

The Catholic Radical

—A Catholic Newspaper for a Divided Age—

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BLOWING THE DYNAMITE

By Peter Maurin (May 1933)

1. Writing about the Catholic Church, a radical writer says: "Rome will have to do more than to play a waiting game; she will have to use some of the dynamite inherent in her message."
2. To blow the dynamite of a message is the only way to make the message dynamic.
3. If the Catholic Church is not today the dominant social dynamic force, it is because Catholic scholars have failed to blow the dynamite of the Church.
4. Catholic scholars have taken the dynamite of the Church, have wrapped it up in nice phraseology, placed it in an hermetic container and sat on the lid.
5. It is about time to blow the lid off so the Catholic Church may again become the dominant social dynamic force.

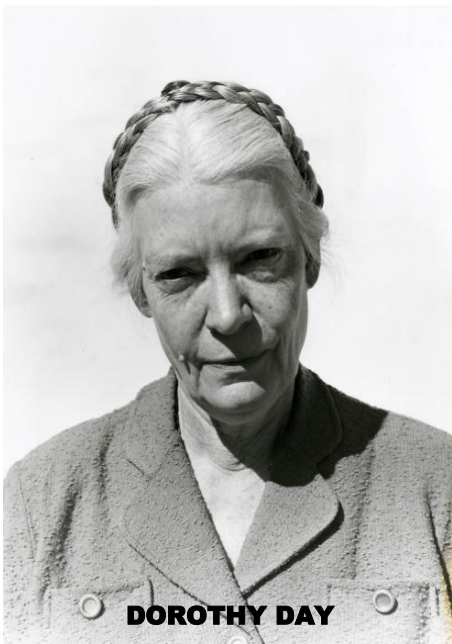
FAITHFUL and RADICAL? By the Editors

Dom Aelred Graham has written that, "in religion 'conservative' or 'progressive' are irrelevant categories. The categories that really apply are 'radical' or 'superficial.'" What is desirable is the radical Christianity that goes to the root (radix) of truth; and in Christianity the root is divine truth, possessed in faith, working to bear fruit in love. (Ga 5:6) - Fr. John J. Hugo

To be radical means to be "rooted" - from the Latin *radix*, meaning root. The Catholic Worker Movement, in the tradition of which this paper stands, began in 1933 under the inspiration of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day in New York City. The idea of their original newspaper, *The Catholic Worker*, was to make people aware that the Catholic Church had a comprehensive social message, and to articulate that message in an accessible form to the man in the street and in the pews. So we call this publication *The Catholic Radical* because its message is *rooted* in the traditional teaching of Catholicism and in loving devotion to the Church.

Catholic social teaching also makes Catholics radical in the sense that a "radical" is someone who holds an unusual social or political philosophy. For Maurin and Day, this meant a Catholic alternative to the depression era options of communism and capitalism. And the Church today continues to offer us a vision that utterly transcends our own stale divisions of left and right. This Catholic alternative, to be articulated in these pages, cannot really be found anywhere on the 'map' of prevailing social or political philosophies. This makes it truly radical.

But, finally, at the most radical level, Catholic social teaching wants to make radicals of us by making us disciples of Christ at the most 'root' level. Beyond being simply a 'position', it is an alternative *way of life*, a practice and a devotion, that goes beyond the imagination of the American status quo. It is a life that engages the social issues of the day with prayer and solidarity, sacrifice and community, with sacraments and action. Maurin and Day teach us that Catholics are radicals because we seek total transformation, not only of the world in which we live, but of ourselves at the deepest level. It doesn't get more radical than that.+



DOROTHY DAY

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: MORE RELEVANT THAN EVER

By Tyler Hambley

The Catholic Worker Movement started in 1933 in an effort to bring the social teachings of the Church to the man in the street - the poor and oppressed, but also the average Catholic in the pews. It was the Great Depression, and a time of great civil unrest and agitation, with competing social philosophies, ideologies, and ways of life coming into increasingly open conflict with each other. It was a time of obvious inequality, with hoards of homeless wandering the streets and those who did work bound to mindless and low-paying grunt work. It was an increasingly polarized time when people gravitated to the comfort and stability of well-worn social and political "camps", but it was also a time that saw the rise of revolutionary new positions, not least among those at the bottom of the social ladder. And of course, there were growing numbers who refused to argue at all, and cynically rejected all reasoning about the 'issues' as a waste of time at best. Politics, they said, is about power, not truth - simply a battle to get what we want. When that happens, political differences become absolute differences, and the way you vote determines who you are.

