

# On Aims and Purposes

Dorothy Day

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In 1933 there were 12.8 million unemployed, nearly 25% of the U.S. workforce. In the years since World War I there had grown disillusionment, economic collapse, and widespread attraction to movements on the right and the left—Fascism and Communism.

Against this backdrop, *The Catholic Worker* newspaper was launched to aid the reconstruction of the social order. In **To Our Readers** Dorothy states their overall purpose.

Dorothy always maintained that Peter Maurin’s ideas were the foundation of the movement. In **Maurin’s Program** we learn the three steps of Peter’s vision:

- roundtable discussions for the clarification of thought
- houses of hospitality
- farming colonies or agronomic universities

Seven years since the CW movement began, in **Aims and Purposes (1940)**, Dorothy restates their mission as working to create “a new heaven and a new *earth*.” The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ is the spiritual foundation of our personal responsibility, here and now, for the good of all.

At their tenth anniversary, in the midst of World War II, with the movement having shrunk to only a few houses and their pacifist stance unpopular, Dorothy succinctly states their purpose in **Aims and Purposes (1943)**: love our brother to show love of God. She asks a series of questions to challenge the reader to assess how they are living Christian teaching.

**Letter To Our Readers at the Beginning of Our Fifteenth Year** recapitulates Peter Maurin’s program of action as they lived it the past fifteen years. The account is rich in historical detail and anecdotes about how Peter lived what he expounded.

Two issues of the paper later, in the July/August 1947 edition, Dorothy writes **What dream did they dream? Utopia or suffering?**. The article is an extended rumination about her own and the movement’s failures. The movement has shrunk, they are criticized on all sides, she is disheartened. She sees a spirituality of self-denial and of the cross as a means to revitalize the movement.

**On Pilgrimage – May 1948** recapitulates Peter Maurin’s core vision, and Dorothy places their work in the wider context of the lay apostolate. However, she states what distinguishes the Catholic Worker is its pacifism and economics of distributism.

In **Personalist–Peter Maurin** Dorothy sketches the background of Peter Maurin’s thinking, the way he lived, what he said, and his social vision.

**Workers of the World Unite** celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the movement. Dorothy reasserts their pacifism in the atomic age and personalizes their goals and her vocation. She includes anecdotes on how their mission evolved.

At their fortieth anniversary, in **On Pilgrimage – May 1973**, Dorothy, now 76 years old, ruminates about the intellectual and spiritual sources of the movement and its relationship to the Church. She repeats Peter’s three-point program.

Taken together, these articles form a mosaic of the central themes of the Catholic Worker Movement, themes that animate the work and spirit of 225 communities worldwide.

James Allaire  
September 2013

# Chapter 2

## To Our Readers

*The Catholic Worker*, May 1933, 4 (First Issue)

*Summary: States that the purpose of the paper is to articulate the Church's social program and to popularize the Popes' social encyclicals. (DDLW #12).*

For those who are sitting on park benches in the warm spring sunlight.

For those who are huddling in shelters trying to escape the rain.

For those who are walking the streets in the all but futile search for work.

For those who think that there is no hope for the future, no recognition of their plight - this little paper is addressed.

It is printed to call their attention to the fact that the Catholic Church has a social program - to let them know that there are men of God who are working not only for their spiritual, but for their material welfare.

### **FILLING A NEED**

It's time there was a Catholic paper printed for the unemployed.

The fundamental aim of most radical sheets is the conversion of its readers to radicalism and atheism.

Is it not possible to be radical and not atheist?

Is it not possible to protest, to expose, to complain, to point out abuses and demand reforms without desiring the overthrow of religion?

In an attempt to popularize and make known the encyclicals of the Popes in regard to social justice and the program put forth by the Church for the "reconstruction of the social order," this news sheet, *The Catholic Worker*, is started.

It is not as yet known whether it will be a monthly, a fortnightly or a weekly. It all depends on the funds collected for the printing and distribution. Those who can subscribe, and those who can donate, are asked to do so.

This first number of *The Catholic Worker* was planned, written and edited in the kitchen of a tenement on Fifteenth Street, on subway platforms, on the “L,” the ferry. There is no editorial office, no overhead in the way of telephone or electricity, no salaries paid.

The money for the printing of the first issue was raised by begging small contributions from friends. A colored priest in Newark sent us ten dollars and the prayers of his congregation. A colored sister in New Jersey, garbed also in holy poverty, sent us a dollar. Another kindly and generous friend sent twenty-five. The rest of it the editors squeezed out of their own earnings, and at that they were using money necessary to pay milk bills, gas bills, electric light bills.

By accepting delay the utilities did not know that they were furthering the cause of social justice. They were, for the time being, unwitting cooperators.

Next month someone may donate us an office. Who knows?

It is cheering to remember that Jesus Christ wandered this earth with no place to lay His head. *The foxes have holes and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.* And when we consider our fly-by-night existence, our uncertainty, we remember (with pride at sharing the honor), that the disciples supped by the seashore and wandered through corn fields picking the ears from the stalks wherewith to make their frugal meals.

# Chapter 3

## Maurin's Program

*The Catholic Worker*, June-July 1933, 4.

*Summary: Outlines Peter Maurin's three step program of social reconstruction (round table discussions, houses of hospitality, farm colonies) led by the laity working out the principles in the Popes' encyclicals on social justice. (DDLW #266).*

### MAURIN'S PROGRAM

FRANCES PERKINS, Secretary of Labor, says that she is grateful for every plan which is sent in suggesting a method of reconstruction. Like the government, THE CATHOLIC WORKER is interested in hearing what the Catholic layman has to say. It offers itself as a mouthpiece and it pledges its cooperation in the working out of the principles in the Popes' encyclicals on social justice.

We believe that there are many groups of Catholic men and women throughout the country who are organizing in study groups and who would like some way to communicate with one another. There are many platforms and programs and it is not the intention of the paper to embrace any one of these but to give space to all.

Peter Maurin (whose name we misspelled in the last issue) has his program which is embodied in his contributions this month. Because his program is specific and definite he thinks it better to withdraw his name from the editorial board and continue his contact with the paper as a contributor. "As an editor," he says, "it will be assumed that I sponsor or advocate any reform suggested in the pages of THE CATHOLIC WORKER. I would rather definitely sign my own work, letting it be understood what I stand for.

"My program stands for three things. Round Table Discussions, and I hope to hold the first at the Manhattan Lyceum the last Sunday of June. Why the Manhattan Lyceum? Yes, I know that it is the place usually chosen by the Communists and radicals for their meetings. But it is cheap. We can have a hall holding 150 people for eight hours for ten dollars. I have paid a deposit of three. I have no more money now but I hope to beg the rest. I hope

everybody will come to this meeting. I want Communists, radicals, priests and laity. I want everyone to set forth his views. I want the clarification of thought.

“The next step in the program is houses of hospitality. In the Middle Ages it was an obligation of the bishops to provide houses of hospitality or hospices for the wayfarer. They are especially necessary now, and necessary to my program as half-way houses. I am hoping that some one will donate a house, rent free, for six months so that a start may be made. A priest will be at the head of it and men gathered through our round table discussions will be recruited to work in the houses cooperatively and eventually be sent out to farm colonies or agronomic universities. Which comes to the third step in my program. People will have to go back to the land. The machine has displaced labor, the cities are overcrowded. The land will have to take care of them.

“I am not saying that my program is for everyone, it is for those who choose to embrace it. I am not opposed to private property with responsibility. But those who own private property should never forget that it is a trust.”



# Chapter 4

## Aims and Purposes (1940)

*The Catholic Worker*, February 1940, 7.

\*Summary: Restates the central vision of the Catholic Worker Movement as working for “a new heaven and a new \*earth,\* wherein justice dwelleth.” This vision recognizes the “primacy of the spritual” and the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. The Catholic Worker is “a new way of life” involving Houses of Hospitality for the daily practice of the Works of Mercy and Farming Communes where each person can take responsibility of doing their part. (DDLW #182).\*

For the sake of new readers, for the sake of men on our breadlines, for the sake of the employed and unemployed, the organized and unorganized workers, and also for the sake of ourselves, we must reiterate again and again what are our aims and purposes.

Together with the Works of Mercy, feeding, clothing and sheltering our brothers, we must indoctrinate. We must “give reason for the faith that is in us.” Otherwise we are scattered members of the Body of Christ, we are not “all members one of another.” Otherwise, our religion is an opiate, for ourselves alone, for our comfort or for our individual safety or indifferent custom.

We cannot live alone. We cannot go to Heaven alone. Otherwise, as Péguy said, God will say to us, “Where are the others?” (This is in one sense only as, of course, we believe that we must be what we would have the other fellow be. We must look to ourselves, our own lives first.)

If we do not keep indoctrinating, we lose the vision. And if we lose the vision, we become merely philanthropists, doling out palliatives.

The vision is this. We are working for “a new heaven and a new *earth*, wherein justice dwelleth.” We are trying to say with action, “Thy will be done on *earth* as it is in heaven.” We are working for a Christian social order.

We believe in the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. This teaching, the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, involves today the issue of unions (where men call each other brothers); it involves the racial question; it involves cooperatives, credit unions, crafts; it involves Houses of Hospitality and Farming Communes. It is with all these means that we

can live as though we believed indeed that we are all members one of another, knowing that when “the health of one member suffers, the health of the whole body is lowered.”

This work of ours toward a new heaven and a new earth shows a correlation between the material and the spiritual, and, of course, recognizes the primacy of the spiritual. Food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul. Hence the leaders of the work, and as many as we can induce to join us, must go daily to Mass, to receive food for the soul. And as our perceptions are quickened, and as we pray that our faith be increased, we will see Christ in each other, and we will not lose faith in those around us, no matter how stumbling their progress is. It is easier to have faith that God will support each House of Hospitality and Farming Commune and supply our needs in the way of food and money to pay bills, than it is to keep a strong, hearty, living faith in each individual around us - to see Christ in him. If we lose faith, if we stop the work of indoctrinating, we are in a way denying Christ again.

We must practice the presence of God. He said that when two or three are gathered together, there He is in the midst of them. He is with us in our kitchens, at our tables, on our breadlines, with our visitors, on our farms. When we pray for our material needs, it brings us close to His humanity. He, too, needed food and shelter. He, too, warmed His hands at a fire and lay down in a boat to sleep.

When we have spiritual reading at meals, when we have the rosary at night, when we have study groups, forums, when we go out to distribute literature at meetings, or sell it on the street corners, Christ is there with us. What we do is very little. But it is like the little boy with a few loaves and fishes. Christ took that little and increased it. He will do the rest. What we do is so little we may seem to be constantly failing. But so did He fail. He met with apparent failure on the Cross. But unless the seed fall into the earth and die, there is no harvest.

And why must we see results? Our work is to sow. Another generation will be reaping the harvest.

When we write in these terms, we are writing not only for our fellow workers in thirty other Houses, to other groups of Catholic Workers who are meeting for discussion, but to every reader of the paper. We hold with the motto of the National Maritime Union, that every member is an organizer. We are upholding the ideal of personal responsibility. You can work as you are bumming around the country on freights, if you are working in a factory or a field or a shipyard or a filling station. You do not depend on any organization which means only paper figures, which means only the labor of the few. We are not speaking of mass action, pressure groups (fearful potential for evil as well as good). We are addressing each individual reader of *The Catholic Worker*.

The work grows with each month, the circulation increases, letters come in from all over the world, articles are written about the movement in many countries.

Statesmen watch the work, scholars study it, workers feel its attraction, those who are in need flock to us and stay to participate. It is a new way of life. But though we grow in numbers and reach far-off corners of the earth, essentially the work depends on each one of us, on our way of life, the little works we do.

“Where are the others?” God will say. Let us not deny Him in those about us. Even here, right now, we can have that new earth, wherein justice dwelleth!

# Chapter 5

## Aims and Purposes (1943)

*The Catholic Worker*, May 1943, 4

*Summary: On the tenth anniversary of The Catholic Worker she explains their purpose as promoting love of God and our brother. Their work expresses the beauty of Christianity in supporting the worker, the poor, and eschewing violence. She highlights instances of violent racism. (DDLW #919).*

“Let us therefore love God because God hath first loved us. If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?”—**St. John**

It is because of this invitation that we are engaged in the work of getting out the **Catholic Worker**. “Love is an exchange of gifts,” St. Ignatius said. And we want to show our love for our brother, so that we can show our love for God; and the best way we can do it is to try to give him what we’ve got, in the way of food, clothing and shelter; to give him what talents we possess by writing, drawing pictures, reminding each other of the love of God and the love of man. There is too little love in this world, too little tenderness.

### Love Fulfills the Law

How can we love God and kill our brother? How can we love our brother and kill him? How can we fulfill the Gospel precept to be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect; how can we follow the precept to love God when we kill our fellow man? How can war be compatible with such love?

To kill, to destroy, to starve, to inflict all these sufferings with love—that is sadism of the most hideous kind. That is perversity. It has long been said that religion is the opiate of the people. Pope Pius XI said that the workers of the world are lost to the church. If that is true, if the poor of the world are turned from the Bride of Christ, it is because there is no relation between the spiritual and material. We are not trying to put into effect our Christianity, our Christian principles. They are not animating our lives.

