THE CATHOLIC WORKER IN DETROIT

1937 to 1967

A SELECTED STUDY

by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

St. Paul summarizes magnificently our goal as Christians when he tells us to "put on Christ." These three little words tell the whole story of my experience with the Catholic Worker.. for it is to know as Christ knows, know what Christ knows; love as Christ loves; serve as Christ serves and serve what Christ serves. My sincere thanks go to the Murphy family for their hospitality during my interviews; to Mr. Frank Wojcik for his encouraging letters.

This thesis, however, is dedicated to my parents for they were the molders of my Christian life and it was their prayers and sacrifices that made this work possible. To my mother, the typist, I am most grateful. To my Religious Family, Rev. Mother Arcadia for her permission to visit the Murphy family during the Thanksgiving holidays and to my local Superior, Sister Mary Loyola, a prayerful thanks.

CHAPTER I

BLUE PRINT OF THE CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT - THE CATHOLIC WORKER PAPER AND ITS FOUNDERS

The world-wide depression of the 1930's with 14,000,000 persons unemployed and its attending misery created in Americans a questioning and critical attitude toward America's industrial system. The transition from an agarian culture to an urban industrial society provoked a reform sentiment in American life as early as the 1890's with the rise of the Progressive Movement.

The immediate ends of the Progressive Movement were as varied as its centers of activity. In cities, its more proximate purposes were the overthrow of boss-rule through the institution of such new political devices as the direct primary and the nonpartisan political ticket, and such new schemes of city government as the city manager plan and the commission form. Wider aims included the abolition of franchise politics, which under corrupt bosses resulted in inefficient, inadequate, and costly city utilities, organized prostitution, a lawless liquor trade, and general corruption and venality. But even a more comprehensive aim of the municipal movement was to make twentieth-century America a decent, healthy, and enjoyable place in which to live. The fulfillment of this aim meant the abolition of slums and tenements, the condemnation of crime, juvenile delinquency, and disease, and the creation of parks, playgrounds,

and efficient social services.[1]

On the state level the progressive movement concerned itself also with democratic political devices mentioned above; but it was even more interested in such economic ideas and issues as the regulation of railroads and monopolies, the adjustment of tax systems so that corporations would be forced to bear their fair share of the cost of government, and attention to such diverse causes as civil service, the conservation of natural resources, and the protection of women and children, both at home and at work. Nationally the progressive aspirations ranged through an even wider spectrum of causes, but the heart of the movement was the central question of what to do with the great interstate organizations of capital and labor, known to the day as trusts and unions. Both types of organizations had vastly augmented their economic power until they were national in scope, and by the first decade of the twentieth century they were engaged in a bitter battle for supremacy. A major question raised by the government was how the corporations and the unions were to be protected from each other, but more important, how the general public and the individual were to be protected from each other.[2]

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[1] Richard Hofstader, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York, 1955), uses an entirely different approach in attempting to explain the growth of the reform spirit. His study, he says in the preface, is "primarily a study of political thinking and political moods." A more recent general coverage of the Progressive Era is: Richard Hofstader, The Progressive Movement, (New Jersey, 1963).

[2] With the emphasis upon the Midwest as a place of origin, and as the intellectual dynamo of early twentieth-century reform, the best source for the material is: Russel B. Nye, Mid-Western Progressive Politics: A Historical Study of Its Origins and Development, 1870-1950 (East Lansing, Michigan, 1951).

The Progressive Movement did not entirely hold the limelight in the social question. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, radical movements had been gathering, protecting the conditions of the working class. The Communist Manifesto was published in 1848. It summoned the proletariat, the masses of workers who had no private property, to rise on an international scale and to replace capitalism with communism.

As trade unions began to develop and to clash with employers who refused to concede any rights to labor, these organizations drew very close to the materialistic teachings of Karl Marx, which are incompatible with Catholic doctrine. Serious questions arose for the Catholics in the United States and in European countries. It seemed that only through collective action could workers alleviate the conditions characterized by long working hours, poor pay, excessive employment of women and children, and a generally depressed social status. But the labor movement in all continental European countries had become committed to a popular version of primitive Marxism. It is in this context that Rerum Novarum was issued.[3]

When Rerum Novarum appeared in 1891, the Industrial Revolution had been going on for about two generations. Most Catholics had their social roots in backward agricultural areas and in the

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[3] Amintore Fanfani, Catholicism, Protestantism and Capitalism (New York, 1935) gives an excellent account to elaborate on the above ideas.

craft and merchant guilds of the cities. The sudden uprooting of rural population and the migration into new centers of industry, where living conditions were substandard and where immigrants were treated as strangers, brought, indeed, "new things". This encyclical asserted the rights of labor to organize, but it warned against labor unions which were permeated by false philosophies. Wherever such unions dominated the labor movement, Rerum Novarum strongly suggested the setting up of Christian trade unions. This suggestion was taken up in Germany, Austria, Holland, Belgium, France and Italy. Most of the ideas which Leo XIII expressed in the encyclical already had been taught in substantially the same form by Bishop Wilhelm von Ketteler of Mainz in Germany, Gaspard Decurtins in Switzerland, Count Adrien de Mun in France, and Cardinal Manning of England. As bishop of Perugia, Leo XIII had foreshadowed some of his future teachings on economic questions in one of his pastoral letters. But Rerum Novarum has the distinction of having synthesized the church's teachings of what had been before largely a matter of opinion and of having officially registered the Church's sympathy with, and determination to struggle for the rights of the common man. This first social encyclical also defined the Catholic wage doctrine. The wage must be in proportion to the needs of the worker and his family. Furthermore, Rerum Novarum criticized overlong working hours and the excessive employment of children. It also criticized wages so insufficient as to force married women to work outside the family in order to supplement the meager

earnings of their husbands.[4]

Rerum Novarum opposed the Marxist doctrine of the inevitability of the class struggle. Acknowledging that there are many conflicts between labor and management, the Pope stressed that they are not irreconcilable. For this reason, while condemning strikes as such, Leo XIII stated that they should be only used as a last resort.

Owing to the then prevailing spirit of agnostic liberalism and materialism, the first social encyclical was not so widely accepted and praised as has been the case with the more recent social encyclicals. World War I brought about many changes. Everywhere labor proved indispensable in the war effort behind the front lines. The status of unions improved and resistance to collective bargaining collapsed in European countries. After World War I, European Marxism split into a more moderate movement, represented by social democratic parties, and by communism, which had already gained power in the Soviet Union.[5] Unlike the developments of the world after World War II, economic recovery was slow after the armistice in 1918. Inflation undermined the economic status of the middle classes, taxes remained high, and after the financial crash in October, 1929, worldwide depression with high levels of unemployment set in.

On the American front there were many reasons which

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[4] A systematic interpretation is offered on the Encyclical Rerum Novarum by Pope Leo XIII in Joseph Husslein, S.J., The Christian Social Manifesto, (Milwaukee, 1931), pp. 65-90.

[5] Ibid.

combined to retard the introduction and growth of labor legislation. The fluidity of class lines, the individualistic spirit of the new country, apparent constitutional obstacles, the opposition of many employers, and the weakness of organized labor were the many causes of delay. Moreover, it was only after the Great Depression of 1929 that labor legislation in the United States came abreast of the laws in the more advanced European countries.

To some Catholic reformers, the greatest obstacle to corrective legislation was the liberalistic interpretation of the United States Constitution which arose after the Civil War and prevailed until the middle of the 1930's. The courts tended to regard labor legislation as an infringement of individual freedom and property rights. They were swayed by the argument that the state has the right to limit freedom of contract and impose conditions on the use of property in order to protect the general welfare.[6]

In the matter of labor legislation, the American Bishops were a generation ahead of their time. On February 12, 1919, The Administrative Committee of the National Catholic War Council issued an eleven-point reform program which was far in advance of much contemporary thinking. At the time a committee of the New York state legislature criticized it as "socialistic", but today most of the bishops' program is part of the law of the land.

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[6] Thomas T. McAvoy, C.S.C. (ed.), Roman Catholicism and The American Way of Life, (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1960).

Two decades later, the American bishops issued another social pronouncement. Just as the bishops' program of 1919 may be considered the application of the Rerum Novarum to conditions in the United States, so the statement entitled "Church and Social Order", issued February 7, 1940, by the archbishops and bishops of the administrative board of the National Catholic War Council may be regarded as an application of Quadragesimo Anno. According to Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno had a threefold purpose: to confirm the teachings of Rerum Novarum; to correct certain misapprehensions, and to elaborate on Leo's encyclical; and to examine the fundamental evils of contemporary society, recommending a moral, Christian reform. Basically, Pius's assertion is of a philosophical nature; it stresses general principles rather than specific proposals.[7]

Another pioneer social thinker and vigorous advocate of social reform, John A. Ryan had profound influence both within and outside the Catholic Church. His writings, lectures, and active participation in social reform served to educate Catholics in the social teachings of the Church and to help modern society base its economic system on sound and moral principles. Although he was not formally educated in the social sciences, Ryan always had a keen interest in social questions. As a youth he had sympathized with the farmers of his St. Paul, Minnesota, community

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[7] An excellent factual commentary on Forty Years After can be found in: Raymond J. Miller, C.S.R., Forty Years After: Pius XI And The Social Order, (St. Paul, Minnesota, 1949), pp. 1-27; 39-40.

and with such movements as the Farmers' Alliance and Populist Party. Two other events that occurred while he was a student heightened his awareness of the problems of industrial workers. The first was James Cardinal Gibbons's forceful defense of the Knights of Labor in 1887. The second was the publication of Pope Leo's encyclical Rerum Novarum. Ryan's most important book was his Distributive Justice published in 1916, subtitled The Right and Wrong of the Present Distribution of Wealth. It was a synthesis of Ryan's basic thinking on the moral import of economic problems and social reform.[8]

In 1909, Ryan published an article entitled "A Program of Social Reform by Legislation". Among his proposals were laws to establish minimum wages and maximum hours of work, to protect the rights of organized workers, prohibit child labor, provide for slum clearance and municipal housing projects, and provide social insurance against unemployment, sickness, accident and old age. Nearly all these proposals were later incorporated in the Bishops' Program of Social Reconstruction, 1919, which was prepared by John A. Ryan and issued by the bishops of the Administrative Committee of the National Catholic Welfare Conference.

America proved a fruitful soil on which to plant the seeds of social thought with leaders of such stamina. The way to the real expression of the encyclicals is still a long way from being perfect.[9]

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[8] An excellent reference is John A. Ryan and Francis J. Boland, Catholic Principles of Politics, (New York, 1952).

[9] For a greater "insight" of Catholic social dynamics see: Martin Quigley, Jr., and Monsignor Edward M. Connors, Catholic Action in Practice, (New York, 1963).

Considered in a general way, one becomes aware of the skillful pens of the pontiffs and America's acceptance to their call to all nations to respect and honor man as God's creature, especially in the economic life. Quadragesimo Anno enfolds the purpose: "to defend and develop the teachings of Leo XIII on the social and economic question as proposed in the encyclical Rerum Novarum and to summon to court the present economic regime".[10]

The opening paragraph of the Rerum Novarum defends and develops Leo XIII's doctrine and the occasion of its writing: "the conflict in the field of economics".[11] Despite the disturbances in the political sphere, the current social conflict, and the spirit of a revolutionary change, it is the effect of these on the economic order which warrants this encyclical. The industrial developments, the new techniques, the uneven distribution of wealth with an ever increasing destitution of the masses, the new relations between employer and employee and the closer unity of the workers were all causes of conflict in the economic order which are dwelt upon in the Rerum Novarum. The problems Leo XIII faced evolved from the fact that the workers' positions were defenseless against the inhumanity of employers and the greed of competitors, and the chains of slavery were laid on the masses of workers by a few very rich men. "And therefore the rights and duties to be treated are those of the economic order: of capital and labor, of rich and poor".[12]

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[10] William F. Drummond, S.J., Social Justice (Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee), p. 21.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Rerum Novarum, p. 7.

Similarly, the economic order marks the introduction of the Quadragesimo Anno. Social problems possess the heart of the matter here--the problems that grew as a result of a new kind of economic life and new developments in industry. It was the awareness of want in the midst of plenty; the division of society into classes, a minority enjoying all the benefits of wealth while the majority of working people were oppressed by poverty. "It is an economic state of affairs which those who enjoy the abundance of riches looked upon as a result of inevitable economic laws".[13] Pius XI gave his support to the movement for economic planning which was, as Aaron I. Abell says, ". . . being popularized by some segments of labor and business and by numerous intellectuals of whom Stuart Chase and Charles A. Beard were the most vocal".[14]

In the United States as elsewhere the Quadragesimo Anno was viewed as the social justice norm and many sought ways to attain its realization. Opinion ran high that the unionization of workers must proceed and, as the Pope suggested, "prepare the way" for the foundation of a modernized guild system. An uncompromising leader of this viewpoint was Monsignor Francis G. Haas, dean of the newly established School of Social Science at the Catholic University of America. He was convinced that "a narrow and selfish open shop individualism" was the basic cause of the Great Depression. Haas predicted in 1931 that "the permanent recovery of industrial society is impossible unless wage earners

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[13] Quadragesimo Anno, p. 4.

[14] Thomas T. McAvoy, Roman Catholicism and the American Way of Life (University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame), p. 81.

are frankly accorded the right to organize and bargain collectively for wages and working conditions.[15] "Union organization, intelligently led," he said, "is the only effective method of securing an adequate share of the national wealth for workers and families."[16]

Social justice was looked upon from a different aspect by Charles E. Coughlin of Royal Oak, Michigan. His eloquent microphonic oratory was involved with this problem after 1930. He publicized Catholic social teachings more widely than any contemporary, not only on radio, but on the public platform and after 1934 through the propaganda of the Union for Social Justice and its weekly journal, Social Justice.[17] Father Coughlin perceived that the problem did not stem from a conflict between employer and employees but rather from profound disturbances, chiefly of a financial and monetary character. On a bandwagon of monetary reform, this "shepherd of the air" gained a wide audience during the early 1930's, but for various reasons was unable to hold it intact. His success was further stifled because the clergy shunned their confrere either out of envy or distrust or because he did not welcome their cooperation. It appeared to be a more personal venture than one religious in character. Thus this "religious Walter Winchell" repelled the priests by his ambitions to put "the universal credo into Christianity".[18]

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[15] "Freedom Through Organization," Salesianum, XXVIII (October, 1933), p. 9.

[16] "Catholic Doctrine and Industrial Practice," Proceedings, Seventeenth National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931, p. 248.

[17] "Father Coughlin: Whither?" The Guildsman, III (January, 1935), p. 9.

[18] Thomas T. McAvoy, Roman Catholicism and the American Way of Life (University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame), p. 84.

The Catholic influence was not only fostered by the clergy but Catholics of education and substance--scholars, politicians and men of affairs who mobilized their influence on the business community, heretofore impervious to Catholic social teaching. The best-known leaders in finance and industry, both Catholic and non-Catholic, met in New York City early in 1932 with Catholic economists and teachers of ethics. The main speaker, John Moody, the noted business statistician, and the apostolic delegate, the Most Reverend Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi, attributed the social chaos to a divorce in practice between ethics and business. In close sequence, the Calvert Associates, publishers of The Commonweal, formed a nation-wide League of Social Justice for the study and application of the economic teachings of Pius XI.[19] Michael O'Shaughnessy was the leader of this endeavor. In America magazine, O'Shaughnessy reported that

> Several Catholic laymen, businessmen of substantial means have reached the conclusion that the social, financial and industrial dislocation that has overwhelmed the world, demands that we conform our human relations to our spiritual ideas, that the value and security of all property and the material happiness of all the people of the United States depends on the attainment in this country of social justice as propounded by our Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical, Quadragesimo Anno.[20]

A more dynamic endeavor with a lasting influence and one that presented splendid opportunities for all-educated and uneducated--was the Catholic Worker. From its founding it served as a

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19 "A League of Social Justice," The Commonweal, XV (January 27, 1932), pp. 337-38.

20 Letter to the editor of America. "Communications: Praying for Social Justice," America, LXVII (September 24, 1932), p. 602.

lighthouse furnishing a sense of direction for Catholics anxious to crusade for social justice. "Sometimes," as Jesuit Albert Muntsch wrote, "neither clergy nor laity know exactly what to do in order to follow out the so-called 'Catholic Program.'" He observed: "The Catholic Worker tells what to do and how to do it. It comes down to the level of the people."[21]

The Catholic Workers in this great drama of Christian charity were many and of diversified backgrounds and interests. Their united efforts and ideals can be summed up in these quotes of Dorothy Day, the founder: "I do not know how to love God except by loving the poor. I do not know how to serve God, except by serving the poor."[22] "The little way, faith in God and the realization that it is He that performs the work, and lastly not being afraid of dirt and failure, and criticism. These are the things which must be stressed in holding up the technique of works of mercy as a means of regaining workers to Christ."[23] Dorothy Day is the most remarkable personality engaged in the battle for the poor. Confronted by the great problem of poverty, she has drawn the conclusion that if she is to help the poor she must become one of the poor: it would not suffice for her to be a social worker coming in among the poor, however devotedly, from the outer social realms. She must live among

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21 "A Promising Journalistic Venture," The Guildsman, III (April, 1935), pp. 6-7.

22 Dorothy Day, "Poor People," The Commonweal, LXII (June 23, 1950), pp. 273-74.

23 Dorothy Day, "House on Mott Street," The Commonweal, XXVIII (May 6, 1938), pp. 37-39.

them and live like them, and therein lies her secret of following Christ's plea of assistance to fellowman. She must take upon herself poverty--not dignified poverty nor romantic poverty, but the hungry poverty of the very poor. This was the beginning, the nucleus, of the amazing House of Hospitality movement in America. Where the down and outs sleep, she sleeps. Thousands are fed in Catholic Worker Houses every day, herself among them.