Sound familiar? Today everyone, it seems, including the poor, oppressed, and even the growing

number of homeless, are searching for someplace solid to stand. Catholics themselves, often precisely because of their faith, feel increas-



Peter Maurin

ingly compelled to give their allegiance to this or that party. Yet, then as now, it is the Catholic Worker's purpose to announce that

the Catholic Church also has an urgent social message, a vision of society, and a philosophy of life just as and more relevant to the pressing debates of the day than any other. It is a philosophy rooted in the teachings of Jesus, the Fathers of the Church, and the message of the popes. It stands for solidarity with the poor, harmony between classes, justice for the oppressed, the sanctity of all life, the distribution of wealth and power, simplicity of life, the goodness of labor, limits to government, peace and even pacifism, small and local economies, and humane technology. It goes beyond abstract talk of rights and equality to the mystery of the divine in each person as an end in his- or herself. It gives flesh to these ideas in the concrete lives of real, small, face-to-face communities, bound together in sacramental worship and the daily practice of the works of mercy. Though it has universal ambitions, it is non-violent and essentially grassroots, refusing to wait for politicians to notice, and finding in every household, parish, or collection of friends all that is needed.

Needed? For what? "To begin," as Peter Maurin said, "to build a new society within the shell of the old, a society in which it is easier to be good."+

WHAT THE CATHOLIC WORKER BELIEVES

By Peter Maurin (February 1935)

1. The Catholic Worker believes in the gentle personalism of traditional Catholicism.
2. The Catholic Worker believes in the personal obligation of looking after the needs of our brother.
3. The Catholic Worker believes in the daily practice of the Works of Mercy.
4. The Catholic Worker believes in Houses of Hospitality for the immediate relief of those who are in need.
5. The Catholic Worker believes in the establishment of Farming Communes where each one works according to his ability and gets according to his need.
6. The Catholic Worker believes in creating a new society within the shell of the old with the philosophy of the new, which is not a new philosophy but a very old philosophy, a philosophy so old that it looks like new.

THREE FOR THREE

By John Homan

Three Books to Read

An Economics of Justice and Charity, Thomas Storck's summary of the political teachings of the Popes

Laborem Exercens, St. John Paul II discussing the nature, dignity, and meaning of human work

Loaves and Fishes, Dorothy Day's history of the Catholic Worker Movement

Three Podcasts to Download

Happy Are You Poor, a podcast on radical Christian community as a means of evangelization

New Polity's Good Money, an explanation of how to build virtue with every dollar

Tradistae, a Catholic Worker podcast on Catholic Social Teaching by Sean Domencic

Three Virtues to Practice

Faith, the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not. (*Summa Theologica II-II Q4 A1*)

Hope, attaining God by leaning on His help in order to obtain the hoped for good (*ST II-II Q17 A2*)

Love, when, to wit, we love someone so as to wish good to him (*ST II-II Q23 A1*)

THINGS YOU WILL AND WON'T FIND IN THIS PAPER

By Sean Domencic

You will certainly find excerpts and re-publications of the writings of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, co-founders of the Catholic Worker Movement.

You will certainly not find the writings of Ben Shapiro or Jennifer Rubin—nor the latest talking points from FOX news or CNN—and you will certainly not be kept in the loop on today's culture wars.

You may find excerpts from, and explanations of, the "Social Encyclicals", that is, the teachings of the Popes on what God's plan for politics are.

You will not find attacks on the Pope, nor claims that the Scriptures, the Magisterium, or the Sacred Tradition is wrong, mistaken, outdated, or misguided.

