From Union Square to Rome

Dorothy Day

Forward to *House of Hospitality*

Summary: An overview of the beginnings of the Catholic Worker. As a journalist covering the Communist led march on Washington in December 1932, Dorothy yearns and prays to find a way to work for the poor and oppressed. She meets Peter Maurin who "indoctrinates" her in Catholic social teaching and his program to change the social order: starting a newspaper, houses of hospitality, roundtable discussions and farming communes. Includes several of Peter's essays and details about starting the newspaper and their first houses of hospitality. (DDLW #435).

1

THE story of the *Catholic Worker* begins with Peter. If it were not for Peter there would be no *Catholic Worker.* If it were not for Peter there would be no Houses of Hospitality and Farming Communes. Peter has changed the life of thousands of people. I met Peter Maurin in December, 1932, right after the Hunger March staged by the Communists.

This is the way the movement Peter now heads began. For five years after my conversion to the Catholic Church I had been living a quiet and studious life. I had earned my living by working as bookseller, cook, research worker, synopsist, dialogue writer and newspaper correspondent. I had been to Hollywood, to Mexico, to Florida, and a good part of the time I had lived in New York.

In the fall of 1932 1 had been writing articles for *America* and the *Commonweal,* and the first week in December I went to Washington, D. C., to cover the Hunger March of the Unemployed Councils, and the Farmer's Convention. Both were Communist-led.

If the journalists and the police of Washington had been coached in their parts, they could not have staged a better drama, from the Communist standpoint, than they did in the events of that week.

Drama was what the Communist leaders of the march wanted, and drama, even melodrama, was what they got. They weren't presenting their petitions to Congress with any hope of immediately obtaining the cash bonuses and unemployment relief they demanded. (Nevertheless five years later unemployment insurance became part of Social Security legislation). They were presenting pictorially the plight of the workers of America, not only to the countless small

towns and large cities through which they passed, not only to the Senate and the House of Representatives, but through the press to the entire world. And in addition they were demonstrating to the proletariat.

They were saying, "Come, submit yourselves to our discipline,–place yourselves in our hands, you unionworkers, you unemployed, and we will show you how a scant 3,000 of you, unarmed, can terrorize authorities and make them submit to at least some of your demands."

It does not matter that the victory won was only that of marching to the Capitol. To those unarmed marchers who for two days and two cold nights in December lived and slept on an asphalt highway with no water, no fires, no sanitary facilities, with the scantiest of food, surrounded by hysteria in the shape of machine guns, tear and nauseous gas bombs, in the hands of a worn and fretted police force, egged on by a bunch of ghouls in the shape of newspaper men and photographers,–to these marchers, the victory was a real one. They had achieved their purpose.

They had dramatized their plight for the workers themselves and given them a taste of power. They might be booed by police, sneered at by the Vice-President, they might be hungry, unshaven, shivering and exhausted, but they felt a sense of power when they saw a whole capital, the center of their country, mobilized against them.

When they had finally gained permission to march, they set out jauntily, defiantly, conscious of victory, though they were escorted through the streets as prisoners, even as they had been prisoners since Sunday, on blockaded New York Avenue, between the government owned hillside and the miles of railway tracks on the other side.

They were victors in that they had forced an unfriendly press to play into their hands and give them headlines and pages of dramatic publicity. They were victors in that they had induced the press to excite the police to a brutal and stupid show of force.

I do not blame the harried police, the firemen, the reserves, even though they cursed and bullied and taunted the marchers as though they were trying to provoke a bloody conflict. I blame the press which for a few ghastly headlines, a few gruesome pictures, was ready to precipitate useless violence towards a group of unemployed human beings who were being used as "Communist tactics," as "shock troops" in the "class struggle."

It is true that the Hunger March was led by Communists. But it is also true that ninety per cent of the marchers were union men and women or unskilled, unorganized workers who were not Communists, but were accepting for the time being, the leadership of the militant Unemployed Councils, affiliated with the Communist party. "No other leaders presented themselves," they argued, "nothing was being done for us. We accepted this leadership and accepted the means offered by them to dramatize our plight."

1 went through Union Square in New York the week before, just as the Hunger Marchers were getting ready to pull out for Washington. It was sunny but very sharp and cold and the fresh-ploughed sod of the park had a frozen, barren look. About twenty-five trucks were lined up at the north end of the square and a few thousand "comrades" were gathered around to "make a demonstration" and see off their friends, the delegates chosen from the various Unemployed Councils of New York. The march on Washington was organized by the National Committee of these Unemployed Councils, and for the past weeks delegates had been setting out from all over the United States, from California, from Washington, Oregon, and all the Middle Western states.