The extent of her concern is not an immediate relief of poverty. She has her own sociological views expressed in her paper, The Catholic Worker. What fills one with admiration is that her writings are not a suggested remedy but the pressing horror of the disease. She puts on no airs of false sympathy for sufferings that the poor do not feel. The real sufferings of the poor are portrayed from the inside. Yet, the most praiseworthy of all of Dorothy Day's efforts is the emotion which transfigures her writing; it is basically love of God and the poor without a trace of bitterness for those more prosperous.

Could her past--the radiant story of unquenchable faith--so vibrant with the raw stuff of life and death, be the vital factor in this "patron saint of Skid Row?" Thomas Merton, in reviewing her book, Loaves and Fishes, seems to convey her dynamics in a nutshell. "Every American Christian should read this book because it explodes the comfortable myth that we have practically solved the problem of poverty in our affluent society. It is a deeply touching and delightfully humorous record of experiences that read like the early Franciscan fioretti. But that does not mean that we can afford to enjoy them and forget

them . . . . Loaves and Fishes is a credit to American democracy and to American Catholicism."[24] Edward Willock, co-founder of Integrity magazine describes The Catholic Worker philosophy: it "is that the House of Hospitality exists not to 'do good' to its guests but to feed, clothe, and house them. It exists before this for the moral reform of those who voluntarily live among and serve Christ in His poor."[25]

If one could read Dorothy's diary, her membership in the Socialist Party could be confirmed. She worked with and for Communism, espoused anarchism, labored for the Industrial Workers of the World and fought the "class war." Miss Day has been described as a radical who never got tired.[26] She went to jail when falsely arrested as a prostitute in an IWW hotel and staged a ten-day hunger strike--also in jail--in support of the suffragists. She entered into a common-law marriage and bore a daughter. Baptized an Episcopalian, she dropped religion as an impediment to her work. At 17, she says: "I was in love now with the masses . . . they were collectively the new Messiah."[27] It was the birth of her baby and the desire to bring some order and religion into the child's life that finally caused Dorothy Day in 1927 to join the Roman Catholic Church. "To become a Catholic meant for me

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[24] "Loaves and Fishes," The Christian Century (October 9, 1963), p. 245.

[25] E. Wellock, "Catholic Radicalism," The Commonweal, LVIII (October 2, 1953), pp. 630-33.

[26] "Dorothy Day," Current Biography, 1962, 94; "Catholic Worker--A Lonely Soldier," New York Times, November 21, 1965, 68, by Richard J. H. Johnson.

[27] "Dorothy Day's Diary," Newsweek, XXXIX (Jan. 21, 1952), p. 85.

to give up a mate with whom I was much in love. It got to the point where it was the simple question of whether I chose God or man . . . . It was not because I was tired of sex, satiated, disillusioned, that I turned to God." Dorothy Day wrote in The Long Loneliness.[28] She entered the Roman Catholic Church on December 28, 1927.

Her first years in the Faith were hard ones. All her associates who shared radicalism were outside the Church. But unlike most converts to Catholicism, Miss Day did not renounce her former friends. She brought the IWW, anarchism, violent pacifism and socialism through the doors of the Church with her.

Her ideas blossomed into the Catholic Worker Movement which she founded in 1933 with Peter Maurin, a French peasant-philosopher. From the thought of the English distributists and of Father Vincent McNabb, St. Thomas Aquinas, Peter Kropotkin and others, Maurin has synthesized a philosophy and a program for a "green revolution" that would unite scholars and workers in houses of hospitality for the needy, farming communes, and round table discussions. He expressed his ideas in carefully constructed "easy essays." The radical Catholicism of Peter Maurin was not just a school of thought but rather a renewal of Christian sympathy for the massed victims of industrial society. Peter Maurin complemented Dorothy Day so that the quantitative influences of the Catholic Worker cannot be calculated; its

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[28] Current Biography, 1962, p. 95.

qualitative influence can only be felt.

To describe this giant of a man is to begin the love story of one who is dedicated to the masses. This man was prepared in early life for the mammoth vocation which awaited him. His parents, the brothers and sisters he dearly loved, plus the Christian Brothers, his teachers, shaped the spirit of this modern Poverello. Peter's poverty, his joy, his soul-searching and world vision bring to life the thirteenth century saint. To describe him best is to see Peter Maurin through Dorothy Day's eyes. "He was intensely alive, on the alert, even when silent, engaged in reading or thought. When he talked, the tilt of his head, his animated expression, the warm glow in his eyes, the gestures of his hands, his shoulders, his whole body compelled your attention."[29]

The best compliment of Peter Maurin was published in America magazine which extolled his ability as a simplifier: "The scholastic scaffold of St. Thomas' Summa came tumbling down as Peter outlined in his blank-verse Easy Essays the medieval teachings on the importance of Big Shots and Little Shots..."[30] The influence of his pen was world-wide. His thought, said Canon Cardijn, founder of the Jocist movement in Europe, was "the purest spirit of the Gospels."[31]

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[29] Arthur Sheehan, Peter Maurin: Gay Believer (Hanover House, New York), p. 91.

[30] Ibid., p. 205.

[31] Ibid., p. 205.

Another facet to his credit was that America had profited greatly from his knowledge of the more mature movements of a social nature in Europe. In the United States, however, the slavish imitation was not followed but with Peter Maurin's influence gave was to evolving mystiques and techniques more compatible with the native climate.

Peter's death came with the quietness of God's approval on May 15, 1949. It marked the anniversary of the Papal encyclicals: Rerum Novarum and Quadregesimo Anno which Peter had done so much to publicize and implement. And it was May - the month just sixteen years before when the first issue of the Catholic Worker was printed and distributed in Union Square.

The impact of the Catholic Worker, the penny paper and the movement that grew out of it, on the Catholic body as a whole is immediately shocking but yet, in its long - range effect, subtle. It has been as intended, a leavening influence and consequently at its mature stage not readily isolated from the whole dough. This efficacy, of which we now have evidence, is the proof of the genius and the essential holiness of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, its founders."[32]

The growth of the Catholic Worker movement out of the needs and aspirations of working men and women in industry and on the farms, is proof that the spirit and outlook of the Old Testament prophets and of the early Church are powerful forces within

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[32] Ed Willock, "Catholic Radicalism," Commonweal, 58 (October 2, 1953), p. 632.

modern civilization. Anne Fremantle, in her Saturday Review report of Dorothy Day's book The Long Loneliness, uses a description which typifies any member of the "Catholic Worker Family." She explains that: "The French say that a person is good like bread" and it is this phrase that comes to mind when one reads Dorothy Day's life. This partly, of course, because bread is so much on her mind, and has been all her life - bread for the people, real wholewheat bread, not white ersatz blotting paper, spiritual or physical. But it is so partly, also, because of Saint Augustine's thought: "I am the Food of the strong: grow and thou shalt feed on Me, but not I into thee, but thou shalt be changed into Me."[33]

The Catholic Worker has gained many avenues through the printed media. The first issues of the Catholic Worker carried the heart of the encyclicals to the common man. Dorothy Day summed up her editorial page thus: "In an attempt to popularize and make known the encyclicals of the Popes in regard to social justice and the program put forth by the Church for the "reconstruction of the social order," this news sheet, the Catholic Worker, is started."[34] Its influence is both dramatic and miraculous when one realizes that editors had only 92¢ among them when the first issue came to press.[35] The Catholic Worker

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33 Anne Fremantle, "Good Like Bread", Saturday Review 35, (March 1, 1952), p. 12.

34 J. C. Cart, "Catholic Worker and the Workers", Commonweal, 55, (April 4, 1952), p. 636.

35 "Fools for Christ", Time, 51, (May 24, 1948), p. 57.

started, as the name suggests, as a competitor of the Communist Daily Worker, and it was no unplanned event that most of the first issue, in 1933, was distributed in Union Square on May Day. "In their maiden editorial the following idea was also engendered: 'Why should the Devil have all the good turns?'" Maurin and Miss Day wrote, "It's time there was a Catholic paper printed for the unemployed. The fundamental aim of most radical sheets is conversion of its readers to radicalism and atheism. Is it possible to be radical and not atheist?"[36] The Church's social program is engendered in two papal letters - the Rerum Novarum of Leo XIII and the Quadregesimo Anno of Pius XI. "Our job is to make the encyclicals click," Peter Maurin once said.[37] Despite his sincere efforts it became apparent rather early in his writings how alien his thoughts were. His answer to a reader's appeal for support for the organization of labor unions is the following:

> Most organizations exist not for the benefit of the organized, but for the benefit of the organizers. When the organizers try to organize the unorganized, they do not organize themselves. If everybody organized themselves, everybody would be organized.[38]

It was Dorothy Day who reconciled the irreconcilable: "Peter's rustic anarchism and the great common sense of the Vicar of Christ."[39]

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[36] D. MacDonald, "Profiles", New Yorker, 28 (October 11, 1952), p. 37.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Catholic Worker, Volume I, No. 8.

[39] J. C. Cort, "Catholic Worker and the Workers," Commonweal, 55 (April 4, 1952), p. 636.

Another quality of the paper, perhaps premature in American thinking, was also a vital facet of Dorothy Day's editorial. Dan Wakefield, in his article in Nation magazine says: "Its first editorial announced that it would not be restricted to the people of any one religion or political belief, any one color of skin or cut of clothes, but that it was. . .

For those who are sitting on benches in the warm spring sunlight.

For those who are huddling in shelter trying to escape the rain.

For those who are walking the streets in the all but futile search for work.

For those who think there is no hope for the future, no recognition of their plight, the Catholic Worker is edited."[40] Besides the scholarly philosophical approach, a practical solution was made apparent. Advertisements were printed appealing for clothing and food to supply those men who were sitting on the benches. Rooms were rented for people who had no roof over their head, and the hungry and homeless were given bread as well as words. For Dorothy Day believed that: "Meals are so important. The Disciples knew Christ in the breaking of the Bread. We know Christ in each other sitting down and eating together. It is unbelievably, poignantly intimate."[41] As the paper and its radical

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[40] Dan Wakefield, "Miracle of the Bowery," Nation 182, (February 4, 1956), p. 91.

[41] Dorothy Day, "It Was a Good Dinner", Commonweal 32, (August 23, 1940), pp. 364-65.

notions of peace and equality spread across the nation, "Houses of Hospitality" grew in the greater metropolises from coast to coast with beds and kitchens for the immediate relief of God's poor.[42]

Truly, it was a historic day in 1933 when the Catholic Worker expanded from a paper to a movement. A vast amount of untapped energy was released and the seeds of future "Houses of Hospitality" were sown. Over the years some of this energy was undoubtedly misdirected to utopian causes and foolish schemes for making the world over. This seems to follow the pattern when youthful idealism is engaged, especially in the Catholic Worker. The Worker existed for over thirty years without any rules, memberships, committees or endowments and has studiously rejected the techniques of organization and the counsels of worldly caution; it has lasted longer than most soberly-conceived undertakings which were began at the same time. It must be held up as a model of efficiency and genuine prudence.[43]

It set out to furnish "a sense of direction to the enlarging corps of Catholics anxious to crusade for social justice."[44] The Catholic Worker produced a philosophy of love and Christian revolution which was old - so old that it looked like new. It set out to rediscover and recreate the evangelical spirit and bear

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[42] Dan Wakefield, "Miracle of the Bowery," Nation 182, (February 4, 1956), p. 91.

[43] J. Cogley, "Catholic Worker," Commonweal 68, (May 16, 1958), p. 180.

[44] Aaron L. Abell, American Catholicism and Social Action.

witness to the simplicities of the Gospel in the modern world. Christ's teaching could be viewed in the writings of Dorothy Day when she emphasized the happiness if even one person was served and helped by the House of Hospitality. The Catholic Worker, she believed, would be repaid and could feel its labors were not in vain.

Perhaps the Catholic Worker, for all its inefficient methods in the sight of "organized, efficient society" was so successful in what it set out to do because its ambitions were so modest and its pretensions so few. This then, was the starting point and inspiration for the organization of the Detroit Catholic Worker.

CHAPTER II

THE SEAT OF CHARITY - DETROIT WORKER HOUSE

In the galaxy of cities, Detroit is the motor capital of the world, a labor union stronghold, and the seat of the Catholic archdiocese. From 1900, when it had 285,704 people, it was raised by the motor car industry to the fifth largest city in the United States with population (1960) of 1,670,144. The Catholic Church has grown simultaneously with the city's physical, industrial and cultural development. Today Detroit has more than one hundred parishes and a variety of Catholic schools, hospitals, religious communities and charitable organizations have sprouted up.

The Catholic Church has been affected by such prosperity and attendant social upheavals. The problem has presented itself by shifts in population, with the white people able to afford to move to the suburbs and their places in the city neighborhood taken by the Mexican migrant laborers, Negroes, Puerto Ricans and poor Southerners, all of whom have come to the "Car City" of the world to seek employment. With this movement reaching a more critical stage, the Church in Detroit is becoming once again a missionary Church, serving the poor and the uprooted. The problem is intensified with the non-English speaking barrier. Not all of the older parishes have been able to cope with this

problem --- to adjust to the changes or meet the challenges. One parish that did was Holy Trinity Church with great creativeness and ingenuity. To make that dream come true, the dynamics, ingenuity and courage of Msgr. Clement Kern were necessary.[1]

The parish is in the most run-down neighborhood of Detroit, neighboring the River and the railroad tracks and not far from the city's Skid Row. The name of the area, once called Corktown because most people who settled there were Irish, has little meaning today. The parish includes a mixture of Maltese, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Negroes and poor Southern whites. The greater percentage are unskilled laborors, on relief or unemployed, drifters, alcoholics, or migrants who live in the area temporarily while picking fruit in the orchards outside the city. Their state is a rather hopeless situation, because Detroit is not suffering a real depression, but because automation is slowly closing in on all those without trade or profession.[2]

The parish plant, as one would expect, is no real work of art. The center of Corktown, the Church is a 113-year-old building of no recognizable style or architecture. (Renovations and the painting of the Church are the undertakings at the present time.) A dark, hulking rectory, an ugly old school and convent form the entire nucleus of Christian Action. The urban renewal project for up-dating the section is creeping through and around

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[1] The Catholic Worker, Volume V, No. 8, (November 1937), p. 3.

[2] The information mentioned above is an observation of my trip to Detroit and was gathered from the interview with Father Clement Kern.

it; however, the parish is very much alive. The rejuvenation of Holy Trinity is Father Kern's formula--the freely applied principle of subsidiarity. Father Kern initiates a program using his prestige throughout Detroit as a labor-management consultant and Latin American expert to help raise money for the workers, and then relinquishes the program to competent lay people to direct and manage. He has introduced a night school for adults, giving a variety of basic courses, including English and Spanish; an employment bureau, a credit union, medical, dental and legal clinics, cooperative housing for aged and young couples, a co-op store. A miracle, a dream--these words could be used when you realize that all this has been accomplished despite the parish's chronic shortage of priests. Rarely are there more than three priests serving Holy Trinity: Father Kern and one or two assistants or a resident priest who helps out on Sundays.

The majority of people in Corktown are not Catholics. The Ecumenical spirit of Father Kern reveals his view: Holy Trinity exists to serve all the people in the parish, not just the Catholics. All parish services therefore are free to everyone in the community and everyone is invited to cooperate in them and work for them.[3]

The myriad activities that Father Kern has progressing seem to be a modern adaptation of the early Christian practice

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[3] Dona Sullivan and Paul Velde, "Most Holy Trinity Parish," (November, 1963), p. 13.

of individual responsibility for the members of the community. Over the centuries, a mistaken, selfish notion has entered which re-echoes Cain's cry, "Am I my brother's keeper?" This has greatly distorted the charity Christ practiced and taught. Much of the charitable work was previously performed by Christians personally for the poor, sick and aged but was transferred to Church institutions staffed by religious. Later, state institutions were primary functioning agencies. The modern age has witnessed people disillusioned with state-directed "charity." Regretably, the Church's larger charitable institutions seem to indicate a greater emphasis on efficiency over personal care and affectionate attention. The charity of Father Kern has given rise to making the parish a center of community social services. He has not, however, made Holy Trinity's community self sufficient. Most of the professionals who render services do not live in the parish and the money to finance them has been raised outside, too. Father Kern's philosophy indicates that people are glad to help one another if they are asked, and whatever helps people to love and serve one another is good. This priest has worked a revolution in a parish that from all appearances should have been dead long ago.[4]

A vigorous force working together with the spirit and in the spirit of Holy Trinity Parish is the Catholic Worker. The director of the Detroit Catholic Worker upholds and maintains the same principles and standards as his pastor, Father Kern.

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[4] Information received from an interview on November 27, 1966.

Mr. Lou Murphy, hearing Christ's call as did the patron of the Worker House, St. Francis of Assisi, to rebuild the Church has dedicated his life to show that "Christian spirituality without social concern is a rejection of the Incarnation." Heeding this plea, the Murphy family today as in the formative years have taken upon themselves a life similar to the Poverello.

The story of Lou Murphy goes back to 1937 when his paradox of poverty began. Lou Murphy became a member of the Third Order of St. Francis at the St. Elizabeth Fraternity in Detroit the same year. In establishing the Worker House, he was assisted by the friars at Duns Scotus College, headquarters of St. Elizabeth Fraternity, but personally by Father Sebastian Erbacker, O.F.M.. With the grasp of the depression holding a tight rein upon Detroit, the St. Francis Worker House was opened. The St. Elizabeth Fraternity continues to aid the work by donations of food, clothing and services.

