

CATHOLIC WORKER



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Peter Maurin's Easy Essays

By EILEEN EGAN

Peter Maurin was happy to be called a radical, a person concerned with the roots of problems and issues. An early publication of his "Easy Essays" was described as "Easy Essays in Catholic Radicalism." His work as teacher, prophet, and co-founder of the Catholic Worker reminds us of the words of Henry Thoreau: "There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root, and it may be that they who bestow the largest amount of time and money are doing the most by their mode of life to produce the misery which they strive in vain to relieve."

Dorothy Day relates how she and Peter Maurin were brought together by the then editor of *The Commonweal*, George Shuster. It was at his urging that Peter first visited Dorothy since George felt that their ideas were similar. He noted in them not only criticism of the social order but a conviction that each person has a responsibility to do something to change it for the better.

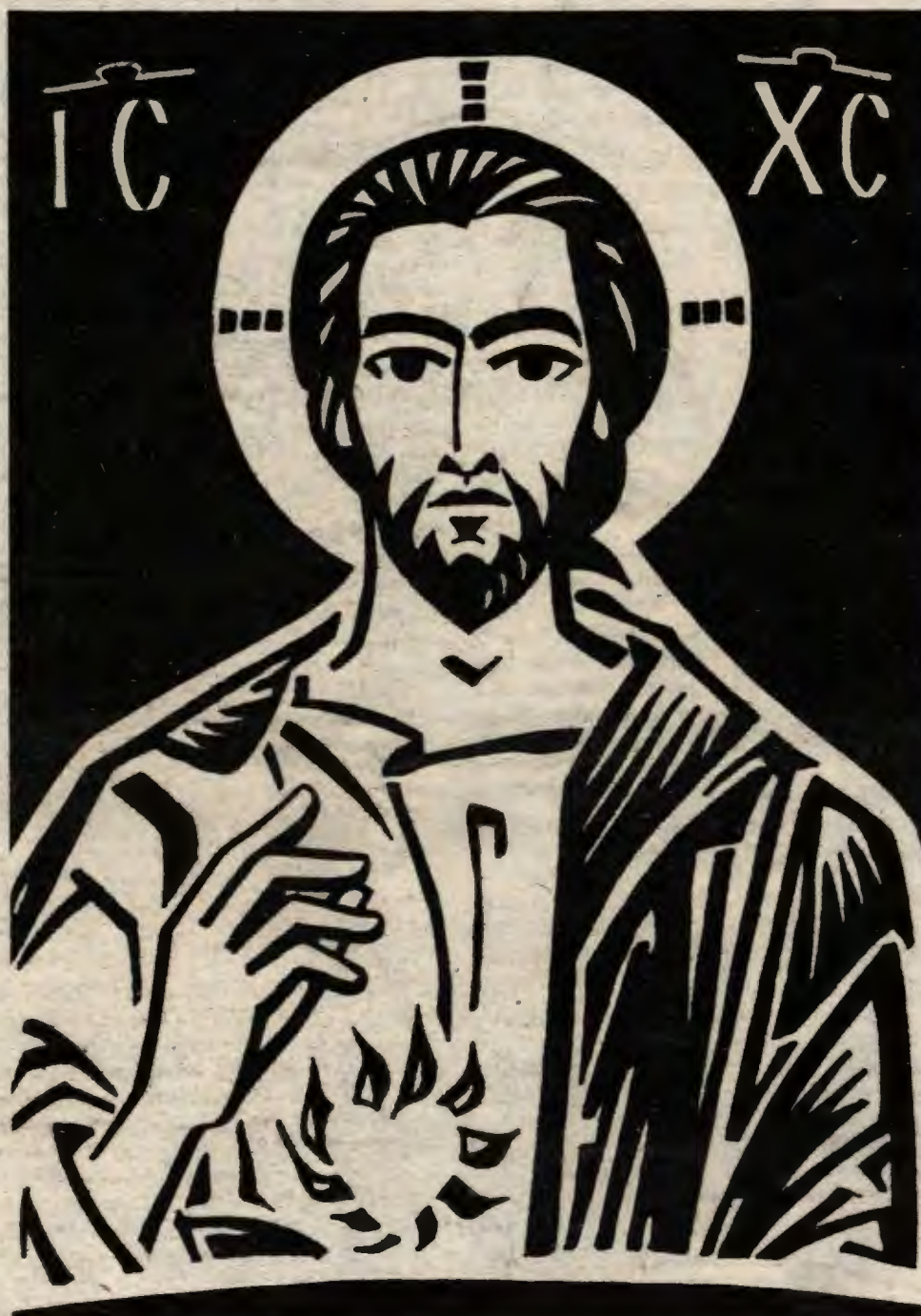
"The night I met Peter," Dorothy recalls, "I had come from an assignment for *The Commonweal*, covering the Communist-inspired 'hunger march' of the unemployed to Washington. I had prayed at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, that I might find something to do in the social order besides reporting conditions. I wanted to change them, not just report them, but I had lost faith in revolution. I wanted to love my enemy, whether Capitalist or Communist."

A Learned Man

This was in December 1932. For the next few months, Peter took it upon himself to educate Dorothy in Catholic social thinking, in the history of social movements in Europe, in economics related not to the ethical void of Capitalism but to the Gospel of Jesus, in the history of economic thought and the history of the Church. He was a learned man, having been educated, first as a lay student and then as a student-brother, by the teaching order founded by John Baptist de la Salle.

Peter Maurin shared all he had learned on an almost daily basis. He would arrive at the tenement flat on East Fifteenth Street in Manhattan at about three in the afternoon. As Dorothy did her housework and cared for her daughter, Peter would talk, explain, make his point and refer to his sheaves of essays and resumés of articles and books. It was often ten or eleven o'clock at night before he concluded. As Dorothy tells it, "...he was one of those people who talked you deaf, dumb and blind, who each time he saw you began his conversation just where he had left off at the previous meeting, and never stopped unless you begged for rest, and that was not for long. He was ir-repressible and he was incapable of taking offense... He believed in repeating, in driving home his point by constant repeti-

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Ade Bethune

Working with Christ

By ROBBIE GAMBLE

This May 1st marks the fifty-first anniversary of the Catholic Worker movement. This day, this celebration of the passing of another milestone, has always been a time of joyous retrospection; of calling to mind past figures and past events, of leafing through back issues of the paper, and remembering where we have been. Such was the atmosphere last May 1st, when we celebrated our fiftieth anniversary. Some five hundred Catholic Worker family and friends, old and new, gathered at St. Joseph House and Maryhouse, to worship together, feast together, and reminisce. There was a tremendous amount of interest generated in the passing of such a significant milestone, and articles on the Catholic Worker appeared in a number of newspapers and periodicals, books were published, conferences held. In all, it was an opportunity to look back over the first half century of the Worker's existence, and to offer thanks and be glad for what has been.

This year, our fifty-first, is, for me at least, as important an anniversary as the previous one. The movement is coming into middle age, and it has such a rich tradition behind it, that it would be easy to fall into a pattern of mostly looking at the past. We recently received a letter from George Carlin, now a deacon with the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity in the Philippines, who was active in the Worker community in New York in the early fifties. In the letter he poses the question, what has happened to the Catholic lay movement since that time, particularly since Vatican II? He goes on to describe his experiences of being around the Worker at that time, of the figures of that era: Dorothy Day, Tom Sullivan, John Cogley, Bob Ludlow, Frank Sheed, Ammon Hennacy, Michael Harrington, etc., etc. He says, "Lest I be accused of succumbing to time's legerdemain in recalling 'golden days' that really weren't, let me say that I can still

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Report from Nicaragua

By PEGGY SCHERER

The municipality of Jalapa is in the department of Nueva Segovia, and has some 23,000 inhabitants. The town of Jalapa itself has about 4,000 people, most of them poor, who live in rooms or small one-story houses, usually centered around courtyards, if not in what we would describe as simple shacks. Most people have electricity, a number have running water. All the roads in town are dirt, as is the road from Ocotal, which connects us to the rest of the country. There are a number of tiny stores, where one might get a soft drink, bread, eggs or soap, if there is any in town, and a few larger businesses: a hardware store, a lumber yard, and businesses handling local crops. However, most people earn their living through agricultural work in this fertile valley. Tobacco, rice, corn, beans, some garlic, tomatoes, coffee and new potato projects, are the main sources of income for the people of Jalapa. Some of the land in the area is in private hands; other parcels are state-owned farms, mainly the large tobacco farms, and then there are the cooperatives. This mixture is typical of Nicaragua. Several of the cooperatives are also resettlement camps: La Estancia, Santa Cruz and Escambray, each with perhaps 500 people, who have fled from more isolated spots in the northern mountains, which have been attacked by the counter-revolutionary forces. They have been given land, help with housing, water, seeds and equipment, and are forming cooperatives to plant crops and make a living.

There are six of us in the long-term Witness for Peace team working out of Jalapa. We are here for six months, coordinating the short-term Witness delegations coming to Nicaragua for two week periods. In April, we are beginning a more mobile effort, with each of us spending more time with the groups when they arrive in Managua. We are attempting to spend—a few of us at a time—more time in other threatened areas, such as Chinandega in the northwest corner of the country, and to escort short-term groups to them, as well as to Jalapa.

Our days vary. When we're with a group, we're off and running from early to late, taking the delegations to visit local people, in town or in the country, arranging meetings with local organizations, community leaders, meeting people on the street, and so on. We join with them in vigils, reflection periods, and celebration. Much effort is needed to provide the constant flow of people with a solid, rounded experience of Nicaragua, in a short time. In between, we continue to learn more ourselves, visiting people in their homes, in town or country, walking along the roads. Transportation generally means hitchhiking, and one always has company waiting for a truck to stop and offer a lift. And so we get to know the people: Amelia, whose daughter, the survivor of twins, is

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Prayer and Work Today

By P. HANS SUN

The motto of St. Benedict was *Laborare et Orare*, Labor and Pray. Labor and prayer ought to be combined; Labor ought to be a prayer.

