

## **Easy Essays**

By Peter Maurin

[This address by Peter Maurin to the unemployed at a meeting held in September, 1933 rings true for Fresno today as the “Anti-Panhandler” ordinance intensifies the persecution of the downtown homeless population. The address is reprinted from *The Catholic Worker* newspaper.]

### **The Duty of Hospitality**

People who are in need  
and are not afraid to beg  
give to people not in need  
the occasion to do good  
for goodness sake.  
Modern society calls the beggar  
bum and panhandler  
and gives them the bum’s rush.  
But the Greeks used to say  
that people in need  
are the ambassadors of the gods.  
Although you may be called  
bums and panhandlers  
you are in fact the Ambassadors of God.  
As God’s Ambassadors  
you should be given food,  
clothing and shelter  
by those who are able to give it.  
Muslim teachers tell us  
that God commands hospitality,  
and hospitality is still practiced  
in Muslim countries.  
but the duty of hospitality  
is neither taught nor practiced  
in Christian countries.

### **The Municipal Lodgings**

That is why you who are in need  
are not invited to spend the night  
in the homes of the rich.  
There are guest rooms today  
in the homes of the rich  
but they are not for those who need them.  
And they are not for those who need them

because those who need them  
are no longer considered  
as the Ambassadors of God.

### **Hospices**

We read in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*  
that during the early ages of Christianity  
the hospice (or the House of Hospitality)  
was a shelter for the sick, the poor,  
the orphans, the old, the traveler,  
and the needy of every kind.  
Originally the hospices (or  
Houses of Hospitality)  
were under the supervision of the bishops,  
who designated priests  
to administer the spiritual  
and temporal affairs  
of these charitable institutions.  
The fourteenth statute  
of the so-called Council of Carthage,  
held about 436  
enjoins upon the bishops  
to have hospices (or Houses of Hospitality)  
in connection with their churches.

### **Parish Houses of Hospitality**

Today we need Houses of Hospitality  
as much as they needed them then,  
if not more so.  
We have Parish Houses for the priests,  
Parish Houses for educational purposes,  
Parish Houses for recreational purposes,  
but no Parish Houses of Hospitality.  
Bossuet says that the poor  
are the first children of the Church,  
so the poor should come first.  
People with homes should  
have a room of hospitality,  
so as to give shelter  
to the needy members  
of the parish.  
The remaining needy  
members of the parish  
should be given shelter in a Parish Home.  
Furniture, clothing, and food  
should be sent to the needy

members of the parish  
at the Parish House of Hospitality.  
We need Parish Homes  
as well as Parish Domes.  
In the new Cathedral of Liverpool  
there will be a Home  
as well as a Dome.  
So people no longer consider  
hospitality to the poor  
as a personal duty.  
and it does not disturb them a bit  
to send them to the city,  
where they are given the  
hospitality of the "Muni"  
at the expense of the taxpayer.  
But the hospitality that the  
"Muni" gives to the down and out  
is no hospitality  
because what comes from the  
taxpayers' pocketbook  
does not come from their heart.  
So hospitality, like everything else,  
has been commercialized.  
So hospitality, like everything else,  
must be idealized.