The seed that initiated this plan was the Catholic Action Convention held at Marygrove College on September 12-13, 1937, in which Dorothy Day's address was the highlight of the program. Two other speakers, Fathers Charles Rice and Carl Hensler of the Catholic Radical Alliance of Pittsburgh, assisted in making the cause of the working man the paramount feature of the Convention. Stimulated by these talks, a group of interested clergy and laymen met with Miss Day at the Knights of Columbus Hall on Friday,

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5 "St. Francis House of Hospitality," Franciscan Herald, (March 1965), pp. 91-92.

September 17, 1937. Miss Day explained the purpose of the Catholic Worker Movement and gave an inspiring account of the work being carried on in New York and other large cities. She suggested that a House of Hospitality be established and that propaganda be carried out to further the workers' movement.

Eager to begin in earnest, another meeting was held September 23, 1937, at the Sacred Heart Seminary. Father C. A. Murphy, editor of the Catholic Action Bulletin, acted as the temporary chairman. Father Sebastian Erbacker, O.F.M. spoke of the need of the Catholic Worker for accurate information pertinent to the problems of labor. He also suggested the organization of a Workers' School for both men and women.[6]

Using his General Motors salary, Mr. Lou Murphy began his Samaritan work. Lou rented a small flat and either begged or bought the bare necessities to furnish this haven for the poor. Within a few weeks, the headquarters was set up at 1414 Bagley Street in a Maltese and Mexican district on the near west side. Classes were organized in parliamentary law, in economics and in labor problems.[7]

As the number of men who came to be fed increased, and his spare time became insufficient to beg food, Lou quit his job at General Motors.[8]

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[6] The Catholic Worker, Vol. V, No. 6, (October, 1937).

[7] Data for this research received from an interview with Mr. Lou Murphy on November 24, 1966.

[8] "St. Francis House of Hospitality," Franciscan Herald, (March, 1965), p. 92.

Donations did not come to him easily. Things were critical those first years and St. Francis changed its address four times, mainly because Lou Murphy could not pay the rent. There were times when the electricity was turned off--or the gas--or the water for nonpayment of bills. Trusting in Providence and begging just a little harder kept the kitchen going.

Lou Murphy was gratified when Peter Maurin and Joe Zarella arrived in Detroit on November 22, 1937. Peter's first talk was given at St. Boniface's Hall on Tuesday evening. He explained the origin and principle of the Catholic Worker in New York. He illustrated the philosophy of the movement by quoting from his delightful "Easy Essays." Round table discussions were held at the house on Bagley Street where Peter Maurin and Joe Zarella clarified points which had caused confusion.[9]

One great financial nugget came through in the early years. The father of a Seminarian, now Maryknoller, Father Hessler, who learned of Lou Murphy's charitable work, donated a fifteen-acre farm near Ann Arbor, about thirty-five miles from Detroit. St. Benedict's farm has greatly eased the food problem by providing some for the soup kitchen.[10]

As the spirit of charity is radiated, friends once helped by Lou Murphy became his staunch supporters. Others, men from the lines, pitched in to ease the burden at St. Francis House, the soup line and the farm.

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[9] The Catholic Worker, Vol. 5, No. 9, (December, 1937).

[10] John Francis, "Samaritan of the Soup Kitchen," The Catholic Layman, (April, 1963), p. 32.

Two years after the St. Francis project, the growing need for a similar house for women became more apparent. Mr. Murphy learned that the Archdiocese had been willed a vacant house for immediate use. He secured the Archbishop's approval and established the St. Martha's House for jobless women. Some of the soup line "regulars" became the first guests. One of these women became the first director.[11]

To further aid his fellowmen, Lou Murphy visited the neighborhood bars and cheap cafes that might be a lure for jobless women. There he posted invitations to St. Martha's House, describing it and extending a sincere welcome. Soon, the administrative position needed the services of a college graduate as the project became more involved in both size and challenge. Justine L' Esperance, who was to become Mrs. Lou Murphy, filled the position.[12]

Justine L' Esperance was first introduced to the Catholic Worker Movement while she attended Marygrove College. Sister Mary had given the newspaper as an assignment. While taking a journalism course, Miss L' Esperance was asked to interview Mr. Lou Murphy about the Catholic Worker in Detroit. Her next contact with this movement was to spend a summer there as a volunteer in her sophomore year. In 1942, she became the head of St. Martha's House. From then on, the spirit of commitment made her decide that this was her life's work. However, she continued her work for the UAW-CIO, AFL and the Federal Government's War Labor Board

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[11] Ibid., p. 34.

[12] "St. Francis House of Hospitality," (March, 1965), p. 92.

as a labor economist. In 1945, the Catholic Worker became a full time job for her.[13]

Lou Murphy was still a bachelor when the second World War broke out. He left his soup kitchen for a time, to drive an ambulance with the American Field Service in France. His choice of service brought him close to the front lines, yet permitted him to retain the pacifist ideals of the Catholic Worker Movement.

In 1947, Lou and Justine were married. To them, Dorothy Day's comment, "The most significent thing about the Catholic Worker is poverty, some say. The most significent is community, others say, but the final word is love" seems to show a unity of motives. With this in mind, Catholic workers reaffirmed their service to the Skid Row set. They realized that they would never be as financially stable as their former classmates and friends.... Justine's from Marygrove and Lou's buddies from the University of Detroit.[14]

Their family of six children, too, have reaped a rich harvest from their environment. As Mr. Murphy remarked: "Many people wonder whether this kind of life is good for the children.... exposed to so much poverty."[15] It takes only the opportunity to meet them to have all doubts cleared. Sheila, 18, the oldest, attends Wayne State University. There she radiates the knowledge

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[13] Facts derived from an interview with Mrs. Lou Murphy on November 24, 1966.

[14] Mr. Murphy's interview revealed the above statements. Information is also given in: John Francis, "Samaritan of the Soup Kitchen," The Catholic Layman, (April, 1963), p. 34.

[15] John Francis, "Samaritan of the Soup Kitchen," The Catholic Layman, (April, 1963), p. 37.

and love for her fellowman gleaned from the family circle. Smiling, red-haired, she gives no evidence of an unhappy psychological conflict. Kevin, 17, shows a seriousness, yet displays an inner peace and satisfaction. Christina and Maureen are students attending Immaculata High School. They, too, have a keen awareness of giving all and getting more in return. They have engendered an interest in the Catholic Worker but have the wonderful world of a teen ager, too. A group founded by Christina called the Young Lay Apostles, made up of high school girls, has begun to tutor and organize recreation for children in poor neighborhoods. The older children have their friends over to discuss the Catholic Worker or other ideas of current interest. It is edifying to see a total devotion to so noble a cause. Bridget is nine years old and is enrolled in Holy Trinity School. Although, too young to understand the dynamic work of her parents, she helps in the soup line on free days. Another son, Brian, was ten years old when he died of a virus infection of the brain. The Murphy family remarked that God blesses any Worker family with an abundance of graces. To show an extra love, Mr. Murphy said, one of the children gets a call from God to come home quite early in life.[16]

Since her children are grown, and since St. Martha's House is the residence of the Murphy's her job of administration is lessened. Some families still seek haven if some distress befalls them. They are most welcomed by the Murphy family. Mrs. Murphy has begun a new career to help her fellowman. She is cur-

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[16] Data secured from a taped interview on November 27, 1966.

rently enrolled in the graduate program in Education at Marygrove College. For the past two semesters, she has taught fourth grade at Franklin School in the inner city. Her primary aim in the endeavor is to secure finances for her family's college education. There is no income in the Catholic Worker. Secondly, the need of qualified teachers is great in the inner city. In this field she has the rich experience of raising a family in a similar environment of meeting the guests and their families at St. Martha's House, and of living in the inner city. Mrs. Murphy is also participating in Project Head Start. She has nothing but praise for the accomplishments and the Church's participation in it. The general Church, unfortunately, has an indifferent, sit-back-attitude which is not found in the Corktown community. The West Central Organization together with the Church is involved in an all-out effort to help preserve the homes of the inter-city people.[17]

The Murphy's, with a deep awareness of what it feels like to be a minority, understand the great drama that is traveling across the country--urban renewal versus human renewal. The human person, the individual, is forgotten in man's search for wealth and power. To the Corktown community, their homes are not the "slum area" and they are homebodies and workers.

This urban renewal has a drastic effect on the bread lines. The number of God's poor has not grown fewer. Since Skid Row is demolished, the occupants have been relocated. The lines

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[17] Information recorded above from an interview with the Murphy's on November 27, 1966. Information similar to the above topic is also found in "Relevance," Marygrove College, The Campus Reporter, (1966 Commencement Issue), pp. 52-53.

have dwindled from 500 to 200 or 300 each day.[18]

To understand the Murphy's life is to have the parable of our Lord about the daisies of the fields and the birds of the air become a reality. When asked about insurance, Mr. Murphy replies, "An easy problem. We don't have any. Not even hospitalization insurance." Divine Providence is the keyword of their happiness. The hospital care is a gift from the Bon Secours Hospital because in the early days, men from St. Francis volunteered to lend a hand around the hospital when they were called. So the Murphy's are well taken care of in the leading hospital of Detroit's wealthy suburb of Grosse Point. They are received as friends, not as charity patients. "The dental care is taken care of too. A friend mentioned to a Catholic dentist that we didn't have one. We all get regular dental care now--visit our dentist every six months," stated Mr. Murphy. Transportation is not too great a problem. Their residence is just a few blocks away from St. Francis House, and within walking distance from Holy Trinity Church and school. Mr. Murphy has a black station wagon for his work in collecting deliveries.[19]

Detroit, with its magic historic past...the great city.... the Corktown community is all part of God's plan. Detroit's culture reveals 1937 as the opening of a new vista. The Catholic Worker is the huge heart aflame with love. What did 1937 hold?

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[18] Derived from the interview of November 26, 1966.

[19] John Francis, "Samaritan of the Soup Kitchen," The Catholic Layman, (April, 1963), p. 36.

That year marked many firsts in Detroit chronology. The Black Legion, an anti-union subversive organization, made its first headquarters there; the Detroit Roman Catholic diocese was made an archbishopric with Edward A. Mooney as its first Archbishop. Detroit celebrated the centennial of Michigan's statehood; the Lone Ranger program began over the radio station WXYZ.

On the world front, 1937 presented the violence of a menacing war as Hitler repudiated German war guilt and obligations of the Versailles Treaty. On a happier tone, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth were crowned in London. The C.I.O. tried to organize an auto and steel workers union. Culturally there evolved a craze over Charlie McCarthy, candid camera, and skiing while the page boy bob was the latest hair style. The Pulitzer prize went to the Late George Apley by John P. Marquand. Best selling novels after Gone With the Wind were Northwest Passage by Kenneth Roberts, The Citadel by A. J. Cronin and Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck.[20] With the cultural past and its advanced industrial development, Detroit was a fruitful vineyard. And the words of St. Francis become a reality for the Murphys as they were for the Poverello centuries ago: "that which was bitter was turned into sweetness....."[21]

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[20] Detroit In Its World Setting, (Detroit, 1953).

[21] "Paradox of Poverty," (March, 1965), inside cover.

CHAPTER III

WORKS OF MERCY AND VOLUNTARY POVERTY - GUIDELINES OF THE MURPHY FAMILY

The Catholic Workers say, as the first Christians would say: "Here are the hungry and homeless, let us share our few dollars with them." These people provide sound doctrine for starving souls, but their practical love for the poor preaches more eloquently than their printed word. Their promoters, like the Murphy family of Detroit, are pioneers in this Catholic enterprise, and they have to seek precedents as far back as the first days of Christianity and the later unworldliness of St. Francis. Moreover, they have the direct encouragement of the Pope who says in Quadragesimo Anno that the best Apostles for the workers are work-folks themselves, and presumably those of whatever class who elect to live the workers' life. Catholic Movements will spread and that in every great city, where communism finds its easiest dupes, Catholics may become laboring-folk to make better known the Church's remedies for social evils, and to show that practical "compassion for the multitude" which filled the Divine Heart of their Leader."[1]

The intricate causes of poverty are deeply rooted in our history. If this poverty is to be removed or aided, sensible

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[1] Sarah S. Appleton, The Catholic Worker, Vol. 3, No. 3, Jubilee, (July, 1955), p. 32.

remedial measures must be applied to these causes. Harry Caudill in an article published in The PTA Magazine traces poverty from the primary stages of our country's development. With this information as a background it is an easy deduction to realize the necessity of formulating plans for America's needs.[2]

From the days of the Revolution, the frontier advanced at a very rapid speed across the Continent all the way to the Pacific Coast. Even the great sage, Thomas Jefferson, could not foresee the subjugation of the frontier. He anticipated and speculated that this development would require five hundred years; it took only a little more than three quarters of a century. The nation opened its doors to the ambitious and the downtrodden of the world and invited them to join in the opening of the new Continent. A rolling tide of humanity on the outermost fringes of the advancing civilization constituted the cutting edge of the westward-moving scythe. These included the backwoodsmen, the hunters and the wanderers.

Behind this tide on the "rough and tumble" border proceeded a populace of temporary farmers. They were scratch farmers without a real attachment to the land. As the frontier advanced they moved along behind it, building rude cabins, clearing forests, plowing the earth. These two human waves were thoroughly content in their rough backwoods environment.

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[2] Harry Caudill, The PTA Magazine, (June, 1946).

They produced and lived in a distinctive subculture of their own.

Fortunately, behind these waves of pioneers flowed a third: the farmers and town builders who secured the continent and began the process of transforming its raw resources into usable wealth. They commenced building the great powerhouse that is modern America.

Thus slowly the frontier vanished, life in America remained in rapid flux. The instability engendered by the constant draining of people into the western expanses, the multiplication of towns and cities, and the vast market of corn, timbers, hogs, wheat and minerals spawned a social order that seethed with energy and purposefulness. This magnificent era in American life afforded an immense challenge to all who participated in it and brought a glittering array of advantages to those lucky and adaptable enough to profit from the opportunities. A majority of the Americans emerged from the century-long scramble with a fair garner of wealth.[3]

But at every stage in the continental scramble there were frontiersmen and scratch farmers who failed to maintain their natural place in the westward movement. A scattering of people from the first two waves of humanity found themselves engulfed by the third.

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[3] For more information on this topic see: John Dos Passos, Prospects of a Golden Age, (New Jersey, 1959).

Out of tune with the dominant society and culture which rapidly coalesced about them, the borderer and his scratch-farming companion were unwilling or unable to adjust to the exigencies of commercial farming or the industrial pursuit.

This third wave, on the other hand, brought a craving for schooling, for roads, for comfortable homes, for well-organized counties and towns. These were the persons from the older states and from Europe. They were willing to organize and develop America after others had cleared the wilderness. The "fragmented subculture" found it increasingly difficult to assimilate with or attach to the much more intricate and productive culture of the all-inclusive third wave.[4]

However, when the men and women of the first two waves failed to join with alacrity the dominant culture which surrounded them, a widening void appeared between them and their more cultured friends. It was the gulf separating the book-learned and the worldly from the simple, the unlettered, and the uncouth. Tragically, as the dominant culture pulled itself up on the wealth it created, the heirs of the marooned subculture tended to fall farther behind their compatriots. The void between them widened because the home life and psychology of the subculture differed radically from those of the dominant culture. This subculture would perpetuate new poverty wherever it is transmitted until assimilation draws its adherents into the mainstream of American life.

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[4] John A. Hawgood, America's Western Frontiers, (New York, 1967), pp. 129-200.

A second factor to be considered contributing to the current impoverishment of many million Americans was also born on the frontier. The great land rush that secured and tamed the continent gave our ancestors almost unlimited natural wealth on every hand. The beautiful trees, the tough plains grasses, and the abundant wildlife had to be disposed of before men could farm or build cities. Men became profligate resource wastrels. They burnt, slashed, plowed and then proceeded on. They built, tore down and rebuilt - and in the process a continent's natural wealth was used up at a wanton pace. Vast stretches of beautiful wilderness were transformed into eroded wastelands. Mines and mills, hurriedly established, polluted streams and reparian lands. Broad areas which Nature never intended for the plow were broken. The result was wide expanses of poor, flood-lashed land. Poor land can support people but as the soil fell into decline, the inhabitants were reduced to a subsistence agriculture. With their houses weathered without paint, it was relatively easy for the cancer of poverty to eat away from the countryside into the town.[5]

The third historic factor to leave us an immense legacy of destitution was slavery. Until their emancipation, it was a crime to teach slaves to read. Since Appomattox, however, the Southern States had made only a token effort to educate the black sector of the populace, and a few constitutional amendments were aimed at providing the Negroes with a better life. While in

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[5] Ernest S. Osgood, The Day of the Cattlemen, (Minneapolis, 1929), is a good source book.

those days, (as now) American statesmen and industrialists proclaimed the virtues of self-reliant hardihood, meekness and submission were required of the percentage of people in the country with black skins. Deprived of decent schools by law and custom, forbidden to associate with society's educated elite, kept poor as a matter of ill-concealed public policy, impoverishment became all but universal among Negroes. On the land they were held to, or beneath, the standards of backwoods remnant. In the city "ghettoes" they huddled with the pauperized immigrants and those of their children for whom life held more rags than riches.