Peter Maurin, *Easy Essays*

Ora et Labora, prayer and work. The bringing together of the sacred and the secular has always been central to the Catholic Worker tradition. Every now and then, it is important for us to re-think just what this tradition means, and the rampant spread of computer work certainly provides the stimulus today. How and in what ways can computer work be related to prayer? Can one bless a computer? Could we write a prayer program the way we light a votive candle?

In seeking answers to this type of question, it is usually a good idea to go back to the roots. The truth is that the phrase—in Peter's or in the more conventional form of *ora et labora*—was not really Benedict's motto, nor is it to be found in the Rule of St. Benedict. It was not coined until the nineteenth century, with the romantic revival of monasticism.

In the *Regula* of St. Benedict, the closest association of *ora* with anything else is with *lectio divina*, spiritual reading. Yet, this link already tells us something. It tells us that the early monks wanted to combine the sacred with that secular activity for which they were to become well-known; that is, scholarship and the preservation of culture.

When, in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the predominant aspect of Western culture became work rather than scholarship, it was natural that the old *ora et lectio divina* should have been rephrased to become *ora et labora*. The new motto has an authentic Benedictine heritage after all.

But how is the desired ordering to be attained—between either prayer and reading or prayer and work?

With regard to reading, St. Benedict gave a two-fold answer. First, only certain things should be read; that is, the content or substance of reading should be restricted. Secondly, we should read only in certain ways; the manner or methods of reading are well-defined. Insofar as work is discussed by St. Benedict, he applied the same two principles. Farming is the most appropriate kind of labor and it should be undertaken with a certain dedication and detachment.

Peter Maurin used to say that the

Catholic Worker wanted to create a new society within the shell of the old, and it is not coincidental that he advocated farming communes. One feature of the new society is that it will be structured so that those within it will find it easier to be good. This is exactly what St. Benedict wanted as well, a community in which it would be easier to do that one good which, Jesus tells Martha, is more precious than any other (Luke 10:38-42).

The Benedictine monastery and the Catholic Worker community thus have as a common goal a social order in which it is easier to be Christian. The monasteries do this for celibates who have taken certain vows and are oriented toward the contemplative life. Catholic Worker communities aspire to do this for certain lay people who are called to the active apostolate and the works of mercy.

Of course, it is never really "easy" to be a Christian and no community can "make" people spiritual. All there can be is what Maria Montessori called a "prepared environment." A Montessori school cannot make children into students, but it can remove some distractions and encourage certain kinds of initiative. And, since studying is never easy either, we should welcome all the help we can get.

Each of these instances—Benedictine monasteries, Peter Maurin's Green Revolution, Montessori schools—involves being selective about the activities and instruments adopted from the larger society. Each recognizes that actions, tools and even ideas are seldom neutral.

It is very easy to see this truth on the level of tools like nuclear weapons, activities like violence, and ideas like hate. These are all "big" things and it seems obvious they are immoral. But what about "little" things like mass-produced newspapers and computers? We come back to the original question.

A Christian, it seems to me, should use as one standard for evaluating any tool or activity the test of whether it can be integrated into a life of "constant prayer" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). It is not enough to say that some technology, by virtue of its efficiency, provides more free time for prayer, for this route would only accentuate the sacred-secular split. As is said in the Rule of Taizé, "For your prayers to be real, you must be at grips with hard work... Your prayer will become total

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Peter Maurin Farm

By TOM CURTIN

Joyfully, cyclically, the growing season slowly seeps into our land and our lives at Peter Maurin Farm. Fields lie flooded with the onset of the early spring rains and the thawed snow. No longer rock hard and obscured by snow, the soil becomes a soggy, bouyant sponge, soon to be dried by the winds and the sun until it is readied to receive seed.

The growing fields are lush with the rich blue-green growth of fall-planted winter rye. Our few fruit trees are pruned, readied for their growth. We are removing large rocks so as to soon be able to rototill and re-sow grass in the pig area, a fine endeavor which recalls the work of Linda Bunce and Mike Vincent, who began this project of pig raising two years ago. Joe Wood, a skilled and loving craftsman who is visiting us, has been doing an excellent job of repairing and seeing to the seasonal start-up of our machinery. The chickens are producing a greater number of eggs due to the rapidly increasing daylight hours. The winter cover mulch was pulled off the strawberries, exposing their low, viney, green growth to the sun and warming air. Rhubarb is beginning to send its lumpy, red spears above ground level. Asparagus, though a spring plant, still awaits dry, warmer conditions. Wintered-



over Egyptian onions are pushing up through their mulch. Chives are up. Camomile is up. Oregano is beginning to stir, with a few rough, weather-worn leaves raised a bit above the soil. Buds are beginning to swell on the raspberries. People are writing to us about coming for the season. As the flooded stream flows onto some of our hay fields, rivulets of running rain water, washing across our growing fields, show us where we need to make grass waterways.

Flats have been started in the greenhouse: broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, onion, leeks; some have germinated, some seedlings have been thinned already. Soon many more will be planted: lettuce, celery, tomatoes, melons, green peppers, flowers, and so on. There is a near-mad rush to finish up the planning and preparation for the work of the quickening season. We need to get our cold frame in operating shape; prune the grape arbor; and clean off the rust and oil our hand tools. As Peter Maurin knew, there is never a lack of work around a farm, and the needs change almost daily.

The stirrings of spring; the beginning of a new garden cycle is upon us. A new season is unfolding in its regular cycle that is of the same spirit as each new dawn, with the life-sustaining sun arching upwards to greet us with its gifts. And with this dawning of a new season come questions that bob up and down in our consciousness much as does a bird feeding upon the sea. Just what are we about here at the farm? What do we do? What would we like to see our energies accomplish? Just what is this Green Revolution, anyway?

On this cool, damp, gray morning, I sit under a pole barn upon a bale of hay, fresh with the sweet green aroma, using

another fragrant bale as a desk. I have just returned from a walk around the farm to let its spirit soak into me, to let it seep into me as surely as the spring rains are seeping into all the depths of the soil, so I could write of it truthfully.

To write of nature, to write of the Catholic Worker on the land, to write of the Peter Maurin Farm and Peter's Green Revolution, one must certainly root one's self in the daily, natural, earth-touching work of a farm. One must breathe it in constantly, just as we sustain our bodies with constant breath. So the hay bales give me their essence, as numerous chickens cock their heads watching this unusual endeavor of mine, and I listen to the musical voices of two Jamaicans pruning the fruit trees of our neighbor's land, as the horizons of our fields spread out before my eyes and my heart. I can be a channel, a humble messenger of the spirit that spoke to Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day. I want to spread the message that all of nature proclaims the loving hand of the Creator; that, on the land, people would learn to live in community; learn to achieve dignity by working for the Common Good; learn to proclaim loudly and joyfully that God is in our midst; and to build a new society within the shell of the old. All of these things and more Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day stood for and worked towards.

Blessing of Fruitfulness

Surely God knows the value of people connected to the earth, nature, the soil. Isaac was unable to give a blessing to his elder son, Esau, for Jacob had deceitfully obtained the blessing intended for his older brother. Isaac sadly told Esau, "I have appointed him your lord, and have given him all his brothers as servants. I have enriched him with grain and wine; what then can I do for you, my son?... Without the fruitfulness of the earth and without the dew of the heavens, what shall your blessing be?" (Genesis 27:38-40) The blessing of the fruitfulness of the earth was one of the greatest blessings one could give to another! The full strength of this blessing is most easily seen when we eat from the labors of our own hands, and not from the exchange of cash in a supermarket.

We of Peter Maurin Farm, through means of our community, work towards being the light that is as a beacon on a high hillside, but the work is a struggle. In community, as in any walk of life, we struggle daily, cry daily, fall and fail daily. There is a harsh aspect to this life. We do not escape anything by living in community; at times, community seems to only intensify the conflicts and pain. Yet, with Kahlil Gibran we laugh all of our laughter and cry all of our tears, as we, who are but tiny sparks of light in the dark night, struggle to become that bright beacon on the hillside. It is an end we can never fully reach in this life. But then the journey is all, and by the grace of God we walk it.

There is such ugliness in our large cities, and it can deaden our spirits and harden our hearts to the point where we nearly resemble the concrete they are built from, instead of the soil into which the Creator breathed life. Peter tells us that the new society will be built with people living in community on the land.

Just as the weed which cracks through the harshness of cement and brick, so does the spirit of God crack through into the hearts and souls of some fine people
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Room for Christ

By BOB TAVANI

During the eleven years I have spent around the Catholic Worker here in Minneapolis and in New York and California, countless times I have been overwhelmed by a sense of futility, the gray feeling that we are all putting not just our fingers but our heads and hearts and maybe even our souls into this gaping hole in the dike that would simply never be filled. I have had hard dreams of the sad-eyed, angry, disaffected ones from all the cities of the earth flooding our doors till we run out of bread and kind words and unkind words too. Must we be caught, both we and our more disadvantaged brothers and sisters, in an endless cycle of bread and pain? Are we doomed to break our dreams with brokenness?

