

The Catholic Radical

—A Catholic Newspaper for a Divided Age—

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PRAYER FOR PEACE

Peter Maurin (1938)

1. Dismayed by the horrors of war which bring ruin to people and nations, we turn O Jesus, to Thy most loving Heart, to our last hope.
2. O King of Peace, we humbly implore the peace for which we long.
3. From Thy Sacred Heart Thou didst send forth over the world divine charity, so that discord might end and love alone reign among men.
4. Do Thou inspire rulers and people with counsels of meekness, do Thou heal the discords that tear nations asunder.
5. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God.

—Pope Benedict XV (1915)

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

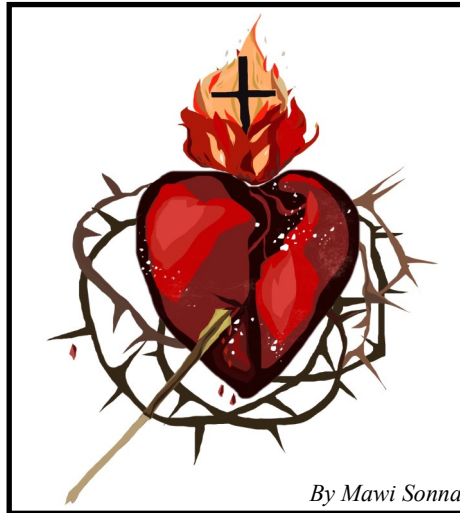
By Tyler Hambley

Evangelical Protestants are well-known for asking people to “give their hearts to Jesus.” I should know; I was one of them. Even now as a Catholic, I am still one of them, evangelical that is, just with a *twist*. What turned the matter around for me was seeing anew who was really giving their heart to whom in a “personal relationship with Jesus.”

What often rests a little too comfortably inside the individualistic logic of our age—our singular “giving of our hearts” to Jesus in a sentimental, pious, or therapeutic kind of way—gets upended when we discover that a Catholic devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus implicates us in a far more expansive drama. Christ literally, physically gives *His* heart to humanity.

In fact, in keeping with the sacrificial practices of Israel, Christ’s heart was pierced on the cross, actively pumping out the lifeblood of the victim of sacrifice. Only, this

lifeblood wasn’t forbidden to consume, as in the Old Testament laws, reserved only for sprinkling at the altar of the Tabernacle, but



was rather given to Jew and Gentile alike in the Cup of Salvation so that all might be tabernacles of Christ sprinkled throughout the world.

Consider, then, the old Catholic practice of enthroning an image of the Sacred Heart in a prominent place in your home. No mere senti-

mental or pious custom, such an act implicates us in a far grander social and political drama because Christ’s Kingship involves not just every member of our households and our relationships with others outside the home, but it links the tabernacle of the *society* that is the Church to our everyday lives. Such an alternative political grounding yields no mere, “bleeding heart” liberalism—where one’s form of life remains relatively unchanged, still thoroughly consumeristic—nor a middle-class, hunkered down traditionalism hearkening for an America that never was, is, nor ever shall be. Rather, it gets to the heart of the matter: Christ’s love is an all-consuming fire stopping at nothing to offer even the “least of these” His friendship through making all of us meek and humble of heart. We hope the articles in this issue showcase our Lord’s Heart poured out so that we the Church can be His lifeblood to the world.+

THE SACRED HEART AND TRUE DETACHMENT

By Malcolm Schluenderfritz

Skeptics frequently downplay or deny the divinity of Christ. In contrast, we Christians sometimes run the risk of forgetting or ignoring his humanity. The feast of the Sacred Heart reminds us that Jesus Christ was a true man, a human being like the rest of us. He had a human body that depended on the beating of a physical heart. He also had a human soul; he had an imagination, emotions, and passions. Through his Incarnation, he redeems and divinizes everything that is human.

As human beings, we develop attachments to particular places and people. We often treasure fond memories of our hometowns and native lands. Family ties can unite disparate individuals in an intimate communion of thought and feeling. We are capable of friendships that bind us to others with an almost superhuman loyalty.

