

# On Conscience

Dorothy Day

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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Day often wrote to promote the “arousal of conscience” and the “examination of conscience.” Some pieces explored the nature of conscience, especially as it applied to Catholicism, but Day also wrote to prick readers’ consciences on particular issues. She frequently commented on war, peace, and anti-nuclear themes; on poverty; on race; and on the labor movement. Often touting the primacy of conscience, Day believed that one of the chief objectives of *The Catholic Worker* was to raise Christians’ consciences on these and other matters.

***December, On Pilgrimage (1948) (DDLW#486)*** Linking voluntary poverty to self-sacrifice, Day implies that conscience is crucial to fashioning a Christian attitude and lifestyle aimed at alleviating the suffering of the poor and of victims of injustice. At the beginning of Advent, Day reflects on the importance of examination of conscience. As an example of her own use of conscience, she describes her weaknesses and writes that “the remedy is recollection and silence.” She prays, “enlarge Thou my heart, Lord, that Thou mayest enter in.”

***July-August 1948, “Articles on Distributism – 2” (DDLW#160)*** In making a case for distributism and a “more just distribution of wealth,” Day urges an arousal of conscience in order to raise awareness of the needs of the poor.

***April 1954, “Are the Leaders Insane?” (DDLW#664)*** In this article, Day denounces hydrogen bomb tests and the production of incendiary bombs and chemical weapons. She writes of the tension between obedience to God and to the state. While she acknowledges God’s command to obey secular authority, when that authority conflicts with God’s law, disobedience to the state may be justified. The conscience is the instrument that reminds us of our duty to God for Day. She argues that “people need to be disturbed,” aroused to opposition to the hydrogen bomb and nerve gas. While she explains that individuals should examine their own consciences when it comes to matters of war and peace, including registering for the draft, she clearly sees the role of *The Catholic Worker* as being a supplementary conscience for those individuals.

***July-August 1963, “On Pilgrimage – July/August 1963” (DDLW#805)*** Day’s

reflections in this piece focus on civil rights demonstrations in Danville, Virginia. She cites Pope John XXIII's comments on the rights of conscience in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, arguing that the non-violent struggle for racial justice is foundational to peace. Both the peace and civil rights movements utilize the rights of conscience to do God's work.

**December 1965, "On Pilgrimage – December 1965" (DDLW#248)** The announcement that the second Vatican Council condemned nuclear warfare elicited Day's approval and sparked her reflections on the nature of conscience. For Day, the decision would lead to a "more enlightened conscience on the part of all men." She tackles the possibility of following a "wrong or ill-informed conscience" and argues that the consequences of that are mitigated by seeking God's good as well as by "studying, listening, [and] being ready to hear . . . opponents' point[s] of view." Day expounds on the primacy of conscience and again examines the struggles that come when one's conscience conflicts with obedience to secular authority.

**May 1970, "On Pilgrimage – Our Spring Appeal" (DDLW#500)** Defining the Catholic Worker Movement in this piece, Day notes the significance of following the conscience. She insists that even though it is necessary to "inform one's conscience," individuals "must follow one's conscience still, even if it is an ill-informed one." December (1948)

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*On Pilgrimage* , Catholic Worker Books, New York, 1948

*Summary: Meditation on the spiritual weapons of voluntary poverty and manual labor. Lists work to be avoided and personal practices of nonparticipation while exploitation in labor continues. Calls for decentralized living. Recommends growing in acceptance of God's providence and seeing good in others. Reflects on silence during Advent, a time of waiting and a time to examine one's conscience, a time "to see only what is loveable." (DDLW #486).*

FOR THE LAST month I have meditated on the use of spiritual weapons. In Father John J. Hugo's pamphlet "Weapons of the Spirit," he advocates as weapons devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Rosary. The love of the humanity of our Lord is the love of our brother. The only way we have to show our love for God is by the love we have for our brother. "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me." "You love God as much as the one you love the least."

Love of brother means voluntary poverty, stripping one's self, putting off the old man, denying one's self, etc. It also means nonparticipation in those comforts and luxuries which have been manufactured by the exploitation of others. While our brothers suffer, we must compassionate them, suffer with them. While our brothers suffer from lack of necessities, we will refuse to enjoy comforts. These resolutions, no matter how hard they are to live up to, no matter how often we fail and have to begin over again, are part of the vision and the long-range view which Peter Maurin has been trying to give us these past years. These ideas are expressed in the writings of Eric Gill. And we must keep this vision in mind, recognize the truth of it, the necessity for it, even though we do not, cannot, live up to it. Like perfection. We are ordered to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, and we aim at it, in our intention, though in our execution we may fall short of the mark over and over. St. Paul says, it is by little and by little that we proceed.

If these jobs do not contribute to the common good, we pray God for the grace to give them up. Have they to do with shelter, food, clothing? Have they to do with the works of mercy? Father Tompkins of Nova Scotia says that everyone should be able to place his job in the category of the works of mercy.

This would exclude jobs in advertising, which only increases people's useless desires. In insurance companies and banks, which are known to exploit the poor of this country and of others. Banks and insurance companies have taken over land and built huge collective farms, ranches, plantations, of 30,000, 100,000 acres, and have dispossessed the poor man. Loan and finance companies have further defrauded him. Movies [and] radio have further enslaved him. So that he has no time nor thought to give to his life, either of soul or body. Whatever has contributed to his misery and degradation may be considered a bad job and not to be worked at.

If we examine our conscience in this way, we would soon be driven into manual labor, into humble work, and so would become more like our Lord and our Blessed Mother.

Poverty means nonparticipation. It means what Peter calls regional living. This means fasting from tea, coffee, cocoa, grapefruit, pineapple, etc., from things not grown in the region in which one lives. One day last winter we bought broccoli which had the label on it of a corporation farm in Arizona or Texas, where we had seen men, women, and children working at two o'clock in the morning with miners' lamps on their foreheads, in order to avoid the terrible heat of the day, which often reached 125 degrees. These were homeless migrants, of which there are some million in the United States. Carey McWilliams' *Factories in the Fields*, which you can get at any library, tells of the conditions of these workers. For these there is "no room at the inn."

We ought not to eat food produced under such conditions. We ought not to smoke, not only because it is a useless habit but also because tobacco impoverishes the soil and pauperizes the farmer, and means women and children working in the fields.

Poverty means having a bare minimum in the way of clothes and seeing to it that these are made under decent working conditions, proper wages and hours, etc. The union label tries to guarantee this. Considering the conditions in woolen mills, it would be better to raise one's own sheep and angora goats and rabbits, and spin and weave and make one's own blankets and stockings and suits. Many groups are trying to do these things throughout the country, both as a remedy for unemployment and for more abundant living.

As for the dislocation in employment if everyone started to give up their jobs? Well, decentralized living would take care of such a situation. And when we look at the dirty streets and lots in our slums, the unpainted buildings, the necessity of a nationwide housing project, the tearing down that needs to be done (if we do not in the future wish to have it done in the hard way and have them bombed down), then we can see that there is plenty of employment for all in the line of providing food, clothing, and shelter for our own country and for the world. We should read Eric Gill, A. J. Pentty, and Father Vincent McNabb on the machine.

Poverty means not riding on rubber while horrible working conditions prevail in the rubber industry. Read Vicki Baum's *Weeping Wood* and André Gide's *Congo Journey*. Poverty means not riding on rails while bad conditions exist in the coal mines and steel mills. Poverty

means not accepting that courteous bribe from the railroads, the clergy rate. Railroads have been built on robbery and exploitation. There are stagecoaches, of course, and we are only about a century past them. But pilgrims used to walk, and so did the saints. They walked from one end of Europe and Russia to the other. We need saints.

Father Meus, the Belgian who is a Chinese citizen since his missionary life began in China, has walked thousands of miles. He said he would dearly love to walk from one end of the United States to the other. Of course, we are not all given the grace to do such things. But it is good to call to mind the *vision*. It is true, indeed, that until we begin to develop a few apostles along these lines, we will have no mass conversions, no social justice, no peace. We need saints. God, give us saints!

How far we all are from it! We do not even see our infirmities. Common sense tells us, "Why live in a slum? It is actually cheaper to live in a model housing project, have heat and hot water, a mauve or pink bath and toilet, etc. We can manage better; we have more time to pray, to meditate, study. We would have more money to give to the poor." Yes, this is true according to the candlelight of common sense, but not according to the flaming heat of the Sun of justice. Yes, we will have more time with modern conveniences, but we will not have more love. "The natural man does not perceive the things of the spirit." We need to be fools for Christ. What if we do have to buy coal by the bucket instead of by the ton? Let us squander money, be as lavish as God is with His graces, as He is with His fruits of the earth.

Let us rejoice in poverty, because Christ was poor. Let us love to live with the poor, because they are specially loved by Christ. Even the lowest, most depraved – we must see Christ in them and love them to folly. When we suffer from dirt, lack of privacy, heat and cold, coarse food, let us rejoice.

When we are weary of manual labor and think, "What foolishness to shovel out ashes, build fires, when we can have steam heat! Why sew when it can be better done on a machine? Why laboriously bake bread when we can buy so cheaply?" Such thoughts have deprived us of good manual labor in our city slums and have substituted shoddy store-bought goods, clothes, and bread.

Poverty and manual labor – they go together. They are weapons of the spirit, and very practical ones, too. What would one think of a woman who refused to wash her clothes because she had no washing machine, or clean her house because she had no vacuum, or sew because she had no machine? In spite of the usefulness of the machine, and we are not denying it, there is still much to be done by hand. So much, one might say, that it is useless to multiply our tasks, go in for work for work's sake.

But we must believe in it for Christ's sake. We must believe in poverty and manual labor for love of Christ and for love of the poor. It is not true love if we do not know them, and we can only know them by living with them, and if we love with knowledge we will love with faith, hope, and charity.

On the one hand, there is the sadness of the world – and on the other hand, when I went to church today and the place was flooded with sunshine, and it was a clear, cold day outside, . . . suddenly my heart was so flooded with joy and thankfulness and so overwhelmed at the beauty and the glory and the majesty of our God that I could only think of St. Dionysius,

“Concerning the Godhead”:

It is the Cause and Origin and Being and Life of all creation. And It is to them that fall away from It a Voice that doth recall them and a Power by which they rise; and to them that have stumbled into a corruption of the Divine Image within them, It is a Power of Renewal and Reform; and a Sacred Grounding to them that feel the shock of unholy assault, and a Security to them which stand; an upward Guidance to them that are being drawn unto It, and a Principle of Illumination to them that are being enlightened; a Principle of Perfection to them that are being perfected; a Principle of Deity to them that are being deified; and of Simplicity to them that are being brought into simplicity; and of Unity to them that are being brought into unity.

The immanence of God in all things! “In Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). “He is not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27).

Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength.

