

May Day – 1956

By Dorothy Day

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Summary: Expresses deep gratitude for Peter Maurin's vision and life. Intermingles appreciations of Peter and St. Joseph's gifts to the works of the CW. (DDLW #704).

May Day

Recognizing May Day as a workers' feast day, our Holy Father, Pope Pious XII, last year, designated May first as the feast of St. Joseph, the Workman, and for many reasons we are delighted to celebrate this feast from now on. We used to think of May Day as our old radical holiday; the anniversary of the first issue of the *Catholic Worker* to appear on the streets of New York in 1933; the beginning of Mary's month, when little children walked in procession dressed in white veils, laden with flowers, crowning our Lady, Queen of the May. A joyful time, a time when winter is over and gone and the buds are bursting out on all the trees, the spring peepers are heard down the brook at the Staten Island farm and there is promise of warmth in the air. May is also Peter Maurin's month, not only because he is responsible for **The Catholic Worker** movement but also because he died on May 15. He fought the good fight and gave everything to God, body, soul and mind and he is in the company of our Lady, and St. Joseph and St. Therese and joyful doctrine of the communion of saints!

Peter Maurin was born in May and died on May 15th, 1949, and we hope many of our readers will remember him in their prayers. It is the best way for all of us to pay the enormous debt of gratitude we owe him for the work which he gave us to do. He set us on a particular path, outlined a particular program, built up a theory of revolution which will last us as a guide for the rest of our lives. Truly Peter was a man who walked with God, who practiced the presence of God, who prayed without ceasing, who never uttered an idle word, who never judged others, who lived a life of utter poverty on the Skid Rows of our country, who practiced the works of mercy at a personal sacrifice, and yet his whole stress was on the primacy of the spiritual. Poverty to him meant freedom, and he rejoiced in giving away his coat, his bed, his food because it left him freer for the spiritual work of mercy, enlightening the ignorant. Strangely enough, our attempts to put into practice his teaching worked out quite differently for us. When we gave away clothes, furniture, food and lodging, when we made St. Joseph the household patron, he took care of things so that we were kept on that level. He sent us goods to distribute, property to administer, food and shelter for our brothers in Christ who came to us. There was not much room for pride of intellect in us when we are so busy running houses of hospitality and farms, and doing it so badly too. The work itself clarifies Peter's teaching.

St. Joseph never fails. He always answers petitions. He founds homes from the Blessed Mother and Child, protected them in exile, worked for them with all the strength of young and vigorous manhood. He was a man, and a saint, and we who believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting, can go to him now today in thanksgiving and joy and ask him for the same abundance of spiritual flavors that he has granted us materially. In our recent difficulties the press was kind to us of course and so was Judge Nichol in an upside down kind of way. But it was St. Joseph who provided the wherewithal to keep our House of Hospitality and **Catholic Worker** headquarters going. We thank him, and thank God for giving him to us. D.D.