Finally, a fourth important historic source of poverty lies in the huddled millions yearning to live in free America. To the enterprising businessman, Europe and Asia were regarded as inexhaustible sources of cheap labor. When the gap between the supply of labor and the number of jobs began to widen for any reason - military conscription, westward migration, or economic boom - legions of new workers were recruited from abroad. These penniless new citizens were held to low wages by the multitudes who pressed in upon them. The classic American success story reveals the tale of an immigrant who by self-denial and endless toil reached the top. Less is heard about those of his kinsmen who clustered in slums in the beginning and never succeeded in escaping from them. Nor have sufficient gains been made to narrow the gap between the squalor of the slums and the general affluence. Today slums are demolished to make way for subsidized public housing centers, but their inhabitants have little in common with white-collar Suburbia.

Although immigrant ships no longer discharge swarms of jobseekers on Ellis Island, the quickening tempo of the Scientific Revolution spawns machines and computers far deadlier to the slumholder's job security. Thus in his asphalt jungle or within the paper-thin walls of his apartment, the uneducated or under-educated European peasant crowds in upon the displaced Negroes and upon the whites from the backwoods and increasingly competes with them for jobs of diminishing utility.[6]

So far efforts to alleviate or to abolish historic or transmitted poverty in the United States have failed primarily because they have been palliatives aimed at removing symptoms rather than curing the deeply rooted causes. We tear down old, congested, tumbledown buildings and replace them with new structures, only to find new slums sprouting elsewhere and distressingly, the public housing centers fall into decay. To get at this tap root of poverty is no easy accomplishment. To assimilate the great subculture of historic and transmitted poverty into the main body of American life has been the task of the Murphy family for the past three decades.

Re-echoing Peter Maurin's philosophy in Detroit, Lou Murphy is very much an apostle to the world today, not only to the poor. Like Peter, he is a prophet with a social message and he wants to reach the people with it. This involves the necessity of embracing voluntary poverty - to strip oneself, and so live the work of mercy. To break the dark recesses of

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[6] Maldwyn Jones, American Immigration, (Chicago, 1960), gives an excellent general survey.

ignorance and indifferentism so as to reach the man in the street the Catholic Worker must go to the street. "To reach the workers, you must begin to study a philosophy of labor, and take up manual labor, useful labor, instead of white collar work. To be the least, to be the worker, to be poor, to take the lowest place and thus be the spark which would set afire the love of men towards each other and to be God."[7] Thus, Dorothy Day, the co-founder emphasizes the paradox, for St. Thomas Aquinas said... "that a certain amount of goods are necessary to lead a good life," and we (the Catholic Workers) are always talking about voluntary poverty.[8] Karl Adams, too, states a parallel idea when he remarked that inspiring sermons are inadequate for any concrete result. Even the greater social organizations or the devoted labors of charitable societies are no longer sufficient.[9]

When then is voluntary poverty such a key note in the security-minded age in which we live? Has not the Progressive Era in American history been heralded as the attempt to eliminate the poor, make the good things of life available to all, give to all a share in the blessings of God? Pope Paul VI has also recognized the problem of the poor and engenders "Catholic Worker principles" in his Encyclical Populorum Progressio. He describes the poverty Encyclical as "a cry of anguish" on behalf of the multitudes who go to bed hungry every night. The Holy Father

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7 Dorothy Day, "The Scandal of the Works of Mercy," Commonweal, 51 (November 4, 1949), p. 99.

8 Not Without Tears, p. 217.

9 Dorothy Day, House of Hospitality, p. 73.

offers an excellent program which includes the following: The rejection of the idea that private property and free commerce are absolute rights. It said instead that help for those who lack basic needs must come first. Pope Paul also rejected unlimited capitalism as a "woeful system" that sees profit as a key to economic progress.[10] Perhaps the tempo of the Pope's poverty encyclical is reflected best by the Spanish prelate who said: "It will now be less easy to regard the faith as an easy armchair."[11]

Voluntary poverty requires a decision only if those who have a vocation to such work, who can best use their talents in such work, who can best dispense their spiritual gifts there. The important consideration, however, is this: no matter what form of apostolate one chooses, he must choose it because of his vocation. The spirit of poverty leaves man free! Lou Murphy with this freedom of spirit as his perogative, has initiated a variety of programs to alleviate the poor - in the soup line of the St. Francis House; in the migrant families who seek shelter in St. Martha's House; in the spiritual comfort derived from Marybrook Retreat House; or in the produce grown on St. Benedict's Farm in South Lyons. Those courageous souls who decide to work out their vocation in some specialized Catholic Action work which usually gives holy poverty her home among the poor and the needy are a heartening sign in this materialistic world.

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10 "What Pope Paul VI Calls For in His 'Cry of Anguish' on Poverty Problem," The National Observer, (April 3, 1967), p. 6.

11 Ibid.

They have gone the precept of poverty - spiritual detachment from possessions - one better. In accepting voluntary poverty in their apostolic life, they follow the more difficult counsel of poverty, namely, the actual giving up of all exterior and material things. Our Lord only counselled this if we were to be perfect.

The story of the rich young man indicates the clarity of voluntary poverty. When the rich young man - a good practicing Christian, asked Our Lord what he must do to be perfect, Our Lord first enumerated the commandments, which must be observed to gain eternal life. This much the young man had been doing. But if he would be perfect, Christ told him to "go sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow me."[12] We all know that the rich young man, satisfied with the minimum, with the precepts, turned and walked away. This was his privilege for the counsels are not necessary for salvation.

Nonetheless, those who accept this advice as well as the precept, those who live a life of voluntary poverty, "those who sell everything to follow Christ"[13] as did the Murphy family, are a rich example in the world today. They keep the Christian ideal of poverty alive in the world that would otherwise operate solely by material standards. In simple testimony, they remind man of a higher life to which he too can aspire. They keep the

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[12] Matthew 19: 16-22 "The Danger of Riches" New American Catholic Edition The Holy Bible, Benziger Brothers, Inc. (New York), pp. 21-22.

[13] Ibid., p. 22.

spirit of the Gospel, the dynamism of Christ's own life, vibrant in a world drifting far from original Christian principles. They call men back to a life of Christ for they hear His words: "I will arise, and will go about the city. In the streets and the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth" and indeed here is where you find Him, in the person of His poor.[14]

In times of trouble, the poor in spirit remain steady. They are not numbered among the suicides when the stock markets fall, when material structures crumble, when sacrifice is enforced by conditions of the times. Instead, they alone are the planners, the giants of peace, the leaders of new structures to replace the old. On their courage, their steadfastness, their almost stoic sense of suffering and offering, the new Christian order will be built. Like Father Zossima, in The Brothers Karamazov, the Catholic Worker is cognizant that "have in practice is a harsh and dreadful thing, compared to love in dreams. It reaches down, and like the sword of the spirit, it reaches down to the very marrow of our bones. But to receive charity and to give it, is to practice loving. We are accounted worthy to suffer for Christ in this dread struggle to learn loving."[15]

Another facet of the Catholic Worker and one of controversial opinion in this atomic era is pacifism. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Catholic Worker in Detroit, Dorothy Day was interviewed at St. Martha's House on this topic.

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[14] Dorothy Day, House of Hospitality, p. 62.

[15] Not Without Tears, p. 221.

Miss Day indicated in her answer -

> "...this whole idea of pacifism steams, of course, from man's free will, his freedom, his free love of God, and it is because we believe so absolutely that we are not going to change the ideologies of others by force.
>
> We are not going to overcome the enemy by great armies, by nuclear weapons. We are not going to be able to bring about justice by such things as guided missiles, urping out whole cities by obliteration bombing or such actions as dropping the atomic bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. These are evidences of the use of force in a gigantic way and it was never Christ's way. Christ's way was one of laying down His life for His brother and of overpowering love that overcame all hatred."[16]

A person who lived the pacifism of the Catholic Worker in the 13th century was the patron of the Catholic Worker House in Detroit - St. Francis. As he set out and faced the Sultan with peace and love in his heart while the Crusaders were using arms indicates that we must begin ourselves to radiate the peace we wish others to possess. The close unity of the works of mercy and pacifism indicate the inter-relation of Catholic Worker ideals.[17] The Christian, the follower of Christ, believes in feeding the hungry, the war philosophy believes in the scorched earth policy, starving out people by boycott or embargos. Where we believe the principal of sheltering the homeless, it destroys whole cities.[18] Dorothy Day also brings the pacifist position to a closer proximity and problem - the area of race.

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[16] Dorothy Day, "Pacifism and Personalism," Fresco-The University of Detroit Quarterly, Vol. 8, No. 1, Fall 1957, p. 26.

[17] Ibid., p. 27.

[18] Ibid., p. 29.

We believe in passive solutions to this pressing "sore" in our country. Likewise, we should be working toward the passive solution of world problems and that can be established by a tremendous increase in the works of mercy and our sense of responsibility.

Possibly, Pope Pius XI expresses the unity of voluntary poverty and pacifism when he says:

> "The crisis we are experiencing is unique in history. It is a new world that must burst out of a crucible in which many different energies are boiling. Let us thank God that He makes us live among the present problems. It is no longer permitted to anyone to be mediocre.
>
> Everyone has the imperative duty to remember that he has a mission to fulfill. That of doing the impossible each within the limits of his activity, to bring the world back to Christ. Only by having radicals of the right will Catholics have the dynamism to withstand the radicals of the left and to conquer the world for Christ."[19]

When Peter Maurin talked about the necessity of practicing the Works of Mercy, he meant both the spiritual and corporal. He envisioned houses of hospitality in poor parishes in every city of the country where these precepts of Our Lord could be put into effect. The Detroit House of Hospitality works through these channels to reach the man on the street "where Christianity itself may be a sign of contradiction."[20] The Works of Mercy are also a wonderful stimulus to the growth in faith as well

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[19] Marybrook Retreat House Brochure.

[20] Dorothy Day, "The Scandal of the Works of Mercy," Commonweal, 51, (November 4, 1949), pp. 99-102.

as in love. It is through them that the faith is taxed to the utmost and so grows through the strain upon it. Resisting the commercialism of hospitality itself in finding ways for individuals to perform acts of mercy, the Worker Movement enables the practice of the precepts of love without any difficulty.

The corporal Works of Mercy are mere "stepping stones" to the fulfillment of the spiritual works. Could Lou have done the dynamic work of "love for one's brother" with some of his Skid Row friends if their bodily needs were not tended first? Our materialistic age has a fertile field "where poverty stalks the street and the idol of Mammon disinherits millions and keeps them in permanent servitude."[21] The tithe of time and the understanding given are more than money or material gifts to the poor.

The Murphy family likes to relate instances when the House of Hospitality is remembered in later years by beneficiaries of their Works of Mercy.

> "One Christmas," he said, "We were low on funds and had no idea where the holiday meal was coming from. Then I got a letter from a former soup-line man. Hadn't heard from him for two years. Enclosed was a check for $100."[22]

> "Another time, a seminarian came to see me and tell me he owed a debt of gratitude to the kitchen. It seems that his father had a drinking problem some years before, left the family and was, for a while, a 'regular' in our soup line. Then he straightened out, got a job and returned to his family. The boy thought the helping hand from St. Francis House was a big factor."[23]

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[21] Dorothy Day, House of Hospitality, (New York, 1939), p. 73.

[22] John Francis, "Samaritan of the Soup Kitchen," The Catholic Layman, Vol.LXXVII, No. 4, (April 1963), p. 37.

[23] Ibid.

The corporal Works of Mercy with their vast expanse of possibilities for God's handiwork bring workers and scholars together. Therefore, besides helping these -

> "Outside the rain pours down in sheets but it is warm. Men stood in our coffee line this morning like dripping pedestals, but at least they were not shuddering with the cold as they have been so many mornings lately."[24]

The spiritual side is more rewarding. Lou Murphy once received a phone call from the pastor of St. Aloysius Church in downtown Detroit.

> "Father wanted to know if we had twelve men who could participate in the washing-of-the-feet ceremony. The men were very hesitant about going."
>
> "They finally agreed, so we went to Church and took our place in the pews at the proper time in the service, Father and the alter boys came to our pews, escorted us to the alter and performed the ceremony. You could tell that the men were glad they came. They left the Church with their chins a bit higher and their chests out a bit."[25]

There is no limit, no exception to Lou's redistribution of the world's goods. He has never drawn a color line at his soup kitchen, nor is the question of one's religion a barrier to aid. Each man gets as much as he wants to eat - subject to limitations only when the line is exceedingly long or the food supply short.

The men in the line know that they can depend on the generosity of Lou in life and death. "To bury the dead,"[26] is nor forgotten if death comes while they are at the Catholic

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[24] Dorothy Day, House of Hospitality, (New York, 1939), p. 236.

[25] John Francis, "Samaritan of the Soup Kitchen," The Catholic Layman, Vol. LXXVII, No. 4, (April, 1963), pp. 37-38.

[26] St. Matthew, 25:

Workers' St. Francis House. The staff will go right on helping them. The house has buried about fifty men since its establishment.

Sometimes a man is buried only as "Red" or "Charlie," because all that is known about him is his nickname. But it is always a burial with dignity - often preceded by a wake at St. Francis House. Mr. Murphy has indicated that the wakes have a profound influence on the others at the House, often leading them to devout preparation for the day when they must meet their Maker.

Lou Murphy will also notify relatives of the deceased when he knows of any. Often "men in the line" deposit personal papers in Murphy's care so he will know whom to notify at their time of death.[27]

Lou is not startled any more when relatives react to news of a death with sentiments like:

> "Thank Heaven, he's not going to be any further embarrassment to the family!"

However, Murphy admits that he was particularly upset when a relative made such a comment concerning a man who had developed into one of Lou's best aides and was serving the soup line when he fell dead.

> "How could a relative talk that way after this man died in the Christ-like role of feeding the hungry?" asks a bewildered Lou.[28]

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[27] John Francis, "Samaritan of the Soup Kitchen," The Catholic Layman, Vol. LXXVII, No. 4, (April, 1963), p. 38.

[28] Ibid.

Therefore, to meet the Murphy family is to see the two vital principles of the Catholic Worker become a dynamic force. The Works of Mercy - the pivot of the true follower of Christ is their basis to assist the men who line the streets near St. Francis House. Peter Maurin's idea which they incorporate so well was to feed the poor, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless at a personal sacrifice. Peter Maurin would say: "That means we are not going to expect things to be as we think they ought to be, the way they are at home. He said that pagans watching the charity and mutual aid between the early Christians used to say: "See how they love each other," but now he says, looking at our differences and our organizations to take over our responsibility for the poor, they say: "See how they pass the buck." What we want to do in the house is to restore the right way of looking at things and show our love by the way we live and what we do."[29]

St. Francis Worker House fulfills that need for charity and goes one step farther. They view these men as Christ's poor. He was one of them. He was a man like other men, and He chose His friends amongst the ordinary workers. As Dorothy Day says: "These men feel they have been betrayed by Christianity. Men are not Christian today. If they were, this sight would not be possible. Far dearer in the sight of God perhaps are these hungry ragged ones, than all those smug, well-fed Christians who sit in their homes."[30]

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[29] Helen Caldwell Day, Not Without Tears, (New York, 1954), p. 82.

[30] Dorothy Day, House of Hospitality, (New York, 1939), XIII.

The spirit of the Works of Mercy does not degrade one, however, the contrary is true. The poor, downcast find a new life, a ray of hope, and a renewed faith in their fellowman. Some slowly come awaked from the dredges of sin and feel themselves useful creatures of God. To refute questions of encouraging laziness and shiftlessness, Peter Maurin would say "that we must make the kind of society in which it is easier for people to be good."[31] Abbe Lugan once remarked that there are certain conditions of work, of lodging and nourishment, below which no sort of life for the spirit can be possible. The echoes of Antoine Frederic Ozanam come to mind, "Charity should never look behind but always ahead, because the numbers of her past deeds is always small, whereas the present and future miseries which she must solace are infinite,"[32] reaffirm the character of St. Francis House.

To give this aid to the needy in Detroit has been close to the heart of Mr. Murphy as it has been for Dorothy Day in New York. Her spirit in the Catholic Worker has opened the portals of the Catholic Heart for America to see the Church in a new light. The Works of Mercy are again regaining, so to speak, the dimension they held in the early Christian life. The Catholic Worker in Detroit has become a beacon wherein it has taught and then acted the "Christian Revolution" of the works of mercy, refusing to adapt to the more prudent counsels in the comfortable

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[31] Helen Caldwell Day, Not Without Tears, (New York, 1954), pp. 217-218.

[32] Dorothy Day, House of Hospitality, (New York, 1939), p. 54.

patterns of the existing order. "It has been consistently 'foolish' in the sense of St. Paul's 'foolishness'...in order to confound the wise." It was a lesson more universal than any ideology: the lesson of Christian freedom of the works of mercy, of St. Paul's foolishness.[33] To change the whole social order so that the works of mercy will be needed, everyone must first become responsible, a neighbor---that is, truly Christian. Meanwhile, the Catholic Worker labors with no divine compulsion to "convert" the down and out, to reassimilate him into the elect society from which he was alienated and largely cut off. They feel no conviction that they are "heroes" in the works of mercy, "bringing Christ to the Bowery. On the contrary, the Bowery brings Christ to them."[34] This identification of themselves with the poor and oppressed - in whom Christians have traditionally seen Christ Himself explains much of their techniques (or lack of techniques) and most of their doctrines.[35]

Thus, the charity manifested by the Catholic Worker Movement is many a step ahead of time. Toward the end of the first session of Vatican II (October 6, 1962), Giacomo Cardinal Lercano, Archbishop of Bologna, asked that care and the evangelization of the poor be a permanent dimension of all the conciliar efforts:

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[33] "Catholic Worker," Commonweal, LVIII (May 1, 1953), p. 89.