Details of the plan of march were given months before in the *Daily Worker,* the Communist newspaper. For the past months collections had been taken up at all Communist meetings to finance the march, and the trucks were hired for $100 apiece for nine days to take the delegates to Washington and back again. According to the published plan, the delegates were to get to Washington, demonstrating on the way in town and village, parade in Washington, present their petition, and turn about and return to their homes, in the same organized fashion. Discipline was to be maintained, violence was to be avoided, food and lodging were to be requested from the cities en route and from Washington, but all preparations such as the hiring of halls, rooms and food for the delegates were to be made beforehand.

Carl Winter, the secretary of the Unemployed Council of New York, was a mild, serious man of thirty-five or so, said by his companions to be a good organizer and a respected leader. He was a modest man, and refused to be photographed by the newsreel men, urging Anna Burlak, Karl Reeve, and Ben Gold to go before the cameras. Anna Burlak was a tall, blond, handsome girl of twenty-two, one of the leaders of textile workers of New England.

I talked with George Granich, one of the delegates on the march and the pay-off man for the truckmen. George was an old friend of mine. "The New England bunch got in last night," he said, "and they were offered accommodations at the Municipal Lodging House by the city. But to get these accommodations it was necessary to go through all sorts of red tape, and the giving up of one's clothes to be fumigated, so everyone went down to the Manhattan Lyceum and slept wrapped in their blankets on the floor. These delegates are all picked anyway, to withstand hardship on the march. They're a strong bunch and ready to sleep in the trucks if they have to."

An attempt had been made to bar members of the "oppressed races" from the march ("the hundred-percent American police would have had it in for them," Granich said), but the seamen's groups insisted on bringing along Filipino delegates. The marine workers who occupied the first trucks were a colorful group, made up as they were of all races. The sailors wore their tight

fitting dungarees, woven belts, wind-breakers and pulled down woolen caps.

The line of march as planned, lay through Jersey City, Elizabeth, Newark, New Brunswick, Trenton, Philadelphia, Chester, Wilmington, Baltimore and on to Washington.

I did not follow the progress of the Western group going into Washington, but the progress of the Northern group was typical. There was no trouble for the marchers in any of the cities on the way until they reached Wilmington. There they were holding a meeting in a church and Ben Gold, one of the leaders, was making a speech, when suddenly windows were broken simultaneously on either side of the hall and tear gas bombs were thrown in. The meeting was in an uproar and milled out into the street in anything but orderly fashion, as was natural. There the police took the opportunity to club and beat the marchers. Ben Gold, after being badly beaten, was jailed, and the march went on without him.

On Sunday, with the Hunger Marchers approaching Washington, the city, according to the papers, was in a state bordering on hysteria. There were riot drills of the marines at Quantico; guards at the White House, Capitol, Treasury, power plants, arsenals of the National Guard, the American Legion, countless volunteers, supplemented by 370 firemen, all were armed with machine guns, tear gas, nauseating gas, revolvers, sawedoff shot guns, night sticks, lengths of rubber hose. The newspapers with scareheads and photographs of the radical "army" fanned flames of hostility, and of actual fear in the public.

When I went out with some newspaper men to meet the marchers and to visit their final encampment, I was struck by the fact that perhaps the most frightened of all were the newspaper men. They implored their editors to authorize the purchase of gas masks (thirty dollars apiece) and they kept a good distance away from the marchers, and with their eyes open for the best means of escape should anything happen.

In addition to the marchers, groups of liberals came to the city to give their moral support and to add their petitions to those of the 3,000 marchers. There were delegates from the League of Professional Groups which was formed before the national election to support the Communist candidates and which is now continuing its propaganda to support the Communist movement. Members of this delegation included Malcolm Cowley, one of the editors of the *New Republic*, Matthew Josephson, magazine writer and author of several biographies, James Rorty, poet, John Hermann, novelist and winner of a Scribner prize, Michael Gold, writer for the *Daily Worker*, Charles Rumford Walker, former associate editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and others.

