

RADIX

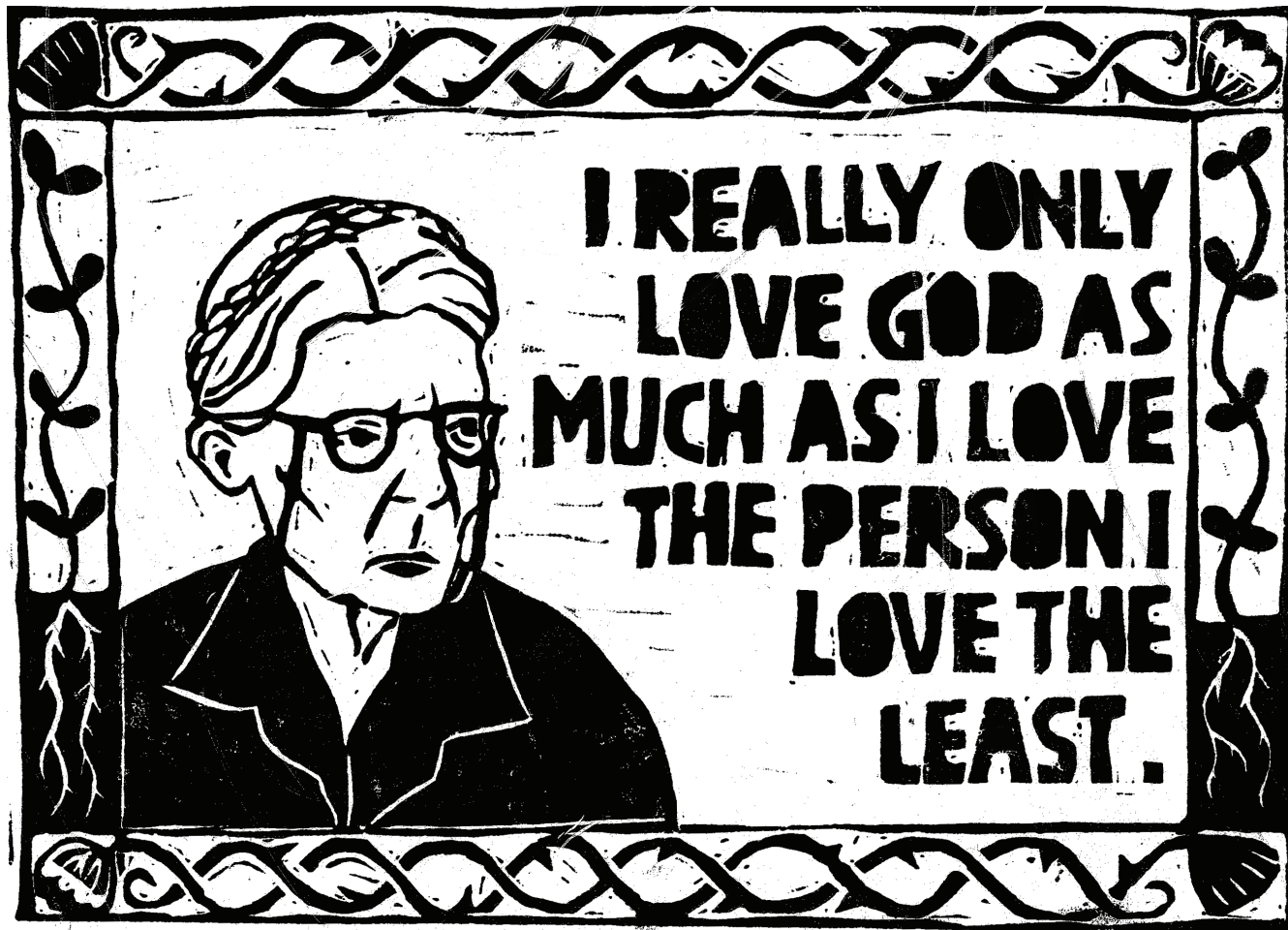
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Fasting—The Way to Freedom

by Dorothy Day

I began to write this article on the Feast of our Lady of Lourdes when I went to my bookshelves to find something about our Blessed Mother to read. I picked up two books, opened them for a bit and closed them both with horror and sat down with my missal instead. I'm not going to mention the names of the two books nor their authors. I'd prefer to talk of the splendid hagiography of Fr. Thurston and Donald Attwater (the revised Butler), Gheon, Ida Coudenrove, Margaret Monroe and other modern writers.

In the first of the two books aforementioned, the saint-writer declares that the Blessed Mother, with lighted torches, was seen setting fire to a dance hall, where couples were carousing, and burning it to the ground with 400 people therein! The second book had a little chapter about eating: "The saints went to their meals sighing. St. Alphonsus, when sitting down, would think only of the suffering of the souls in purgatory, and with tears would beseech Our Lady to accept the mortifications he imposed upon himself during

meals. Blessed de Montford sometimes shed tears and sobbed bitterly when sitting at table to eat. If such have been the feelings of the saints what shall we say of those of Mary? St. Jerome (in a letter to Heliodorus) said that this wonderful child only took, toward evening, the food which an angel was wont to bring her."

No wonder no one wants to be a saint. But we are called to be saints—we are the sons of God!

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Filling the Bucket: *Localism in Wendell Berry's Poetry*

by Patrick McKenzie

Localism has become a bit of a buzzword in today's discourses. Sometimes it's conflated with supporting small businesses or shopping at the farmer's market. Sometimes it's reduced to a square mile or expanded to the entire Midwest. And for many, it has been lost altogether. What is local anymore anyways? From the invention of the telegraph to the telephone to computers to smartphones, the idea of localism has all but been nullified in the global mind. You can buy shoes made in a sweatshop seven thousand miles away; you can buy a tomato grown in an entirely different continent; you can apply for a job based in a whole different country—all without interacting with a single person, I might add. How is it possible to live locally in a world where our economy has been globalized, depersonalized, and outsourced to faraway nations, all in the name of profit? In a society where day to day social interactions have been usurped by Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, et al.? Is there hope to live locally?

When it comes to good examples of how to live out localism, you don't have to look much further than north central Kentucky, where you'd find the ninety year old farmer, poet, novelist, essayist, and localist, Wendell Berry. Berry has written many brilliant essays dissecting and surveying the idea of localism and its importance to both people and the land. It is a common leitmotif in many of Berry's novels such as Jayber Crow, Hannah Coulter, and Andy Catlett. But what I would like to focus on in this article is how localism is portrayed in Wendell Berry's poetry.

It would be helpful to begin with a small glimpse of what localism means to Wendell Berry. In a speech he gave in 1988 to the Iowa Humanities Board, Berry gave the image of a bucket at his grandfather's farm (which is now his farm). The bucket hung from the barn collecting fallen leaves, nuts, animal droppings, and insects. Over the years, the mixture of organic matter rotted and decayed and produced a layer of humus at the bottom of the bucket. This is what he calls the "slow work of growth and death, gravity and decay, which is the chief work of the world." Much like the bucket, according to Berry, "a human community too must collect leaves and stories, and turn them into an account. It must build soil, and build the memory of itself—in lore and story and song—which will be its culture." And upon this culture is built trust and on that trust an economy of people working together, providing for one another, depending on the land beneath their

feet. Localism then to Wendell Berry is not just about buying local goods, it requires knowing and caring for the people and the land where you live.

Turning to some of his poetry, we can further expound upon this idea. In his poem Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front we hear, "Put your faith in the two inches of hummus / that will build under the trees / every thousand years." Already we see that localism is quite a long process and is a work that extends far beyond ourselves. We mustn't view the Earth as something that is at our disposal or something for us to profit off of, rather we must "say that your main crop is the forest / that you did not plant, / that you will not live to harvest," as we hear later in the same poem. Foundational to Berry's view of localism is the understanding that we are participating in a work that spans generations. This directly contradicts the hyper-individualism that is so prevalent today which stems from the fact that we have been cut off from our community and culture. Due to globalism, social media, and a severance from life on the land, we have been uprooted and dropped into an unfamiliar landscape.