[34] Ed Willock, Catholic Radicalism, 58, (October 2, 1953), p. 631.

[35] Ibid., p. 632.

> "We shall not satisfy our task nor respond to the inspiration of God and the expectation of men if we do not make the Mystery of Christ in the poor and the evangelization the center and the soul of the doctrine and legislative work of the Council."[36]

This mark or attribute has long been the task of Mr. Murphy in St. Francis Home.

The second integral factor in the life of a Catholic Worker is voluntary poverty. This spirit does not scorn anything, nor does it cast anything aside with disgust. It is an interior liberty. It is the disposition of will which does not monopolize for itself the goods given by God to men. It is a detachment of heart. For years the Murphys have experienced that poverty liberates vision, eyes are then opened when the cares of ownership do not press upon them. Poverty liberates their heart: the poor can love everything; their heart is not attached. Poverty liberates courage: the poor have all their strength available; they can hurl it forward. Following in their Master's footsteps, the Catholic Worker recreates the words of the Prophet Isaiah:

> "The spirit of the Lord...has sent me to take the good news to the poor, to announce deliverance to the captives and the restoration of sight to the blind, to give liberty to the oppressed."[37]

Truly the spirit of the patron of St. Francis House makes Mr. Murphy another Poverello - one with a heart inflamed who will seek and love poverty in the Skid Row bum; who will trod daily

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[36] Most Reverend Leon Arthur Elchinger, A Challenge to the Church, (The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1965), p. 67.

[37] Luke 4:18.

with his fellow Catholic Workers and lead them to a better day.

John Kenny sums up the movement in Detroit when he writes:

> "He and his family have remained deep in the shadows of the movement in this city... That, too, is part of the "Crazy Idealism" that forces him to work and live with the derelicts. He sees their soul shinning through their grime and rags."[38]

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[38] John Kenny, "$2 and 20 Years Make Murphys 'Crazy' For Christ and His Poor," The Michigan Catholic, 1957.

CHAPTER IV

THE GROWING STRUCTURE OF THE DETROIT WORKER
THIRTY YEARS OF SERVICE

It was an historic day thirty years ago for the Church in Detroit - for through the Catholic Worker a vast amount of untapped energy was released. Over the years, some of this energy was undoubtedly misdirected to utopian causes and half-baked schemes for remaking the world. However, this sort of thing is inevitable when youthful idealism is engaged, as it has been at the Catholic Worker. The Detroit Worker which has existed for over a quarter of a century without rules, regulations, memberships, committees or endowments and has studiously rejected the techniques of organization and the counsels of worldly caution, has lasted longer than most soberly-conceived undertakings which were begun at the same time. In any real accounting, it must be shown as a model of efficiency and genuine prudence. It set out to get people talking and thinking about the things that really matter. It set out to recover the evangelical spirit of St. Francis and bear witness to the simplicities of the Gospel in the modern world.

The purpose of this chapter is to portray the growth of the Detroit Catholic Worker in chronological sequence. With this in mind, the continuous growth and diversified activities become apparent. Frank Wojcik in his letter of January 4, 1967, writes that "a person's distinct personality reflects or colors any endeavor or involvement" - through Lou Murphy and his family, the charity and simplicity of their "House Patron" St. Francis are outstanding characteristics.[1] In fact, The Catholic Worker paper of May, 1938 heralded the Detroit House as the "Model of Hospitality."[2] Ammon A. Hennacy is of the same opinion for he says: "The kindly atmosphere of the Catholic Worker House here (Detroit) and the cheerfulness of Lou and Justine Murphy and their happy children is outstanding."[3]

The roots of the Catholic Worker charity in Detroit showed evidence as early as May, 1937. "May Day in Detroit" was the first introduction for The Catholic Worker paper. One hundred fifty men gathered in the city's Times' Square to commemorate and augment the "solidarity" of labor. A squad of six youths headed by a stalwart Encyclopedist named Flannery,[4] handed out copies of The Catholic Worker, The Catholic Action

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[1] Frank Wojcik, "Letter," (January 4, 1967).

[2] The Catholic Worker, "Day After Day," Vol. VI, No. 1, (May, 1938), p. 2.

[3] Ammon A. Hennacy, "Notes Along the Way," The Catholic Worker, (December, 1952), Vol. XVIII, No. 16, p. 8.

[4] Flannery was at one time a policeman in Detroit; on this occasion he was retired.

Bulletin, leaflets on Spain, and other materials. This group was sent by Rev. Clare A. Murphy, director of Diocesan study clubs and culture circles in Detroit. "It was notable that of the six hundred pieces of literature distributed scarcely any were to be found after the meeting closed. Many were seen largely reading or folding their copy for later reference. A good afternoon's work was done for 'counter revolution'".[5]

The May issue of The Catholic Worker indicates that the influence of Dorothy Day's and Peter Maurin's philosophy had already infiltrated into the minds of questioning individuals. The letter indicates some of the sentiments of Leo J. Sys:

Detroit

Dear Editor:

I have been receiving your paper for a few months and find much good in it. What appeals most to me is that you are just a step broader minded than the Catholic Church papers which are all such upholders of our capitalistic systems.

Here in Detroit in the last sit-down strike the sitdowners were denounced vehemently by our three local papers, all good friends of the old system. Your article was good in quoting that old Roman Law, which our lawyers use, was all different from the Christian Law which held different viewpoints on private property, vis., the social side of it. And then should not human rights prevail above the property rights?[6]

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[5] The Catholic Worker, "May Day in Detroit," Vol. V, No. 2, (June, 1937), p. 5.

[6] For detailed reports - The Catholic Worker, "C.W. Editor calls on G. M. Strikers in Plant at Flint," "New Association for Catholics in Labor Movement," (Marcy, 1937), Vol. IV, No. 11, pp. 1-4.

> I also liked some of your articles on the Civil War in Spain. As a workingman, I naturally side with the Leftist or Loyalist Government in Spain. I believe in rule by the ballot, not by bullets as Franco and the Fascists, and am sorry to say, the leaders of the Catholic Church do. By the way, I attended the Rally given here in November in Cass Technical High School for the Spanish Democracy. I heard Madame De Palencio, Marceline Dominge and Father Sarasola speak. The latter is a genuine Basque priest but has been persecuted by the Hierarchy, who wanted him to side with the nobility or wealthy Spanish landholders. Father Sarasola laid great stress on this: that the Spanish War was one between Fascism and Democracy, not Communists who were still by far in the minority.[7] Of course talking of numbers, it is not always numbers that rule, witness the latest G.M. Strike in Flint. The C.I.O. or United Auto Workers were by far in the minority, but they were the most intelligent, the most well-organized, the strongest in purpose. In fact, it was the one group that Governor Murphy (that fine gentleman, our Governor) would deal with, and believe me he knows his onions, and he is no radical either, although he is very broad minded.[8]

Leo J. Sys' letter indicates the wide range of material in the newspaper but simultaneously infers an embryonic stage of the Catholic Worker development in Detroit.

In October, the St. Francis House was officially opened. Lou Murphy's thoughts on that eleventh day can be summed up as follows:

> "We need more voluntary poverty of the kind chosen by Christ and His closest friends, less expensive churches, and more beautiful temples of the Holy Ghost, more holy mendicants and "fools of God" like St. Francis, and fewer or no "barons of high finance"... If a true soul reform does not set in, a radical change in the

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[7] A discussion on the Spanish situation can be found in Stephen Johnson, The Catholic Worker, "A Protest and an Answer on Spain," (February, 1937), Vol. IV, No. 10, p. 6.

[8] The Catholic Worker, "Letters From our Leaders," Vol. V, No. 1, (May, 1937), p. 5.

attitude of the human minds, Bolshivism may triumph and force abject poverty upon us."[9]

Dorothy Day's presence in Detroit, no doubt, opened new channels of interest for the newly established House of Hospitality. Her conference with Archbishop Mooney on the Catholic Worker Movement and the C.I.O. solidified the approval of the organization. Miss Day's speeches on the radio - once on the C.I.O. Hour and on the Daughters of Isabella Catholic Hour - reaffirmed the Archbishop of Detroit's stand on the C.I.O. which states:

> "No Catholic authority has ever asserted that the C.I.O. is incompatible with catholicity on the basis of its publicly stated principles."[10]

The speeches also increased the popularity of the Catholic Worker group because on one occasion there was an enthusiastic response of the two or three hundred persons who heard Miss Day. Those who attended were a cross section of all professions, skilled and unskilled workers.[11]

An interview with Governor Frank Murphy completed the activities of Dorothy Day in Michigan. Her corporal Work of Mercy of visiting the sick governor combined business with pleasure. A friend of the Catholic Worker, Governor Murphy

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[9] The Catholic Worker, January, 1937, Vol. IV, No. 9, p. 7. "A reader sends us this quotation from the Christian Family, a monthly published by the Fathers of the Divine Word, and asks us to reprint it.

[10] "Catholics Favor C.I.O." (clipped article received from Wayne State University Library.)

[11] The Catholic Worker, "Day By Day," Vol. V, No. 6, p. 2, (October, 1937).

discussed the conscientious objectors in Boundbrook, New Jersey. Miss Day quotes him as saying:

> "Machine guns are always the last refuge of the undisciplined, important officials in time of crisis. Patience and tolerance invariably demand more exhibitions of weakness, which go by the name of 'action'. Force never settled industrial disputes. And I do not believe that the use of force can settle international disputes."[12]

With the support of the Governor, Frank Murphy, and Archbishop Mooney, the initial stages of the Catholic Worker were well fortified. By November, 1937, a request published in The Catholic Worker indicated that five hundred copies of the newspaper should be sent to:

Helen Storen
1414 Bagley
Detroit, Michigan

An order of fifty back issues of the October copy were to be forwarded to:

Helen Storen
c/o Hamtramck R of R
2401 Howitt
Hamtramck, Michigan[13]

Joseph Zarella visited Detroit for several days and used his time and energy to seek followers from the High School set. The enthusiastic youngsters bombarded him with questions, and promised support for the Catholic Worker ideal and the Pax

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[12] The Catholic Worker, "Interview of Dorothy Day with Governor Frank Murphy of Michigan," Vol. V, No. 6, (October, 1937), p. 1. Governor Murphy wrote an acknowledgment of thanks to Miss Day. The Catholic Worker, Vol. V, No. 7, p. 2

[13] The Catholic Worker, "Letters From Our Readers," Vol. 5, No. 6, (November, 1937), p. 3.

Movement. Mr. Zarella was impressed to see the number of students who study the paper regularly and have volunteered to distribute it at the churches.

Following the counsels of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, regular activities commenced. Classes in economics, encyclicals and parliamentary law were given. Two Saturday classes for children in "story telling" and dramatics were also on the agenda. As to St. Francis House, the number of men is up to twenty-five since three months of service. Food and clothing were distributed but an all out effort was desired to secure more overcoats and men's underwear. As to the newspaper - "It was a big red letter day for our group when the first Catholic Worker was sold on the streets of Detroit. In the future, they would be sold regularly, and distributed free at Communist meetings, union halls and clubs."[14]

Letters of appreciation printed in The Catholic Worker from Michigan indicated that the "Apostolic Itch" for God's poor was felt. A few examples proving these sentiments:

Monroe, Michigan
December 3, 1937

Dear Miss Editor:

Enclosed you will find a little offering from our C.S.M.C. Unit to provide a cup of coffee for a few of the "Ambassadors of Christ."

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[14] The Catholic Worker, "Detroit," Vol. V, No. 9, (January, 1938), p. 6.

Perhaps because of our long silence you think we are no longer enthusiastic about your fine work. But let us assure you, we are! We have been so busy with our missionary activities that we have hardly had time to write.

You will be interested to know that some of our students visited your "House of Hospitality" on Bagley Avenue in Detroit, and found your work most interesting. While there they had the privilege of meeting Peter Maurin, who was in Detroit at the time. We intend to make the Catholic Worker the object of our activities.

Our small Catholic Action Club, which we organized in May of last year has become a school organization. All the girls are greatly enthused over it.

Incidently, I am the sister of Donald Hessler, whom you no doubt recall, as having made frequent visits with his camera to your headquarters at 115 Mott Street.

Sister Mary Veronica sends her best wishes. She had the pleasure of meeting Dorothy Day at the C.S.M.C. Convention in August.

We assure you of a continued remembrance in our prayers for the success of your splendid work for God's poor.

Very sincerely yours,
Mary E. Hessler[15]

Similarly, this letter also contains the same elation over doing God's work.

Annunciation High School
Detroit, Michigan

Dear Editor:

We are most grateful to you for your prompt and generous response to our request for sample

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[15] The Catholic Worker, "Letters From A Detroit Friend," Vol. V, No. 9, (January, 1938), p. 5.

copies of The Catholic Worker. Our Lay Apostolate Committee of the High School Sodality introduced the paper to the Sodalists of the November meeting. The three hundred copies were distributed and the students were urged to pass their copies on to the adult members of their families. We are glad to report a few subscriptions and hope to have more - perhaps after the holiday season.

Our committee is (a group of tenth grade boys and girls) interested on the Michigan Catholic reporting of the opening of a House of Hospitality here in Detroit. They have sent a supply of coffee and a small donation as a Thanksgiving offering. All are pledged to pray for the Catholic Worker and its staff.

I am a ninth and tenth grade teacher and have been interested in the Catholic Worker for some time. Having been placed in charge of the Lay Apostolate Committee of the High School Sodality, I felt that an opportunity was thus offered of introducing the movement to the boys and girls and through them to the older members of their families.

The activities, interests and enthusiasm of High School students are almost endless and one of the duties of the teacher is to guide and direct them. The C.W. Movement seems to offer an avenue - I should say a mountain path; steep and difficult, no doubt, - leading away from the merely trivial, temporary, and selfish. How many of the pupils will attempt the way remains to be seen. May God give His grace to those that do.

I more than welcomed the suggestion of having Mr. Joseph Zarella explain the movement to a group of our students. Joe gave them a splendid account of the work. The main result of Joe's talks at present (I hope for deep, lasting results through His Grace) is that our committee have changed their idea of getting subscriptions to that of distributing the paper. We are sure that we can take care of a hundred a month to begin with.

I shall continue to pray and have the children pray for the success of your efforts and those of your co-workers.

Cordially yours in Christ,
Sr. M.C.[16]

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[16] The Catholic Worker, "Sister Writes," (January, 1938), Vol. V, No. 9, p. 5.

This letter also emphasizes that the spirit and philosophy of the Worker have come to welcomed listeners.

Dear Editor:

> This month we successfully disposed of one hundred of your splendid little paper which I call, "David's Sling" and we now feel sufficiently bold to attempt the sale of four hundred copies for March. The idea of spreading Catholic propaganda among industrial workers in this parish alone, has been of slow growth; but I do believe that the idea has "caught on" at last.
>
> And we have not forgotten your hospitality House on Bagley Street. The C.S.M.C. unit has ordered one hundred pounds of rice, one hundred pounds of barley, one hundred pounds of beans, one bushel of potatoes and one bushel of onions to be sent to Mr. Lynch to make soup for his "Brothers Christophers." We shall also send Catholic Literature in a few weeks.
>
> Very sincerely yours in
> Our Immaculate Mother
>
> Sister Mary Noreen, S.D.[17]

With letters such as these as well as many others that remained unpublished, the Detroit Worker advanced further in the cause for the poor. The early part of 1938 saw the Detroit Worker House feeding about one hundred sixty men bread and soup. Several thousand papers were also distributed. Father Furfey[18] addressed a group of Catholic Workers on his new book, "Three Theories of Society." Other activities mentioned in the Catholic

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[17] The Catholic Worker, "From Detroit," (April, 1938), Vol. V, No. 12, p. 5.

[18] Matthew Hoehn, O.S.B. ed., Catholic Authors Contemporary Biographical Sketches 1930-1947, (St. Mary's Abbey, Newark, 1948), pp. 254-255. One of the leading Catholic sociologists of the U.S., Rev. Paul Hanly Furfey, has been professor of sociology at the Catholic University of America and head of the department

Worker may be summed up as: The Catholic Worker was given out at a Ford Fiesta where 1,000 Union men were arrested. The beaten up organizer was visited by two priests. Dan Foley spoke for the group over the United Auto Workers Radio Station. A Workers' School was promised.[19]

Mary Grace Donnelly, the Secretary of the Catholic Worker group in Detroit submitted the following to be published in the March issue:

February 26, 1938

The Honorable Frank Hague
Jersey City, New Jersey

Sir:

The following expression of opinion was unanimously endorsed by the Catholic Worker Group of Detroit, and at the direction of the Group, I forward it to you.

The Catholic Worker Group of Detroit condemns the administrative policies of Mayor Hague, of Jersey City, New Jersey, particularly in regard to the treatment of the C.I.O. Unions in that city.

1. Because such treatment is un-American. It denies the Constitutional rights of the working man.

2. Because it is un-Catholic. The Pope has pointed out the duty as well as the right of the working man to organize.

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since 1940. He is interested in "personalistic social action" as exemplified by the Catholic Worker Movement. Dr. Furfey is on the faculty of the National Catholic School of Social Service as well as Catholic University. He is former vice-president of the American Catholic Sociological Society, and is a member of the Catholic Biblical Association and of various committees. He was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

19 The Catholic Worker, "Catholic Worker Cells," (February, 1938), Vol. V, No. 10, p. 4.

3. It abets Communism. The suspension of the constitutional rights of the citizens of Jersey City is construed as a failure of the democratic form of government.

