

# The Catholic Radical

—A Catholic Newspaper for a Divided Age—

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## THE SPIRIT OF THE MASS

By Peter Maurin (Oct. 1933)

Men always ring a little bell  
When the sacring time is near,  
And then shalt thou do reverence  
To Christ Jesus' own high presence;  
That thou mayest loose all sinful bonds  
Kneel and hold up both thy hands,  
For this is He that Judas sold  
That lifted up thou dost behold.  
And He was scourged and trod the way  
To shed His blood for all mankind.  
He died, He rose, He went to Heaven  
Whence He comes to judge mankind  
For all that each of us had done.  
This same is He thou lookst upon  
This is the truth of Holy Church.

—From a lay-folk's Mass Book  
Thirteenth Century

## LITURGY AND THE WORKS OF MERCY

By the Editors

Peter Maurin used to say that his mission, and the mission of the Catholic Worker, should be to announce, not to denounce. So then, to keep Peter happy, I want to repeat the announcement he was making, which is very simple. What do we announce? Christ. How do we announce him? By being his body, the Church. How do we be the Church? By doing what the Church does.

What is that? The Mass, the Prayers, and the Works of Mercy. Christ comes to us weekly and daily in the Eucharist. But the Eucharist, you might say, has tentacles, and it reaches out to touch our whole lives. It is omnivorous, and wants to devour all that we have and are. The Christian life is always nothing more or less than working out the logic of the Mass — of living the entailments of the Eucharist. This is how Christ devours us.

There are two primary confessions that appear over and over again in the liturgy: the Lord's worthiness to be praised and adored by us, and our unworthiness to do so. The confession of praise is constant: "Glory to God in the Highest"... "Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy!"... "Thanks be to God". But equally constant is, "Lord have mercy"... "I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof". I dare to say that each word of the Liturgy could fall under one of these confessions.

And these two confessions are exactly what we try extend throughout the rest of our lives. And so the first tentacles of the Eucharist are our daily prayers, such as the Liturgy of the Hours and the Rosary. Morning and Evening Prayer, for instance, sanctify the rest of the day with exactly the Mass's twofold logic: "Hallowed be thy name... forgive us our trespasses."

The Works of Mercy are therefore an essential part of Christianity precisely because not to practice them would be to fail to show that we take seriously the logic of the Mass — to contradict ourselves. In the Mass we participate in the supreme Work of Mercy — the Passion. Giving to those who beg, giving our bed to the homeless, eating with the hungry, forgiving wrongs, praying for enemies — all these Christ did first for us and does for us at each liturgy. Christians welcome especially those who might seem unworthy, precisely because in the Eucharist we are welcomed though unworthy.

The Works of Mercy, then, are not part of an optional outreach or a social program. They are part of the Liturgy. This is how we announce Christ to the world.+

## REORDERING OUR VERY LIVES: LITURGY BEYOND RENEWAL AND REVERENCE

By Sean Domencic

Many Catholics today are talking about the need to "revive the liturgy", which makes sense, because liturgy—ritual and rite, signs and symbols which are real and effective means of receiving God's grace—is at the heart of the Catholic Faith. I myself started attending Saint Joseph's in Lancaster, my parish, because it had both a Latin Mass and a Novus Ordo with beautiful music. I was hungry for a Mass that felt like what we claim it to be: the Wedding Feast of the Lamb and the Throne Room of the High King.

But as recent events have made clear, reverent liturgy on its own isn't enough to build up the Church. Pope Francis' restriction of the Latin Mass is tragic, and perhaps imprudent, but his reasons are totally understandable: for some, the Tridentine Rite has become an idol, a symbol of their separation from the rest of the Universal Church.

So why isn't reverent Liturgy enough to build up a beloved community? I propose that the problem is because most Catholics, even us liturgical traditional ones, have still failed to make the Eucharist the center, source, and summit of our lives. To get a sense of what this could mean, let's look back to medieval times. In those days, most Catholics lived within walking distance of their parish. They worked together in the fields and farms of

their fellow parishioners, and they gathered as a village for festivals, feast days, and other celebrations. If a family was in need, they could trust others to provide mutual aid. Finally, the linens, the candles, the flowers, and the very bread and wine offered on the altar were not just paid for by the people, but handcrafted by the local community.

This may sound like an overall optimistic vision, but maybe that's because of how far we've fallen from the ideal. Since the 1950s, it has become normal for Catholics to live well outside walking distance from their parish, often driving at least 15 minutes (though I know many who drive for nearly an hour). Because of this distance, and the busyness of modern life, going to Church has become a once-a-week affair, even for those who pray devoutly at home. Our capitalist economic system, for all its "advancement", has forced most breadwinners to commute (again via car) to find a job with a living wage. Not to mention the scattered nature of schools, sports, and other recreation. Modern life is divided, a jumble of disordered and unrelated parts, instead of an integrated whole. At best, church is the most important part, but even then, it is not the center.