To contrast this image of being uprooted, Berry depicts quite the opposite in his poem From the Handing Down: "He has become one of the familiars / of the place, like a landmark / the birds no longer fear." The old man in the poem has formed and been formed by the place he has lived. He has affected and been affected by the people in his community. To further illustrate this immersion Berry states in the same poem, "Among the greens of full summer, / among shadows like monuments, / he makes his way down, / loving the earth he will become." The same place where the old man was born and grew up is the same place he grows old and will eventually be laid to rest, decaying into the soil, and in turn giving new life.

The entire poem beautifully depicts a relationship between grandfather and grandson. The grandfather has grown old and strolls through the town seeing familiar places and faces and envisions a place that will nurture the future generation when he is no longer there. This introduces a critical element of Berry's localism: hope. "He's comforted, not because he hopes / for much, but because he knows / of hope, its losses and uses." Amidst all the messages of destruction and despair that fill the airwaves, Wendell Berry speaks of hope. When half the world is 'getting while the gettin's good,' we are presented with another option, to have hope for

a better way of life. Hope, not that the world will become some kind of utopia, but that I, here in this place I find myself in and with the people I call neighbor, can join in the work of those who came before me and those who will follow after, in a work that is good.

So how do we hope? How do we begin this participation in building up a culture and an economy that has been lost to the powers that be? We must begin in little ways. We must begin with small, but important, steps. In Wendell Berry's poem How to Be a Poet he offers several lines of advice on writing poetry that I think also apply well to our challenge at hand. He says, "Stay away from anything / that obscures the place it is in." We must be weary to not fall into the false idea that we can be connected with anyone and anything all over the world. Nothing can ever compare with the relationships and encounters we share with the people we interact with each day. We also must be weary not to become overwhelmed with the astonishing images of foreign places and enthralled in movies and shows featuring flashy fictional lives on our phones, TVs, and computers, lest we miss the beauty of the place we are actually in and the depth of life ready to be shared in those actually around us.

From the same poem, Berry says, "There are no unsacred places / there are only sacred places / and desecrated places." No matter where we find ourselves, we must recognize the sacredness of the place we are. The sacredness of the land begging to be cultivated. The sacredness of those in our community, each individual per-

son carrying a depth of dignity inside of them. We must not only stay true to what is sacred, we must consecrate what has been desecrated. Wendell Berry speaks often of the harm that has been done to the land by large corporations and bureaucratic governmental policies which in turn harm the people who live there.

In Sabbath Poem II, 1988 we read, "It is the destruction of the world / in our own lives / that drives us half insane / and more than half." We must recognize the impact the loss of fertile land has on our communities, our economies, and our families. This is not an environmentalist position. This is the reality that we find ourselves in today. When our land has been desecrated and raped for all it can give we will be the ones who will have to answer for our own greed. We have been charged with caring for and cultivating the Earth, but it is our greed and the abuse of our dominion that has led us far away from our original call. "To have lost, wantonly / the ancient forests, the vast grasslands / in our madness, the presence / in our very bodies of our grief."

Yet, as mentioned before, we must have hope and start small. We must know and love the people and places around us. We must appreciate the sacredness of where we are and work towards healing that which has been desecrated. And so, to remind us all that each new day we have a chance to start again, I would like to leave you with a piece of Wendell Berry's poem Be Still in Haste: "How quietly I / begin again // from this moment / looking at the / clock, I start over". ■



Thank God for the missal! I turned for refreshment to the Mass for the day.

“The flowers have appeared in our land, the time of pruning is come.” (That is literally true. Down here on Long Island they have been pruning the fruit trees and grapevines the early part of the month.) “Arise, my love, my beautiful one and come; my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall. Show me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears, for thy voice is sweet and thy face comely.”

Filled with joy at this so different address to the Mother of Christ, I went on reading that chapter in the Cantic of Canticles. “Behold my beloved speaketh to me: Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The fig tree hath put forth her green figs; the vines are in flower with their sweet smell. Arise my love, my beautiful one and come. Catch us, the little foxes, that destroy the vines.”

The little foxes, it is about the little foxes I wish to write, the little foxes that destroy the beautiful vines that prevent the grapes from coming to fruition. In other words, the little misconceptions of feastings and fastings that keep us from rejoicing in true devotion during this season of Lent.

In the Mass of this very day there were two prayers, begging for “health both of soul and of body” and “that physical and moral health which we desire.” I want to write about feastings and fasting and the joys and beauties of body, because, although this is a feast day on which I begin this writing, the Septuagesima season has begun and we begin to gear ourselves for Lent.

How much there was about food in the Old Testament. Adam raised food for himself and Eve, and did it with pleasure. After the fall of Adam, ploughing and seeding and harvesting, earning one’s daily bread either as a husbandman like Cain or shepherd like Abel, was a difficult and painful affair. Sacrifices of food were offered to the Lord, whether of beasts, or of bread and wine—food because it represented our life—what we live by. We offered our lives to the Lord. We also lust after food as Esau did when he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. The Israelites complained of their food in the desert and yearned after the flesh pots of Egypt even with the bondage and slavery it entailed, even though

the Lord fed them bread from heaven and water from the Rock, food that had every delight and taste.

Who can forget the widow’s cruse of oil which was never diminished; Ruth gleaned in the corn; Daniel and his three companions living on “oats, pea beans and barley corn”; and the meal that was served Daniel in the lion’s den by the prophet Zacharias? St. Bonaventure said that after the long fast of our Lord in the desert, when the angels came to minister to Him, they went first to the blessed Mother to see what she had on her stove, and got the soup she had prepared and transported it to our Lord, Who relished it the more because His Mother had prepared it. Of course.

Fasting

How many times fasting is enjoined in the Old Testament. Whenever there was war, a penalty for their sins, the Jews were told to fast, and to fast joyfully, not with long faces. Over and over again the chosen people were urged to do penance, to fast, even their cattle, not only as a sign of sorrow for sins, and offering to God of their life, but also to have the means to show their love for their brother, who was afflicted.

How shall we have the means to help our brother who is in need? We can do without those unnecessary things which become habits, cigarettes, liquor, coffee, tea, candy, sodas, soft drinks, and those foods at meals which only titillate the palate. We all have these habits, the youngest and the oldest. And we have to die to ourselves in order to live, we have to put off the old man and put on Christ. That it is so hard, that it arouses so much opposition, serves to show what an accumulation there is in all of us of unnecessary desires.

The Way to Freedom

Instead of quoting Fr. Lacouture or Fr. Hugo, I’d like to quote Fr. Zossima, that very much alive character in Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*:

“The world says, you have desires, and so satisfy them, for you have the same rights as the most rich and powerful. Don’t be afraid of satisfying them and even multiply your desires. I knew one champion of freedom who told me himself that, when

he was deprived of tobacco in prison, he was so wretched at the privation that he almost went and betrayed his cause for the sake of getting tobacco again! And such a man says, ‘I am fighting for the cause of humanity.’

“How can such a one fight, what is he fit for? He is capable perhaps of some action quickly over, but he cannot hold out long. And it is no wonder that the people instead of gaining freedom have sunk to slavery and instead of serving the cause of brotherly love and the union of humanity, have fallen on the contrary, into dissension and isolation.”

“The monastic way is very different. Obedience, fasting and prayer are laughed at, yet only through them lies the way to real, true freedom.”

And Feasting

I have always meant to go through the New Testament to see how many times food is mentioned, how many times Christ dined, supped, picnicked with His disciples. He healed St. Peter’s mother-in-law and she rose to serve them. He brought the little girl back to life and said, “Give her to eat.” He broiled fish on the seashore for His apostles. Could it possibly be that Mary was less solicitous for the happiness and comfort and refreshment of others?