The Catholic Worker did not begin as some pious giving of bread to the poor but as an invitation to Christian wholeness through community, a community working with hands and minds and spirit to build a new and more livable culture. The Worker began as a moving movement, a radical challenge to life in all its fullness and poverty, transformed by a vision and a closeness with like-spirited community members. Its charity was rooted in a personalism that offers not only bread but the bread of life, deep interpersonal knowing and acceptance, a living together that heals. The poor are always with us, and we are so many that our dream of closeness sometimes gets lost in numbers of meals. Is there a way that you, our extended family of readers, could help us who are so often overwhelmed?

There is an old Catholic Worker tradition I haven't heard anyone speak of for a long time. It is the tradition of the Christroom. Dorothy Day used to encourage those who wanted to live in the Worker way but whose responsibilities kept them from actually being at one of the Worker houses, to keep a Christroom. This room might be a guest room for the poor so that hospitality might be given not just by sending money in a stamped envelope but personally and with care. Perhaps houses were bigger in Dorothy's day and perhaps hearts too. Nonetheless, we who think of ourselves as Christians must find ways to share whatever wholeness and wealth we have with those who have less. Deep knowing can heal, acceptance can temper what can't be healed. Bread is bread, but bread is not enough.

Forming Bonds

How could a person who wants to share more than bread with Christ's little ones, with Christ Himself, begin to do this sharing? One could start by getting to know the people at a Catholic Worker house or a nearby meal line, getting to know them by being with them, quietly at first, and by listening to their needs. One could invite those whose confidence comes spontaneously to a meal or a movie. One could let these new friends call on the phone when they are lonely. One could gradually include them in the family in little ways that are appropriate. As the interpersonal bonds are formed, beginning growth could be encouraged and changes supported by hospitality.

Acceptance, even when there is no apparent growth, is a very profound and healing reality. A person who would risk this kind of caring must be willing, of course, to know patience and even failure.

There is a conversation between two men in a book called *What Is To Be Done* by the prophet Tolstoi, which makes my point better than I do:

"Why is it useless if we help thousands, even hundreds of unhappy ones? Is it a bad thing, according to the Gospel, to clothe the naked, feed the hungry?"

"What you are doing is not that. You are walking in the street; somebody asks you for a few pennies; you give it to him. Is that charity? Do him some spiritual good; teach him. What you gave him merely says, 'Leave me alone.' Let us instead unite these poor ones with ourselves. I am not rich myself but will at once take two of them into my kitchen. You take a young fellow into yours and they will be family. We shall work together and I will teach them how to reap and we shall eat out of one bowl. And they will hear a good word from us. This is love."

(Originally published in the February, 1984 Minneapolis Catholic Worker Newsletter.)



Meinrad Craighead

Aims and Purposes

The aim of the Catholic Worker movement is to realize in the individual and in society the expressed and implied teachings of Christ. We see the Sermon on the Mount and the call to solidarity with the poor at the heart of these teachings. Therefore, we must look at the world to see whether we already have a social order that reflects the justice and charity of Christ.

When we examine the society in which we live, we find that it is not in accord with justice and charity.

—The maldistribution of wealth is widespread: the fact that there are hungry and homeless people in the midst of plenty is unjust. Furthermore, we are struck by the spiritual destitution of our consumer society. Rich and poor suffer increasingly from isolation, madness, and growing individual violence, side by side with a governmental emphasis on the implements of war instead of human well-being.

—The rapid rise of technology, without a fitting development of morality, emphasizes progress based on profit rather than human needs. The triumvirate of military, business and scientific priorities overwhelms the political process. "Democracy" is reduced to a choice between "brand names" in products and politicians. Bureaucratic structures make accountability, and therefore political change, close to impossible. As a result, there is no forum in which to express, effectively, different views of the events shaping our lives. The individual suffers as much from these transformations as does the whole social order.

—On a scale unknown to previous generations, the poor throughout the world are systematically robbed of the goods necessary to life. Though we realize the United States is not the sole perpetrator of such immoral conduct, we are North Americans and must first acknowledge our own country's culpability. We deplore U.S. imperialism in its various expressions. Multinational corporations, economic "aid," military intervention, etc., have led to the disintegration of communities and the destruction of indigenous cultures—blatant violations of justice and charity.

—The proliferation of nuclear power and weapons stands as a clear sign of the direction of our age. Both are a denial of the very right of people to life and, implicitly, a denial of God. There is a direct economic and moral connection between the arms race and destitution. In the words of Vatican II: "The arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which injures the poor to an intolerable degree."

To achieve a just society we advocate a complete rejection of the present systems and a nonviolent revolution to establish a social order in accord with Christian truth.

—The Catholic Worker envisions a society based on St. Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of the common good, in which the freedom and dignity of the person are fostered and the good of each is bound to the good of the whole in the service of God. A person's primary responsibility is to this common good and not to a political entity.

—The Catholic Worker advocates a society that is decentralized—a society in direct contrast to the present bigness of the state, mass production in industry, in education, in health-care and agriculture. Specifically, we look forward to a life closer to the land and are encouraged by efforts towards family farms, land trusts (rural and urban) and an appropriate technology which fosters a respect for human dignity and the environment. In towns and cities, too, decentralization can be promoted through worker ownership and management of small factories, through food, housing and other kinds of cooperatives.

—We advocate a personalism in which we take on ourselves the responsibility for changing conditions to the extent each of us is able. Houses of hospitality have been

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Report from Nicaragua

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finally, at three months, looking like she'll survive, a matter of joy to her and her husband, recently returned from duty in the militia; Yolanda, 17, mother of a 9-month old son, unable this year to continue her studies, who tells us of her aunt, killed at age 17 during the insurrection; Humberto, a bright, handsome 20-year old, working with a youth group, who shares his own story of growing up in a poor neighborhood in Managua, damaged by a flood; then the earthquake, the relief funds pocketed by Somoza. He works so that other youth will not grow up as quickly as he did, but will have a chance to play baseball, study, think of something other than work and war. Rosa, perhaps 22, has learned to read and write in the past few years, moved from a life of working under terrible conditions from childhood, on the tobacco farm where her family lives, to be a leader in her union. So

many people enrich our days.

In the time that I have been in Jalapa, I have received a number of letters from friends in the States raising questions about the Witness for Peace. Questions have focused on the complexity of violence and nonviolence. For example, is it possible to be a purist about nonviolence? Is nonviolence a viable societal option, or a large group-response, or only a personal stance? Can Nicaragua be looked at as some kind of "ultimate example" of revolution? Is it a Christian revolution? For me, there are more questions as well: what can we do as U.S. citizens, seeing the adverse role our government has been playing in this region through most of the twentieth century, given our particular gifts and shortcomings? How do we strengthen the connections with our many brothers and sisters in faith here; bonds that go beyond national origin or affiliation?

My first temptation is to say that I'll publish a two-thousand-page book in twenty-five years. My second is to say that several months here have not led me to very different conclusions from those I've come to at the Catholic Worker, although my beliefs are certainly deepening. Of course, the situation in Nicaragua is very complex. The violence suffered is direct, in terms of combatants and civilians falling in battle, yet also indirect: economic disruption, which means at times a shortage of milk, of cars and tractor parts for farming and public transportation; divisions within families and communities; and a growing sense of militarism. The war is used as an excuse to carry out personal revenge, and to deepen tensions over other issues, such as the practice of religion.

A Humbling Call

What does this mean to all of us who want to consider ourselves peacemakers, pacifists, people who try to live Gospel nonviolence? I can see no easy answer. The challenge seems to be to keep trying to discern and be open to God's call to be faithful. I do believe that different individuals are sincerely called to different understandings and responses, yet within the context of the clear Gospel call to love one another. For God is within each and every one of us. The peace Jesus offers us is tied to justice and truth in ways we find mysterious, yet we must seek to implement it in this world. A large task, to say the least.

Here I am, daring to call myself a Christian, consciously humbled by what that means. I believe that the Gospel calls us to total nonviolence, to refuse to do harm to others. Yet life (and the Gospel) show us that to live thus is a grace, something we strive for, yet often fail at. One of my reasons for coming to Nicaragua is to be present in a situation I have faced only in limited or intellectual ways in the United States. In a quantitative way, the suffering here is so much less now than it is in El Salvador or the Middle East. Yet every life is precious. I wonder—and this is where I am honestly untested—how I would respond if I saw anyone, particularly a loved one or a child, killed, perhaps after being tortured. Here, I find myself less able than ever to pass judgment on people who have come to the decision to take up arms to defend lives. Still, such a step will mean taking another's life in turn, and is not really a solution. A mother on the other side of the border will grieve, because of an act to save a Nicaraguan mother that pain.

I find that what fills me is a growing belief that nonviolent defense is possible;

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Prayer and Work Today

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when it is one with your work."

When it comes to information technologies (writing, radio, TV, computers, etc.) then, we should, like St. Benedict, question both the content and the form. There are certain things you cannot communicate without violating the spirit of prayer: cursing and pornography are ready examples. At the same time, we must also ask questions about the form or means of communication—a much more difficult task, especially in a society such as ours, which is overwhelmingly committed to an elaboration of technical means, in the belief that the means themselves are always neutral or can be put into the service of a multitude of ends.

Some might object further that appealing to a standard like prayer is too ambiguous. Prayer may be classically defined as "A raising of the mind and heart to God" (St. John of Damascus), but, in fact, doesn't prayer mean a thousand different things to a thousand different people?

One way out of these dilemmas is to turn for guidance to those people who are more proficient at prayer than we are, who say explicitly that they dedicate their whole lives to prayer. Think again of the monks or groups like the Little Brothers and Little Sisters, the Amish, the Bruderhof, etc. All of these people teach us at least two things about a prayerful existence: a focus on the personal over the technical and the exercise of restraint in organizing their environment. They relate to persons more than to things or organizations and thus practice a goodly amount of strict voluntary simplicity.