Yours in Christ,
Mary Grace Donnelly[20]

Though just a few months in existence, the Worker Group through the dynamic leadership of Lou Murphy sought ways to cure the evils of the world. The New Jersey letter was only one of the myriad ways the Worker used to assist the working man. They participated in the United Auto Workers unemployment march to the City Hall. Dun Scotus Seminary made posters on the C.I.O. and U.A.W. for the "stout-hearted" men to carry, along with The Catholic Worker to give away during the parade. By March, Lou Murphy's soup line increased to five hundred. The meetings and classes in liturgy, economics, public speaking and children's classes made the rooms available scanty. The poor, always more conscious of their obligation than those more comfortably off, had recourse in prayer. A Holy Hour, once a month, was conducted at St. Leo's Church. The Compline was recited together at the Catholic Worker House from March 18-20 at ten thirty for the indicated intention.

Besides the basic work, Lou Murphy and his "Skid Row Set" engaged in activities to improve the working man. They solicited the various strike headquarters to investigate what aid could be given and used the opportunity in further spreading The Catholic

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[20] The Catholic Worker, "Detroit", (March, 1938), Vol. V, No. 11, p. 8. For greater insight into the policies of Mayor Hague - The Catholic Worker, "Can Hague Be Stopped". Open letter to the People of Jersey City, (January, 1938), Vol. V, No. 9, p. 1.

Worker especially at radical meetings. Mimeographed sheets and pamphlets were also distributed as they felt akin to the fellow sufferers in this disordered world. On the lighter side, the history of St. Francis House showed great confidence in their patron, as the Poverello was "always seeing to it that we get what is necessary. One fine day our wash boiler, which served as our soup pot, sprang a leak, and almost immediately came a donation of a mammoth kettle - much better than the boiler."[21]

Dorothy Day, in her column "Day by Day" perhaps best lends an insight into the activities and persons who color the story of St. Francis House. On her visit there in April, 1938, the lines had increased to more than six hundred men daily and the "crew" also consisted of many new faces. Pat Lynch, painter; Jack Kenny, brewery worker and crane operator; Bruce Hosmer, baker; Louis Skufer, siding applicator and Richard Herbert, sailor, were all unemployed yet "putting in a good day's work taking care of the crowds that come to the House."[22] (Lou Murphy was at this time still working for Ford but he lived at the Worker House.)

Dorothy Day was amazed at the courtesy shown and gave recognition with the title - "Detroit Catholic Worker-Model of Hospitality".[23] She remarked, "It was their idea to have the pitchers of water and glasses at every place and the small

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[21] The Catholic Worker, "Detroit", (April, 1938), Vol. V, No. 12, p. 7.

[22] Dorothy Day, The Catholic Worker, "Day by Day, (May, 1938), Vol. VI, No. 1, pp. 1-4.

[23] Ibid., p. 1.

courtesy touched me. In the center of the table stands a statue of St. Anthony[24] with a vigil light burning before it. They are a fine lot of men doing the work and a fine lot being served, the men who have built up the country and now find themselves without employment and homeless, forced to live in missions. There is no Catholic Hospice for them. If there were only some vacant buildings turned over to them, they could easily run it themselves, and far more affectionately as a cooperative venture and then the mission atmosphere would be missing."[25]

Miss Day also commented on the various activities which radiated from the Worker House. There was a Workers' School conducted on the East side every night and plans were formulated for one on the West side. A new endeavor was a Priests' Class in Social Action headed by Father Erbacker, the Franciscan at Duns Scotus who is the chaplain of the Catholic Worker Group. In many parishes, Christian Associations of Workers were formed, according to the Pope's ideas[26] set up side by side with neutral unions which the workers must of obligation to their fellows, join.

Because of the House of Hospitality's position in a

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[24] On my visit to the Worker House, the same statue still stands and the same hospitality described prevails.

[25] Dorothy Day, The Catholic Worker, "Day by Day", (May, 1938), Vol. VI, No. 1, pp. 1-4.

[26] Rerum Novarum, 42, 43. This encyclical declared most appropriately that "these workingmen's associations should be so organized and governed as to furnish the best and most suitable means for attaining what is aimed at, that is to say, for helping each member to better his condition to the utmost in body, soul and property." For "the foundations of social laws being thus laid in religion, it is not hard to establish the relation of members one to another, in order that they may live together in concord and achieve prosperity."

"core area", the soup line was not the only activity of Lou Murphy. All afternoon women from the neighborhood come in for bread and clothes and it is seldom that they went away without something.

Perhaps Miss Day summarizes the spirit of St. Francis House best when she wrote: "When I am visiting a new place, I am immediately at home when I set foot in the door. The same spirit, the same comradeliness, the same idea of giving, rather than getting,"[27] prevailed at St. Francis House. Peter Maurin experienced the same sentiments when he met Lou Murphy and the crew. Peter Maurin, together with Father Carl Hensler and Father Charles O. Rice, Pittsburg priests who founded the Catholic Radical Alliance, and who have marched with strikers in several picket lines; and Father Frank McGvey, founder of Mt. St. Francis co-operative agricultural community at King City, Onterio, were speakers at a conference sponsored by the Detroit Catholic Worker Group. The conference opened Saturday at 9:00 A.M. in St. Vincent's Roman Catholic Church with a dialogue Mass. Business sessions were held in the St. Francis Worker House at 10:00, 1:30, and 7:30 P.M. Mr. Maurin, Father Sebastian Erbacker, O.F.M., and Dom Godfrey, O.S.B., assistant editor of "Orate Fratres" were speakers. Baroness Catherine de Hueck,[28] who is

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[27] The Catholic Worker, "Day by Day," (May, 1938), Vol. VI, No. 1, pp. 1-4.

[28] She is author of: Dear Bishop, (New York, 1947); Dear Seminarian, (Milwaukee, 1950); Friendship House, (New York, 1946). Her biography is written by Edward Joseph Doherty, Tumbleweed, (Milwaukee, 1948).

working among the Negroes in Harlem, spoke Sunday at 10:00 A.M. in Sacred Heart Church. Afternoon sessions were held on the Catholic Worker Communal farm on Milford Road near Seven Mile Road. Father McGvey and Thomas Barry, editor of "The Sower" spoke on Catholic rural life movement. Sessions on Monday at 1:00 and 6:00 P.M. had Fathers Hensler and Rice, and Richard Deverall, co-editor of "The Christian Front."[29]

January 1939 marked a vital period in the labor issue. Questions of wages, hours, collective bargaining and the modern production system were discussed from the Catholic viewpoint during sessions of the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems held January 16 and 17 at the Detroit-Leland Hotel. This conference was sponsored by Archbishop Edward Mooney and the social action department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. The main objective was "to expose the facts in the American industrial situation, and to apply to those facts the principles expressed in the two great church manifestos Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno."[30] Speakers represented both employers and employees and presented issues in the modern industrial problems. Church authorities followed with the application of Catholic principles to specific questions. The entire conference contained suggestions similar to many of the Worker tendencies -

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[29] Detroit News, "Catholic Workers' Group Sponsors Conference Here," (September 1, 1938). (Clipped article from Wayne State University)

[30] Detroit News, "Church to Air Labor Issue," (January, 1939). Further details are given in - Detroit News, "Communistic Danger Cited," (January 16, 1939).

"to make Catholic membership into labor unions an organized force for sound unionism in the Christian spirit"; urged priests to set themselves energetically to help their Christian workers train themselves in principle and technic to assume the leadership in the unions which their numbers justify"; and "to shift the good from the bad in labor proposals, and to be the defenders of sound, constructive union activity against the inroads of communistic agitation."[31]

Lou Murphy, too, was attaining "gains" in the development of the Catholic Worker in Detroit. Bagley Avenue became the new home of the Worker. It was an old duplex house containing nine rooms which provided sleeping quarters on the second floor. Bagley house could accomodate thirteen men. Lou's dream, which never fruitified, was the acquisition of the adjacent house to provide accomodations for women.

The program of activities expanded, so that it consisted of:

Tuesday	-	Parliamentary law
Wednesday	-	Open house for men of the lines
Thursday	-	General meeting-Father Sebastian is beginning a series of lectures on Stanley James' new book - Christ and the Workers.
Friday afternoon	-	Children's classes
Friday	-	Liturgy and Chant
Saturday afternoon	-	Children's classes
Every second Sunday	-	Holy Hour at St. Aloysius Church where Father Hickey is the Pastor.[32]

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[31] Detroit News, "Unions Get Approval of Mooney," (January 18, 1939).

[32] The Catholic Worker, "Detroit," (January, 1939), Vol. VI, No. 7, p. 6.

Another first was a Hallowe'en Party for the "Ambassadors" and about one hundred thirty came. The Open House situation paved the way for the success as Lou was able "to get a more personal contact with the men."[33] They were given the opportunity to read a great deal of Catholic literature, sing, smoke and play cards. "They enjoy it so much," Lou remarked, "that they furnish the entertainment. Some of them are very talented."[34] Despite the apparent success, Mr. Murphy was faced with lack of funds. As Lou wrote to Miss Day,

> "This may sound like we are in the dough but honestly Dorothy, there have been times when we had to go without meals and it wasn't so very long ago. It surprises us how we have been able to continue when we didn't see more than two dollars a week. Some of the fellows threatened to go out and hock their suits but I wouldn't let them. By the way, a man in the line gave us three cents."[35]

Another new phase of Catholic Worker's interest was conscription. In the November issue of the Catholic Worker, Lou Murphy praised Miss Day's presentation of the war situation and conscription. He also stated his concern - "It no doubt will require a great sacrifice for us to maintain our position, but with God's help I am sure that we can. As a step in this direction we are trying to indoctrinate our fellow Catholics in the position we are to take if the conflict should spread to

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

this country."[36] To bring to focus this problem, Lou had Father Leon Kennedy of the Philosophy Department of Sacred Heart Seminary speak to the group on "The Church and War."[37]

To aid the men spiritually as well as materially, the Third Order of St. Francis of Duns Scotus College held a Day of Recollection with Father Sebastian Erbacker, O.F.M. on October 14, 1939. Twenty men from St. Francis House rode out there to make it. On October 1 a retreat was conducted for the colored brothers at St. Benedict Farm. Father Clement Kern, the spiritual director, was the Retreat Master. The men were impressed and requested retreat in the future. St. Benedict's Farm served as an ideal location for endeavors of this nature.

Again the St. Francis House was sown in new soil. (This being the fifth time in less than two years) Since moving was a constant undertaking, Mr. Murphy remarked, "Someone suggested we move in a trailer and save banging the furniture. Is there any Catholic Worker on wheels? I will say we have become quite proficient in the art of moving and I don't mean jumping rent."[38] There were times when eviction notices were served but the needed money always turned up at the last minute. The new abode, however, rendered many advantages because it had a full basement. Wall divisions were made which produced a Laundry Department, a

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[36] The Catholic Worker, "Detroit," (November, 1939), Vol. VIII, No. 3, p. 6.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

Tailoring Department, a Maintenance Department and a Vegetable Department. "The biggest selling point of the new place," Mr. Murphy contended, "is the fact that we can establish Nazareth Workshop for we have a barn in the rear of the lot."[39] Lou planned a repair shop for the broken furniture that was donated. With this assistance, poor families in the neighborhood received the refinished pieces. Shoes for the members of St. Francis House as well as the soup line were mended. But most important of all the advantages mentioned, was the opportunity the twenty-seven men were given to use their God-given talents, and it taught them that no matter how little they possessed, charity was still possible.

With the donation of land in South Lyons, Michigan, Lou Murphy turned his energies to the earth. The words of St. Benedict, the Patron of the Farm, formulated the way of life of the farming commune for he says: "Then are they monks in truth if they live by the work of their hands, as did also our forefathers and the Apostles."[40] To Lou, the farm was a place of rest to seek the closeness to God he so desired away from the turmoil of the city. Spiritual reading, and a time to take stock of things to see what path was his were always on the agenda.

The farm work brought Lou much joy for each harvest brought a supply of food to serve God's unfortunate. The initial

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[39] Ibid.

[40] St. Benedict, Holy Rule, Chapter 48.

stages were ones where muscle power was needed as the land was unused for fifteen years. The donation of Jersey cows increased the milk supply for the needy children in St. Martha's House as well as the men of St. Francis House. Cottage cheese and butter making also produced a more varied menu.

A humorous incident that took place on the farm was the slaughter of a pig. Lou describes it best in a newsletter which states:

> "Tuesday we killed one of our pigs which we had raised. All of us were amateurs and for an onlooker it would have presented an amusing sight. There were five of us at the killing, each of us with a knife in our hand, and blood in our eye. Personally, I think the pig died more of fright than a cut throat. It must have been funny to see me holding the pig by the tail with one hand and holding the "Guv'ment" book in the other, peering through the stream and reading the instructions like an Economics Professor."[41]

The lard and meat were worth the struggle but Lou found it hard to realize that they had reached the stage of producing their own meat from the Lyons farm. He once said, "Certainly God had been good to us and I am wondering if we are doing as much for Him as He is doing for us. We are trying our best but He simply can't be outdone in generosity."[42]

On one of these trips for produce, a "dude side-swiped"[43] them and wrecked the car. Mary's protection was theirs as the rosary was being recited and all passengers were unharmed. This

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[41] The Catholic Worker, (February 1940), Vol. VII, No. 6, p. 8.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

loss presented a real handicap for the fellows in the city as no way was possible to pick up the bread and other donations to be used in the soup line. During this distressing period, a driver from one of the restaurants that donates food generously gave part of his lunch hour to deliver the food. As a gesture of gratitude the men decided on a token of appreciation. One of the workers was a tooler of leather and with leather created a beautiful belt and used his talents to praise God.

To sum up the farming commune in South Lyons, Marie Conti in her Catholic Worker article states that "Isn't it queer that our generation had to re-discover these basic things that other people have always taken for granted - the joy of dealing with God's creatures, the homely animals that He chose for witnesses to His birth, the thrill of eating food grown and prepared yourself. When our farming commune becomes a self-dependant community of families living close to God and close to realities, we will have our Shangri-La in spite of war and rumors of war."[44]

The St. Benedict Farm provided the perfect atmosphere to inculcate the philosophy of the Catholic Worker that man is not a machine and the tyrant machine is to be conquered if humanity is to be saved. Christopher Dawson in "Judgement of Nations" reiterates the crass materialism of this day and age. Farming communes and christian communities where the communal and private aspects of property can be restored are in harmony with

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[44] The Catholic Worker, (February 1941), Vol. VIII, No. 4, p. 5.

the teachings of Pope Leo XIII who said: "Private ownership as we have seen, is the natural right of man and to exercise that right, especially as members of society is not only lawful, but absolutely necessary. Man should not consider his possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need. Whoever has received from the Divine bounty a large share of temporal blessings whether they be external and material, or gifts of the mind, has received them for the purpose of using them for the perfecting of his nature and at the same time, that he may employ them as steward of God's Providence for the benefit of others."[45]

Sharing the fruits of the earth with the men on St. Benedict Farm was evidenced in the donation of the Newman Club of Wayne University to the seed fund. The friars at Duns Scotus College gave tomato plants. On a larger scale, an unusual donation was made in the form of building materials of an old bank building---bullet proof glass, marble and grill work.

New homes with new vistas of charity saw their origin on March 28 with the opening of St. Anthony House at 1323 Trumbull Avenue. It was used by the children for Catechism classes. On Saturday afternoons, woodcraft classes were scheduled there. A lending library for the people in the neighborhood was initiated. Sewing classes were held every Wednesday at one o'clock. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday, Jack Fletcher conducted softball

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[45] Rerum Novarum.

games for the boys in the neighborhood. St. Anthony House was their "Club House" and Holy Trinity playground was their "ball park." This history of this new house is related best in the words of Lou Murphy..."We were able to get out of debt, which is a most unhealthy state for the Catholic Worker and then we got a call from the Chancery Building. We went down to see what was up, and Father John Donovan, the Archbishop's secretary, gave us fifty dollars which the Archbishop told him to give us. We could think of nothing better to do with this money than to start a new house. The rent on the new house is twenty-five dollars. I don't know how we will be able to maintain this place, but we will trust in God, and if He doesn't want us to have this place, He will soon let us know."[46]

Another foundation was made at 630 Abbot Street for Old Age Pensioners. This Cure of Ars Home provided shelter for fifteen men. Father Kern was influential in procuring the materials to make the place habitable and securing the necessary money. The men from St. Francis House assisted with some of the labor involved. During the period of repair, Father Kern had meetings in the rectory to discuss cooperative ideas. At this time, December 1946, however, St. Francis House had a debt of eight hundred dollars plus six months rent. The success at the farm seemed to balance the picture for an electric automatic pump was installed to provide running water in the farm house. Also by the first of the year, the six milk cows provided money

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[46] The Catholic Worker, (May 1940), Vol. VII, No. 8, p. 9.

to make major improvements on the farm like fencing, building repairs, necessary equipment and ordering the seeds on time.[47]

December 29, 1949, witnessed the opening of the St. Thomas Aquinas Reading Room. It provided a warm, comfortable refuge from the cold and from the four walls of the rooming houses where many of the Old Age Pensioners were forced to spend their days. This reading room was crowded every day with men who could not find employment and others who just wanted to spend a few minutes to get warm.

The year 1949 saw an increase in the food lines at St. Francis House due to the various strikes in the city. Men's clothes and shoes were difficult to get as their demands became greater. The donations, however, were channeled toward painting the walls of the home. The men were pleased with their work and prided themselves with their improved living conditions.