You will likely find writings from the Doctors, Fathers, and Saints of the Church on money, justice, family, and politics.

You will likely not find hopeless despair, furious outrage, or lukewarm centrism.

You—if we, the editors, have anything to say about it—will definitely find stories, plans, and ideas for the reconstruction of the social order by building up Christian communities and cooperatives.

You may even find new ways to love God and love your neighbor, with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.+



THE SCANDAL OF THE WORKS OF MERCY

By Dorothy Day (Excerpts, from *Commonweal*, 1949)

To reach a man in the street you must go to the street, where Christianity itself may be a sign of contradiction.

The spiritual works of mercy are: to admonish the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive all injuries, and to pray for the living and the dead.

The corporal works are to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked: to ransom the captive, to harbor the harborless to visit the sick, and to bury the dead.

When Peter Maurin talked about the necessity of practicing the works of mercy, he meant all of them, and he envisioned houses of hospitality in poor parishes in every city of the country, where these precepts of Our Lord could be put into effect. He pointed out that we have turned to State responsibility, and we no longer practice personal responsibility for our brother, but are repeating the words of the first murderer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Not that our passing the buck is as crude as all that. It was a matter of social enlightenment, Holy Mother the City taking over, Holy Mother the State taking the poor to herself, gathering them to her capacious bosom studded with the jewels of the taxation of the rich and the poor alike, the subtle

war between Church and State meanwhile going on at all times.

Peter Maurin, the founder of *The Catholic Worker*, was very much an apostle to the world today, not only to the poor. He was a prophet with a social message and he wanted to reach the people with it. To get to the people, he pointed out it was necessary to embrace voluntary poverty, to strip yourself, which would give you the means to practice the works of mercy. To reach the man in the street you must go to the street.

We are all devoured by a passion for social justice today, and seeking an alternative to Communism and capitalism. We like to discuss capitalism, industrialism, distributism, decentralization. Peter liked to talk of making a message dynamic, and that meant with him putting it into practice.

Publishing a paper and reaching the man in the street, was to Peter, performing the first four of the spiritual works of mercy. To go on picket lines, was to perform spiritual works of mercy. Yes, such works of mercy, such spiritual works of mercy, can be dangerous, and can smack of class war attitudes. And of that we are often accused, because the performance of the works of mercy finds us on the side of the poor, the exploited, whether with literature, picketing, soup kitchen, etc.

The works of mercy are a won-

derful stimulus to our growth in faith as well as in love. Our faith is taxed to the utmost and so grows through this strain put upon it. It is pruned again and again, and springs up bearing much fruit. For anyone starting to live literally the words of the Fathers of the Church, "the bread you retain belongs to the hungry, the dress you lock up is the property of the naked," "what is superfluous for one's need is to be regarded as plunder if one retains it for one's self," there is always a trial ahead. "Our faith, more precious than gold, must be tried as though by fire." Here is a letter we received today. "I took a gentleman seemingly in need of spiritual and temporal guidance into my home on a Sunday afternoon. Let him have a nap on my bed, went through the want ads with him, made coffee and sandwiches for him, and when he left, I found my wallet had gone also."

I can only say that the Saints would only bow their heads and not try to understand or judge. They received no thanks—well then, God had to repay them. They forebore to judge, and it was as though they took off their cloak besides their coat to give away. This is expecting heroic charity of course. But these things happen for our discouragement, for our testing. We are sowing the seed of love, and we are not living in the harvest time so that we can expect

a crop. We must love to the point of folly, and we are indeed fools, as our Lord Himself was who died for such a one as this.

Some years ago there was an article in *The Commonweal* by Georges Bernanos. He ended his article as I shall end mine, paraphrasing his words, and it is a warning note for these apocalyptic times: "Every particle of Christ's divine charity is today more precious for your security—for your security, I say—than all the atom bombs in all the stockpiles." It is by the works of mercy that we shall be judged.+

This newspaper is distributed in your area by Tyler Hambley and the Maurin House. Contact us at (919) 667-5267 or see what we're up to at maurinhouse.com.

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