If we ask ourselves what kind of information techniques we ourselves use for the most personal and intimate forms of communication, I think we will find that we are equally selective. Our first choice is usually direct conversation, the second a hand-written letter, with typed letters being left for business. Studies of telephone conversations and electronic (computerized) mailings show that these tend to take on a more impersonal tone and often an almost violent character. For instance, we resort to harsh words much more readily over the phone than we do in person. We do have some sense of restraint in means when it is a matter of personalism and paying personal attention. Should we not apply the same standards for the whole of our lives?

If all this sounds impossibly idealistic, let me offer a few more examples of what it might mean to use the prayer-derived criteria of personal attention and technical simplicity as standards for evaluating a social order, our social order. —I've seen many people saying a rosary or reading a prayer book on the subways, but never while driving a car. Perhaps an increase in mass transit would be more conducive for recollection and prayer in an industrialized world.

—Fast-food restaurants would have to go. You can't pray while hurrying and scurrying to prepare such food, and it seems almost sacrilegious to thank God for it. The experience of fast-food eating is anything but a sacramental activity.

—Television would also probably have to be cut back radically. You cannot pray while passively watching TV, which also introduces an element of distortion and unreality into anything it portrays. Karl Rahner's point, that it is theologically unsound to televise the Mass, could be pushed even further.

—Medical care would, of course, have to

The Wayfarer Chronicle from the Farm

By DEANE MARY MOWRER

Last night—Monday of the week before Holy Week, three weeks before May Day when we celebrate the fifty-first anniversary of the Catholic Worker—Marc and I stood on the front porch and listened to the chorus of spring peepers rising triumphantly from the pond into the chill, moonlit air of a somewhat recalcitrant spring. The waxing moon, which Marc had described in ghostly guise during our walk in early afternoon, shone strongly now, blessing Peter Maurin Farm, pond, peepers, and all, luminously prophetic of Easter wholeness. As I returned to my room, the spring peepers continued singing in my mind, engendering there, it seemed, thoughts of Easter, May Day, and of Dorothy Day, who, with Peter Maurin, founded the Catholic Worker, and through long years of hard work and dedication led the Catholic Worker along the difficult paths of peace, nonviolence, the works of mercy, and that abiding love of poverty and the poor which is rooted in Christ Himself. ALLELUIA, sang the peepers. LUMEN CHRISTE, sang the moon. DEO GRATIAS.

Recently, Marc, who has been at the Catholic Worker just a little over a year, brought up from Maryhouse a tape of a talk given by Dorothy Day at Casa Maria in Milwaukee in 1969. Marc and a few others who had not known Dorothy, listened to the tape one evening, and enjoyed it very much. Later I, though I had heard the tape before when Dan Mauk played it for one of our Sunday afternoon meetings at Maryhouse, listened to it again. For me, who had known Dorothy so well, and had heard her speak at so many Catholic Worker meetings, the tape seemed to evoke Dorothy's presence so that I felt almost as though she were in the room talking with me.

In 1969, when Dorothy spoke, the horrors of the Vietnam war were still continuing. Many young men were in jail as a result of burning their draft cards or resisting arrest. Mass demonstrations

became more centered on the actual patient, with more attention to what used to be called "bed-side manner" than to proficiency in manipulating machines and other medical techniques.

—Education would be transformed from the high-pressured, competitive, acquisition of technical skills and information, to a more leisured study based on self-knowledge and wisdom.

—Christians may have to steer clear of those mass communications technologies which currently appear so attractive to some. TV evangelization may be more TV than evangelization and a computerized parish is probably more computer than parish. This is indicated by the fact that the technicians who run such projects are hired not on the basis of any spiritual commitments, but more by appeal to technical competence.

Even though these examples perhaps still sound rather idealistic as a call for a total re-ordering of our lives, they don't sound completely unrealistic, do they? In fact, I hope that they sound sensible and humane.

This is one of the great mysteries of Creation. If we aim high, we often achieve lower goals as well. If we aim only for lower, and what look like more realistic goals, we often fail to attain even these. "Seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness, and all these things will be yours as well." (Matthew 6:31)

were often marred by confrontational tactics which often generated more hostility than peace. Many young people tried to solace their despair and frustration with drugs. Deaths from suicide and overdose were all too common. Some of the more



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militant peace activists were burning draft records or spilling blood over them. One such group, the Milwaukee Fourteen,

was much in the news at the time of Dorothy's visit. The tragic events of 1968—the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, the riots, burnings, lootings, etc. that followed, the shameful Democratic Convention of that summer when Chicago police and authorities terrorized the young—were still fresh in memory. 1969, however, was also the year of the celebrated rock festival at Woodstock, New York. In a bit of conversation recorded at the end of the tape, Dorothy remarks that several of her own grandchildren had taken part in the festival. She adds with some pride that they also took part in peace demonstrations and protest marches.

Even on the tape, the atmosphere that night in 1969 at Casa Maria comes through as relaxed, informal, with babies running about, and something of that sense of family which ought to be part of every Catholic Worker house of hospitality. Dorothy herself spoke with easy spontaneity, almost conversationally, but always with that great natural flow of words which those who have heard her will surely remember. She ranged over many of the events of the time, especially those related to peace and civil rights. Dorothy thanked the young poet who had opened the meeting with a most dramatic recitation of a rather strange poem he had written about the Milwaukee Fourteen. The poem led Dorothy into some interesting reminiscences of Alan Ginsberg, who had visited the Catholic Worker farm, and spoken at a Friday night meeting where he had recited to a more-than-packed house his famous poem, Kaddish. This led her into a short disquisition on the Pentecostal movement and the possible relationship between the gift of tongues and modern poetry. So on she went, through anecdote and digression, with some humorous asides, and occasionally a little gentle teasing, but always winding her way most surely toward a moving and convincing portrayal of Catholic Worker life and principles, with special emphasis on the importance of using nonviolence in the attainment of Catholic Worker goals. She spoke against the endorsement of revolution by the Catholic Left of Europe. She

(Continued on page 8)

MARYHOUSE

By PAM QUATSE

Spring at Maryhouse seems to be a time of mixed blessings, struggles and joys. Tim, Paul, myself and a number of others have birthdays during this season. We celebrate with ice cream and cake, and rejoice over the appearance of daffodils, while not in our struggling garden, at least at the neighborhood flower stands. Still, the suffering of people near and far gives me pause to recognize Christ crucified again and again.

We welcomed back Mary Mullins in mid-February, with open arms, and a party, naturally. She had been away for several months and her smile, as bright as sunshine, and her laid-back laughter, not to mention her enthusiasm and many talents, had been sorely missed around the Worker. Not one to waste time, Mary immediately fell to planning a "cabaret" to chase away our winter doldrums. In no time at all, a flurry of rehearsals were underway to get ready for the opening (and closing) night of our "very off-Broadway" production. A soupmaker's dozen of workers sang and danced to our theme song "Puttin' on the Splits" — referring to peas, of course. During rehearsals the auditorium echoed with lyrics such as:

If you're blue and you don't know
where to go to, why don't you go
where the Worker sits—
puttin' on the splits.
Different recipes a day,
count on beans and leaves of bay,
garlic fits—
puttin' on the splits.
(sung to the tune of
"Puttin' on the Ritz")

Besides the song and dance routine, much hilarity was generated for one act, a take-off on "West Side Story," in which folks from both houses participated. George was our energetic choreographer, and tirelessly offered suggestions as we tried to dance while singing our Catholic Worker verses to the tunes from this musical.

In the final performance, besides our "East Side Story," with Sue and Paul starring as our (in this case not star-crossed) lovers, Mike Quinn did a stand-up comedy routine, Mary and Jennifer sang a comic ballad about intricate family relations called "I'm My Own Grandpaw," Madeline sang her heart out, Sharron showed off her new talent on the tin whistle, Frank and Tim did piano

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Peter Maurin's Easy Essays

(Continued from page 1)

tion, like the dropping of water on the stones which were our hearts."

Peter urged a personalist and communitarian revolution, a green revolution of hope rather than the red revolution of violence which was the refuge of many searching people in that bleak era. By personalist, he meant the recognition of the person in all his eternal and temporal dignity and the duty to assume personal responsibility for creating a social order "in which it is easier to be good." By communitarian, he reminded people of the need to consider the well-being of others as a matter of equal importance with one's own well-being, in other words, the concept of the common good:

Bourgeois Capitalism/ is based on the power/ of hiring and firing./ Fascist Corporatism/ and Bolshevik Socialism/ are based on the power/ of life and death./ Communitarian Personalism/ is based on the power/ of thought and example.

Peter's program for the new society was built on Round-table Discussions, Houses of Hospitality and Farming Communes. The Round-table Discussions were to be aimed at clarification of thought through the return to Gospel principles and the application of these principles to the human predicament. The Houses of Hospitality were to be centers where Christians could express their love and concern for their neighbor through the works of mercy, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, consoling the afflicted and teaching those in need of instruction. Farming communes would help keep farmers and artisans on the land and attract young people to a life based on productive work. He saw the Farming Communes as practical "agronomic universities" where skilled workers could pass on their gifts to the unskilled.

Alarm Against Bigness

Everything in Peter Maurin's program was rooted in the person, in the evangelical vision of the person's infinite dignity and value. His approach was one of radical decentralization and he hoped to see the Catholic bishops throughout the country set about the task of opening hospices in each diocese, and, where needed, to help parishes set up their own hospices. He sounded the alarm against trust in bigness, the bigness of government, of business, of industrial technology, of unions and of corporations. He saw them as forces for depersonalization, as destroyers of personal responsibility.

