

There are many stories one could tell about Catholic Worker life, but it is always better to wait until years have passed so that they become more impersonal, less apt to be identified with this one or that.

There is a story, however, about a reader of the paper, and this happened long enough ago so that we can tell it. Our friend adopted a young girl and educated her, and the young girl proved to be a great joy and comfort. Now she has entered a contemplative order to spend her life in prayer and work. The same reader then took in another young woman, who brought home a fatherless baby, and when that was forgiven her, went out and brought in still another, and there was apt to be a third. Our friend wrote and begged us for advice and help as to what to do. Was she contributing to the delinquency of this girl by forgiving seventy times seven, and was she perhaps going to have seventy times seven children to take care of?

It is good to think of the prophet Hosea, whom I have mentioned before in writing on love. He was commanded by God to take a harlot to wife, and she had many children by other men. He was a dignified, respected teacher of his people, and he was shamed and humiliated by the wife of his bosom. Yet he was to go down in history as the type of the love of God for His adulterous people.

Love must be tried and tested and proved. It must be tried as though by fire. And fire burns.

We may be living in a desert when it comes to such perceptions now, and that desert may stretch out before us for years. But a thousand years are as one day in the sight of God, and soon we will know as we are known. Until then we will have glimpses of brotherhood in play, in suffering, in serving, and we will begin to train for that community, that communion that Father Perrin talked so much of in his story of the worker priests in Germany.

This last month, there was an article by John Cogley in *America* about his experiences in the Chicago House of Hospitality. He writes of it as in the dim and distant past, and tells of the "mushroom growth" of such houses back in the thirties. In the present there are a few still struggling along, he writes, and a few farms existing in dire poverty.

Yes, the problems have become intensified, a great many have left the running. Where there were thirty-two Houses of Hospitality and farms, there are now eleven. But in those eleven we are still trying to work out a theory of love, a study of the problem of love so that the revolution of love, instead of that of hate, may come about and we will have a new heaven and a new earth wherein justice dwelleth.

December

The love of the humanity of Our Lord is the love of our brother. I have meditated on this fact during the past month. The only way we have to show our love for God is by the love we have for our brother. And as Father Hugo likes to say, "You love God as much as the one you love the least."

Love of brother means voluntary poverty, stripping one's self, putting off the old man, denying one's self. It also means non-participation in those comforts and luxuries which have been manufactured by the exploitation of others. While our brothers suffer, we must suffer with them. While our brothers suffer from lack of necessities, we will refuse to enjoy comforts. These resolutions, no matter how hard they are to live up to, no matter how often we fail and have to begin over again, are part of the vision and the long-range view which Peter Maurin has been trying to give us these past years.

And we must keep this vision in mind, recognize the truth of it, the necessity for it, even though we do not, cannot, live up to it. Like perfection. We are ordered to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, and we aim at it, in our intention, though in our execution we may fall short of the mark over and over. As St. Paul says, it is by little and by little that we proceed.

If our jobs do not contribute to the common good, we pray God for the grace to give them up. Have they to do with shelter, food, clothing? Have they to do with the Works of Mercy? Everyone should be able to place his job in the category of the Works of Mercy.

This would exclude jobs in advertising, which only increases people's useless desires, and in insurance companies and banks, which are known to exploit the poor of this country and of others. Whatever has contributed to the misery and degradation of the poor may be considered a bad job, and not to be worked at.

If we examined our consciences in this way we would soon be driven into manual labor, into humble work, and so would become more like Our Lord and our Blessed Mother.

Poverty means non-participation. It means what Peter calls regional living. This means fasting from tea, coffee, cocoa, grapefruit, pineapple, etc., from things not grown in the region in which one lives. One day last winter we bought broccoli which had the label on it of a corporation farm in Arizona or Texas, where we had seen men, women, and children working at two o'clock in the morning with miner's lamps on their foreheads in order to avoid the terrible heat of the day. These were homeless migrants, of which there are some million in the United States. For these there is "no room at the inn."

We ought not to eat food produced under such conditions. We ought not to smoke, not only because it is a useless habit, but also because tobacco impoverishes the soil and pauperizes the farmer, and means women and children working in the fields.

Poverty means having a bare minimum in the way of clothes, and seeing to it that these are made under decent working conditions, proper wages and hours, etc. The union label tries to guarantee this.