In accordance with the framework of Peter Maurin's round table discussions, groups were organized discussing the "Mystical Body and Social Justice." Father Kowalski of Blessed Sacrament Parish led the meetings on Tuesday and Thursday nights.[48] The need for apostles in the highly industrialized city became the motto of the dynamic group which hoped to germinate the restoration of Christ in all things.

The priests of the diocese assisted the Catholic Worker in a variety of ways, ministering to the body and soul of Christ's

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[47] The Catholic Worker, (January 1947), Vol. XIII, No. 11, p. 6.

[48] Ibid.

abandoned. In February 1951, a special Shrove Tuesday Dinner of ham, mashed potatoes, green peas, bread, coffee and peaches was served. The meal was provided by twelve priests of the Archdiocese who in white waiter aprons served the meal. Among the group who donated their time and energy were: Fr. Edmund Muir of Visitation Parish; Fr. Maurice Deeker, Divine Child Parish, Dearborn; Fr. James Fitzgerald, Visitation and Fr. Raymond Klauke, Immaculate Conception, Anchorville. Like all special meals offered by the Worker, the number of patrons increased as the news of the "feast" traveled along the grapevine.

The Catholic Worker, through the pen of Jane O'Donnell, reports the foundation of a new vista of bringing Christ and of attracting more individuals to the idea of sharing with the less fortunate. Marybrook, thirty miles south of Detroit, just outside Carlton, Michigan, was the site. It was approved by Edward Cardinal Mooney, Archbishop of Detroit. Marybrook, a forty-acre farm, was founded by Fr. Leo J. Trese[49] with Mr. and Mrs. Murphy as directors, in the midst of his exceptionally beautiful and wholly rural parish, St. Patrick's.[50] The house, an ordinary farm house, with nothing pretentious about it, was made quite comfortable and livable by Fr. Trese's foresight. There was a large barn, a carriage house, a chicken coop, a brooder house, a corn crib, a garage, and a beautiful old granary which was

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[49] Author of Vessel of Clay, a challenge to honesty, appeared via Sheed and Ward.

[50] St. Patrick Parish is located in Carlton, Michigan, in Monroe County.

made into a chapel, grouped in good array at a suitable distance from the house. Ascension Chapel was blessed by Monsignor Warren C. Peek as a semi-public oratory. Like all Worker projects begun with zeal, love and lack of funds, tools for repairs on out-buildings were needed and likewise a tractor. A generous neighbor planted the grain crops but one couldn't expect such arrangements to go on indefinitely. As for livestock, a start was made with two pigs and fifteen pullets to initiate a plan of fifty laying hens to provide enough eggs for week-end retreatants and the Murphy children (there were three). Plans for several head of cattle were made since good pastureland near a brook on one of the boundaries was indicated.

Marybrook was available for meetings and conferences other than retreats; provided the meetings had a religious purpose. A registration fee of two dollars was charged and the retreatants were to bring bed linen, towels and soap. Twenty-four persons could be accommodated.[51]

It is interesting to note Jane O'Donnell's impressions of St. Francis House and the adjacent buildings, all Catholic Worker endeavors:

> We went to St. Francis House, a small 8-room house where the men who come to be fed were waiting in line. It was about 11:30, and the group had dwindled (they begin at 9 in Detroit; yet as we went through the dining room and had quite literally to brush by those waiting in the narrow hall, I realized there still was a goodly number. Again it was an experience

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[51] The Catholic Worker, (June 1950), Vol. XVI, No. 12, p. 5-6.

of the poor eating in silence, a silence oppressive, not because it is empty, thank God, but because it is a silence of suffering, a silence for which, as Dorothy suggests, we should often offer the full silence of our beautiful retreats at Maryfarm.

Maryhouse, a small flat in a home at the rear of St. Francis House, on the next street, always makes a pleasant visit. Here Mrs. Miller, senior member of the Catholic Workers, always has her doors open to her wide circle of friends, ranging from her many godchildren in the neighborhood, to all the Catholic Workers and the group coming down from their homes to seek the refreshment and repose one finds there. Not the least among her activities are the visits Mrs. Miller makes in connection with St. Francis Xavier Cabrini Clinic.

The visit to the Clinic, which is in a school room of Holy Trinity Parish, was very interesting. The Clinic is rather singular-and I hope not for long-for it is staffed completely by volunteers, and ministers, at no charge, to the poor of Father Clement Kern's parish which is beautifully made up of all nationalities and races. It is Father's idea that, along with the medical aid given, should always run the parallel service of calling on these poor in their homes, trying to give an example of the love of Christ as the Good Shepherd. For example, the expectant mothers are invited to join a sewing group to make clothing for their babies, and it is there that informal instruction on Baptism will be given, climaxing with Father's giving the blessings before and after childbirth to each woman, along with a baptismal robe and baptismal candle. It is a great boon to the men of St. Francis House that they are the ones who painted and carpentered to make the Clinic the clean and attractive place it is.

Then came the visit to the Nazareth Workshop and Library around the corner, two adjoining rooms in a former basement store, having good light, and serving the purpose their names indicate. It is here that the contribution of Jim Hunt is mainly channeled. In the workshop, a poster quotes the motivation in the words of Eric Gill: "Art is essentially the making of things intelligently and honestly, not the imitation of already existant things." Here Jim and those who work with him make crucifixes, hanging, many things for use in the Christian home, as well as mimeograph a little paper called "Challenge," which he and some of his fellow-

students at the University of Detroit put out to stimulate thought on the U. of D. campus. With the development of Marybrook, the Workshop will be moved to the country, allowing for very concrete expressions and experiences of some of the ideas Lou and Justine see as essential to intelligent work for the lay apostolate. The library will continue as a center of indoctrination, as it is accessible to many groups.

Then the visit to St. John Vianney House, a home where old-age pensioners, men, pool their resources, hire a cook, and have a certain peacefulness and tranquility in their common life. The St. Thomas Aquinas Reading Room, a small store on Michigan AVenue, where there is an abundance of lighter but wholesome Catholic literature for the numbers of men, many of whom come on the line, and for one reason or another, need and appreciate such a little spot for rest and relaxation.

And finally came the visit to St. Martha House. Here, as at St. Francis House, is a family size house, which provides to evicted families for the most part, and transient single women and girls temporary food and shelter, and very often clothing. The thing that strikes one more all the time is the advantage of a house which can be made a home, depending on the love in the hearts of the workers, over a series of flats or apartments. A week's visit at St. Martha House, being so close to the mothers and their children especially, seeing their needs and their gratitude, renews one's desire for the multiplication of Martha Houses where the great volume of transients may experience, even so briefly, the respite and refreshment that comes with participation in the life of those who are trying to embody Christian ideals of prayer and work and service. It is interesting to note the steady volume of intercourse between Martha House and the social agencies, who clearly recognize the value of this emergency service. All day long there are calls, well summarized by "Can you take a woman and three children?" To such agencies as the Traveler's Aid, Martha House is a boon indeed, because it is geared to the need of the moment. As one supervisor said on her visit, deploring the red tape demanded by rules and regulations, Martha House is doing a highly significant work. Again we meet the problem of dearth of workers. And we do not deny that the flexibility needed, the frustration of order that can come with the emergencies, is a challenge; but, oh, for some

more generous girls and women who would be willing to give themselves for some time to this beautiful service of Christ in the family.[52]

The work described above would be impossible were it not for charitable persons who shared with the "Skid Row Set." The Michigan Catholic reports that a fifty dollar check was received from Anne Hart, treasurer of the Teachers' Conference of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. The needs of Lou Murphy became so intensified that a demand was made in July-August issue of The Catholic Worker.

DETROIT CATHOLIC WORKER APPEALS

The Detroit Catholic Worker
St. Francis House
1432 Bagley - Wo. 2-5857
P.O. Box 615

Dear Friends in Christ:

"AND THERE WAS A CERTAIN BEGGAR NAMED LAZARUS WHO LAY AT THE RICH MAN'S GATE, COVERED WITH SORES."

For 15 years, we at the Detroit Catholic Worker, through your generosity, have been the rich man to whose gate has been coming Christ in the guise of the modern Lazarus. We who daily trust in Divine Providence, through the technique of voluntary poverty, consider ourselves rich in the serving of God's poor. For as St. Augustine says, "The service you owe the needy is to join in bearing some of the burden that oppresses them." The poor man's burden is need, and our urgent need of the moment is to be able to buy 25 feet of land of the city of Detroit, so that we may continue to feed, clothe, and house the many who come to us, daily.

Our landlady died and willed that her property be converted into cash and the money used to construct an orphanage in her hometown in Italy. Through the executor of the estate we are being given the

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[52] Ibid.

opportunity to buy our House of Hospitality for $4,000. Rt. Rev. Msgr. Edward J. Hickey, ex-Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Detroit, now Pastor of St. Mary's Redford, personally gave up $500 for the down payment. Through our appeals in the MICHIGAN CATHOLIC and this letter we are trying to raise the balance. To date we have received a total of $1,124.14; the balance due is $2,875.86. [53]

"No man gave," says the text, that is all; Dives is not reproached for refusing. Lazarus holds his peace, leaving his sores to plead for him. The sores pleading for him today are; neglected old age; physical handicaps, scarred war veterans; periodic unemployment; poor housing, and exorbitant rents. One wonders how long he will hold his peace in these times of plenty. Owning the 25 feet of land and keeping our House of Hospitality open, God Willing, we may through the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy cleanse, and bind, the sores of Lazarus with your Christ-like Charity towards us.

In return we will have the Holy Sacrifice offered in our Parish for you and your intentions, and our daily Rosary will be continued in remembrance of you.

Sincerely in Christ the Worker,

LOUIS J. MURPHY[54]

The hardships came together with the joys - Dorothy Day, the "sweetheart" of the penniless man was in town to help celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Catholic Worker. "No fancy dishes were served, soup and beans prevailed at the St. Francis House Luncheon," commented Charles Manas, reporter of The Detroit Free Press. Among the guests present were: Cuthbert, Florentine and Dismas from Duns Scotus College and Miss Day.

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[53] The Michigan Catholic, March 29, 1951.

[54] The Catholic Worker, July-August 1952, Vol. XVIII, No. 12, p. 2.

Speaking of Miss Day after the luncheon, Edward Farley commented: "You betcha, she's a sweetheart. This place is good, good to me. Maybe I can get a job in a few days."[55]

The twentieth anniversary witnessed another visit from Miss Day. The day commenced with Mass at Holy Trinity Church. Father Clement Kern, pastor, offered the Mass, assisted by Fr. Leo J. Trese as deacon and Fr. Edward J. Farrell as subdeacon. An open house was held at St. Francis House, from five to eight with Dorothy Day as guest. Lou's sense of humor is one of his many saving graces. On his fumigating problems he said: "Those crazy cockroaches. They've built up an immunity to the exterminator and are growing fat on it. Now we have to find a substitute to kill them."[56] Lou and his family have remained deep in the shadows of the movement. "That is part of the crazy idealism." states John Kenny, "that forces him to work and live with derelicts. He sees their soul shining through their grime and rags."[57] "Crazy" it would seem as were faith and idealism of St. Francis of Assisi, their model. That year, 1957, Lou was feeding nearly four hundred men daily and twenty-two men resided at St. Francis House. An estimate of six hundred dollars to run the place completes the statistics.

In a newsletter dated February 26, 1957, Lou and Justine Murphy discussed their position - "Life in the Detroit Worker

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55 The Detroit Free Press, October 11, 1952.

56 Clipped article by John Kenny, "$2 and 20 Years Make Murphy 'Crazy' for Christ and His Poor" (unmarked newspaper article)

57 Ibid.

has been precarious to say the least, but somehow each day's problems seem to resolve themselves. Needless to say we have seen daily, and gratefully the hand of God in all things, to the point of making us ashamed of our spiritual and physical indolence."[58] The city condemned the wiring in the St. Francis Home and threatened to close the place. To assist the Catholic Worker in this crisis, the Harlan Electric Company donated the labor and materials to meet the city's requirements. This was God-sent as the soup lines were between three and four hundred men daily. Work was scarce in Detroit, the only available was pin-setting and car washing with an average wage of thirty cents an hour. The Michigan State Employment men came three times a week with little work to offer. If automation was that problem ten years ago, what could be expected now? The demands on St. Martha's House decreased because rentals were more available. The "guests" were generally for a night or two until proper plans were formulated.

Just before Christmas, 1957, after the humble twentieth anniversary, Lou Murphy was visited by a man. (Visitors like this are common since the interest in the Worker was increasing in importance.) Lou related this story thus:

"In my mind's eye I thought to myself, 'I know this type. An Irishman, shoes shined, trousers pressed, clean shaven and

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[58] The Catholic Worker, (March 1957), Vol. XXIII, No. 8, p. 4.

not a dime in his pocket.'" However, I invited him in and visited with him for a while, answering all his questions. He then said to me that he had made money his god, that he was too damn selfish to get married and that he had succeeded in making a lot of money. He lived all his life in a cheap hotel, didn't smoke or drink, and then you know what happened to him - he had a nervous breakdown, and the doctors told him that the only cure for him was to find a truer value in life than a dollar bill. So he says "I am a wealthy man." I leaped at that, but he quickly punctured my greed by saying that he didn't help institutions as such. He then asked to see St. Francis House.

We went over there and the men were unloading the railroad ties from the truck. (We used the ties to heat the House. We have only bought one ton of coal this year). He remarked that they needed overshoes, to which I agreed. He then went through the House asking more questions. He then told me to get a list of the men's need in the way of clothing, and bring it down to his hotel. That night I told the men the story, and expressed my doubt, etc. I took the list to his hotel and then waited. In a few days he called Justine, and left a message to pick up these things. He bought 18 pairs of shoes; shirts, hats, jackets, socks, overshoes. He will never know the happiness he brought to the men. It made a real Christmas for the men. The next day, in came a huge box, and in it were 7 dozen of sheets, wash cloths, face towels, and bath towels. And the day before Christmas, a special messenger brought the missing pillow cases. Wasn't it wonderful! Things we

could never afford to buy. I do not think he was a Catholic. I only know his name, and nothing more. We haven't seen him since. So you can see that I was guilty of what the children call, "Doing rash judgment."[59]

The corporal Works of Mercy were evidenced in the following episode:

"On Thanksgiving we were unable to serve a dinner to the men, but a couple days before a man came to us and asked if we could provide about 80 men to come to a dinner in one of the suburbs. We did that, and they sent school buses, station wagons, and cars to transport the men to the restaurant. The men told me it was the nicest meal anyone could possibly eat. Each man was given a pack of cigarettes, and a dollar bill. They brought the men back to the Worker. And above all, no publicity - no news photographs."[60]

1960 witnessed a visit from Dorothy Day to the Worker House at Bagley Street. It was the last lap on one of her periodic tours around the country. Once a year this founder lectures in colleges, universities and Catholic Action Groups from coast to coast; she also visits the various daughter houses across the country. She spoke before groups at Pleasant Ridge, Wyandotte and at Most Holy Trinity in Detroit. "The main topic of all my talks," she said, "is the problem of the destitute. There is

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59 Ibid., pp. 4-7.

60 Ibid.

more destitution in this wealthy land today than there was during the depression."[61]

The hungry never stay fed; the poor are always with us. Twenty-five years of serving the Brothers of Christ found Lou and Justine nodding acquaintances with hardship. They have constantly cared for the poor with one hand while fending off an army of creditors with the other. In their worry and discouragement, the Murphy's take heart in the words displayed over their fireplace at home. Taken from the Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena, they read: "I have placed you in the midst of your fellows that you may do to them what you cannot do to Me, that is...that you may love your neighbor without expecting any return from them and what you do to them I count as done to Me."[62]

The feast of St. Francis de Sales is a memorable one in the history of the Catholic Worker. The Nazareth Lay Apostolate Library opened which adjoined the already existent Nazareth Workshop. The St. Francis Cabrini Clinic opened its portals for the poor on the same date. There was Benediction at Most Holy Trinity Church. Father Clement Kern was the celebrant and he gave a short homily and thanked the benefactors of both the library and the clinic.

After the Benediction there was a procession with John Hicks leading it and carrying a banner made at the workshop showing the church in the center with all the various activities

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61 Unsigned clipped newspaper article, 1960.

62 The Michigan Catholic, (October 5, 1961), Vol. LXXXIX, No. 40, p. 1.

which should be in every parish around it. The procession came first to the library and although most of the people crowded into the tiny library, many remained outside due to lack of room. Father Kern read the prayers for the Blessing of a Library and blessed it. Frank Wojcik, who, along with Chester Zajac were responsible for the material being in the library, read the prayers of the blessing in English. The procession then proceeded to Holy Trinity School, which is a block away, where Father Kern blessed the St. Francis Cabrini Clinic. Father Kern provided one school room to be equipped with the necessary facilities. A group of nurses and friends of Lorrain Fedje, along with the excellent assistance of the men of St. Francis House of Hospitality, the room was made ready.

The wife of the late Dr. Boell contributed the instruments- there are all the necessary instruments of pre-natal care and for deliveries if necessary. There are enough instruments to perform a tonsilectomy if the occasion should arise and one was needed. The nurses worked out of their time schedule so evening hours were made available with a few days provided. Doctors were on hand to take care of the serious and complicated problems. No questions were asked of the patients nor was any red tape involved.