In the early thirties, when the chief solution to the plight of those caught in a world depression was bigger government of either right or left ideology (with immense power over the individual), Peter's trust in smallness was not echoed by many. It has taken cataclysms and obvious threats to the human community (and the planet entrusted to its care) to promote wide hearing for E. F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* and Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America*. One of the books which Peter Maurin admired was *The Agricultural Testament* by Lord Albert Howard, a treatise on the crucial need for preserving the health of the soil through organic

methods of agriculture. Having grown up on a farm in Southern France that his ancestors had cultivated for fifteen hundred years, Peter knew the importance of putting back into the land what had been taken out. He feared the end result of chemicals which brought quick results and depleted the soil.

As time goes on, his ideas seem more and more practical.

In the early thirties, when "big business" and "big industry" had so tragically failed to fulfill their promise of plenty, Peter's program did energize groups who heard him speak, or who read his "Easy Essays" in *The Catholic Worker*. The circulation spurted to over 110,000. Houses of Hospitality sprang up in cities across the country. Farming Communes were started and numbers of families, either alone or in company with one or two like-minded families, made the attempt to settle and make their living from the land. But the depression began to lift, and a sick economy was rescued by a greater sickness, preparation for war. Soon large numbers of the unemployed were absorbed into war plants and young people were sucked into army battalions.

Peter was against war of any kind. He did not impose his ideas on others, but he explained that, in relation to war, he himself followed the way of St. Francis of Assisi and the counsels of the Church.

Peter's diagnosis of the cause for the descent into a new dark age was clear.

We have brought about our present/ unhappy conditions/ by divorcing education, industry, politics/ business and economics/ from morality and religion/ and by ignoring for long decades/ the innate dignity of man/ and trampling on his human rights.

We have taken religion/ out of everything/ and have put commercialism/ into everything...

According to St. Thomas Aquinas/ man is more/ than an individual/ with individual rights/ he is a person/ with personal duties/ towards God/ himself/ and his fellow man./ As a person/ man cannot/ serve God/ without serving/ the Common Good.

In his lapidary style, Peter has given a clear definition of secularism. He carried his style to an extreme when he summarized his personalist revolution in three words, "Cult, Culture and Cultivation." Cult englobes the worship of a Creator Whose commandment to His creatures is love and service to one another through the works of mercy; Culture links human-kind with the heritage of literature and thought; Cultivation involves the right use of the earth and its resources through careful and responsible work.

The methods Peter proposed for healing society were those of gentle personalism.

To be/ radically right/ is to go to the roots/ by fostering a society/ based on creed/ systematic unselfishness/ and gentle personalism./ To foster a society/ based on creed/ instead of greed/ on systematic unselfishness/ instead of systematic selfishness/ on gentle personalism/ instead of rugged individualism/ is to create a new society/ within the shell of the old.

He avoided violence of any sort, even verbal violence. Instead of promoting polarization, of diabolizing the Capitalist or the Communist so as to arouse hatred, he searched for concordances. He would use these as links for possible cooperation on a human level.

Peter's essays, though they show his acquaintance with such thinkers as Kropotkin, Penty and Marx, are rooted in

the message of Jesus. The economics that he taught, and the way of life he not only taught but lived, reflect the love Jesus bequeathed to His followers, a love which, under the aspect of need, becomes mercy and the works of mercy. He often cites the Christian duty to use one's surplus for the good of one's neighbor, especially the neighbor in need. This runs counter to the use of surplus for investment and collides with the very basis of Capitalism and the capitalistic mentality. Over and over again, he confronts the ethical void of primitive Capitalism; the notion that



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money is not only a means of exchange but a means to make money.

Peter Maurin agreed with R. H. Tawney that the very basis of the acquisitive society of our time is the legalization of usury, or the lending of money at interest. He goes back to the time when usury, which originally meant interest as such, and not excessive interest, was forbidden by the Catholic Church. "The Prophets of Israel and the Fathers of the Church," he wrote, "forbid lending money at interest." The Catholic Worker has been consistent in refusing to accept interest,

to the consternation, if not the scandal, of many.

Work, to Peter, was cooperating with nature and with others for the common good. "Labor and prayer ought to be combined; labor ought to be a prayer," he says in an ultimate statement against secularism. If one works with the needs of others in mind, considers one's work as sacred, and uses one's surplus to meet the needs of others, then one reaches the Christian ideal that Peter taught and lived, voluntary poverty. This involves keeping what one needs and no more.

Still Timely

Peter's "Easy Essays" reveal the seeds of the Catholic Worker Movement which has brought significant changes to the Catholic community. It might be thought that "Easy Essays" would have less resonance in the last quarter of the Twentieth Century. In point of fact, except for a few topical references, the "Easy Essays" seem to have been written for this time. The "dark age" that Peter Maurin saw some years ago, has become a darker age. Capitalism goes raging into the underdeveloped corners of the planet through multinational corporations. Industrialism has such technological power that it pollutes soil, inland waters, the broad oceans and even the air we breathe. Nuclear energy, offered as the answer to fuel shortages, presents grave dangers to life now and in the future, and nuclear weaponry gives us a planet pulsing with death. Instruments of mass destruction are turned out on the assembly line and are stored about the earth. Peter opposed the degradation of work in huge depersonalized factories; how much more would he oppose the degradation of work which provides a person a livelihood through participation in preparing instruments of mass death.

Peter Maurin's "Easy Essays" need to be studied by those whose consciences are aroused by the evils they see around them and who want basic principles on which to move towards a better social order. They may find that "hacking at the branches of evil" is not enough. It is necessary to strike at the root.

(Adapted from a review in the May, 1978 CW. For current information on "Easy Essays," see book listing, p. 6. Eds. note.)

Aims and Purposes

(Continued from page 3)

opened to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and shelter the homeless. We strive to do this as a family, for hospitality is more than supplying food: it is opening ourselves to others. We see community as a potent remedy to the isolation and spiritual destitution prevalent today. We should not look to the impersonal welfare of the state to provide solutions or to do what we, as Christians, should be doing. The Catholic Worker sees voluntary poverty as an implication of Jesus' teaching on the unity of justice and charity. Through voluntary poverty we ask for the grace to abandon ourselves to the will of God, and we cast our lot in solidarity with those whose destitution is not a choice, but a condition of their oppression. We cannot participate in their struggle for justice if we do not recognize that we have both responsibilities and limits in our use of goods. "No one is justified in keeping for their exclusive use what they do not need, when others lack necessities." (Pope Paul VI)

—We believe that the revolution to be pursued in ourselves and in society must be nonviolent and cannot be imposed from above. We oppose the deliberate taking of human life by any means. We con-

demn all war and the nuclear arms race; and we see oppression in any form as blasphemy against God, Who created all people in His image. When we fight tyranny and injustice, we must do so with humility and compassion, using the spiritual weapons of prayer and fasting and non-cooperation with evil. Refusal to pay taxes, refusal to register for conscription, nonviolent strikes and boycotts and withdrawal from the system are all methods that can be employed in this struggle for justice.

We see this as an era filled with anxiety and confusion. In response, we, as a lay movement, seek our strength and direction in the beauty of regular prayer and liturgy, in studying and applying the traditions of Scripture and the teachings of the Church to the modern condition. We believe that success as the world determines it is not a fit criterion for judgment. We must be prepared and ready to face seeming failure. The most important thing is that we adhere to these beliefs which transcend time, and for which we will be asked a personal accounting, not as to whether they succeeded (though we hope that they do) but as to whether we remained true to them.

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BOOK REVIEWS



RELUCTANT RESISTER. By Jeff Dietrich, Unicorn Press, 1983, available from the Los Angeles Catholic Worker, 632 North Britannia St., Los Angeles, CA 90033. \$6 paper, \$17 cloth. Reviewed by Robert Gilliam.

In November 1978, Jeff Dietrich and Kent Hoffman of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker were arrested for blocking the entrance to the Anaheim Convention Center during the Military Electronics Exposition. Their large sign said simply, "No." They spent the night in jail and got a year's probation. The following year, in response to the return of this grisly Arms Bazaar, they helped organize a large legal protest and led a smaller group in civil disobedience. Appearing again before the same judge, they received a six-month sentence. After two months, apparently moved by their steadfastness and hundreds of letters of support, the judge released them. *Reluctant Resister* is the record of that imprisonment. It includes a Preface by Kent Hoffman, an interesting and longish Introduction by Larry Holben on the history of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker and the "roots" of the Catholic Worker movement, and a warm Afterword by Father Daniel Berrigan. The major part of the book is the prison letters of Jeff Dietrich.

The Jeff Dietrich we meet in these letters is a likeable fellow. He is thoughtful and serious, though not without humor. He has a deep attachment to prayer. He is touchingly honest and impressively unself-conscious. He is aware of the temptation to self-righteousness and he can laugh at himself. But the temptation is powerful and he sometimes succumbs. It is hard not to assign excessive importance to what we do, all the more so in jail. I was embarrassed recently to reread some of my own letters from prison. There is a very human tendency to strike poses and make pronouncements which he does not entirely avoid.

During his time in jail, Jeff Dietrich read and reread and was deeply moved by Reinhold Niebuhr's *Beyond Tragedy*. He mentions it in several letters and quotes from it at length. It is hard to understand his enthusiasm. Though it has been years since I have read Niebuhr, I can't get over thinking of him as a Rotarian with a theological education. I think of Niebuhr as having been rather finally bested by John Howard Yoder, responding to his attack on pacifism, and Karl Lowith, in his critique of Niebuhr's view of history. It is hard for me to be enthusiastic about a theology which issues in such conventional politics.

