

The Hartford Catholic Worker



St. Martin De Porres House
St. Brigid House

“Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” - James



Oh Come Let Us Adore Him, Brian Kavanagh

Advent/Christmas 2013

In this night

*In this night
the stars left their habitual places
and kindled wild fire tidings
that spread faster than sound*

*In this night
the shepherds left their posts
to shout the new slogans
into each other's clogged ears*

*In this night
the foxes left their warm burrows
and the lion spoke with deliberation
"this is the end
revolution"*

*In this night
roses fooled the earth
and began to bloom
in the snow*

*Dorothee Sölle
Revolutionary Patience*

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The Hartford Catholic Worker is published bimonthly by the St. Martin De Porres Catholic Worker community. We are a lay community of Catholics and like minded friends, living in the north end of Hartford, working and praying for an end to violence and poverty. We are a 501c3 tax exempt organization. We do not seek or accept state or federal funding. Our ability to house the homeless, feed the hungry, and work with the children depends on contributions from our readers. We can be reached at: 18 Clark St.,

Hartford CT 06120; (860) 724-7066, doucot@sbcglobal.net and www.hartfordcatholicworker.org We are: Brian Kavanagh, Jacqueline, Christopher, Micah and Ammon Allen-Doucot.

Catholic Worker Christmas Cards For Sale

We are once again selling Christmas cards featuring Brian Kavanagh's artwork, proceeds will support the Hartford Catholic Worker.

This year's packs of 10 will feature 2 new designs: "Oh Come Let Us Adore Him", featured on the front cover, and "No Room at the Inn." seen on the right.

Cards are available for \$15 in 4" x 6" size or \$20 for 5" x 7" size. Please include an additional \$1 per pack for postage and packaging.

Contact Marie McKenna at (860) 704-8360 or bcmarie98@yahoo.com to purchase cards or to obtain a poster to help promote them.



Christmas Morning

Brenda McLaughlin

Wind
rattles window panes and
whistles
beralding
morning in winter
drawing
my eyes
to fresh fallen snow
glistening under
moon and stars
my father's footprints
marking the way
to the barn
already covered
now virgin
snow beckons me

bundled against the cold
to follow and
to witness the
morning milking
in the warmth of the barn
cows mooing and
automatic pipeline
humming with milk
flowing
when
Grandma Cat,
calico
from whom all barn cats
descend,
keeps watch
for me
eyes filled with

dazzling light
beg follow
so I do
wade again

in snow and
biting cold
trailing white tracks
formed by
paws under

tri-colored fur
trotting toward
hay barn
inside
hay fort
has become
birthplace.

New kittens
eyes closed
just licked clean
drinking mother's milk
hungrily.

The secret
birth
revealed
to me!

A child
in red rubber boots
in awe
before dawn.Ω



We Need Your Help

Christopher J. Doucot

Catholic Worker co-founders Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin often wrote of begging and beggars. My favorite Peter Maurin quote about beggars is “Modern society calls the beggar bum and panhandler and gives him the

bum’s rush. But the Greeks used to say that people in need are the ambassadors of the gods”. For her part, Dorothy was frank that she was herself a beggar. Indeed, the Catholic Worker movement is nothing less than a community of beggars, by beggars, and for beggars- my apolo-

gies to Abe Lincoln. I begged for the first time when I was twenty-one and fresh out of college. I was living at the Catholic Worker in Worcester and we were broke- again. And so Scott Schaeffer-Duffy and I drove over to a wealthy neighborhood in the West end of Worcester where we spent the afternoon going door to door begging for support. Scott seemed to relish this opportunity; me? not so much. I certainly didn’t much feel like God’s ambassador, I still don’t.

But still I beg. I beg for your help so that we can continue to shelter guests, I beg so that we can fill bags with groceries for our neighbors, and I beg for your support so that we can continue to welcome the kids of our neighborhood inside for a healthy snack, a loving hug and a sense of belonging.

In case you missed it- I’m begging right now for you to support our work with a gift of your time, talent and treasure. I am writing on November 15 with a balance of \$204

in our account.

Begging for us is not simply a way to raise funds but rather it is a spiritual discipline that profoundly shapes the nature of our various relationships. I beg because it is my most effective, and affective, form



of prayer. To butcher an adage: when I beg I’m putting the shoe of charity on my other foot because I’m pretty sure that, like me, the folks who come begging at our door for help with their heating bill or for a simple sandwich don’t feel like ambassadors of God. Why would they when in our popular imagination beggars are lazy, addled, and perhaps addicted?

My favorite thing about living at the Hartford Catholic Worker is the quality and quantity of relationships I have with people who need to beg in order to support themselves and their children. Some may be lazy but no more so than some of my middle class friends who might call their laziness “going to the theatre” or “watching the (three hour long) game”. Most definitely some of my neighborhood friends battle the bottle but can we honestly claim that addiction is solely the demon of the poor? And certainly a few of my friends who beg might not have the highest I.Q.’s but they certainly

haven’t cornered the market when it comes to lacking common sense.