And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart. And thou shalt tell them to thy children. And thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand; and they shall be and move [as frontlets] between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry, and on the doors of thy house. (Deut. 6:4-9)

THE WINTER before Tamar was born, we lived in a little apartment on West Street looking out over the Hudson River docks which was as sun-filled as the chapel in which I meditated. And on the doors of that little apartment, down the street from St. Christopher’s Church, in an apartment over a tavern, there were those holy words enclosed and tacked upon the doorpost inside that house. I was strangely moved when it was explained to me by a Russian Jew, a Communist, what it meant. I understand one can find many an apartment in New York, and doubtless in many of our cities with their large Jewish populations, with such small metal containers, hanging unnoticed by the door frame. I feel like going to one of the Hebrew stores on the East Side and purchasing one so that hereafter, always, it may hang on the door of my house. We need these reminders.

When the world is too much with us, how wonderful to think on these things, to let the mind rest on these things, to rejoice in these words: God is Light, Infinite Beauty, Goodness, “for there is no good save only God.”

One very dreary, dark morning a year ago, when the dark, cold mist hung like a slime over the streets and tenements around Mott Street, I had been at Mass down at Transfiguration Church, where there was a mission going on. The priest gave a very good homily on the commandment “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Each day he was talking on the commandments, one by one.

In his talk he said that any murmuring against God could be included in the violation of this commandment. He talked of “acceptance” of the will of God in whatever the day brought forth. His talk emphasized the virtue of abandonment to Divine Providence. He even brought in the weather.

And yet as I left the church and stopped to exchange some words with a neighbor, my first words were “Miserable weather, isn’t it?” I was immediately conscious of my lapse and laughed at myself as I went down the street.

But it is true that most of our complaining can be construed as thoughtless complaining against God and His Providence. I remember reading once in Romain Rolland that we Western people have lost the beautiful quality of acceptance. Many writers on the East have talked of the philosophical calm and “acceptance” of the Eastern, the Oriental, in the face of heat and cold, disaster and suffering.

Cynically, our Westerner may say that is why they do nothing about poverty and filth and disease. Many of our soldiers were disgusted rather than pitiful at the poverty they saw everywhere, as though it came of choice and sloth. I have heard them express themselves so in regard to our own South. Certainly we Westerners have poverty, filth, and disease side by side with our wealth and comfort. I do not think much of that wealth and comfort, that shining civilization of gadgets and electric lights and skyscrapers, radio and movies. There was the ancient city of Ur out of which Abraham came. I like to turn my thoughts back to Memphis, that great city of Egypt, and Babylon, whose walls extended for forty miles in circumference. And there the Jews sat and wept when they remembered Zion, Jerusalem the golden, so many times razed to the ground.

“Praise the Lord, O my soul. Let all that is within me praise His holy name.”

No matter what happens, it is possible to praise, and it is impossible to praise God without that swelling of joy within the breast.

And people! What about people – the evil that men do? I think of Sister Peter Claver and her saying that women’s job is to love.

One summer Sister Peter Claver was rebuilding an old farmhouse over in Jersey which was going to be used as a retreat house for Negroes. The place was a wreck – it had not been used for years – and there was work to do in roofing it, painting it, [and] repairing it, and Sister had no money. She came to the Catholic Worker [house] and asked if anyone wanted to work for God. She had to beg for every scrap of paint, shingle, and lumber she put into it, getting what she needed week by week.

Two of our men volunteered. Both of them were men who drank, one steadily, the other periodically. John, who drank steadily, went out to Jersey for the summer and never touched a drop for the months he was there. Hugh went out and worked hard, but again and again was tempted and fell. In addition to his other work, he carved a huge beam which separated the sanctuary from the pews in the room they made into a chapel, and he made a crucifix. He had learned these crafts at the Catholic Worker house.

Sister never became discouraged in her loving charity. She loved these men and brought out the best in them. I’ve been inclined to attribute that loving warmth of Sister Peter Claver to the fact that she is half-Jewish and half-Irish. It is in her nature to be warm and loving, to see the good in others, I argue to myself. But true it is, she forgives seventy times seven, she sees always the good in the other, she sees a man as made in the image and likeness of God, a temple of the Holy Ghost, the brother of Christ.



Oh, the joy there is in that warmth and love. Bernanos wrote, “Every particle of Christ’s divine charity is today more precious for your security – for your security, I say – than all the specie in the vaults of the American government.”

ADVENT IS a time of waiting, of expectation, of silence. Waiting for our Lord to be born. A pregnant woman is so happy, so content. She lives in such a garment of silence, and it is as though she were listening to hear the stir of life within her. One always hears that stirring compared to the rustling of a bird in the hand. But the intentness with which one awaits such stirring is like nothing so much as a blanket of silence.

Be still. Did I hear something?

Be still and see that I am God.

Zundel, in *Our Lady of Wisdom*, has some beautiful passages on silence:

Do we understand at last that action must be born in silence, and abide in silence, and issue in silence, and that its power must be an emanation and the radiation of silence, since its sole aim is to make men capable of hearing the Word that silently reverberates in their souls?

All speech and reasoning, all eloquence and science, all methods and all psychologies, all slogans and suggestions are not worth a minute of silence in which the soul, completely open, yields itself to the embrace of the Spirit.

In solitude Christ speaks to the heart, as a modest lover who embraces not His beloved before all the world.

In silence we hear so much that is beautiful. The other day I saw a young mother who said, “The happiest hour of the day is that early morning hour when I lie and listen to the baby practicing sounds and words. She has such a gentle little voice.”

St. James says, “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.” And how much more women need this gift of silence. It is something to be prayed for. Our Lady certainly had it. How little of her there is in the Gospel, and yet all generations have called her blessed.

Behold, how small a fire, how great a forest it kindles. And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity. The tongue is placed among our members, defiling the whole body, and setting on fire the course of our life, being itself set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird and serpent and the rest is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But the tongue no man can tame – it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With it we bless God the Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made after the likeness of God. [ James 3:5-9]

To love with understanding and without understanding. To love blindly, and to folly. To see only what is lovable. To think only on these things. To see the best in everyone around, their virtues rather than their faults. To see Christ in them.

Many people think an examination of conscience is a morbid affair. Péguy has some verses which Donald Gallagher read to me once in the St. Louis House of Hospitality. (He and Cy Echele opened the house there.) They were about examination of conscience. There is a place for it, he said, at the beginning of the Mass. “I have sinned in thought, word, and deed,

through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.” But after you get done with it, don’t go on brooding about it; don’t keep thinking of it. You wipe your feet at the door of the church as you go in, and you do not keep contemplating your dirty feet.

Here is my examination at the beginning of Advent, at the beginning of a new year. Lack of charity, criticism of superiors, of neighbors, of friends and enemies. Idle talk, impatience, lack of self-control and mortification towards self, and of love towards others. Pride and presumption. (It is good to have visitors – one’s faults stand out in the company of others.) Self-will, desire not to be corrected, to have one’s own way. The desire in turn to correct others, impatience in thought and speech.

The remedy is recollection and silence. Meanness about giving time to others and wasting it myself. Constant desire for comfort. First impulse is always to make myself comfortable. If cold, to put on warmth; if hot, to become cool; if hungry, to eat; and what one likes – always the first thought is of one’s own comfort. It is hard for a woman to be indifferent about little material things. She is a homemaker, a cook; she likes to do material things. So let her do them *for others*, always. Woman’s job is to love. Enlarge Thou my heart, Lord, that Thou mayest enter in.

And now, with all this talk of silence, I finish this long account of the year. I send the book out with diffidence. It is the work of a journalist who writes because it is her talent; it has been her means of livelihood. And it is sent out with the hopes that it will *sell* so that the printing bill will be paid, and enough [will be] left over to bring out another book next year – perhaps the book about Peter Maurin as well as a book by another of the Catholic Worker editors. We write also to help support the work which we are doing, because we have a very big family, ranging in age from the infant twins at 115 Mott Street to an eighty-four-year-old woman who wandered in from the streets. It is written most personally because I am a woman who can write no other way. If it is preaching and didactic in parts, it is because I am preaching and teaching and encouraging myself on this narrow road we are treading.

“Life,” said St. Teresa, “is but a night spent in an uncomfortable inn, crowded together with other wayfarers.”

There are bills to pay at an inn, of course, and they are one of the reasons which led me to send this manuscript forth in the care of St. Joseph, patron of all families. May God bless it, and you who read it.

# Chapter 2

## Articles on Distributism - 2

*The Catholic Worker*, July-August 1948, 1,2, 6.

*Summary: Argues that distributism is the only alternative to the US economy. Distributism is an alternative to capitalism and socialism built around “the village economy” and a more just distribution of wealth. Quotes four modern Popes in its support. Summarizes its principles with the following statements: “land is the most natural form of property” “wages should enable man to purchase land” “the family is the most perfect when rooted in its own holdings” “agriculture is the first and most important of all arts.” (See also DDLW #159 and DDLW #161) (DDLW #160).*

We have a farm at Newburgh of nearly six acres. We are raising hay, corn, vegetables, pigs, chickens, a cow. Every few days the dog, King, has brought in woodchucks and some of them weigh eight pounds. He must have caught fifty this year. Down at the docks the Negroes fish without a license for eels. It is woodchuck season and you can eat the woodchucks now. You skin them as you do rabbits, and roasted with sage dressing they make a good meal, and they are cleaner than chicken or hog. Right now Carmela and Florence are sitting out under the crabapple tree stringing beans. There are peas and broccoli and swiss chard besides lettuce for salads. It is getting easier to feed the forty or so retreatants who come every few weeks to the farm and the twenty who are here all summer.

I tell these things to make the mouth water. In the fall we are going to put in a field of wheat and next summer, God willing, we will have our own flour for the good whole wheat loaves that come out of the oven every day.

For the average worker it is more and more difficult to get food. Butter, oleo and fat are sky high. Meat costs a fortune. Food prices have gone up 133% and milk 85%. We saw these figures in a magazine recently to advertise milk as a food. How to live, how to feed a family! Most of all, how to find shelter!

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Every month I shall have to explain the title to this series. We are not expecting utopia here on this earth. But God meant things to be much easier than we have made them. A man has a natural right to food, clothing, and shelter. A certain amount of goods is necessary to lead a good life. A family needs work as well as bread. Properly is proper to man. We must keep repeating these things. Eternal life begins now. "All the way to heaven is heaven, because He said, 'I am the Way.'" The Cross is there of course, but "in the cross is joy of spirit." And love makes all things easy. If we are putting off the old man and putting on Christ, then we are walking in love, and love is what we all want. But it is hard to love, from the human standpoint and from the divine standpoint, in a two room apartment. We are eminently practical, realistic.

