

A Catholic Paradox:

The Life and Words of Dorothy Day

*Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, is a woman who defies easy categorization. A social activist, a mother and a woman of deep prayer, she participated in labor strikes, opened houses of hospitality, wrote prolifically and served jail time on multiple occasions for civil disobedience. After her conversion to Catholicism she left Communism behind, but not radicalism. "Indeed," said John Cardinal O'Connor, "those of us who grew up knowing her recognized early in the game that **she was a radical precisely because she was a believer**, a believer and a practitioner. She, in fact, chided those who wanted to join her in her works of social justice, but who, in her judgment, didn't take the Church seriously enough, and didn't bother about getting to Mass" (Catholic New York - Nov 13, 1997). Hers was the radicality of the Gospel, her activism had its foundation in Christian prayer, and her quest for justice was about God's plan for the world rather than her own.*

*Dorothy Day, who now bears the title Servant of God, once famously declared, **"Don't trivialize me by trying to make me a saint."** These very words, however, were cited by John Cardinal O'Connor in his letter to the Holy See in February 2000 initiating her cause for canonization, where he went on to write: "Prima facie, such words may seem damning. They are, in fact, paradigmatic of Dorothy Day's deep faith and commitment to the Church. Her personal humility was such that she never considered herself to be holier than any other Catholic... It has long been my contention that Dorothy Day is a saint—not a 'gingerbread' saint or a 'holy card' saint, but a modern day devoted daughter of the Church, a daughter who shunned personal aggrandizement and wished that her work, and the work of those who labored at her side on behalf of the poor, might be the hallmark of her life rather than her own self" (Catholic New York - March 16, 2000). And Timothy Cardinal Dolan has referred to her as **"a saint for our time,"** because she exemplifies **"what's best in Catholic life, that ability we have to be 'both-and' not 'either-or.'"***

Day's is indeed a "both-and" kind of life, marked by unity in the midst of tensions and apparent contradictions. Primarily using her own words, this exhibit looks at the communion she lived with others and at the many paradoxes she embodied. What, we are asked to consider, is the source of this seemingly impossible unity?

1897- Dorothy Day is born in Brooklyn, New York.

1906- Day's family survives the Great San Francisco Earthquake, a formative experience for Dorothy as she witnesses the charity of others.

1917- The United States enters World War I, fighting alongside Britain, France and Russia.

1920- The 19th Amendment, granting women suffrage, is ratified and added to the Constitution.

1925- Day purchases a small beach bungalow on Staten Island, using money she earned by selling the film rights to a novel she wrote, *The Eleventh Virgin*. It is at this time that she meets Forster, who would become her romantic partner for many years.

1927- Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian-born anarchists are executed, having been convicted of murder. The trial and sentence were hugely controversial, perceived as a sign of growing anti-radicalism in the United States.

1932- After being sent by *Commonweal* to cover a Hunger March in Washington, DC, Dorothy begins to feel the profound tension between her radical history and her life in Church. She goes to pray in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. "There I offered up a special prayer, a prayer which came with tears and with anguish, that some way would open up for me to use what talents I possessed for my fellow workers, for the poor." Upon returning to New York, she promptly meets Peter Maurin and the Catholic Worker movement is born.

1935- The Catholic Worker moves to 144 Charles Street in the lower west side of New York, acquires an additional property on Staten Island, and opens the farm in Easton, Pennsylvania. The paper reaches a circulation of 100,000.

1914- Dorothy Day enters the University of Illinois at Urbana on a scholarship.

1914- WWI breaks out in Europe

1917- Day is arrested for the first time, after picketing the White House on behalf of a group of political prisoners. She participates in a 10-day hunger strike.

1922- Day becomes a writer for *The Liberator*, a Communist newspaper based in Chicago. She continues her political activity and is arrested again.

1926- Day gives birth to her daughter, Tamar.

1927- After having Tamar baptized and desiring to enter the Catholic Church, Dorothy leaves Forster. She herself is baptized that winter.

1929- The stock market crashes, leading to 25% unemployment and a devastating economic depression across the United States.

1932- Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected president. Once inaugurated, he quickly launches his New Deal, a series of programs intended to jumpstart the economy, generate employment opportunities, and provide necessary social services.

1933- The first edition of *The Catholic Worker* is published. At nearly the same time, the Catholic Worker movement opens its first office at 436 East 15th Street New York.

1936- The Spanish Civil War breaks out when Francisco Franco launches a coup against the liberal government.

1939- Hitler invades Poland, marking the beginning of WWII.

1941- After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States declares war on Japan and enters the war.

1944- Tamar marries David Hennessy.

1945- President Harry S. Truman authorizes the use of atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

1953- Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, both Communists, are convicted of espionage and executed in New York state.

1955- Dorothy Day, Ammon Hennacy and several others are arrested for their refusal to participate in the mandatory civil defense drills. She, and other members of the Catholic Worker, would be arrested and jailed many times for this over the next few years.

1963- Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., acclaimed leader of the Civil Rights Movement, delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech to a crowd of 250,000 gathered in Washington, DC for the March for Jobs and Freedom. Later that fall, President John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

1966- Cesar Chavez founds the United Farm Workers union.

1970- Day is invited to spend several days with Saint Teresa of Calcutta's Sisters of Charity in Calcutta, India.

1974- Maryhouse, a former music school at 55 East Third Street, just around the corner from St. Joseph's House, is purchased to serve as a shelter for homeless women. It officially opens two years later.

1978- Pope John Paul II is elected.

1980- Dorothy Day dies in Maryhouse.

2000- The Holy See approves opening the cause for canonization and calling Day "Servant of God."

1936- The Catholic Worker finds a more permanent home at 115 Mott Street, which will serve as its headquarters until they are evicted in 1950.

1942- The Catholic Worker reaffirms its pacifism in light of WWII, publishing an issue of the paper with the headline, "We Continue Our Christian Pacifist Stand."

1949- Peter Maurin dies.

1950- The Peter Maurin Farm is opened on Staten Island.

1952- *The Long Loneliness*, Dorothy Day's autobiography, is published.

1954- The United States Supreme Court declares that segregation is unconstitutional in the landmark case, *Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education*.

1961- The Catholic Worker moves to 175 Chrystie Street.

1962- Dorothy Day travels to Cuba despite strained diplomatic conditions.

1962- The Second Vatican Council is convened by Pope John XXIII.

1964- The Catholic Worker purchases a new farm in Tivoli, New York and begins participating in anti-Vietnam protests alongside other Christian pacifist organizations.

1968- The Catholic Worker opens St. Joseph's House at 36 East First Street, where it still resides today.

1968- Civil rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

1972- While protesting in support of Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworkers in California, Day is arrested for the final time.

1975- The final U.S. combat troops are withdrawn from Vietnam after 10 years of armed conflict.

1979- Saint Teresa of Calcutta visits Dorothy at Maryhouse in New York.

1960

1970

haunted by god

"'All my life I have been haunted by God,' as Kirilloff said in *The Possessed*. This must indeed be so, as former friends and comrades have said this of me... A Cleveland Communist said once,

'Dorothy was never a Communist. She was too religious.' How much did I hear of religion as a child? Very little, and yet my heart leaped when I heard the name of God. I do believe every soul

has a tendency toward God. 'As soon as man recalls the Godhead, a certain sweet movement fills his heart... Our understanding has never such great joy as when thinking of God,' St. Francis de Sales writes." (LL, 12)



"Children look at things very directly and simply. I did not see anyone taking off his coat and giving it to the poor. I didn't see anyone having a banquet and calling in the lame, the halt and the blind. And those who were doing it, like the Salvation Army, did not appeal to me. **I wanted, though I did not know it then, a synthesis. I wanted life and I wanted the abundant life. I wanted it for others too.** I did not want just the few, the missionary-minded people like the Salvation Army, to be kind to the poor, as the poor. I wanted everyone to be kind. I wanted every home to be open to the lame, the halt and the blind, the way it had been after the San Francisco earthquake. Only then did people really live, really love their brothers. In such love was the abundant life and I did not have the slightest idea how to find it." (LL, 39)



"It was Mrs. Barrett who gave me my first impulse towards Catholicism. It was around ten o'clock in the morning that I went up to Kathryn's to call for her to come out and play... In the front bedroom Mrs. Barrett was on her knees, saying her prayers. She turned to tell me that Kathryn and the children had all gone to the store and went on with her praying. And I felt a warm burst of love toward Mrs. Barrett that I have never forgotten, a feeling of gratitude and happiness that still warms my heart when I remember her. She had God, and there was beauty and joy in her life. All through my life what she was doing remained with me. Mrs. Barrett in her sordid little tenement flat finished her breakfast dishes at ten o'clock in the morning and got down on her knees and prayed to God." (UR, 26)

Photos by Bob Fitch; © Stanford University Libraries

"It was on one of these cold, bitter winter evenings that I first heard *The Hound of Heaven*, that magnificent poem of Francis Thompson. Gene could recite all of it, and he used to sit there, looking dour and black, his head sunk on his chest, sighing, 'And now my heart is as a broken fount wherein tear-drippings stagnate.' It is one of those poems that awakens the soul, recalls to it the fact that God is its destiny. The idea of this pursuit fascinated me, the inevitableness of it, the recurrence of it, made me feel that inevitably I would have to pause in the mad rush of living to remember my first beginning and last end." (UR, 90)

preference for god: entering the catholic church

In The Long Loneliness, Day describes how her experience of natural peace and happiness opened her longing for God and led her increasingly to pray. She was living on Staten Island with the man she loved, Forster Batterham, and she conceived a child. While pregnant, she decided that she wanted her child to be baptized and to belong to the Church. Not knowing any Catholics to speak to, she approached a nun she saw walking along the road, Sister Aloysia, and asked how she could have her child baptized. Sister Aloysia challenged Day, telling her she too must become a Catholic if she wanted to raise her daughter Catholic and she visited a few times a week to give her catechism lessons. After her daughter Tamar Teresa was baptized, Day herself entered the Catholic Church in December 1927, which led to the loss of the man she loved, since he would not marry her.