Why do we write about cooperatives, credit unions, mutual aid? Because when we see what Christianity is, when we see the beauty of our faith—when we have gone through something analogous to a conversion, we see all things new, as St. Paul says. We look upon our work, our lives, and we say, “How do these things square with Christian teaching? Can we go on making money at the expense of our brother? Can we be profiteers, can we work on Wall Street? Can we go in for advertising which sets up false standards, which perverts the people, which fills their minds with meretricious desires, making the good sweet life of the Christian unpalatable?” If we wish to follow Christ, we will be workers like Jesus, like St. Joseph, like St. Paul. We will think of the dignity of labor, we will respect the worker, will bear our share of responsibility toward making that new social order wherein justice dwelleth, where people will have that certain amount of goods which St. Thomas says is necessary to lead a good life.

Why do we talk about houses of hospitality, bread lines, and farming communes and the necessity of taking care of our poorer brother? Because the greatest hypocrisy is this, to say to our brother in need, “Go, be now filled,” and give him no bread.

How can we show our love for God except through our love for our brothers?

How can we cease to cry out against injustice and human misery?

The first Sunday in May, I went visiting through Paterson and Passaic with Sr. Peter Claver, and saw some of her Negro students and heard some of their stories. There was one elderly woman caring for grandchildren, two little boys, working at hard days’ work, living in a cold house. During the depths of the winter she had no stove. At one time she was so poor she sold her bed and slept on a board between two chairs.

There is always work, people will say. Yes, but what if your children are sick, or if you are too ill yourself to work?

This poor woman had supplied the bouquet of flowers that Low Sunday morning for the altar of the little Negro Chapel in Paterson. They were the only flowers there, and it was the month of May.

She had one of her grandchildren in her arms all during the mass and it cooed like a little pigeon.

Oh, the suffering, the poverty, of these poor of Christ, and the indifference of Christians!

On my recent visit South I heard of a white man who had killed seven Negroes, one for not getting out of his bed, one for marrying a mulatto of whom he was enamored. And in speaking of these things to one of the brothers of the order I had visited he said to me:

“But that is not the worst. When I was down south as a brother, I saw a young man with his arms and legs grotesquely crippled. He had offended a white man at the age of 12 or so and the man had laid hold of him and a broken both his arms and legs like matchsticks. They were never set properly and he was crippled for life.”

Are not these sins crying to heaven for vengeance? And how can we do anything but howl over the sins in which we share? They are our sins. Just as we believe in the communion of saints—that we share in the merits of the saints, so we must believe that we share in the guilt of such cruelty and injustice.

We cannot talk of the love of God, the love of our neighbor without recognizing the dire need for penance. In a world in which such cruelty exists, in which men are so possessed, such a spirit cannot be cast out but by prayer and fasting. Our Lord Himself said so.

(This article was also reprinted in the May 1967 issue, p. 7.)

## Chapter 6

# Letter To Our Readers at the Beginning of Our Fifteenth Year

*The Catholic Worker*, May 1947, 1,3.

*Summary: Outlines P. Maurin's program for social action as the instituting of Houses of Hospitality, Clarification of Thought and Farming Communes, and explains where the C.W. has gone with each program. Reveals Maurin's sources of thought and the need to find lay apostolates. Traces personal sacrifices to Jesus' command in the gospels and asserts that the state cannot take over this duty. (DDLW #155).*

"It is better to light a candle than to sit complaining of the dark." Chinese proverb.

### Dear Fellow Workers in Christ:

This merry month of May, this month of Mary, this most important month which marks the beginning of our fifteenth year I have offered, with great temerity, to write the whole paper, aside from Peter's essays. We have a new farm and retreat house at Newburgh-on-the-Hudson, sixty miles from New York and up there the men are ploughing and planting and building, Gerry Griffin and Jack Thornton, John Fillinger, Joe Cotter, Hans Tunnesen, Rocco and Frank Coyle. In a way I would like to have this issue of THE CATHOLIC WORKER an anniversary issue, and give a resume of our life and work in neat and scholarly style. But being a woman, and a much interrupted woman, I can only write a letter, a discursive letter, which none the less will be packed full of news and events and from which you will gain a picture, form an opinion, even perhaps make a decision. A decision to read a book, make a retreat, visit us on Mott street; a decision perhaps to consider yourself an apostle and search out some school of the apostolate to inform yourself more about God our King, and Heaven our country.

Each and every paragraph of this letter will be interrupted, I know, by visitors, by babies perhaps, by meals, by matters of great importance in that they have to do with human beings. And in the face of these interruptions, I must remember what I read of Cervantes

recently—that he wrote his masterpiece, “Don Quixote,” while he lived in a four-room house with six women, and above a tavern full of roistering drinkers. Not much peace and quiet there.

Peter Maurin’s program of action, in the face of the crisis of the day, a crisis that has continued these last fourteen years through a great depression and a great war, remains the same now as it did when first we met back in 1933.

1. To reach the man in the street with the social teachings of the church.
2. To reach the masses through the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, a personal sacrifice, which means voluntary poverty.
3. To build up a lay apostolate through round table discussions for the clarification of thought.
4. To found Houses of Hospitality for the practice of the works of mercy.
5. To found farming communes for the cure of unemployment. To solve the problem of the machine, for the restoration of property and the combating of the servile state: for the building up of the family, the original community, the first unit of society.

To form our minds, Peter brought us things to read, Chesterton and Belloc and Gill and Cobbett and Father Vincent McNabb, the encyclicals of the recent Popes, from Pope Leo XIII down to the present day. “Making the encyclicals click,” he used to say with his bright and happy smile, at what he considered a happy phrase, something that would stick in the mind of the hearer. Peter is a Frenchman (for those of you who do not know him) and a peasant, and he has his own way of saying things.

He introduced to us Leon Bloy, the pilgrim of the absolute, and that great and terrible line of his, which converted the Maritains, “There is only one unhappiness, and that is—NOT TO BE ONE OF THE SAINTS.” He showed us how Pope Pius XI called our attention in his encyclical on St. Francis de Sales, to the fact that we are all called to be saints, layman and religious, that this is our goal, union with God.

“If you have risen with Christ, seek the things which are above. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are of earth. For you have died and your life is hid with Christ in God.” “Unless the seed fall into the ground and die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.”

Peter quoted this encyclical on St. Francis de Sales, he quoted the beatitudes, he quoted the Sermon on the Mount. And these Ideas were afterward elaborated in the retreats given at Maryfarm, Easton, and are now being given at Maryfarm, Newburgh; retreats which emphasize man’s dignity as the son of God, the supernatural motive, as the little way to God; the correlation of the spiritual and the material, making one’s work coincide with one’s faith as a Christian. All summer we will have these retreats at Newburgh, and after the retreats there will be discussions and work on the land, to raise the food for the breadline at Mott street.

This letter will be for our prospective readers, as well as for the 58,000 subscribers we now have throughout the world. So I will try to take up Peter’s program point by point and tell what we have been doing these last fourteen years.



## Reach All Nations, Reach All Men

To reach the man in the street. “The workers of the world have been lost to the Church,” Pope Pius XI is reported to have said to Canon Cardijn, international head of the Young Christian Workers. It is here that the apostolate of the WORD comes in, newspapers, leaflets, magazines; THE CATHOLIC WORKER, a monthly, usually of eight pages, but now cut down on account of the paper shortage has been distributed from the very first in public squares, sold on street corners, distributed in front of meeting halls. At times the circulation which started at 2,500 went up to 150,000, at a time when labor was beginning to organize and there was a greater call for the paper for mass distribution.

At those times when such simple issues as the right of workers to organize into unions of their own choosing was at stake, it was very necessary to get out into industrial conflicts, in front of factories and on picket lines, to emphasize what the Popes have said in regard to the worker.

But there were also criticisms to make as to the acceptance by the unions of the industrial set up as it was, private enterprise, competition, industrial capitalism.

Frankly, our position was that we had better work against the whole order, work for decentralization, in some cases even for abolition of the machine and the assembly line where it definitely went against the best interests of man and his needs and his nature. Since the unions were organized more for wages and hours, rather than for mutual aid and indoctrination, very often what we have to offer in the way of a program did not interest them. Our point of view was foreign if not hostile at times. Often it is a matter of criticism that we have not continued work with unions as we did in 1933 through 1938. Frankly, it was because we were not interested in increasing armaments, big business, perpetuating the status quo, and working in many cases perhaps towards state ownership.

We must continue to protest injustice, bad working conditions, poor wages which are general now in face of the high cost of living; but our vision is of another system, another social order, a state of society where, as Marx and Engels put it, “*Each man works according to his ability and receives according to his need*,” Or as St. Paul put it, “Let your abundance, supply their want.” Men are beginning to think of the annual wage, in the unions, but not the family wage. Usually it is “equal pay for equal work.” But that holy Pope Pius XI, said we should work to deproletarize the worker, to get him out of the wage-earning class and into the propertied class, so that he would own his home, as well as his tools.

## Join the Apostolate

We must continue to get out into the highways and byways to distribute the paper even if it is not the food the man in the street wants. Religion is *morbid* to most people, and indeed it is a matter of dying to self, in order to live for God and one’s neighbor. Religion has too long been the opium of the people, the opiate of the people. I forget how the jingle in the first issue of INTEGRITY ran, but the sense of it was this:

John Smith puts on his hat and  
 goes to Church on Sunday,  
 And John Smith goes to hell for  
 what he does on Monday.

Not Saturday night, mind you, when he may be taking surcease from care in some tavern, but for the work he engages in, whether it is the advertising business, or a fat job in the Rubber Company or Copper or Nickel Mines, or a Steamship company. We participate in the sin of others, we are all helping to make the kind of a world that makes for war.

Yes, let us get out into Union Square, along Forty Second street, in front of Madison Square Garden and distribute and sell THE CATHOLIC WORKER. We have been doing that for many years, but we need to do much more of it. As the older ones get tired (and Stanley has become a tired radical in this job of selling the paper), let the younger students and workers take over the job of being fools for Christ. One seminarian sold the paper all one summer for us. One rainy night when we were going into a CIO meeting there he was, standing in the downpour shouting READ THE CATHOLIC WORKER—THE ONLY THING THAT ISN'T ALL WET!

Big Dan used to call out (in opposition to Communist salesmen, who shouted, Read the Daily Worker), "READ THE CATHOLIC WORKER DAILY."

Leaflets, pamphlets, papers as well as more scholarly journals, are needed to reach the man in the street. Here is a letter which came last month: "We have been receiving a hundred CATHOLIC WORKERS a month and selling and distributing them in Columbus Circle. Do publish an appeal for more zeal on the part of Catholics in getting the Catholic message to the worker, to the poor, to the oppressed. There is a colored Catholic couple in Philadelphia and they would like a supply of fifty papers every month to distribute in their neighborhood."

Many an apostle has been found by selling Catholic literature on the street corner; he has been queried as to his positions and beliefs and has had to begin to study "to know the reason for the faith that is in him" in order to answer all the questions that are put to him. And many a time he just can't answer them and it's no use his trying.

## Houses Needed For Hospitality

*To reach the masses through the spiritual and the corporal works of mercy.* Of course getting Catholic literature around is performing quite a few of those tasks. It is *enlightening the ignorant and counseling the doubtful, comforting the afflicted*, and you might even say that walking on a picket line is doing these things too, as well as *rebuking the sinner*. But when we talk of the works of mercy, we usually think of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and sheltering the homeless.

We have had to do them all even to *burying the dead*. One does not necessarily have to establish, run, or live in a House of Hospitality, as Peter named the hospices we have been running around the country, in order to practice the works of mercy. The early Fathers

of the Church said that every house should have a Christ's room. But it is generally only the poorest who are hospitable. A young college graduate hitchhiking across the country during the depression (he was trying to make up his mind about his vocation) said that the only place he found hospitality was among the Negroes and the Mexicans. Certainly priests' housekeepers did not extend any. He met so much misery and starvation even, that when he reached Los Angeles he finally started a House of Hospitality there, and in that house he met with so many impossible cases that he turned more and more to the spiritual weapons, and now he is a priest, with the most powerful weapons of all in his hands.

Every house should have a Christ's room. The coat which hangs in your closet belongs to the poor. If your brother comes to you hungry and you say, Go be thou filled, what kind of hospitality is that? It is no use turning people away to an agency, to the city or the state or the Catholic Charities. It is you yourself who must perform the works of mercy. Often you can only give the price of a meal, or a bed on the Bowery. Often you can only hope that it will be spent for that. Often you can literally take off a garment if it only be a scarf and warm some shivering brother. But *personally*, at a *personal sacrifice*, these were the ways Peter used to insist, to combat the growing tendency on the part of the State to take over. The great danger was the State taking over the job which our Lord Himself gave us to do, "Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me."

Of course husbands must be considered, and wives must be considered, and children. One must look after one's own family it is true. But Fr Coady said once, "We can all do ten times as much as we think we can do."