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Irene has charge of the clothes at Mott street (besides having charge of the women's house and writing for the paper, and seeing visitors) and the other day a mother of eleven children, nine of them living, came in to get clothes. They are all living at the Municipal lodging house on Third street. The other afternoon when the rain had stopped Irene and I walked down Mott street to Bleecker where Mott street ends, then over to the Bowery and up one block to third, and there, just to the east of the Bowery, is the big building that used to be the Bowery Y.M.C.A. and which is now a municipal shelter.

I was familiar with the place because it used to have a "clean up system" before the blessed days of D.D.T. which you can use like a talcum powder, and there once in a while I used to bring my old friend Mr. Breen. He was a very dignified old man, with a beautiful beard and he walked with a cane. He looked like Chief Justice Hughes. He had worked as Sunday editor of the Washington Post, and he had worked for the N.Y. World, written reviews for the Commonweal, poetry for us, and had assisted us, during his last years, in answering our large correspondence. His wife and children had died, he had fallen into bad times and during the depression we became his family. For a time he had slept in the world's largest bedroom, on a dock down at South Ferry, where the Municipality put up about 1,200 men every night. He used to tell us a story of one old man who evidently thought he was in a cathedral, so vast was the long dim dock at night, and in his night shirt, with his long sticks of legs making him look like a strange bird, he used to "make the stations" down the inner aisle between the double-decker beds, pausing at every seventh bed to pray.

Mr. Breen had many such stories of the poor. We had to take him, as I said before, to the Bowery Y, for a clean-up every now and then. One could bathe at leisure, have one's clothes cleaned and pressed, and have a shave and a hair cut all for seventy-five cents. We used to go in state in a taxi cab. It was very hard to get Mr. Breen to go, and he would only go with me. As we went up to the desk and the very courteous young man behind it, Mr. Breen would look at him haughtily and say in lordly fashion, "I have come to be deloused." Then he would turn to me with a sweeping bow, thank me for my escort, and I would leave him

there for the night.

Now this building is part of the municipal lodging house. On either side of the entrance hall there are beautiful rural scenes painted on the walls, a road through the woods, a country field, and around the tiled halls, children play, from one-year old and up, slipping in and out between the hordes of young and old, black and white, drunk and sober men who are also served, who also are “clients” getting their lodging for the night and several meals a day. The men were registering at the desk as we came in. They all could write their names on the ledger, they were all literate. After they registered they were all taken upstairs to the dormitories to bed. It was five-thirty. No one was taken in after nine.

Downstairs meals were still being served. They had soup or stew, as we could see from the windows outside, two slices of bread and huge mugs of cocoa.

I don’t know how many thousands of men are served every day, are lodged every day. What was occupying our minds was the fact that forty-five families were lodged there too, with six, eight, nine children. The mothers sat around, the fathers came in to report the result of their day’s search for rooms, (and who wants families of four children even, let alone nine?) The children restlessly ran from end to end of the hall, and we tried to talk.

“Isn’t there a play room?” Yes, but the colored, the Puerto Rican the Italian and the “American” children fought. It was nerve-racking. There were separate bed rooms for different members of the family, it was not overcrowded, there is a doctor for the women and children. The city was doing what it could. Up at 26th street, another branch of the Municipal lodging house, there were other families and more men. What they were trying to do was bring all the men down here to Third street, and get the women and children away from the Bowery and up to 26th where there was a playground, a dead end street, the river, and more light and air.

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Yesterday two Irish Christian brothers came to call and told us of Harlem where their order had a school in what was the largest parish in the world. There were thirty thousand people in it, it was estimated. Families fleeing the hunger of Porto Rico were living three families to an apartment. It was the most congested, most neglected section of the city. With all these thousands, the church on Sunday was only half full. It is not a leakage from the Church, it is a landslide.

We have been working on these problems at the Catholic Worker for the past fifteen years, and we can say with all sincerity, that things have never been so bad as they are now, even in the worst of depression. Now men may have work, but they lack homes. There may be odd jobs, poorly-paid jobs, something coming in the way of work, but the housing situation gets worse and worse. Everywhere it is the same. In every city and town the story is the same. There are no apartments, there are no houses.

Mr. O’Daniel, father of the eleven we were visiting, had had a job as janitor. In order to make their profits and avoid the penalties of rent gouging, the owners of the building he was

in had transformed a twelve-apartment house into a twenty-four-apartment house of two and a half rooms each. The board of health got after the owner for having a large family of children in the basement, and he had let them go. No one wants to employ families, none want to rent to families.

And of course we can understand the home owners' point of view. Once we saw a cartoon in the Saturday Evening Post of a mother rebuking her child. "Don't deface the wall, William, we own this house." In other words, what you own is taken care of. Property means responsibility. Property is proper to man.

This is a long preamble. But what a need there is to arouse the conscience! To call attention to the poor! "Are there any more poor?" This fatuous question has been asked me so often by well meaning listeners at meetings that one must answer it. "What about the bricklayer and his huge wages? Never have wages been so high." And what do high wages mean when there is no just price? Anyway, with all the talk of high wages, most of the people around here that I know are working for thirty and thirty five dollars a week. Also the great white collar class of young men and young women are getting along by living at home, profiting by the industry and thrift and better housing opportunity of their parents.

People sooner or later will have to admit that things are rapidly getting worse, not better. People said during the war that Hitler had the theory that the bigger the lie, the easier it was to get people to believe it. It seems to me we have quite a number of these big lies.

There is the lie of high wages.

There is the lie of widespread ownership.

There is the plentiful production lie.

There is the everyone consuming more lie.

In the little pamphlet *DISTRIBUTISM* by S. Sagar, a reprint of six articles from the Weekly Review of London, says that the great danger of today is not a revolt of the proletariat but the lethargy of the proletariat. He also says that the "preliminary to any step taken towards Distributism was the creation of the will to take them."

Here is one quotation from Pope Pius XII which ought to be considered a mandate along these lines.

"We confirm what only recently we had occasion to expound. For Catholics, the only path to be followed in solving the social problem is clearly outlined in the doctrine of the Church. The blessing of God will descend on your work if you do not swerve in the slightest degree from this path. You have no need to think up specious solutions or to work with facile and empty formulas for results that prove only a delusion. What you can and ought to strive for **is a more just distribution of wealth**. This is and this remains a central point in Catholic social doctrine.

Joseph T. Nolan writes in *Orate Fratres*: Too long has idle talk made out of Distributism as something medieval and myopic, as if four modern popes were somehow talking nonsense when they said: the law should favor widespread ownership (Leo XIII); land is the most natural form of property (Leo XIII and Pius XII); wages should enable a man to purchase

land (Leo XIII and Pius XI); the family is most perfect when rooted in its own holding (Pius XII); agriculture is the first and most important of all the arts (Pius VII); and the tiller of the soil still represents the natural order of things willed by God (Pius XII).

“But in general there is so little facing of the problem of the land, or of machinery, which the Franciscan Belliot called”one of the gravest and most disquieting elements in the social problem.” How many Catholics, especially liturgists, share the anxiety of the present pope at “the agglomeration of huge populations in the cities and the diminution of modern man by the domination of the machine? Neither the nihilists nor the optimists who still dream of abundant production can fill our present need; a lot closer are the realists who are willing to rebuild an organic Christian society from the ground up, from the soil, who might escape the very real prospects of unemployment, hunger and despair.”

There are numerous steps that can be taken, outlined in THE RESTORATION OF PROPERTY by Hilaire Belloc. But how to create in men a desire to take them, a hope that they will be able to take them?

Things have gotten so desperate, Mr. Sagar says, goods have gotten so scarce, the effort to find housing has become so heart breaking, that now at last today, after these many years, DISTRIBUTISM IS GOING TO BE DISCUSSED.

The alternatives are not capitalism or socialism. Nor are they the corporatism that Fr. Massey seems to be indicating in AMERICA. We must take into consideration the nature of man and his needs, not just cash—commodities, food and clothing, but a home, a bit of land, and the tools with which to work, part ownership in workshops and stores and factories.

*Distributism does not mean that everyone must be a farmer.* The Distributist thinks in terms of the village economy, and as for the size of the CITY (the city of God) which Cardinal Suhard talks of our building, that is a matter of situation. It may be five hundred, it may be five thousand, it may be fifty thousand. The main thing to do is to distribute the cities before the atom bomb does it. We are not suggesting that it be done by force but by education. If that seems too slow a method, probably depression, war, hunger and homelessness will play their part. We only know it is not human to live in a city of ten million. It is not only not human, it is not possible. “Cities are the occasion of sin,” Fr. Vincent McNabb said, and of course any theologian will say that we should flee the occasions of sin. Pope Pius XII pointed out that it was difficult for modern youth to live in the cities without heroic virtue. (And it was never intended that the good life should demand heroic virtue.)

Distributism does not mean that we throw out the machine. The machine, Peter Maurin used to say, should be the extension of the hand of man. If we could do away with the assembly line, the slavery of the machine, and the useless and harmful and destructive machines, we would be doing well.

In the psalms it says, “Lord, make me desire to walk in the way of thy commandments.” Daniel was called a man of desires, and because he was a man of desires, the Lord heard him.

But how, are we going to get people to desire, and to hope, when men like Fr. Becker writing in America; Fr. Higgins, of the N.C.W.C. and Fr. FitzSimmons of Notre Dame, accept the status quo, endorse social security instead of pointing to the enormous dangers that go with

it and in effect combat the desire of the people for land and for bread, and feed them on husks that the acceptance of the city and the factory result in.

Cardinal Suhard of Paris and Fr. De Lubac, S.J., both cry out against the refusal of some traditionalists to be co-creators with God and use the tools which science has put in man's hands. But Fr. De Lubac also writes (in the Dublin Review) "Does not the discovery of new values involve the depreciation of other, perhaps more fundamental ones? And does it not breed, even while the discovery is still modest and tentative, a kind of intoxication, so that the passionate interest it arouses tends to make men oblivious of everything else, even of essentials? And so ambiguous situations pile up, leading inevitably to crises whose outcome no one can safely prophecy."

We are sure that these priests aforementioned have the interests of the worker at heart, and that in their social ideas and studies they are trying to remedy situations which have become well nigh intolerable. But the essentials are food, clothing and shelter. The essential is ownership which brings with it responsibility, and what is more essential than the earth on which we all spring, and from which comes our food, our clothes, our furniture, our homes.

It is as a woman, a mother, speaking for the family and the home, that I protest the work of "priest-sociologists," who in their desire to help the worker, are going along with him in his errors, and are accepting the easy way of capitalist industrialism which leads to collectivism and the totalitarian state.

To conclude this particular installment of our series of articles on Distributism, the warning is there, Isaiah 26, 5.

"He shall bring down them that dwell on high; the high city he shall lay low. He shall bring it down even unto the ground; he shall pull it down even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down; the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy."

So, "strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees. Say to the faint hearted, take courage and fear not. Behold, your God will bring the bread of recompense. God Himself will come and save YOU."



# Chapter 3

## Are The Leaders Insane?

*The Catholic Worker*, April 1954, 1, 6.