"I had known Forster a long time before we contracted our common-law relationship, and I have always felt that **it was life with him that brought me natural happiness, that brought me to God.**"
(LL, 134)



"One of the disconcerting facts about the spiritual life is that God takes you at your word. Sooner or later one is given a chance to prove his love. The very word 'diligo,' the Latin word used for 'love,' means 'I prefer.' It was all very well to love God in His works, in the beauty of His creation which was crowned for me by the birth of my child. Forster had made the physical world come alive for me and had awakened in my heart a flood of gratitude. The final object of this love and gratitude was God. No human creature could receive or contain so vast a flood of love and joy as I often felt after the birth of my child. With this came the need to worship, to adore. I had heard many say that they wanted to worship God in their own way and did not need a Church in which to praise Him, nor a body of people with whom to associate themselves. But I did not agree to this. My very experience as a radical, my whole make-up, led me to want to associate myself with others, with the masses, in loving and praising God. Without even looking into the claims of the Catholic Church, I was willing to admit that for me she was the one true Church." (LL, 139)

the catholic worker

The Catholic Worker was the fruit of the synthesis that Dorothy Day had been seeking throughout her life and conversion, made possible by her friendship with Peter Maurin. It constituted both a place and an idea, a lived reality inspired by the beatitudes, Catholic social teaching, and ressourcement philosophy.

"We here at the Catholic Worker are surrounded by the lame, the halt and the blind, the utterly destitute, and it is a seemingly hopeless situation. And we can do so little. Yet young people, who come to us to give us a few months or years of their lives, learn here what it is to love, to hope, to rejoice." (Dorothy Day, *The Catholic Worker*, July-August 1973)

What little could be done was rooted in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy described in Matthew 25. Maurin summarized Matthew's

Gospel in one of his *Easy Essays*, stating,

"In the first centuries of Christianity the hungry were fed at a personal sacrifice, the naked were clothed at a personal sacrifice, the homeless were sheltered at a personal sacrifice. And because the poor were fed, clothed and sheltered at a personal sacrifice, the pagans used to say about the Christians, 'See how they love each other.'" (EE, 110)

Maurin's folksy essays were published in the movement's paper, *The Catholic Worker*. His column provided space to explain the doings of the *Catholic Worker* against the backdrop of its intellectual roots, in particular the concept of personalism. Personalism emphasizes the dignity of the human person and highlights the need for one's individual initiative in living out their faith and attending to the needs of others.

The newspaper was the

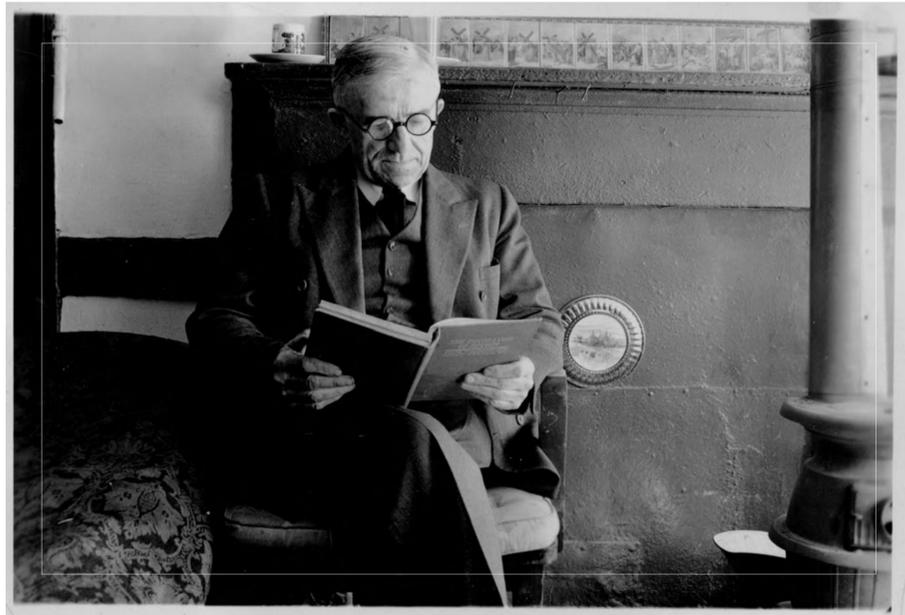
first element of the Catholic Worker to be initiated and was followed by the opening of houses of hospitality and later farming communes. Each initiative would be a place to live out the radicalness that Day and Maurin perceived as necessary to confront the poverty of man in both the flesh and spirit and to build a society based on the dignity of work and personal responsibility.

Together, the three aspects of the Catholic Worker continue to embody the same paradoxes lived in Dorothy herself. It is a place of work and prayer, where "editors also cook", with equal footing in city and country. It exists as a utopian vision intermingled with the dirt and grime that comes with service of the poor. It seeks to overturn the social order, but does so by responding to the immediate needs of men and women and through a call to personal conversion.



peter maurin: co-founder and unlikely friend

"Peter Maurin is most truly the founder of the Catholic Worker movement. I would never have had an idea in my head about such work if it had not been for him. I was a journalist, I loved to write, but was far better at making criticism of the social order than of offering any constructive ideas in relation to it. Peter had a program, [and] I tried to follow it." (PM, XVII)



Dorothy Day had been a Catholic for five years at the end of 1932 and she "still did not know personally one Catholic layman" (LL, p. 166).

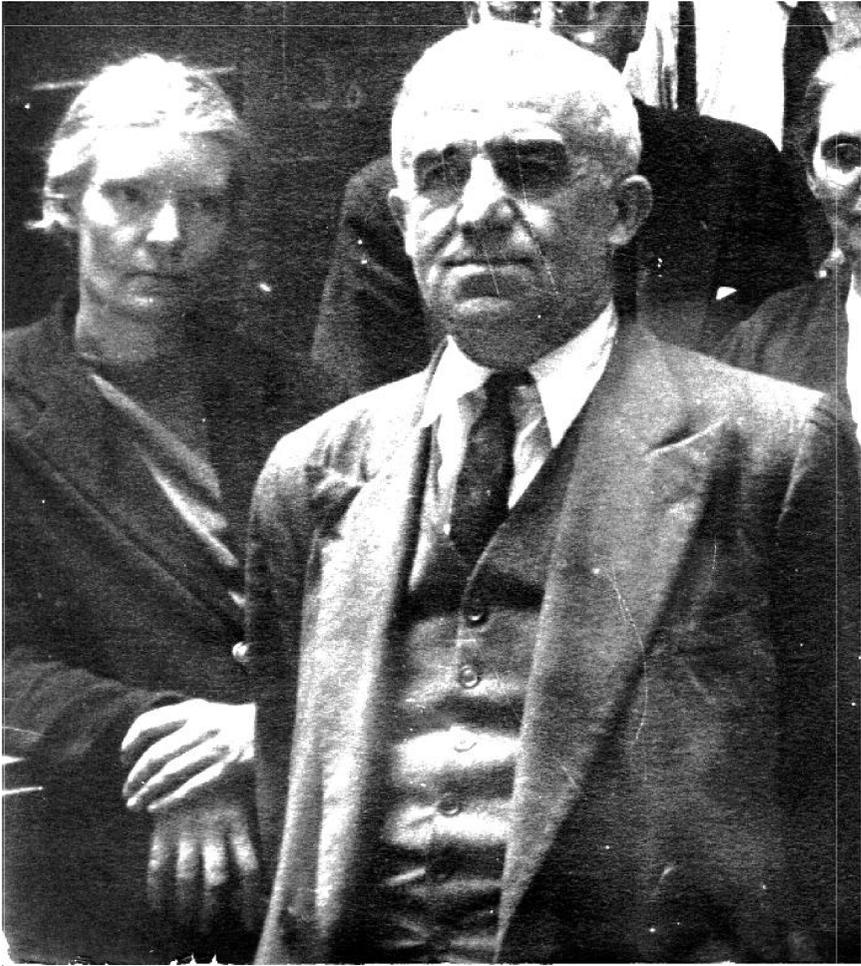
After covering a Communist-organized march of unemployed workers in Washington, D.C. she went to pray at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on the patronal feast day of the Basilica. There she prayed "that some way would open up for me to use what talents I possessed for my fellow workers, for the poor" (LL, 166), and upon her return to New York, Peter Maurin, a Frenchman of peasant origin, was waiting for her:

"When I walked into my apartment, I found waiting for me a short, stocky man in his mid-fifties, as ragged and rugged as any of the marchers I had left...This man introduced himself briefly: 'I am Peter Maurin.' ... 'George Shuster, editor of *The Commonweal*, told me to look you up. Also, a red-headed Irish Communist in Union Square told me to see you. He says we think alike.'" (LL, 169)

It was through Peter that Day discovered the unity between her thirst for justice and her faith in Christ, between love of the poor and love of the Church. Or as Francis Sicius put it, "Peter provided for Dorothy Day the connection between the eternal and the finite" (PM, p. XXV).