When the news came that the marchers were being held prisoners in the half-mile stretch of roadway, fifty feet wide, this group of liberals joined forces with the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners to take legal action to free them. A writ of habeas corpus was taken out and an injunction asked against the city commissioners.

Various women's organizations, pacifist groups, the Fellowship of Reconciliation,

Quakers, and others protested against the ludicrous and uncalled-for show of force. There were no Catholic groups protesting.

Only one paper in Washington, the Scripps-Howard *Daily News,* gave a calm, unhysterical account of the situation. It suggested editorially that the marchers were within their rights in wishing to present their petition and that such imprisonment of the marchers and show of force were both unnecessary and unconstitutional.

The other papers screamed of the "mad fanaticism" of the marchers, "fanned to wild fury by the inflammatory speeches of the leaders." *The Star* spoke of razor blades secreted in the shoes of the marchers which could, if kicked with properly, sever arteries of the police. They hinted "they may be armed." And they went on in this way through edition after edition, Sunday and all day Monday.

Then on Tuesday morning it was announced that the marchers were to parade and to leave that night. And so, after this permission to parade had been refused steadily before and since their entry into Washington, they did parade, just as they had set out to do, just as the campaign had been mapped out for them in the *Daily Worker* a month before. The plan was delayed, but not defeated.

The papers did their best to make a riot out of it and failed. They merely presented to public view the Communist leaders who could carry through successfully a planned and disciplined demonstration. And the Washingtonians who lined the streets by the thousands to watch the procession, laughed tolerantly at the songs and slogans, and said admiringly, "They sure have got gumption, standing up against the police that way."

3

I watched that ragged horde and thought to myself, "These are Christ's poor. He was one of them. He was a man like other men, and He chose His friends amongst the ordinary workers. These men feel they have been betrayed by Christianity. Men are not Christian today. If they were, this sight would not be possible. Far dearer in the sight of God perhaps are these hungry ragged ones, than all those smug, well-fed Christians who sit in their homes, cowering in fear of the Communist menace."

I felt that they were my people, that I was part of them. I had worked for them and with them in the past, and now I was a Catholic and so could not be a Communist. I could not join this united front of protest and I wanted to.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception was the next day and I went out to the National Shrine and assisted at solemn high Mass there. And the prayer that I offered up was that some way would be shown me, some way would be opened up for me to work for the poor and the oppressed.

When I got back to New York, Peter Maurin was at the house waiting for me.

He had come in a few days before and had met my brother and sister-in-law with whom I was living. John was working nights on one of the Hearst papers

and Tessa was going to have a baby. John did not earn very much so they had moved in with me.

It was a tenement apartment, four rooms deep and there was a yard in back. There were peach trees and fig trees in the yard, planted by Italian tenants. Privet hedges lined the fences and hid their bleak ugliness. In the summer half the yard was fenced in to protect the beds of petunias that scattered their fragrance even there between the canyons of buildings. Both on the Fourteenth Street and Fifteenth Street side, the buildings were five and six stories high. Next door and down the block the gardens were the same, and the Italians used to sit and smoke their pipes under the stunted trees at night.

We were on the first floor and in the basement below was a barber shop with an organ in the rear where the Italian barber used to play sad tunes at night when his work was finished. Germans and Italians lived next door and upstairs.

I slept in the noisy front room, noisy because people came in all night and slammed the outside door and stamped up and down the bare steps. The milkman started the noise again at four in the morning. But one gets used to these things.

In the second room my daughter Teresa slept. Teresa was six. There was just room there for a bed and dresser. It was also a passage to the next room, which was in turn a passage to the kitchen. John and Tessa slept in the room next to the kitchen. The kitchen was also our sitting room, library and dining room, but we were not as crowded as most of our neighbors. We had to heat the place with gas. The front room was a north room, and cold. The kitchen was heated by the cooking and by the gas oven, an expensive form of heat (the poor are always extravagant) and it was a south, sunny room, so we lived in it all winter, only using the bedrooms for sleeping purposes.

Tessa and John were twenty-one and twenty-two years old then. They were happy and carefree and didn't mind being crowded and having lots of company. And Tessa was Spanish.

It was because she was Spanish and hospitable that she welcomed Peter when he came. John is more reserved.

They often talk of that first night Peter Maurin walked in. He was wearing a khaki shirt and shabby stained pants and an overcoat, the pockets of which were crammed with books and papers. When he started looking for something, he pulled glasses out of his pocket (glasses which he bought along the Bowery for thirty cents and which magnified) and perched them half-way down his nose. For a year or so he wore a pair which had one ear-piece missing so they sagged on one side of his face.