*Summary: Passionate condemnation of the hydrogen bomb tests and industrial preparation of nerve gas for war. Upholds the supremacy of conscience and challenges each person to resist as they are able. Quotes spiritual writers in an effort to strengthen her faith and reduce fear. (DDLW #664).*

When the Lord washed the feet of his apostles on Holy Thursday, St. Peter, head of the Church, questioned Him, “Lord, is it for Thee to wash my feet?” That question is always being asked. He knew how hard it was for us to understand it. “Do you understand what it is I have done to you? You hail me as master and indeed I am. . . if I have washed your feet, I who am the Master and the Lord, you in your turn ought to wash each other’s feet.”

## City of God

St. Augustine in his **City of God** says that God never intended man to dominate his fellows. He was to dominate the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, what crawled upon the earth, but men were not to dominate each other. He preferred shepherds to kings. It was man himself who insisted on having a worldly king though he was warned what would happen to him. God allowed the prophets to anoint the kings and once men had accepted their kings they were supposed to show them respect, to obey the authority they had set up. To obey, that is, in all that did not go against their conscience. St. Peter was ordered by lawful authority not to preach in the name of Jesus, and he said he had to obey God rather than man, and he left prison to go out again to the market place and preach the Gospel. Over and over again, men had to disobey lawful authority to follow the voice of their conscience.

This obedience to God and disobedience to the State has over and over again happened through history.

It is time again to cry out against our “leaders,” to question whether or not, since it is not for us to say that they are evil men, they are sane men.

On Laetare Sunday, a day of rejoicing in the midst of a season of penance, three stories in The New York Times caught my eye. On the first page of the news of the week in review, there is an account of the “new alarm” throughout the world over the setting off of another hydrogen bomb in the Pacific. The President said of this latest test:

## Quite Clear

“It was quite clear that this time something must have happened that we had never experienced before, and must have surprised and astonished the scientists.”

It is decided that we must learn more about it, so a film will be released on April 7<sup>th</sup> which will show the tests being made. Russia, too, is releasing data about her hydrogen bombs. She has given detailed reports and compared the force of the explosion to the million ton meteor that blasted more than a hundred square miles of forest in Siberia in 1908.

Both Russia and America warn that the use of these weapons will wipe out civilization. Those who are caught in the middle, all those lands on which we have placed our air bases, including England, look upon this arms race with horror. Russia’s foothold in Guatemala is one base of a sort, compared to the innumerable bases we have around the world.

Television, radio and press have given accounts of the poor fishermen who were showered with dust from the last atomic explosion and are now suffering the consequences.

There is “an ebbing of hopes for the long standing problem of the Suez,” there is “furore over Scorpion Pass,” there is the terrible war in Indo-China for which we are paying from 60 to 80 per cent of the costs. There is bitterness in France towards us for paying with money, while they pay with human lives for their last outpost of empire.

On the last page of the first section of the Times, there is a column-long story of Denver’s place in our war preparations, with the heading, Denver Calmed on War Gas Fear.

## Deadly Gas

The description of the manufacture of this deadly gas and how it kills in four minutes of frightful agony is told in detail. “The arsenal produces this weapon 24 hours a day, seven days a week.” I wonder how many are working in this plant, and have been working in it in the last fourteen years. Until this GB, as it is called, was declassified by the army last week, most workers did not know what they were making. Will we be forgiven for our ignorance?

## Increase Production

Some projects include the filling of mustard gas shells, an assembly line for incendiary bombs that make World War II napalm obsolete. The army plans to increase the arsenal production from sixty million to ninety million beginning June first. The arsenal was built in 1942 and

produced the jellied gasoline incendiary bombs that “burned out the heart of the Japanese industrial area long before the atomic bomb explosion.” On March 10, 1945, Guam-based B 29’s dropped 1,500 tons of Denver made incendiary bombs on Tokyo. About 83,000 persons were killed and an estimated 41,000 injured. More than half of Tokyo was destroyed in that raid with more than a million made homeless." Besides Tokyo 69 other enemy cities were attacked with these bombs.

## Are we frightening ourselves to death?

Lewis Mumford in a column long letter on the editorial page of the Times strongly condemns the leaders of the country for their secrecy in regard to these horrible weapons, with the faith that once known, the people themselves will revolt against this madness. He is afraid that at a given moment our self-induced fears will pull the trigger that will start the destruction of civilization around the world.

Are there not enough Americans still possessed of sanity, he asks, who will call a stop to the irrational decisions which are automatically bringing us close to total catastrophe? And he points out: “There are many alternative courses to the policy to which we have committed ourselves practically without debate. The worst of all these alternatives, submission to Communist totalitarianism, would still be far wiser than the final destruction of civilization.

“As for the best of these alternatives, a policy of working firmly for justice and cooperation, and free intercourse with all other peoples, in the faith that love begets love as surely as hatred begets hatred, would in all probability, be the one instrument capable of piercing the strong political armor of our present enemies.

## Mass Suicide

“Once the facts of our policy of total extermination are publicly canvassed, and the final outcome, mass suicide is faced, I believe that the American people are still sane enough to come to a wiser decision than our government has yet made. They will realize that retaliation is no protection; that total extermination of both sides is not victory; that a constant state of morbid fear, suspicion and hatred is not security; that in short what seems like unlimited power has become impotence.”

Let us deal with our own massive sins, he cries out and he concludes that if as a nation we have become mad, it is time for the world to take note of that madness, and he asks that the voice of the sane be heard again in the land.

## Prosperity

And yet how can that voice be heard when the Denver story listing all the defense plants which are bringing prosperity to Colorado, says “the uneasiness of some in the Denver area

about the nerve gas does not affect Colorado's enthusiasm for the part it can play in what President Eisenhower has called "the new look."

## How Rejoice?

And yet in the face of these accounts we are told by St. Paul to rejoice and to rejoice always. Fr. Henri de Lubac, the great French Jesuit, wrote in his **Drama of Atheist Humanism**, "So long as we talk and argue and busy ourselves on the plane of this world, evil seems to be stronger. More than that, whether evil distresses us or whether we exalt it, it alone seems real. The thing to do is to enter upon another plane, to find that fourth dimension which represents the kingdom of the spirit. Then freedom is queen, then God triumphs and man with him."

## Worst Happened

My favorite quotation from Juliana of Norwich is her reassurance that the worst has already happened and has been remedied—that is the Fall of man, and his redemption by Christ. Looked at in the light of eternity we have nothing to fear.

But it is not so easy to separate the city of God and the city of this world. It is not so easy for a mother and father of a young and growing family to face them around the supper table and contemplate only fear and suffering for them in the time to come. It is all very well to say we must go to the source of all strength, to drink at the living fountain of Christ, but can we go from that fount of Love to a factory where nerve gas and incendiary bombs are manufactured?

When we have talked of a general strike it is of such work and of such evil that we are thinking; when we talk of non-payment of taxes it is of the money which is going to Indo-China in the form of these incendiary bombs and the planes to drop them that we are thinking. It is not thus that we can love God and our brother; it is not in this way that we can love our enemy.

## People Need Disturbing

When it is said that we disturb people too much by the words pacifism and anarchism, I can only think that people need to be disturbed, that their consciences need to be aroused, that they do indeed need to look into their work, and study new techniques of love and poverty and suffering for each other. Of course the remedies are drastic, but then too the evil is a terrible one and we are all involved, we are all guilty, and most certainly we are all going to suffer. The fact that we have "the faith," that we go to the sacraments, is not enough. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" with napalm, nerve gas, our hydrogen bomb, our "new look."

Each one of us must make our decisions as to what he should do, each one must examine his conscience and beg God for strength. Should one register for the draft? Should one accept conscientious objector status in the army or out of it, taking advantage of the exceptions allowed, but accepting the fact of the draft? Should one pay tax which supports this gigantic program?

I realize how difficult this is to decide. If one is unmarried and strong physically, it is easier to make a decision to do only day labor or work without pay. But there are many whose mental and physical strength is not equal to this decision and there is a withholding tax taken from even the smallest salary. Sometimes one can only make a gesture of protest. It is not for any one to judge his fellow man on how far he can go in resisting participation in preparation for war. In the very works of mercy which we are performing, we at the Catholic Worker are being aided by those who earn what they do only because they pay income tax for war. Oh yes, the editors of **The Catholic Worker** know only too well how far we too are involved in the city of this world. Perhaps Bob Ludlow, who left us much against our will, felt that he was being more honest in permitting a withholding tax to be taken from his meager wage as hospital attendant than working for nothing for the Catholic Worker. Who knows the heart of another? The temptation is always there to go out on one's own, to walk the lone path of a St. Francis rather than the community way of a St. Benedict.

## All Involved

I write thus frankly to let our readers know that we realize that we are all involved, that we are not trying to place on the shoulders of others the heavy burdens of knowledge and responsibility and are not bearing them ourselves. This is the greatest of problems today, this problem of war and peace, and involves every man, woman and child in the country. It is a bigger problem by far than Senator McCarthy, than Guatemala, than Puerto Rico and the recession. We are one world and all men are brothers. We must pray to learn to love, to have faith in love.

Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief; take away my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh; in thee have I hoped, let me never be confounded.

## Chapter 4

### On Pilgrimage - July/August 1963

*The Catholic Worker*, July-August 1963, 1, 2, 7.

*Summary: Goes to Danville, Virginia, and describes the brutality of the police against demonstrators. Speaks at a spirited prayer meeting devoted to civil rights. Ties civil rights to education, jobs, health care, and averting war. Participates in picketing. Says, "We all have something to give." Notes the death of friends. (DDLW #805).*

An invitation for me to speak in Danville, Virginia, came last month so I set out July 8th to fill the assignment. Actually I was not asked as editor of **The Catholic Worker**, as a writer, a reporter. I was asked by Mother Teresa of the Society of Christ The King, to come and take her place because the newly assigned young priest did not think that it was fitting that a founder of a religious group of social workers, known for the past twenty years in the community should be taking her place by the side of a crowd of Negro demonstrators on the steps of City Hall in Danville.

Mother Teresa had spoken on the radio several times besides. The priest is the only one for miles around; the next nearest church is Lynchburg, and it is one of the difficulties of the Church in America, that one is dependent for the Bread of Life on the one priest who may be completely hostile to one's point of view. In the big cities this does not matter. There are a number of priests in each parish and any number of parishes in each city. But in Danville there is one Catholic Church and one priest. One wishes to be friends.

#### The Society of Christ The King

Mother Teresa heads a small group of sisters who do social work among the poorest of the Negro and white population, town and rural. They do what comes to hand and if it is a baby, left on their doorstep or a family of half a dozen children whose mother is in a mental hospital for five months, or a group of families back in the country to be instructed in the truths of religion, – they are ready. While I was with the sisters, there was a baby, carried about with them, taken to Mass in the morning, sitting in a little stroller in their kitchen or garden while they worked.