In fact, my most profound spiritual lesson was not taught to me by any of the Ph.D.s. at Yale but rather by a number of poor folks who befriended me over the years;

the first being a young man named Kenny who lived at the Worcester Catholic Worker while I was a student at Holy Cross. The lesson is simple: the pride one experiences when committing an act of charity is often equal to the amount of humiliation experienced by the person receiv-

ing the charity. I’ve reflected on this constantly since I first took Kenny to the cafeteria at Holy Cross for dinner. At first I was so full of myself and the pride I had at being a “good” Catholic that I was oblivious to how mortally embarrassed Kenny was by the experience. In honest hind sight I used Kenny in a way that still shames me. Praying about this revealed a second lesson: the humiliation of receiving charity may be amplified when it is committed outside the context of- and with disregard for- a meaningful relationship with the ambassador of God, aka Christ in disguise.

The practical effect of being a beggar has been a transformation of my relationship with wealth. When I am in the position to help someone out it is obvious to me that I am able to do so because the food, shelter or money I share is not from me but only through me; I may possess it but I do not own it. A number of saints from the first years of

(Please see: Help, p4)

Help, cont.

the Church (Clement, Basil, John Chrysostom et al) expand upon this notion asserting that all the wealth of this world belongs to our God who created it. In effect Christians are simply God's middlemen and women who are called to use that portion of God's wealth under our control to effectively love our neighbors as ourselves.

In essence of the story of the Rich Young Man ([Mt 19:16-20:16](#)) is a sort of moral algebra. The rich man asks Jesus what he must do to "gain eternal life". Jesus tells him he needs to "follow the commandments and to love his neighbor as himself". When the rich man claims to be doing so a skeptical Jesus tells him he must then sell all that he has and give the proceeds to the poor. As we know the rich man doesn't and instead goes away sad. The story is a lesson on Shalom, that is, the practice of Right Relationships. Here's the moral math: the rich man refuses to have a right relationship with his wealth which thus prevents him from having a right relationship with his neighbors, especially the poor, which thus prevents him from joining Jesus and the apostles, and so he goes away sad.

What if the rich man chose to serve Jesus instead of his wealth? ([Matthew 6:24](#)). In math this is called contrapositive logic. Let's do the math: the rich man understood that the wealth in his possession is from God and is meant to benefit all God's children; and so he uses this wealth to love his neighbors as himself, that is he feeds the hungry and houses the homeless; and so he has a right relationship

with the poor; and so he has a right relationship with Jesus; and so he is happy.

So here's another cool thing about math- equations are true and eternal, $2+2$ has always equaled 4 and so a two thousand year old formulation whereby sharing results joy is as true today as it was when Jesus first articulated it. Frankly, the story of the Rich Young Man is really the basis for a liberation theology for the wealthy. Happiness in this life, and the next, cannot be gained by accumulating stuff or saving a heap of cash ([Matthew 6:19 and Luke 16:19-31](#)). This notion is confirmed by a growing body of social science research which shows that wealth contributes to happiness only to the point of lifting one out of relative poverty; beyond that greater wealth does not result in greater happiness.

Jesus and social science seem to agree that what makes us most happy are meaningful, loving relationships; and loving relationships necessitate caring for one another which inevitably means sharing. And should you fret that this pursuit of happiness might result in your becoming one of God's needy ambassadors take cheer in the testimony of the apostles who shared all that they had with one another and discovered that there was more than enough to go around and so none of them was poor ([Acts 2:44 and 4:32](#)). The confident sharing of the apostles was nothing less than a re-enactment of the miracle of loaves

and fishes.

And so we come to you as self-appointed ambassadors of God begging for your support. Please consider making a donation to the Hartford Catholic Worker so that we may continue to fill bellies with food and souls with hope. And please consider joining us sometime in our pursuit of a right relationship with Emmanuel among us in the form little kids who are missing their front teeth but not their dignity.

Consider this an invitation to imitate Jesus and the apostles by reperforming the miracle of loaves and fishes today.

Do the math- it will make you happy.Ω

The Duty of Hospitality

Peter Maurin

*People who are in need
and are not afraid to beg
give to people not in need
the occasion to do good
for goodness's sake.*

*Modern society calls the beggar
bum and panhandler
and gives him 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.*

*[Moslem] teachers tell us
that God commands hospitality,
and hospitality is still practiced
in [Moslem] countries.
But the duty of hospitality
is neither taught nor practiced
in Christian countries.*



Notes, cont.



need may eat and feed their children. A simple thing...but in the age of welfare, the works of mercy are not often done on a personal basis. The best thing to happen is when the giver gets to meet the "needy one". Suddenly the giver recognizes her own needs and a relationship is formed as is the kingdom of God. The job of Christians is to make the world holy. By that I mean as Dorothy Soelle writes, our role is to "bring to earth the love and compassion of God". In that work we are made whole. We are made to see that any divisions that come

between us as brothers and sisters come from that which is NOT God.