On this night however, he did not stop to look for papers. He came in brusquely and wanted to know where I was. Hearing that I would be back in a day or so, he started indoctrinating Tessa.

Holding out one finger, from a position of vantage in the middle of the floor he began reciting his phrased essays, enunciating them so that one could almost see them clear and black against a page.

"People go to Washington,
asking the Federal Government
to solve their economic problems.
But the Federal Government
was never meant
to solve men's economic problems.
Thomas Jefferson says,
'The less government there is
the better it is.'
If the less government there is,
the better it is,
the best kind of government
is self-government.
If the best kind of government
is self-government,
then the best kind of organization
is self-organization.
When the organizers try
to organize the unorganized,
they often do it for the benefit
of the organizers.
The organizers don't organize themselves.
And when the organizers don't organize themselves,
nobody organizes himself.
And when nobody organizes himself,
nothing is organized."

Tessa was making supper, trying to find John's tie, and being hospitable and listening with one ear. This probably sounded anarchistic to her, caught in passing as it were, but her father is an anarchist so she felt quite at home with Peter. Tessa herself was a Communist.

Peter spoke and still speaks with a strong accent, but Tessa also was used to accents. Peter came from Languedoc near the border of Spain twenty-five years ago. Even his type was familiar to her, short and sturdy, shoulders broad and powerful, features hewed as though out of rock.

John confessed afterward that he thought of an anarchist friend, truly unbalanced, whom I tried to avoid and said that if he had been home alone he would not have told Peter that I would be back in a few days.

But nothing could have kept Peter from finding me, once he had made up his mind. He had read some articles I had written in the *Sign* and the *Commonweal* and had determined that I should start on his program of social reconstruction.

If I had not said those prayers down in Washington if I had not been reading the lives of the saints, canonized and as yet uncanonized, St. John Bosco and Rose Hawthorne for instance–I probably would have listened, but continued to write rather than act.

4

It has taken us years to pry Peter's story from him. He deals with ideas and considers personalities unimportant, and it has only been little by little and day by day that we have gained a knowledge of his background. He was born in a small village in the southern part of France, and his own mother died when he was nine years old. His father married again and there were twenty-three children in the family. Every now and then Peter tells us about the communal aspects of life in a little village; the bake-oven which all the villagers used; the flour mill. They had a big stone house and the sheep were housed on the first floor and the family on the second. When Peter was a young man he became a cocoa salesman travelling all over France. Finally, he reached Paris where he associated with the radicals of the day and continued his studies. He first came to Canada as a homesteader, but when his partner was killed in a hunting accident he gave it up and began wandering around the country doing whatever work came to hand. He has worked in steel mills, coal mines, lumber camps, on railroads. He has dug ditches and sewers, and worked as janitor in city tenements. He has taught French, and has always continued studying. Always he was an agitator, speaking on street corners and in public squares, indoctrinating the men with whom he came in contact in lodging houses, coffee shops and along the wayside.

"We must study history," he says, "in order to find out why things are as they are. In the light of history we should so work today that things will be different in the future." journalists, he believes, should not merely report history, but make history by influencing the time in which they write. In other words they should be propagandists and agitators as he himself has always been. He started to write, he says, because he could not get enough people to listen to him, and his writing was influenced, technically at least, by the Works of Charles Peguy who also wrote in short phrased lines. St. Augustine had used this technique in writing his meditations, finding it a help to break up the sentences into phrases that catch the eye.

Peter always had sheaves of these writings in his pockets, and he began visiting the offices of Catholic papers and magazines trying to get them printed. At times he mimeographed copies of his work and distributed them himself. Always he emphasized voluntary poverty and the works of mercy as the techniques by which the masses could be reached, and he lived as he taught. He has the simplicity of a saint or a genius, believing that everyone is interested in what he has to teach, believing that everyone will play his part in the lay apostolate.

He was living at that time in Uncle Sam's hotel down on the Bowery where he paid fifty cents a night for his room. Today, as he travels all over the country, speaking at colleges and seminaries, he still lives in flop houses, sleeps in bus

stations, and eats in dingy lunchrooms on the "Skid Rows" of the country. He possesses only the clothes that he wears and the books that he has in his pocket. He has no desk at which to write, no office–in fact, no home except the Catholic Worker Houses of Hospitality throughout the country. He is the most completely detached person that it has ever been my privilege to meet.