"I was sure of Peter - sure he was a saint and a great teacher-although, to be perfectly honest, I wondered if I really liked Peter sometimes. He was twenty years older than I, he spoke with an accent so thick it was hard to penetrate to the thought beneath, he had a one-track mind, he did not like music, he did not read Dickens or Dostoevski, and he did not bathe. I am sensitive about writing these things, but I feel I must point out that it was no natural 'liking' that made me hold Peter in reverent esteem and gave me confidence that all I learned from him was sound, and that the program he laid down for us was the right one for our time." (LF, 105).

peter maurin:
teacher and witness



Dorothy wrote of Peter: "I do know this, that when people come into contact with Peter Maurin, they change, they awaken, they begin to see, things become as new, they look at life in the light of the Gospels. They admit the truth he possesses and lives by, and though they themselves fail to go the whole way, their faces are turned at least toward the light..." (PM, 91)

*In the second issue of the paper, The Catholic Worker, Peter articulated his "program" in this way: "My program stands for three things: **Round-table discussions** is one and I hope to have the first one at the Manhattan Lyceum the last Sunday in June. I want Communists, radicals, priests, and laity. I want everyone to set forth his views. I want clarification of thought...The next step in the program is **houses of hospitality**. In the Middle Ages it was an obligation of the bishop to provide houses of hospitality or hospices for the wayfarer. They are especially necessary now and necessary to my program, as halfway houses... [M]en gathered from our round-table discussions will be recruited to work in the houses cooperatively and eventually be sent out to farm colonies or agronomic universities. Which comes to the third step in my program. **People will have to go back to the land**. The machine has displaced labor. The cities are overcrowded. The land will have to take care of them." (LF, 22-23)*

Peter often expressed his ideas and teachings in pithy sayings and in essays written in verse, which came to be called his 'easy essays.'

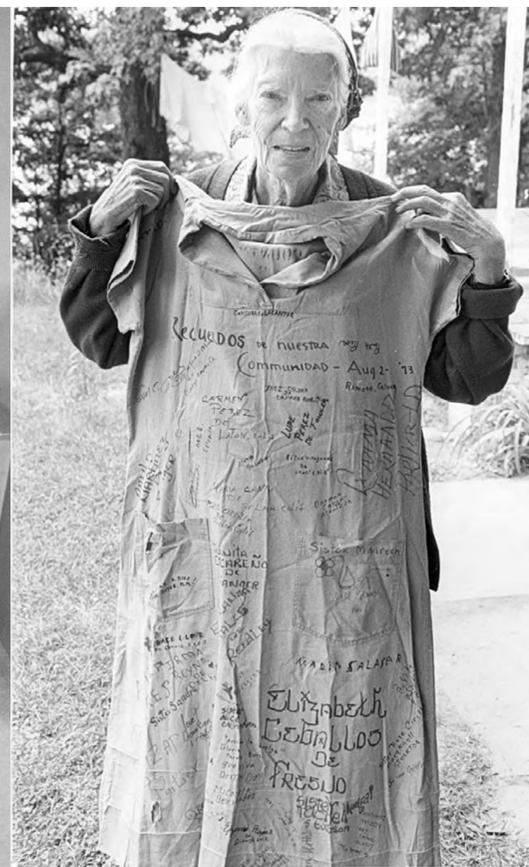
"The sermon on the Mount will be called practical when Christians make up their mind to practice it." (PM, 117)

"A personalist is a go-giver not a go-getter." (LF, 21)

"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." (PM, 50)

'the people'

"There is so much more to the Catholic Worker Movement than labor and capital. **It is the people who are important, not the masses.** When I read Pope Pius XII's Christmas message, in which he distinguished between the masses and the people, I almost wished I had named our publication *The People*, instead of *The Catholic Worker*." (LL, 221)



For Dorothy, solidarity with the poor meant welcoming and living relationships with particular people, like Anna and Margaret.

"'What had become of Anna?' someone just asked. How, how to keep track over the years of those who come and go?... Anna was a short, shuffling woman with a broad, flat face, a big smiling mouth, and little tufts of hair growing out of her chin... Usually she wore several dresses and several coats. She peeled off the layers according to the weather. Anna's vanity showed only in her style of headdress. She was always winding strange pieces of silk of many colors around her head in fantastic turbans... Anna was poor yet not destitute. 'But I won't sleep in a bed,' she said. 'I haven't slept in one for thirty years. I can't begin now.' So she took a corner of the hallway where no one passed. She would curl up there with a bundle under her head. One cold night I ventured to put a blanket over her. She got up hastily, left the house, and did not come back for several days. If we left a blanket lying around the office, however, she would pick it up and use it. She was our guest in this way for five years or more... Our aim is to make people happy. We certainly succeeded with Anna in the end, but it took years before she made herself at home with us." (LF, 153-155)

"Margaret used to rock in the one rocking chair, which was conceded to be hers. When little Margaret first came to us, it was with a shopping bag containing all her belongings. She told me how, little by little, she had gone down in the world—from running a furnished rooming-house, to living in a small furnished room, and then, finally, being evicted from that. Turned down by the City social workers on some technicality when she applied for relief, she slept in the subway for a few nights until a friendly priest found her and sent her to us. When she came, she was so fatigued that she stayed in bed for a week and ate voraciously everything we offered her. After recovering her strength, she never spent another day in bed until the last week of her life. She helped us by braiding rugs out of old neckties, and by taking care of the clothing room several hours a day." (LF, 215)

encounters

Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) was a Russian Marxist revolutionary. After the 1917 October Revolution, he became one of the five members of the Politburo. He was exiled from the USSR in 1929 when Stalin came to power. A Soviet agent assassinated Trotsky in Mexico.

Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997) was an American poet and writer who won the National Book Award for Poetry in 1974. He was one of the main artists of the Beat Generation, a social activist, a non-violent protester against the Vietnam War and a Buddhist.

Diego Rivera (1886-1957) was a Mexican painter, muralist and husband of the artist Frida Kahlo. His most famous work is *Man at the Crossroads*.

Ernesto Cardenal (1925-) of Nicaragua is a former Catholic priest, poet and politician. As a member of the Sandinista party, he was Minister of Culture from 1979 to 1987.

Joan Baez (1941-) is an American singer and civil rights, peace and environmental activist.

Cesar Chavez (1927-1993) was an American labor leader and civil rights activist who founded the National Farm Workers Association. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1994.

Sigrid Undset (1882-1949) was a Norwegian novelist who converted to Catholicism in 1924 and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1928. Her most famous work is the trilogy *Kristin Lavransdatter*.

Ignazio Silone (1900-1978) was an Italian anti-Fascist novelist and politician who was awarded the Jerusalem Prize in 1969. His most famous works are *Fontamara* and *Bread and Wine*.

Robert Kennedy (1925-1968) was U.S. Attorney General (1961-1964) during the Administration of his brother President John F. Kennedy. RFK represented New York as a U.S. Senator (1965-1968). While campaigning to become the Democratic presidential candidate he was assassinated on June 5, 1968.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver (1921-2009), an advocate for children, founded the Special Olympics in 1968 and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1984. Pope Benedict XVI named her a Dame in the papal Order of St. Gregory the Great in 2006. Her siblings included President John F. Kennedy.

Coretta Scott King (1927-2006) was an American civil rights leader, wife of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and founder of the King Center.

Lanza del Vasto (1901-1981) was an Italian peace activist, disciple of Mohandas Gandhi, promoter of nonviolence and founder of the Community of the Ark.

Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966) was an English writer who converted to Catholicism in 1930. His most famous work is *Brideshead Revisited*.

Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972) was a Polish-American rabbi, theologian and philosopher who represented American Jews at Vatican II. He authored influential theology books, including *Man is Not Alone* and *God in Search of Man*.

Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) was a French philosopher who converted to Catholicism in 1906 and specialized in Thomism, based on the work and thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. He was involved in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. His major works include *Integral Humanism* and *The Peasant of the Garonne*.

Father Thomas Merton, O.C.S.O (1915-1968) was an American Trappist monk and writer who converted to Catholicism in 1938. He entered the Abbey of Gethsemani (Kentucky) in 1941. His most famous work is his autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain*.

St. Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997) was an Albanian nun and missionary popularly known as Mother Teresa. She arrived in India in 1929 and founded the Missionaries of Charity in 1950 to serve the poorest of the poor. St. Teresa was canonized on September 4, 2016

In October of 1963, while on a vacation and speaking trip to Italy, Dorothy Day met Fr. Giussani and wrote about it in her travel journal, which the Catholic Worker originally published. (Traces, January 6, 2006).