The group of about two hundred fifty which were present gathered in the cafeteria to hear Fr. Trese give an informal talk on the necessity of the lay apostle mentality accomplished by a library which caters to the formation of this mentality. Emphasis was made that there must be a formation of the mind as well as that of ability of the hands in helping to create an atmosphere

where Catholics may easier save their souls. The purpose of having the library adjoining the workshop was to emphasize the necessity of developing both the hands and the mind. The hands and the mind must be so formed as to make the man a completely integrated christian. There seem to be so many dillentantes who refuse to dirty their hands, and so many workers who refuse to deepen their knowledge of Christ and the part that they must play in the lay apostolate. The pseudo-intellectuals and the feverish activists must learn to find a middle way so that each of them may become whole men in a strictly Catholic sense.[63]

The collection of books were entirely in accordance with the thoughts of Peter Maurin as many were taken from his recommended list in Catholic Radicalism. John Hicks, one of the first contributors, brought volumes of Gill, Chautard, Father McMabb, Luigi Sturgo and Father Vann. Father Trese, the guest speaker, presented some of the "American Ecclesiastical Review" and a set of "Cross and Crown." Prior to the formal opening of the library, Lou Murphy and his co-workers pooled their personal books and formed the nucleus of the new endeavor. Sister Esther of St. Mary-of-the-Woods College in Indiana sent a set of the Catholic Encyclopedia which had recently been replaced along with some of the works of Newman, Bernanos, and Goodier. There were also many who came bearing a book or two: Elaine Curry, Lou Martin, Mrs. Gray, Tony Marine, Pat Hefferman and Mrs. Snow. Although

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[63] The Catholic Worker, (May 1962), Vol. XXVIII, No. 10, p. 7.

there were many empty shelves that day, an attempt was made to establish what Peter Maurin called a "Catholic Workers' School."

Another innovation was the re-establishment of an old Jesuit tradition of having the Novices in the seminary spend two weeks in poor areas visiting families, attending union meetings, spending the night in a flop-house; working in hospitals, attending interracial meetings, and meetings of changing neighborhood problems. They came to Trinity from Colombiere Seminary, Clarkston, Michigan, a Detroit suburb. Their usual routine entailed, as it does now in 1967,[64] the opportunity to serve the men in the line at St. Francis House, and on the Sunday came to visit the family and have dinner and a discussion in the evening. (Like in past years, the general consensus was that the period of time is too short to fully appreciate the Apostolic value.)

To the Murphy family, a personal crisis developed. It began the first part of January when their son, Brian, developed paralysis of the throat and the lower bowel, and was taken to Bon Secour Hospital. He was withering away, and things looked hopeless. After about two weeks, Bon Secour discovered an ulcer on his lung and he was transferred to Maybury T.B. Sanitarium. As a consequence, the family was x-rayed and on Mr. Murphy a spot on the lung was discovered. Despite the best care and medication, Brian died.[65]

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[64] Observed on my visit to Detroit when the Jesuit scholastics and myself served the men.

[65] The Catholic Worker, (May 1962), Vol. XXVIII, No. 10, p. 7.

The New Year of 1963 brought a visit from the fiery, crusading editor, Miss Day. As Jean Sharley wrote, "Still concerned with the dynamite in the Roman Catholic Church that's being 'hermetically sealed and sat on' instead of exploded, Dorothy Day spent Tuesday urging Detroit's young people to strike a few matches."[66] She conducted lectures to three hundred and fifty students from eleven schools, in the host school, St. Paul's 120 Grosse Point Blvd. Tuesday evening she spoke before the Wayne State University Newman Club.

In 1964, the nucleus of the Detroit Worker was to spread its influence farther. The following letters indicate the dynamic influence of Lou Murphy and his Detroit Worker House:

Detroit, Michigan
March, 1964

Dear Tom:

St. Thomas More House of Hospitality is six weeks old today. Ever since I first came into contact with the Detroit Catholic Worker in November, 1959, I have dreamed of having a place of my own, and the dream has finally come true. Our house is small, a frame house with two small bedrooms, a back yard and a garage.

We are located in a residential neighborhood in St. Boniface parish, near the Detroit Tigers Stadium. People from the suburbs consider it a slum, and the Fischer Expressway will be coming through here within two years. Much of the property is already condemned, although ours is not as yet. Many of the houses here are in good condition, particularly the large, older brick homes.

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66 Jean Sharley, "Crusading Editor Still Fiery at 64," Detroit Free Press, January 9, 1963.

Two boys from St. Boniface grade school located it for me, just after Christmas, and I moved in on January 26, with the help of Fr. Paul Hons, an Anglican priest from Philadelphia, and Charlie List, an ex-seminarian who is active in the Young Christian Workers.

I was here a week before the first guest came to stay. He was twenty-two years old, and Fr. Van Antwerp from Most Holy Trinity parish sent him over to stay until he got on his feet again. Fr. Van Antwerp is my contact man although over half the men here have come through other people. We went up to six men within the first three weeks, then four men got jobs, three of them have come so we are up to six again. A full house would be seven men, and we could sleep a few more men on the floor for a night or so. There are no imposed rules here. Everyone is free to come and go as he pleases. But we do encourage a man to make his own bed and to do his own dishes. We have our evening meal together, by candlelight, and usually there are a couple of guests.

We had an open house on February 23, and about two hundred and twenty people came. And we are still living on the left over food. One man brought his banjo, another an accordion, and a third an electric guitar. We have a six week old ram, and a five week old nanny goat, and they ran in and out through people's legs all through the house. It was really lots of fun.

Quite often we will have twenty visitors in one day, from the Grail, Young Christian Workers, the Christian Family Movement, high school catechism classes, the Freedom Now Party, Cursillo, seminaries, relatives, neighbors and friends. On other evenings God allows us enough peace, quiet and privacy, to read and become meditative, which is so beautiful and precious a gift. The Little Brothers of Jesus are only about seven blocks from us, so when things really get hectic, I run over there and kneel in their chapel for a while, and have coffee and conversation with them.

A former YCW girl who is our neighbor, does our washing free and buys our milk for us each day. People have given us clothing, food, books and magazines, furniture and dishes. We take everything and if we can't use it we give it to people who can. We had a young man living with us for a month who was

the head of the Holy Trinity St. Vincent de Paul Society. He also acquainted us with the Freedom Now Party, the Black Muslims, and he visited two hospitals regularly, giving out magazines and tobacco.

We have four wonderful priests in our parish, and during Lent I have been fortunate enough to have been asked to read the Epistle and the Gospel at the Tuesday and the Friday night Masses, at 7:30 P.M.

We have been going to the five thirty a.m. Mass each Saturday in Ann Arbor, so this means that we get up at 3:30 a.m., borrow a car or station wagon, pick up friends and sing country and folk songs all the way there. About one hundred people have been coming to this Mass each week, a few nuns and students and a lot of us who have made the Cursillo. The Mass is facing the people with the offertory procession, the kiss of peace, and each person holding a lighted candle. All the men crowd around the priest inside the altar rail. We sing hymns during the entire Mass. Communion is given across the altar, with communicants lining up single file and standing. Afterwards we go in procession singing De Colores into the school social hall for breakfast; song, discussion music and talks by three or four people on their particular apostolic projects.

We sing Compline at our house each night in English, as I learned to sing it this past summer when I was with you on Chrystie Street. The time for Compline varies from 9 p.m. to about 3 a.m. because of our varied schedules. Neighbors and friends often sing it with us, so that sometimes ten or twelve people sing it, while at other times there are only two or three of us, or just myself. And on occasion I am too tired myself to say it.

We have been giving lots of food and clothing to our neighbors, and twice now we have had neighbors' boys stay over for the weekend. We are working on having a flower and vegetable garden this summer.

Bob Kaye came over two weeks ago and left us a stack of CW's which we are giving out to friends and visitors. I still haven't gotten out in the street to sell them, but that is the idea.

The Grail girls gave us a beautiful little loom, and we all hope to become loom-a-tics. There is so much to do here, reading, phone calls, writing,

discussion, projects, cleaning up, manual as well as mental labor. We are trying to see Christ in each person we meet. We want to practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. We read Peter Maurin's Easy Essays and make them the basis for discussion.

It's so nice to have lots of girls coming over also. Life would be a little drab without them. Thank God for them!

We hope to start a girls' house next door in two weeks if our present plans develop. It would only be big enough for two or three girls in the beginning, but at least it would be a start. Some girls from Grosse Points plan to come down here for the summer, and teach a six week course in Bible, painting, or whatever the parents and our pastor feel is needed for the smaller children.

Our major projects at present are a birthday party here on March nineteenth for three friends; getting our garden ready; slaughtering our ram for the Holy Thursday Paschal meal to which we will invite our neighbors, particularly our teenage neighbors. On April fifth we will show the San Francisco to Moscow Peace Walk, a film which we are borrowing from our Quaker friends in Ohio. Around May Day Ammon Hennacy will be here for a few days, and will give one of his talks here.

> We are taking Jesus at His word when
> he said,
> "Do not fret, then, asking, What are
> we to eat?
> or What are we to drink? or
> How shall we find clothing?
> It is for the heathen to busy themselves
> over such things;
> you have a Father in heaven who knows
> that you need them all. Make it your
> first care to find the kingdom of God
> and his approval, and all these things
> shall be yours without the asking.
> Do not fret, then, over tomorrow; leave
> tomorrow to fret over its own needs;
> for today today's troubles are enough."

We thank our Good God for his daily miracles among us, and we thank you, the Catholic Workers, Dorothy, Ammon, Karl Meyer, everyone, and in particular Peter Maurin, for the guidance and love which you

have shown me personally, in Detroit, Chicago and New York. There are so many countless people to thank. All of you have planted the seed which enables us to reap such a bountiful harvest for the coming of the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom where there will be perfect joy and peace, happiness and fulfillment. Where we will all be as free as the birds and where those who hunger and thirst after justice will be satisfied.

De Colores,
Dan Shay[67]

3313 Swede Rd.
Midland, Michigan
February, 1964

Dear Tom:

Since my visit there last fall I have come to realize the beauty of the Catholic Worker philosophy. For the first time in my life Christianity means something to me other than fearful obedience to a set of rules which seem to induce an insidious form of hypocrisy in many of those who abide by them, so much so that many of us have been consumed by our environment rather than influencing it as Christ obviously intended.

For five months we have struggled, studied and prayed that our family of ten might become more directly involved in this work. We talked about the need for a house of hospitality in the Saginaw area. Lou Murphy gave us some advice on how to get the movement started here. And then it happened.

One day we received a letter from some friends whom we recently came to know through the Cursillo Movement in Saginaw, announcing the opening of a house of hospitality in downtown Saginaw. Unbeknownst to us they had been considering this for quite some time. Needless to say, we were overjoyed and have since been spending every available bit of time either at the house or acting in its behalf. Many people are involved, but the two who appear to

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[67] The Catholic Worker, (April 1964), Vol. XXX, No. 9, pp. 7-8.

be the real movers are Frank O'Malley and Frank Walsh. There are now about twenty men living there. The clothing room stock is growing and the kitchen is going strong. Now that the glow of the "grand opening" is wearing off, we're going to have to face up to many problems, not the least of which is begging for support from our fellow Christians. The address of the house of hospitality is St. Alexius House, 110½ N. Warren, Saginaw, Michigan.

Jim Leddy[68]

February, 1967, The Catholic Worker indicated the latest progress of the Detroit unit. Michael Cullen, the founder of Casa Maria in Milwaukee, made the observation:

Detroit

Michael visited Louis Murphy and the two houses of hospitality in Detroit, putting up at Martha House at 1818 Leverette Street. There had been two other houses, run by young people but they are not operating now. Dan Shay ran one house for a few years but is now married and living at the farm at South Lyons, Michigan - a farm given The Catholic Worker by Maryknoller Fr. Hessler years ago, and now is divided between four or five families. Lou's farmhouse is a house of hospitality on the land, and countless are the activities carried on there over the years.

Houses have begun and ended in other cities in Michigan and in other parts of the country too and the cause may be urban renewal, new highways, or the presence of some discouraging soul who casts a blight on all around so that the project is given up. It takes a certain temperament to keep a house of hospitality going.[69]

Through the course of the history of the Catholic Worker, the Murphy family has desperately tried to make Detroit the

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[68] The Catholic Worker, (March, 1964), Vol. XXX, No. 8, p. 5.

[69] The Catholic Worker, (February, 1967), Vol. XXXIII, No. 5, p. 6.

center of the Apostolate, and, with so many activities of the Catholic Worker in Detroit, there is a place for anyone who wishes to emphasize a particular talent while learning to become a wholly integrated Christian. Women are needed to care for the old-age pensioners at St. John Vianney House. There, they would care for Christ in those men who are crippled, blind, deaf, legless and infirm. Truly, this requires special dedication. Apostles are needed who wish to increase their knowledge of art and literature at the workshop and library. Young men could devote their time and energy to St. Francis House who do not mind the monotony of charity. Young people can assist on the farm to help plant in the future generations the seeds of Christ - like virility and spontaneous christianity. Everywhere Apostles are in demand and God knows that there are many phases of work which must yet be started. But in Detroit, the trail is blazed.

CONCLUSION

The Catholic Worker in Detroit was founded on the conviction that every man born has innate dignity...even the scrapple of humanity that is "skid row". The jobless, the evicted, the hungry and the discouraged were from the beginning the life-blood of the Murphy family's energy. From a purely practical standpoint, there is great need for personal charity and the personal practice of the corporal works of mercy. As a Christian, the duty of personal charity is always with us. The Murphy family has realized this need and has fulfilled Christ's example. Charity is of the very essence of Christianity. If we lose the social aspect of this virtue by which men are known as Christians, if we ever abandon the practice of personal charity, then we have sacrificed the heart of our Religion.

The basis of Christian hospitality is Christian love. We show our love for God by our love for each other, and if we really saw Christ in our fellow man and it meant more than a pious phrase, we would open our doors and unite our tables with those of the poor.

In the House of Hospitality, The Catholic Worker of Detroit, entertained and helped the poor in a most informal, personal and Christ-like manner. The Worker reached these

people through voluntary poverty. It is only when we accept voluntary poverty, as did Lou Murphy and his family, that we are really ready for the war on poverty today, ready to think of the future common good; ready to open our minds to the fact that we are entering a new era and must have a vision of a new social order "wherein justice and charity dwellth". This reconstruction of the social order depends on voluntary poverty which we can share with joy and love because it was the means Christ used. Voluntary poverty espoused by the Murphy family meant taking less themselves that others could have more. "Let your abundance supply their want," St. Paul said. So in lowering his standard of living, Lou Murphy has lifted others for he realizes that man is man, because of what he is, rather than because of what he has. This guiding principle which has been the Murphy's motive for the past thirty years is the focal point in Pope Paul VI's Encyclical, "Popularum Progressio". For he states:

> "The development of people has the Church's close attention, particularly the development of those people who are striving to escape hunger, misery, endemic diseases and ignorance; of those who are looking for a wider share for the benefits of civilization and a more active improvement of their human qualities; of those who are aiming purposefully at their complete fulfillment.
>
> Following the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council a renewed consciousness of the demands of the Gospel makes it her duty to put herself at the service of all, to help them grasp their serious problems in all dimensions, and to convince them that solidarity in action at this turning point in human history is a matter of urgency."

By insisting on translating the grandeur of Christian theology into such simple terms as feeding the hungry or nursing the sick, The Catholic Worker has not belittled theology but enhanced its appeal. Many a young person who comes to the St. Francis House unlettered in theology ends up eagerly devouring Augustine, Thomas and Bonaventure. This movement which never sought power has more influence than one could equate.

Aside from taking care of the body of man, the St. Francis House of Hospitality like the parent foundation in New York, is in active sympathy with the growing labor movement, publicizing bad working conditions, joining and organizing unions and picket lines and in less dramatic ways helping wage earners secure justifiable objectives.

In its origin and first stages of development, social reforms were largely a by-product of Americanization, then the great need of the Church. In the recent past the Catholic social movement, encouraged by Popes and dedicated laymen like Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, has been preoccupied with the problem created by a horrifying economic crisis. In this atomic ago of today and tomorrow, this Catholic Social action of the Detroit group may well help serve the cause of world order for the only safeguard of peace is social justice and a contented people.

The foundation of the Catholic Worker House in Detroit, was successful through the influence of Archbishop, later Cardinal, Edward Mooney who was exceptionally active on the labor front. Thus, armed with the support of the Papacy

through the Encyclicals, Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno, and the support of Archbishop Mooney, the Saint Francis House began its labor of love. Through the House of Hospitality "in the shadow of the Church" men would be recalled to Christ "and to the job of rebuilding the social order." By the mission field approach to reform, Lou Murphy furnished a sense of direction to the enlarging corps of Catholics anxious to crusade for social justice.

Turning to the soil, was another facet of the Lou Murphy's endeavors. Getting close to God's earth and giving an example to others in how to put Christian ideas into practice in a very practical manner was the secret of Peter Maurin's philosophy as well as his follower, Lou Murphy. They are also providing the alternative and the answer to what is called "creeping Socialism," to the Welfare State and all its enslaving consequences, to Communism as well as to many other things, including the "something for nothing" philosophy, the inflation and high, soft living, which are in reality the reason for war economics promoted by governments in order to keep people on an unnatural level of so-called prosperity. The families in the budding Christian rural community near South Lyons, Michigan, have found the answer to depression and the way to peace.

Perhaps Peter Maurin best summarizes the work of Lou Murphy and family in his essay on Saint Francis, the patron of the Detroit House.

What Saint Francis Desired

That men would give up superfluous possessions,
St. Francis desired.

That men would work with their hands,
St. Francis desired.

That men would offer their services as a gift,
St. Francis desired.

That men would ask other people for help when work failed them,
St. Francis desired.

That men would live as free as birds,
St. Francis desired.

That men would go through life giving thanks to God for His gifts,
St. Francis desired.

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