When we met he had been working in a boys' camp up near Mount Tremper, New York, for four years, cutting ice in winter, quarrying rock, and doing odd jobs about the camp. He was working without pay but when he came to New York, Father Scully, who had charge of the camp, gave him a dollar a day to live on. After weeks of stimulating discussion around Union Square he would go back to the camp to continue his studying and his writing. These years seem to me to have been years of preparation for the work that he is doing today. He had drawn up a program of action which was simple and comprehensive. He feels it is not enough merely to bring the workers propaganda by way of a newspaper, pamphlets, and leaflets. One must combine this with the direct action of the works of mercy: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, in order that one may instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, and comfort the afflicted. The corporal and the spiritual works, according to Peter, must go hand in hand, and getting out the *Catholic Worker* and distributing literature were to Peter performing spiritual works of mercy.

In order to carry on this work, he said, we needed hospices such as they had in the Middle Ages, and he always referred to these hospices as "Houses of Hospitality." In regard to this he wrote the following in an early issue of the paper:

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THE DUTY OF HOSPITALITY

People who are in need
  and are not afraid to beg
  give to people not in need
  the occasion to do good
  for goodness' sake.
Modern society calls the beggar
  bum and panhandler
  and gives him the bum's rush.
But the Greeks used to say
  that people in need are
  the ambassadors of the gods.
Although you may be called bums
  and panhandlers
  You are in fact the Ambassadors of God.
As God's Ambassadors
  you should be given food, clothing and shelter
  by those who are able to give it.
Mahometan teachers tell us
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that God commands hospitality.
And hospitality is still practiced
in Mahometan countries.
But the duty of hospitality
is neither taught nor practiced
in Christian countries.

THE MUNICIPAL LODGINGS
That is why you who are in need
are not invited to spend the night
in the homes of the rich.
There are guest rooms today
in the homes of the rich
but they are not for those
who need them.
And they are not for those
who need them
because those who need them
are no longer considered the Ambassadors
of God.
So people no longer
consider hospitality to the poor
as a personal duty.
And it does not disturb them a bit
to send them to the city where they are given the hospitality
of the "Muni"
at the expense of the taxpayer.
But the hospitality that the "Muni"
gives to the down and out
is no hospitality
because what comes from the taxpayer's pocketbook
does not come from his heart.

BACK TO HOSPITALITY
The Catholic unemployed
should not be sent to the "Muni."
The Catholic unemployed
should be given hospitality
in Catholic Houses of Hospitality.
Catholic Houses of Hospitality
are known in Europe
under the name of Hospices.
There have been Hospices in Europe
since the time of Constantine.
Hospices are free guest houses;
hotels are paying guest houses.

And paying guest houses or hotels
 are as plentiful
 as free guest houses or Hospices
 are scarce.
So hospitality like everything else
 has been commercialized.
So hospitality
 like everything else
 must now be idealized.

HOUSES OF HOSPITALITY
We need Houses of Hospitality
 to give to the rich
 the opportunity to serve the poor.
We need Houses of Hospitality
 to bring the Bishops to the people
 and the people to the Bishops.
We need Houses of Hospitality
 to bring back to institutions
 the technique of institutions.
We need Houses of Hospitality
 to show what idealism looks like
 when it is practiced.
We need Houses of Hospitality
 to bring Social justice
 through Catholic Action
 exercised in Catholic Institutions.

HOSPICES
We read in the Catholic Encyclopedia
 that during the early ages of Christianity
 the hospice (or the House of Hospitality)
 was a shelter for the sick, the poor,
 the orphans, the old, the traveler
 and the needy of every kind.
Originally the hospices (or Houses of Hospitality)
 were under the supervision of the bishops who designated priests
 to administer the spiritual and temporal affairs of these charitable institutions.
The fourteenth statute of the so-called
 Council of Carthage held about 436
 enjoins upon the bishops
 to have hospices (or Houses of Hospitality)
 in connection with their churches.