Right now we have two Houses of Hospitality in Detroit, the St. Martha House and the St. Francis House. In Cleveland there is the Martin de Porres House. In Pittsburgh, there is the St. Joseph House of Hospitality which was started by our group, (the Bishop gave the use of a huge orphanage) and is now run by Father Rice and Joseph Lenz. In Harrisburg there is the Martin de Porres House. In Philadelphia, the House of Christ the Worker. In Rochester, St. Joseph's House of Hospitality for men and the Martha flat for women.

In the past there have been houses in Seattle, Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Milwaukee, St. Paul Minneapolis, Chicago, South Bend, Toledo, Troy, Buffalo, Boston, Washington, Baltimore, New Orleans, etc., but when the depression ended with the war boom, and there were again jobs for all, many of the houses closed. Of course there is always a need for such centers. There are always the lame and the halt and the blind. There are always the poor we will always have with us, as our Lord said. There are always those coming out of hospitals, mental asylums, jails, etc. There is the wayfarer that needs to be sheltered for a night and those who come and stay a lifetime and finally need to be buried. The war took many of our young men into the service, into conscientious objector camps, into the medical corps, into jails, and they were the ones who ran the houses and performed the works of mercy. There were only four houses for women and of those two are still going; the Harrisburg house is a family center, to take care of the Negroes in the Seventh Street district in the shadow of the capital.

## Unpremeditated

At one time a thousand a day were fed in New York, probably more. Now there are perhaps four hundred or five hundred. The house is always filled (we have 36 rooms and two stores) but the line is smaller. We started fourteen years ago by inviting whoever came along to dinner. Many of our workers were recruited in that way. By the time three years had passed we were given the use of 115 Mott street and the line began to stretch around the block. We never contemplated starting a BREAD LINE. All Peter had ever talked about were Houses of Hospitality and he had hoped that there could be craft shops, and discussion centers and libraries, and perhaps a chapel, and that these houses would be little cells of Christian living, radiating peace and brotherly love. But the evil of the day, the poverty in our rich country, the unemployment in the age of the machine was so great, and the disability, mental and physical, so appalling, that our houses grew and the lines grew with them.

But Peter never grows discouraged. "Discouragement is a temptation of the devil," he would say "We must make the kind of society where people find it easier to be good," he would add very simply.

## Clarification Thru Discussion

Round Table discussions go on everywhere, when two or three gather together. Perhaps there is too much of it in an informal way, and not enough of it in a formal way. We have regular Friday night meetings, when speakers come and present a point of view lead in a discussion, or give a spiritual conference. There are discussions when visitors gather together, and whole groups, classes from seminaries, colleges and schools come together to ask questions and to enter into controversy. There are the retreats at Maryfarm, which in the past have been glimpses of heaven to a great many, an enlightenment, a conversion, a time of peace and study and rest.

Peter used to enter upon discussions on street corners, over restaurant tables, in public squares, as well as in the office, at all times of the day and night. He believed in catching people as they came, and often the discussions would go on all night. One is reminded of St. Paul who talked so long that the young man fell off the window seat out of the open window, and was picked up for dead; St. Paul had to revive him. And St. Catherine of Sienna, it is said, talked until she put people to sleep and then woke them up to listen some more. But Peter can talk and discuss no longer. He is over seventy, and his mind is tired and his memory bad. He has been a great leader, and his writings still inspire. And now significantly enough, many young people all over the country are trying to put into effect his ideas, both in publishing, in running centers of training, in establishing themselves on the land and here these discussions are being continued. If you cannot find enough people around Mott street to talk to about these ideas, and books that Peter has recommended, one can go to John Straub or Walter Marx in Washington or the Center for Christ the King at Herman, Pennsylvania, or to Loveland, Ohio where there are a number of families, as well as the great school of the apostolate for women, THE GRAIL. Or there is a center at

Brookfield, Conn., where there are four families on the land. Everywhere, the discussions started by Peter, are going on. The candle he has lit has been lighting many another candle and the light is becoming brighter.

## Farm Centers Are Small Beginnings

There are these centers and other farms too around the country which are centers of the lay apostolate, though not the communal farm that Peter envisaged at a time when unemployment was the tragedy of the day, and man had neither work nor bread. There is a Catholic Worker farm at Lyons, Michigan where Louis and Justine Murphy live, and another Catholic Worker farm at Upton, Mass., where the O'Donnell and the Paulson family live. Frank manages the St. Leo shop there and Carl Paulson and Mary make stained glass and do wood carving etc. Both farms are called St. Benedict's Farm. There are nine children at the Massachusetts farm. There is Our Lady of the Wayside Farm at Avon, Ohio, where Bill and Dorothy Gauchat live with their three children and are taking care of a little crippled baby (who cannot live) whose parents cannot care for it. This farm helps provide food for the House of Hospitality Bill manages in Cleveland.

Now there is Maryfarm, Newburgh, which is connected with 115 Mott street, and which we hope will soon be self sustaining, and not only self sustaining, but helping to feed the breadline at Mott street. We will be having retreats there during the summer, and it will be delightful to go by way of boat up the Hudson, a slow trip, but a fitting approach to a week of prayer and study. You can get there quickly by New York Central to Beacon in an hour and a half, then take the ferry to Newburgh and a bus to Coldenham for ten minutes or so. You ask to be let off on Route 17K at the Catholic Worker Farm which is opposite the Sunnybrook Fruit Farms. We have had our first retreat already, Easter week, dedicated to rejoicing.

This is a brief summary of the Catholic Worker and its aims and purposes in the lay apostolate. Often people ask us what is the keynote of Peter's message, and one could say at once, without hesitation, POVERTY. It is what sets him apart, it is what distinguishes him from the great mass of the teachers of the day. In a time when we are living in an acquisitive society, Peter Maurin is THE POOR MAN.

Last month there was a sensational story in all the New York papers, and probably reprinted all over the country, about two brothers, Langley and Homer Collyer, who were misers and accumulators and who met with a horrible end. On receipt of a telephone call, police broke into a house on upper Fifth Avenue in the Harlem section, a four story house which in this housing shortage could have been converted into homes for four families. They found Homer, who had been blind and helpless, dead from starvation. His brother had disappeared. The house was so filled with junk that Langley had had to tunnel his way through to go in and out of the house to make their few purchases. In fear of intrusion, he had made booby traps with hundreds of pounds of old iron ready to fall on whoever threatened their privacy. One of these booby traps caught Langley who smothered to death within a few feet of his blind brother, who on account of the junk, could not reach either his brother or the window to call

for help.

He slowly starved to death, while listening to the rats feeding on the corpse of Langley a few feet away.

This story seems to me a vision of hell, a very literal and appalling sample of the hell that awaits the acquisitive, the greedy, the accumulators, the seekers after markets, wealth, power, prestige, exclusiveness, empire, dominion, of everything opposed to the common good. Here were two old men who epitomized to the nth degree suspicion and hatred of their fellows and a desire to gather together to themselves, everything they could lay their hands on. "They were worth \$100,000" the newspapers reported. What a strange use of words! They spent little. Among the things they collected were six grand pianos, dismantled cars, babies' cribs.

Peter, on the other hand has accumulated nothing in this life. He has nothing but the suit on his back, the shoes on his feet. He has lived on Bowerys and Skid Roads all his life, not believing that his dignity needed to be maintained by residence at a decent address, or by stopping at a good hotel. To reach one's fellows by the practice of the works of mercy, AT A PERSONAL SACRIFICE,— this meant embracing voluntary poverty. Voluntary poverty as a means to an end, to publish a paper, to put out leaflets, to live on the land, to serve one's fellows. He has lived these ideas.

And so when people ask us how we get the funds to run Houses of Hospitality, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, care for the sick and bury the dead we can only reply that our own wages are a penny a day and that by living in common we have enough to care for our brothers. The paper costs a cent a copy, or twenty-five cents a year. Many people send more. When our bills pile high, we send out an appeal, and usually this must be done twice a year, spring and fall, on St. Joseph's day in March and St. Francis Day in October. Always we get just enough to carry on. When there is some extraordinary project in view like the new farm at Newburgh, we made an especial appeal for that. Ask and you shall receive. That is, if the Lord wants you to have it. "I have no need of your goods," He has said, through the psalmist, and one of the ways we may know if it is God's will that we carry on this work, is by the response to our appeals. If He wants the work done, He will send the means to do it.

## Light and Warmth Means Love

All this is set forth to show the validity, the vitality of Peter Maurin's ideas, of his vision. They said of the early Christians, — "SEE HOW THEY LOVE ONE ANOTHER" and we have seen in Peter's poverty how this love could be expressed, to live with the poor, to work with the poor, and to love the poor. And how great and wonderful thing is this love which makes all work joyful and all burdens light. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." And HELL Bernanos says, is not to love any more.

That love is not a matter of emotion, but a matter of the will, a matter of preference, one soon learns in work like this. To love your neighbor, to love your enemy, who only yesterday was your neighbor your ally, and now has become an enemy. Or so they say.

And what does this love mean in regard to Russia for instance?

## What Is Our Stand on Russia?

We are fighting principalities and powers, not flesh and blood, and the Russians are our neighbors, our brothers in Christ, and not just a world power seeking empire. We are inclined to look upon the small nations as having much more to say, these days, and much clearer judgment than the mighty powers in the UNO. We are for disarmament and the outlawing of the atomic bomb, even if we die for it, even if we are deceived in the integrity of our brothers. We must lay down our lives as Christ did. “A New Commandment I give you, that you love your brother as I have loved you.”

But what about the concentration camps, forced labor, domination of small countries? “The worst enemy of a man will be those of his own household.” “Regard not the mote that is in thy brother’s eye while disregarding the beam in thine own eye.” What about our own problem of minorities, Negroes who are one tenth of our population, Chinese, Philippino, Japanese concentration camps, the recent deportation of Indonesians. Have we forgotten about these?

If your enemy hunger, give him to eat. There is always a solution in the practice of the works of mercy, *at a personal sacrifice*.

The old Testament speaking of our Lord, foretelling Him is full of the same thought. The epistle on Monday in Holy Week was from Isaiah, “I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them. I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me. The Lord God is my helper.”

To those who call us isolationist, we must remind them that the Good Samaritan did not leave the poor traveler by the road and run after the robbers. He ministered to the wounded, and fed and sheltered him, and did not seem in the least concerned for justice to be done to the thieves, or revenge being taken. Love, it is a beautiful word, but as Father Zossima said, LOVE IN PRACTICE IS A HARSH AND DREADFUL THING COMPARED TO LOVE IN DREAMS.

## Chapter 7

# What Dream Did They Dream? Utopia or Suffering?

*The Catholic Worker*, July-August 1947, 1, 4, 6, 8.

*Summary: A self-critical appraisal of the Catholic Worker movement's first fifteen years. Readily accepts criticism of their ideals of voluntary poverty and pacifism, failure to implement Peter Maurin's vision, of rigorous and demanding retreats, of internal dissent, and of their approach to helping the poor. Says they have not been good servants nor recognized the failure of the cross and the need to die to self. Says they are in a time of transition with only ten houses remaining. (DDLW #456).*

## On the Feast of Sts. Cyril and Methodius

As I read the story of these two brothers Cyril and Methodius there falls out of my missal a memorial card for "Rev. William Francis Roach, pastor of St. Mary's Church, Texas City, Texas, who died a heroic death April 16, administering to the injured and dying during the Texas City holocaust."

A seminarian from Texas gave me the card and I wish I had 100 more of them to send around to the retreatants who came to us over Labor Day, 1940, all of whom met Father Roach and his twin brother at that retreat. Here were two brothers, both priests, laboring for the faith in the Southwest in an era of black paganism, as Pope Pius XI called it. And here one of them in the midst of his labors had laid down his life for his brothers. Knowing that another explosion was imminent, Fr. Roach went among the injured wearing his cassock, not a customary thing. He knew, his brother said afterwards, that he was going to die. "For the love of God," and for love of his brothers, facing death joyfully and fearlessly. I wish we all had his card, so that we would be remembering to pray daily for such love, and so too that we can overcome the fears of our cringing flesh, so that we too will never hesitate to go into danger if the time comes for us. I always remember two stories of fear, **The Red Badge of Courage** and **Lord Jim** and the horrible failure of Lord Jim in the face of an emergency. God deliver us from such treason.



Yes, the two Roach brothers, not long priests, were with us for that long weekend retreat, a memorable one in more ways than one. I have often wanted to write the story of that retreat but it would almost take a book to do it justice. There were five priests there, and 125 lay people. And our accommodations were the most primitive.

It was before we entered the war, so some of the Catholic Worker houses of hospitality had cars, and brought carloads of retreatants and food. We had about thirty houses at that time, and all the Eastern houses sent representatives, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, Cleveland, Toledo, Pittsburgh, Rochester, Harrisburg, Boston, Worcester, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, not to speak of the crowd from New York. It was the last great get-together the Catholic Workers had before we were separated by war, our workers dispersed to the far ends of the earth, in the service, in jails and conscientious objector camps, the houses closed. There are ten houses still but they are neither as they were before in the depths of depression and with the energy of emergency and crisis upon them and the new found joy of a fellowship in the lay apostolate; nor are they centers of Catholic Action as Peter Maurin envisaged them. We are in a transition stage and we need to do a great deal of writing and talking to work out programs of action and a *modus vivendi*.

