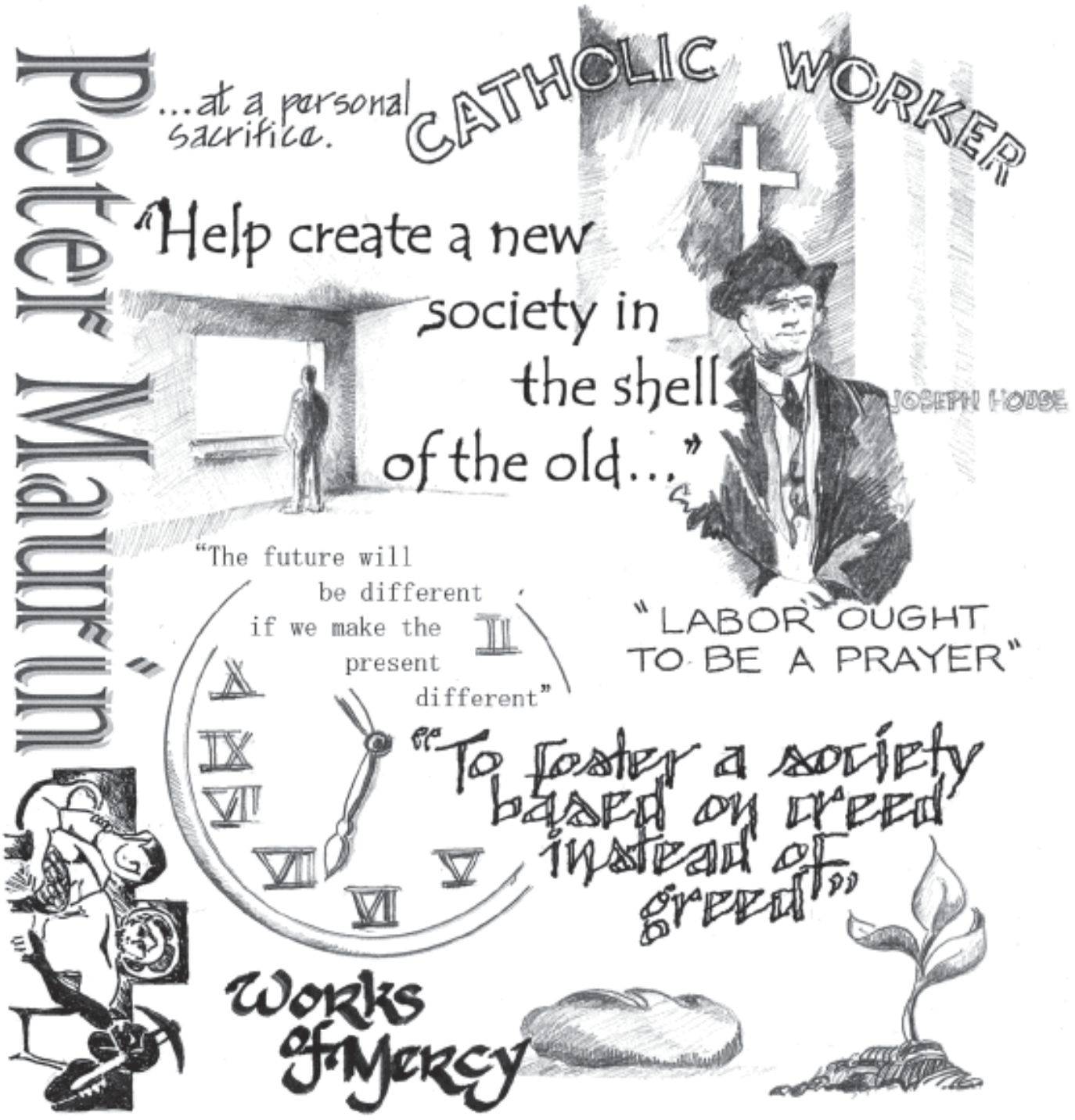
THE Round Table

Spring 2010

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --Peter Maurin



Why This Issue?

"So, does anyone know who Peter Maurin is?" A long, long silence ensued. I was speaking to a group of high school students; they had read a bit about the Catholic Worker, seen *Entertaining Angels*: The Dorothy Day Story, and fuzzily remembered who Dorothy Day was after we clarified that I wasn't asking about Doris Day, the actress. This response is not unusual in groups; many people recognize Dorothy Day's name but few people outside of the Catholic Worker movement know of Peter Maurin, the French immigrant who provided the impetus, backbone and underpinning of the Catholic Worker movement.

Our community is thrilled to present this issue on Peter Maurin. It seems that we, along with Workers and friends across the country, are considering Peter's philosophies with renewed appreciation, and what a gift they are! Certainly, society's problems - environmental ruin, corporate omnipotence, and disconnection from the land, to name a few - make Peter Maurin's vision look "less like a medieval utopian fantasy and more like an urgent and rational plan for a new and sustainable social order," in the words of RT author Brian Terrell. We hope you'll join us at a **Potluck and RoundTable Discussion on Peter Maurin** – Saturday, May 1st (the 77th Anniversary of the Catholic Worker!) at Karen House! Details are on the back page.

When most people think "Catholic Worker," they automatically think "house of hospitality." Here's the exciting news: we are a diversifying movement, with increasing numbers of communities doing craft work, resistance work, farm work, and education work, joining communities doing the vital works of mercy in urban centers. These communities together embody essential pieces of a personalist society, geared towards the dignity of the human person, organized in local communities, and connected to land.

How does one summarize the vast teachings of Peter Maurin? We tasked Carolyn Griffeth with the near-impossible mission: distill the sum of Peter's theology and philosophy into a mere 2,200 words. In it, we witness a faith-filled life based on nonviolence, the works of mercy, manual labor, and voluntary poverty, ideals that are both counter-cultural and absurdly commonsensical. Later, Teka Childress provides a context for Peter to speak for himself in her article highlighting Peter's Easy Essays.

Peter, whose pre-Catholic Worker life is described wonderfully in Ellen Rehg's article, recognized that many of our urban problems, our conflicts with other nations, and our oppression of other people, are rooted in issues of land and resources. From his home of 20+ years at Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker Farm, Brian Terrell discusses this idea while chronicling Peter's vision throughout the 77 year history of the Catholic Worker.

The Catholic Worker promotes structures that emphasize human dignity – from how we organize ourselves (we model and promote personalist, consensus-based, small communities) to how we organize our money (check out our last RoundTable on the economic model of Distributism). Along these lines, Eric Anglada from New Hope Catholic Worker Farm discusses Peter Maurin's vision of, and their community's experiments in, the Agronomic University. This is a developing concept of education as a structure that promotes human dignity.

In this issue, we also hear the news from both Karen and Kabat House, while in Catholic Worker Thought and Action, Colleen Kelly discusses Peter Maurin's vision of anarchism, which is rooted in the idea of "individual freedom, personal responsibility, and loving each person in the broadest sense."

Because of the meeting between this 50 year-old, undocumented, hobo-looking laborer and a 33 year-old single mother who was working precariously as a freelance writer and living with her sister, we are here today. It's both mind-boggling and incredibly hopeful. And so, for those who can tell you about Dorothy Day, but look befuddled at the mention of our most-inspiring Frenchman; and for ourselves, who extol the virtues of Dorothy while being befuddled ourselves at Peter's expansive vision, we offer these humble reflections. Ladies and gentlemen, Peter Maurin. - Jenny Truax

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Peter Maurin's Personalist Gift to the Catholic Worker

by Carolyn Griffeth

Central to Catholic Worker lore is the story of Dorothy Day's conversion from a life of socialist agitation to a life of Catholic piety, a conversion which both magnified her longing to join the struggle of the poor, and stymied the participation she once had in it. For four years following her conversion Dorothy was reluctant to participate in any form of social activism, a trend she parted with in 1932 when she went to Washington, D. C. to cover the "hunger march". Her heart was pierced by the countless ragged, hungry men gathered there. The next day at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Dorothy prayed ardently 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." Were it not for this prayer, she later admitted, she would likely not have been so receptive to "the French peasant whose spirit and ideas [would] dominate the rest of [her] life," who awaited her upon her return home.

This French peasant, laborer, and itinerant scholar was Peter Maurin, who had immigrated to Canada in 1909, and then to the United States in search of his Christian vocation. This vocation eluded him throughout a decade of teaching and Catholic political activism in France, and then two more decades in the new world where he lived as a traveling laborer until World War One. This lifestyle created an inroad into a comfortable life as a French teacher. Like Dorothy, Peter had also experienced a radical conversion; at the age of fifty-three he walked away from the comfort he had struggled to gain in order to pursue a life of poverty, charity, and agitation, which four years later brought him to Dorothy's door.

Not being one to talk of himself, Peter never revealed the details of his own inner-transformation, but rather when pressed by one interviewer explained dismissively that "a world in search of affluence and security had gone crazy, and I decided to be crazy in my own way." One is left to speculate on just how Peter's vocation was found. Peter is best known as an intellectual and as a synthesizer of the philosophy and wisdom of others. Being of such a nature, perhaps Peter's conversion flowed naturally from the intellectual clarity and vision he arrived at after long studying the gospel, the lives of the saints, Catholic teaching, and the writings of a diverse group of philosophers and scholars. Peter formulated this clarity into a three-part program of action, a program that began with him, and through his graced encounter with Dorothy Day gave birth to the Catholic Worker Movement.

At the core of all Maurin's thought lies the life and teachings of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount in particular: "Blessed are the poor . . ." For Maurin, poverty was essential to entering into the life of Jesus and embodying the message of salvation Jesus preached, as was non-violence or the love of enemies. One became poor because Jesus gave everything, even his life, to serve humankind. Voluntary poverty and nonviolence also gave witness to the primacy of the spiritual and prophetically demonstrated the orientation society had taken towards materialism and violence. The rumpled, old and only suit Peter Maurin wore on the occasion he met Dorothy gave evidence to the life of poverty he had chosen. After the onset of the Catholic Worker Movement, Peter had ample opportunity to model non-violence as a way of dealing with conflict. Dorothy relayed one account in the September 1948 Catholic Worker: When two men at Easton farm fought over an egg to eat, Peter refused to eat eggs or milk the rest of the summer, so that others might have more.

For Maurin, poverty was essential to entering into the life of Jesus and embodying the message of salvation

Peter also took to heart the teaching of Mathew 25:31: to serve those in need is to serve Christ. As the second pillar of his program he recommended Christian hospices, in the tradition of the early and medieval Christians, where the Corporal Works of Mercy would be practiced at a personal sacrifice. In Dorothy's words: "We were to reach the people by practicing the works of mercy, which meant feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the prisoner, sheltering the harborless, and so on. We were to do this by being poor ourselves, giving everything we had; then others would give, too." Peter did not hesitate to be the first to put his teachings into practice: "When a reader who had been sleeping in the subway came into the Catholic Worker office one day and disclosed her need (the apartment and the office were already full), Peter's literal acceptance of 'If thy brother needs food or

Carolyn Griffeth is excited about her garden and all the people cultivating it this year.

drink, feed him, and if he needs shelter, shelter him' meant that we rented a large apartment a block away which became the first House of Hospitality for women." In the same spirit, Maurin would often stay overnight at Uncle Sam's Hotel for forty cents a night, or simply sleep in the park because he had given his bed to someone in greater need.