In two different letters, Jeff Dietrich talks about the Eucharist and the Resurrection as metaphors. He quotes Niebuhr who describes the Resurrection as not "literal," but a "symbol of humanity's ultimate fulfillment." Though the metaphorical richness of the central Mysteries is inexhaustible, it seems crucial to cling to their fundamental realness—the Real Presence. I recall a passage in Eric Gill's *Autobiography*. About to be received into the Church, he went on retreat to some Belgian Benedictines. The old monk who was to be Gill's director spoke little English, but in response to Gill's rather liberal, metaphorical-symbolic account of the faith, responded repeatedly and adamantly *pas symbolique, pas symbolique*.

Jeff Dietrich tells of a funny and uncomfortable meeting with a priest at the County jail. He says he wanted to tell the priest, "I don't belong to a parish. I

belong to the Catholic Worker." I remember saying almost exactly those words to a friend once. I think they reveal a continuing temptation within the Worker, to see ourselves as a Church within the Church, and, implicitly, above the Church.

The book is from a small press in North Carolina and the price is reasonable. We owe them our gratitude for making available a book not likely to be a commercial success. But the book needs proof-reading and editing. We aren't always clear exactly what the letters are about or to whom they are addressed. There are quite a few pictures, some of which are interesting, but the captions are many pages away and, though the captions are neatly numbered, the pictures aren't. There is a lot of white in the book. Even a four line letter gets a page to itself. The back cover blurb compares the book to Thomas Merton's *Sign of Jonas* and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison*. This is a bit hyperbolic, even for a publisher.

Jeff Dietrich reports that Mass was not celebrated at the Orange County Jail. He gives the impression that it was only irregularly said at the camp to which he was transferred. If this is still so, it is certainly a matter for concern.

The Exposition did not return to Anaheim for a third year. It moved to West Germany, where it elicited a similar response.

WINGS OF THE DAWN. By Stanley Vishnewski. Available from The Catholic Worker (see note in the book list below). 231 pp., 1984. Reviewed by Tina Sipula.

The first time I knew of the *Wings of the Dawn* was in 1978 when Stanley Vishnewski and I traipsed around Manhattan from publisher to publisher with his manuscript in hand and a determined hope that some day the 231 pages would be printed. A year and a few days after that day together in New York, Stanley's heart failed him and his manuscript was left behind for others to fulfill his dream—a dream well worth the effort.

The *Wings of the Dawn* is a personal account of the Catholic Worker from the beginning in 1933 up to the time of Peter Maurin's death in 1949. Few could tell such a story so completely, so personally and so sprinkled with adventure and humor as Stanley did, for he was a joyful servant of the New York Worker for 46 years.

His 46 years of stories describe in detail many of the people who came to serve and the thousands who were the victims of poverty during the Depression. "The Catholic Worker breadline," he writes, "stretched from the kitchen all the way down Mott Street to Canal Street and then around the corner to Baxter Street. It was estimated that there were at least two or three thousand men on the breadline waiting patiently for cups of coffee and rye bread with peanut butter and apple butter. . . In the winter months, the men on the line would build fires on the streets in an effort to keep warm. Most of the men were not alcoholics. They were part of the great mass of unemployed homeless men." Often while reading the history of the Worker of those early years, I felt they could easily be the stories of today. The long lines of the hungry are still with us as are the many homeless who come to the Worker. It is merely "the faces that change," said

Stanley, but the faces and characters come alive as he shares with us tender and humorous memories.

Be prepared to laugh out loud while reading *Wings of the Dawn*. Besides his use of puns, Stanley had a knack of turning tense painful moments into funny truths that forced you to chuckle or groan. "I have a paternal affection towards all bedbugs since they are indeed blood of my blood. . . They were invented to prevent the saints from being too joyful in their beds. And that must be the reason why so many saints slept on the bare floor!"

There is no time spent in this book on deep philosophies or theological analysis. It is a simple, beautiful story of a man who dedicated his life to the Lay Apostolate. Along with Peter Maurin, Stanley dreamt of the days when "people would awake to the fact that the old materialistic society had just died and withered away and that a new culture, based on the Sermon on the Mount, had emerged with the wings of the dawn." We dream with you, Stanley.

FEAST OF LOVE: POPE JOHN PAUL II ON HUMAN INTIMACY. By Mary G. Durkin. Chicago: Loyola University Press. 248 pp., 1983. \$9.95. Reviewed by Pat Jordan.

Mary Durkin, a pastoral theologian whose *Marital Intimacy: A Catholic Perspective* (1982) explored the sacramental depths of the maritally vowed life, has taken, for the inspiration of this study of recent papal teaching on the nature of human sexuality, a line from Eugene O'Neill's *A Long Day's Journey into Night*: "Enough is not as good as a feast." After the reader has followed her through the considered analysis of fifty-six papal audiences dealing with the intricate mysteries of sexuality, one is convinced that Mary Durkin has hosted a generous feast.

This is not to say that the reading is all that easy, nor the subject without perplexity, nor the structure of the book somewhat stilted (the eighteen chapters are divided each into a triad: Pope John

Paul II's remarks, a summary of those same remarks, and Mary Durkin's reflections on them). But, despite the drawbacks, doublebacks, and occasional triplebacks, the reader experiences a convincing, cumulative sense of triumph, akin to hearing Wagner's "Prelude" to *Tristan und Isolde*. The pervasive nature of sexuality is demonstrated as surely as the coursing of the tides, mysterious and deep as the winter's full snows. John Paul II and Durkin firmly interweave sexuality with the rich theological themes of creation, redemption and sanctification.

The pope's opening remarks are always a response to Sacred Scripture—principally the Genesis story and Jesus's teaching on purity of heart. One is struck at the pope's range of understanding, his depth and breadth. Somewhere, he has journeyed into night. He states that the "definitive creation" of the human person "consists in the creation of the unity of two beings." The "primordial sacrament"—in which the image of God is most clearly manifest among us—is in the unity and complement of human masculinity and femininity. Sexuality completely pervades human personhood. This will surprise some, particularly hearing it spoken in full light from Catholic housetops. But said it is, not only with papal sonority, but with the gracious clarity of Mary Durkin. With a guiding hand, she transports us deep into a vast, verdant garden otherwise only hinted at from the papal pathways.

This book has wisdom: it brings forth both what is old and what is new. It is richly orthodox. (There is no denial of sinfulness, of concupiscence. It even speaks of purity.) And it is open to the multiple contributions of those modern disciplines which can assist the development of mature sexual personhood. On the one hand, Jesus's understanding of the realms of the heart is ceaseless. On the other, our spiritual and psychological depths are legion and endless. Jesus wants not only hearts and minds, but the heart of our minds and the very mind of our hearts. He teaches it is not ritual purity but the purified heart that reveals the spontaneous, exquisite dignity of the human person. And His sure insights shatter our self-satisfaction and indulgence. Moral responsibility is firmly (Continued on page 7)

Book List

For those interested in further reading, the following is a listing of some of the books now in print which deal with aspects of the Catholic Worker movement. Prices are listed as we know them.

- The Long Loneliness*. An autobiography by Dorothy Day. Harper and Row publishers, 1700 Montgomery St., San Francisco, CA 94111. (\$6.95)
- Loaves and Fishes*. By Dorothy Day. Harper and Row. (\$6.95) A history of the Catholic Worker movement.
- By Little and By Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*. Edited by Robert Ellsberg. Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022. (\$17.95 hardcover, \$9.95 paperback)
- Peter Maurin: Prophet of the Twentieth Century*. By Marc Ellis. Paulist Press, 545 Island Rd., Ramsey, NJ 07446.
- Meditations—Dorothy Day*. Edited by Stanley Vishnewski. Paulist Press (\$1.95)
- Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America*. By Mel Piehl. Temple University Press, Broad and Oxford Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19122. (\$9.95 paper-

back) A history of the movement through 1965.

- The Dorothy Day Book: A Selection from Her Writing and Reading*. Edited by Margaret Quigley and Michael Garvey. Templegate Publishers, 302 E. Adams, P.O. Box 5152, Springfield, IL 62705.
- Therese*. By Dorothy Day. Templegate Publishers. A biography of Therese of Lisieux.
- Dorothy Day and the Permanent Revolution*. By Eileen Egan. (booklet) Benet Press, 6101 East Lake Rd., Erie, PA 16511. (\$1)
- Wings of the Dawn*. By Stanley Vishnewski. (see review above) Yes, Stanley's book is finally in print! We have limited copies available. For more information, please write the Catholic Worker, 36 E. 1st St., New York, NY 10003.
- A superb edition of Peter Maurin's *Easy Essays* was published in 1977 by the Franciscan Herald Press, but unfortunately it is no longer in print. We are trying to encourage the publishers to do another printing, and requests from readers might help to bring this about. Inquiries about the *Easy Essays* should be addressed to: Franciscan Herald Press, 1434 W. 51st St., Chicago IL 60609.

MARYHOUSE

(Continued from page 4)

accompaniment and more. All in all, it was a brief but wonderful show with much laughter and calls for "encores."

Martha, whose special concerns include Central America, took off in late February for her first trip to the region, to visit a friend who works in the refugee camps in Honduras. Pam Noone rendezvoused with Martha in Texas in mid-March. The two of them then took off to travel through Mexico for several weeks. Elaine also flew south in March to fulfill a long-dreamed hope of visiting her sister, who lives in Paraguay. We look forward to welcoming all our weary travelers home by early May, full of stories to tell, no doubt.

Anna "Banana," the matriarch of Maryhouse, was taken to the hospital in February with what we feared was a mild stroke. She is better now and has been moved into a nursing home, a half-day's trip from Maryhouse by public transportation. It was a hard decision not to bring Anna back to Maryhouse, but it was felt by many people that we could no longer adequately take care of her needs. We are grateful for the care she is getting at the nursing home. We hope, however, for a transfer soon to a local nursing home so we can visit more often. We all miss her toothless grin and her affectionate greeting, "Hi, Babel!"