"When I was in Milan last May, I spoke to the university students and Bill Congdon translated my talk. The meeting was held after a Sunday morning Mass at the Church of St. Anthony, Abbot, where the transepts and the body of the church were packed with students who began their worship with Prime... The students were intent and disciplined during this long meeting. Don Luigi Giussani is the inspiration of this work among the youth of Milan. They are given the best in intellectual and spiritual leadership and Don Giussani is not afraid of taking their time, asking all, demanding search, research, more meetings, preparation for that moment, that opportunity, that choice which will affect their entire lives. All this emphasizes the need to intensify their prayer life. The meetings stimulate their minds, inflame their hearts. Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh. There cannot be too many words of this kind, words that crowd out frivolities. Read, study. 'Wisdom is the most active thing.'" (Traces, January 6, 2006)

friends

Rayna Prohme

Rayna Prohme (Simons) (1864-1927) was a journalist born in Chicago. She studied at the University of Illinois. After the Russian Revolution (1917), Prohme joined the American Communist Party and moved to China with her husband William Prohme. In 1926 she moved to Moscow to study at the Lenin Institute and died there of encephalitis.

"Then in the midst of the bare hardship of my days, a new love came into my life, a new love of friendship that was also as clear as a bell, crystal clear, with no stain of self-seeking, a give-and-take friendship that meant companionship and sharing... She was single-minded, one of the pure of heart, and her interest in life was as intense as her interest in books... In spite of brilliant scholarship and an outstanding personality, good looks and wealth, she was not invited to join any sorority. It was my first contact with anti-Semitism... When I think of Rayna, I think of Mauriac's statement...that those who serve the cause of the masses, the poor, working for truth and justice, have worked for Christ even while denying Him." (LL, 47-48, 71)

Mike Gold

Itzok Isaac Granich (1893-1967) was the son of Jewish immigrants and born in New York City. He became a regular contributor to the Socialist Journal, The Masses and the New York Call and took the pseudonym Mike Gold. In 1926 he was appointed as editor of The New Masses. He died in California. His only novel, Jews Without Money (1930), was an immediate success and was translated into over 14 languages.

"When I first met Mike, I had been working on the socialist New York Call...It was through his writing that I came to know Mike... My suffering at that time was brief, but Mike's was profound." (SW 148)

"Some years after the war I saw Mike in Chicago, where I worked briefly for Bob Minor on The Liberator... Mike was editor of The New Masses at the time, and I wrote a few things for him. He seemed to understand my misery and to sense that there had to be a price to pay, sometimes a heartbreaking price, in following one's own vocation." (SW, 147-149)

"I remember the one time Mike had turned bitter against me and The Catholic Worker. "The brotherly love The Catholic Worker preaches would be more understandable if it were not that they were pro-Franco during the Spanish Civil War, "he wrote in his column the Daily Worker. Were not, of course pro-Franco, but pacifists... I call attention to these fundamental differences in religion and in the attitude towards force to show how there can be a strong personal friendship between a Catholic and a Communist, and a constant seeking of concordances and agreements." (SW 150)

Eugene O'Neill

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill (1888-1953) was an American Nobel laureate playwright. He spent several years at sea, where he suffered depression and alcoholism. O'Neill's first published play, Beyond the Horizon, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. In 1936 he received the Nobel Prize in Literature. The drama Long Day's Journey into Night is considered one of the finest American plays of the 20th century.

"It was on one of these cold, bitter winter evenings that I first heard The Hound of Heaven, that magnificent poem of Francis Thompson. Gene could recite all of it, and he used to sit there, looking dour and black, his head sunk on his chest, sighing, 'And now my heart is as a broken fount wherein tear-drippings stagnate.' It is one of those poems that awakens the soul, recalls to it the fact that God is its destiny." (UR, 90)

"I thought of Gene, and his sad death, a death expected for some years but tragic in its loneliness. He died 'out of the Church.' He did not receive his Viaticum. He did not make his peace with God, the 'practicing Catholic' would say. And I thought of our obligation to pray for the dead. It is one of the works of mercy, 'to pray for the living and the dead.'" (TC, 8)

"Gene seemed always to be setting his will against God. Since he brought to me such a consciousness of God—since he recited to me 'The Hound of Heaven,' I owe him my prayers. There is no time with God and I would be sinning against hope, faith and charity if I did not believe that my prayers, and whoever else is praying for the soul of Gene, are not heard." (TC, 9)

Ammon Hennacy

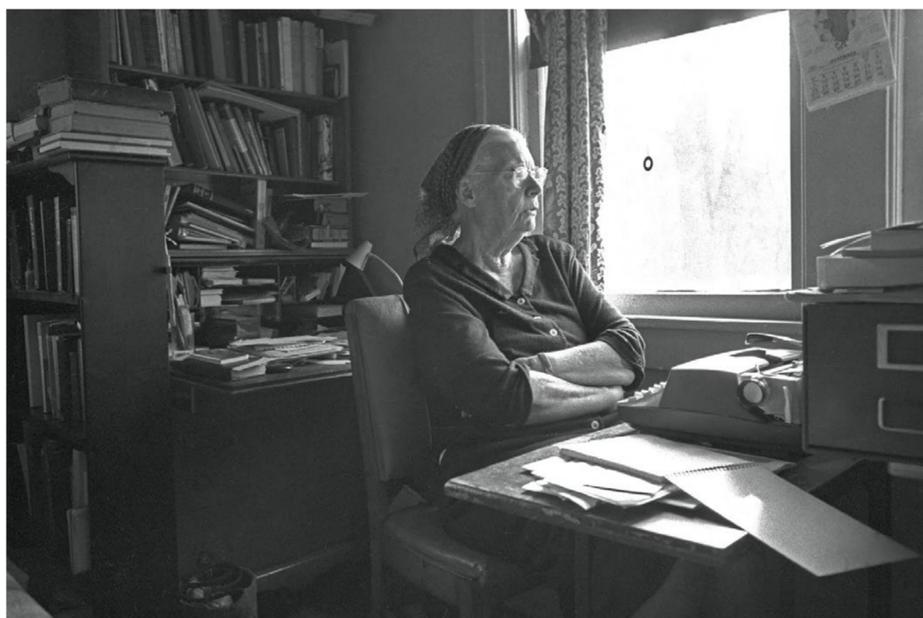
Ammon Ashford Hennacy (1893-1970) was an American pacifist, social activist and member of the Catholic Worker Movement. In 1952, he was baptized Catholic with Dorothy Day as his godmother. He became the associate editor of the Catholic Worker in 1953. In 1965, Hennacy left the Catholic Church and thereafter called himself a "non-church Christian." He died from a heart attack.

"One of the great things that Ammon did for the Catholic Worker back in the thirties (we began publishing in 1933) was to increase our ecumenical spirit. There was not much talk of ecumenism in those days in the Holy Roman Catholic Church. His association with us began in the city of Milwaukee where he was living at that time and where we had a house of hospitality. Communists, socialists, anarchists, and an assortment of unbelievers and Protestants, of who knew what denomination, used to come to our Friday night meetings... Which brings me again to Ammon's life of hard work and voluntary poverty. In those two aspects he outshone everyone. There were a few hall bedrooms in the old Chrystie Street house and Ammon had one of them most of the time, though he never hesitated to give up the room to guests... Of course, Ammon was a romantic Irishman, basically, and never lost that sense of drama, that love of life, tragic though its outcome so often was. He literally would have liked to give his life for the obliteration of wars and all injustice from the face of the earth." (The Catholic Worker, February 1970, 2,8)

loneliness

communion

"[D]uring that time I felt the spell of the long loneliness descend on me. In all that great city of seven millions, I found no friends; I had no work; I was separated from my fellows. Silence in the midst of city noises oppressed me. My own silence, the feeling that I had no one to talk to overwhelmed me so that my very throat was constricted; my heart was heavy with unuttered thoughts; I wanted to weep my loneliness away...and yet, as I walked these streets back in 1917 **I wanted to go and live among these surroundings; in some mysterious way I felt that I would never be freed from this burden of loneliness and sorrow unless I did.**" (LL, 51)



Photos by Bob Fitch; © Stanford University Libraries



"The only answer in this life, to the loneliness we are all bound to feel, is community. The living together, working together, sharing together, loving God and loving our brother, and living close to him in community so we can show our love for Him." (LL, 243)

"A conversion is a lonely experience. We do not know what is going on in the depths of the heart and soul of another. We scarcely know ourselves." (SW, 9)

"I explained that we were not a community of saints but rather a slipshod group of individuals who were trying to work out certain principles—the chief of which was an analysis of man's freedom and what it implied. We could not put people out on the street, I said, because they acted irrationally and hatefully. We were trying to overcome hatred with love, to understand the forces that made men what they are...to change them, if possible, from lions into lambs. It was...a paying of the cost of love." (LF, 50)

sacrifice

fulfillment

"When one is 'in love' one feels a renewal, a sense of being thoroughly alive, a feeling, a consciousness of every sense, alert, keen, and functioning normally to its fullest extent. Or rather, one might also say an expectation of fulfillment, an expectation of flowering, a hunger and thirst for the ineffable where death is swallowed up in victory when we will be dissolved and be with the beloved. We look for happiness in sex, for pleasure, for ease, for fulfillment; and we lose it or spoil it in two ways: first by not accepting it all as from God, as a sample of God's love, as a foretaste of a new heaven and a new earth, by seeking such happiness as an end in itself; and second by frittering away our taste for true happiness. If we eat always between meals, we have no taste for the banquet. If we listen

all day to cheap claptrap on the radio we have no taste for the symphony. Our ears, our tastes are dulled. And in these days, when all the senses are indulged and catered to, there is a living on the surface, a surface excitement, a titillation, which never goes below to the great depths of passion." (DD, 107-108, September 3, 1945)