Jesus certainly shared in this aspect of human nature. He was a true member of the Jewish people, revering the temple as the house of God and weeping over the impending doom of the sacred city. Similarly, he wept over the death of his friend Lazarus.

Despite this Divine example, such attachments can make Christians nervous. After all, we’re called to be “detached,” free of impediments so that we can follow Christ. This can create a dour, puritanical attitude that strives to eliminate human feelings and sentiments.

Such puritanism finds an unexpected ally in our modern culture. In a way, the modern world is very detached. The average American moves frequently, leaving behind family, friends, and neighborhood to start fresh in a new location. Friendships tend to last only during a particular phase of life. We’ve become much less likely to make long-term commitments of any sort. Even our buildings have become temporary, easily constructed and easily demolished, while modern advertising has created a whole nation of consumers constantly induced to throw away one thing in pursuit of the latest thing.

This kind of detachment leads to overflowing landfills, broken communities, the loneliness of old-folks homes, and a pervasive rootlessness and alienation. “By their fruits you will know them”—and the fruits of the modern detachment from human ties are bitter indeed.

In reality, the Christian is called to be detached from self rather than from others. Due to original sin, we’re all born with a tendency toward selfishness. The selfish individual desires domination, and seeks fulfillment through consumption, striving to engulf and devour as much as possible. Paradoxically, such a person must remain detached; any attachment to another is a limit on personal “freedom.”

The Christian is called to reject a self-centered existence. We must imitate the reckless love of God,

who loves creatures so fully and so intensely that they are maintained in being by his loving glance. In Jesus Christ, God even experienced the suffering that love often entails. Out of compassion, he suffered in solidarity with his creatures. We worship the God of the pierced heart. Like him, we must love every creature, even our enemies.

Of course, such reckless love entails suffering, which is why we are tempted to avoid it. Giving our hearts to another is dangerous! Instead, we tend to give our hearts to others with a string attached. We wish to possess, to drag hosts of others about on strings in an attempt to inflate our egos. We avoid the risks and sacrifices that come with self-giving. Such consumptive and possessive attitudes have nothing in common with true love. It is this counterfeit love from which we are called to be detached. Detachment breaks the string and allows us to give freely, without counting the cost or demanding a return.

In our “detached,” consumeristic, and individualistic world, we lack authentic community. So long as we are attached to our own pursuits, we will not be properly attached to those around us. We will remain locked in our own limited world, striving vainly to enlarge ourselves at the expense of others.

By contrast, Christianity demands community. Christ didn’t come to teach ethical principles, but rather to found the community of the

Church. In his letters, St. Paul uses the analogy of a head with members to portray this community. We’re supposed to be tightly joined to Christ and to each other as members of a living body. The New Testament also uses the analogy of a building. If the elements of a building are detached from one another, the structure falls into ruin. In the concrete reality of a local Christian community, we can practice detachment from ourselves so that, like living stones, we can become attached to one another in the spiritual temple of God.+

WORKS OF MERCY

By Peter Maurin (1935)

1. The best kind of apologetics is the kind of apologetics people do not have to apologize for.
2. In the first centuries of Christianity pagans said about Christians: “See how they love each other.”
3. The love for God and neighbor was the characteristic of the first Christians.
4. This love was expressed through the daily practice of the Works of Mercy.
5. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to instruct the ignorant at a personal sacrifice was considered [...] *the right things to do*.
6. Superfluous goods were considered superfluous; and therefore to be used to help the needy members of the Mystical Body.

TAKING THE LAST PLACE: UNDERSTANDING ST. CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

By Leigh Miller

“Our Lord took the last place, and no one has been able to wrest it from him.” So counseled one Father Huvelin, reported to have been a holy and ascetic man, but who may have long been forgotten save for his ministry as lifelong spiritual director to another French ascetic—now saint!—Charles de Foucauld.