It is a part of woman’s life to be preoccupied with food. She nurses her child, she has nourished him for nine long months in her womb; it is her grief if her breasts fail her; she weeps if her child refuses to eat. Her work as food provider is her pleasure and her pain, pain because of the monotony and because right now the cost of food has gone up 43 per cent.

There are many ways to write about the problem of food. The heretical attitude of mind which feels shame of the body, disgust at its functions, distaste at supplying its necessities, fear of its joys, has resulted in a most exaggerated attention to food. First we neglect it because we think of eating as a gross pleasure. Then we lose interest in preparing foods for the family, then we turn to store and factory foods with all their talk of vitamins and calories.

Books on Health

From the standpoint of health, there are two good books which stimulate many

thoughts on food. Dr. Price’s *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*, and Alexis Carel’s *Man the Unknown*. We eat to have strength in order to serve God. If there are pleasures of taste to oil the heavy labor of production, we should take them gratefully from the good God. I’m sure the Blessed Mother did not neglect her family duties. I am sure St. Joseph provided a good piece of wood which Mary kept scrubbed and perhaps waxed, and she who “with her bosom’s milk didst feed her own Creator, Lord most high,” must have seen to it that suitable meals were served on that board to Him who was like unto us in all things save only sin.

I have been getting the idea as to what was eaten in those days by what is eaten now by people in the same region. Reviewing a book for the Commonweal, “In the Footsteps of Moses,” led me to T. E. Lawrence, and then to Doughty’s *Arabia Deserta*. At the same time I was reading Bazin’s life of Fr. Charles de Foucauld. And, of course, the Desert Fathers.

Wheat, butter and honey, dates, wine and oil, mutton, calves, fish and quail—these are all mentioned in the Bible. Aside from feasts there was a monotony of diet that we should get back to for the sake of simplifying our lives, for the sake of being more truly poor with Him, for the sake of fasting, and for the sake of health. A handful of ground wheat with honey and milk on it makes a most delightful collation. A slice of whole wheat bread makes a fast day breakfast. You can buy a sack of wheat, a hundred pounds, for \$3. You can live this way in city or country. Not only is this war time, but this is Lent, and Lent is a wonderful time to begin again.

The Pope Said:

Back in May, 1741, Pope Benedict XIV said: “If this observance of Lent comes to be relaxed it is to the detriment of God’s glory, to the dishonor of the Catholic religion, and to the peril of souls; nor can it be doubted that such negligence will become a source of misfortune to nations, of disaster in public affairs, and of adversity to individuals.”

As in the days of the Old Testament, that prophecy of Pope Benedict XIV has come true with us. ■

(originally published in *The Catholic Worker* as “Notes by the Way” in March 1944)

Building Churches

by Peter Maurin

Henry Adams tells us in his autobiography that he could not get an education in America, because education implies unity of thought and there is no unity of thought in America. So he went to England and found that England was too much like America. So he went to France and found that France was too much like England and America. But in France he found the Cathedral of Chartres and from the Cathedral of Chartres he learned that there was unity of thought in thirteenth-century France.

People who built the Cathedral of Chartres knew how to combine cult, that is to say liturgy, with culture, that is to say philosophy, and cultivation, that is to say agriculture.

The Cathedral of Chartres is a real work of art because it is the real expression of the spirit of a united people. Churches that are built today do not express the spirit of the people. "When a church is built," a Catholic editor said to me, "the only thing that has news value is: How much did it cost?" The Cathedral of Chartres was not built to increase the value of real estate. The Cathedral of Chartres was not built with money borrowed from money lenders.

The Cathedral of Chartres was not built by workers working for wages.

Maurice Barres used to worry about the preservation of French Cathedrals, but Charles Peguy thought

that the faith that builds Cathedrals is after all the thing that matters. Moscow had a thousand churches and people lost the faith. Churches ought to be built with donated money, donated material, donated labor.

The motto of St. Benedict was Laborare et Orare, Labor and Pray. Labor and prayer ought to be combined; labor ought to be a prayer. The liturgy of the Church is the prayer of the Church. People ought to pray with the Church and to work with the Church. The religious life of the people and the economic life of the people ought to be one. I heard that in Germany a group of Benedictines is trying to combine liturgy with sociology. We don't need to wait for Germany to point the way, Architects, artists and artisans ought to exchange ideas on Catholic liturgy and Catholic sociology.

THE WORLD REBORN

by John McCormick

Below the surface of the barren and crusted earth
far from probing eyes
a mystery unfolds in hidden silence
Subtle changes, a stir,
a mother's whisper gently prompts,
calling forth new life

The hard exterior of the buried seed slowly yields its protective shell
to the penetrating gift of warmth and moisture,
no longer in exile

A single shoot bursts forth
reaching, reaching upward
through the dense mass of dark and rich humus
the rotting remains of past years
becomes the hallowed ground from which new life springs

A glimmer of hope
a persistent refusal to allow death and decay to have the final word
Lo! not a single shoot but hundreds, thousands
woven into a living garment
clothing the earth's naked body
with its splendor and beauty
the promise of an eternal spring



"Sower Went Out to Sow" by Ade Bethune

Farming is an Altar

Prayer & Worship in the Work of Farming According to Catherine Doherty

Part One: To Dust You Shall Return

by Mattie Jenkins

Of those things in life that speak for themselves, I believe farming is one. No matter how distant any one of us may be from where our food is grown, we all know that its availability is thanks to the work of farmers. Still, I think there is a spiritual value to farming that goes beyond material production; there is something deeply human and indeed, deeply Christian about what we call farming. Catherine Doherty points to this in her book, *Apostolic Farming*, and one feels while reading her book that farming surely must have a place among the more common acts of prayer and worship practiced by Christians. So here we begin an argument for farming for the Christian (if any argument is needed), in two parts. Part one will serve as an introduction, outlining the importance of working the soil for the purpose of preserving our God-given identity as humans, and part two—coming in June—will discuss farming as an intrinsically Christian endeavor. What I say here is the fruit of insights I have received from the land, from dear friends whose relationship to Creation models the argument I make, and from Doherty's book.

But what is meant by “farming”? Does it mean merely “growing food”? Even narrowing it down in that way is difficult in the context of today's agriculture, for the food we encounter as a modern society is not grown whole. We have come to understand food based on how it is processed, not how it grows. But food has always come from the land, and it has long taken the cooperation of Man with Creation to work the land and receive its

yield. Eating—arguably one of the most basic, essential of human activities—depends on forces outside of our control, relationships beyond our inner circle, realities which supermarkets and fast food make it easy to forget. In modern society, there is a rupture at the foundation of this gift we call food, a rupture in the relationship that we are meant to have with it and where it comes from. I assume that we all know this, or at least sense it somewhere within ourselves, and it is important to recognize this because if we have a disordered relationship with where our food comes from, then we have a disordered relationship with ourselves, since we come from the same place. From the dust, that is. Thus, “farming” does mean growing food, but growing food that we have a relationship with and from soil that we have a relationship with. And so, for what follows, farming means the work of growing food in the context of a relationship: one of reciprocity and symbiosis, in which what is taken is received as a gift, and then given back in some way. The descriptor “apostolic” conveys the intention of our farming. The difference between apostolic farming and conventional farming is that apostolic farming submits itself—offers itself—to the Creator. Instead of merely being an occupation, apostolic farming is a way of life with a mission: living the gospel.