“We have learned about mothers from them,” Mother Teresa says happily. St. Teresa of Avila advises that every convent have a baby in it to humanize the nuns.

It is an all day bus trip to Danville. The bus leaves at 8:30 a.m. and arrives at 8:45 at night with few stops on the way. It is the through bus to New Orleans. Mother Teresa met me at the station and drove me out Route 4, down Industrial Avenue, past tobacco warehouses, past a sewage plant, past a street of shanties and then a row of slightly better houses, and finally up a rutted road to the top of a hill where the sisters have put up half a dozen buildings, including a guest house, a community house, work shops, a library and so on. They began with barracks and the sisters do the building themselves. A tornado in 1953 destroyed some of their houses, and they are working on another now. There are fruit trees, a vegetable garden, lovely grounds under a great spreading oak (many of whose limbs were torn away by the tornado), and across a little valley, a good barn and milk house. They have two Guernsey cows, and have an abundance of milk, butter and cream.

## Supper Party

It was not long after I arrived that a group of the young people from SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) arrived for a late supper. There was Cynthia Ann Carter from Danville; Roland Sherrod from Petersburg, Va., Ivanhoe Donaldson from New York, Bob Zellner, field secretary of the Alabama SNCC, Mary Elizabeth King and Sam Shirah from Atlanta. We ate the good farm products (there were steak and hot dogs besides) and students told me of the happenings in Danville. Stories of which had been publicized all over the country, but they still could scarcely convey the horror of the brutality which had been inflicted on a helpless, unarmed crowd of demonstrators.

Before I left New York, and it was not too heartening to hear it, Bob Gore had told other members of CORE that in all the country, the police of Danville had been the most terrible. And on July 12 Martin Luther King told a mass meeting in Danville that he had seen brutal things done by the police elsewhere in the South, “but seldom, if ever, have I heard of actions as vicious and brutal as those done by the police here.” Dr. King’s Assistant, Wyatt Tee Walker, called Danville the worst area with Gadsden, Alabama and Savannah, Georgia, a close second.

This is what happened the week before:

## Riot

The group of demonstrators which included prominent ministers and their wives, parishioners and many young ones, were driven by deputized police into an alley between a parking lot and the City Hall and there the fire hoses were turned on them with such force that they were thrown to the pavement and in one case a woman’s clothes, (skirt and blouse), ripped off her, so that she was exposed with nothing but step-ins and naked from the waist up. Women taking refuge under parked cars were dragged out and beaten with clubs and kicked. Arms

were broken by the force of the blows. Men, women and children were all beaten unmercifully and deliberately. It was fear run riot.

“Deliver me from fear of their fear,” I prayed as I listened, using the words of St. Peter which had been part of the epistle of last Sunday’s Mass, thinking of the hysterical fear of guilty whites, fear of the past, of the future.

“Trouble was, they deputized untrained policemen, men who were garbage collectors and street cleaners and other workers for the city,” the students told me, as many others told me again and again. And when they said “untrained,” I thought of what I had read of how police are trained to strike blows that will not be seen, that will not kill but will render the opponent unconscious and so on. But these men were striking as though to kill by their blows and many of the demonstrators had to be taken unconscious to the hospital. At present writing two are still there, one in Duke Hospital and one in Richmond.

The local hospital, Winslow, has 25 beds for the colored and the other hospital in this town of 47,000 has 750 beds for the whites. Winslow is a city hospital, free, a fact protested by white citizens who point out that they pay fourteen dollars a day at Memorial which had started as a hospital for the needy and had been given gifts of a million or more.

## Prayer Meeting

What I was invited to do in Danville was to speak at a mass meeting the following night in the High Street Baptist Church where Rev. L. W. Chase is pastor. The meeting began with songs and hymns and the hymn singing was hearty and beautiful.

“Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? Precious Saviour still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer. Do thy friends despise, forsake thee, take it to the Lord in prayer. In His arms He’ll take and shield thee, take it to the Lord in prayer.”

There were other hymns and prayers and the invocation was surely a crying out to the Lord, a singing and a sobbing of a prayer, rhythmical, so that it became almost a litany. Rev. James Dixon prayed with all his strength.

And then there were the Freedom songs, many of which have been composed in jail, coming from the heart, from the suffering, from the open bleeding wounds of a people who have known indignity and sorrow for generations.

The Freedom songs were more lively than the hymns and clapping accompanied them and a light tapping of the feet. **“Keep on walking, talking . . . Ain’t gonna let no injunction turn me round, walking up the freedom way.”** There were many verses and many refrains. The singing lifted the heart, strengthened the weak knees.

## Speakers

There were many speakers but they were brief. William Canada told with complete lack of emotion how he had spent nineteen days in jail. Authorities kept denying he was there, and



he was sought for by his family in hospitals and there was no knowing where he was until he was released. Despite beatings he had been put to work in the quarry.

Bob Zellner talked of Moses and how he led his people out of Egypt and how tired people got of the struggle so that they wanted to go back to bondage; it was forty years before they saw the Promised Land. And he compared the non-violent struggle of the Negro to the clamorous attack made on the walls of Jericho, which, he reminded them, had come tumbling down.

Claudia Edwards of Arkansas, one of the task force of CORE, urged the Mothers to join me in a picket line in the down town area the next morning. She herself, she told me later, was going to buy her some jail clothes in an adjoining town since they were boycotting the down-town area in Danville. Jail clothes meant a pair of jeans or dungarees and a slightly heavier shirt so that if the hoes were turned on them again, her clothes would not be swept off. I saw her the next day at noon and she looked small and wiry, and very much alive. The next afternoon she and a dozen others lay down before the gates of the Danville Mills against which they are urging a world-wide boycott, and the police let them lie there and deployed the trucks to another gate. There were not enough of them to cover all the entrances to these great textile mills which have subsidiaries all through the South, and a world wide market. Ten thousand are employed by the Mill and only 500 Negroes.

There were speakers urging registration for the vote, so that next morning 47 went to the polls and registered, and they went together so they would not be intimidated. There was only one woman, very nervous, to register them, so it took a long time, and many could not join our picket line at the noon hour. The rule is that at first registration, one pays not only the year's poll tax but for three years previous, and this added burden keeps many from registering.

Lawyers spoke on the progress made in the courts. Leonard Holt from Norfolk and Arthur Kinoy from New York, both warned their audience, (there were five hundred there,) that the work could not just be done in the courts, that the people had to keep up their demonstrations, had to continue their struggle in the streets.

Reverend A. I. Dunlap, just recently appointed vice-president of Kettrell Junior College, made a statement of purpose and since he was directly in front of me and spoke so that he kept his audience in gales of laughter I could not get the gist of his talk which was also very brief.

## Pope John and Integration

I was the speaker of the evening and I do not know whether I would have had the courage to speak, outsider that I was, if I had not been there to represent Mother Teresa whose work was known and loved by them all. Besides, the singing lightened my own heart, dissolved my own fear, so that I could tell them of the Women's Pilgrimage for Peace and the Pope's encyclical **Pacem in Terris**.

There was no end to what one could say about that Encyclical. There was the part where he said, "He who possesses certain rights, has likewise the duty to claim those rights as marks of

his dignity, while others have the obligation to acknowledge those rights and respect them.”

I took that statement on a poster placard on the streets of Danville the next morning when we picketed for an hour and a half before the hostile or indifferent stares of hundreds of people during their lunch hour.

There was a notable absence of Negroes but some of those who shopped said they were from the country and did not know about the pleas of their fellow Negroes to keep out of the downtown area and not to buy from stores where Negroes were not employed in fair ratio to the whites.

There was much to quote from Pope John: what he had to say about the rights of conscience; about unjust laws; about the place of women, the part they had to play in the world.

And I told my listeners too, that after so many years of work in the Peace Movement, I had come to the conclusion that basic to peace was this struggle of the colored for education, job opportunity, health, and recognition as men. That while we talked of averting war, we were in the midst of one of the strangest wars in history, where the side which had declared the war were using no weapons but those of suffering. They were praying they were marching they were doing without (by boycott); they were in a way offering their own flesh, their suffering, their imprisonment, for their brothers. “A new **commandment**” (not a counsel) “I give to you, that you love each other as I have loved you.” And that commandment of Jesus means the laying down of life itself for one’s brother, colored and white.

It is the Negro who is leading the way, and it is among the Negroes that the ranks of the martyrs is increasing. They are uncounted, unknown, many of them. Medgar Evers leads them, going out as he did with fore knowledge of his doom. He fell, and his brother is taking his place. Others are unknown, unsung heroes. Something is happening in our midst that we do not recognize. We have eyes and see not, ears and hear not. The last are becoming the first. “He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble.”

## “Not Worthy”

It is hard to feel that the color of our skin in a way separates us from this mass of people whom we have injured. It is with too little and too late that we are engaging ourselves. But even if it is at the eleventh hour that we are called to serve, we can respond.

We can pray too that we may be “counted worthy to suffer,” a fact the apostles rejoiced over when they put up their non-violent struggle for the Faith, and were imprisoned and beaten. I felt that I had not been counted worthy when I learned that the Danville police have been imprisoning all the pickets since I left, besides all those who have been engaged in sit-ins. The jails have been filling up.

I talked to some of the women who had been beaten by the police and their deputies and the savagery was incredible. The only thing they were spared were the humiliating stripping and searching that all women are subjected to in the Women’s House of Detention in New York.

## All ages

On the picket line which I participated in through the downtown streets of Danville, I was preceded by Mrs. Chase, wife of the minister of the church where I had spoken the night before, and Mrs. Lawrence Campbell whose husband is the executive secretary of the Danville Christian Progressive Association and minister of one of the other leading churches of the city.

The very young among the Negro students have led in the integrating of public facilities, lunch counters, hospitals, libraries, theaters and housing in many places, and have engaged the minds and hearts of youth in Danville also. It was fascinating to see and hear these young ones, some of them only fourteen, talk of the work and the struggle ahead.

Just as in Birmingham, many of these young ones have already seen the inside of the prisons. Comparing them to the gangs of unemployed teen-agers who are looked upon with fear and trembling by the householder everywhere, one can only see in these young ardent souls great hope for the future.

John Davis was one of the first from Danville to take a position of responsibilities in these activities. In an interview at the office of **Liberation** in New York, he told how a group of young people were arrested for trespassing when they sat on the steps of Charcoal House, a segregated restaurant, after the manager closed the place in the face of their picket line. When they were arrested there were two news men present and Chief of Police McCain warned the police to handle their prisoners with care, but when they arrived in the jail cells where there were no witnesses they were kicked and “cursed in most vile language.”

Ivanhoe Donaldson who drove down from New York was halted by the police outside Danville and arrested for driving with faulty brakes, handcuffed, taken to the police station, and struck in the face several times. Another student from Brandeis University who came to help the SNCC group was beaten so badly with clubs that Mother Teresa said it was a wonder he had any sense left. The police kept saying, one of the young colored girls told me, “Is you a white man or is you a nigger?” and when he would not answer, they kept beating him.