PARISH HOUSES OF HOSPITALITY
Today we need Houses of Hospitality

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 as much as they needed them then
 if not more so.
We have Parish Houses for the priests
 Parish Houses for educational purposes
 Parish Houses for recreational purposes
 But no Parish Houses of Hospitality.
Bossuet says that the poor
 are the first children of the Church
 so the poor should come first.
People with homes should have
 a room of hospitality
 so as to give shelter to the needy
 members of the parish.
The remaining needy members of the parish
 should be given shelter in a Parish Home.
Furniture, clothing and food
 should be sent to the needy
 members of the Parish
 from the Parish House of Hospitality.
We need Parish Homes
 as well as Parish Domes.
In the new Cathedral of Liverpool
 there will be a Home as well as
 a Dome.

HOUSES OF "CATHOLIC ACTION"
Catholic Houses of Hospitality
 should be more than free guest houses
 for the Catholic unemployed.
They could be vocational training schools
 including the training for the priesthood
 as Father Corbett proposes.
They could be Catholic reading rooms
 as Father McSorley proposes.
They could be Catholic Instruction Schools
 as Father Cornelius Hayes proposes.
They could be Round-Table Discussion Groups
 as Peter Maurin proposes.
In a word, they could be
 Catholic Action Houses
 where Catholic Thought
 is combined with Catholic Action.
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5

But while Peter read aloud his inspired lines on hospitality we had as yet no

office. I had worked on the first issue of the paper at the kitchen table after supper, at the library, sitting in the park in the afternoon with Teresa.

Peter's idea of hospices seemed a simple and logical one to me, hospices such as they had in the Middle Ages for the poor and the wayfarer and which we certainly very much needed today. But I liked even better his talks about personal responsibility. He quoted St. Jerome, that every house should have a "Christ's room" for our brother who was in need. That "the coat which hangs in one's closet belongs to the poor." Living in tenements as I had for years I had found many of the poorest practicing these teachings.

I was familiar enough with the hospitality of the Communist, with the voluntary poverty of the Communist. At a meeting that very week of the farmers' delegation, coming back from Washington and going back to their homes in the Middle West and New England, the chairman had called upon the audience to provide hospitality for the delegates.

"Who has an empty bed in their homes?" he wanted to know. "Who will put up one of the comrades for the next few days?" And hundreds of hands were raised.

It was like the Christian gesture put forth by the *Daily Worker* during the seamen's strike two years ago when the editors called upon the readers to provide Christmas dinners to the strikers, and so many responded that two thousand were fed. In the old days many of my friends had hitch-hiked around the country organizing for unions and for Communist affiliates, and they were always put up in homes of the workers and shared their poverty with them.

If one worked for one's fellows it was obvious that one had to embrace voluntary poverty, though the Communist would not call it by that name. Even now when we talk of it in the *Catholic Worker* as an indispensable means to an end, they claim that we are trying to lower the standard of living of the masses.

But of course it was getting out a labor paper which caught my imagination, popularizing the teachings of the Church in regard to social matters, bringing to the man in the street a Christian solution of unemployment, a way of rebuilding the social order.

Peter brought up the idea of the paper the first time I met him and he kept harping on it, day after day. He told me I needed a Catholic background, and he came day after day with books and papers and digests of articles which he either read aloud or left with me to read.

I was doing some research then on peace, for a women's club, and was in the library until three every afternoon. And every day when I got home I found Peter waiting to "indoctrinate" me. He stayed until ten when I insisted he had to go home. He followed Tessa and me around the house, indoctrinating. If we were getting supper, washing dishes, ironing clothes, or washing them, he continued his conversations. If company came in he started over again from the beginning.

Teresa had measles that winter, and Peter followed the doctor around, commenting on the news of the day, hopefully looking for a stray apostle. He approached the plumber, the landlord when he came to collect the rent, the grocery clerk. When he had to stay away because so small a house had to be kept in peace and quiet during sickness, he spent his time at the Rand school, making a digest of Kropotkin's *Fields, Factories and Workshops* for me.

It was impossible to be with a person like Peter without sharing his simple faith that the Lord would provide what was necessary to do His work. Peter had counted on some priest to provide a mimeograph machine to get out the first issues of the paper, but nothing came of it. So I began planning a printed edition. It would cost only fifty-seven dollars to get Out 2,500 copies of an eight-page paper and I had some money coming in from articles. When I spoke of the work to Father Purcell, then editor of the *Sign,* he held up Father Ahearn of Newark for ten dollars and Sister Peter Claver for one dollar and handed me that. They were the first contributors to the work. Father McSorley, of the Paulists also helped by giving me work and advice.