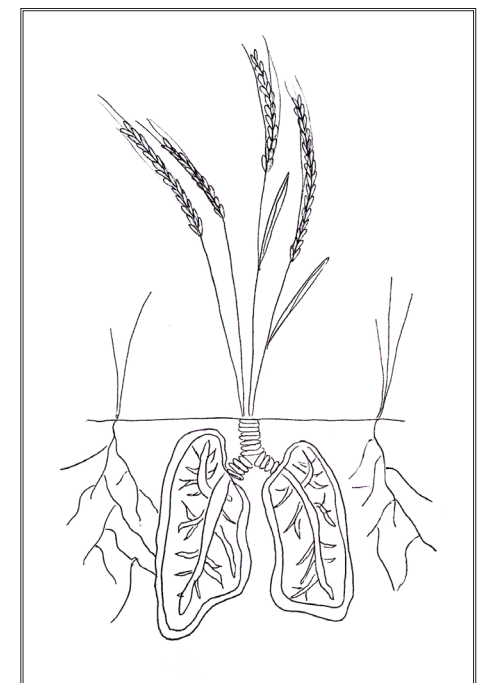
“[God] has placed our soil into this house of sod, and from the soil He will receive it back.” These are the words of a Russian peasant farmer, words that remained with Catherine Doherty long after she grew up and left Russia, words that inspired her and all the members of the Madonna House community, which she founded in Combermere, Canada, to realize a dream that God put in her heart to reintroduce farming to the world as an apostolic vocation. The old Russian farmer continues, “Little lady, of course I know about the earth, and you will too. I came from her and I will return to her. Dust to dust! That's the way God decreed we should come from Him into the world. That is how we shall go back to Him”. This peasant farmer understands something about our humanity that modern society has forgotten (or neglected): the indispensable relationship between Man and Creation. The soil housed man's pri-

mordial encounter with God, and it continues to be a place of encounter with the Creator and a sacred place of participation with Him in redemptive work. According to the biblical account of Creation, Adam emerges after God infuses His own breath into the dust of the Earth. This intimate act reveals the Creator's longing for unity in all of His Creation. With this as our origin story, I assume that the tension between dust and divinity must always be core to our understanding of ourselves as we wrestle alongside the Psalmist when he writes, “Who am I that You are mindful of me, the son of man that You care for me?” (Psalm 8). The first command that Adam receives from God is the command to cultivate and care for the Earth, to “have dominion over it.” In this command, humans receive a great responsibility and a wondrous grace; the preservation and fruitfulness of our means of sustenance are placed in our hands. (Put this way, it begins to sound like the Annunciation, when the infinite God filled a finite womb, placing divinity in the constraints of mortality, redemption in the hands of the redeemed.) We are simultaneously the pinnacle of God's creation and formed from it, we are nothing apart from it. In working the soil, we encounter God in a way that reacquaints us with our human identity, reminding us paradoxically of our poverty and our glory.

Our origin story is not the only place that highlights this tension between dust and divinity; language also points to an indispensable connection between us and the Earth. Three words form a rich trifecta whose roots return to the proto-Indo-European word for “Earth”: human, humus, and humility. Is this shared history a coincidence? Humans are made in the image of God, souls and bodies entrusted with caring for the humus of the Earth, that humus on which we tread and from which springs the food that sustains our lives. With our feet on the ground, our hands dug into this rich soil—full of life and necessary for life—our souls soar up to God, the Creator of this intricately woven, exquisitely designed place that we call home. What response could there be other than humility? Dependent on the soil, we are not only reminded of our position before God, but

also His dependence on us to participate, to cooperate with Him in His continually creative work. We came from the same dust that produces our food, from the food that sustains our life. And what else comes from this dust, this soil? The bread and wine that become Our Lord in the Mass. Given to us by the Earth, through the work of our hands, we offer it back to Him and He transforms it into Himself, just as we one day will be transformed correspondingly to His glorious image. Dust to dust, indeed!

Farming humbles us and brings us back to our roots, it reawakens us to the creative spirit deadened by the rapacious desires of sin. Working the soil and growing food was our first given means of participating in our own redemption and the redemption of the world. It is as natural to the human experience as breathing. “[God] has placed our soil into this house of sod, and from the soil He will receive it back.” When the Russian farmer of Doherty's youth left these words to her, he captured more than the practical value of growing food lovingly and thoughtfully. He captured something profound about our human identity and our relationship to the dust. In this season of Lent, as we reflect on the words of Scripture, “from dust you came and to dust you shall return,” may it be a reminder of our life as much as it is of our death. ■



Artwork by Marjorie Mika

Good Business

by Will Mohr

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)

I often circle back to these words from Jesus. I apply them to many activities, frequently going to my work. I ask myself, “Do I love my neighbor through my work?” Good work hinges on answering this question affirmatively. I previously claimed that one works to provide for needs (“Good Work, Done Well”). Often, work does not provide for one’s own needs but for the needs of others. The farmer feeds himself and his family, but he also feeds a great many more people. Those same people being fed in turn build the tools, the markets, and the clothes necessary for the farmer to live well. Once work gains an interpersonal dimension, Christ’s words “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” must be the guiding principle. The Christian must ask “Do I love my neighbors in my work?”

If good work provides for real needs, then if I love my neighbor, I should wish for my neighbor to have the fruit of my work. We want those we love to have their needs fulfilled. The farmer who loves his neighbors wishes to produce enough for people to eat well. Of course, the farmer deserves payment for his produce so that he may provide for himself as well. Love, however, should moderate the transaction. Both parties should love their neighbor. The farmer should seek no more payment than what is necessary for himself, and the people should seek to provide him with the means for him to live well. Love, willing the good of the other, motivates the transaction, not maximizing or minimizing prices. Money exists as a physical means for enacting neighborly love.

As is with this small case, so should our larger organizations function. Is this so? The largest bank in the United States produced a net income of \$56 billion in 2024 (AP News). Although it provides many different services, one small slice of its business is home loans. If this bank (well, the people who run it) loved their neighbors, should it not provide below market rates for their clients? After all, one who loves their neighbors wishes their neighbors to have good homes. If this bank (well, the people who run it) loved its employees, would it not share the \$56 billion with their employees? It made approximately \$180,000 per employee after paying wages. According to Indeed, this bank pro-

vides salaries ranging from approximately \$38,000 to \$168,000 a year, substantially less than the profit made per employee in 2024. Admittedly, other sources list numbers higher and lower than Indeed. So, what does this company (well, the people who run it) love? Money. Evidenced by its actions, it does not care much about its employees or its clients, it cares about maximizing profits (and raising stock prices). In other words, its motivation is greed, greed for itself and its stockholders. If it functioned on principles of love, it would moderate its own profits by lowering fees and interest rates to better provide real goods to its clients and raise pay to ensure its employees may live well. This, however, is not happening.

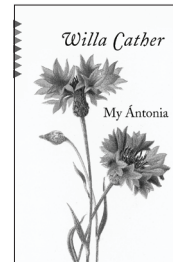
Now perhaps the reader responds, “Yeah of course businesses aim to maximize wealth. That’s just good business!” Maybe for the non-Catholic, unfortunately (or fortunately depending on what you think), the Catholic is called to a standard of love which knows no bounds. Christ gave no stipulation for separating His commands to love from economic affairs (Please correct me if I am wrong).

Maybe the reader thinks, “That’s well and good but the Church has no business being in business!” Unfortunately (or fortunately depending on what you think), the Church has the “grave duty of disseminating and interpreting the whole moral law, and of urging it in season and out of season...” and consequently she reserves “the right and duty to pronounce with supreme authority upon social and economic matters” (Quadragesimo Anno 41). The Church has spoken, “...all forms of economic enterprise must be governed by the principles of social justice and charity (Mater et Magistra 39). In other words, our economic enterprises should seek to curb the greed which currently motivates our institutions and instill, in its place, the virtue of charity.