"There was the legislation of the Church in regard to marriage, a stumbling block to many. That was where I began to be troubled, to be afraid. To become a Catholic meant for me to give up a mate with whom I was much in love. **It got to the point where it was the simple question of whether I chose God or man.** I had known enough of love to know that a good healthy family life was as near to heaven as one could get in this life. There was another sample of heaven, of the enjoyment of God. The very sexual act itself was used again and again in Scripture as a figure of the beatific vision. It was not because I was tired of sex, satiated, disillusioned, that I turned to God. Radical friends used to insinuate this. It was because through a whole love, both physical and spiritual, I came to know God." (LL, 140)



"Faith that works through love is the mark of the supernatural life. God always gives us a chance to show our preference for Him. With Abraham it was to sacrifice his only son. With me it was to give up my married life with Forster. You do these things blindly, not because it is your natural inclination—you are going against nature when you do them—but because you wish to live in conformity with the will of God." (LL, 256)

prayer

activism

"Nursing was like newspaper work. It was impossible to suffer long over the tragedies which took place every day. One was too close to them to have perspective. They happened too continuously. They weighed on you, gave you a still and subdued feeling, but the very fact that you were continually busy left you no time to brood... What were we here for, what were we doing, what was the meaning of our lives? One thing I was sure of, and that was that these fellow workers and I were performing an act of worship. I felt that it was necessary for man to worship, that he was most truly himself when engaged in that act." (LL,92-93)



Photos by Bob Fitch; © Stanford University Libraries

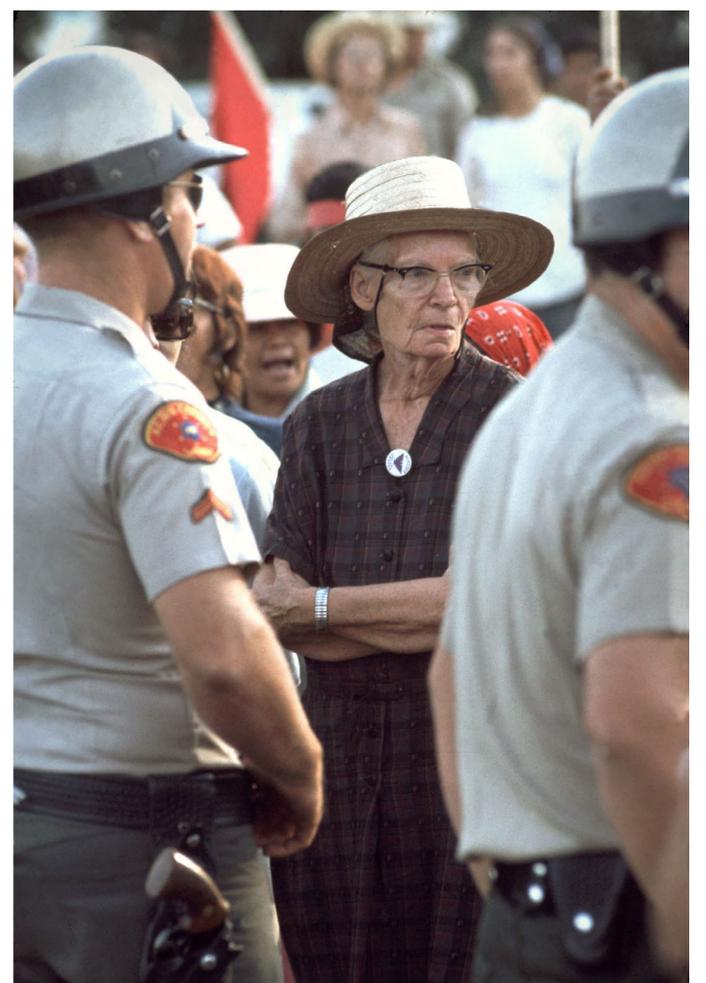
"If we have failed to achieve Peter's ideals, it is perhaps because we have tried to be all things to all men: to run a school, an agronomic university, a retreat house, an old people's home, a shelter for delinquent boys and expectant mothers, a graduate school for the study of communities, of religions, of man and the state, of war and peace. We have aimed high; and we hope we have accomplished enough at least 'to arouse the conscience.' Here is the way— or rather here is a way— for those who love God and their neighbor to try to live by the two great commandments. The frustrations that we experience are exercises in faith and hope, which are supernatural virtues. With prayer, one can go on cheerfully and even happily. Without prayer, how grim a journey!" (LF,206)

"Actually our Tax situation and the threats which hang over us involve nowhere near as much suffering and heartbreak as the moral, physical and mental illnesses of many of those around us which involve so many who are dear to us. It is then that I turn most truly for solace, for strength to endure, to the psalms. I may read them without understanding, and mechanically at first, but I do believe they are the Word, and that Scripture on the one hand and the Eucharist, the Word made Flesh, on the other, have in them that strength which no power on earth can withstand."

(The Catholic Worker, June 1972)

"I must write about prayer because it is as necessary to life as breathing. It is food and drink."

(The Catholic Worker, July-August 1973)



radicalism

obedience

"It was an age-old battle, the war of the classes, that stirred in me when I thought of the Sacco-Vanzetti case in Boston. Where were the Catholic voices crying out for these men? **How I longed to make a synthesis reconciling body and soul, this world and the next**, the teachings of Prince Peter Kropotkin and Prince Demetrius Gallitzin, who had become a missionary priest in rural Pennsylvania... No wonder there was such a strong conflict going on in my mind and heart." (LL, 151)



Photo by Robert Lax

"When I became a Catholic, it never occurred to me to question how much freedom I had or how much authority the Church had to limit that freedom... I had reached the point where I wanted to obey." (The Catholic Worker, December 17, 1966)

"During the first year of the existence of the Catholic Worker, Cardinal Hayes sent us a message through Monsignor Chidwick, then pastor of St. Agnes Church in New York. The Cardinal approved of our work, he said. It was understood that we would make mistakes; the important thing was not to persist in them. And of course we made mistakes. We have erred often in judgment and in our manner of writing and presenting the truth as we see it. I mean the truth about the temporal order in which we live and in which, as laymen, we must play our parts... When it comes to concerns of the temporal order—capital vs. labor, for example—on all these matters the Church has not spoken infallibly. Here there is room for wide differences of opinion. We are often asked the question, 'What does the Church think of our work and our radicalism?' The Church as such has never made any judgment on us." (LF, 122)



Photo by Mottke Weissman

"To see Christ in others, especially those in authority, as David saw it in Saul even when Saul kept trying to kill him. Even as Uriah did when he must have known the gossip of the court. To see Christ and only Christ even when following one's conscience incurs what looks like defiance and disobedience. To guard the spirit in which one resists. The spirit of a child, combined with the judgment of a man. 'To be subject to every living creature.' We obey when we go to jail. Either register or go to jail. We are, after all, given a choice. I'm afraid I have not kept this spirit of respect towards Senator [Joseph] McCarthy. There is no room for contempt of others in the Christian life. I speak and write so much better than I perform. But we can never lower the ideal because we fail in living up to it." (DD, 199, "Notes for September Conf.", 1953)

"What a world problem, this authority and freedom, and the tension between the two! And how we Americans have held onto the Christian ideas of freedom and the dignity of human personality while forgetting that freedom is based on complete submission, complete meekness to God." (PM, 163)

personal conversion revolution



Marquette University Libraries

"The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us? When we begin to take the lowest place, to wash the feet of others, to love our brothers with that burning love, that passion, which led to the Cross, then we can truly say, 'Now I have begun.' Day after day we accept our failure, but we accept it because of our knowledge of the victory of the Cross. God has given us our vocation, as He gave it to the small boy who contributed his few loaves and fishes to help feed the multitude, and which Jesus multiplied so that He fed five thousand people. Loaves and fishes! How much we owe to God in praise, honor, thanksgiving! In our neighborhood the church bells ring at seven, eight, and nine o'clock. Every day we go to whichever mass is most convenient and stay awhile for a thanksgiving." (LF, 215)

"Most Catholics speak of Communists with the bated breath of horror. And yet those poor unfortunate ones who have not the faith to guide them are apt to stand more chance in the eyes of God than those indifferent Catholics who stand by and do nothing for 'the least of them' of whom Christ spoke." (The Catholic Worker, June 1934)



Photo by Robert Lax; Marquette University Libraries

"Last night I spoke at a little Methodist church on Mt. Tabor. Probably I was the first Catholic to ever speak there, and I spoke simply on the love of God and the love of one's neighbor, as the dominant force in the work of rebuilding the social order... Some of the people left the church when I began to speak. The young people were laughing and talking among themselves, and it was difficult." (DD, 55, February 25, 1940)

"From that 'year' I spent away from my work, I began to understand the greatness of the Little Flower [St. Therese of Lisieux]. By doing nothing, she did everything. She let loose powers, consolations, a stream of faith, hope and love that will never cease to flow. How much richer we are because of her." (DD, 90-91, 1944)

voluntary poverty

the hundredfold

"Poverty is a strange and elusive thing. I have tried to write about it, its joys and its sorrows, for thirty years now; and I could probably write about it for another thirty without conveying what I feel about it as well as I would like. I condemn poverty and I advocate it; poverty is simple and complex at once; it is a social phenomenon and a personal matter. Poverty is an elusive thing, and a paradoxical one." (LF, 7 1)

"To be hated and scorned by one's very own-this is poverty. This is perfect joy."
(DD, 62,
July 24, 1940)