This same little one, who looked no more than twelve years old, had been thrown into prison too together with a crowd of others, and “the prison was so full that they had to put us in the side with the white people, – so we integrated the jail!” Truly this is also a children’s crusade. It is not that they have been led into it, – it is hard to keep them out.

An Emergency Food Drive has been announced by representatives of SNCC and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in Danville, to help ease hunger due to the cutting off of unemployment compensation and loss of jobs which occurred in reprisal for participating in demonstrations.

## Parents in Jail

“There are also many families where one or both parents are in jail, and they have vowed to remain there without bail. Food is needed for their children,” according to Rev. L. G.

Campbell. Staples such as flour, canned milk, and canned vegetables and meat are needed for immediate distribution. "We are making a special appeal to all friends of justice for small and large packages to be sent to 226 North Union St., Danville, Va., said Avon W. Rollins, Executive Committee, SNCC.

Besides the relief that is needed and the money for all the expenses and legal fees of these committees (they are doing a lot of work and not spending much on literature) there is the problem of the building of a kind of social order which can handle the problems of automation, the building of a new society within the shell of the old. The continuation, in other words, of Peter Maurin's program of Farming Communes and Agronomic Universities throughout the country. Besides teachers, students, workers and scholars, all are needed who have funds to invest in land and enterprises, those who know how to plan and those who know how to build, those most especially who know how to teach, – to work with others. There is not much room for the individualist, but much need for the personalist, in the communitarian society where the aim will be the common good; the need to make the kind of social order "where it is easier for man to be good," as Peter Maurin said.

There is time to talk about these things in prison, in meeting halls, in times of unemployment and tension. We each have our vocation – the thing to do is to answer the call. We each have something to give.

## LATE NOTES

We last went to press June 12. So far five families have had vacations at the beach house in Staten Island. There is usually a day or so in between to clean up a bit and defrost the ice box. With lots of kids there is bound to be some disorder and breakage, but this year one of the unemployed men of the family repaired a bit of plumbing, something we had been trying to get done for months. There is so much building on the island it is impossible to get a plumber. Also we like to think of the miracle of a house free from bugs all these summers. In spite of the fact that these families come from the real slums and are crowded into a few small rooms in town, none of them have brought with them any noxious insects. But as for mosquitos, – we haven't a single mosquito, says Stanley. They are all married and with large families.

## Fr. McSorley Died

Our dear friend Fr. McSorley, with whose encouragement and advice Peter Maurin and I launched the Catholic Worker back in 1933, died, and was buried Saturday, July 6. I thought, during the requiem Mass, how gentle and how saintly a man. His whole life reads like the life of a saint. It was all entirely directed to the priesthood and I felt, as I never did before at anyone's passing, that here had been a man of complete innocence and yet one of whom one could go loaded down with guilt and misery and know that he was filled with loving kindness

and understanding. “He is a priest forever,” as the priest who preached his funeral sermon said, “and so we can still count on his help.”

## Sasha Died

In the mid section of *The Long Loneliness* when I wrote of a time of “natural happiness,” I tell of a Russian Jewish family who figured largely in my life at that time. The father of that family died during the month and it was a shock to hear that he had gone from us. There are so many memories of discussions, literary and political, with a background of guitar music and Russian folk songs. Sasha introduced to us Dzarjevsky (who gave me his baptismal cross and for whom I am bound to pray), Salama, and the Bulgakov family, and I remember how Freda and I taught Varya how to read English from **Candide**. Sasha had a little garden and he told us once that he wished we would some day plant some dill on his grave when he died it was so delectable an herb in salads. I lived with them in the city for a time, and when I had my home on Staten Island, the Maruchess family bought a place next door and we were constant companions for years. May he rest in peace!

## Michael Died

One can think peacefully of the death of a Fr. McSorley but not of a Michael who was too young to die. Michael Willock was only eighteen and the last time I saw him was when he and his father Ed had spent a Thanksgiving vacation with us on the Staten Island farm.

Suffering is a mystery and often one cries out, Why, why? We ask the prayers of our readers for Dorothy Willock and the children.

## Hiroshima Day

As we go to press, Aug. 6, A. J. Muste has been leading a large group of demonstrators in a sit-down before the Atomic Energy Commission on Hudson and Houston Streets. A vigil is lined up before the block long building, which will be continued for the next three days. Hour by hour, one of the watchers goes to take his place beside A. J. Muste who has led in the sit-down, blocking the door of the main entrance to the building. We will write more of this in the next issue.

## Danville Again

**Late News.** Rev. Chase of Danville whose wife led the Mothers for Freedom picket line in Danville in which I took part, was arrested. Police came at four-thirty in the morning and

kicked in the door of this home and dragged him out in pajamas to the local jail. Later in the day eighty more pickets were arrested, including Mrs. Chase, his wife.

## Retreat Movement

Fr. Marion Casey of Belle Plaine, Minnesota gave us our annual retreat which began on a Sunday night and lasted until Saturday. I am writing a book about this spiritual adventure, which the Catholic Worker Press will publish later.

## Chapter 5

### On Pilgrimage - December 1965

*The Catholic Worker*, December 1965, 1, 2, 7.

*Summary: Discusses freedom of conscience and obedience to Church and State in the context of Vatican Council II's condemnation of nuclear war. Lauds the "little way" of St. Therese as the foundation of world peace and a means of social change. (DDLW #248).*

It is a happy thing to feel gratitude, so we thank our readers for these feelings of ours, as well as for the help they have sent us to pay our bills, and for the good letters upholding us in a difficult time, making us realize how wide-spread the Catholic Worker family is throughout the world.

Every night, as a small group of us go into the house chapel to say the rosary and compline, we pray for the individuals who have asked most especially for prayers and for the living and the dead, believer and unbeliever, our own family, as well as our correspondents. And we pray with deep gratitude for those who send us help to enable us to do the work of hospitality.

In the daytime you can see the wooded hillside from the chapel windows, where one of the men from the Bowery has cleared away underbrush so that the stone walls which terrace the hillside here and there are visible. The setting sun on these terraces colors the rocks a deep rose, and the trees come alive with light and color. My room faces the river, not the hill, and as I write this morning I look out at the Hudson River and marvel at how the Atlantic tide reaches all the way up to Tivoli and covers the rushes, which in turn cover the mud flats across the river. Bits of driftwood float upstream. The channel is on our side, and just now a great oil tanker went by under my window.

Downstairs in the room below me, Agnes Sidney, who is eighty-five, is bedridden. Brother Raphael, of the Christian Brothers in Barrytown, saw to it that we had a hospital bed, and six young novices brought it up so that Agnes can face the river and look out at tanker, freighter and barge. Her husband, long dead, was barge captain and she herself lived for thirty years on barges, sometimes making the perilous journey from New York to Boston, via coal barge.

## Good News

The happy news on the radio this morning is that the Vatican Council has passed with an overwhelmingly majority vote, the Schema on the Church in the Modern World, included in which is an unequivocal condemnation of nuclear warfare. It was a statement for which we had been working and praying. We will report further on the details of the condemnation of modern war in next month's issue.

As to the questions this condemnation will raise in the hearts and minds of all men, Catholic or otherwise—I can only feel that such questions and the attempts to answer them will lead to more enlightened knowledge, more enlightened conscience on the part of all men. It will lead, as Peter Maurin was always fond of saying, to clarification of thought, a state of mind which should precede all action. I am sure that he thought that our action very often trod on the heels of thought too quickly and so was very imperfect. But I always felt, with St. Francis of Assisi, that we do not know what we have not practiced, and that we learn by our actions, even when those actions involve us in grave mistakes, or sin. God brings good out of evil, that evil which has come about as a result of our free will, our free choice. We learn, as the saying is, the hard way. But the promise remains: “All things work together for good to those who love God,” or who want to love Him, who seek to love Him. As Pascal said: “You would not seek Him if you had not already found Him.” In other words, the promise is there. “Seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you.” And to repeat again, since there is no time with God, the promise, the finding, and the seeking go together. Even when one is following a wrong or ill-informed conscience.

For me, this answers the question as to whether we, at the Catholic Worker, think that a man is in the state of mortal sin for going to war. I have been asked this question so often by students that I feel we must keep on trying to answer, faulty and obscure as the answer that each one of us makes may seem to be. To my mind the answer lies in the realm of the motive, the intention. If a man truly thinks he is combating evil and striving for the good, if he truly thinks he is striving for the common good, he must follow his conscience regardless of others. But he always has the duty of forming his conscience by studying, listening, being ready to hear his opponents' point of view, by establishing what Martin Buber called an I-Thou relationship. I suppose this is what priests mean when they talk about loving one's enemies, trying to reconcile the teachings of the Gospel with war. The intention, they feel, is to bring about peace and initiate rational discussion around the conference table, and from there on try to establish a relationships of love by building hospitals, repairing the damage done by war, restoring prosperity to a country exhausted and ravaged by war. (Because our modern wars are always fought on the soil of others.) But what means are being used to accomplish these good ends! The means becomes the ends, a Benedictine writer, Augustine Baker, brought out forcibly.

And even these **good** ends, as Cardinal Leger's richly provocative talk, published in this issue of the paper, brings out, we are always trying to make others like ourselves, so convinced are we that we white, Anglo-Saxons (Protestant usually goes with this in opposition to Negro, Catholic and Jew, though we Catholics have taken on the same formula) are right.

It seems to me that those of the hierarchy who opposed the inclusion in Schema thirteen



of this condemnation of nuclear war were leaving out of account Divine Providence, when they thought that without these weapons of destruction we could not face up to the threat of Communism's taking over the world. The idea of arms being used as deterrents, to establish a balance of terror, and so keeping the world at peace was long ago condemned by Benedict XV, who spoke of "the fallacy of an armed peace." Abbott Christopher Butler brought out the fallacy of such reasoning even more strongly in the quotations from his intervention at the Council which we printed on page one, first column, of the October issue of the **Catholic Worker**. (We are continuing to use other interventions, as they are called, from other members of the hierarchy in the paper, for the sake of clarification of thought on this all-engrossing problem of war.)

The primacy of conscience in the life of a Catholic is more and more brought out by the deliberations in the Council and by the very conflicts that take place there. The promulgation (a solemn word) of the doctrine on religious liberty is an example of this. When I was in Rome, one bishop (it may even have been an archbishop) said to me: "You need not worry about the problem of conscientious objection to war, since freedom of conscience is already thoroughly established in the schema on religious liberty." I always hesitate to name the bishops when I am quoting them, for fear of not being entirely accurate. We would not think of printing their letters of commendation for our "good work" when they send us their frequent contributions, knowing that they would seem to many an endorsement of our position, when it is actually our works of mercy that they are commending. Of course we consider enlightening the ignorant and counseling the doubtful works of mercy, as indeed they are. As for "rebuking the sinner" we are told not to judge, by our dear Lord, and we are only too conscious of our own all too imperfect state. However, our positions seem to imply a judgment, a condemnation, and we get the "holier than thou" accusation often enough.