Worst of all, this disorientation has wormed its way into the Holy Mass itself: the bread and wine,

"fruit of the earth and work of human hands", are no longer the fruit of the parish's earth and the work of the parishioner's hands. The vast majority of hosts are produced by Cavanaugh, a non-Catholic for-profit corporation that has ruthlessly put nuns out of business as they corner the market on communion wafers. The Church in America let it happen without a word, and then we wonder why two-thirds of Catholics don't take us seriously when we preach the Real Presence. Are we offering our first fruits, like Abel, or our leftovers, like Cain? We need reverent liturgy, yes, but even more importantly, we need an integral liturgy, offered up from the sweat and blood, the joys and griefs of the parish—the People of God—by the consecrated hands of their shepherd.

In short, we've let profit, efficiency, and consumerism make decisions about how we enter the Holy of Holies, and as a result, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass has been more and more often profaned. This comes as no shock: "you cannot serve both God and Mammon."

Still, there are signs of hope: Eastern Catholics often handmake the communion bread within their parish family, the "New Liturgical Movement" (which includes both the revival of the Tridentine Mass and the reform of abuses in the Ordinary Form) has drawn much-needed attention to the beautiful

power of reverent ritual, and the calls for intentional community as a form of parish renewal (see, for example, "The Prodigal Church" by Brandon McGinley) have great potential... if only we will respond generously. For our part, this is why we started our Catholic Worker house a three-minute walk from our parish in the city. And we're praying God will send a family with some bread-baking experience to move in next door.+

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MASSES

By Peter Maurin (Oct. 1933)

1. The central act of devotional life in the Catholic Church is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.
2. The sacrifice of the Mass is the unbloody repetition of the Sacrifice of the Cross.
3. On the Cross of Calvary Christ gave His life to redeem the world.
4. The life of Christ was a life of sacrifice.
5. The life of a Christian must be a life of sacrifice.
6. We cannot imitate the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary by trying to get all we can.
7. We can only imitate the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary by trying to give all we can.

**THREE FOR THREE**

By John Homan

**Three Saints to Imitate**

Bl. Alberto Marvelli—“Christ is the man sent by God to bear witness to the Light: Lord, let me see. Whoever engages in politics must serve, not be served; Jesus serves.”

Venerable Madeleine Delbrêl—“The Gospel is not for minds seeking ideas, but for disciples who wish to obey.”

Servant of God

Catherine Doherty—“In order to show the face of Love to others, in order to empty ourselves so that Love will shine in our business emporiums, our stock exchanges, in our suburban residential areas, we must become poor ourselves. Not even poverty of spirit, which means that we must realize how utterly dependent we are on God, is enough. We must be poor in the reality of daily life.”

**Three Moments of the Mass**

Kissing of the Gospel—“Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be wiped away.”

Mingling of the water and wine—“By the mystery of this water in wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”

Dismissal—“These few words [Ite, missa est] succinctly express the missionary nature of the Church.

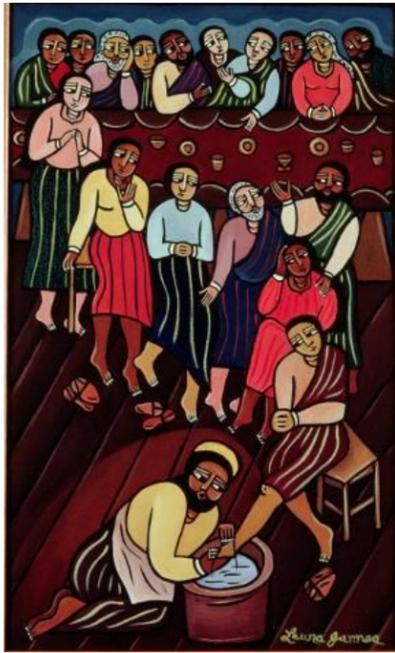
*The People of God might be helped to understand more clearly this essential dimension of the Church's life, taking the dismissal as a starting-point.* —Pope Benedict XVI

**Three Feasts to Celebrate**

St. Therese (Oct. 1), whose ‘Little Way’ offers a blueprint for sanctification through the ordinary actions of our lives

Our Lady of the Rosary (Oct. 15), whose mysteries “so marvelously exemplify and epitomize that divine pattern of living given to us by Him Who said: ‘I am the Way and the Truth and the Life’” (Fr. John J. Hugo)

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (Oct. 16), whose devotion to the Sacred Heart calls us to the heights of Christian heroism



**DON'T ADORN THE CHURCH AND IGNORE THE POOR**

Excerpts from a sermon by St. John Chrysostom

Do you want to honor Christ's body? Then do not scorn him in his nakedness, nor honor him here in the church with silken garments while neglecting him outside where he is cold and naked. For he who said: This is my body, and made it so by his words, also said: You saw me hungry and did not feed me, and inasmuch as you did not do it for one of these, the least of my brothers, you did not do it for me. [Mat 25:34ff].

Let us learn, therefore, to be men of wisdom and to honor Christ as he desires. Peter thought he was honoring Christ when he refused to let him wash his feet; but what Peter wanted was not truly an honor, quite the opposite! Give him the honor prescribed in his law by giving your riches to the poor. For God does not want golden vessels but golden hearts.