Later that winter, Peter had to go up to the camp where he had been working for the past four years to put in some time cutting ice. He came down for a Catholic Industrial Conference which was held at the Astor in February but returned again for another few months. When the paper came out on May 1, 1933, he was still in the country.

The first issue was sold in Union Square on May Day. Two hundred thousand Communists and trade unionists paraded, gathered in the Square and dispersed all during that long hot day. A friendly priest sent a young convert, Joe Bennet, and two other young Catholics, to help sell copies. The two latter fled in short order. The sarcasm and questionings as to the place of a Catholic paper in Union Square was disconcerting. Joe, tall, gaunt and crippled, stayed throughout the day.

He is dead now, poor Joe, and he did not want to die. He was only twenty-four and he enjoyed every moment of living, enjoyed it seriously, with great earnestness. His faith was a tremendous thing to him and he wanted to do great things for God. But he had rheumatic fever and he suffered much, and his frail body could not stand the strain of his energetic desires. He worked with us for a time, later for Father Purcell in Alabama, and then two years ago, he came back to us to die.

That first issue took up the question of the cooperatives, of the Negro in labor, of the trade unions, of the unemployed. One of Peter's essays which caught all eyes, dealt with the dynamite of the Church.

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Albert J. Nock says,
 "The Catholic Church
 will have to do more
 than to play
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 a waiting game: she will have to make use
 of some of the dynamite
 inherent in her message."
To blow the dynamite
 of a message,
 is the only way to make that message
 dynamic.
Catholic scholars
 have taken the dynamite
 of the church;
 they have wrapped it up
 in nice phraseology,
 have placed it
 in an hermetically
 sealed container,
 placed the lid
 over the container,
 and sat on the lid.
It is about time
 to take the lid off
 and to make
 the Catholic dynamite
 dynamic."
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About this time my brother got a job as city editor of the Dobbs Ferry *Register* and moved there, so in a month or so I rented the store downstairs which the barber had vacated. At first, however, the first floor apartment was the office. The rent was twenty-five a month, too high for a heatless place. But there was always hot water and the house was clean. There were no desks, no files, no typewriters even, because I had sold mine to pay the second printing bill.

An expressman, a Communist, contributed the first furnishings in the way of an old desk and a filing cabinet. Someone else brought in an old typewriter. We let our wants be known in the columns of the paper and soon plenty of furniture began coming in. At times we were better furnished then than we are now. Often too people who had been evicted , who had lost their furniture and now were in a position to start housekeeping again, came to us in need of furniture and we were stripped bare again.

With the second issue of the paper, Dorothy Weston, who was only twenty-one, joined me. She had studied at Manhattanville, Fordham and Columbia, had a brilliant mind and was intensely interested in the work. Soon others came, a young Canadian, a New Englander, an unemployed real estate operator, a convert Jew, a Lithuanian boy of eighteen, a bookkeeper, a former policeman, an Armenian refugee, a German distributist, and we had an editorial force, a

circulation department and a very active group of propagandists.

A pot of stew and a pot of coffee were kept going on the coal range in the kitchen and all who came in were fed. We worked from early morning until midnight.

Teresa and I slept in the middle room between the kitchen and the store. In the summer we could also move a typewriter into the back yard and write or receive callers out there.

Homes had to be found for the men–some had been sleeping in Central Park–so we rented an eight-dollar-a-month apartment near Tompkins Square, a rat-ridden place, heatless and filthy, abandoned even by slum dwellers.

The paper's circulation increased from 2,500 to 20,000 in six months, but since it is a monthly it was not the paper alone which kept us busy. Neighbors came in needing clothes and we had to go to friends and readers begging for them.

People were being evicted on all sides. We had to find other apartments, help get relief checks for them, borrow pushcarts and move them.

We cooked, cleaned, wrote, went out on demonstrations to distribute literature, got out mimeographed .leaflets, answered a tremendous correspondence, entertained callers. Bishop O'Hara, Bishop Busch, Monsignor Ryan, Father Virgil Michel, Father Parsons, Father Benedict Bradley, Carleton Hayes, Parker Moon, Jacques Maritain, and many other visitors,–priests, laymen, seminarians, students, workers and scholars came to visit us day after day, even as they do now. They came to see what we were doing and they taught us much. Subscriptions came in from India, China, Italy, France, England, Germany, Africa, Australia, from countries all over the world. A *Catholic Worker* was published in England and another in Australia. The Canadian *Social Forum, The Christian Front, The Sower* (American), *The Right Spirit,* the Chicago *Catholic Worker,* these are more children.