Here after the manner of a communion breakfast speaker, I will insert a joke. Several communists in an outer office to Stalin's own sanctum heard roarings and shoutings from within. They cowered in their chairs, or exulted in the discomfiture of another as their temperaments reacted. The shoutings went on for fifteen minutes, and then the door opened and Stalin came out and passed through the office. Peering in, his underlings found that there was no one in the inner office.

"Oh," one sighed in relief. "It is just his daily fifteen minutes of self criticism."

This is one of the old communist jokes, but emphasizing one of the more human and appealing communist trends at the time.

## LEADERS

When one is leader of a movement there is plenty of criticism from all sides as we all know. For fifteen years there has been plenty of it from within and without and in order not to be discouraged one needs much self confidence, as well as confidence in God. When there happens to be two leaders, a man and a woman, the criticism is intensified. No matter how harmoniously those two work together over a long period of years, there are always factions. "I follow Peter," "I follow Paul." It has been so since early apostolic times. This means that few obstructionists ever leave the **movement** which has a dangerous fascination for the anarchist and individualist. They can always say—I follow this one or that one. Peter used to say sadly, "No need ever to eliminate people, they eliminate themselves." But on the other hand, Ray Scott, head of the former Alcuin Community, said brightly, "The Catholic Worker movement performs a great function; the gold is eliminated, the dross remains." This quotation has gone down in the history of the movement, and everyone who tries to stick by and continue the work, ruefully admits that there is some truth in it.

Last year in our September issue there was a long article on **The Church and Work** which was a criticism of a tendency in the Jociste movement, in the union movement in the Church, which brought a storm of protest from all over the country. I still contend that there is not enough **vision** of a society as it could be, and too much of an acceptance of the machine, the factory system, the status quo, an acceptance that is so dangerous that in the immediate and in the long run, it results in the disregard of the family, of the family's needs in the way of property—that it indeed caters to man's concupiscence and neglects such vital and fundamental teaching as to man's real needs, and emphasizes instead his luxury needs. We have been saying these things for fourteen years in our discussions as to work and voluntary poverty, war and voluntary poverty, spirituality and voluntary poverty. But, as Pope Pius said when he cried out against increased armaments, urging the press and pulpit also to do so, "our voice has not been heard."

## Other Groups

It is interesting to read of other communities which have endeavored to build up a better life here and now without waiting for pie in the sky. One such community, New Llano, in Louisiana, suffered for the twenty years of its existence with a group of obstructionists who called themselves, I believe, the brushfire group. They wore a bit of brush in their buttonholes and maintained a society constantly augmented by new members, and it seemed their whole joy was in being contrary, even to the extreme of setting fire to a building which they in their voting had not agreed was necessary.

We have had three attempts here in the past to wreck the Catholic Worker movement, or to carry it along another course. During the first, Peter Maurin expressed the opinion that it would be better to walk out and leave the work to the dissenters rather than continue the argument, which was over the relative importance of the works of mercy and indoctrination. Peter held for the former, of course (though all who know him realize the importance he laid on "indoctrination"). He never ceased to reiterate that the way to reach the people was by the works of mercy carried on at a personal sacrifice. And he never ceased to hold forth against social worker schools, and techniques. Pope Pius XII (thank God for our saintly popes!) said recently:

"In times during which it is the object of the world's hatred, Christianity is not a matter of persuasive words, but of greatness." (See July issue of *The Catholic Mind*.)

And how to be great except by being little, by being poor, by being the servant of all, by doing everything whether we eat or whether we drink, for the love of God, and not for love of ourselves! Oh, we have not yet begun, I realize that over and over again, we have not yet begun to be holy, and there are too many of us settled smugly in our ruts, content with what we are doing, and looking back to "the good old days" when there were 125 at a retreat and a good time was had by all.

"He who says he has done enough has already perished," says St. Augustine, or words to that effect. When we quote, we are often accused of taking words, quotations out of their context, from the Popes of the present to the Fathers of the Church. Sometimes in regard to pacifism,

and sometimes in regard to labor. And as for spirituality, God forbid that I should set myself up as a theologian, and I pray that I will always remember with St. Teresa of Avila, that I am but a woman.

And before I go any further with this article, I might as well quote her on the subject of such writings as this (since I consider this an important article):

“If our Lord should give me grace to say anything that is good, the approval of grave and learned persons will be sufficient; and should there be anything useful, it will be God’s, not mine; for I have no learning, nor goodness . . . I write also as if by stealth and with trouble because thereby I am kept from spinning; and I live in a poor house and have a great deal of business. If our Lord had given me better abilities and a more retentive memory I might then have profited by what I heard or read, and so, if I should say anything good our Lord will it for some good; and whatever is useless or bad, that will be mine . . . in other things, my being a woman is sufficient to account for my stupidity.”

## Past Leaders

In the June issue of the *Historical Review* printed by St. Louis University there appeared an article by Donald Gallagher, professor in the philosophy department of Marquette University, and formerly one of the first heads of the St. Louis House of Hospitality. He was there while he was going to school, with Cy Echele he headed the St. Louis Catholic Workers which were made up of three groups, one might say—those who wished to help the poor in that unemployed era; those who were especially interested in the liturgy, and those who were interested in studying the social order and formed themselves later into the Catholic Radical Alliance. The meetings at the house were large and well attended. There were many people interested actively in the work and keeping a center going. Herb Welsh carried on wonderfully for a while, carrying on especially the first of the listed activities, with an active and ardent love for running the house and working with the poor. Now many of these young people are married, have children, have jobs—have the full life which keeps them from other activities. Some are teachers, some edit **The Living Parish**; all of them indeed were touched by, influenced by the movement. They are even in some way a part of the movement still, in that we are all working as members of Christ’s Mystical Body of which we are the members.

I liked the article of Don Gallagher very much but some of the newer members of the New York group who feel an intense loyalty to the movement felt that he spoke too much of the movement in terms of the past.

It is true that the movement is a living vital thing—the ideas which animate it are as vital and important as they were when restated by Peter Maurin. As I pointed out in an article in **Integrity**, he never claimed so much to be an original thinker but called himself an agitator, an integrator, a maker of a synthesis, and above all, he called for a synthesis to be made by others.

## THE POOR

To me also it is true that the movement is still one of the most important in the country today, in that it points to a problem which has not been met except with words. That is **the problem of the poor**. Too many other movements have gone out with words, with agitation, with study and indoctrination, with efforts towards organization and legislation. There is too much tackling of the problem from above. There are too few who will consider themselves servants, who will give up their lives to serving others, who will sow the things of this world, the things of the mind, and of the soul in order to “put on Christ”—to “be Christ” to those around us. In other words, to answer in the words of a priest who was praised for his charitable work, “I have not yet shed my blood for them, my brothers.”

There is too much talk of the raising up of **leaders**, and too little of the raising up of servants; or rather, just too much talk, and too little **being** what we are talking about.

We may think that we are humble, that we wish to be ignored, spat upon, criticized, verbally buffeted (there are few of us who have had the privilege of being actually buffeted, though there are already, thank God, martyrs among our friends who have shed some blood for their brothers) but I am thinking that much of the criticism we get, we deserve, if not for the particular point on which we are criticized, then for something else.

As my mother used to say, “you never get a lick amiss.” So if priests and layfolk we encounter say scornfully that we are wasting time and intelligence and money on derelicts, the scum of the earth, the submerged tenth, we should accept the criticism at not having done better at the job, at not having progressed much in sanctity ourselves, nor developed much sanctity in others around us. Our fever has not been catching!

If our pacifism has not convinced, has not brought about converts, then we should acknowledge that there is an element of heresy in our pacifism that has not been burned out—that it is hard for Bishops and priests to find the gold in the dross that is within us. Fr. McSorley said once, “Come a war, you will find yourselves in very strange company,” and I often thought of that as I met long-haired pacifist, vegetarian pacifist, Lemurian pacifist, anarchist pacifist, including many other varieties not to speak of Friends, Brethren, Hutterites, Doukhobors, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses who were not pacifists but just refused to fight in this war. This is true of some of our Coughlinite pacifists who are now only too anxious for a holy war against Russia.

I have loved our strange associates during these war years. Peter Maurin himself is remembered more often among the bourgeois because he is a ragged, foreign-speaking soapboxer of a peasant agitator than for what he says. The very tales, legends, traditions that are built up about him, true and untrue, are proof of this. Through our peace movement in this country perhaps we are reminding some of our twenty five million Catholics, that there are men of God, pilgrims on this earth, people content to be despised and rejected, like those of old Russia that Maria entertained in **War and Peace**. (I wonder if there are any such pilgrims in Holy Russia today.)

We can be critical because of lack of cooperation on the part of clergy and laity, and there were bitter years during the depression when no parish or diocesan Houses of Hospitality

were opened, though many a homeless one had to sleep in jails and empty buildings. We may be critical remembering how there were empty buildings available owned by diocesan authorities, and not made available to the poor. The Law enters in of course, insurance, multiple-dwelling laws, the enormous cost of converting old buildings so that all the rigmarole of the state is complied with, fire retardant halls, fire escapes, sprinkler systems, etc., but it seems to me a time comes when it is necessary to disregard the law. When Men and when families are homeless and hungry, when there are sick to be cared for, one must go ahead and house people and disregard the law. But then one can get **no insurance!** God will have to take care of it. He has certainly rescued us on many occasions.

Divine Providence has kept our houses going, and our poor fed, and we have done it badly because there were so many of them. It was not right nor fair that we should bear so large a burden; that we should face long lines of hungry, sick and aged people in the morning and the evening. It could well have been distributed through the parishes, the parish halls, the parish properties, the parish societies; and if the old societies are too stodgy to take care of these new needs in a changing world, then new societies like the Samaritans in Montreal, like Fr. Meenan's mothers group in Pittsburgh, should be formed. Why should appeals for help come to us from England, Ottawa, St. Louis and points west in one short week? Why should a priest in Brooklyn call us at ten o'clock at night to ask us to take in a girl who would probably shudder at the sight of Mott Street at that hour? Where are the **parish** groups for emergencies? The State would be able to organize them in war, famine or flood. Why not the parish? The poor we always have with us, and the need is always there for caring for those in trouble.

## CRITICISM

Of course we deserve criticism in that we have done our job badly, and so discouraged well wishers and volunteers and those who could only go part way in immolating themselves for love of God and their neighbor. We have had literally so many calls on us that it seems nothing is done well. But the dross who remained to do the work did not stop doing it because they had to do so bad a job. "The best is the enemy of the good," an old Italian proverb runs.

Yes, I see excuses for ourselves, in the depression, and the blindness of others around us to the problem. But I see also how often it has been our own fault that we failed. We have fallen short of the "greatness" the Holy Father calls for. In embracing the poor, we have too often shared the vices of the poor, and by that I mean all the little luxuries and indulgences of self which made us "**so human!**" (Fr. Hugo said once that we could go to hell imitating the failings of the saints.)

We have become too often luxurious in our poverty, as Bernanos has pointed that out in his **Diary of a Country Priest**. "God save us from being your pious kind," we said smugly, little wotting that we were guilty of a more subtle hypocrisy, that of the bourgeois.

The best disintegrates, degenerates; we must always be returning to first principles, to early fervor, to the first moods of our conversion.

We need to stop and reflect on the mystery of suffering, and the fact that God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. We need to recognize the immensity of God's majesty, the need to worship the craving of our nature (recalling Kafka's novels) to reach the **Castle**, our incompatibility with the **Village**, since we have received this call, since we are sons of God. We need to know ourselves in order to know God. "There is more difference between God and man than between us and a worm," Fr. Roy once said, and yet we have been made sons of God, we have been divinized by Him, He has put on our flesh, God became man that man might become God. And these are truths which we do not think of too often, and we do not like to meditate on what they mean, what they cost us. We do not like to think of the death of the cross, the dark night of the senses and the soul which all must go through. "Christianity," Kierkegaard said, "is the greatest wound inflicted upon man . . . Christianity is an offense." In other words, an effort must be made, we must bestir ourselves, go on the offensive.

## THE RETREAT

One might say that the retreat given at the farm at Easton these last three years, and now is given at Newburgh, New York, is a basic retreat in that it makes man realize and face even with despair the work that is before him, the death to self, the chasm he must bridge, to reach God. We must begin sometime to aim at sanctity. The tragedy, Newman said, is never to begin. Or having put one's hand to the plough, to turn back. To become a tired radical. To settle down to relish comfortably past performances of self sacrifice and self denial. It is not enough, St. Ambrose remarks, to leave all our possessions, we must also follow Him, and that means to the Cross, the Gethsemane and Calvary, before one can share in the Resurrection and Ascension.

"I die daily," St. Paul said, and I've often thought it was not the big struggles, the great deaths we have to undergo that are so hard, as the daily torture of denying oneself, mortifying, putting to death the old man in us. Thank God a good part is done **for us**.