Likewise, Peter paid great respect to the seven Spiritual Works of Mercy as described by the Catholic tradition: to admonish the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive all injuries, and to pray for the living and the dead. In particular, he embraced "instructing the ignorant" or "agitation" as his particular vocation, and sought to instruct Bishops and bums alike. One of his pedagogical techniques was reciting monologues that would continue uninterrupted until his point had been made and then listening to the fullness of his conversation partner's ideas without interruption. Another technique of his, was to begin a conversation with one person in a crowded setting like Union Square but in a voice loud enough to attract others. In order to get profound ideas across to the common person, Peter wrote and recited Easy Essays, or pithy poems designed to get stuck in your head. With all these strategies it is no wonder John Woodlock of the *Wall Street Journal* wrote of Peter: "He can cram more truth into your cranium at high speed in a single hour than any ordinary person could do in a week."

Fritz Eichenberg

Nonetheless, one could argue that Peter's pedagogy was a secondary factor in his success as an agitator; the greater factor was his unshakable belief that all individuals shared his interest in the big questions: What has gone wrong in contemporary society? And, how can society be recreated to better serve the common good and the flourishing of the human person? Moreover, he assumed that everyone was capable of grasping profound truths and willing to transform one's life in conformity thereof. To this end, Peter proposed Round Table discussions as the first pillar of his three-part program. Round Tables were to compel the exchange of ideas across class divisions in order to understand the roots of social problems and thus forge radical answers.

Having found a disciple at last in Dorothy, Peter spent every day for the next four months, from three in the afternoon until eleven, following her around the house in order to give her a "Catholic education." Respecting that Dorothy was a working, single mom, Peter would not only bring books, but also summaries of them, which he wrote as an act of service for those without the time to read the works he recommended. Peter's summaries included a digest of Kropotkin's Fields, Factories, and Workshops (1889), which concluded, from the study of peasant society, that the principals of cooperation and mutual aid, rather than competition, were the most natural tendencies of humankind. Other sources Peter eagerly brought to Dorothy's attention were the English Distributists who decried the evils of industrialism and advocated a land and craft society, and the French Personalist, Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950), who emphasized the absolute value of each person, made in the image of God, as the proper philosophical foundation for society. In the words of Mounier, Peter described his own program as a personalist one, a "green revolution," which begins with an awakened sense of vocation that compels one to take an active role in history.

Another source of inspiration which Maurin brought to Dorothy was the example of the saints. Peter said, "In the Catholic Worker we must try to have the voluntary poverty of St. Francis, the charity of St. Vincent de Paul, the intellectual approach of St. Dominic, the easy conversations about things that matter of St. Philip Neri, and the manual labor of St. Benedict."

"Peter loved St. Benedict," wrote Dorothy, "because he said that what the workers needed most was a philosophy of work." This philosophy flows out of the Benedictine motto: Laboreare et Orare, Labor and Pray, which emphasized an ideal unity between work and prayer, religious life and economic life. In his own life, Peter had seen the degrading effects of capitalism and communism, both materialistic economic models that emphasize wealth and production rather than the wholeness of the human person or the flourishing of human relationships within society. As an alternative, Peter proposed Christian communalism, believing that the development of one's interior life was best fostered by a spiritually-centered communal life emphasizing poverty over affluence, self-giving over self-advancement, and cooperation over competition.

Peter cited Benedictine monasticism with its emphasis on hospitality, prayer, life on the land, art, and labor, as just such a model which could transform not only the person but also the wider culture. From his studies of monasticism, Peter also acquired the idea that human goodness can be fostered by appropriate structures. Therefore, Peter would formulate a daily schedule with set times for prayer, work in the fields, meals, rest, crafts, study, etc., for himself and whoever cared to follow. It was these small structures as well as the practice of the works of mercy, and the return to a village-like land and craft based culture, which fleshed out Peter's idea of a "society where it is easier to be good." To this end, Peter proposed farming communes or "agronomic universities," to reintroduce city dwellers to the spiritual richness and simplicity of life on the land as the third and final pillar of his program. On Peter's farming communes, community members were to live not only in cooperation with one another, but also in cooperation with their animals, which were considered as community members, and with the land,

which was to be farmed using the most earth-friendly methods available—all of which was akin to living in cooperation with God.

Nonetheless, it is St. Francis, not St. Benedict, to whom Peter Maurin has commonly been compared, and who was arguably his greatest source of inspiration. The radical conversion Peter underwent coincided with his reading a series of books and papal encyclicals on St. Francis. In one of his Easy Essays Peter summarized the way of St. Francis, which he sought to emulate:

Saint Francis desired that we should give up
superfluous possessions.
Saint Francis desired that we should work with our hands.
Saint Francis desired that we should offer
our services as a gift.
Saint Francis desired that we should ask other people for
help when work fails us.
Saint Francis desired that we should live as free as birds.
Saint Francis desired that we should go through life giving
thanks to God for God's gifts.

Like St. Francis, Peter was described by Dorothy as possessing "a freedom and joyousness that come from a clear heart and soul." This joy and freedom flowed from his adoption of Franciscan poverty and the clarity he possessed about his own vocation, which was, in the spirit of St. Francis, to preach the gospel at all times in both word and action. Peter's method of "agitation", employed to awaken the human intellect and to compel one towards conversion, as well as his three part program, were his attempt to bring the gospel to the common person and to the social realities of his time. In short, Peter sought not only to talk of salvation (one's growth towards holiness, or the full realization of oneself moving towards God), but to make salvation more possible by creating a spiritually nourishing culture.

It is remarkable how precisely Dorothy's prayer "to find something to do in the social order" for the poor was answered in Peter Maurin. "Without him," Dorothy concluded, "I would never have been able to find a way of working that would have satisfied my conscience. Peter's arrival changed everything, I finally found a purpose in my life and the teacher I needed." In turn, Peter found in Dorothy the student he had searched for, one with the capacity and charisma to put his program into action. Because of Peter and Dorothy's student-teacher relationship, Peter has commonly been understood as the intellectual founder of the Catholic Worker Movement. Yet from the beginning, Dorothy sought that Peter would be known for more than just his ideas and even insisted that biographers writing about her write instead about Peter. In the end, Dorothy set out to write her own biography of Peter which, though unfinished, was recently published in Peter Maurin: Apostle to the World. Dorothy's reflections within, make it clear that Peter was not only her teacher but also her

spiritual mentor in whom she saw the "face of Christ." Upon Peter's death, Dorothy compared their time together to the time the disciples walked unknowingly with the risen Jesus, quoting Luke 24:32: "Was not our heart burning within us whilst he spoke along the way?"

Peter on Pilgrimage

by Ellen Rehg

"What do we really know of a man who, though his writings were circulated around the country and he spoke at length with hundreds of people, was a wanderer and revealed little of his background or interior life, even to his best friends?" Marc Ellis asks in his biography of Peter Maurin, Peter Maurin, Prophet in the Twentieth Century. He laments, "[A]fter studying Maurin for years and laboring at writing his biography, I can say without apology that Maurin's life remains a mystery." Alas, even Dorothy Day wrote, "I do not pretend to understand Peter Maurin." (Sicius, 65)

Peter Maurin, The Catholic Worker's co-founder, has always been over-shadowed by Dorothy Day. He is almost a silent partner, despite the fact that his synthesis of radical Catholic thought provides the intellectual framework of the movement. Dorothy's conversion, her despair at remaining on the sidelines of social advocacy, her fervent prayer at the shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, and their fateful meeting upon her return to New York, is a beloved staple of Catholic Worker lore. Tellingly, this story is never relayed from Peter's perspective. What of his struggles? Had he also sent a heartfelt prayer to God that he would find a way to bring his vision to fruition? How did he feel about the young convert who gave him half an ear while she tended her daughter, as he poured out for her the precious teachings which he had spent a lifetime sifting through and finally synthesizing into the best of the Catholic tradition? The answers to these puzzles remain submerged beneath the friendly cadences of his "Easy Essays".

In addition to Ellis' intellectual biography of Maurin, Arthur Sheehan, Peter's good friend, wrote a much earlier work, Peter Maurin, Gay Believer. Most recently, Francis Siscius took the biography that Dorothy Day wrote but never published about Peter, and augmented her words with his own thoughts and research in Peter Maurin, Apostle to the World. These three works represent the bulk of the Maurin biographies.

The reader will do well to note that unlike Ellis' years of study, this author has had mere weeks of such at her disposal. Still, having benefited from Ellis' and the others' work, I believe I can safely say what we do know about Peter: namely, that he was a product of the land. He was a product of *his* land; not only the peasant culture of the south of France, but the intellectual activism of Paris; the eerie, empty plains of Saskatechewan; the lonely and homey Midwestern railroad towns of the U.S.; the coal country of Pennsylvania; the hard, wealthy streets of Chicago, and the cosmopolitan bustle and anomie of Manhattan. He himself made the claim: "I am a peasant. I have roots." If it is true there is an interplay between our environment and our deepest selves, such that they reflect and shape each other, then that is where we will find out about if not the inner life of Peter Maurin, then maybe his inner landscape.

Peter Maurin was born on May 9, 1877, in the Languedoc region of France, in a small village called Oultet. The Languedoc region in Southeastern France borders the Pyrannees to the south, and the Mediteranean Sea to the east. The famous city of Toulouse lies in the western most section of the region. Peter's village lies amid the rugged and rocky hills of the department of Lozere. The swooping lens of Google Earth reveals mountainous and forested terrain, interrupted by fields and terraced farmland. It is "lush, verdant, and green" according to Sicius, who visited the area while researching his book. Its thick woods covering rolling mountains reminded him of the Smokies in the U.S.

Oultet remains a secluded town situated on the mountainside of Mount Lozere, much like it was when Peter lived there. Still today there are only 20 to 25 houses in the small town, made of different styles of architecture, many of them inhabited by Maurins. Peter's family still lives in the same house, and works the same land that they did when he lived there. In fact, his family has owned and worked their farm for the past 1500 years, a mind-boggling fact to we transient North Americans.

His house was (and is) two stories, and appears to be made of whitewashed stone. Inside, I imagine that the chilly stone was tempered by the warmth of the cooking fire in the kitchen when Peter was growing up; the pungent, cold scent of rock permeated with the homey, acrid smell of burning wood and whatever soup was bubbling in a pot over it. All of nineteen to twenty-two children shared the two "substantial" rooms on each floor of the dwelling, with sheep occupying the basement, and two other farm buildings in use out back.