As for the dislocation in employment, if everyone started to give up their jobs? Well, decentralized living would take care of such a situation. And when we look at the dirty streets and lots in our slums, the unpainted buildings, the necessity of a nationwide housing project, the tearing down that needs to be done, then we can see that there is plenty of employment for all in the line of providing food, clothing, and shelter for our own country and for the world.

Poverty means not riding on rubber while horrible working conditions prevail in the rubber industry. Poverty means not riding on rails while bad conditions exist in the coal mines and steel mills. Poverty means not accepting that courteous bribe from the railroads, the clergy rate. Railroads have been built on robbery and exploitation. There once were stagecoaches, of course, and we are only about a century past them. But pilgrims used to walk, and so did the saints. They walked from one end of Europe and Russia to the other.

Of course, we are not all given the grace to do such things. But it is good to call to mind the *vision*. It is true, indeed, that until we begin to develop a few apostles along these lines we will have no mass conversions, no social justice, no peace. We need saints. God, give us saints!

How far we all are from it! We do not even see our infirmities. Common sense tells us, "Why live in a slum? It is actually cheaper to live in a model housing project, have heat and hot water, a mauve or pink bath and toilet, etc. We can manage better; we can have more time to pray, meditate, study. We would have more money to give to the poor." Yes, this is true,

according to the candlelight of common sense—but not according to the flaming heat of the sun of justice. Yes, we will have more time, with modern conveniences, but we will not have more love. "The natural man does not perceive the things of the spirit." We need to be fools for Christ. What if we do have to buy coal by the bucket instead of by the ton? Let us squander money, be as lavish as God is with His graces, as He is with His fruits of the earth.

Let us rejoice in poverty, because Christ was poor. Let us love to live with the poor, because they are specially loved by Christ. Even the lowest, most depraved, we must see Christ in them, and love them to folly. When we suffer from dirt, lack of privacy, heat and cold, coarse food, let us rejoice.

When we are weary of manual labor and think, "What foolishness to shovel out ashes, build fires, when we can have steam heat! Why sew when it can be better done on a machine? Why laboriously bake bread when we can buy so cheaply?" Such thoughts have deprived us of good manual labor, in our city slums, and have substituted shoddy store-bought goods, clothes, and bread.

Poverty and manual labor, they go together. They are weapons of the spirit, and very practical ones, too. What would one think of a woman who refused to wash her clothes because she had no washing machine, or clean her house because she had no vacuum, or sew because she had no machine? In spite of the usefulness of the machine, and we are not denying it, there is still much to be done by hand. So much, one might say, that it is useless to multiply our tasks, go in for work for work's sake.

But we must believe in it for Christ's sake. We must believe in poverty and manual labor, for love of Christ and for love of the poor. It is not true love if we do not know them, and we can only know them by living with them, and if we love with knowledge we will love with faith, hope, and charity.

On the one hand, there is the sadness of the world—and on the other hand, when I went to church today and the place was flooded with sunshine and it was a clear, cold day outside, suddenly my heart was so flooded with joy and thankfulness and so overwhelmed at the beauty and the glory and the majesty of our God that I could only think of St. Dionysius, "Concerning the Godhead":

"It is the Cause and Origin and Being and Life of all creation. And It is to them that fall away from It, a Voice that doth recall them and a Power by which they rise; and to them that have stumbled into a corruption of the Divine Image within them, It is a Power of Renewal and Reform; and

a Sacred Grounding to them that feel the shock of unholy assault, and a Security to them which stand; and upward Guidance to them that are being drawn unto It, and a Principle of Illumination to them that are being enlightened; a Principle of Perfection to them that are being perfected; a Principle of Deity to them that are being deified; and of Simplicity to them that are being brought into simplicity; and of Unity to them that are being brought into unity."

The immanence of God in all things! In Him "we live and move and have our being." "He is not far from every one of us." (Acts 17:28)

"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul and with thy whole strength.

"And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart. And thou shalt tell them to thy children. And thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand; and they shall be and move between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry and on the doors of thy house." (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

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To love with understanding, and without understanding. To love blindly, and to folly. To see only what is lovable. To think only of these things. To see the best in everyone around, their virtues, rather than their faults. To see Christ in them!

IN FIELDS AND FACTORIES