

This Money is Not Ours

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Summary: Explains their position on usury and derides the profit system. Says they try to withdraw from "THE SYSTEM" by following Matthew 25. Keywords: work (DDLW #768).

City Treasurer:
Dear Sir,

We are returning to you a check for \$3,579.39 which represents interest on the \$68,700 which we were awarded by the city as payment for the property at 223 Chrystie Street, which we owned and lived in for almost ten years, and used as a community for the poor. We did not voluntarily give up the property—it was taken from us by right of eminent domain for the extension of the subway which the city deemed necessary. We had to wait almost a year and a half for the money owed us, although the city permitted us to receive 2/3 of the assessed valuation of the property in advance so that we could re-locate. Property owning having been made impossible for us by city regulations, we are now renting and continuing our work.

We are returning the interest on the money we have recently received because we do not believe in "money-lending at interest." As Catholics we are acquainted with the early teaching of the Church. All the early Councils forbade it, declaring it reprehensible to make money by lending it out at interest. Canon law of the Middle Ages forbade it and in various decrees ordered that profit so obtained was to be restored. In the Christian emphasis on the duty of charity, we are commanded to lend gratuitously, to give freely, even in the case of confiscation, as in our own case—not to resist but to accept cheerfully.

We do not believe in the profit system, and so we cannot take profit or interest on our money. People who take a materialistic view of human service which to make a profit but we are trying to do our duty by our service without wages to our brothers as Jesus commanded in the Gospel (Matthew 25). Loaning money at interest is deemed by one Franciscan as the principal scourge of civilization. Eric Gill, the English artist and writer, calls usury and war the two great problems of our time.

Since we deal with these problems in every issue of THE CATHOLIC WORKER since 1933—man's freedom, war and peace, man and the state, man and his work,

and since Scripture says that the love of money is the root of all evil, we are taking this opportunity to live in practice of this belief, and make a gesture of overcoming that love of money by returning to you the interest.

Insofar as our money paid for services for the common good, and aid to the poor, we should be very happy to allow you to use not only our money without interest, but also our work, the works of mercy which we all perform here at the headquarters of THE CATHOLIC WORKER without other salary or recompense than our daily food and lodging, clothes, and incidental expenses.

Insofar as the use of our money paid for the time being for salaries for judges who have condemned us and others to jail, and for the politicians who appointed them, and for prisons, and the execution chamber at Sing Sing, and for the executioner's salary—we can only protest the use of our money and turn with utter horror from taking interest on it.

Please also be assured that we are not judging individuals, but we are trying to make a judgment on THE SYSTEM under which we live and in which we admit that we ourselves compromise daily in many small ways, but which we try and wish to withdraw from as much as possible.

Sincerely yours,
DOROTHY DAY
Editor, The Catholic Worker