Sicius relates that in his visit to Peter's village, he met Pe-

BEGINNINGS

Ellen Rehg loves the way Peter's hometown smells.

ter's nephew who resembles Peter and who continues to work the family farm. Peter's legacy is known there; the nephew took out a copy of The Catholic Worker newspaper, and said, "They've been sending us these since the 1940s."

Although Oultet, and the near-by towns of St. Uvenal de Tournel and Mende that his family frequented for Mass and marketing, are rural, lying deep in the country, the area's geography has never kept it isolated from political currents and controversies. Indeed, the Languedoc region has a rich and colorful history. The man who would propose, as a un-yet unrealized part of his program, sending out "troubadours for Christ", "who would go about the country city to city, begging their way, chanting the praises of God and the rebuilding of the social order", (Sicius, 66) came from the land of the troubadours. In the twelve century, these poet-musicians traveled about singing of courtly love, high ideals, and the equality of all transcending blood or wealth. The birth of modern western literature is traced to their wide-ranging and sophisticated verses.

The man whose relationship to Catholicism was deep and free enough to make non-coercian a key element of his thought came from the land which was the only European area that was the object of a crusade – the crusade against the Albigensians, or Cathars, from 1208 to 1244. Languedoc was a center of the Cathar "heresy", a sophisticated dualistic Christian faith which believed in the complete separation of love from power. Among their tenets were an absolute refusal to kill. The Cathars also adopted practices of aceticism and poverty and were scandalized by the opulent lives of the Roman Catholic clergy.

Despite the turmoil throughout the ages, peasant life in Langedoc remained pretty constant, the seasonal rhythms deeply embedded in its inhabitants' souls. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, in his seminal book, The Peasants of Languedoc, wrote that the peasants clung to their culture to such an extent that he labeled it "L'histoire immobile" – a story which didn't change over the passage of time. A key feature to the culture was its communal nature. Peasant men formed fraternal societies, for example, in which goods were shared, money held in common, and each 'brother' had a right to no more than five sous in pocket money. Women baked bread together in communal ovens, sharing news and companionship as they sat together watching their bread.

Peter was the first born of his mother's five children, of which three survived. His mother died giving birth to the last of her children. There followed "two sad and troubled years" (Sheehan, 19). One can only speculate how the death of his warm and lively mother when he was about eight years old, affected Peter, who was no doubt a sensitive child. Could this have been the start of his emotional reticence as this eldest son suffered this deep loss? His siblings later described Peter as quiet and reflective, someone who "gave no sign, but took things in his stride" (Sheehan, 33).

His father remarried a young woman of 19, a loving woman who embraced her stepchildren and had nineteen more of her own. Peter's father and grandfather were quiet and somewhat stern men, "though not unkind" (Sheehan, 21). They were tough – working in the fields into their old age. The family recited the rosary daily, and prayed each night before a statue of Mary.

Peter and his siblings helped collect vegetables and fruit in the summer, gathering raspberries and blackberries; in winter they gathered branches to cut for firewood. He learned how to plough, but also had plenty of time to play with his closest brother and constant companion, Celestin. The man who said, "Eat what you raise and raise what you eat!" also liked to stir up crowds by gaily proclaiming, "Work four hours daily!"

Peter himself wrote about his childhood, "We did not eat the calves, we sold them. We ate salt pork every day. We raised no hops, so there was no beer. We raised no grapes, so no wine. We had very little meat. We had plenty of bread-there was a communal flour mill and bake oven…We had vegetable soups, salads and cheese…My family owned eighty sheep and there was a herder for all the village who had an assistant in the summer. There were probably three thousand sheep in the flock, and they grazed on what was still communal land."

After his formal schooling at the village school came to an end when he was 14, Peter attended the boarding school of St. Privat in Mende, 12 kilometers from his farm, which was run by the Christian Brothers. At the school, he would have been embroiled in issues between the Catholic Church and the anti-clerical left that had their roots in the French Revolution of 1789. As Sheehan notes, Peter would have "come to know well the story of French Revolution days when the anti-clerical mob had sent their committee to examine the Brothers at Mende. The committee had had to admit grudgingly that the Brothers lived poorly, without oustentation, deserving well of the… people" (Sheehan, 39).

The Christian Brothers inspired Peter both with their progressive teaching methods and their life of sacrifice. Sheehan tells us, "The Brothers were never to become priests, so all the consolations and privileges of that vocation were denied them. They must sacrifice honors, leading lives of obscure daily suffering…They were to teach the children of the poor, asking no money for their work…" (39) Peter entered the noviate shortly after his arrival at the school, and two years later, in 1893 at the age of 16, left for his cannonical year in Paris.

One of the notable influences on Peter from these years was the life of St. Philip Neri, whose life and work was part of the novices' spirtual reading. Philip Neri (1515-1595), founder

of the Congregation of the Oratory, was one of those people who periodically surfaces throughout church history, who dedicate their ministry to calling church officials, Popes and Bishops, back to the practices of Jesus. To accomplish this aim Philip renounced all worldly goods and success and walked to Rome, where he proceeded to simply, "stand about on street corners, striking up conversations with whomever he chanced to meet" (All Saints Ellsberg, 231). He called his ministry "Easy Conversations," and his joyous and guileless nature soon attracted a following. According to Sheehan, Philip of Neri's spirit was reflected in Peter's attitudes, such as the comment, "If a thing is dull, it isn't Christian," which Peter would say repeatedly.

Peter remained a Christian Brother until 1902, spending his time teaching at various schools. He never spent longer than two years at any one assignment, a worrisome sign to

Photo courtesy Marquette University Archives

his superiors that he had not settled into his vocation as a Brother. Two developments during those years began to move Peter away from a career as a school teacher and Brother. In one of his assignments he taught the children in a working class district whose parents had vivid and bitter memories of the uprising of the Paris Commune in 1871. Their hatred for the rich and for the clergy was still raw. The Catholic hierarchy had been on the side of the wealthy, and supportive of the monarchy. This engendered a deep antagonism towards the Church by the some of the groups which were organizing for the rights of the laborers. Peter may have heard a different side of the story from the kind related by the Brothers in Mende. As Sheehan notes, "It raised in [Peter's] mind many questions that he had never before considered" (50).

The other key event that happened was Peter's military service. A year of military service was compulsory for all males, and Peter served from November 1898 to September 1899, in a regiment located close to his home town. Peter was appalled at the organization and discipline directed toward killing, and he hated it. Unfortunately for Peter, his one year of service was not the end of it – he would be called up yearly as a reservist. After the second call back, Peter dodged his army duty and changed addresses frequently in order to escape the authorities. Brother Norbert, a fellow Brother of Peter's explained, "Above all, after his year of military service, [he] reflected deeply…From this time he became interested in politics and held very advanced ideas on social organization and on pacifism, ideas common today but at that time seemingly subversive of the social order" (Sheehan, 51).

In 1902, the government closed a large number of religious schools throughout France, in a move toward further separating the Church from the state (putting a lot of the Christian Brothers out of a job). Catholics protested this disruption of their educational system in various ways; the group that Peter joined says a lot about his views on his faith. One of the associations that formed in the wake of the closings was called "Le Sillon" or in English, "The Furrow". Unlike some Catholic associations, which called for a return to the Monarchy, the Sillon remained committed to the Republic, preferring to work toward integrating Christian principles into democracy, through the efforts of a Christian "elite". It was this group which attracted Peter, and he left the Christian Brothers at the age of 25 to work with them. He would remain with the Sillon for the next six years.

The Sillon prefigured many elements of the Catholic Worker. The leader of the movement, Marc Sangnier, published a weekly paper. The group was "neither an association, a league nor a party. There was no enrollment, no dues, no rules, no elections. One entered and left freely. No one received a salary, but there were indemnities for personal needs" (Sheehan, 60). In short, it ran on a philosophy that Peter would later call "personalism." Peter and other members sold the paper each day on the streets, often encountering violence from "anti-clerical toughs." Regular meetings were held at the Sillon center in which the members would discuss and clarify the positions that they would take in their newspaper. "It returned again and again to a program for peace – religious peace, social peace and international peace" (Sheehan, quoting Brother Norbert, 59).

Peter grew intellectually and spiritually, both as a Christian Brother and a Sillionist. He took part in lay study groups, under the direction of priests, "to study the social and religious questions of the day" (Ellis, 25). These were pressing questions in turn of the century Europe. The streets of Paris were alive with workers and activists, organizing socialist, communist and anarchist movements. In Russia, in 1905, the first revolution took place, in which the Tsar was forced to yield to constitutional limits.

Yet, Peter was also attuned to a different frequency. Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical, "The Condition of the Working Classes" (Rerum Novarum), had just oriented the Church in a new direction by aligning it's interest with that of the working class. Leon Harmel was operating his family's spinning plant, demonstrating that industry could operate humanely, integrating the physical and spiritual needs of workers.

He may have listened to Leon Bloy, the Catholic writer, who lived in Monmartre. Bloy's many novels all highlighted "[t]he mystical dignity of the poor as ambassadors of God"

(Ellsberg, 476). Bloy lived in poverty and had great contempt for the bourgeois spirit of materialism. The Maritains, who would enter the church in 1906 with Bloy as their godfather, were studying at the Sorbonne.

As the Sillon evolved over time, Peter began to have differences with it, and he left the movement when Sangnier decided to run for political office. He left Paris and returned to the south of France, working as a coffee and tea salesman. He read Kropotkin and investigated the small craft industries in southern France which had inspired him. The Russian anarchist promoted an alternative to the Russian communist vision: local organization and local control instead of centralized government, and a focus on agriculture and rural life in contrast to an industrialized economy. The desire to escape his military service, and his growing interest in living on the land prompted Peter, in 1909, to join the wave of French immigrants to Canada.

Photo courtesy Marquette University Archives

Peter's two years in Canada were probably the most difficult of his life. He ended up homesteading in Saskatchewan with a man he met on the way over. Saskatchewan was vast prairie land without a single tree for miles. The weather during the two years Peter lived there was unusually severe. The rainfall was the lowest in a 20 year period; the summers unbelievable hot, reaching temperatures of 110° F in the shade (which meant, inside one's small shack since there were no trees); and in the winter, temperatures fell to 40 to 50 degrees below zero. The work was relentless, exhausting and fruitless. The Canadian plains were lonely and isolating. Compounding the difficulties, Peter spoke no English and his partner spoke no French.

If Peter had started his adventure filled with great hopes of living out his ideals, one can only imagine what it must have felt like to have them flatten and die in this unforgiving new world. He had left his homeland, his family and friends; finally his partner was killed in a hunting accident, and Peter abandoned the homestead. In the following years, he acted like a man who had lost his way, as he began a long 14 year sojourn wandering from one type of labor to the next.

He worked as a thresher in neighboring Alberta's wheat fields, work which typically started at 4:00 a.m. and continued to 9:00 p.m. He labored for the railroads digging ditches; he quarried stone in Ottawa. He crossed the border into upstate New York and worked a job tearing down concrete forms. He arrived penniless in New York City and begged his way down through Maryland and Pennsylvania. There he worked for a coal company, living with "a Negro" in an unused coke oven. He rode the rails to Ohio, worked in factories in Missouri and Illinois and in a lead mine in Iowa. He also worked for a railroad in St. Louis, where he "met hillbillies for the first time and liked them" (Sheehan, 81). Despite his hard work he was often penniless and was arrested for vagrancy more than once.