Whenever this question of conscience comes up, the question of obedience immediately follows, obedience to Church and State, even when commands are not personally directed at us lay people, nor obedience exacted of us, as it is of the clergy. We have pointed out again and again the freedom the Catholic Worker has always had in the Archdiocese of New York. We have been rebuked on occasion, when we advised young men not to register for the draft; when we spoke of capitalism as a cancer on the social body, as Count della Torre, the former editor of **Osservatore Romano**, did; and on only one occasion, for our use of the name **Catholic**. This last reproach came up again in a news report recently, and we can only repeat what I said to our former chancellor, Monsignor Gaffney, (God rest his soul) that we have as much right to the name Catholic as the Catholic War Veterans have.

## Obey God and Men?

As to my oft-quoted remark that if the Cardinal asked me to stop my writing on war, I would obey, which has been brought up quite a number of times recently, I will try to clarify it: First of all, I cannot conceive of Cardinal Spellman's making such a request of me, considering the respect he has always shown for freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. But in the event of so improbable a happening, I have said that I would obey. "What becomes of your

obligation of conscience to resist authority? You have quoted St. Peter's saying that we must obey God rather than men."

My answer would be (and it is an easier one to make now that the Council has spoken so clearly) that my respect for Cardinal Spellman and my faith that God will right all mistakes, mine as well as his, would lead me to obey. A respect augmented by the way he has carried out his physical duties in connection with military ordinariate, in visiting the soldiers in far-off parts of the world. This Christmas, as during the Korean conflict, he will be in a war area, since there is not a spot in Vietnam which can be considered safe. We have been a troublesome family to the chancery office, and I am sure that there are plenty of bishops around the county who are glad we are not in their dioceses. It is fitting, of course, that the Christian revolution (it has scarcely begun in its pacifist-anarchist respects) should struggle on in New York as it has these last thirty-three years. Let us pray that it continues.

## Immediate Effects

As to what change will be brought about by the pronouncements of the Council? None immediately, just as there was none when Pope Pius XI spoke out against Fascism in Italy. (And was it not Cardinal Spellman who flew out with that encyclical, which was suppressed in Italy under Mussolini?) Popes speak out, as Paul VI did recently at the United Nations, but wars go on. There are cheers and rejoicings, and seeming assent to what they say, but action does not seem to be influenced, **that is, immediately**. They are respected for what they say because of their lofty position. But a Father Daniel Berrigan, S.J. is "given another assignment" to Latin America. But in the long run, these words, these pronouncements, after much blood has been shed, influence the course of history, which progresses more and more towards a recognition of man's freedom, his dignity as a son of God, as made in the image and likeness of God, whether he is Communist or imperialist, Russian or American, "North" or "South" Vietnamese. All men are brothers, God wills that all men be saved, and we pray daily, **Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven**.

Meanwhile, to go from the general to the particular, I rejoice that Father Berrigan has this new assignment. He has done magnificent writing on race relations and war, he has spoken and walked on picket lines, and undoubtedly he needs some rest, some time to think, to research, to learn more about solutions to the problems that make for war, such as world poverty and hunger. If we had peace tomorrow, in Vietnam, the problem of poverty in Latin America would still be there, fermenting more violence and hatred, more use of force. Are pacifists in this present war going to be pacifist still when revolts break out throughout Latin American countries? Are we going to have trained and resourceful people ready to deal with these problems? And above all with accent on the primacy of the spiritual and knowledge of "the little way?"

A Jesuit priest from Madras, India, came in the office to visit us the other afternoon. When he spoke of the war in Vietnam he spoke as one nearer to it than we were, and he reiterated the familiar argument: If Vietnam is lost to the Communists, all Asia goes too. One of the Midwest senators answered this argument very successfully in an address printed in the

**Saturday Review** last April.

But from the Christian point of view (and in this case from the Jesuit point of view) when he asked, "What are we to do?" I could only point to the example of St. Ignatius, who first of all laid down his arms, then went to support himself by serving the poor in hospitals, and then went back to school to study. Peter Maurin not only emphasized such a "simple" program, but pointed out that we should study history by reading the lives of the saints, which throw a light on what is happening in the present day. He also had a famous essay, "They and We."

## Community or Crowd?

People say:

They don't do this,  
They don't do that,  
They ought to do this,  
They ought to do that.  
Always "They"  
and never "I."

The Communitarian Revolution  
is basically/a personal revolution.  
It starts with I,  
not with They.

One I plus one I  
makes two I's  
and two I's  
and two I's make We.  
We is a community  
while "they" is a crowd.

When a mother, a housewife, asks what she can do, one can only point to the way of St. Therese, that little way, so much misunderstood and so much despised. She did all for the love of God, even to putting up with the irritation in herself caused by the proximity of a nervous nun. She began with working for peace in her own heart, and willing to love where love was difficult, and so she grew in love, and increased the sum total of love in the world, not to speak of peace.

Newman wrote: "Let us but raise the level of religion in our hearts, and it will rise in the world. He who attempts to set up God's kingdom in his heart, furthers it in the world." And this goes for the priest, too, wherever he is, whether he deals with the problem of war or with poverty. He may write and speak, but he needs to study the little way, which is all that is available to the poor, and the only alternative to the mass approach of the State. Missionaries throughout the world recognize this little way of cooperatives and credit unions, small industry, village commune and cottage economy. And not only missionaries. Down in our own South, in the Delta regions among the striking farmers of Mississippi, this "little way" is being practiced and should be studied.

From California comes news this month, not only of the strike in the Delano region of the grape pickers, well covered by the **National Catholic Reporter**, but a letter too of co-op development in the California Valley. "We have visions of a complex of co-ops in the California Valley, owned and controlled by the farm workers. It will be interesting to see how long it takes vision to be translated into reality."

Com Chautard, in his **Soul of the Apostolate**, in answer to the question as to how to find workers in all these vineyards, called attention to our Lord's words: "Pray ye therefore, for workers." So right where we are, at this moment, we can pause and send up such a prayer.

The Lord knows we need to around the Catholic Worker. Sometimes it seems that the more volunteers there are around the place, the less gets done. I have letters from six volunteers on my desk now. Not only are all the beds full, so that we cannot put them up for the Chrystie Street work, but also, it seems in regard to these we already have that their interest in peace keeps them from the clothes room, or from the paper work connected with the thirty or more subscriptions which are coming in each day. Paper work is scorned and yet it is an essential when you are dealing with the people who receive the eighty-five thousand copies of the paper which go out each month. Paper work, cleaning the house, cooking the meals, dealing with the innumerable visitors who come all through the day, answering the phone, keeping patience and acting intelligently, which is to find some meaning in all these encounters—these things too are the work of peace, and often seem like a very little way.

But as Pope John told the pilgrimage of women, Mothers for Peace, the seventy-five of us who went over to Rome to thank him for his encyclical **Pacem in Terris**, just the month before his death, "the beginnings of peace are in your own hearts, in your own families, schoolrooms, offices, parishes, and neighborhoods."

It is working from the ground up, from the poverty of the stable, in work as at Nazareth, and also in going from town to town, as in the public life of Jesus two thousand years ago. And since a thousand years are as one day, and Christianity is but two days old, let us take heart and start now.

## Chapter 6

# On Pilgrimage - Our Spring Appeal

*The Catholic Worker*, May 1970, 1, 2, 11.

*Summary: Appeals for help and answers the question “What is it all about, this Catholic Worker movement?” Describes the Catholic Worker as a school, a family, and a community of need. Says they are anarchist-pacifist, which is distinguished from nihilism. Asserts the primacy of conscience and “The most effective action we can take is to try to conform our lives to the folly of the Cross, as St. Paul called it.” Keywords: Catholic Worker philosophy, non-violence (DDLW #500).*

“Now delights the virgin in dance/and young men and old together./I turn their mourning into joy, I console and gladden their woe/I refresh the souls of the priests with delight/and my people are filled with my good things.”

Who would know that the above is Jeremiah speaking, the prophet who advocated nonviolence, indeed appeasement, and was thrown into a noisome prison for his plans? I am writing this on a brilliant spring day, with the sun shining gloriously and three little children playing on the lawn in front of the old house at Tivoli. As I look out of the window I see Dan wandering up the road to the house. Dan was brought up here as a child when this place was an extension of an orphanage in Yonkers, a camp in summer and an agricultural school. He loves the place so much, his roots are here, so he has taken over an unused corner of the old mansion, where he sleeps. Already in April there are a dozen people living in the mansion, several of whom lived there through the winter without plumbing or heating. It meant a great deal of wood chopping for all. Dan takes his meals out, even in cold weather, and eats under the trees in some spot sheltered from the cutting spring winds. He washes the pots in the kitchen and there is never a word out of him. Three other men of the road are with us, and there are two silent hermits whom we seldom see though they have been with us for years.

One of the new men who came recently had worked with us fifteen years ago at the farm we had near Newburgh. Another had been with Louis Murphy at the Detroit house and the farm at South Lyons, Michigan. Mothers and babies, young and old, students on the road from California to New York and back again, during vacations, two of them staying with us because they can't afford the expensive housing hereabouts.

When I consider our Catholic Worker houses and farms, I think of George Orwell's **Road to**

**Wigan Pier** and **Down and out in Paris and London** where he speaks of the need for decent hospitals in the city and places on the land where men could plant a garden and raise some of their own food. Communes, yes, but communes for the poor, for the down and out.

Priests talk of loneliness. Of course everyone needs a family. The family is the basic unit of society. Cardinal Terence Cooke recommends that the rich parishes help the poor ones, and wouldn't it be a good idea if our cities were dotted with houses of hospitality, strategically placed between the rich and the poor, with priest living in them with such a ready-made family, made up of young and old, mothers with babies, students with problems—and who doesn't have problems? It's the way we learn. And of course in connection with such city houses there could be communes in the country.

## May Day Issue

With this May Day issue of the **Catholic Worker**, which is an anniversary issue since we sold the first issue of the paper on May Day, 1933, I'd like to reaffirm my belief in the non-violence of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a means of achieving our ends as far as we can achieve them in this world. Of course I believe in working for the here and now, and not a pie in the sky. St. Catherine of Siena said, "All the way to heaven is heaven, since Jesus said, 'I am the Way.'" When the disciples came down from the mountain after the Transfigurations, "they saw only Jesus." You love God only as much as the one you love the least. That takes some pondering. Maxwell Bodenheim once said in one of his poems, which he used to declaim to all who would listen in the old village days.—

"I know not ugliness,/it is a mood which has forsaken me."

