladly have played hooky from!) By October I was extremely frustrated and discouraged and decided to pursue any job that would pay rent and groceries. After a brief, temporary stint in the Women's Shoes Dept. at Nordstrom Rack (God! Did that ever darken my outlook on the future of civilization!) I began working at a new, classical only, Tower Records store near Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. I still have an ear to the ground for a job in social work, but for now I get paid to push Solti and Callas and Horowitz CD's. (Things could be worse. At least I'm not a congressional Democrat!)

The ordeal of the months-long job search paled in comparison to the dismay at losing two close and dear friends, both "in their prime". Mike Cashman and Steve Pascente were among my first students at NDHS/Niles and remained close for the last 25 years. Their sudden deaths in July and October took the wind out of my sails in ways that few other losses have.

This time of transition and reassessment has provided some hilarious moments (and painfully awkward ones too) of confused identity. On Thanksgiving morning I was helping with the Loaves & Fishes holiday breakfast at the Newman Center in Berkeley. Within a time span of 30 minutes: a fashionably dressed new volunteer mistook me for one of the homeless diners and offered a homily of



encouraging words (I just didn't have the heart to tell her); a co-worker threw me her keys so I could move her car from the lot, prompting one of the street people to ask how long we'd been married; and another first-time volunteer, with a pious, Irish brogue, was surprised to learn that I wasn't the Newman pastor -- said she just saw something about me that made her presume...

Through it all, this year has also been one of deepening hope and spirituality. And it has been a time of profound gratitude for the loving support and encouragement of my friends, even when they didn't quite understand why I was making this move.

In dark times you have helped me to focus on "that light which still shines in the darkness, and which the darkness has never managed to put out."

Thank you!

With love,

Fitz

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