Peter's most successful job was as a French teacher in Chicago, around the time that the U.S. entered World War I in 1917. French instruction was in demand for translators and army officers. Peter headed a small school in which he employed several French teachers, and he became fairly affluent. His stability allowed him to reconnect with his family in France, and he caught up with the news of his parents and siblings' lives. He was also stable enough to continue the reading and studying that he had started in France. A photo taken of him around this time reveals a well-dressed and well-groomed 30 year old with dark eyebrows and a thick mustache. The school lasted for eight years.

In 1925, he returned to the East on the invitation of a wealthy student who offered to introduce him to her social circle. He decided to remain there, living and teaching in and around Woodstock, New York for the next several years. And then Peter experienced a turning point in his life; he started living in the way that he later become known for. He stopped charging for his lessons, preferring to offer his work as a gift (and allowing his students to pay him whatever they wanted). He embraced a life of voluntary poverty, owning only the clothes on his back. By this time he seems to have achieved a large part of the synthesis that would become his program. He told one student of the need for a "Green revolution" and he showed her copies of his Easy Essays. As Sicius writes, his "substantial bibliography blended with his own personal experiences: teaching with the Christian Brothers, attempting to Christianize the French Republic with the Sillon, his first hand witness of the injustices of industrial capitalism on the streets of the United States, and finally his certain disillusion with the bourgeois promise of comfort and harmony." (Sicius, 33)

Peter began working as a handyman at a Catholic boy's camp, spending his free time reading and writing. Like Philip Neri walking and talking in Rome, he began making trips to New York City to collar anyone he met, proselytizing them with the good news of Jesus, updated to include the latest insights of the social teachings of the church, St. Benedict and Kropotkin. In short, he began to live as a prophet.

In many ways, he became the first Catholic Worker, living simply, sharing whatever he had with others, promoting a program that would create a more just world, where it would be "easier to be good." Perhaps he channeled all of his emotions into his vocation as a radical Catholic agitator. It certainly could be said of him, as St. Paul said of himself, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

The Easy Essays

by Peter Maurin
compiled with commentary by Teka Childress

Peter Maurin, scholar and teacher, who shared his vision of a program of Catholic Social Action with Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement, wrote down his ideas in what have been called, "Easy Essays."

Part and parcel of his program for Catholic social action was re-igniting the radical message of the Church. Jesus had shown us a profound way to live; we would be judged by whether or not we fed the hungry, clothed the naked and gave drink to the thirsty. He told us to love our enemy and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Peter Maurin realized how little the Catholic Church and Christians preached and lived out this tremendous calling.

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

In 1931 Pope Pius XI wrote the encyclical entitled Quadragesimo Anno. This encyclical looked at social and economic life forty years after the 1891 encyclical of Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum. Rerum Novarum had addressed the plight of workers who with the rise of industry had left the land, moved to cities and lived and worked in terrible conditions. In 1931, seeing that wealth had become more concentrated in the hands of fewer people, Pope Pius XI called for a reconstruction of the social order based on the principle of subsidiarity. In response to this message Peter Maurin proposed a reconstruction of the social order based on the lives and practices of the Irish missionaries (For more on the Irish monks see, How The Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe by Thomas Cahill). To the people of medieval Europe the monks had carried faith and charity, culture and education, and farming colonies and in this way reconstructed the social order of their own time.

Reconstructing the Social Order
The Holy Father and the Bishops ask us
to reconstruct the social order.
The social order was once constructed
through dynamic Catholic Action.
When the Barbarians invaded
the decaying Roman Empire
Irish missionaries went all over Europe
and laid the foundations of medieval
Europe.
Through the establishment of
cultural centers,
that is to say, Round-Table Discussions,
they brought thought to the people.
Through free guest houses,
that is to say, Houses of Hospitality,
they popularized the divine
virtue of charity.
Through farming colonies,
that is to say, Agronomic Universities,
they emphasized voluntary poverty.
It was on the basis of personal charity
that Irish missionaries
laid the foundations
of the social order.

As a personalist, Peter Maurin did not believe that we should wait for the government to take action to fix the ills of society, but that we should follow the examples of the Irish missionaries and provide for our neighbors ourselves. Maurin warned against the tendency of the secular and modern society of the early twentieth century in which Catholics and other people of faith had relinquished their responsibility of caring for others.

Back to Hospitality
The Catholic unemployed
should not be sent to the "Muni."
The Catholic unemployed should be
given hospitality
in Catholic Houses of Hospitality.
Catholic Houses of Hospitality
are known in Europe
under the name of hospices.
There have been hospices in Europe
since the time of Constantine.
Hospices are free guest houses;
hotels are paying guest houses.
And paying guest houses or hotels
are as plentiful
as free guest houses or hospices
are scarce.
So hospitality, like everything else,
has been commercialized.
So hospitality, like everything else,
must now be idealized.

Personal Sacrifice
To be our brother's [or sister's] keeper
is what God wants us to do.
To feed the hungry
at a personal sacrifice

Teka Childress has been visiting with Peter in her dreams and continuing the personalist revolution.

is what God wants us to do.
To clothe the naked
at a personal sacrifice
is what God wants us to do.
To shelter the homeless
at a personal sacrifice
is what God wants us to do.
To instruct the ignorant
at a personal sacrifice
is what God wants us to do.
To serve man [and woman]
for God's sake
is what God wants us to do.

As a personalist, Peter also believed that each person had infinite value, and because of this, decisions in society had to be made to protect the good of all. Peter looked to the notion of the Common Good as a basis upon which to build his philosophy of social action and as he frequently did in his Easy Essays he pointed his listeners to further learning on the topic.

Catholic Social Philosophy
The Catholic Social philosophy
is the philosophy of the Common Good
of St. Thomas Aquinas.
Three books where this philosophy is
expressed are:
The Thomistic Doctrine of the Common
Good, by Seraphine Michel;
The Social Principles of the Gospel,
by Alphonse Lugan;
Progress and Religion,
by Christopher Dawson.

Peter noted how many of the problems in modern society stemmed from greed. He wrote of the business culture and those who chose to act in direct contradiction to the dictates of the Common Good.

Creating Problems
Business men say
that because everybody is selfish,
business must therefore
be based on selfishness.
But when business is based
on selfishness
everybody is busy becoming
more selfish.
And when everybody is busy becoming
more selfish,
we have classes and clashes.
Business cannot set its house in order
because business men are
moved by selfish motives.
Business men create problems,
they do not solve them.

In opposition to the values of business culture, Peter promoted a personalist culture. A personalist was a "go-giver" rather than a "go-getter."

Better and Better Off
The world would be better off
if people tried to become better.
And people would become better
if they stopped trying to
become better off.
For when everybody tries to
become better off,
nobody is better off.
But when everybody tries to
become better,
everybody is better off. . .

Peter took particular exception to making money off of money rather than simply using money as a means of exchange. When usury was put into practice, money became a vehicle for producing wealth. Wealth was thereby no longer necessarily related to producing the things that people needed. Usury further made it difficult for the poor to obtain necessities as money became more difficult to obtain.

Usurers Not Gentlemen
The Prophets of Israel
and the Fathers of the Church
forbid lending money at interest.
Lending money at interest
is called usury
by the Prophets of Israel
and the Fathers of the Church.
Usurers were not considered
to be gentlemen
when people used to listen
to the Prophets of Israel
and the Fathers of the Church.
When people used to listen
to the Prophets of Israel
and the Fathers of the Church
They could not see anything gentle
in trying to live
on the sweat of somebody else's brow
by lending money at interest.

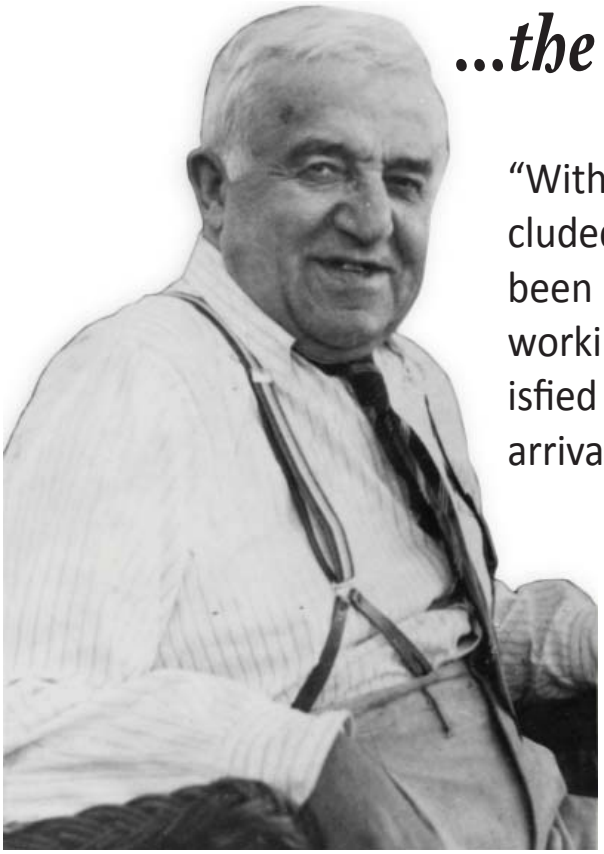
Peter had an equally radical understanding of labor and work.

Selling Their Labor
When the workers
sell their labor
to the capitalists
or accumulators of labor
they allow the capitalists
or accumulators of labor
to accumulate their labor.
And when the capitalists
or accumulators of labor
have accumlated so much
of the workers' labor
that they do no longer
find it profitable
to buy the workers' labor
then the workers
can no longer sell their labor
to the capitalists
or accumulators of labor.
And when the workers
can no longer
sell their labor
to the capitalists
or accumulators of labor
they can no longer buy
the products of their labor.
And that is what the workers get
for selling their labor.

Peter Maurin was unhappy when the first issue of the Catholic Worker paper covered a labor dispute. He did not believe labor was a comodity to sell, and opposed the methods that were sometimes used in struggling for better wages. Yet, Peter did not oppose protest. He did believe that it must be conducted in a nonviolent manner and referred to the nonviolence of Gandhi and the necessity of using pure means as discussed by French personalist, Jacques Maritain.