In an attempt to give folks at Maryhouse more of a sense of being a family, we've started tea parties on Monday afternoons. We break out the popcorn, and often Bertha bakes a cake for the occasion. Sometimes we return to our Catholic "roots" by playing bingo for little prizes—jewelry, colognes, soaps—whatever little knick-knacks that we find around the clothing room. Bingo is a big hit with a few people, especially Annie Skwarek, our resident bingo pro.

Tim, Elaine and George seem to be the most faithful attendees at our weekly prayer vigil at Riverside Research Institute. They are usually joined by a smattering of other folks from both houses, along with Fr. Dennis Leder, S.J., from our local parish, and Fr. Martin Clarke, a Franciscan and friend of the Worker for many years. Nancy, a friend from Nineteenth St., rounds out our group, so that even on the coldest of days, we are able to have a good presence of hardy fools to pray, hand out leaflets, and talk to passersby.

Once a week since November, George, Tom and sometimes a few others from the Worker have taken time to join forces with people from several Christian peace groups to pray and protest at our Senator

Moynihan's office. This effort is to express concern about the escalation of violence and covert aid against Nicaragua, and United States involvement in Central America generally.

The letters we get from Peggy in Nicaragua and the news in the media each day keep the urgency of the issue ever in the minds and prayers of many at the Worker.

In recent months, Tim, George, Paul and I have been putting together a folk liturgy once a month at The Church of the Nativity parish around the corner. Thus, anyone peeping into the auditorium of Maryhouse, in recent weeks, is very aware of the Lenten season, as our budding chorus rehearses for Good Friday and



Easter Sunday Services. Jenny and Roxanne, from Nativity, have joined our fledgling group, adding flute and voices. Preparations for our own Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday services, at Maryhouse and St. Joseph House, are also underway.

If the coming of Easter is a sign of Spring, so is the recent rash of beard clipping among the menfolk of the Worker. Gary started it several weeks ago by cutting his marvelous full beard very short. Robbie went further than that soon after, by shaving his beard off completely. Tom says his beard is on its way out and Tim has admitted that he is thinking of joining the fray. Paul, George, Alan and Ben, however, are holding fast to their whiskers—or perhaps they prefer the element of surprise (time will tell).

We find hope in watching the cycle of life begin again, as the blooming of spring breaks through the concrete expanse of our neighborhood. In the same way, the coming Easter, with its promise of redemption and forgiveness, gives us strength and courage as we go about our daily lives.

others' nourishment, as opposed to buying packaged, near-stale food in a store; to live and work and be cradled in God's creation, as opposed to being a cog in the ugly, oppressive, artificial world so many of our cities have become.

It would surely be my guess that Peter Maurin saw these contrasts, and thus knew the importance of agronomic communities, of "Catholic Communism" based on the idea of the Common Good, so as to allow the oppressive multinational, governmental, propertied, and monied interests to wither away from lack of support and compliance, while people involved themselves in building the new society in the shell of the old. This seems to be a substantial portion of the Green Revolution. Here at Peter Maurin Farm, we slowly work to inch this along, for the benefit of each of us as individuals, and as a community, and as neighbors in the planetary community of the Mystical Body of Christ. We are just at the beginning of our revolution, and we have a long journey ahead of us.

NICARAGUA

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that it will, in fact, also cost lives, will probably be long in coming, will not be turned to easily, and will continue to be viewed with skepticism. But we must pray and work toward that end. What is becoming progressively clearer to me is that "full" nonviolence includes not only a refusal to bear arms, but, as Dorothy Day, Gandhi, Martin Luther King and St. Francis all showed us, calls for personal witness in all areas of our lives, especially in embracing voluntary poverty. One of the privileges of being in Nicaragua (while I'm quite conscious that the imposed poverty should be alleviated) is that, in a society where people live more simply and materialism is not a false god, it is so much easier to be good. (Yet I still wish I had a better typewriter, a copy machine closer than three hours away, hot water, etc.) It is heartening to see people come to Nicaragua and recognize the connections between war and poverty and injustice, while discovering that a simpler life can encourage cooperation and interdependence, and that the slower pace allows people to be important, rather than the efficiency of the tasks at hand.

I think Nicaraguan society can also teach us something of nonviolence. Hospitality—welcoming the stranger—is given freely, not as an afterthought. Suffering and self-sacrifice, necessary elements for peacemaking in our violent world, are all around me. How often I realize that people, taught for centuries that war can be justified in Christianity, have rarely been taught that there is another way.

Problems

I also reflect on the imperfections of the country. There are the dangerous implications of militarism, even if there is consciousness of the dangers. Youths and children are accustomed to guns, and see arms as a way of life. In lives often so dreary there is an attraction to uniforms and to going off to defend the country. In a tense atmosphere, polarization can come more easily than reconciliation. People with guns use them, accidents occur, personal disputes are "resolved" with violence. The very nationalism needed, in one sense to keep spirits up, also sets up barriers. How fortunate that many visitors from North America and European countries come, and are welcomed. At least people are reminded that people are distinct from their governments.

I don't think Nicaragua is, nor can any country be, the "ultimate" example of a just society. Our efforts for a world "wherein justice dwelleth" will be unending, I'm afraid. Yet I do think what is happening here is, so far, way ahead of many places, especially in light of the history of the country. What is critical is the opportunity for us (as people from the U.S., but primarily as Christians) to join with Nicaraguans in working for the good—not

simply to support the Sandinistas—but because it is important to work for justice and for the benefit of others. There is an element here, to some degree a source of shame, as Dorothy noted on her 1962 trip to Cuba, that sometimes people without "faith" live the teachings of Christianity better than some of us. I think there are ways we can express our nonviolence, both here and in the U.S. The means of expression are hard to discover; sometimes, in our sense of futility, we must struggle to remember that if our acts seem useless, they hold value in God's eyes. I grow in my sense that a bodily presence here has tremendous potential both in what it can teach us, and in demonstrating, more in witness than in words, Gospel nonviolence. I also continue to hope that such a presence might also touch the hearts of those making, implementing and paying for our country's policies.

Constant Prayer

Throughout all of our experiences in the Witness for Peace runs the awareness of war. Tranquil as life has been on the surface during these past several months in Jalapa, we are all aware of the threat of war that hangs over us. On the Voice of America, or National Public Radio if we're lucky, we hear the news; of millions of dollars in aid being requested in Congress for the counter-revolutionaries and for the government troops in El Salvador; of U.S. troop movements and military exercises being carried out in the Central American region. And so we pray. Each day in Jalapa, we gather to read Scripture and reflect on the situation we are all in, to seek guidance. We pray too at funerals; for those lost in combat, and for children, dying needlessly because there is still too little medical care, and because medicines are still in short supply, due to boycotts. We pray for those who survive and mourn, for those who keep working for a better country. We pray constantly to be better instruments of peace.

Review

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ours. But this, at last, is a task worthy of the human person.

God calls us out of solitude. In *Feast of Love* we see the Church itself being called out of solitude. Mary Durkin teaches that only when the Magisterium listens to the voice of married people and women in particular will it become truly aware of the "revelatory aspects of sexuality": "The task of the Church requires that the Magisterium engage in an ongoing dialogue on this 'basic fact of human existence' with those who have charisms different than those of the teaching authority. Only then can the entire Church hope to be faithful..."

This book richly projects the many shades of human sexual understanding: its joy, difficulty, and necessity. It provides a true feast, far in excess of "enough."

FRIDAY NIGHT MEETINGS

In keeping with Peter Maurin's recognition of the need for ongoing clarification of thought, we invite you to join us for our weekly Friday night meetings. We are alternating between Maryhouse—55 East Third St., (212) 777-9617, and St. Joseph House—36 East First St., 254-1640. As much as we can see ahead, those we will hold at First St. will be marked with an asterisk (*). Both houses are between First and Second Avenues (2nd Ave. stop on the F train). Meetings begin at 8:00 p.m., and tea is served afterwards.

May 11—A Round Table Discussion on Peter Maurin—Tom Sullivan & others.
May 18—Joseph Cunneen: Jean Sullivan: Breton Priest/Novelist*
May 25—Dr. Burkhard Luber: The Future of the German Peace Movement.
June 1—Fritz Eichenberg: Art and Grace (a talk with slides).
June 8—Robert Peters: The Mennonites—History and Relevance Today.*
June 15—Chuck Matthei: Faith and Finance—Investment for Social Change.*
June 22—Ramsey Clark: Grenada Reconsidered.
June 29—Robert Scullin: Evening of Song.

There will be no meetings during the summer, due to the warm weather and our need for a break. Meetings will resume again in September.

P.M. FARM

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who find God in the city. Yet it was the land that held hope for Peter.

The differences between the land and the city are powerful: the softness of moonlight as opposed to bright, blinking neon signs; the wide and lush expanse of a hay field as opposed to glass-strewn, garbage-filled vacant lots; the gleeful play of little children in the waters of a pond, as opposed to splashing around in a gutter; the backs of people stooped in the labor of the soil, as opposed to the slumping backs and depressed spirits that come to the unemployment line; the respectful passing along of history and the knowledge of accumulated experience by the elderly, as opposed to muggings, isolation and retirement; to be hemmed in by the beauty of rolling hillsides and mountains instead of office skyscrapers and burned-out tenement buildings; to pick fresh, organic, lovingly raised food for our own and for

Chronicle

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spoke against confrontational methods, and the attempt to provoke the police by name-calling. She remarked that Pope John XXIII and St. Thomas Aquinas were very stout men, but no one would call them pigs. She emphasized that the true role models for those working for peace and civil rights were such persons as Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, and Vinoba Bhave. Many, I suspect, who heard her, would have added Dorothy Day's name to the list.