Photos by Bob Fitch; © Stanford University Libraries

"Much of the time we are so lighthearted about our work that we are accused of 'undue levity,' as a melancholy Jewish friend termed it. We are called to this work because it is our vocation. We are happy in slums and we would be unhappy in a palace. We belong where we are because God put us here. The places are like refugee camps in their hardships, but when so many in the world are living under such circumstances we would not be happy unless we so lived... And in poverty we are rich, because 'all things are ours, whether it be... of this world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come. For all are ours, and we are Christ's and Christ is God's.'" (PM, 120-121)

"What a delightful thing it is to be boldly profligate, to ignore the price of coffee and go on serving the long line of destitute men who come to us, good coffee and the finest of bread. 'Nothing is too good for the poor,' our editor Tom Sullivan says, and he likes that aphorism especially when he is helping himself to something extra good." (LL, 235)



"It is hard to comfort ourselves with the reflection that if we did not get rest and food we would not be able to do the work we do. We can reflect that some of the poverty we profess comes from lack of privacy, lack of time to ourselves. We can list instances of sights and sounds, smells and feelings that one can never get used to nor fail to cringe from. Yet God has blessed us so abundantly, has provided for us so constantly over these twenty-five years that we are always in a paradoxical position of rejoicing and saying to ourselves, 'It is good, Lord, to be here.' We feel overwhelmed by graces, and yet we know we fail to correspond to them. We fail far more than seven times daily, failing in our vocation of poverty especially." (Commonweal, December 27, 1957)

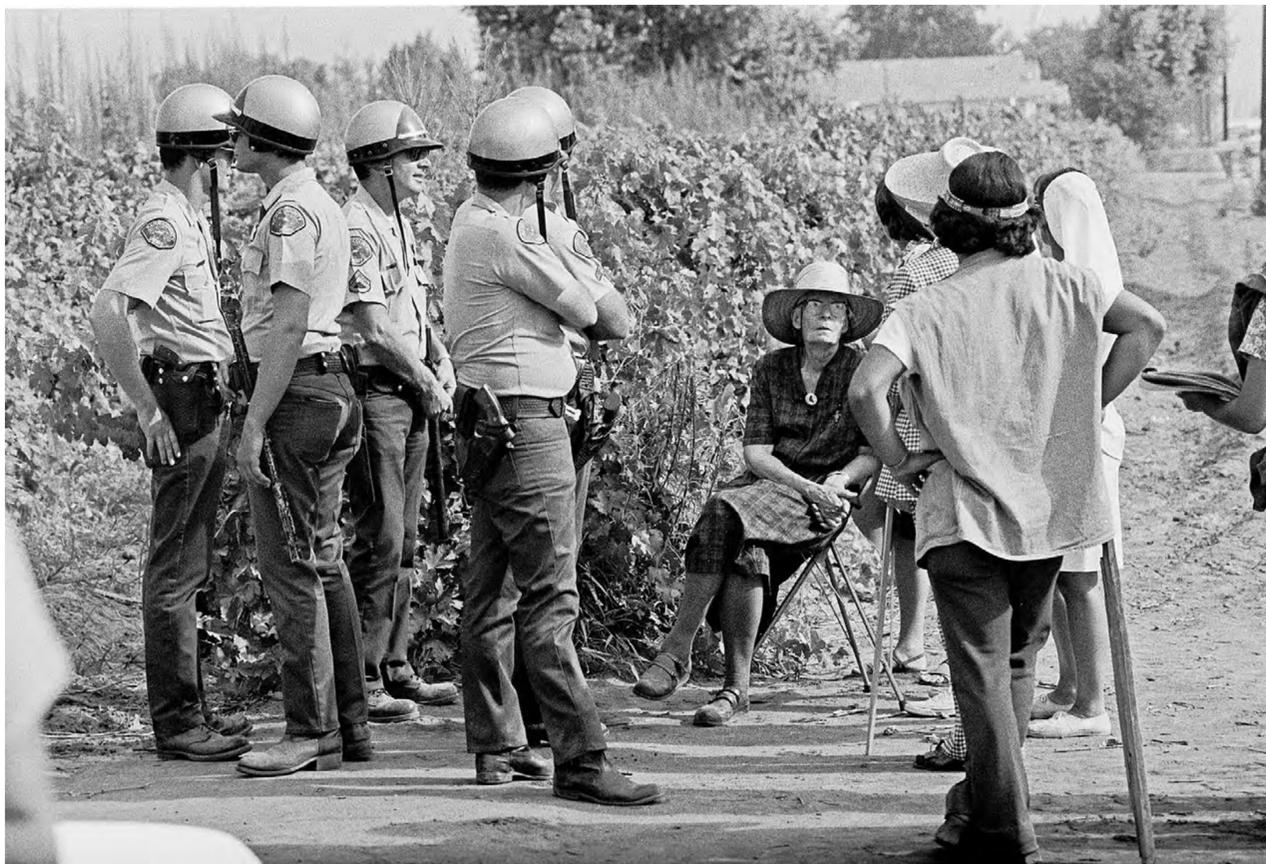
resistance

pacifism

"Our pacifism must be a complete pacifism, and our love must grow in strength to overcome bitterness and resentments." (The Catholic Worker, April 1949)

"We will print the words of Christ who is with us always, even to the end of the world. 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, who makes His sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and unjust.'... We are still pacifists. Our manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount, which means that we will try to be peacemakers.

Speaking for many of our conscientious objectors, we will not participate in armed warfare or in making munitions, or by buying government bonds to prosecute the war, or in urging others to these efforts... But neither will we be carping in our criticism. We love our country and we love our President. We have been the only country in the world where men of all nations have taken refuge from oppression." (The Catholic Worker, January 1942)



Photos by Bob Fitch; © Stanford University Libraries

"What would you do if an armed maniac were to attack you, your child, your mother? How many times have we heard this. Restrain him, of course, but not kill him. Confine him if necessary. But perfect love casts out fear and love overcomes hatred. All this sounds trite but experience is not trite." (LL, 270)

"Can there be a just war? Can the conditions laid down by St. Thomas ever be fulfilled? What about the morality of the use of the atom bomb? What does God want me to do? And what am I capable of doing? Can I stand out against state and Church? Is it pride, presumption,

to think I have the spiritual capacity to use spiritual weapons in the face of the most gigantic tyranny the world has ever seen? Am I capable of enduring suffering, facing martyrdom? And alone? Again the long loneliness to be faced." (LL, 272-3)

work

providence

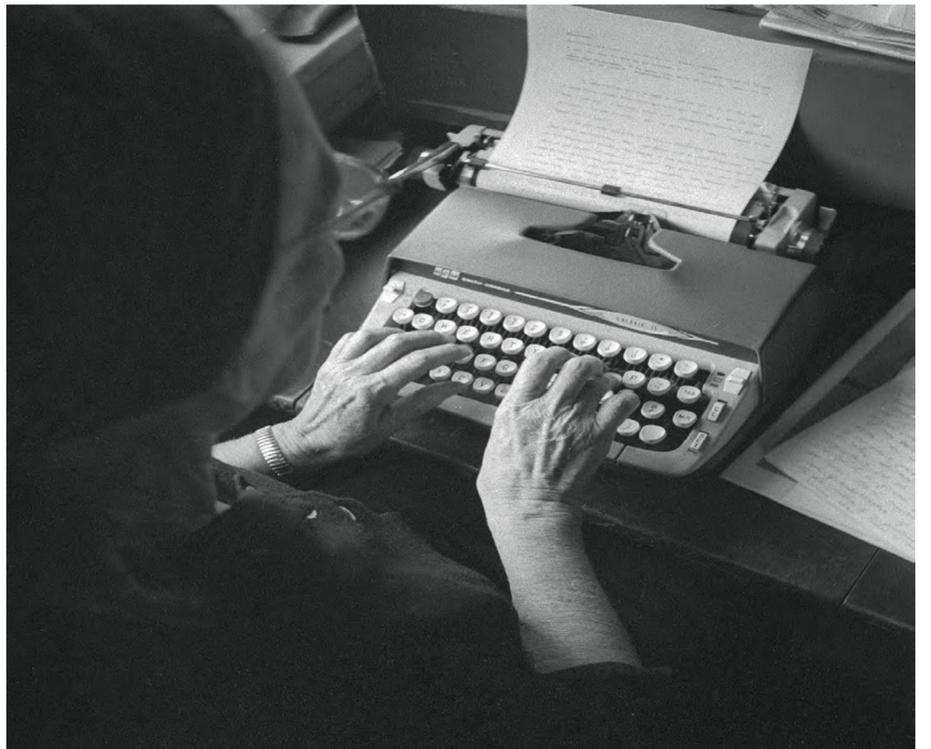
"Peter's Christian philosophy of work was this. God is our creator. God made us in His image and likeness. Therefore we are creators. He gave us a garden to till and cultivate. We become co-creators by our responsible acts, whether in bringing forth children, or producing food, furniture or clothing. The joy of creativeness should be ours." (LL, 227)