The Sit-Down Technique
Strike news
doesn't strike me,

...the voluntary poverty of St. Francis



"Without him," Dorothy concluded, "I would never have been able to find a way of working that would have satisfied my conscience. Peter's arrival changed everything, I finally found a purpose in my life and the teacher I needed.
- Dorothy Day

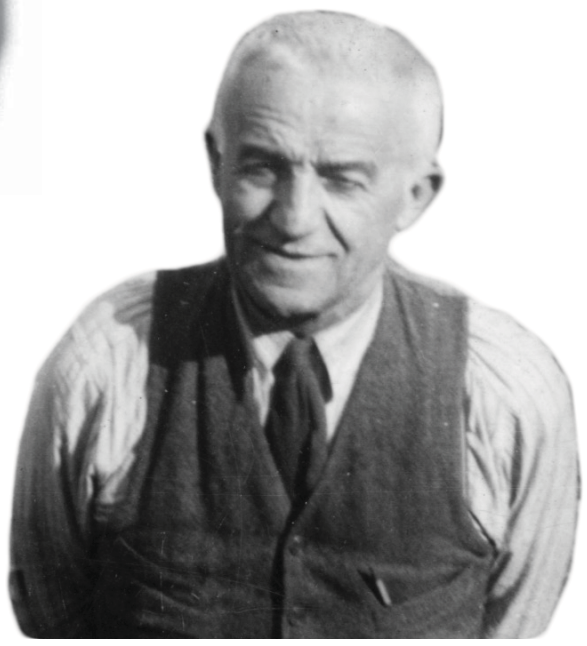
"In both word and deed Peter taught that, what we do for our [sister or] brother for Christ's sake is what we carry with us when we die." - Dorthy Day

...the charity of St.

"[Peter] has shown us the way, with his poverty and his works of mercy, and that way is Christ."
-Dorthy Day

Peter Maurin

"Peter Maurin was so conscious of the overwhelming fact that he was a child of God, and an heir to heaven that he made others feel it." - Dorothy Day



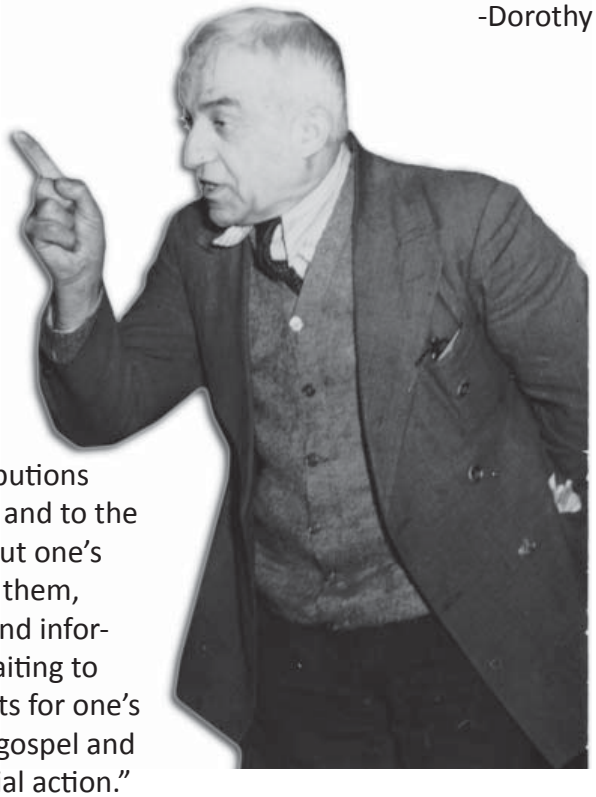
"At first glance you would probably overlook Peter, yet Peter Maurin was perhaps the greatest inspiration of Catholic America in our generation." - Pat Coy

"First of all," Peter used to say, " one must give up one's life to save it." - Mark and Louise Zwick

"Peter had a program, and I tried to follow it... He opened our minds to great horizons, he gave us a vision" -Dorothy Day.

Vincent de Paul

"He can cram more truth into your cranium at high speed in a single hour than any ordinary person could do in a week." - John Woodlock of the Wall Street Journal



"One of the most important contributions Peter made to the Catholic Worker and to the world was his insistence on living out one's convictions, not just reading about them, studying them, or collecting facts and information. He did not recommend waiting to develop five-year plans or blueprints for one's life, but simply to begin to live the gospel and to learn by doing, through existential action." Mark and Louise Zwick

... the manual labor of St. Benedict

All photos courtesy: Marquette University Archives

but the sit-down strike
is a different strike
from the ordinary strike.
In the sit-down strike
you don't strike anybody
either on the jaw
or under the belt,
you just sit down.
The sit-down strike
is essentially
a peaceful strike.
If the sit-down strike
remains a sit-down strike,
that is to say,
a strike in which you strike
by just sitting down,
it may be a means
of bringing about
desirable results.
The sit-down strike
must be conducted
on Gandhi lines,
that is to say,
according to the doctrine
of pure means
as expressed by Jacques Maritain.

He believed in the need for radical change based on a personalist vision. This idea differed from many of the philosophies common to his and our own times.

Not a Liberal
They say that I am a radical.
If I am a radical
then I am not a liberal.
The future will be different
if we make the present different.
But to make the present different
one must give up old tricks
and start to play new tricks.
But to give up old tricks
and start to play new tricks
one must be a fanatic.
Liberals are so liberal about everything
that they refuse to be fanatical
about anything.
And not being able to be fanatical
about anything,
liberals cannot be liberators.
They can only be liberals.

A New Society
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...

We live in an era in which people are familiar with two prevalent economic theories, capitalism and state socialism. People sometimes misunderstand the Catholic Worker movement and think that perhaps Catholic Workers are socialists or communists, but Peter was critical of both capitalism and state socialism or modern communism.


Photo courtesy Marquette University Archives

Better and Better Off
...Christianity has nothing to do
with either modern capitalism
or modern Communism,
for Christianity has
a capitalism of its own
and a communism of its own.
Modern capitalism
is based on property without
responsibility,
while Christian capitalism
is based on property with responsibility.
Modern Communism is based on poverty
through force
while Christian communism
is based on poverty through choice.
For a Christian,
voluntary poverty is the ideal
as exemplified by St. Francis of Assisi,
while private property
is not an absolute right, but a gift
which as such can not be wasted,
but must be administered
for the benefit of God's children. . .

Two Bourgeois
The bourgeois capitalist
believes in rugged individualism;
The Bolshevist Socialist
believes in rugged collectivism.
There is no difference
between the rugged individualism
of bourgeois capitalism
and the rugged collectivism
of Bolshevist Socialism.
The bourgeois capitalist
tries to keep
what he [or she] has,
and tries to get
what the other fellow has.
The Bolshevist Socialist
tries to get
what the bourgeois capitalist has. . .

Peter has given to us a philosophy that is seamless. With the radical vision that each person is made in God's image and a program that reminds us that nothing keeps us from responding to this vision, Peter has inspired Catholic Workers and many others alike. We shall end therefore with Peter's simple statement about the Catholic Worker.

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

The Evolution of Peter Maurin's Vision in the Catholic Worker Movement

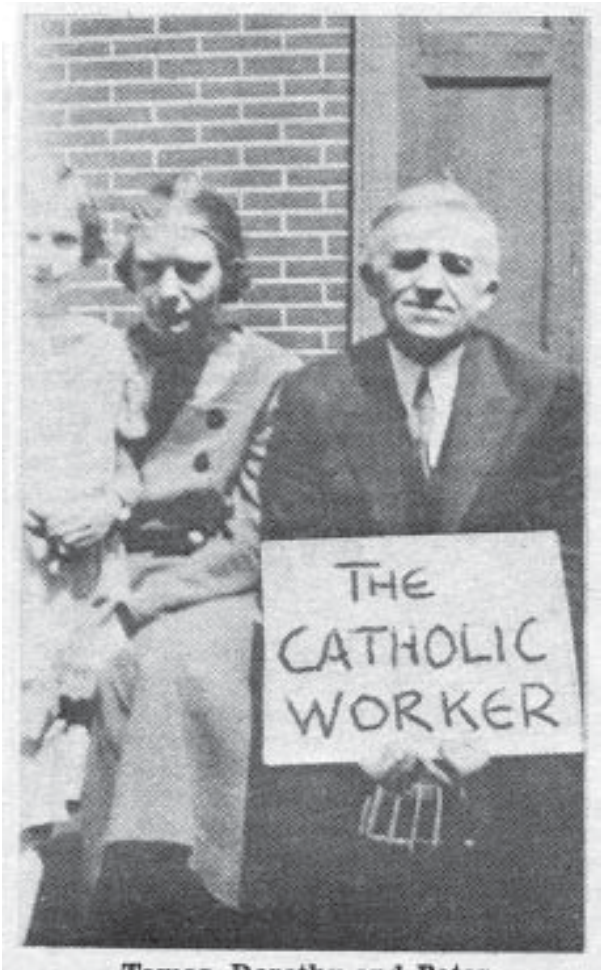
by Brian Terrell

Sometime in the late 1970s, several of us in the New York City Catholic Worker communities were meeting to discuss updating the "Catholic Worker Positions" for a special anniversary edition of The Catholic Worker. References to Peter Maurin's visions of "agronomic universities" and return to a village based craft economy were not taken too seriously. I fear that most of us would have been just as happy to dump these as slightly embarrassing and quaint anachronisms. They remained in the "Positions," as I remember, mostly as a nod to nostalgia and out of deference to Dorothy Day who, while retired from an active editing role, kept a close eye on what we "young people" chose to publish in the paper.

Peter's "Easy Essays" about Irish monks establishing salons de culture across medieval Europe did not seem relevant to our demanding work of offering hospitality near the Bowery nor did his suggestion that following these monks' example was the answer to global hunger and war. We took Dorothy Day at her word that peter Maurin was her mentor and co-founder of the movement but there was at the time little evidence of his influence in our life and work.

Mel Piehl in his fine historical review of the Catholic Worker Movement, Breaking Bread, 1982, even quotes some Catholic Workers of an earlier era who suggested that Peter's "intellectual genius was clearly exaggerated," and that Peter was uncomfortable in his "feigned role of leadership." Piehl estimates that Dorothy Day had exaggerated Peter's role as "co-founder" and that she "promoted the fiction that the Catholic Worker was simply an attempt to realize Peter Maurin's 'Idea.'" It was, Piehl said, "strategically useful to her as a woman leading a social movement in the sexually conservative Catholic Church, to be able to point to a male co-founder of the movement."