This desire of taking the last place frequently appears in the writings of St. Charles, forming the saint’s yearning to share in Jesus’ own abjection. In order to imitate the humility of our Lord, who, though equal with God, “emptied himself,” Charles *physically* moved into solitude and poverty in the Sahara desert. There he lived with a destitute people, largely Muslim, who had been slaves and now lived where one’s survival was barely eked out.

As a solitary priest, Charles took for his mark a simple cross and heart of Jesus on the front of his tunic. The Incarnation, God’s taking on of a human heart, was a sign to him of the “unimaginable goodness” of the Lord who gave human beings the ability to inflict suffering on Him, but also the gift of being able to console the heart of God Himself. Because Jesus is, even now, in *our* flesh, we are invited to comfort Him, to love Him, and to embrace Him in His humility.

How? “It is enough for a servant to become like His Master.” Charles loved the heart of Jesus by embracing poverty, lowliness, solitude, humility, and penance, with great joy, so as to identify more

closely with the Beloved. But mortifications were followed by an outpouring of love for all of his neighbors, in particular for “the least of these” he chose to live among. Charles understood that Christians love the poor in the same way that Christ loved us, by choosing to condescend to, to materially share, in their poverty and exclusion.

And this self-abnegation makes St. Charles such a stunning sign to our age. Not just that he believed that the Christian Gospel was a Gospel of love—everyone believes that. But St. Charles understood that in a world of burgeoning political liberalism, self-seeking and pleasure hunting, and a material, bourgeois comfort in which Charles himself had indulged, the finding of Christ must be a finding of factual poverty, hiddenness and littleness, spiritual and material humility.

Our modern political divides, which seem to run deeper in the church than we dare to admit, tend to emphasize with gusto *either* interior *or* exterior humility and, in doing so, find no humility at all. Some communities preach the interior, spiritual humility with zeal, championing a devout interior life, with a softer concern for the simultaneous necessity to choose a material poverty and charity at a personal sacrifice. Others see the irrevocable call to serve the least of our brethren but seem to think it can be achieved by means other than what the Church gives, that is, without serious sacrificial devotion to prayer (communal

and meditative), Eucharistic piety, and the sacrificial renunciation of our own pride in the ascetic disciplines of the Church, including our desires for success and efficiency.

In particular, the media fanfare surrounding Charles and his canonization focuses on him as a model of something called “interreligious dialogue.” And indeed Charles desired to be known as the “universal brother,” to live demonstratively with his Muslim neighbors the truth that they were sons and daughters of one and the same God. Yet too often what goes unmentioned in the media is that Charles was a man who was *converted* from a life of sensual indulgence, who found the *old* and austere rules of the Trappists too soft, who desperately sought solitude and contemplation, was affable and docile to authorities, and who so identified himself with the destitute and forgotten—thus being absent of even the pretense of “fixing” their poverty—that it won him respect from secular French military powers and Muslim governors alike. Nor did he ever cease to work and pray for their conversion. So, if Charles is a model of interreligious relations, it is in *this* unapologetically Catholic way and no other.

In the end, Charles found the courage and inspiration to seek the last place only through a life of deep conversion and prayer. He was a contemplative, an ascetic, and a desert hermit. To miss these aspects of his life is to miss the man

himself. Charles’ first love was Our Lord and His Sacred Heart found in Eucharistic devotion, prayer and contemplation. And it was here that he found the courage to abandon everything, along with his Lord, for the sake of a sacrificial love of neighbor that impacted all he encountered. Indeed, what prayer can be called true without such love as its fruit?+

WHY NOT BE A BEGGAR?

By Peter Maurin (1933)

1. 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.
2. Modern society calls the beggar bum and panhandler and gives him the bum’s rush.
3. But the Greeks used to say that people in need are the ambassadors of the gods.
4. Although you may be called bums and panhandlers you are in fact the Ambassadors of God.
5. As God’s Ambassadors you should be given food, clothing and shelter by those who are able to give it.
6. Muslim teachers tell us that God commands hospitality.
7. And hospitality is still practiced in Muslim countries.
8. But the duty of hospitality is neither taught nor practiced in Christian countries.