For the Catholic, there is no escaping it - we must work according to the Gospel. We must ask ourselves if our economic ventures reflect the all-encompassing law of love. We must moderate our desire for money. “Do we love our neighbors as ourselves?” Only when our work reflects a love of neighbor will we truly have “good business.” ■

What Friends of the Catholic Worker are Reading

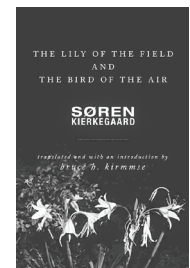
(and why you should, too)



My Antonia
by Willa Cather

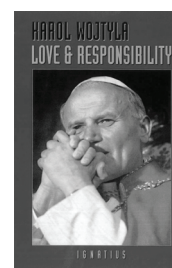
“My Antonia paints a vivid picture of the rawness of American pioneer life. Cather incorporates the ecological transformation of the North American prairie during this period as a subtle backdrop, beginning with rich description of the expansive beauty of the virgin prairie and how early agricultural practices began to alter that landscape. The pioneer way of life is neither over-romanticized nor condemned, and well-developed characters navigate the joy and hardship embodied in the timeless human experience of living together with those closest to us.” —Kate

“In his book, Kierkegaard reflects on a passage from the Gospel of Matthew and encourages the Christian to learn from the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. The reader is first introduced to ‘the poet,’ a type of person who considers the freedom that the bird has and laments at his inability to fly. The poet searches for himself within the lily and the bird and finds pain in his failure to imitate them. The Christian must take these creatures as teachers of the faith. We are to look at how they worship God and learn from them. In what appears to be a homiletic narrative, Kierkegaard masterfully outlines three discourses that inspire his readers to learn silence, obedience, and joy from these teachers. This little book is simple and yet edifying. He makes living out the Christian faith accessible to those who allow themselves to be small enough to learn from such simple creatures.” —Mihret

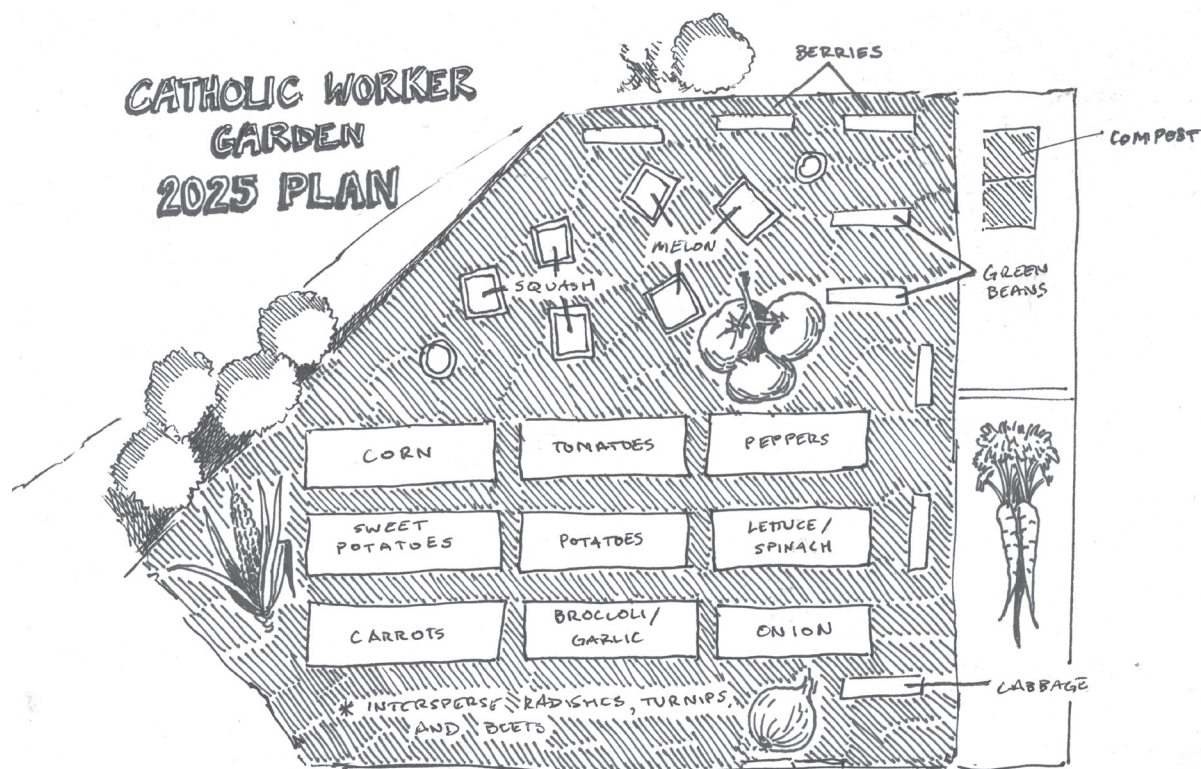


The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air
by Søren Kierkegaard

“In an age where the word “love” and our understanding of it are so muddled, this book has been refreshing for me. Pope Saint John Paul II systematically and thoroughly examines what true love is, encompassing its sensual, emotional, psychological, ethical, and most importantly, personal, aspects. Though this book is specifically about married (“betrothed”) love, it is for every Christian because its insights on love are based on a “personalistic norm,” versus a “utilitarian norm.” True love is always directed toward the person as a being made in the image of God, and not their use, which has obvious implications in our friendships as much as in our marriages.” —Mattie



Love and Responsibility
by Karol Wojtyła



Upcoming Garden Workdays

Saturday, March 15
Prepping the Garden

Saturday, March 22
First Round of Planting

Saturday, April 19
Second Round of Planting

Saturday, May 3
Harvesting & Planting

All days starting at 9:00am
Families welcome!

It's that time of year again. We at the Romero Catholic Worker are craving sunshine and warmth after roughly 13 inches of snow and two "winter storms" between January and February here in Wichita. Our bodies are telling us that it's time for fresh fruit and vegetables - broccoli, salad, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, melons. And our brothers and sisters living in tent encampments south of town along the river have expressed a desire for fresh vegetables to add to their meals. So to that end, we'll be working as a community to sow seeds in the garden space graciously provided by the Lord's Diner-Hillside, beginning this month and into May.

This is our first planting season, so our goal is to get acquainted with the soil and what it might need from us in order to be healthy and fertile and to learn what our crops have to teach us about their needs, given the specifics of place, climate, and daylight. We are beginning with the knowledge that we do have, and fully expecting to learn as we go. We are students; the Lord-through His Creation-will be our Teacher. While we intend to grow food and hope for abundance so that we can share with our neighbors, our goal is stewardship, not production. If this season we learn only what the soil and crops need, then we will consider this

enough. We are sowing more than seeds; we are sowing hope, love for God and neighbor, and faith in God's provision. We are sowing because we believe that our modern, consumerist, wasteful, exploitative society is not what we were made for as humans and because we believe in the significance of small actions, working toward a "society in which it is easier for people to be good."

Right now, leaf mulch and some locally sourced horse manure and straw compost adorn our beds, in an effort to increase the organic matter of the soil. Winter peas have begun to sprout, serving as a soil cover and as a food crop. Broccoli and cabbage seedlings will be the first to grace the beds, followed by carrots, potatoes, spinach, and lettuce later this month. We will scatter beet, radish, turnip, and kale seeds among the other plants, to bring a diversity of roots to the soil and expand the possibilities for kitchen creativity. The cucurbit family-melons, cucumbers, zucchini, and squash-will be sprawled out in no time, yielding a harvest through the summer and into late fall. Tomatoes, peppers, and sweet potatoes give us reason to look forward to the heat of summer here in the Plains. And while our space is too confined to plant the Three Sisters (the indigenous planting method of the Americas for corn, beans, and

squash) in the traditional way, we still plan to attempt it in a modified way, with a small crop of corn and pole beans planted together.

Each plant contributes to the soil and the garden ecosystem in a different way. This is why we have chosen a variety of vegetables, many of which we will intercrop, so that the soil and the plants are enjoying the most possible benefits from each other's company. Diversity also protects the harvest from devastation by pests, diseases, and weather; what affects one crop may be met with resilience from another.