Yes—that was a great retreat, seven years ago, at Easton, Pa. How many were there how many houses were represented! It was a funny retreat too. There was a retreat within a retreat. One priest gave a retreat, and because he did not insist upon silence, Fr. Roy, who had just become acquainted with the movement, gave conferences on the love of God between conferences. He shook his head over the lack of silence, over the money spent on cigarettes—"Is it for the love of God you smoke or for the love of self?" and the furore caused by this innocent remark on cigarettes does not cease to reverberate to this day. It is a more delicate point with us than the war. What a fool for Christ this priest who lays so much emphasis on cigarettes! So small a point! In the midst of so grave problems which we are undertaking to solve! But why the furore over so small a point, except that it is a symptom of our self indulgence. Dostoievsky called attention to the luxury of the day and pointed out that a man would sell his comrade for a cigaret. And there is a foolish slogan today, "send a package of cigarettes and save a baby in Poland." "We can pay our rent with one pack of cigarettes a month." "We purchased enough wood to keep us warm for the winter with the cigarettes which came in a CARE package." These were lines from letters we received.

That retreat marked the beginning of one of the wars in our midst. That priest! That rigorist! That Jansenist! It is amazing how many lay people have become theologians in justifying their habits.

The young Fathers Roach, in the midst of a summer downpour which lasted off and on for several days, laughed their way through it all.

“God love you,” they kept saying, “this is a wonderful retreat!” Though one of them got pneumonia as a result of it. I got a cold and a stiff neck so that I could hardly move my head, and Madame de Bethune, who arrived the last day to pick up her daughter, massaged my neck with analgesic baume. Father Roach, one of them, brought me a little bottle of whiskey and said with a twinkle, “Drink it for the love of God, and get rid of your cold.” Controversies started at that retreat over pacifism and leadership and the use of spiritual weapons, on liturgy, and on “emphasis on self”—a telling phrase used to combat what looked to be a new heresy in the movement. “But God love you, I don’t agree,” Fr. Roach would say, and whether it was one point or another he was talking about, I do not know.

There was another priest at the retreat, a Fr. Egan from Baltimore, who died a few years after from a blood clot or high blood pressure, or some such sudden call. His death was blamed on the “new retreat,” emphasis placed too much on penance. “It unhinged him,” the comment was made.

## SEVEN YEARS

Seven years have passed since that retreat, that beginning of the basic retreat, the Pauline retreat, the Thomistic retreat in our midst, and we have died many deaths, and many sorrows have entered our lives. Not only the tragedy of a great war, a cataclysm that brought with it the atom bomb and an apocalyptic attitude toward life, but also all the small tragedies which make up our lives.

“Everyone’s tragedy is no one’s tragedy,” is another Italian proverb quoted by Silone in **Bread and Wine**, and I thought of it during Mississippi floods when I talked with Arkansas sharecroppers who told me what a good time they had being cared for on the levee, their needs supplied by the Government and the Red Cross—never had such solicitude been shown them before. War has its compensations too, though I may be excoriated for saying so. Those who come back may say so, but not an editorial writer.

But the daily tragedies of life, of poverty, and loss of love, and sickness and death, striking in our midst; these are the sorrows and pain incident to dying daily, to putting off the old man and putting on Christ. Dying is not pleasant. Dying is painful. We have to accept the Cross, take up our Cross, and die to rise again. It is growth, normal growth, and if the egg does not proceed in due course to become a chick and put on wings, it becomes a rotten egg.

And most of us fight every inch of the way, hold back, withdraw, become embittered at chastisements that are preparations, instead of throwing ourselves into the arms of this mighty lover. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard what He hath prepared for them that love him! A

hundred fold, and in this life too. No, we wallow in our pottage, instead of flinging ourselves under the torrent of His pleasures.

We are creatures of sense, and our loves are sense loves, whether exterior or interior. Every mother knows the death she must undergo for her love; the dark night of the senses that is part of raising a family; yes, even the killing of natural love in order to attain to the supernatural. The poor know these things, a mother knows these things, a lover knows these things. Knows the blackness of the seeking of self in sex which makes pleasure an end, knows that certain dark fascination of the sense life that brings death with it.

Those who try to save their lives, their pleasures and lose them, lose them forever, and with discouragement comes loss of love and divorce and remarriage and the same sad cycle of natural love and hate and the beginning again—instead of the courageous going on through the Calvary every love goes through to be divinized. Every Catholic wife and mother has a grim endurance of this, and oh, if they were only taught these things instead of being offered “all this and heaven too,” if they were taught the meaning of their pain it would be easier to endure, and they would find even a happiness in suffering.

## Claudél Says

Youth demands the heroic, Claudél says, and the heroic is the tragic, and the glorious, the laying down one’s life for one’s brother, the losing it to save it, the following of Christ, not just the giving up of possessions (which one soon begins to collect again after an initial noble gesture).

Youth in this era has begun to know about what the heroic is, and has through war and revolution endured sacrifice, poverty, cold and hunger, grim pain and imprisonment, loss of all worldly goods. We cannot deny the heroism of the world, of countless thousands of those who took part in the last gigantic slaughter, of men and women who laid down their lives, “who gave their all.” And despite the exalted mouthings of hired writers for the government, we know with that we would be happy if we were as sure of our courage as the unknown and unsung heroes throughout the world that have risen up in this day.

But we know too, that heroism can go much farther, that there is a martyrdom of the inner senses, the understanding and the will; that until we see the kenotic aspects of Christ’s life, the humiliations of his manhood, the scorn heaped upon him; until we understand how little he thought of *worldly* honor and prudence, we have not yet begun to “put on Christ.”

## Obedient Unto Death

Because of the first man’s disobedience, Christ was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And how we Americans hate this word *obedient*. He stripped himself and came in the likeness of a *servant* and how we hate the word servant. We want to be recognized, as important, as successful; we are always justifying ourselves for our failures; we have not begun to recognize the failure of the Cross.



## Catholic Action

Certainly the Catholic Worker has failed—both in establishing Houses of Hospitality as Peter envisioned them, or Farming Communes. We have succeeded in many small ways, hidden ways, and influenced the lives, we well know, of countless thousands and by the paper and by **all efforts which have failed**. We have sowed in tears, and others will reap in joy. “Have you aimed at failure?” someone asked once. No, we have seen no reason why these ideas expressed by Peter and others in **The Catholic Worker** should not work out to build up a new society within the shell of the old. God did not mean that life should be so difficult. He has provided enough for all, and man in his greed has made a mess of things. I’m firmly convinced that we should keep the vision Peter has held up to us, work towards it, recognizing with humility our mistakes and the gains of others, and appreciating all the means the Church has held out to us—the cell techniques of Catholic Action for instance, work in the Legion of Mary in performing the spiritual works of mercy, and other groups furthering the lay apostolate.

Of necessity we will often not be accepted by other groups because of the radical nature of our work. The disease of Statism is too wide spread. Our emphasis on personal responsibility on the part of Catholics, whether individual or group is astonishingly radical to a world committed to State aid, more terrified of poverty than of any other evil. Our writings on war and peace, and even, strangely enough, on **property**, seem astoundingly radical. (One of our friends who was trying to acquire by purchase or gift, a bit of land from an order which owned thousands of acres, was interpreted as showing a communist trend, the desire to deprive the Church of its property!)

We have a tremendous work before us—to live and to die in love of Christ. So let us all begin again, our readers, our fellow workers, and pray that God will raise up more apostles for the vineyard who will follow in the footsteps of the “humiliated Christ,” responding to the call for **greatness** of Pius XII.

# Chapter 8

## On Pilgrimage - May 1948

*The Catholic Worker*, May 1948.

*Summary: 16th anniversary recapitulation of distinctive CW positions, especially pacifism and distributism. Explains the C.W.'s philosophy of labor as serving others. Argues that the problem of unemployment originates from the machine - and advocates Gandhi's economic program. Emphasizes a philosophy of work and a philosophy of poverty. (DDLW #158).*

It is May Day again, and we will begin our sixteenth year. We have finished fifteen years in the lay apostolate. People look at our masthead and say, "Yes, but it says Vol. XV, No. 3. What does that mean?" It just means that we have skipped an issue now and again, and it means that we come out 11 times a year, not twelve, but according to some regulation of the post office department, you have to number a journal in that way.

Last year I tried, taking the whole issue of the paper to do it in, to write a general article on what we were trying to do, summing up what our program meant. But a thing like that is most unsatisfactory. One is always leaving out the most vital things. Peter Maurin's program of action was for round table discussions for the clarification of thought; houses of hospitality for the practice of the works of mercy, for the study of Catholic Action; farming communes or agronomic universities where the unemployed could learn to raise food, build shelters, make clothes, and where unemployed college graduates could do the same; where the worker could become a scholar and the scholar a worker.

And who are those with whom we have cooperated thru the years, and whom we admire and love in the lay apostolate, in spite of differences?

There is first of all the N.C.W.C. labor action groups with whom we first came in contact back in 1933 and who were pioneers in the field. Peter used to go to all their meetings, not only to hear, but to be heard.

There was the *Commonweal* group of scholars who were by their writings and thought studying the "theory of revolution." George Shuster, now president of Hunter College and then an editor of *Commonweal*, sent Peter Maurin to me and so started off the Catholic Worker movement.

There were the Friendship House groups first in Canada and then in the United States who

worked so steadily in the interracial field, among the poor, performing works of mercy and having centers of meetings and study, days of recollection and retreats.

There is the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists with their papers throughout the country and the papers they have influenced and the priests who have entered the field of trade unionism and gone on picket lines, into the factories, into the homes of workers and into strike headquarters. There is *Work* in Chicago, edited by Ed Marciniak, one of the founders of the Chicago House of Hospitality which is no more, and there are the ACTU publications, *The Wage Earner* in Detroit and *Labor Leader* in New York.

There is the Grail at Loveland, Ohio, and there is the Center for Christ the King, Herman, Pa., schools of the apostolate for women and for men, centers of study, not connected by any close ties, by leadership.

There are such publications as *Today* in Chicago, and *Integrity* in New York, animated by much the same spirit, and to whom we owe much, as they owe much to us. There is official Catholic Action, not recognized in many a diocese, but making a beginning here and there about the country and stimulating and arousing the laity. *Fides* publications at South Bend, which recently published Cardinal Suhard's *Growth or Decline?*, *Concord*, the student publication gotten out by the Young Christian Students, *The Catholic Lawyer*, published also from Notre Dame, all these are evidences of specialized Catholic Action, of the apostolate of like to like.

## Retreats

There are the retreat movements, and we refer especially to our own because it is a basic retreat open for both colored and white, Catholic and non-Catholic, men and women, young and old, for the poorest of the poor from the Bowery, as well as for the young seminarian or student. There is one retreat house in New Kensington, Pa., called the Apostolate of Mary House, and there is our own at Maryfarm (Catholic Worker Farm) at Newburgh, N.Y.

There are the *Cana* conferences for the family, started in St. Louis by Fr. Dowling and spreading throughout the country.

And we are part of it all, part of this whole movement throughout the country, but of course we have our own particular talent, our own particular contribution to make to the sum total of the apostolate. And we think of it as so important that we are apt to fight and wrangle among ourselves on account of it, and we are all sensitive to the accusation that we are accenting, emphasizing one aspect of the truth at the expense of another. A heresy over-emphasizes one aspect of the truth.

## Unity

But our unity, if it is not unity of thought, in regard to temporal matters, is a unity at the altar rail. We are all members of the Mystical Body of Christ, and so we are closer, to each

other, by the tie of grace, than any blood brothers are. All these books about discrimination are thinking in terms of human brotherhood, of our responsibility one for another. We are our brothers keeper, and all men are our brothers whether they be Catholic or not. But of course the tie that binds Catholics is closer, the tie of grace. We partake of the same food, Christ. We put off the old man and put on Christ. The same blood flows through our veins, Christ's. We are the same flesh, Christ's. But all men are members or potential members, as St. Augustine says, and there is no time with God, so who are we to know the degree of separation between us and the Communist, the unbaptized, the God-hater, who may tomorrow, like St. Paul, love Christ.

## The Apostolate

This past month or so we have all been reading such books as *The Worker Priests in Germany*, translated by Rosemary Sheed; *France Alive*, by Claire Bishop; *Growth or Decline*, by Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard; *Souls at Stake*, by Rev. Francis Ripley and F.S. Mitchel with a foreword by Archbishop Ritter.

Chesterton used to start off writing in answer to things he had been reading, or because he was stimulated by what he was reading, and I am sure that all of us on the Catholic Worker this month, are doing just that. One of the books I have been reading by a non-Catholic, Richard Gregg, about the work of Gandhi along economic lines, led me to think of just how The Catholic Worker movement is distinguished from all these other movements, just what it is we emphasize, just what position we take, which is not taken by them. Not that we wish to be different. God forbid. We wish that they all felt as we do, that we had that basic unity which would make us agree on *pacifism* and *distributism*.

## Philosophy of Work

We feel that the two go together. We feel that the great causes of wars are maldistribution, not only of goods but of population. Peter used to talk about a philosophy of work and a philosophy of poverty. Both are needed in order to change things as they are, to do away with the causes of war. The bravery to face voluntary poverty is needed if we wish to marry, to live, to produce children, to work for life instead of for death, to reject war.