INTRODUCING THE MAURIN HOUSE

By the Maurin House Community

The Maurin House is an emerging Catholic community rooted in the prayers of the Church and the works of mercy in Northeast Minneapolis, MN. We see ourselves—along with many other Catholic Worker communities we’ve gotten to know around the country—as being a practical, very imperfectly lived-out, and often humorous attempt at putting the spirit of this publication to work on the ground—at least, when we’re not tripping all over ourselves.

The Maurin House is maintained by two families, each with four young children, and offers housing and food to three or four homeless men at a time. The hospitality house is sandwiched between two family houses, and it serves also as the community space for meals and discussions. Our families gather in the house chapel daily for Evening Prayer and twice a week we hold community dinners open to all. We are inspired by the orthodox Catholic witness of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, which drew us into the Catholic Church in the first place.

There is absolutely nothing flashy about our work, and if you join us for Evening Prayer or supper we will prove it to you in more ways than one. Faithful to Peter Maurin’s “personalism,” we do not think of ourselves as running a “program.” We simply offer shelter to the poor, who often end up becoming our friends, for as long as they want it. There are no forms to sign, no

hoops to jump through, no money exchanges hands, and so we end up looking, on our better days, something like a semi-functional family or a group of friends. We guard ourselves against the temptation, ever pressing in our world, to take measures that would formalize and institutionalize what we intend as ordinary acts of Christian charity (such as becoming a sanctioned “charity”—we are not a 501c3). We are hesitant even to call it “the Maurin House,” because that might give the impression that it is a “thing”—a group home, a shelter, or a recovery program.

And so we take it that we are not doing anything extraordinary. We are just ordinary Catholics—the Church just trying, and more often than not failing, to be the Church. We do not think of this as a “calling” particular to us, or as a special ministry, or that God has given us a “heart for the poor.” It’s simpler than all that. Christ calls all Christians to “bring the homeless poor into your home” and “share your bread with the needy,” and so we do it. Not very well and certainly not very piously, but we do it.

At the same time, we do not think of the Maurin House as “ours,” but simply as a sort of unofficial outpost of the Catholic Church. So, recognizing that many do not feel that they are in a position to start their own house, but that there is a growing desire among Catholics for engagement with the poor and for

the cultivation of Church community, we want to provide as many ways as we can for participation.

The easiest way you can get involved is just to donate money (we’re not afraid to beg). Right now, our two families pay the mortgage, utilities and upkeep for the house, and many months this stretches our modest finances pretty thin. You can make a one-time donation or, even better, a monthly pledge. No one makes any salary or gets paid in any form, and all donations are used directly for works of mercy of one kind or another.

Or you can think of us when you go to the store. With three or four large men, we’re always running out of food and toilet paper and the like. Stuff that’s easy to prepare and has meat and cheesy stuff seems to be popular. You can just leave it on the step or you can come in and put it away in the kitchen for us. It won’t go to waste.

Finally, you can start to get to know us in more personal ways. The obvious things are to come by as regularly as you’d like for Evening Prayer and/or dinner. People do this fairly regularly. Or, if you’re handy, you can give us a buzz and see what projects around the house we have going on. Our time and expertise is limited, and often there are even little things that would help us a lot. We also have gardens and chickens to tend and lawns to mow and compost piles to turn over and workbenches to build and

chainsaws to sharpen and meals to cook. We have found that shared work is a key component to building friendship.

We’ve been at this work long enough to know that it is regularly a comedy of errors. And I think a lot of the reason we do it, if we were to be completely honest, is that it makes us laugh so often (and usually at ourselves). It’s a serious spiritual adventure, but it’s also just so much fun. We try to take the Gospel seriously, but ourselves very lightly. And so, in whatever way you may be so moved, we’d be delighted to hear from you. Check us out at www.maurinhouse.com to learn more.+

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