The harvest will be distributed among our community and neighbors, and our monthly community dinners will feature seasonal ingredients grown in our garden. Who knows? Maybe we'll have some recipes to share in the next issue of The Radix! Fresh produce lends itself well to a sort of accountability: our dialoguing about stewardship and responsible use and localism will now have reality to test our commitment. Before the tomatoes and zucchini and greens go to waste, we'll have to be creative about how to use them, or return them to the soil in the form of compost. So maybe there will be breakfast burrito and salsa-making parties in the Romero Catholic Worker's future ... ■

Third Place

Peter Maurin called for Round-Table Discussions in order to have clarification of thought.

Through clarification of thought, we refrain from becoming idealists and are enabled to take action.

Our Round-Table Discussion is called Third Place.

We meet every other Thursday 8:00pm.

120 N Erie St
Wichita, KS 67214

If you'd like to receive notifications with meeting times and reading material, please send us an email at romerocatholicworker@gmail.com.

All are welcome.

OUR NEEDS AS WE APPROACH SUMMER

Water (40 packs)

Reusable Water Bottles

Gatorade/Lemonade Drink Mix

Individual Drink Mixes

Liquid I.V.

Sunscreen

Bugspray

Empty Milk Jugs

(Donations can be dropped off at 120 N Erie St)

Wichita City Council Targets Homelessness With New Ordinance

by Patrick McKenzie

On January 7th, the Wichita City Council passed 4-3 a stricter illegal camping ordinance for the city of Wichita. On the yes side was Lily Wu, Becky Tuttle, JV Johnston, and Dalton Glasscock; on the no side was Maggie Ballard, Brandon Johnson, and Mike Hoheisel.

The decision followed a Supreme Court ruling last June where a 6-3 decision overturned a lower ruling in the 9th circuit that had said camping bans in cities with insufficient shelter were in violation of the Eighth Amendment. Commenting on this violation as cruel and unusual punishment, Justice Sonia Sotomayor stated, "Sleep is a biological necessity, not a crime."

Ed Johnson, the director of litigation at the Oregon Law Center commented on the Supreme Court's decision saying, "We are disappointed that a majority of the court has decided that our Constitution allows a city to punish its homeless residents for sleeping outside with a blanket to survive the cold when there is nowhere else for them to go."

The overturning of the 9th circuit's decision by the Supreme Court has led to other cities, including Wichita, enforcing much stricter ordinances targeting homeless individuals.

The new ordinance in Wichita allows for immediate cleanup of camps on sidewalks or walking paths, in front of doorways, near bridges, or at bus shelters. Camps that do not fall under the previous categories will be given a 48-hour notice to clean up, compared to the previous allowance of 72 hours. If someone were to refuse, they can be fined \$200 or up to 30 days in jail. The city has allotted \$300,000 for cleanups for the year of 2025 (the city spent \$210,000 in 2023).

Many individuals spoke up at the Council meeting, pleading with the City Council to not go through with the ordinance. "All sweeps do is decrease the overall life expectancy of people being affected by them," said Piper Thomas, a member of the Sunflower Community Support Network. "People would do well to view every home-

less person not as an illegal camper but as somebody who may have been forced into this situation," said Aaron Ferguson, someone who is currently experiencing homelessness.

Councilman Brandon Johnson spoke up as well at the meeting saying, "We're kind of putting the cart before the horse. The other challenge is these folks are not going to jail. You know, jail is one of the penalties, but as soon as someone unhoused goes to jail, they're going to get right back out and be back out in the community, and then where are they going to go, where their belongings [are going to go]". Johnson continued by commenting on how simply having beds available is not enough, "We have a lot of work to do to build trust with the unhoused community to get them into a place like our emergency shelter."

The city of Wichita and Mayor Lily Wu have made big claims about the future of the city's plans to work with the homeless. Back in June, the city of Wichita acquired the former Park Elementary School building at 1025 N. Main St., where it plans to establish the "MAC" or Multi-Agency Center. This center would function as an industrialized "one-stop shop" for shelter and services for the homeless population.

The MAC served as this winter's Emergency Shelter, run by HumanKind Ministries which was contracted out by the city of Wichita. The shelter has a capacity of 200 beds (128 for men and 72 for women) as well as an overflow space with 66 beds. The shelter has been running at near capacity during the cold weeks this winter.

This winter was also an unprecedented occurrence due to zero housing vouchers being issued, a consequence of rising housing costs. In fact, not a single housing voucher has been issued since May due to a moratorium put in place by HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development), according to Sally Stang, the director of city housing and community services for the city of Wichita. Currently, 10,000 households remain waiting for vouchers. ■

Love Your Neighbor, Stop Buying Clothes!

by Mattie Jenkins

It was down to the wire; a two-week scramble that took me back to my college days. I fell asleep mentally arranging and rearranging every night, seeking solutions to this dilemma that we had unexpectedly found ourselves in ...

It might surprise you, but I am not referring to the rewarding pressure of beating a deadline so that someone could get housing or pay their bills on time. I'm not even referring to late nights spent editing and finalizing the newspaper you are holding in your hands (though that may have been the case ...)

No, I am referring to our push at the end of last month to get everything out of the storage unit that we have been renting since November. The storage company raised the monthly rate to over \$100 (for a unit the size of a small bedroom), which also raised the question: is it not an absurdity for Catholic Workers—striving to live by principles of simplicity and voluntary poverty—to pay for a place to store stuff? In this unit were stored all of the clothing donations and sundry other items that we have received to distribute to our homeless brothers and sisters, and they were in a storage unit because what had been a trickle soon became a roaring torrent and had promptly overflowed Patrick's truck, his front porch, and my bedroom. But at the end of February, despite the fact that the unit itself was bursting to the seams, we scrambled and we pushed and we got every last trash bag full of clothes out of there by 8pm the night before March's payment came due. So now Patrick's truck, his basement, my basement, my vehicle, and Bridgette's garage temporarily contain these donations until they can be given to "the needy." Or until more stuff can be piled on top of them.

It gets even harder than usual to love your neighbor when you can't see your neighbor for the mountain of black trash bags of clothes you have to sort through.

Supposedly, because I am at the park every Tuesday and Patrick and April are downtown nearly every weekday, we are sufficiently able to distribute all of the clothing, hats, gloves, scarves, coats, blankets, socks, etc. But all winter, we have made barely a dent in the amount that we have to distribute, and truthfully, it seems that the mountain continues to grow. Most days I bring home only marginally less than I

had taken out with me. The problem is not the inability to distribute resources, it is the veritable excess of resources to distribute. It turns out that the needs of "the needy" are not exactly proportional to the overflow of the less needy. And even on the days when we run "specials" and people can take as many clothes as they can carry, I ask myself, is this really the point? People just don't need—and most don't even want—armfuls of clothing every week, even if they are unhoused. On Tuesdays, my immediate goal may be to get rid of as much as possible, knowing there is oh-so-much more where that came from, but isn't the ultimate goal to encourage a society in which it is easier for people to be good? And wouldn't that exclude excess and consumerism? Is this not encouraging the very same materialism and accumulation of earthly goods that we despise and criticize?

If you feel that you are detecting some sarcasm, you are right. Maybe there is even some cynicism. Am I being melodramatic? Yes. Am I being peevish? Yes. Am I being ungrateful? I am certainly not trying to be. It would be terribly unfair and, in fact, wrong, to spurn the generosity that has inundated us with these items. It is truly a great gift to offer my neighbor at the park a pair of jeans that actually fit her, or a coat to replace her stolen one; this would not be possible if we did not receive some donations. But the flood - it's the flood of stuff that sticks in my craw. It isn't that I am trying to stifle abundant generosity. Generosity and the magnanimity of our friends is not to blame for this flood. The fault lies in overconsumption and its progenitor, overproduction.