For generations of young Americans attracted to Catholic Worker communities, the European peasant Peter Maurin might have appeared as obscure and incomprehensible as the very American radical Dorothy day was accessible. Certainly, more of them knew how to go about political agitation and giving shelter to the homeless than how to implement a "green revolution." Daniel Brigand, in his introduction to Dorothy Day's Long Loneliness published in 1981, a year after her death, reflected a common if less than generous perception of Peter and his vision, one held by many in the movement and our friends: "They started a newspaper and the rest is history. They started houses of hospitality; that too is history. Peter was forever talking about something he called 'agro-



Tamar, Dorothy and Peter

Photo courtesy Marquette University Archives

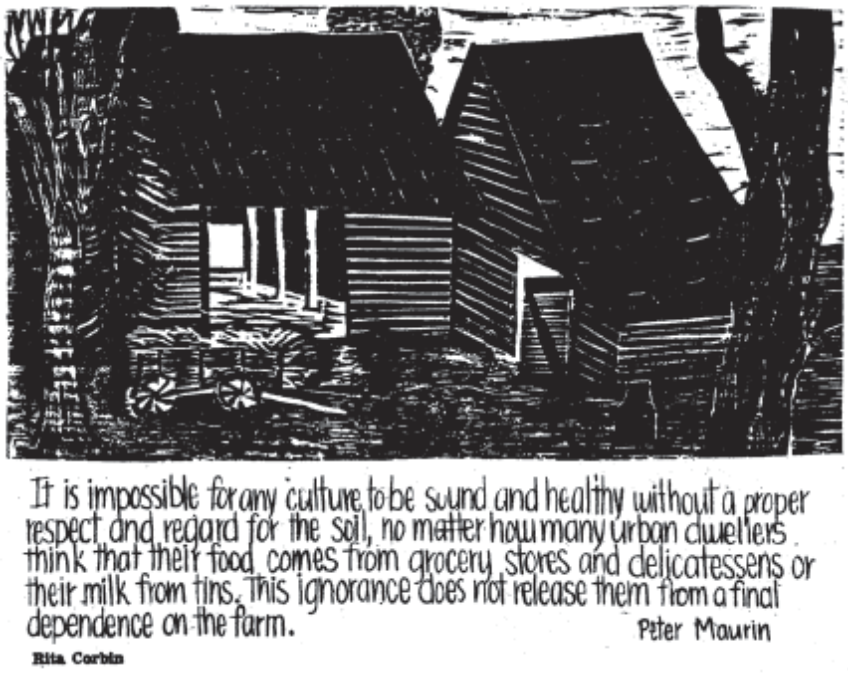
nomic universities.' They started one, on the land; and that is something less than history."

Dorothy Day's announcement in the Catholic Worker in January 1936, "we are going to move out on a farm… and start there a true farming commune," however, seems to have been proclaimed with the expectation that history was being made. "We believe that our words will have more weight,

Brian Terrell has been enjoying all of the craft retreats done at the farm.

our writings will have more conviction, if we ourselves are engaged in making a better life on the land." While she assured her readers that "we are not going to abandon the city," it is clear that Dorothy's historic expectation was that the Catholic Worker was going to realize its original vision, that of a rural based "back to the land" movement keeping some presence in the city, "sending out apostles of labor from the farm, to scenes of industrial conflict, to factories and to lodging houses, to live and work with the poor."

If this and other early experimental farming communes came and went as "something less than history," as Dan offers, or as the abject failures that others have named them, the concept did continue to limp along somehow for the next decades. Rather than the cutting edge of a revolution as Peter envisioned the agronomic university, however, most Catholic Worker farms were planned and grew, if they did, as dependent branches of urban Catholic Worker houses of hospitality. Most of these few farms were seen even by those who lived and worked at them in an urban context, as auxiliaries, existing to provide cheap food for soup lines, hospitality for the urban poor and places for retreat and recreation for Catholic Workers from the city. Most were rural responses to urban poverty and homelessness with little regard to the poverty of their neighbors.



Some few here and there in the most obscure and remote places have always remembered and stood by Peter's vision, but these were often marginalized and misunderstood by the larger Catholic Worker movement as much as by their neighbors and the culture at large. When in 1986, Betsy Keenan and I moved with our children from the Catholic Worker hospitality house in Davenport, Iowa, to Malloy, this town of less than 30 souls just north of Iowa's border with Missouri, many friends assumed that we had left the Catholic Worker movement, some challenged us, what need is there for a soup-line in so small a town? No soup-line? What kind of Catholic Worker house are you? Whose farm are we, we have been asked, meaning what city house owns and controls your farm, assuming that the legitimate existence of any rural entity is bound to its tie to an urban one.

In the years that I was at the Catholic Worker in New York, Betsy (my best mentor in my struggle to be a farmer) was living at the Catholic Worker farm at Tivoli, a hundred miles up the Hudson River from the city, in its last chaotic days and in the process of being closed. Tivoli was beset with many problems, but the decision to close the farm was made largely by Catholic Workers in the city, many of whom had little appreciation for the place or much real understanding of what the farm was supposed to be for. "Cold-blooded discussion about very important members of our community," Dorothy Day wrote in her diary about closing Tivoli on October 8, 1978, "I can do nothing. An unheard voice. On the shelf indeed."

We are all products of our culture, and it is a sad irony that Catholic Workers sometimes buy into a basic premise of "this filthy, rotten system" that we decry. When we value the land based on what it gives the city, when we see our farms only as sources of organic veggies for our soup or places for urbanites to go and "get away from it all" and when Catholic Worker farms are owned, directed and disposed of by urban Catholic Worker communities exclusively to meet the needs of the city, we are joining in with the banks and corporations in the exploitation of the land and its people.

Over the past 20 years there has been a great shift in understanding and respect for Peter's vision and what it means. At one of the sporadically convened national Catholic Worker gatherings, I think that this was in 1987, a round table discussion of Peter's agronomic university was attended by a few of us farmers and the most pressing question that surfaced from the few mildly curious others who wandered in was "why bother with a garden when we have more donated old veggies from the market than we can ever sort out?" Since that time, there has been a great resurgence in Peter's dreams of farming communes in the movement. At the 2009 national Catholic Worker gathering the roundtable on rural issues and Peter Maurin was one of the best attended. Not only were there more farmers on hand, but urban Catholic Workers were on hand, too, and there was a lively and substantial discussion among us about the whole direction of our movement.

This resurgence is evidenced not only in the unprecedented plethora of Catholic Worker farms around the country and abroad. It is also shown in the level of discussion given Peter and his ideas in the newspapers of the various houses. Peter's influence is seen in the growth of urban gardens in the yards and vacant lots around our city houses. Catholic Worker cottage industries, such as carving spoons, repairing bicycles, and making soap, all are examples of a growing movement.

Here in Malloy this winter we hosted two craft retreats at which more than a dozen Catholic Workers from around the Midwest crowded into our farmhouse to join us and some neighbors to weave, make cheese, carve wood, dip candles,

knit, make baskets, cook, eat, pray, dance and sing. We had fun but these sessions were not recreational in the conventional sense nor were we really "on retreat." These gatherings were, rather, the Catholic Worker movement going about some of its most serious business.

I left Malloy with the stragglers from the first craft retreat on the first leg of a journey that took me to Washington, DC, where Catholic Workers and other friends protested the continued operation of the prison at Guantanamo a year after its promised closing. We also vigiled at the White House, demanding that the funds for wars of aggression be cut in order to fund human needs. From Washington I traveled to Madison, Wisconsin, to be sentenced in federal court for protesting the training of troops for Iraq and Afghanistan at Fort McCoy. After two weeks in jail I was on the train for home and arrived in time to welcome the next batch of crafters! In all these places resistance was going on.

THE CATHOLIC WORKER

The Catholic Worker stands for co-operativism against capitalism.
The Catholic Worker stands for personalism against Socialism
The Catholic Worker stands for leadership against dictatorship
The Catholic Worker stands for agrarianism against industrialism
The Catholic Worker stands for decentralism against totalitarianism.

- Peter Maurin

As I wrote earlier, Dorothy said she believed her words would have more weight since she became engaged in making a better life on the land. I pray and believe that my own words have more weight and my writings more conviction from living here on the land. I am convinced, too, that as the Catholic Worker movement at large is more and more "engaged in making a better life on the land" what we have to say to the world about poverty, homelessness, nuclear weapons, and torture will bear more weight; more conviction.

This shift of paradigm has come, I think, as people who come to Catholic Worker houses are staying longer. Dan McKanan, in his The Catholic Worker after Dorothy, 2008, noted that "in the end, the hippie generation of Catholic Workers achieved something that very few of the founders had: they figured out how to make whole lives out of the Catholic Worker movement." While many still come to Worker houses to donate a "gap year" or two of their lives in service to the poor between college and "real life," from the 1970s on, more and more came and stayed. It has been suggested that some of these moved out to farms because they were raising families and the farm is a better place for kids than an inner city house of hospitality.

There may be something to that, but I offer that for many of us, living and working for years with the urban poor made us look deeper into the roots of the world's problems and see that serving soup, holy work that it is, is not enough. Speaking for myself, I needed to live in urban hospitality houses for many years before I could make any sense of Peter's talk about revolution on the land.

For many of us, too, solidarity work and travel to places exploited by economic and other kinds of colonialism brought us to see that Peter was right when he pointedly insisted that issues of war and peace always are, at the heart, issues of the land and its use. In New York City or Los Angeles as in Jerusalem or Mexico City or San Salvador, the peace and good order of society requires justice on the land. It strikes us, finally, that even the food that we serve on our soup-lines that is donated or gleaned from dumpsters depends on slave labor and is grown in ways that cannot be sustained. When the peace for which we yearn and struggle finally comes and our neighbors will no longer be forced by debt and oppression to clothe and feed us but will use their own land and water to care for themselves, how then will we live?

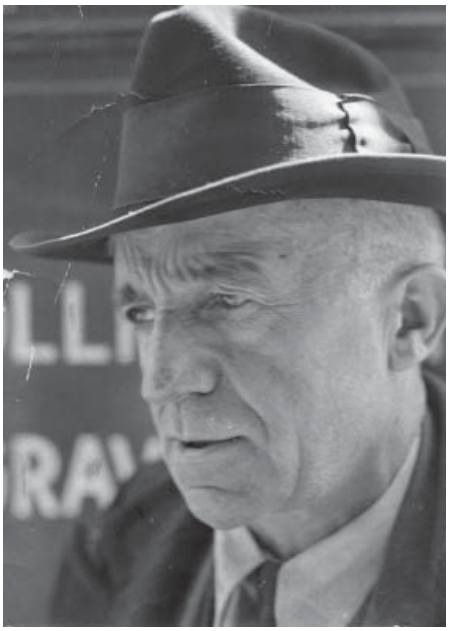


Photo courtesy Marquette University Archives

The crisis of global warming on our threshold, too, makes Peter's dream of agrarian revolt look less like a medieval utopian fantasy and more like an urgent and rational plan for a new and sustainable social order of the future.

Some criticize such changes in the movement as if they are evidence that we are losing our way. My perspective is that, with some growing pains, the Catholic Worker is rather finding its way now after so many years. "Our houses of hospitality are scarcely the kind of houses that Peter Maurin has envisioned in his plan for a new social order," Dorothy Day wrote in her column in September 1942. "He recognizes that himself, and thinks in terms of the future to accomplish true centers of Catholic action and rural centers such as he speaks of."

Perhaps it is true that Peter Maurin's role as "co-founder" of the Catholic Worker was exaggerated in the past. If so, it might also be true that Peter Maurin is now posthumously growing into that role as the movement matures. Now might be that time in the future he looked to that has eluded us for so long: the time to realize his vision for a new social order. If the first agronomic universities on the land that Peter and Dorothy started were "something less than history," perhaps that history is being made all around us this very day.