Photos by Bob Fitch; © Stanford University Libraries

"Sunshine in the middle of January is indeed a present. We get presents, lots of them, around The Catholic Worker office. During the holidays a turkey, a ham, baskets of groceries, five pounds of butter, plum puddings, flannel nightgowns and doll-babies, sheets, wash-rags, and blankets descended on us. There was even the offer of a quarter of a moose from Canada, but we didn't know where we could put it, so we refused it. We appealed in our last issue for beds, and eight beds came. Our House of Hospitality for unemployed women is furnished now, and the surplus that comes in we will give to unemployed people in the neighborhood... But the printing bill, the one hundred and sixty-five dollars of it which remains unpaid, confronts us and tries to intimidate us. But what is one hundred and sixty-five dollars to St. Joseph, or to St. Teresa of Avila either? We refuse to be affrighted (though of course the printer may be, 'oh, he of little faith!')." (SW, 60)

"I have never... been afraid to travel in our Catholic Worker cars, which are mostly discards from our readers. I have had clutches come out of the floor into my hands, the gas pedal fall down through the floor board, the battery fall out of the car, and innumerable tires go flat. And these mishaps always occurred miraculously enough within a step of home. Often at the end of a long trip just as I was pulling into the home stretch, the car would go dead." (LL, 230)



"We offer Him what we are going to do. If He wishes it to prosper, it will. We must depend solely on Him. Work as though everything depended on ourselves, and pray as though everything depended on God, as St. Ignatius says." (HH, 114)

joy

sorrow

Photo by Bob Fitch; © Stanford University Libraries



"Joy and sorrow, life and death, always so close together!" (LL, 242)

"What a driving power joy is! When I was unhappy and repentant in the past I turned to God, but it was my joy at having given birth to a child that made me do something definite." (LL, 141)



"I miss Tamar terribly, unhappily at night, but in the day not sadly. My nights are always in sadness and desolation and it seems as though as soon as I lie down I am on a rack of bitterness and pain. Then in the day I am again strong enough to make an act of faith and love and go on in peace and joy." (DD, 60-61, July 6, 1940)

"A sad world. We are surrounded by sadness. Michael grim and resentful, Carney drunk as well as mad. It is time of full moon. One must will to rejoice." (DD, 122, St. John's Day, June 24, 1948)

"I'm praying very hard for you this morning, because I myself have been through much of what you have been through. Twice I tried to take my life, and the dear Lord pulled me through that darkness—I was rescued from that darkness. My sickness was physical too since I had had an abortion with bad after-effects, and in a way my sickness of mind was a penance I had to endure. But God has been so good to me—I have known such joy in nature and work—in fulfilling myself, in using my God-given love of beauty to express myself. He has given me over and over again such joy and strength as he will surely give to you if you ask him." (SL, 510, February 6, 1973, Letter to a young woman)

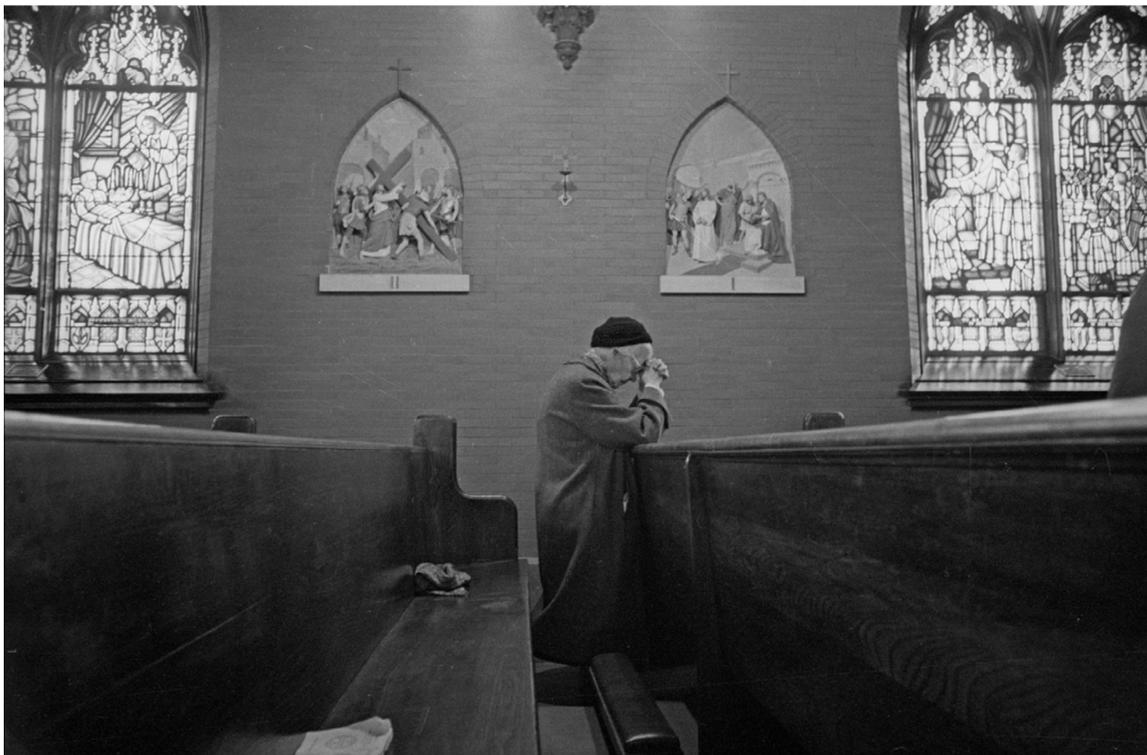
"A day of rejoicing and of sorrow. Again the twofold aspect of the Cross."
(DD, 91, Palm Sunday, 1944)

weakness

sanctity

"Suddenly I remembered coming home from a meeting in Brooklyn many years ago, sitting in an uncomfortable bus seat facing a few poor people. One of them, a downcast, ragged man, suddenly epitomized for me the desolation, the hopelessness of the destitute, and I began to weep. I had been struck by one of those 'beams of love,' wounded by it in a most particular way. It was my own condition that I was weeping about—my own hardness of heart, my own sinfulness. I recognized this as a moment of truth, an experience of what the New Catechism calls our 'tremendous, universal, inevitable and yet inexcusable incapacity to love.'... Perhaps I knew in that moment in the bus in Brooklyn what St. Augustine meant when he cried out, 'May I know myself so that I may know Thee.' Because I felt so strongly my nothingness, my powerlessness to do anything about this horrifying recognition of my own hardness of heart, it drove me to the recognition that in God alone was my strength. Without Him I could do nothing. Yet I could do all things in Him Who strengthened me. So there was happiness there, too. The tears were of joy as well as grief." (SW, 181-182)

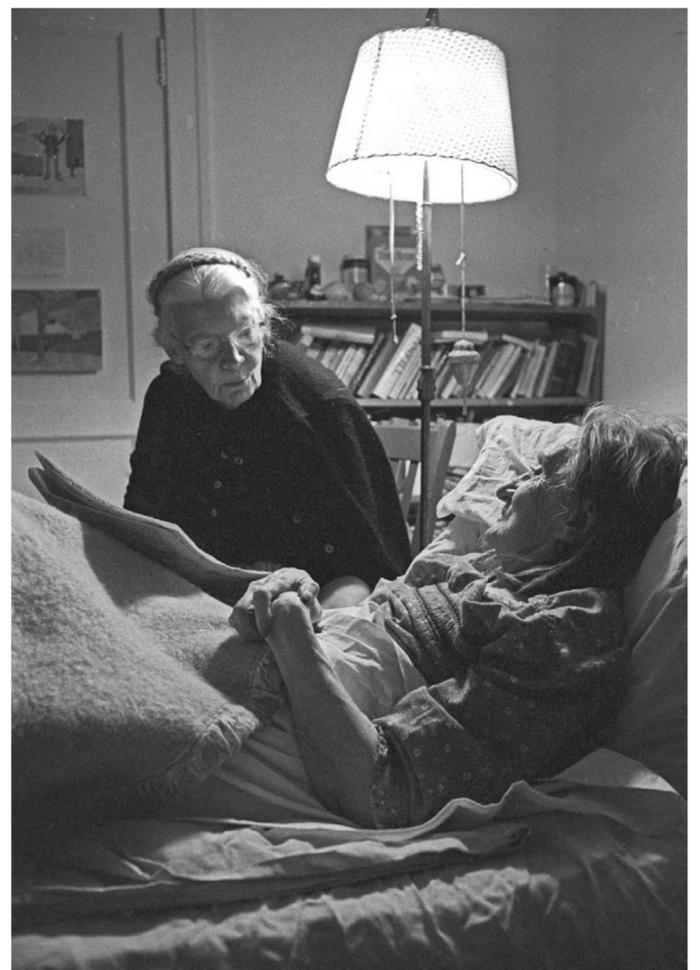
Photos by Bob Fitch; © Stanford University Libraries



"The hours on trains or bus are so precious - to be alone for a short while, it is a complete relaxation, a joy. I am a weak and faulty vessel to be freighted with so valuable a message as cargo. I am an unprofitable servant and must begin over again right now to change myself. God help me." (DD, 56-57)

"Our Lord must teach me, I cannot learn by myself to give up my will completely, to accept the present moment, to live in the presence of God. I should be happy that this struggle is going on, that I am not content. A paradox." (DD, 26, May 8, 1937)

"Yes, we fail in love, we make our judgments and we fail to see that we are all brothers; we are all seeking love, seeking God, seeking the beatific vision. All sin is a perversion, a turning from God and a turning to creatures....Thank God for retroactive prayer! St. Paul said that he did not judge himself, nor must we judge ourselves. We can turn to our Lord Jesus Christ, who has already repaired the greatest evil that ever happened or could ever happen, and trust that He will make up for our falls, for our neglects, for our failures in love." (LF, 184)



order

chaos

"I wanted Tamar to have a way of life and instruction. We all crave order, and in the Book of Job, hell is described as a place where no order is. I felt that 'belonging' to a Church would bring order into her life which I felt my own had lacked." (LL, 141)

"RULE FOR 1936

The Catholic Worker to be in the hands of St. Joseph, and Tamar and I continue under our novice mistress, the little St. Teresa, who alone can teach us how to do the little things and cultivate a spirit of humility. St. Joseph is also taking care of me this year as I asked him up at Montreal at the Shrine.