So, toward the end of a more consistent ethos, I would ask that we consider restraint as a means of loving our neighbor. That is, the restraint of not buying more clothing, and thereby choosing to resist a system that produces and produces and produces with no thought for the waste it generates. I am not discouraging a generous spirit; we welcome generous, copious amounts of prayer! I am merely being frank about the situation as it is for us at the Romero Catholic Worker: we simply cannot accept more clothing at this time. I am discouraging material generosity in favor of charity. That is, let us truly love our neighbors by opting out of overconsumption, and stop buying clothes. ■

If you'd like to subscribe to quarterly issues of the Radix Newspaper you can send us your mailing information at romerocatholicworker.org under the 'Radix Newspaper' tab.

* * *

Copies of Radix are free, but donations are welcome to help support our efforts.

Blowing the Dynamite

by Peter Maurin

Writing about the Catholic Church, a radical writer says:

"Rome will have to do more than to play a waiting game; she will have to use some of the dynamite inherent in her message."

To blow the dynamite
of a message
is the only way
to make the message dynamic.

If the Catholic Church
is not today
the dominant social dynamic force,
it is because Catholic scholars
have failed to blow the dynamite
of the Church.

Catholic scholars
have taken the dynamite
of the Church,
have wrapped it up
in nice phraseology,
placed it in an hermetic container
and sat on the lid.

It is about time
to blow the lid off
so the Catholic Church
may again become
the dominant social dynamic force.

Spiritual Poverty & the Desert Fathers

by Patrick McKenzie

In the two accounts of Jesus' famous Sermon, one that takes place on a mount (Gospel of Matthew) and one at a level place (Gospel of Luke), we hear two very similar statements. In Matthew, Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," and in Luke, "Blessed are you who are poor," to which Jesus assures the kingdom of heaven to both. What is this connection between the physically poor and the poor in spirit? Is it simply a linguistic issue, or is there a deeper connection between spiritual and physical poverty?

Looking first to the Desert Fathers, to gain a deeper insight into this question, we come across a story of two hermits:

Two hermits lived together for many years without a quarrel. One said to the other, 'Let's have a quarrel with each other, as other men do.' The other answered, 'I don't know how a quarrel happens.' The first said, 'Look here, I put a brick between us, and I say, "That's mine." Then you say, "No, it's mine." That is how you begin a quarrel.' So they put a brick between them, and one of them said, 'That's mine.' The other said, 'No; it's mine.' He answered, 'Yes, it's yours. Take it away.' They were unable to argue with each other.

The problem here lies not in the physical goods themselves (in this case, a brick), but in our attachment to our belongings. In the truest sense, the two hermits understood that we do not really own anything, that everything we have has been given to us by God. To say this is my brick, or my car, or my house, is not really true at all. Everything we "own" ultimately comes from God, and nothing we "own" can be taken with us in the eschaton.

It is in the fundamental misunder-



standing of our relationship to physical goods that greed and quarreling enter our lives. We quickly become attached to our belongings and depend on them for our security and, even worse, our happiness. If we allow this attachment to fester, physical goods can even become idols, eclipsing the relationship between us and God the Father. When our relationship with the Father is distorted, our relationships with our

brothers and sisters soon follow, as can be seen in another story about the Desert Father, Abbot Agatho:

Abbot Agatho frequently admonished his disciple, saying: Never acquire for yourself anything that you might hesitate to give to your brother if he asked you for it, for thus you would be found a transgressor of God's command. If anyone asks, give it to him, and if anyone wants to borrow from

you, do not turn away from him. (XC-VII)

Returning to the Sermon on the Mount, the poor that Jesus is referring to are called the *anawim*. The word *anawim* literally means to be bowed down or crouched over in Hebrew. They are the lowly, the marginalized, the forgotten, the little ones, the poor. They are the ones who depend fully on God and his promise of his Kingdom, because they have nowhere else to put their faith. They are like the lilies of the field that do not toil or spin, yet God dresses them beautifully.

The greatest example of the *anawim* that we have is Mary of Nazareth. In the Annunciation, Mary was met with an angel who brought a message: that she would bear a son through whom salvation would enter the world. In her utter dependence on God, Mary accepted, "let it be done to me according to your word." As one of the *anawim*, Mary's life was not simply entrusted to God's providence. Even more than dependence, her life was filled with a readiness to do God's will. This is the second aspect of what it means to be poor in spirit: to have within oneself a readiness to answer God's call.

Thomas Dubay, in his book *Happy Are You Poor*, draws the connection between this readiness and physical poverty: "Factual frugality embraced willingly in faith bestows on one not a mere abstract, pale awareness. It brings about a felt sensitivity to what the Lord Jesus is all about. It helps dissolve opaqueness, dullness, resistance to the word of God."

To conclude, we cannot say that physical belongings in themselves are bad, but we must be weary to not grow attached or dependent, lest our soul becomes stuffy and crowded to hear God's call and respond with haste. ■

To Be Branded

by Jordan Ehrke

Everywhere we look, brands present themselves to us. From where I am sitting while writing this article I can see a variety of brands, from the QT logo on a coffee cup, to the Apple logo on my phone; from the Pilot logo printed on the pen I am using, to the Nike logo on a stranger's shoes. Even if we were to flee to pristine untouched wilderness, we would likely be able to look down and see that the very clothes we are wearing are plastered with brands.

Branding is more prolific today than ever before, but humans have been using brands since at least 2700 BC. Initially, branding was used in to denote ownership. A heated branding iron would be used to burn a unique mark on cattle and slaves to identify their owner. Of course, some ranchers raised fatter and healthier cattle than others, and their brands became indicators of the origin and quality of their product. In time, the practice of marking crafted goods to indicate a certain quality became widespread. This is the sense it which many of us might assume recognizable brands are used today.

A quick glance at some of our most recognizable brands makes it apparent that this is not the case. Products no longer stand alone; they are supported by media engagement, targeted ads, celebrity endorsement, and product placement. We are conditioned to think highly of a given product when we are watching movies, browsing the internet, scrolling on social media, and driving on the highway. But our perception of a product is rarely based on its real qualities, because we cannot engage with the product itself through a digital or printed ad. Instead, we build perceptions based on the fact that our favorite celebrity used this water bottle, because James Bond wore those sunglasses, or because that truck looked so very capable in that commercial. In purchasing a product, we are acting from the perceptions that have been

intentionally instilled in us, not necessarily for our benefit, but certainly for the company's benefit. In doing this, we have become slaves, obedient to our masters.

The brand might not scar our skin, but it is emblazoned on our chest, displayed on our shoes, and stamped on our devices. They show others that the companies own us, that they have subliminally commanded us and that we have obeyed by purchasing. In wearing or carrying the product, we reinforce the message for others. You need this type of phone. Everyone is wearing these shoes. All your friends like that jacket. We imitate the people around us, and further give in to the messaging of the company.

All of this might sound like a sweeping denouncement of brands, as if I would have you eliminate all branded objects from your life. That is not the case. Some brands still do serve the real function of ensuring quality and origin. Further, some "brands" that we wear are not corporate in any way. I might walk around in a shirt stamped with a logo that identifies my community or interests. Even the Romero Catholic Worker has a recognizable logo. Finally, I find the fashionable attempt to eliminate brands completely from your clothing in attempt to differentiate yourself from the crowd and emphasize your individualism ridiculous.

My intention in writing this is simply to bring a bit more attention to the factors that influence our consumption decisions, with the hope that increased awareness might allow us to begin to freely make those decisions for ourselves. Especially now, during Lent, instead of imitating the consumers around you, emulate the ancient Israelites in making an exodus and emancipating yourself from the factors that are making you a slave. Ask yourself, "Will you let yourself be branded?" ■

Thank you!

We are so grateful for having the opportunity to start a Catholic Worker in Wichita, KS. We wish to thank so many that have already supported our community in its effort to live out the Works of Mercy daily. From dropping off water and bananas each week, to donating clothes, to giving monetarily, we are overwhelmed by how willing people have been to give. We continue to make many connections and are astounded by the willingness and readiness of people ready to live the Gospel. Thank you to all who wrote articles for and helped distribute the newspaper. We also know that those we serve are also extremely grateful for all your support.

