



WHAT THE
CATHOLIC
WORKER BELIEVES

BY PETER MAURIN

- **The Catholic Worker believes in the gentle personalism of traditional Catholicism.**
- **The Catholic worker believes in the personal obligation of looking after the needs of our sisters and brothers.**
- **The Catholic Worker believes in the daily practice of the works of mercy.**
- **The Catholic Worker believes in Houses of Hospitality for the immediate relief of those who are in need.**
- **The Catholic Worker believes in creating a new society within the shell of the old. . .**

Ora et Labora

PRAY AND WORK

JUNE 2010

77, 40, 14, Markers of Faithfulness

by Liza Apper

It all happened while we sat there and it is still going on

—Dorothy Day

“Just one more pot to clean,” I said wearily to myself, “and I will be done with soup kitchen clean-up for today.” I lifted the 15 gallon pot into the kitchen sink and started scrubbing. For 13 years this pot has been the tool that has made it possible for us at the St. Benedict Catholic Worker to make homemade soup from scratch for the people we serve in front of Fresno County Jail. And for most of that time I, self-described as the chief cook and bottle washer, have been the one whose job it is to clean it. Over the years we at the Catholic Worker have made a wide variety of soups with this pot. It bears the cooking stains, nicks, and bruises of a well-used cooking utensil. Looking at it that day, I began to see it as more than a pot but a talisman of Catholic Worker life. This pot had a deeper connection for me, reaching back in time to the beginning of the Catholic Worker Movement 77 years ago, my induction into Catholic Worker life with the Los Angeles Catholic Worker 40 years ago, and the continuing journey of that life with the St. Benedict Catholic Worker, now beginning our 14th year. Like an old familiar friend, this Catholic Worker soup pot was recalling for me the story of Catholic Worker life.

The Catholic Worker Movement began with Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin and a soup pot. They took Jesus’ words seriously and literally—feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, visit the sick, cloth those in need, and visit the imprisoned (Matt. 25:31-46). And that Gospel vision of living the kingdom here on earth, Catholic Worker life, was introduced to me by Dan and Chris Delaney, who founded the Los Angeles Catholic Worker.

As I scrapped off the last remaining bits of split pea soup from the pot, I recalled that 40 years ago, on a June day in the summer of 1970, I was scrubbing a similar pot in a church kitchen where the Los Angeles Catholic Worker prepared soup to serve on the streets in downtown Los Angeles. I was eighteen years old and capti-

Markers of Faithfulness, *continued from page 1*

It was in that moment that I felt God calling me to Catholic Worker life.

Fourteen years ago this July, my husband and I did in Fresno what Dorothy and Peter did 77 years ago in New York City and what Dan and Chris Delaney did 40 years ago in Los Angeles—we started a Catholic Worker House.

vated by the LA. Catholic Worker's efforts to live the Gospel life as Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin envisioned it. I remember feeling such complete and utter joy and fulfillment in the simple task of cleaning that pot. It was in that moment that I felt God calling me to Catholic Worker life. I spent the next 30 years of my life as part of the Catholic Worker Movement but never fully committed to Peter and Dorothy's vision. The work I did commit to for the next 30 years (teaching, youth ministry, social justice causes, etc.) was very good, but I also understand now that those years were preparation for my eventual lifelong commitment to the Catholic Worker. A journey towards that commitment that began with my experience of "complete and utter joy and fulfillment" while cleaning the pot in that church kitchen as part of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker.

Dorothy Day once wrote, "We were just sitting there talking when lines of people began to form, saying, 'We need bread.' We could not say, 'Go, be thou filled.' If there were six small loaves and a few fishes, we had to divide them. There was always bread." Fourteen years ago this July, my husband and I did in Fresno what Dorothy and Peter did 77 years ago in New York City and what Dan and Chris Delaney did 40 years ago in Los Angeles—we started a Catholic Worker House. "We were just sitting there" when the needs of the people Bryan encountered at Fresno County jail confronted us, saying, *we need your presence here*. And so on July 27, 1997 the St. Benedict Catholic Worker was born. And this August we will begin our 14th year of faithfulness empowered by the vision of Dorothy and Peter, who began the Catholic Worker Movement 77 years ago and the teaching of that vision to me, 40 years ago, by Dan and Chris at the Los Angeles Catholic Worker.

"77, 40, 14" are not lucky numbers with which to play the lottery but they are markers of faithfulness—faithfulness to the Gospel admonition to love our brothers and sisters by serving them, day in and day out, through the works of mercy (Matt. 25:31-46). It all happened while Dorothy and Peter, Dan and Chris, and Liza and Bryan sat there talking, and it is in over 180 Catholic Worker houses around the world, still going on.

House Journal by Liza Apper

In January we greeted the New Year praying for health and continued opportunities to serve those we encounter at Fresno County Jail. Our soup line continues three times a week on the front portico of Fresno County Main Jail.

We continue to give hospitality to homeless women. "Big Sue," a friend, homeless woman, and tireless homeless advocate, stays on-and-off here at the Catholic Worker. We have, however, expanded our hospitality to include those visiting at the jail who come from far away and need a place to stay for a night or two. And of course, we have emergency housing here on an "at need" basis. We also welcome any wandering Catholic Workers from other houses looking for respite or to look-and-see life here at the SBCW.

Daily "at home" visits which include preparing a breakfast or lunch, making dinner once or twice a week, and pastoral counseling for a family in need, present a new way in which the St. Benedict Catholic Worker serves those in need. We are finding Gail Sheehy's new book, *Passages in Caregiving* is an invaluable resource for us and for all those who find themselves in the role of caregiver within a family or for a friend.

In April, Margaret Johnson, came from the Los Angeles Catholic Worker to spend a few weeks with us. We sure did get spoiled! Margaret joined in whatever we were doing with gusto, supporting us and our work by making herself available to help when and wherever needed. Margaret also made wonderfully beautiful and great tasting loaves of bread that filled our house with their delicious aroma. On Easter, she made her Dad's recipe for homemade spaghetti sauce and meatballs! We renamed the recipe, "Margaret's Killer Spaghetti Sauce and Meatball Recipe" and keep it under culinary lock and key.

The weekend of May 15-16 we travelled to Los Angeles to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker.

As we inch toward summer and those dreaded "112 degree days," we find ourselves in need of your generosity. Our tile counter around our kitchen sink is falling and our funds are too low to carry us through the summer months of June, August, and September. Please help us continue by donating what you can.

Please remember us in your prayers. And, most importantly, remember the people we serve whose needs do not take the summer off. It promises to be a long hot summer in Fresno, but your contributions can make it a more bearable one for those we serve.

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Ora et Labora—Pray and Work
Newsletter of the St. Benedict Catholic Worker

Published occasionally by the grace of God

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Summer Appeal



*Oh God, look upon the face of Thy
Christ in these poor, and help us to
keep going.*

-Dorothy Day

In these hard economic times,
our soup line grows longer.
During the summer months,
those in need are often forgot-
ten and our resources are slim.

We turn to you, dear friends,
for help to keep us going. We depend on your generosity so
that we can look upon the face of Christ in those we serve
and not turn them away for lack of food or other hospitality
needs (see list at right).

Please help us to keep going...

Needs List

Hot dogs
Hot dog buns
New coloring books
Large containers of lemon-
ade or ice tea mix
Snow cone syrup
8 oz/12 oz Styrofoam cups
Styrofoam plates
Plastic forks and spoons
Mayonnaise (1-gal.)
Mustard (1-gal.)
Smart and Final gift card
Food Maxx gift card
Costco gift card
13/33 gal. trash bags