'Can you not watch with me one hour?'

I shall remember this whenever I am tired and want to omit prayer, the extra prayers I shall set myself. Because after all I am going to try to pray the simplest, humblest way, with no spiritual ambition.

Morning prayers, in my room before going to Mass. I always omit them, rushing out of the house just in time as I do...

Around the middle of the day to take, even though it be to snatch, fifteen minutes of absolute quiet, thinking about God and talking to God.

Read the Office as much as I can, if only Prime and Compline, but all whenever possible.

One visit during the day always without fail.

The rosary daily.

I do plenty of spiritual reading to refresh myself and to encourage myself so I do not have to remind myself of that.

The thing to remember is not to read so much or talk so much about God, but to talk to God.

To practice the presence of God.

A nightly examination as to this rule and not just about faults.

To be gentle and charitable in thought, word, and deed." (DD, 16-17, December 31, 1939)



flesh

spirit

"Our life of grace and our life of the body goes on beautifully intermingled and harmonious. 'All is grace,' as the dying priest whispered to his friend in *The Diary of a Country Priest*. The Little Flower, also said, 'All is grace.'" (The Catholic Worker, May 1954)

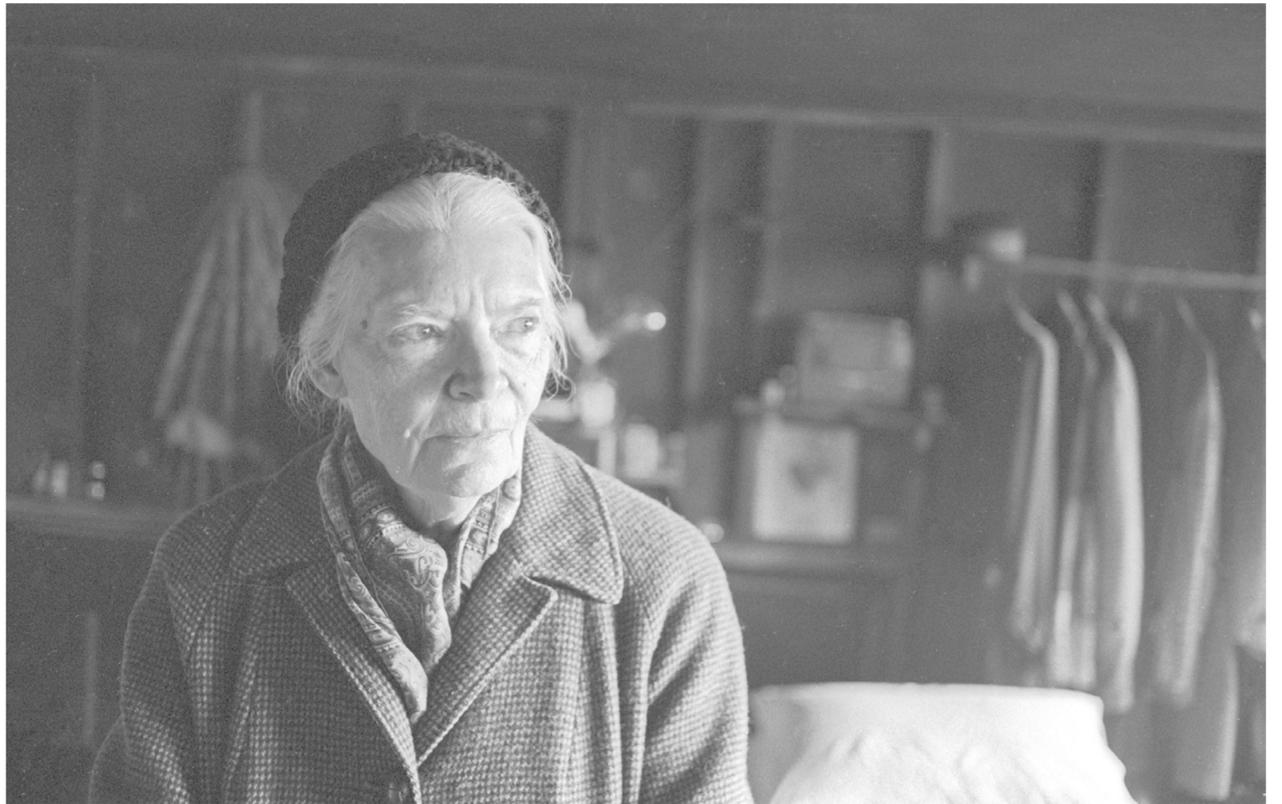


Photo by Bob Fitch; © Stanford University Libraries

"The discussion was heated as it usually is, everyone speaking with vehemence and bobbing up and down from the floor. And Dr. Furfey not having heard Peter before thought it was necessary to calm people and began reminding us that we must not pay so much attention to the economic side of things, that spirituality was all that mattered after all. So I hopped up and said that you can't preach the Gospel to men with empty stomachs and that if he had been down to the Municipal Lodging house and seen 12,000 men being fed at South Ferry, he would think it was necessary to put some emphasis on the material." (DD, 14, New Year's Eve, 1935)

"But when I read in my Bible, in St. James, 'Pure religion and undefiled... is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world,' to me the world meant the flesh and the lure of the flesh, the pride of life one felt when in love. This conflict was to go on for years. All beauty, all joy, all music thrilled my heart and my flesh, so that they cried for fulfillment, for union." (LL, 35)

"The union between man and woman is the closest analogy in this moral life to union between God and man. **One cannot properly be said to understand the love of God without understanding the deepest fleshly as well as spiritual love between man and woman. The two should go hand in hand. You cannot separate the soul from the body.** Even throughout the psalms you find the union of the two. 'My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.' 'The love of God should quicken the body as well as the soul.'" (DD, 29-30, Aug 6, 1937)

"Ritual, how could we do without it!... And just as a husband may embrace his wife casually as he leaves for work in the morning, and kiss her absent-mindedly in his comings and goings, still that kiss on occasion turns to rapture, a burning fire of tenderness and love. And with this to stay her she demands the 'ritual' of affection shown...We have too little rituals in our life." (LL, 199)

beauty

ugliness

"The world will be saved by beauty, Dostoevsky wrote, and Solzhenitsyn quoted it in his Nobel talk. I look back on my childhood and remember beauty. The smell of sweet clover in a vacant lot, a hopeful clump of grass growing up through the cracks of a city pavement. A feather dropped from some pigeon. A stalking cat. Ruskin wrote of 'the duty of delight,' and told us to lift up our heads and see the cloud formations in the sky. I have seen sunrises at the foot of a New York street, coming up over the East River. **I have always found a strange beauty in the suffering faces which surround us in the city.**" (The Catholic Worker, September 1974)



"If prisoners and officers had worked together to make the prison a happier place, what a change there might have been in the hearts of those confined. The officers sat all day at their desks, watching, directing, always expecting the worst, always looking for some small infraction, always seeing the women as criminals. They did not see that which is of God in every person, as the Friends put it. St. John of the Cross said, 'Where there is no love, put love, and you will find love.' The officers looked for the criminal and found the criminal. Looking back... I see that I have gone from sublime to the ridiculous, even to the vulgar and, for some, the revolting. But beauty and joy often spring from the dungheap." (SW, 287)

"I have 'kissed a leper' not once but twice—consciously—yet I cannot say I am much the better for it. The first time was early one morning on the steps of Precious Blood Church. A woman with cancer of the face was begging (beggars are allowed only in slums), and when I gave her money—which was no sacrifice on my part but merely passing on alms someone had given to me—she tried to kiss my hand. The only thing I could do was to kiss her dirty old face with the gaping hole in it where an eye and a nose had been. It sounds like a heroic deed, but it was not. We get used to ugliness so quickly. What we avert our eyes from today can be borne tomorrow when we have learned a little more about love. Nurses know this, and so do mothers." (LF, 83-84)



We were just sitting there talking when Peter Maurin came in. We were just sitting there talking when lines of people began to form, saying, "We need bread." We could not say, "Go, be thou filled." If there were six small loaves and a few fish, we had to divide them. There was always bread. We were just sitting there talking and people moved in on us. Let those who can take it, take it. Some moved out and that made room for more. And somehow the walls expanded. We were just sitting there talking and someone said, "Let's go live on a farm. It was as casual as all that, I often think. It just came about. It just happened. I found myself, a barren woman, the joyful mother of children. It is not easy always to be joyful, to keep in mind the duty of delight. The most significant thing about The Catholic Worker is poverty, some say. The most significant thing is community, others say. We are not alone anymore. But the final word is love. At times it has been, in the words of Father Zossima, a harsh and dreadful thing, and our very faith in love has been tried through fire. We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship. We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community. It all happened while we sat there talking, and it is still going on. (LL, Postscript, 285-286)

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