A philosophy of work is essential if we would be whole men, holy men, healthy men, joyous men. A certain amount of goods is necessary for a man to lead a good life, and we have to make that kind of society where it is easier for men to be good. These are all things Peter Maurin wrote about. (He is not writing any more, we are just reprinting what has appeared in *The Catholic Worker* over and over again for many years. The fact that people think Peter is still writing, is an evidence of the freshness of all his ideas. They strike people as new. They see all things new, as St. Paul said.)

## Philosophy of Poverty

A philosophy of work and a philosophy of poverty are necessary if we would share with all men what we have, if we would each try to be the least, if we would wash the feet of our brothers. It is necessary if we would so choose to love our brother, live for him, and die for him, rather than kill him in war. We would need to reject the work in steel mills, mines, factories which contributed to war. We would be willing to go on general strike, and we intend to keep talking about general strikes in order to familiarize each other, ourselves, our fellow workers with the phrase, so that they will begin to ponder and try to understand what a different way of working, different jobs, a different attitude to work, would mean in the lives of all. (There is plenty of other work besides factory work. Not all workers are factory workers. There are the service jobs, the jobs that have to do with food, clothing, and shelter. There are the village jobs. Not all would have to be farmers. We are not shouting for all to rush to the land. There is the village economy. A destruction of cities may force us to consider it in the future.)

## Machine and war

The Catholic Worker movement is distinguished from other movements in its attitude to our industrial civilization, to the machine, and to war.

To make a study of the machine, it would be good for our readers to send to India and get this book of Richard Gregg's, called the *Economics of Khaddar* (hand-spun and hand-woven cloth). It is published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai, Navajivan Press, Kalupur Ahmedabad, India. "The symbol of the unity given to all Christians by Christ himself was food, bread and wine; so the symbol of unity of all India given by Gandhi was means to food - the spinning wheel."

Gandhi was concerned with the poor and with unemployment. So was Peter Maurin. He started his movement in 1933 when unemployment reached the peak of 11,000,000. It was war which put all these men back to work and it is recovering from war which is keeping them at work, though unemployment is again setting in. Peter did not believe in the use of force, any more than Gandhi did to settle disputes between men or nations. He was inspired by the Sermon on the Mount, as was Gandhi, and there was no talk in that of war. It was turning the other cheek, giving up your cloak, walking the second mile. It was feeding and clothing your enemy. It was dying for him on the Cross. It was the liberty of Christ that St. Paul talked of. Christ constrained no one. He lived in an occupied country, all his years and he made no move to join a movement to throw off the yoke. He thought not in terms of the temporal kingdom of the Jews.

## Use of Power

The problem of the machine is the problem of unemployment. Or rather, the problem of *power*. “The right use of power is the important thing, the machine is only an incident.” A spinning wheel is a machine, so is a typewriter, a churn, a loom, a plow. These machines use available mechanical energy of men, women, and children, young and old. The old man (anyone over forty-five in our industrial era) can use any of these machines. Mechanical energy is derived from food eaten by the person. Not from gasoline and water power, or electricity or coal. Men have to eat, employed or unemployed. The efficient thing to do is to use the available energy, human energy, to combat unemployment. Then we would not have to fight about oil, and such like raw materials.

There have been many tributes paid to Gandhi for his non-violent resistance, his pacifism in a world at war. But little to the “economic validity of his program.” That is what this book is about. And I would wholeheartedly recommend it to all missionaries who have been sending us their desperate appeals these last years. We must continue to help them of course, but the works of mercy are not enough. Men need work as well as bread to be co-creator with God, as He meant them to be, in taking raw materials and ennobling them.

## Richard Gregg

Richard Gregg synthesized his book as follows (paragraphing mine):

“In addition to being a consideration of the economic validity of Mr. Gandhi’s program, and of one aspect of the Indian renaissance, it may be regarded as a discussion of a special instance of the economic validity of all handicraft work, versus power-machine industry; or as a discussion of a special method of unemployment prevention and relief; or as a new attack on the problem of poverty; or as an indigenous Indian form of cooperation; or as illustrating one phase of the relations between Orient and Occident; or between Western capitalism and some other forms of industrial organization; or as a fragmentary and tentative investigation of part of the problem of the limitation or balance of use of power and machinery in order to secure a fine and enduring civilization; or as a partial discussion of the beginning of a development of a sounder organization of human life.

“If India will develop her three great resources, (1) the inherited manual sensitiveness and skill of her people; (2) the wasted time of the millions of unemployed; (3) a larger portion of the radiant energy of the sun, and if she will distribute wealth equably among all her people, by the wide use of the spinning wheel and the hand-loom, she can win her economic goal.”

## Cardinal Suhard

“You have to take a position on our contemporary civilization, to judge, condemn or correct it,” Cardinal Suhard says. “You must draw up an objective evaluation of our urban civilization

today with its gigantic concentrations and its continual growth, inhuman production, unjust distribution, exhausting form of entertainment... make a gigantic synthesis of the world to come... Do not be timid... Cooperate with all those believers and unbelievers who are whole-heartedly searching for the truth. You alone will be completely humanist. Be the leaven and the bread will rise. But it must be bread, not factitious matter."

That is why we rebel against all talk of sanctifying ones surroundings. It is not bread in the first place. It is not worth working with. We must think of these things, even if we can take only first steps out of the morass. We may be caught in the toils of the machine, but we do not have to think of it for our children. We do not just think in terms of changing the ownership of the machine, though some machines will remain and undoubtedly will have to be controlled municipally, or regionally.

Peter Maurin's vision of the city of God included pacifism and distributism. And that is what distinguishes us from much of the lay apostolate today. It is the talent Christ has given us and we cannot bury it. The April issue of *The Catholic Worker* has devoted its space to pacifism, and that was the issue distributed on May Day through the streets of New York. This May Day article is again a recapitulation.

# Chapter 9

## Personalist - Peter Maurin

*The Catholic Worker*, May 1953, 1-2.

*Summary: Summarizes Peter Maurin's worldview and discusses his new social order and how his life embodied his ideas. Reveals the sources of his thought such as Proudhon, Kropotkin, Guardini and Karl Adam. (DDLW #170).*

In 1932, Peter Maurin, founder of the Catholic Worker movement, was working at hard manual labor at Mount Tremper, New York, at a boys' camp where he mended roads, cut ice, and did other chores winter and summer and received his living, not a very munificent one, in return. As a French peasant he lived on soup and bread. His account at the grocer did not come to more than a few dollars a week. He slept in the barn which was as close to the Stable as he could get. He spent seven years in the vicinity of Kingston, New York, studied, worked and prepared what he liked to call the Green Revolution. Before this he had travelled through the States and Canada as an unskilled laborer. Before that he had worked in France, where he was born, at the one thing he was skilled at, teaching with the Christian Brothers. But he believed too, that the scholar had to become a worker not only that he might understand the conditions and problems of the worker, but that the worker too might become a scholar, because Peter believed in THE PEOPLE changing their own conditions. He did not speak in terms of THE MASSES, being swayed by some dictator demagogue.

Peter Maurin studied the prophets of Israel and the Fathers of the Church; he studied Proudhon, Karl Marx, Kropotkin and familiarized himself with utopian socialist thought as well as Marxist thinking. He knew to whom to turn among Catholic thinkers, and he introduced us to Romano Guardini, Karl Adam, Luigi Sturzo, Vincent McNabb, among the priests, and to E. I. Watkin, Christopher Dawson, G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc as well as E. J. Pentty and Peter Kropotkin, who was in a way his favorite among the laywriters. When he waved the encyclicals at us, it was not only the social encyclicals of the Popes, but also that on St. Francis of Assisi. He preferred St. Francis' way to the industrial council way. He always aimed at the best, and to him voluntary poverty, manual labor was the beginning of all true reform, which was to begin with one's self. First of all he was a personalist and a Communitarian. "People are always saying, 'they don't do this, and they don't do that,' " he would cry out in ringing accents, "WE is a community, THEY is a crowd." And a lonely crowd, David Reisman would say, himself crying out against "the damned wantlessness of



the poor.” Peter would have liked Reisman’s book as he would have liked Martin Buber’s book, *PATHS IN UTOPIA*. He wanted people to be taught to want the best, and the best for him was the immediate program of the works of mercy, practiced in the cities and farming communes set up in the countryside where workers and scholars could get together to try to rebuild society within the shell of the old by founding better institutions to take the place of soulless corporations. (He spoke and wrote in phrases so packed with thought, that to expand them would mean the writing of a book.) He saw the need for the works of mercy as a practice of love for our brother which was the great commandment and the only way we can show our love for Christ, and he saw too that such a practice would mean conflict with the State. “Personal responsibility, not state responsibility,” he always said.

Peter’s teaching meant the immediate establishment of houses of hospitality because it was a time of depression and not only the worker, but young Catholic college graduates were unemployed. Peter shocked people by calling for an “abolition of the wage system” and self employment. Young people gave their services and unemployed workers gave their skills, and readers of *THE CATHOLIC WORKER* sent in material goods and money, so that for the last twenty years we have kept going on this basis of voluntary poverty and “abolition of the wage system,” for those preferred to give their services rather than go out and earn a wage for them.

This self employment was an immediate remedy for unemployment but the long term program meant substituting a new social order to take the place of both capitalism and communism. Peter did not believe in the use of force to bring about this new society, so from the first we have opposed class war, race war, civil war, imperialist war, and have been surrounded by them all. There is even the war between the worker and the scholar, and Peter faced the reality of that. He spoke of the treason of the intellectuals and also of the fault of the worker who permitted his work to be treated as a commodity to be bought and sold.

The impact Peter made on us all, from one end of the country to the other, so that houses of hospitality and farms were undertaken from coast to coast, was because he personally lived a life of poverty and work. He knew the skid rows of the country. He never asked anything for himself. His speech was “yea, yea,” and “nay, nay.” He was a great indoctrinator, a great agitator. He believed in “a theory of revolution” and advocated much study. “The evil is so deep seated,” he said, “that of course much of the time will be given up to an immediate practice of the works of mercy.” But he believed too, in constantly trying to create order out of chaos. “To be a social missionary,” he said in one of his essays, “requires social mindedness, historical mindedness and practical idealism.”

Because Peter loved most of all what he called the green revolution, we are beginning our twenty-first year with emphasis on the land.

# Chapter 10

## Workers of the World Unite

*The Catholic Worker*, May 1958, 1,3,11.

*Summary: Celebrates the 25th anniversary of the C.W. Perceives freedom as the greatest gift to man from God, and advocates a four hour work day, child labor, private property as personal property and manual labor. Personalism works from the bottom up and reminds her readers that Jesus told people, not states, to perform works of mercy. (DDLW #177).*

Here is another May Day, our 25th anniversary and I have only today to get my copy ready for the paper which Bob Steed will have to make up alone, with Beth Rogers as general proof reader and editorial advisor. On make up day I must be speaking in Holyoke, the last engagement of a week of speaking at Fordham, Swarthmore, Boston and returning for a communion breakfast here in New York, and a talk at Iona college in New Rochelle. If today is a day like yesterday there will be people sick in the house to visit, letters, phone calls, the Puerto Rican and Negro neighbors for clothes, a priest from the Fiji Islands, and another from Santa Fe, college students and others, and always the letters that don't get answered and the articles that don't get written.

Oh well, if the Lord wanted them done, I comfort myself, He would provide the time and the ability. But there is always the sneaking thought, I am not efficient, I don't organize my time right. I should hide away and get things done. But every one in St. Joseph's House of Hospitality is my family, and those on Peter Maurin farm too. I am "the barren woman that the Lord makes joyful with many children." I am always thanking God that "my lines have fallen in goodly places," – and then falling from this happiness of gratitude into the suffering that is inseparable from love. If we pray to grow in love, burdens are bound to grow heavier on every side, our own burdens and those of all the people in the CW around the country. It is a terrible thing to see some of the suffering of our friends. Oh for the strength of the apostles who came rejoicing from prisons and from beatings, "rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for Christ."

Our main burden right now of course is that the subway down the street is approaching ever closer and closer. Indeed it is a temptation not to leave everything on a bright sunny day like this with the trees bursting into green in the park, and lean against the fence that surrounds the big open pit at the corner, and watch the work as the huge shovels eat inexorably towards

us. We are about to be devoured and we are fascinated by this progress. What is the sense of it all? Across the way there is an inadequate school for the slum children around us. There is a playground understaffed. There are derelicts sick and maimed on every park bench. There are so many ways to spend money on people instead of on a little connecting link of subway, extending for five or six blocks and which is costing millions of dollars. And here is this Puerto Rican father, minus two fingers on one hand recently lost in an accident at his machine in the factory, and an underfed little boy with him, rooting around in a huge box of contributed shoes. No compensation yet, he says, and the little boy and the little girl with him look as though they had not had a decent meal in their lives. But unemployment brings one blessing with it. The father, or mother, can be at home with their children! Among teenagers throughout the five boroughs, the mad and senseless violence continues. It is a guerilla war against society and each other. Deane Mowrer said that the other night the gangs of children on her block which is between Avenue C and Avenue D, went rioting down the street knocking over every ash can and garbage can and destroying property as they could.