Now, in saying this I am not forbidding you to make such gifts; I am only demanding that along with such gifts and before them you give alms. He accepts the former, but he is much more pleased with the latter. In the former, only the giver profits; in the latter, the recipient does too. A gift to the church may be taken as a form of ostentation, but an alms is pure kindness.

Of what use is it to weigh down Christ's table with golden cups, when he himself is dying of hunger? First, fill him when he is hun-

gry; then use the means you have left to adorn his table. Will you have a golden cup made but not give a cup of water? What is the use of providing the table with cloths woven of gold thread, and not providing Christ himself with the clothes he needs?

Tell me: If you were to see him lacking the necessary food but were to leave him in that state and merely surround his table with gold would he be grateful to you or rather would he not be angry? What if you were to see him clad in worn-out rags and stiff from the cold, and were to forget about clothing him and instead were to set up golden columns for him, saying that you were doing it in his honor? Would he not think he was being mocked and greatly insulted?

Apply this also to Christ when he comes along the roads as a pilgrim, looking for shelter. You do not take him in as your guest, but you decorate floor and walls and the capitals of the pillars. You provide silver chains for the lamps, but you cannot bear even to look at him as he lies chained in prison.

Once again, I am not forbidding you to supply these adornments; I am urging you to provide these other things as well, and indeed to provide them first. Do not, therefore, adorn the church and ignore your afflicted brother, for he is the most precious temple of all.+

**THE FORGOTTEN RADICAL PETER MAURIN**

A Book Review by James Murphy

In a 1968 speech Dorothy Day delivered to the Marist Brothers, she described Peter Maurin as an answer to a prayer when she “met the one who was truly the founder of the Catholic Worker...he brought me the social teaching of the Church, and pointed out the surest and truest way to show your love for God was by your love for fellow man.” Peter Maurin's influence and footprint on the Catholic Worker Movement are undeniable. Without him, there would be no Catholic Worker newspaper, no houses of hospitality, no round table discussions (clarity of thought), and no Catholic Worker Farms. The philosophy of personalism so embraced and practiced by Catholic Workers throughout the world today, would not be an integral part of the CW. Without Maurin, there simply is no Catholic Worker Movement. And yet, without the Church's liturgy, there simply is no Peter Maurin—himself a daily communicant and a devotee to the liturgy of the hours.

One way to see the Church's worship and love of God saturating Maurin and Day's social program is to contemplate his writings in a new book by Fordham University Press (2020). With the tragic but apt title, *The Forgotten Radical Peter Maurin, Easy Essays from the Catholic Worker*, editor Lincoln Rice has delivered a great gift to the Catholic Worker canon with an up-

dated and annotated edition of Peter Maurin's notorious Easy Essays (two of which appear on the front page of this paper). As the canonization cause of Dorothy Day moves forward, it is vitally important that Peter Maurin, the greatest human influence in her life and the Catholic Worker (CW) movement not be lost to posterity.

Maurin wrote hundreds of short, simple, almost poetic essays that appeared in the Catholic Worker Newspaper from its inception in 1933 until well after his death in 1949. Originally from France, and a former teacher with the French Christin Brothers in Paris, he uses humor, repetition, and playful use of words to unpack complex ideas into simple, fun, and challenging reading. Dorothy Day described Peter as a teacher at heart and his Easy Essays are where we can find his curriculum. He covers a lot of different topics ranging from economics, history, and sociology to soil conservation, contraception, and the common good. He is no fan of communism and is just as likely to criticize capitalism. Packed with demanding ideas meant to convey dense information and encourage the reader to ponder different ways to understand and interact with reality, his short poetic phrases became his way of communicating his vision and theology. But what set the agenda for his thought was the principle act of Christian worship: the

Eucharist. Like Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet after the Last Supper, one cannot separate Maurin's social ethic from his liturgical mooring. See, for example, his essay, *The Spirit of the Masses*, printed on the opposite page.

Because his essays were written from the late 1920s until the mid-1940s and much of what he discusses would have made sense to readers in this era, eighty years later the names and ideas that he mentions have been forgotten or meanings changed. The editor does the contemporary reader a great favor by giving us scholarly footnotes to help make sense of Maurin's vision. I've been reading Maurin's Easy Essays for years and found myself going down internet-search rabbit holes when I came across a name or reference I was unsure of. Mr. Rice does an excellent job of explaining the context and history of Maurin's writings that tremendously helps the reader. The editor also includes a comprehensive reading list that Maurin left behind as well as a series of previously unpublished easy essays, many of which organized around Maurin's three C's for social renewal: Cult—> Culture—> Cultivation (liturgy—> literature—> agriculture)

Peter's Easy Essays were first released in book-form in 1936. One reviewer with the Catholic Telegraph Newspaper hoped “that this little book will be widely distribut-

ed and closely read.” I have the same hope in 2021. If you are interested in creating a new society in the shell of the old, this book should be read. If you are interested in cooperative economics, personalism, and the Catholic Worker in general, this book belongs in your library. You will both chuckle and be challenged when reading this book and hopefully a new generation of Catholic radicals will be inspired by the great peasant-philosopher—and true liturgical theologian—Peter Maurin.+

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