Although she never got over a sense of nervousness in public speaking, Dorothy made many talks during her long apostolate. Since the advent of the tape recorder, many have been taped. Some tapes of Dorothy's talks are in the Catholic Worker archives at Marquette University. Phil Runkel, the conscientious archivist who looks after Catholic Worker materials, has undoubtedly made every effort to procure as many tapes as possible. Yet it is always possible that there are some persons who possess taped talks of Dorothy's which are not contained in the present archives collection. If there are readers of this column who possess or know of such taped talks, I hope they will try to get copies sent to the archives at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Even if they are somewhat imperfect tapes, I think they can still be useful. I am sure Phil Runkel will be grateful and take good care of them. Any graduate student, scholar, or historian interested in understanding Dorothy Day or the Catholic Worker could really benefit from studying these tapes.

Readings

Here at Peter Maurin Farm, where I listened to Dorothy Day's Casa Maria talk fifteen years after it was given, we are suffering from a perennial Catholic Worker problem—the comings and goings of volunteer workers. Where no one takes vows, and no one is paid a salary, one can hardly expect stability. Perhaps the first commitment of a volunteer should be to the teaching and principles of the Catholic Worker movement. These are most effectively expressed in the writings of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. The best introduction to the writings of Dorothy Day is, as I have said before, contained in that marvelous anthology, *By Little And By Little*, published by Knopf, and edited by Robert Ellsberg. Robert's introduction is the best short account of the Catholic Worker I have read. His arrangement and selection of Dorothy's writings is brilliant. He well deserves the Christopher Award he received for this book not long ago, and certainly the writings of Dorothy Day are worthy of that award. As for the writings of Peter Maurin, they fill only a small volume, but may be hard to find in print. Another book, which ought to be read by the volunteer worker, is Stanley Vishniewski's *Wings Of The Dawn*. It has finally appeared, though not yet in plentiful copies. Reading Stanley's book will surely shed a little humorous light on the contradictory, paradoxical realities of the Catholic Worker.

Marc, Carol and Jerilyn will certainly need help with the organic garden and with the general maintenance of this farming community when Tom leaves to resume other duties in Baltimore. Perhaps there are among our readers some who would like to try volunteer work on a Catholic Worker farm. Buddha once said that life in community is like a blade of sword grass in the hand. Many who have lived in community, however,

Working with Christ

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remember the vivid feeling I had at that time that what was happening was very special."

Thirty years from now, will we look back on our present situation and remember it as being a very special time? Is it important that it be remembered as such? By what yardsticks can we or should we measure the value of our present work? I am humbled when I read Dorothy's description in *Loaves and Fishes* of the meal lines at the house on Mott St. in the mid-thirties. Up to a thou-

where it is extremely difficult for people to be good. So the work is cut out for us, and I have to remember that we are a community of particular individuals in a particular situation together, each with our own skills and weaknesses. In trying to live out the precepts of the Gospel daily, in trying to realize the vision of Dorothy and Peter, we are truly fools for Christ. May the Holy Spirit renew us daily so that we will be both foolish and strong enough to continue.

As a fledgling editor of this paper, I am often given bits of advice on how to put



sand hungry people were fed twice-daily; bread and coffee in the morning, soup at noontime. 115 Mott St. is still standing; the storefront kitchen, now a butcher shop, is hardly any bigger than our present soup kitchen at 36 East 1st St. Yet we are almost overwhelmed if we serve four hundred people on a busy soupline morning.

The danger of continually looking over our shoulders at the past is that so often we appear to fall short of it in our present work, which is discouraging. As we strive for, as Peter Maurin said, a society where it is easier for people to be good, it seems that we are presently living in a society

believe there are also important rewards. Read Dorothy, Peter, Stanley. For them, the Catholic Worker was truly a way of life.

We shall certainly miss Tom and Kate and Tony. Partly as the result of the last illness and death of Kate's father, but also because of other ties and goals, they are returning to Baltimore where they both grew up. It has been almost three years since they came to us. They have given us much, and have shown us fine examples of the work ethic in practice. Tom is undoubtedly the finest organic gardener we have ever had. Kate's nursing skills have often proved invaluable, especially during the last illnesses of Farmer John and Alice. As for Tony, he is a cheerful, vocal, lovable baby. We miss him. We shall also miss the visits of Kate's parents, and our talks with her father. All of his life, though he suffered from a serious heart condition, John McAviney had been a dedicated worker for peace and civil rights. He was also a brilliant, stimulating conversationalist. Throughout his life, he was a devout Catholic. May he rest in peace.

Now on the eve of Holy Week, I wonder if it is possible to do sufficient penance for our own sins and the sins of our country in which we must all bear our share of guilt. Surely the mining of Nicaraguan harbors is one of the most shameful episodes in our history. Are we not partly responsible for the "death squads" of El Salvador? Pray for us, Dorothy Day, that we may never forget that, with God, all things are possible. The Risen Christ is Christ our Brother. And, in the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, "the Holy Ghost over the bent world broods, with warm breast, and with, ah, bright wings." ALLELUIA.

the paper together. Many of the suggestions have to do with the writings of Dorothy and Peter. Some people say, "There should be something by Dorothy and Peter in every issue. It is their paper." Others say, "Please, no more reprints of old columns. You are doing the paper a disservice by turning it back on the past." This dilemma illustrates quite clearly the present situation of the Catholic Worker. We are sitting on top of a tremendous source of wisdom and spiritual wealth which we have inherited from Peter and Dorothy. Yet, we are living in a rapidly changing society which needs to be looked at from a fresh perspective all the time. Since Peter wrote his *Easy Essays*, we have been subjected to a variety of wars, a new alignment of the superpowers, increasing secularization of society, and an arms race of unforeseeable magnitude. We have also experienced the fundamental changes of Vatican II, and seen an increasing public awareness of issues of social justice, as evidenced by the civil rights movement in the fifties and early sixties, and the growing peace movement in more recent years. Even in the three short years since Dorothy's death, dramatic changes have occurred; on one hand, hopeful events such as the American bishops drafting a pastoral letter on peace and war, and, on the other, rapid technological changes, driven home to us personally by the inevitable acquisition of a home computer to print up our address labels. Given such change, how can we tap into the wisdom and riches that Peter and Dorothy have left us? When press deadlines are looming and an issue appears to be short of copy, it is an easy temptation to read through old papers and dig out an *Easy Essay* or an *On Pilgrimage* column that has some bearing on a present topic, hoping that what was written in 1935 or 1954 is still fresh and relevant today. Often this is the case, for Dorothy and Peter were such extraordinary visionaries that their words are often timeless and universal. But what is also needed now is for people, writing with some understanding of the Catholic Worker vision, to use Peter and Dorothy's words in conjunction with their own thoughts, in the context of the present. Peter and Dorothy should be in every issue—it is their paper—but they should be guides to those who are writing and thinking and working in the here and now.

And we surely need guidance now! As it says in the Aims and Purposes of the Catholic Worker movement (see page 3 of this issue):

We see this as an era filled with anxiety and confusion. In response, we, as a lay community, seek our strength and direction in the beauty of regular prayer and liturgy, in studying and applying the traditions of Scripture and the teachings of the Church to the modern condition.

Guidance comes from prayer and worship, from Scripture and Church teaching and the vision of our founders, and we struggle to apply it in our daily lives and views of the present world. There is so much to be done, on many different levels. The works of mercy, those works so essential to the Catholic Worker program, through which we attempt to learn how to love our brothers and sisters as ourselves, must be performed continually. New ways to confront the violence and potential violence in our world must be put into action. Theories of revolution—spiritual, social and economic—must be developed and articulated. If, as Dostoyevsky said, the world is to be saved through beauty, then our surroundings, our words and our lives must be made beautiful. The talents of many are needed: artists, poets, philosophers, journalists, theologians, pastors, economists and, of course, carpenters, farmers, soup makers, and so on. The work is ongoing, and there has been a steady stream of gifted people who have contributed to it over the years at the Catholic Worker. With God's grace, the flow will continue uninterrupted.

Signs of Hope

At present, there is exciting news from all over which gives cause for hope. Peggy Scherer and all the participants of the Witness for Peace in Nicaragua are learning to live nonviolently and to speak of nonviolence in a region where violence is such a part of daily life. In Greenfield, Massachusetts, at the Institute for Community Economics, Chuck Matthei and his colleagues are working to establish community land trusts and other humane, practical, and alternative economic programs in communities around the United States. We hear of the base Christian communities in Brazil and other Latin American countries, and hope that they might become models for a grassroots spiritual renewal in this country. And there are now over eighty Catholic Worker houses of hospitality all over the U.S., more than at any other time in the history of the movement.

Finally, as Peter said, the Catholic Worker is an organism, not an organization. We are an ever-changing community struggling to work for the Common Good in an ever-changing society. Dorothy addressed this idea beautifully when she said:

We must minister to people's bodies in order to reach their souls. We hear of the faith through our ears, we speak it with our mouths. The Catholic Worker movement, working for a new social order, has come to be known as a community which breaks bread with brothers and sisters of whatever race, color, or creed. "This is My Body," Christ said at the Last Supper, as He held out bread to His apostles. When we receive the Bread of Life each day, the grace we receive remains a dead weight in the soul unless we cooperate with grace. When we cooperate with Christ, we "work with" Christ, in ministering to our brothers and sisters.

So, as the Catholic Worker moves along into its second half-century, I pray that we will be able to continue to "work with" Christ, and that we will be up to the tasks that He has laid out for us.