But it is May Day. We cannot sorrow as though we have no hope. How can one help but live in hope and the joy that faith and hope bring on such a spring morning as this? A few weeks ago a deluge of rain and cold and snow made us despair and the trees and shrubs in the park were dead. But we had faith and hope as far as nature was concerned. To all appearances they were dead, and now they are blooming. There is no one without such natural faith and hope in such weather. So let us rejoice, as Fr. Roy was always telling us. Let us rejoice in tribulations. Has there ever been a time when we were without them? We started out twenty-five years ago thinking we were just going to get out a newspaper, small though it might be, which would allow us to exercise our journalistic talents. We were going to discuss the present problems, which began with depression and unemployment (and we have them again) and we would go on with all the problems which came with poverty, injustice, and the ever recurring wars, whether race wars, class wars, civil wars or international wars. We were always pacifists, many opinions to the contrary.

Peter Maurin exalted freedom as God's greatest gift to man, and he pointed to the gospels and Christ's teachings. We were to lead by example, by serving. We were not to seek leadership indeed, but to strive to be the least – to wash one another's feet in other words. "I have left you an example," Jesus said, when He washed the feet of His disciples. "As I have done, so do ye." "My little children, love one another," the beloved disciple kept repeating in his last days. "A new commandment I have given you, that you love one another as I have loved you." Jesus said. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Everything we knew in the Gospel was against the use of force. We were taught in the Gospel to work from the bottom up, not from the top down. Everything was personalist, we were our brothers' keepers, and we were not to pass by our neighbor who has fallen by the wayside and let the State, the all encroaching State, take over, but were to do all we could ourselves. These were the anarchist and pacifist teachings Peter Maurin, our founder, taught us. And he bolstered them up not only from all the religious sources we were familiar with, but from the writings of Kropotkin, Don Sturzo, Chesterton, Belloc, Eric Gill, Fr. Vincent McNabb, Fr. Tompkins, Fr. Coady.

When Fr. Dowling called Peter an anarchist, he admitted it, but he also said he would run for office on a proportional representation ticket in order to try to put his ideas across. He firmly believed in “the withering away of the state” which the Communists spoke of, but he did not believe it would happen under a dictatorship even of the Proletariat, and he always said that the only true communism was the voluntary communism of the Church.

He wanted farming communes, communities of families, though many people went to the land when they married, and there have been attempts at farming communes, we cannot point to any successful one. Peter was a personalist and a communitarian and he said that there could be a Christian capitalism and a Christian communism. We keep quoting from Peter, and keep repeating his writings because he was, to use his own words, “the theoretician of the green revolution” we were to promote.

Yes, we thought we were embarking on a career in journalism, the few of us who worked that first year getting out the paper, but like true revolutionary movements, we attracted all the cranks, the reformers, the theorists, the fools for Christ, who wander like wandering monks of St. Benedict’s day, or like the “lumpen proletariat,” or the migrants of our own country.

Some who came to us were holy, some had not even begun to learn to “keep the commandments.” In fact, to this very day, common sense in religion is rare and we are too often trying to be heroic instead of just ordinarily good and kind. Newman wrote how tragic if we come to the end of our lives and find that we have never even begun to do what God wanted of us. But I honestly do not think that can be said of us. I do sincerely think that we keep trying, that we keep beginning again, over and over, each day. And the fact that we were so soon involved, and are now so completely involved in the daily practice of the works of mercy and can’t get out of them, nor ever can for all the rest of our lives, is some proof that we are continuing Peter Maurin’s mission.

“It is good for us to be here.” John Cort in his article in this issue speaks of how I made the Catholic Worker sound like a “good time,” like fun when he heard me speak in Boston. And it is true that there is a good deal of humor involved in **The Catholic Worker** movement. It is not only that we are fools for Christ. He is always making us “put up, or shut up,” as the vulgar saying is.

We wrote about houses of hospitality, and the poor came to the doors of the CW office and forced us to open one. “Why write about it otherwise,” the first articulate homeless woman told us. “Peter Maurin wrote that we should not say, ‘The Church or the State, doesn’t do this or that.’ ‘We is a community; they is a crowd.’ ‘Be what you want the other fellow to be.’ Why don’t **you** have a house of hospitality?”

Maybe Peter Maurin was surprised at being taken at his word too. Anyway it was that woman who came in with a paper shopping bag, who had been sleeping on subways, who forced us to open the first house of hospitality. And there have been thirty or forty since – I cannot count them all, since each one is autonomous, and I am always finding new ones here and there around the country. Just this week we got a donation from D. Farnsworth, from Martin Joseph House, and I recognize the name and know that she was running a house in Stockton, California for some years. The Blanchet House of Hospitality in Portland, Oregon, is feeding almost two thousand men a day now, according to a priest who just visited us from

there.

Once I asked Peter what he thought of our Baltimore House (which was finally closed not only because of overcrowding but also because we housed both Negro and white) and he looked rather doubtful, thinking of what he really wanted in a house, craftrooms, seminars, reading rooms, as well as a place to eat and sleep. "It at least arouses the conscience," he said. He always firmly held that the works of mercy were the means to show our love for God and our love for our brother.

It was the men in the house themselves that started our breadlines, by taking in one after another to share our meals. It seems we never do anything good by ourselves, we just get pushed into it. We are surely unprofitable servants. One time at Maryfarm I saw a man with a suitcase walking down the road towards our farmhouse, and since we were already filled to the door, and with problems too, I sighed deeply and remarked, "I suppose he is coming here." And a man sitting next to me said sternly, "Then you don't mean what you write in the paper?" Yes, we believe it. If "your brother is hungry feed him, if he is naked, cover him, if he is without shelter, visit him, if he is sick comfort him, if he is in prison visit him, if he is dead bury him." The Lord himself said it. And he was talking to each one of us, not to Holy Mother the State.

Of course there are some ideas which we change over the years. Personally I don't believe women should work out of the home if they can possibly help it. Personally I believe more in child labor than I used to. If the little boys who are running riot could be put to work and the mothers stay home, how much happier it would be. But we do not have a philosophy of work, as Peter Maurin said, and certainly the jobs open to most people in this mechanized age, are anything but attractive. I do believe however in the four hour day. And I do believe in manual labor for every one, everyone bearing their share of the hard work of the world.

Steve Hergenhan, God rest his soul, used to call me a pencil pusher when I did my writing and he dearly loved to see me in the kitchen working. There is always a war between worker and scholar and too often the scholar has it coming to him.

I'm afraid I believe in private property too, though St. Gertrude says that "property, the more common it is, the more holy it is." But when I speak of private property it is mostly personal property I am thinking of. A typewriter, for instance-a fountain pen, one's books, one's own bed. Of course if one is deprived of these things, one should thank the one who deprives, since they are lightening one's load on the journey to heaven. Once a policeman called up and said he had picked up a man who was bringing one of our typewriters to a Bowery hock shop. The man explained that all property was held in common around the Catholic Worker, so it was his as well as any one else's. The policeman restored our "property." We didn't press charges of course, and we thanked the policeman. Ammon would have refused the services of the police perhaps and gone to pick up the typewriter himself. He hangs on to his own pencil, book, clothes, so carefully indeed that we sometimes call him "private-property-Hennacy." But it is really just Yankee thrift.

Once a passerby dropped into our store at Mott street when Slim was being night watchman, and someone had brought us a turkey that night since it was the eve of Thanksgiving. Slim wanted to take a little walk, so he left the stranger in charge and went out. When he came

back stranger and turkey were gone. There was a great furor around the house, but we took the opportunity to explain that in the upside-down world of Christianity, Slim should have run after the thief and brought him the cranberries and celery and other fixings so that he could have a really good meal. "If anyone takes your coat, give him your cloak too." Most of the family didn't see it that way. I have told this story before, but I did not tell the sequel. Only a year or so ago, but ten years after the incident, a man came in and handed us five dollars. "I was the one who stole your turkey," he said.

Sometimes perhaps we arouse a little fear in the hearts of our friends. For instance there had been a demonstration in England just after the war, when the needy moved into some of the uninhabited homes of the rich and just took over. We expressed ourselves in the CW as pleased with this expropriation, and went on to say that the Benedictine oblates amongst us would like to go to some of the Benedictine monasteries and become squatters on their vast tracts, and so induce them to start again the guest houses which are part of the rule of the order. They don't need all the land they have, and we have plenty of landless folk. Not long after that, (but we had forgotten our comments, thinking of them as casual illustrations of our point rather than plans for action) we went to visit a Benedictine monastery, Peter, Dwight Larowe and I. (Dwight is now Brother Peter in the Trappist Monastery of Our Lady of the Snows in Colorado.) We were fed a very good dinner rather hastily, and then the good monks pulled out bus schedules and rather hastily found a way of getting us off their premises. I thought the visit very short, there had been no time for any conversation, nor any dear-to-his-heart round table discussions for Peter, but it was only on the way home that it occurred to me that our dear friends the monks had read the paper and had been afraid that in the parlance of the gangster, we were "casing the joint." In other words, that we were sizing up the place with the end in view of moving in some of our unemployed families.

Well, if they suffered from this misconception, we were made to suffer too. That month we had had a letter from one of our friends who was married and had two children and was dissatisfied with the farm his father had given for his use. He wanted to join one of our farm communities. We wrote and told him that he already had a home and that we were forced to say no. But he disregarded us and very soon after car and trailer arrived and little family with another baby imminent, to move into our barn. We did not want them, but they were there; it was as though God were teaching us a lesson, was having a little joke on us, making us eat our words.

Peter Maurin rejoiced in these situations. They made us think, he always said. There was nothing like a crisis for on-the-spot discussions. For clarification of thought. Everyone was an asset in a way. No need ever to eliminate anyone. They would eliminate themselves. It took a robust soul to live in community. It was, in fact, a martyrdom.

There are so many stories that could be told about our communities, our houses of hospitality, and some of them grim and some of them so funny and so good that one could laugh for joy.

## Tribulation Ammon

And speaking of tribulations, - one of them is Ammon. I used to say the same of Peter, of course, thinking of my quiet writing life before I met him in 1932 and became embroiled in what became a movement. But Ammon is such a fighting Irishman, such a belligerent pacifist! Take this last article of his on page two of the CW. Here he is carrying on a battle with the ushers of a church and a policeman rather than with the personnel of the guided missile base. He was all but tarred and feathered of course, and I am sure he inspired them with respect for his courage. But they needed more time to get acquainted. These guerrilla warfare tactics - descending on a town with pickets and leaflets and poster walks and radio talks and so on, may cause surprise and some thought but I liked the way things worked out in Phoenix, Arizona, where little by little Ammon got acquainted with all the priests and sisters in the town, and won their friendship and won, too, a very wide circulation for the idea of the Catholic Worker. And now here he is threatening to fast for forty days. I wonder if this is truly a Gandhian technique - to fast at the government, if one can put it that way. Stop atomic tests, or else! What it practically amounts to is a fast to the death. Because I am sure the government out of plain stubbornness, even if they intended to stop would not give in to such pressure. It somehow does not seem the way. It is Ammon's recognition of course, that we are living in fearsome times and that only the most drastic, heroic remedies, much suffering, and self-inflicted sufferings, are going to serve as penance for our sins as a country. We do indeed need to fast and pray. And Ammon goes into these struggles with a joyous spirit, with a great courage, with the generosity of one who wishes to give all, even life itself, for Peace.

They use to say of Peter that he held up to us such lofty aims that we could only reach half way. And that if his aims were lower, we would still only be reaching half way, human nature being inclined to sloth. Certainly the State, love of country, demands and exacts and inspires and arouses the willingness, even the desire to die, to give up one's life for the ideal. Ammon is one of those people who have kept his ideal, and it is just as strong in him now as it was in his early youth. It has grown indeed with his daily communions since his baptism five years ago. He has been "putting on Christ" as St. Paul calls it, though for some people it is as hard to see Christ in Ammon Hennacy as it is to see Him in the derelict. Certainly he is not articulate about his faith, and philosophy and theology are not his forte. His actions are always better than his words, when it comes to living his faith, putting in hours serving others, getting mail, answering it, giving up his bed, listening to the sick, the poor and afflicted. Yes, we will stand by him. He is what God sent us as an apostle, an editor, and he is certainly an agitator par excellence.

## Picketing

And how he delights to call attention to the fact that we once picketed the Cardinal during the cemetery strike. It has gotten now so that some of the people at the CW deny that we ever did. The facts are that Michael Kovalak, Irene Mary Naughton and Helen Adler took signs and when all others were fearful of criticism, proceeded to the chancery office and after

announcing their intentions to one of the priests at the cathedral, who told them they of course had to follow their conscience, thereupon picketed for an hour and then went into the cathedral and prayed, to make their picketing more effective.

It was so effective that Ammon Hennacy, not yet a Catholic, in far away Arizona, went into the Catholic Church for the first time and prayed joyfully for us all, and thanked God for companions of courage. Some time later, on another visit to the Church he said he began to be conscious that those praying, kneeling Catholics, no matter what their political opinions, "had something." And not to be outdone, now he has it too.