Of course we know suffering. To love is to suffer, but to love is joy. One should read that mysterious book by Georges Bernanos called **Joy**.

## Appeal, Appeal

Ed Forand and Walter Kerell, who are our steady "responsibles," have been at the Spring Street, Chrystie Street, and now the First Street homes for the last ten years, in charge of office and funds and ordering of paper and supplies. They initiate most of the things, including begging food at the Hunts Point market, which the students and volunteers take up and carry on. And they are the ones who beg for me to write the appeal this month "for the front page, so that everyone will read it—not the second page as we usually do. We don't want to mail out an appeal—it costs too much: three thousand dollars."

We used to use newsprint for paper, and our printer did the job, not mechanically, but putting his heart into it. In the early days, when he sent the bill the bookkeeper wrote, "Pray—and pay." I was glad they got the point; that prayer should precede action. I pray before I write an appeal, before an "On Pilgrimage" too.

One of my grandchildren once talked of “honeybums,” and when I mentioned it, Marge Hughes said that one of her children used to talk of the “bread-lions.” Lou Murphy’s daughter, Sheila, as a child, said solemnly, “Bum is a bad word. We don’t say it in our house.”

Some of the students going home for Easter vacation were wondering how the work at First Street would get along with so many of the young ones away. I reassured them most joyfully. The Catholic Worker has carried on for years and in many a crisis and through the Second World War by the work of men among the “bread-lions.” Those men who have come to us and made our family in many of houses in different cities over the years have kept things going. “Personal responsibility” is not a cliché.

“What is it all about, this Catholic Worker movement?”—so many ask us this question by mail or in person; there are so many people beating a path to our door, I usually try to explain it in simple terms. “We are a school not only for the students, the young, who come to us, but for all of us. We are also a house of hospitality, for worker, for scholar, for young and for old. There are racists, patriots in both the good and the bad sense, nihilists, anarchists and socialists. There are alcoholics. An agency nearby tried to send one over to us for care and when we explained that personal responsibility also meant that each one of us should take on the burdens encountered, the worker replied, “I thought you specialized in that sort of thing.” The *New York Times* usually identified us as people who run some kind of a mission on the Bowery. The *Daily News*, more discerning for once, looked us squarely in the eye and identified us as a group of pacifist-anarchists.

## Love One Another

But what we really are, and try to be in all the Catholic Worker houses around the country, is a family—and gentleness and loving kindness is the prevailing mood. The other day Chris was on hand in the basement room where the “bread-lions” were waiting for soup and one pulled a knife on another. “Put it away!” Chris’s voice was strong enough so that we could hear it upstairs. “All the men have knives,” Mary Galligan, who sits behind the desk from eight to four every day, said calmly. There is liquor and there are drugs. The young ones are generally under the influence, in a leaping, laughing state as they come in to eat. But they are all hungry, black and white together, young and old, and the soup is good. I often wonder if they read the beatitudes which Rob lettered on the white stone wall or if they look at the cross, a bit on the slant, which Jimmy, who has a beautiful African hair-do, painted on the wall, black with a black Christ, an unself-conscious primitive.

I wonder how many of our readers have read Knut Hamsun’s book **Hunger**. Or remember the incident in James Baldwin’s **Another Country** where a young lad almost sells himself for a hot meal, and a place to sleep.

## Judge Not

There is a statue on top of my bookcase which a young boy whom we took care of some years back, gave me. He had lived this life on the streets. To prevent such things, even for a time, is something. I. F. Stone in his recent **Weekly** commenting on the bomb tragedy on Eleventh Street, said, "Man himself is obsolete unless he can change. That change requires more altruism, more kindness, more--no one need to be ashamed to say it--more love."

Love shows itself in gentleness, in tenderness, and manifests itself physically in serving and accepting service from another. Hans Tunnesen, our Norwegian seaman cook, uses the word **gentle** as his highest form of praise. When he says a man is gentle, he makes us all realize how good a word that is.

We are, too, a community of need, rather than what sociologists call an "intentional community." When people ask us how long people stay with us, meaning "the poor" (thought we are all poor), we say, "for life"; one of the works of mercy is burying the dead, and we remember them all as we say compline in the country, and vespers in the city, each night.

And certainly too, praying for the living as well as the dead, we are remembering all those who answer our appeals, and send us what we need to keep our two households going. "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you." We have had these prayers answered too often for us to doubt now.

I never know, when I am quoting scripture, what translation I am using, whether King James, or Douey, the revised editions or the new translations. It would take more time than I have to check on this. So please excuse.

To answer simply the question, "What do you mean by anarchist-pacifist?" First, I would say that the two words should go together, especially at this time when more and more people, even priests, are turning to violence, and are finding their heroes in Camillo Torres among the priests, and Che Guevara among laymen. The attraction is strong, because both men literally laid down their lives for their brothers. "Greater love hath no man than this."

"Let me say, at the risk of seeming ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love." Che Guevara wrote this, and he is quoted by Chicano youth in **El Grito Del Norte**.

One must write about these things now when in these last weeks three young people were blown to bits in a house on Eleventh Street, just off of Fifth Avenue, reportedly in an attempt to make bombs to blow up banks, department stores, the offices of giant corporations, all those impregnable homes of high finance in this affluent society. One can only use cliches to express these things it seems. That is one reason perhaps for the use of those four-letter words which shock by their contempt and hatred almost for life itself, for the ecstatic act which is part of the beginning of new life on earth.

Anarchism and nihilism are two words familiar to the young and now attractive to them. They do not believe in building a new society within the shell of the old. They believe that the old must be destroyed first. That is nihilism. In a way it is the denial of the "here and now." Perhaps St. Paul defined The Catholic Worker's idea of anarchism, the positive word,



by saying of the followers of Jesus, “For such there is no law.” For those who have given up all ideas of domination and power and the manipulation of others are “not under the law.” (Galatians 5). For those who live in Christ Jesus, for “those who have put on Christ,” for those who have washed the feet of others, there is no law. They have the liberty of the children of God.

But, my God, what a long and painful process this is, and yet how powerful! How long enduring!

“If there is no law,” I have been asked many times, “then why are you a member of the Roman Catholic church, the authoritarian church?”

I can only quote Newman in answer to this, and strangely enough, in a most peculiar context? I believe it was during a time of war for England and he was asked a banquet whether he would go against his country if the Pope called a war unjust. He answered that if he were asked to drink a toast it would be to **conscience** first, and then to the Pope. During the second Vatican Council it was again affirmed:

“In the depths of his conscience man detects a law which he does not impose on himself but which holds him to obedience . . . For man has in his heart a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of man. According to it he will be judged . . . Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of man. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths. In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor.”

One must follow one’s own Conscience first before all authority, and of course one must inform one’s conscience. But one must follow one’s conscience still, even if it is an ill-informed one. All those young ones and older ones, who are committing themselves to violent revolution as the only way to overcome evil government, imperialism, industrial capitalism, exploitation—in other words evil—are not only following their conscience but also following tradition.

**All Men Are Brothers**, that Chinese classic which inspired Mao, and the Buddhist and Hindu classics tell of the gigantic struggle between good and evil with profound faith in the eventual triumph of the good. Even that fool for Christ, Don Quixote, setting out on his donkey with lance in hand, was trying to overcome evil, to right wrongs. It is all another concept of the Incarnation, an acting out in flesh and blood, and in the shedding of blood, man’s hope against despair, the believe that physical activity, violence, the pitting of all one’s life forces in the only path that is open to us today. This is the way young people are reasoning. To do otherwise is to betray one’s brothers, they believe, to leave them to slow and agonizing death in wary or by cold, hunger and disease.

So we cannot **judge** the young. But we are challenged to answer.

Jesus said, after he had washed the feet of his disciples, “What I have done, you shall do also.”

No one coming into contact with this Man fails to be affected by Him. In a recent **Commonweal**, John Deedy quoted from the Communist Roger Garaudy’s article about Christianity in the Franciscan review *Evangile Aujourd’hui*:

“About the time of the reign of Tiberius, no one knew exactly where or when, a person whose name was unknown made a break-through in man’s horizon. He was neither philosopher nor tribune, but one who lived in such a way that his life signified that every one of us can, at every moment, begin a new future.

“In order to proclaim the good news to the very end, it was necessary that he announce that every limitation, even the supreme limitation, death itself, had been conquered. Thus his resurrection.

“Various scholars are able to challenge every fact of this existence, but that changes nothing in regard to the certainty which changes life. A fire has been lighted.

The fire was first of all a rising of the poor, without which, from Nero to Diocletian, the ‘Establishment’ would not have persecuted to the extent it did. With this man, love was to be militant, subversive; if it weren’t he would not have been crucified . . . His death was like the birth of a new man.

“I look on that cross, and I think of all those who have expanded man’s horizon—John of the Cross, who teaches us by dint of having nothing; Karl Marx, who has shown us how we can change the world; Van Gogh—these and others who have made us realize that man is too great to be sufficient unto himself.

“You the receivers of that Constantine stole from us, you men of the church, restore him [Christ] to us. His life and his death are for us also, who have learned from him that man has been created a creator.

“The power to create, the divine attribute of man, is there—it is, my friends. It is present every time something new is born to augment the human form: in the most passionate love, in scientific discovery, in poetry, even in revolution.”

During the civil war in Spain the story is that the workers draped a statue of the Sacred Heart in a public square with the printed inscription on the Red Flag: He is ours. You cannot take him from us.

The justification for a Christ who urges militant action is the story in the New Testament of how he drove the money changers out of the temple. Over and over again, when I am speaking in colleges and universities, this incident is brought up. There are many strong denunciations of the oppressor, the hypocrites, the whited sepulchres the lawyers, of all those who put heavy burdens on men’s shoulders and do nothing to share them or lighten them.

I can only answer in these other words of His: “Let him who is without sin among you, cast the first stone.”

The most effective action we can take is to try to conform our lives to the folly of the Cross, as St. Paul called it.

## Take and Read

Mike Cullen and his wife Nettie came by this week and wanted to know what he should read while he is spending the next few years in jail. There is first of all the New Testament, but

one has to do a good deal of praying for light while reading it. In a way we have heard it too often. One has to dig for the treasure. One has to give up many things to buy the field in which the treasure is buried. There is Father P. R. Regamey's **Nonviolence and Christian Conscience** (Herder and Herder) and **Christianity Versus Violence** by Stanley Windass (Sheed and Ward, London). And nothing has explained the Old Testament to me like Father John MacKenzie's **Two-Edged Sword** (Bruce). Unfortunately prisons demand that books be sent new from the publishers and these books may be out of print, so we cannot send them from our library. But as far as I am concerned, the Holy Spirit is always putting into my hands the things I particularly need at the moment, food for the mind and food for the soul.

"Come Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of thy faithful and kindle in them the fires of thy love. Send forth thy spirit and they shall be created (new men) and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth."

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