Heads and Hands

by Eric Anglada

"In the Catholic Worker,
people learn to use their hands,
as well as their heads. "

-- Peter Maurin, "Outdoor Universities"

My favorite image of Peter Maurin is of him standing on the stage at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem, in his usual dusty, ill-fitted suit, announced as a comedian on amateur night, reciting his Easy Essays on Catholic radicalism. Not surprisingly, the itinerant French peasant and intellectual founder of the Catholic Worker [CW] movement was met with jeers and whistles of disapproval. Later, he was not afraid to admit that he really "got the hook that night."

One thing that can be said of Maurin, other than the fact that he was no comedian, is that he had a passion for pedagogy, even risking humiliation to spread his message of how to build a new society within the shell of the old. There could have been a myriad of subjects on which he spoke before he was escorted off the stage--voluntary poverty, the futility of strikes, personalism, usury--but I imagine him discussing his vision of an agronomic university which laid at the core of his program for a revolution of the social order.

Central as it was, and is, however, there remains some ambiguity, even some 75 years since the founding of the Catholic Worker movement, as to precisely what he meant by that curious phrase, agronomic university. That term was an invention of Maurin's and is a bit undeveloped given the movement's emphasis--slightly misplaced in his view--on urban hospitality.

"The modern person looks for thought so to have light, and is unable to find it in our modern schools."

The farming commune has always represented a minority segment within the movement. But Maurin's desire was to create a significant push back to the land where people would grow their own food and create their own crafts. What would make the farming commune a university, however, is that it would include an intentional space for education for adults. If farming communes have held a minority position in the movement, those emphasizing education have held an even smaller one. There were, however, a few experiments early on that might help us come closer to filling in the details of Maurin's broad brush strokes.

A Catholic Worker summer school session was held in 1940, four years after they procured a 28 acre farm in Easton, Pennsylvania. The session consisted of 10 or so participants who sought to experience the worker-scholar ideal which laid at the core of Maurin's vision because, as scholar Larry Holben has noted, "Only in the symmetry of such a life can we begin to live out the fullness of God's purpose for us." Their search for balance required some tweaking of the schedule. Maurin, ever ambitious, sought to read nine books over the summer but soon realized that such a load was too much. The pared-down schedule consisted of a class each evening and work--pitching hay, picking cherries, among other tasks--during the day. The pedagogy, one participant observed, was "very different from the American system... one person read a chapter from the book we were studying [e.g. Christopher Dawson's Making of Europe]. After [...having] finished each person had an opportunity to contribute some remark... Of course...most of these remarks...aroused discussion among the students."

Maurin was so enthralled with the success of the summer school that he sought to repeat the program the next summer at Easton. That summer, there were two other sessions at CW farms: one outside of Minneapolis, and the other, outside Cleveland. Maurin jumped at the chance to go out to Ohio to participate in their summer folk school, where fifty people were in attendance. The folk school tradition had begun nearly 100 years earlier in Denmark. It was a model of adult education revolving around work and crafts as well as more theoretical subjects. Dorothy Gauchat of the CW farm reminisced: "[W]e'd have liturgy, we'd have breakfast, we'd have work sessions, and then we would have Peter, and then a period with Ade Bethune and her artists... The evenings were always for recreation and for folk dancing." The folk school lasted two summers, until the breakout of World War Two.

In one of Maurin's Easy Essays entitled "Shouting With

Eric Anglada is really excited about the Radical Communities, Healthy Families school session in May with the folks from Possibilty Alliance. He's also helping plan a week-long school session in July called Growing Roots that will include time for intellectual work as well as manual labor.

Rotarians" he said, "The modern person looks for thought so to have light, and is unable to find it in our modern schools." He goes on to quote a university official who supports the status quo: "Schools reflect the environment, they do not create it." This explains, according to Maurin, why college graduates are unreflective capitalists. While his critique of modern schooling was not highly developed nor was his definition of the agronomic university precise, it is clear that Maurin thought the existing Catholic Worker farms could provide an alternative model of education. His vision is fleshed out a bit more through the following two examples.

Artist Ade Bethune was closely affiliated with the Catholic Worker movement. Even though she did not live on a CW farm or house, her work helps shed light on the idea of an agronomic university. (Her artwork continues to be featured in CW papers.) In 1938 Bethune moved to Newport, Rhode Island where her friend had opened a workshop named "John Stevens University." As they and others became increasingly proficient in the practical arts (wood engraving, drawing, lettering, etc.) they began to take on apprentices. Ade took several students under her wing and began calling her space Lion College. They lived very simply, raising a garden and rabbits, and shared meals. During the day they honed skills that by then had been largely forgotten such as woodworking, knitting, repairing furniture, splitting wood and numerous other skills. Maurin was impressed, calling Lions College, no doubt with a slight smirk on his face, "The Regressive School of Backward Studies." Many Catholic Workers, including Dorothy Day's daughter Tamar, spent time with Ade to learn crafts. Bethune did not exclude the intellectual from her craft-based life. She was in correspondence with many of the thinkers that had influenced Maurin and Day: the artist-writer Eric Gill, the Benedictine liturgist Virgil Michel and the Indian philosopher Ananda Coomaraswamy.

The other example is in his Easy Essay "Outdoor Universities. " Maurin describes a monastery outside of Washington DC that practiced his ideal by blending manual labor and intellectual pursuits. The Sisters took classes in the morning, cultivated the land in the afternoon and then studied in the evening. This integration of work and study allowed for the flourishing of the person, where the workers could become scholars and the scholars could become workers.

By the time of his death in 1949 (notably on the feast of St. Isidore, patron saint of farmers) Maurin had lived to see his dream of an agronomic university pursued, albeit in fits and starts. Since he only wrote in terse free-verse "Easy Essays" we in the present day are only left with generalities, and little in the way of specifics of how to carry this vision forward.

As you ride down the valley, toward our Catholic Worker Farm, you will see the ruins of a schoolhouse long abandoned. Not a 100 feet across the road sits our farm: a thriving community inspired by Maurin's vision of an agronomic university. The two "schoolhouses" are worlds apart, however. I imagine 50 years ago pupils sitting in rows, passively eyeing the teacher standing above them. Here on our farm, we are experimenting with alternate educational models keeping in mind what the anarchist critic Paul Goodman once wrote: "We should be experimenting with different kinds of schools, no school at all, farm schools, practical apprenticeships, work camps, and community service."

As we continue to experiment with various forms of learning (at present mostly for adults) we find ourselves in a fascinating nexus, riding various connected currents both within the Catholic Worker and in the growing radical community at large:

—*A revived Catholic Worker agrarianism*. Never, to my knowledge, have CW farms been as successful or numerous. One long-time CW farmer beamed with excitement over a packed room during a discussion on Maurin's Green Revolution at the last National Gathering. 25 years ago only a handful of people were present for a discussion on the same topic.

—*A renewed interest in crafts.* For the past two years, a craft gathering has taken place on Iowa CW farms where steps are taken to learn practical skills like weaving, candle-making, wood-carving and more. This is reflective of the seemingly growing desire within the CW to experience dignity and function in our labor.

—*An emerging ecological consciousness both in the mainstream and in intentional communities*. Green technologies such as solar and wind power are increasingly being used in both. We are particularly inspired by more radical communities such as the Possibility Alliance who are living without electricity and oil, and are offering a vision of how people might live now, whether we experience a post-oil age or not.

—*A recognition of the spiritual void in our society*. There has recently emerged a network of communities calling itself a "new monasticism," that believes in relocating to the "aban-

doned places of empire" and applying the insights of St. Benedict to communities of families and singles in the 21st century. And there is still the recognition, of course, of the treasures of "traditional" monasticism which many of us utilize for spiritual direction, oblate status, and meaningful liturgy.

—A desire to seek more direct and "fresh" methods of political resistance while also seeing the value of more traditional forms of protest and civil disobedience. A serious dialogue between anarchism and radical Christianity has emerged over the past several years offering possibilities for alternate strategies of resistance.

—A desire for alternative education for both financial and philosophical reasons. There is the recognition that modern schooling, in many ways, helps create the undesirable society in which we live. A healthy desire to learn often leads to debts that prevent a break from that society. Alternatives such as homeschooling and unschooling (for children) and free and folk schools (for adults) provide hope.

To these currents or "movement of movements," I believe an agronomic university has something to add and deepen. The significance of an agronomic university is that Maurin understood that we need to treat the full dimension—body, mind, and spirit—of the human person. We at New Hope CW Farm have only begun to touch on the fullness that those early CW farm school seemed to achieve, if only briefly. We hope to offer our farm as an integrated environment of learning. There are three inter-connected offerings that I have discerned we can provide to those various currents:

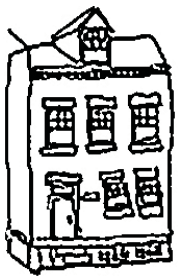
—A place of rest. Burn-out within activism and more particularly in the Catholic Worker movement is rampant. If we can't create spaces for people doing important work then we will continue to lose these precious people.

—A place of reflection and study. There can't be a revolution, Maurin said, without a theory of revolution. He also noted that our analysis and critique needs to be updated every 20 years. Maurin, like all of us, was limited to his time and place. Much has changed in society—capitalism is more complex and nefarious, for example. We need practical examples of how to resist and create something different. Who would Maurin be reading today? It should be said that Maurin's pedagogy (he's been called an "autodidact") has to be revised and alternative models of education, such as the free school tradition mentioned above, should be considered. Our nascent "school" has hosted interns, children for art classes, and adults to learn turkey butchering, a seminar on Thomas Merton, a workshop to expand our understanding of oppression through analysis of heterosexism, a non-fiction writing workshop, and two weekend discussions on the Enneagram. In the near future we plan on integrating the work and skills of the farm into discussions of spirituality, politics, and the economy.

—A place of culture (which, as Maurin used to say, is related to cultivation). People like myself often have the desire to grow our own food and build our own houses but those skills, sadly, are largely lacking. We imagine life on the land to be ideal but don't know how to start. If we want to reclaim our lives from powerful corporations and the nation-state it is imperative that we develop practical skills to do just that.

As we go forth, a few questions come to mind: How do we create an educational style that is open yet ordered, intellectual but not abstract, practical but not superfluous? And what of the poor, as we attempt to create a society where it is easier to be good?

Our experiment is just that--an experiment. There will be problems of course. But I am convinced of Maurin's vision and hope that we can be one of many agronomic universities bringing the Catholic Worker movement into the 21st century, and help create a new society within the shell of the old.



From Kabat House

by Ben Schartman

Spring is come to Kabat House and with it many exciting and new things for our community. There is a lot of interest within the Kabat House community in growing as much of the food that we eat as possible. Thus, many of us will be gardening at The Farm House under the guidance of awesome head gardener Carolyn Griffeth. Our close friends at New Roots Urban Farm are beginning their sixth growing season with more members than ever before. Our numbers have grown through the winter and now in the spring there seems to be energy to form new Catholic Worker projects and communities. One of these communities might focus on the greater integration of permaculture ideals into our communal life (the better use of land for gardening and fruit growing, as well as more intelligent composting systems). Another potential community might focus on hospitality and economic/political activism, including forging the kind of alternative economic model (Distributivism) that was discussed in the last Roundtable.