They are somewhat alike, Ammon and Peter, both close to the soil, both close to the people, both inspiring others to awake. On my last trip when I passed out some Catholic Worker papers in the bus which came from Mexico City to El Paso (fare eleven dollars) the insurance saleswoman who was reading the paper began to read Peter's essays out loud to her companion, a Canadian, and to laugh with startled amazement at his ideas. When people know Ammon they laugh at him and with him, and because of him, and some of this laughter is that joyful laughter that the Christian ideal is so flaming, so alive, so burning still. "I have come to cast fire on the earth," Jesus said. And His fire is quite a different fire from that of the nuclear weapon, which is of hell.

## The Role of Woman

I speak and write this way of Peter and Ammon (and how often did I not have to speak so of Bob Ludlow!) because I feel that though they themselves do not feel they need to be interpreted, translated, explained, or justified - I am doing it to declare my own position. Sometimes some of our readers like to hold that I, Dorothy Day, editor of the Catholic Workers, do not go along with these ideas,- that others have seized control of the paper, that these ideas are somehow not in line with the works of mercy. **They are all part and parcel of it. It all goes together!** It is all for clarification of thought. Peter used to say that it was men who had the mission and that it was woman's place to follow the men who follow their mission. I believe that this is true. In the main, the Catholic Worker movement has been one of men throughout the country. There have been many great and generous men who have worked with it, Joe Zarrella, Gerry Griffin, Tom Sullivan, Bob Ludlow, Dwight Larrowe and Jack English (the last two now with the Trappists); Roger O'Neill and Charles McCormack, and now the present staff. And there are others still with us, too numerous to mention, Hank and John and Keith, and Larry and Roy and Joe, and Red and John and Jim, and Pop and Tom and Mike, and then the men on the farm!

God be thanked for the work He has given us to do. And may we continue it another twenty-five years!



# Chapter 11

## On Pilgrimage - May 1973

*The Catholic Worker*, May 1973, 1, 8.

*Summary: Series of reflections on the occasion of their 40th anniversary. Laments little time to read, recalls the books Peter Maurin recommended and his constant agitating. Notes the primacy of conscience, defends critics of the Pope, and the need for Christ rooms. Keywords: Philosophy of the CW, obedience, folly of the cross (DDLW #529).*

This issue celebrates our fortieth anniversary. And the psalm verse comes to mind, “Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle’s.”

I can apply that to the Catholic Worker which over the years is renewed and revitalized year after year. Peter Maurin said once, quoting Ibsen, “The truth should be restated every twenty years.”

That line sticks in my mind, journalist that I am. Christ is our Truth—“True God and true man, like unto us in all things save sin.” When I was a little girl I used to wish I’d hurry and grow up so that I’d not “sin” any more. Of course, I did not use that word—probably it was “be bad”—because most children have a keen sense of right and wrong.

“The truth should be restated”—which phrase means, in my mind, that we have to take truths—statements, dogmas—which are old and stale, and develop them in the light of growing knowledge and understanding which we gain from experience and our contacts with those around us.

The Catholic Worker House of Hospitality and Farm is a school, as well as a flophouse, a soupline, which we sometimes contemplate with despair and think, “Can’t we ever get beyond this? Is this *all* we can do? When are we going to read, study, enrich ourselves with all this stimulating thought Peter Maurin has given us glimpses of? When are we going to get a chance to read **Personalism** by Emmanuel Mounier, that young man who started **Esprit** in Paris the same year the **CW** started, and the book Peter Maurin was the first to translate into English? Mounier died young, but he lived fully and accomplished much for ‘the clarification of thought’ that Peter talked of as the first step in ‘rebuilding the social order.’ When can we read **Fields, Factories and Workshops, Mutual Aid, Diary of a Revolutionist** by Kropotkin, the philosophical anarchist? And now there is also Teilhard de Chardin, also a personalist who has much to teach us.”

## Souplines, Houses

The books will always be there. If we give up many other distractions, we can turn to them. We can browse among the millions of words written and often just what we need can nourish us, enlighten us, strengthen us—in fact, be our food just as Christ, the Word, is also our food.

It is an amazing thing that the soup line still goes on, that college students, seminarians, nuns, priests have taken to manual work, raising food as at the farm—many for the first time putting their hands in the soil, to the plough, to kneading the dough, reroofing a building, leveling roads, serving tables, washing dishes, “trying to make that sort of society where it is easier for man to be good.” (When I say “man,” remember St. Paul writes “there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female.”) We are all one, “members of one another, and when the health of one member suffers, the health of the whole body is lowered.” Yet each person is so unique, so loveable. (It is no wonder they don’t like to be written about.)

Besides, living as we do with men and women of all ages who “come in”—some staying to help, others moving on—it is not right to discriminate. But of course there are some who come to give their time and talents and stay for longer or shorter periods, as in a school.

## Peter’s Recommendations

Certainly it is the first time many young students have become acquainted with the “man in the street”—so much talked of. Peter Maurin quotes Cardinal Newman as saying, “If you wish to reach the man in the street, go to the man in the street.”

The first recommendation of Peter Maurin in outlining his program was “round table discussions for clarification of thought.” (Of course, he conducted them everywhere—on park benches, in Bowery restaurants, in discussions with professors at Columbia University, and with priests and bishops, not only at social action conferences, but in visits to episcopal residences. I must not forget his calls on John Moody and Thomas Woodlock on Wall Street.)

He would have liked to see in me another Catherine of Siena who would boldly confront bishops and Wall Street magnates. I disappointed him in that, preferring the second step in his program, reaching the poor through the works of feeding, clothing and sheltering, in what he called “houses of hospitality” (where the works of mercy could be carried out).

Since the works of mercy are the opposite of the works of war (where food supplies are flooded and bombed out, shelters destroyed, and clothing burnt off the backs of men, women and children by napalm), we were almost immediately involved in anti-war work, some of which took us to jail. Going to jail is a spiritual work of mercy—visiting the prisoner on a grass-roots level.

## God's Messengers

George Woodcock in his review in the **Nation**, March 19, of William Miller's book **A Harsh and Dreadful Love** states that he "cannot think of being at one with a state of mind that can see the Pope as 'Our Dear Sweet Christ on Earth.'" (I do not know why he capitalized this phrase except that it makes it look more ridiculous.) Evidently he does not know Catherine of Siena or her times, far worse times than these for popes and the Church. In fact, there were three men contending for that office, and Catherine, backing one of them, who had fled to Avignon, kept urging him by letter and by visits to France (on foot) to return to his job of being head of the Church. She tempered her strong criticisms and rebukes by calling him, at times, "our dear, sweet Christ on earth." In other words, she was trying to seek concordances, and some political and spiritual solution for the troubles of the day. She was trying to make him forgive her effrontery by reminding him of his responsibility as one who sat in the chair of Peter, the same Peter who had denied Christ three times, who had no desire to wash the feet of others. Peter looked for power as James and John did. After the descent of the Dove, he changed. (Many another Pope has reminded us of eagles and vultures rather than the Dove, the symbol of Peace as well as of the Holy Spirit.)

We are all supposed to see Christ in each other. "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least (or worst) of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." It is hard to see the dear sweet Christ in many a pestering drunk that comes in demanding attention. "Love is a harsh and dreadful thing, for Jesus to ask of us." "You love God as much as the one you love the least." These staggering, unlovely, filthy ones who come in waving a bottle at you and cursing you, and saying "Peter Maurin started these places for the likes of us!" are God's messengers. I am reminded of the classic story of St. Teresa of Avila who, when she fell off her stumbling mule into the shallow river and cried out to God in protest, heard Him say, "This is the way I treat my friends" (a sardonic or a humorous God?). And she flung back at him, "That is why you have so few of them." It has the flavor of Hasidism—that tale.

To go on, having been "turned on" by Mr. Woodcock's review. He takes up, as many have taken up, my oft-quoted statement, perhaps as well remembered by non-Catholic readers as any remark I have ever made, that if the Chancery Office ordered me to stop publishing the **Catholic Worker**, I would do so.

Such a statement needs clarification, of course. My understanding of the teaching of the Church is that we must follow our conscience, even an erroneous conscience. My reading of Cardinal Newman confirms that. I think it is in Bouyer's life of Newman that he quotes Newman as saying he drank a toast to "conscience first, the Pope second." My conscientious reasoning, if asked to cease publishing, would be this: I may be held responsible for what goes in the paper, but I am a member of an unincorporated association of the Catholic Worker, made up of a very active group of young people who so ardently esteem the ideas of Peter Maurin that right now they are adding a few of his Easy Essays at the end of our evening recitation of Vespers in the basement of our New York house of hospitality. Whatever happened to me, I could count on them to carry on Peter's program, founded on a new synthesis of cult, culture and cultivation. They would be a group, amongst whom always the one would be looked to as leader who works the hardest at "being what you would have the

other fellow be,” who takes responsibility and perseveres, does not grow weary, rejoices in tribulations, who knows how, “when there is no love to put love, and so find love” (St. John of the Cross)—and so the work would go on. Its “youth would be renewed like the eagle’s,” to use that happy psalm verse.

Yes, I can well see myself obeying—and under the cloak of obedience, sit in a rocking chair on a porch and watch the majestic Hudson and its ships pass by; and read, and write more. What kind of obedience would that be? A joy indeed.

## The Folly of the Cross

I am glad that Mr. Woodcock knows and appreciates Dostoyevsky as he does. I am glad that Lewis Mumford, in a television interview with Bill Moyers, says he reads over once a year Fr. Zossima’s instructions to his monks (in **The Brothers Karamazov**).

I do not think I could have carried on with a loving heart all these years without Dostoyevsky’s understanding of poverty, suffering and drunkenness. The drunken father of Sonya in **Crime and Punishment**, the story Grushenka told in **The Brothers Karamazov** about the depraved sinner “who gave away an onion,” the little tailor who took in the honest thief, sharing his corner of a room—all this helped me to an understanding of St. Paul’s “folly of the cross”—that passionate, suffering St. Paul who is still criticized today, even as our present “dear sweet Christ on earth” is, Paul VI.

Our anarchism stems from Kropotkin. (Peter Maurin introduced me to **Fields, Factories and Workshops, Mutual Aid** and **The Conquest of Bread**. I had only read his “Life of a Revolutionist” which ran in the **Atlantic Monthly** years ago.) Our anarchism is that of a Lewis Mumford, or a Paul Goodman, a decentralist, personalist point of view. Peter Maurin’s function as teacher and leader of the Catholic Worker movement was to translate for us Emmanuel Mounier’s “Personalist Manifesto,” to talk to us about the Personalist-Communitarian Revolution which Mounier wrote about in **Esprit**. Martin Corbin, who is the scholar in the CW movement, has all Mounier’s works in French and is trying to get more of his writings translated. (Mounier’s last book, **Personalism**, is in paperback, published by the Notre Dame Press, Indiana. Get it.)

A further note: When I spoke of loving the unlovable and cited the drunk who was abusing us a few paragraphs back, I was also thinking of one who shouted at one of our volunteers—“With all that publicity you got this year on television (Bill Moyers’ program) you’re taking in millions of dollars and all you give us is a bowl of soup.”

But of course, aside from a few bequests of a thousand dollars, we have not been overwhelmed with donations. We’ve had enough to keep going on. With inflation, increased mailing and printing costs, a staggering increase in rents and food costs, carfares, daily supplies, etc., we just get along.

## Christ-Rooms Needed

We are daily tormented by the need for a woman's shelter. There are so many shopping-bag women sleeping on the streets or in empty buildings. But from sad experience of building codes, fire and health department requirements, we know the costs would be astronomical. The house we are in now cost us \$35,000, \$15,000 down and two mortgages, one of which is now paid off, and the additional costs of architects' plans (according to building code requirements) added \$45,000 for the rebuilding before we got a certificate of occupancy.

What I would like to see is a house for women, with each woman having her separate room with key—an old convent, for instance, with separate cells. The Episcopalian Church used to run a shelter for women, dormitory style with double decker beds, on Stanton Street. They gave it up and the Salvation Army took it over. They charged 45 cents a night. There is no shelter there for man nor woman now. The Joan of Arc Residence, which I once stayed at between movings, is very good, but packed to the doors. Besides, the kind of women we have will not give up their shopping bags, discarded clothes picked out of trash cans, which they would fight like tigers to hold on to. To keep them they will sleep in doorways and empty buildings. In winter they wear four coats to keep warm, and lug them around all summer in anticipation of the future cold. And we must bear the consequences of our permissiveness in our own house, by periodic outbreaks of cockroaches, head lice, and other kinds, too. Woe is me!

So we will hug our personalist philosophy to us, and go on talking of a Christ-room in every house, and are rewarded most recently by one of our friends taking in one of our guests. Each one takes one. There is always somebody, somewhere, for each one. Let us get them together.

Marge Hughes, with a population at the Farm of one hundred over the Easter holiday and more comings and goings with summer, looks longingly at a neighboring farm where there could be a tent colony and many organic gardens. The beginnings of an agronomic university such as Peter Maurin talked of? Perhaps.

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