Thanksgiving is just two weeks away and the energy levels are shifting into high gear. At this time of the year we REALLY see that God has given us enough for everyone if we choose to distribute that wealth amongst all of Her people. Volunteers and neighbors will come to help us gather and sort over 150 turkeys and untold bags of fixings that will be shared with the families who make up our community. Churches and schools will gather enough toys for our Christmas party and so that Moms, Dads and Grandmas can come and "shop" for their children and later enjoy a beautiful sit down lunch Ms.Edna will whip up.

In the holiday spirit the barrier between the not yetness of the Kingdom of God and the peaceable kingdom disappears. All are fed... all are filled with joy...

So...after 20 years what we most want to say is THANK YOU! Without all of you we would never have made it through year one. Without all of you we would not be able to do any of the ministries. Without all of you there would be no us. Isn't that really the message of Christ about the Kingdom of God?Ω



The Kingdom of God is Like...

Christopher J. Doucot



A few weeks ago the low, late Fall, morning sun sent a shaft of light into our living room illuminating flecks of dust and warming the milk chocolate skin of Lily's face. It was like a tunnel into another world. With outstretched arms and the unsteady gait of a two year old she reached for the dust, but like ten thousand tiny fireflies it swirled away always beyond her grasp. Still, she jumped and giggled in its midst. The moment was fleeting as the sun was soon hiding behind the building next door sharing its magic stream of translucence with our neighbors Kelliah and Samiah.

Later while she slept in my lap I imagined Lily whispering to me "Pop, the kingdom of God is like dancing with pixies- join me next time".Ω

Song

Langston Hughes

*Lovely, dark, and lonely one,
Bare your bosom to the sun.
Do not be afraid of light.*

*Open wide your arms to life,
Whirl in the wind of pain and strife,
Face the wall with the dark closed gate,
Beat with bare, brown fists-
And wait. Ω*



Tim Ashkar

Notes From De Porres House

Jacqueline Allen-Doucot

20 Years In.....

Right now it is hard to believe that we have been living here on Clark Street at St. Martin House for 20 years. In 1993 Micah was about 6 months old. The first night we were here was also the first time that he ever slept through the night. I took that as a good omen from the Holy Spirit. He will be 21 years old on his next birthday. The children of some of our first "kids" now bring their kids here to be tutored and create art and play ball. Some of the ministries we did years ago (food coop, furniture pantry) have shifted to a smaller scale. We wanted to make time and space for Christ's other vocation (teaching about race/non violence/poverty at U of H and CCSU). We wanted to sharpen the focus towards young people in our community. With an eye towards Brian turning seventy it seemed right to cut down on the heavy hauling and lifting. This opened some space for us to be in the joyful position of caring for Lily three days a week.

Standing on the threshold of starting our third decade of ministry I am often surprised by how little has changed around here. In the last year or so, the government's ongoing preferential option for the wealthy combined with budget cuts in childcare and food stamps... things seem even tougher than when we began. It seems the "times discipline" to stand in resistance to the culture of fear and war making and live by hope. We keep hoping...with lots of help from other hopeful folks; folks who

are not afraid of the city and its poor.

After 20 years what strikes me most is that we are all poor. Some of us are poor money wise, some poor in patience and some are poor in social capital. There are those of us who are poor in discipline. Many of our young women seem poor in self esteem. Just spend about 10



minutes watching the videos that go with the latest pop songs and you can see where that comes from. Some of us are poor in sobriety. Some of us are the second and third generations of those poor ones! Some of us are poor in humility which is why some other ones are so poor in cash. Some of us suffer from poverty of community. We do not seek the very human communion that brings us to joy and finding Christ in each other. After 20 years...I have also come to see that we are all rich. Some of us have money while others are rich in humor, or energy, or art, or love, faith, patience, time, generosity...

I think what we do best at The Worker

is to create a space, as CW co-founder Peter Maurin would often say, where it is easier to go about doing good- a space where those who are rich and poor can give and take according to their need/ability. A heavenly balance ensues...a peek into what the kingdom looks like. This feels especially true for me on

Saturdays when I do not have to coerce young people into doing a half hour of homework. The young and old, the black, white, Latina, the strong and the weak, the giver and the receiver all find a joyful communion. Communion happens on the ball court, and at the giving table. It happens in the kitchen where 5 or 6 people work side by side to fix a meal for 60 or so folks. It happens on the front porch where Pete and Dwight work side by side with folks who need bikes and repairs or those who are donating used ones. It

happens when we receive guests from Iraq or Palestine and see children whose countries are at war play side by side and give us HOPE in our building of nonviolence. It happens when a child who was once angry all the time finds a listening ear and unconditional love and the anger simmers down to a manageable bubble with the HIP steps (Help Increase The Peace conflict resolution). It happens when a first grader who cannot write his name masters the task and his grin melts your heart!

The food pantry allows the hungry to be fed. People of means bring food so that folks in

(Please see: Notes, p5)