New friends are arriving and dear old ones are returning. Ben Bowman has returned from more than a year spent working on hunger and food distribution in this country. Carl Kabat is back with us after his most recent Plowshares action against nuclear weapons. Both Enrique and John Nolan have returned from their separate boycotts of winter; Enrique is returned from Cuba, and John from Argentina. So much has happened in Danny and Sarah's house through the winter that it is nearly ready to become a home! And there are big plans for the Carriage House on that property as well. We want to convert the downstairs of Carriage House into a wood shop/pottery studio for public use. This space will hopefully facilitate the creation of a cottage industry, which will give our guests and community members an opportunity to make useful things and even earn some income.

All of this activity is currently taking place amongst a great diversity of people living at Kabat House. The home countries of the guests living with us span the globe including Hungary, Tanzania, Viet Nam, Afghanistan and Cuba. Our most recent guest is Marta, who fled her house and home country of Hungary, because she believed that she was the subject of communist antagonism. Through the winter she has been busy creating very ornate drawings. Since it has warmed slightly, she has spent a couple of days working outside with us. She is a very energetic gardener! Marta has not been in the country long but can communicate well using body language and the English that she is learning from classes at the International Institute.

It has been very touching to notice how Nader—our guest from Afghanistan—has helped both Marta and other guest Tung get into classes at the International Institute. He has made sure that they are all ready in time for the bus and has led them through the complicated bus system to and from class. Nader was born in and lived for many years in Afghanistan but has also lived and worked in Iran and Pakistan before coming to the United States. He has spent years of his life being a furniture finisher/painter but has not been able to find work in the last couple of years, due mostly to his difficulty communicating in English. If there is anyone reading this that needs work of this sort done, please contact us; we would love to introduce you to Mr. Nader Ali.

Tung is our guest from Viet Nam. He is good friends with Nader and with us all, addressing everyone he lives with: "Hey brother" or "Hey sister." Tung was going for a while with Nader and Marta to English class but seems to have stopped, probably because he is hard of hearing. We realized only recently that his hearing is damaged, and this must have been enormously limiting his ability to learn English and to get around in America. Community member Mary Densmore may just have changed this, for she was able to find a scholarship that covers 95% of the cost of getting Tung a hearing aide. Way to go Mary!

Whereas we have had luck in finding help for Tung, we have had great difficulty in finding help for our dear and longest guest Enrique. For the last two months since Enrique returned from Cuba we have been trying to get him an appointment to see a psychiatrist. It is shocking how difficult this has been. Hopewell, the mental health facility that serves low-income people in our part of the city, is no longer accepting new clients. Enrique has Medicaid, but after hours of calling we have found no psychiatrists who will accept Medicaid on an outpatient basis. We are doing our best for our friend Enrique and it makes me very happy to know that he has us as a kind of family. However, it is very upsetting to know that there must be many people in similar situations who do not have the support that he does.

The final guest currently living at Kabat House is Peter. He is from Tanzania and is in a less dire situation than our other guests. His English is quite good, and he is studying engineering at UMSL. He came to us when he no longer had enough money to afford a place to live and go to school at the same time. I have found myself in a sort of perpetual conversation with Peter, where I try to point out that there are social costs associated with the great "efficiency" and "progress" that he sees in the American Way. On the other hand he is constantly pointing out to me the systems and technology all around me that I have been taking for granted.

These men and woman came a long distance to find their home at Kabat House. Though I did not have to travel so far, I too have found my home here. I have found my home in this community where people understand and agree that loving and taking care of each other is the most important thing that they can do each day. I have found my home in this community where people want the world to be a better, more just place than it is and are trying in small and large ways to make this so. It feels very good to have found this home.

Ben Schartman has been hammering away, making his home in the Kabat House community.

From Karen House

by Timmy Cosentino

During the two years I have lived at Karen House I have seen community members open up their hearts to the various people they have met here. They welcome the other people's joys and sufferings into their lives while at the house. Occasionally two people will just connect well and the connection will last beyond the house. The connection can be between anyone: guest and community, guest and guest, community and neighborhood folk, or two community members. It has always seemed like the connection comes up slowly, sneaking up on someone, so that before they could really even consciously say yes or no to the relationship they were in it. These connections are both quite beautiful and quite painful. In the end though we are better for it; more loving for it.

There is a quote on the third floor of Karen House from a Carmelite nun to Dorothy Day that says "It is the crushed heart which is the soft heart, the tender heart." It is written on a small piece of paper and taped on the wall. I often walk past it without noticing it or I take its presence and meaning for granted. It is just there waiting to be noticed or remembered, knowing that someone will see it and receive its message when the time is right.

It is hard to say exactly why--maybe I am too guarded, come off cold, or just a little slow but during my first two years as a community member I did not make one of those lasting special connections. Other people did and I supported them and walked with them as their hearts became "the tender heart," but that connection eluded me. I don't want to give the impression that I have a heart of stone or don't care about the people who come through Karen House, it is just that none of my relationships lasted very far beyond someone's time in the house. I have learned something though about these special connection relationships. It seemed to me that they just happened, but that isn't entirely true. There is a choice present: one person's choice to go to someone else and to trust them and another person's choice to not walk away. The relationships didn't just come to community members while they passively sat and waited, they chose to be in those relationships either by seeking out another or saying yes when sought out. Recently I have realized that while I have occasionally been sought out by others; I have not sought that kind of relationship with others. I haven't actively tried to make that connection, instead only waiting for it to come to me.

There is another oft mentioned Catholic Worker quote and a favorite of Dorothy Day's from Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov: "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared with love in dreams." It is easy to see this quote if you have spent any amount of time around Catholic Workers, though the last part about "love in dreams" might be omitted. I think it is a wonderful reminder for me that a meaningful relationship isn't going to just come to me, and it sure isn't going to be easy to get in or stay in. We are all broken people, myself very much included. But if I can accept the "harsh and dreadful" reality of active love in my life then perhaps even my heart is becoming the "tender heart."

Photo courtesy Marquette University Archives

Timmy Cosentino is happy to have had a warm bed this winter but that's all that can be said about that.

by Colleen Kelly

I recently went with a couple of people to talk to Rep. Lacy Clay about military spending. He started out by telling us that the link between homeless women and war spending was a stretch. He also told us to stop protesting outside of his office because he has been against the war since the beginning and we needed to focus on other Democrats. I left feeling so angry and disempowered. Lately, this has not been an unusual feeling for me regarding my activism. I have felt increasingly irritated with the lack of response from congressional leaders and from their inability to reflect their constituent's needs and desires. I realize that this type of witness needs to occur but it also makes me realize how incredibly blessed I am to live within the framework of the Catholic Worker model.

When I first decided to do this article I wanted to explore the idea of anarchism as it pertains to the Catholic Worker movement and Peter Maurin's vision. I thought for sure I would be starting out with the idea of decentralization but I quickly realized that the Catholic Worker idea of anarchism is much more closely tied with personalism. I have always understood the definition of personalism as the idea of recognizing everyone's worth and relating to them as an individual rather than in the context of a system. The more I read, the more I realized that that is the root of Christian anarchism as well.

Peter Maurin's view of anarchism was that we are all bound together and that we all have personal responsibility to care for one another. He believed in respect for every individual and creating co-operative models that allowed for everyone's personal strengths to be developed in the most creative ways. We are all empowered to affect change in any way possible without the reliance on government or bureaucratic structures.

We see wonderful examples of this type of beautiful resistance every day in our community. Teka , who does a lot for Winter Outreach, a group of folks that go out into the community when the temperatures go below freezing to hand out blankets and offer rides to shelters, has recently been so frustrated with the city's refusal to open a winter shelter. One day she had a revelation: she does not have to continue spinning her wheels, attempting to convince the city's bureaucrats that we should care for all of its inhabitants in the most humane way. We don't have to continue having a conversation with people to help them realize that we should provide a warm place to sleep away from the bitter cold. She realized that right in front of her, there were multiple people with similar vision and they could figure out a way to do it themselves. They could talk to people and open up their own shelter, their own warm haven.

This type of personal responsibility is a perfect example of why I love my life. Absolutely. I have been amazed at how much I enjoy life almost every day. I love the Catholic Worker. I feel like the last year and half of my life has been an amazing trajectory of learning how to love people and myself and being loved in return. Embracing the ideas of personalism, non-violence, and consensus decision-making have been incredibly empowering. It makes doing works of resistance and witness so much easier knowing that there are communities living out alternative visions in concrete ways. In a lot of ways, we are living on the margins of society, in the way we live and the thoughts we have. However, the more we step away from our individualistic society and enter into a world of cooperation and more sustainability, life becomes increasingly easier. I no longer have the distractions about what I do not HAVE. Instead I am focused on how incredible it is to be surrounded by so much love and support in trying to change anything and people that ARE changing everything.

Peter's vision of creating a "new society within the shell of the old" is happening all around us in our community. He calls us to look at our lives and find ways that we can affect change ourselves. He challenges us to be revolutionary in how we greet the world. The Catholic Worker has taught me that we all can! There are things that we can do every day that allow ourselves to separate from contributing to structures that are oppressive. We can resist by farming, by buying locally, by refusing to pay taxes that pay for war, by starting Christ rooms, by starting people's movements, etc., etc. Peter Maurin's vision of anarchism, rooted in the ideas of individual freedom, personal responsibility, and loving each person in the broadest sense has taught me that any true revolutionary change needs to start from within. We must open ourselves up to love every person we encounter and know that each and every one of us has the power to change ourselves, our neighborhood or the world around us.

Colleen Kelly has been dreaming of starting a Catholic Worker justice house here in St. Louis.

The Round Table

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The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to *The Round Table*, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO. 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work with the poor. People working on this issue include: Joe Angert, Jenny Truax, Teka Childress, Megan Heeney, Timmy Cosentino, Colleen Kelly, James Meinert, Katherine Wallig, Carolyn Griffeth, Ellen Rehg, and Ben Schartman. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

Karen House Needs

- Hygiene supplies: deoderant, toothpaste, toothbrushes.
- Bicycle locks and helmets.
- Donations for the Windows Project. We will have almost used up our generous donations of $30,000. We are 2/3 of the way finished!

Kabat House Needs

- Coffee, sugar, oil
- Toilet paper
- Laundry Detergent
- Bus passes, especially monthly ones!

The Round Table wants you!
to tell your stories!

Stories from 50 to 750 words can be submitted to the Round Table

Share your stories of inspiration, forgiveness, humor, conversion--We'll print as many as we can

Join us May 1, 2010 (the 77th anniversary of the Catholic Worker)

7pm at Karen House

for a Round Table on Peter Maurin's thought and action....

Check **www.KarenHouseCW.org** for updates on Karen House, information on the Catholic Worker, an archive of past Round Tables, and more!