By the time we had gotten out six issues of the paper the need to start a hospice for women made itself felt. With the seventh issue of the paper we announced its beginning. We called upon Saint Joseph to help us and we went to the curates of our parish, Father Seccor and Father Nicholas. They interested young working women who pledged their help. Among themselves they collected quarters to pay the rent. Girls who lived in unheated, cold-water flats gave their quarters to the extent of fifteen dollars. Ten dollars came from a priest and ten dollars more came from a husband, who, from the bedside of his dying wife, sent this donation as one he knew she would be glad to make for the opening of a home for unemployed women. It was really not a house that we were opening up, but an apartment in the neighborhood, steam-heated, with a good big bath and six large rooms, five of which could be used as bedrooms. One room was even large enough to contain four beds. The rent was fifty dollars a month. The kitchen was large enough to be used as a small sitting room.

In the seventh issue of the paper we announced the opening and wrote:

"So far three beds are all that have been obtained although fifteen are needed. We also have four blankets, two of them donated by a woman the members of whose family are unemployed, save for one son who is working for ten dollars a week. She washed the blankets herself and sent them down to the office with prayers for the success of the new venture. Another woman, unable to afford to buy things herself, canvassed among her friends until she found one who voluntarily bought ten sheets and pillow slips. Another one of our readers sent in two sheets, another sent curtains and a blanket, and she is the mother of a large family and could well use them herself.

"The winter is on us and we can wait no longer. Even without furniture we have opened the doors. We will borrow blankets for the time being and use those of the editors. They can roll themselves in coats and newspapers, which are said to be very warm, though we are sure they are also very noisy. However, we hug to ourselves the assurance that all these things, such as blankets, will be added unto us, so we are not dismayed. Come to think of it, there are two rugs on the *Catholic Worker* floor which, if energetically beaten out, will serve as covers.

"Christ's first bed was of straw."

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A year later we moved to an eleven-room house on Charles Street, where the women occupied the third floor, the men the second, and the offices the first. The dining room and kitchen were in the basement, the only warm part of this cold house which had no furnace and had to be heated room by room. A year after that we were offered the use of an old rear tenement house on Mott Street and here we are today.

Throughout the country there are twenty-three hospices, each one now accommodating anywhere from a few people to one hundred and fifty. There are "cells" made up of interested readers who are personally practicing voluntary poverty and the works of mercy. There are bread lines run at many of the houses so that now about five thousand a day are fed. In New York City over a thousand come every morning to breakfast.

We have fed workers during strikes. We have been out on picket lines. We have spoken at meetings all over the country to workers, unemployed, unorganized and organized, to students, professors, seminarians, priests and lay people. Through these contacts we have reached thousands more who have become lay apostles.

And now there are four farming communes, which are a step towards clarifying Peter's fourth step in his four point program–labor papers, round-table discussions, houses of hospitality, and farming communes. As Peter says there is no unemployment on the land. As St. Thomas said, "A certain amount of goods is necessary for a man to lead a good life." On the land there is a possibility of ownership. There is the possibility for a man to raise his own food. There is room for the family on the land. In our endeavor to de-proletarianize the worker, as Pius XI advised in his encyclical *Forty Years After,* we have advocated not

only de-centralized industry, cooperatives, the ownership by the workers of the means of production, but also, the land movement.

The following pages are jottings written down during journeys, notes kept for my own comfort, information, clarification, or publication. They are random notes published now while we are in the midst of the work, in the heart of the conflict.

At any time the work is likely to be interrupted by visitors. Often I have written only a few paragraphs, or a few pages, only to be called away to deal with some problem of human misery.

Some will think, perhaps, that it is premature to present this sketchy material on the movement that the *Catholic Worker* has become to our friends and readers; but on the other hand, it may be a very useful volume to those thousands who wish to know more about the work we are doing in the lay apostolate. A great many of these notes were not written for publication, but for my own self in moments of trouble and in moments of peace and joy. So one cannot say that this is really the story of the *Catholic Worker* movement. That remains for some more disinterested person to cover. This Foreword is to give some background for these pages, most of which make up a notebook kept casually over a period of five years. I present it with apologies.

As St. Teresa of Avila said in giving an account of her first foundation:

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