We still are not sure where God is guiding our efforts though we continue to pray for a house to begin our House of Hospitality. It is our hope that with a House of Hospitality (ideally two, one for women and one for men) we will not only be able to house people who are on the street, but that we will begin to share our lives with the poor in a radical way.

If you would like to donate, please visit our website at www.romerocatholicworker.org or email us at romerocatholicworker@gmail.com. Checks can be made out to "Romero Catholic Worker" and sent to 120 N Erie St, Wichita, KS 67214. Please be advised that we do not have 501(c)3 status as an act of resistance and non-participation as well as to stay true to the grassroots and personalist efforts of the Movement, gifts are not tax deductible. **As always, we ask for your prayers above all.**

Peace in Christ,

The Romero Catholic Worker

If you would like to contribute to *Radix*, please submit articles, artwork, poems, etc. to romerocatholicworker@gmail.com.

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Voz de Romero

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY BECOMES OURS THROUGH BAPTISM

*Homily by St. Oscar Romero
Holy Saturday, 25 March 1978*

The word of God takes us back to the origins of the world in the first reading from Genesis and then continues on through various chapters of salvation history before culminating in the event we are commemorating tonight: the resurrection of the Lord. But this history did not end twenty centuries ago. The final chapter we are writing here right now. That is why my poor words can do little more than draw on the readings from God's word to tell you (and to remind myself) how much the Lord loves us!

At the origins of humankind God said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness" (Gen 1:26), but human beings did not maintain this dignity. Rather, they offended God by sinning and disfigured this likeness to God. And so his divine Son came to restore that image, and he consummated the work of restoration.

This evening we conclude the solemn Easter Triduum. These three days are the greatest days of the year and have given us an opportunity to consider three great aspects of our redemption: the suffering and passion of the Redeemer on Good Friday; the silent hopefulness of the tomb where the body of Christ was laid to rest; and tonight, the triumph of the resurrection. These three realities—the sorrowful death, the tomb, and the resurrection—constitute the paschal mystery.

The paschal mystery—that is, the passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ—is an event that we must make our own. This whole history-defining episode of Christ's life would have been in vain if we did not make it part of our lives. This is the meaning of this night: that sorrowful passion, that expectant tomb, and that triumph we commemorate tonight have all been made ours through baptism.

In a short while we are going to renew our baptism because these three dimensions of the paschal mystery which brought about our redemption have marked our lives from that moment when our parents carried us to the baptismal font—just as in former times the catechumens were brought forward on Holy Satur-

day night to be baptized and confirmed.

Saint Paul has just explained to us the meaning of Christian baptism: being buried with Christ and rising with Christ (Rom 6:4). When we reflect on modern men and women, sisters and brothers, we see how these three aspects of the Passover of Christ relate to the life of people today.

THE SUFFERING AND PASSION OF THE REDEEMER ON GOOD FRIDAY

First, consider the sorrowful passion of Christ. People today run away from pain; they don't want suffering. Nevertheless, no one is more convinced than modern people that pain and death are invincible. Despite all the advances in medicine and the alleviation of suffering, pain still reigns supreme. Suffering is the human heritage whether we like it or not. The secret, then, lies in giving meaning to that suffering. What baptism does is take human beings with all their tragedy and all their pain and convert the suffering of their lives—their hunger, their marginalization, their pain—into redemptive suffering along with Christ.

This evening we are able offer the divine risen One all our suffering by incorporating it into his glorious wounds. Of all the faithful filling this cathedral and all those reflecting with us on the radio this holy night, who does not have suffering? What Christian does not carry some problem of conscience? Tonight Christ invites us to unite all our own sufferings to his passion and cross so that they may be divinized, being illuminated with the light and filled with the hope of Easter. On this night, sisters and brothers, the best gift we can bring for the divine risen One is our own suffering so that, united to his resurrection, it becomes the pain of redemption.

THE SILENCE OF THE TOMB, THE HOPE OF THE GRAVE

The second aspect of the Passover is the burial of Holy Saturday. The tomb is silent but not passive, because our faith tells us that while the body of Christ rested in his tomb from Good Friday afternoon until tonight, the blessed soul of

Christ was at work.

It was Palm Sunday on the other side of history. After Christ passed through the painful tunnel of death, his soul was there with the blessed souls of the Old Testament. There he was with Adam and Eve, Abraham, David, the patriarchs, the prophets, all the noble and holy people who lived before Christ but could not enter heaven because it had been closed by human sin.

That heaven was now open again! As our Creed tells us, "Christ descended into hell"; that is, he descended to the realm of the dead, and the quarters of death were filled with light. It was Palm Sunday also for the people of the Old Testament, who together with the risen Christ formed a procession of spirits who accompany him everywhere and enter with him into the kingdom of heaven. Christ has come to redeem all people, not only those born after him, but those who lived before him in the hope of resurrection.

The silent tomb is a sign of our hope. On this Easter night the tomb becomes an empty grave and the greatest monument to Christian hope. We will also die; we will succumb to the onslaught of pain and death; we will grow old. Will this be reason to say that Christ's

redemption was ineffective? By no means! It simply means that in Christ's redemption there is a definitive phase which is his divine person. He has triumphed completely, but the human race must still keep living with hope. Hope is vital for us.

Sisters and brothers, in these times when history seems to be running into a dead end, hope still brightens the horizon of Christians. It appears that in the tomb of Christ the Lord's enemies have sealed their victory, but on this very night the seals and chains placed on it by his enemies are broken, and the tomb cries out, "O death, where is your victory?" (1 Cor 15:55).

Just as the tomb of Christ breaks the padlocks of death, so too the tombs of our loved ones and our own tombs will one day be emptied.

We need to nourish this hope, sisters and brothers, especially during these hours when many people are trying to resolve our political, social, and economic problems by organizing earthly forces and using only worldly means. Redemption tells us that our true liberation is the fruit of the triumphant Christ and of the hope we place in him. The greater our problems, the more opportunity we are giving the Redeemer and the greater must be our hope. This is the night of hope, the night of Easter, the night of the empty tomb!

THE TRIUMPH OF THE RESURRECTION

And so we come, sisters and brothers, to the third phase of the paschal mystery: the triumph. This is a night of triumph, a night of victory, but not a victory that leaves the enemies crushed under hatred and bloodshed. The victories achieved by bloodshed are detestable. The victories won by brute force are brutish. The victory that truly triumphs is that of faith, the victory of Christ who did not come to be served but to serve (Matt 20:28). The triumph of his love is a peaceful triumph. Death's triumph was not definitive. The definitive victory is the triumph of life over death, the triumph of peace, the triumph of joy, the triumph of the alleluias, the triumph of the

resurrection of the Lord!

But I repeat: in this triumph, sisters and brothers, there are two aspects, two phases.

Don't forget that. The first phase is Christ's, and he is already crowned with absolute victory; he is the king of life and of eternity. Saint Paul just told us, "Christ has risen, and death has no hold on him" (Rom 6:9). In him redemption has reached its peak. But tonight we are going to renew our baptism as Christians, and we know that for us the victory still lies ahead as the object of our hope. The banners of suffering and pain and sin and death are still raised over our world.

This does not mean that Christ's death and resurrection were a failure because of human wickedness; it just means that this is the time of the church. From the resurrection of Christ until the second coming how many centuries will pass? We do not know, but we do know that with the resurrection of Christ the victory over sin and hell and death has been guaranteed and that God has asked his church to administer this victory of Christ in the hearts of every person. That is the reason for this tremendous work of evangelization, the labor of reconciling people with God, the work of bringing the blood of Christ to the hearts of all, the work of planting the love of God in the midst of hatred, the work of sowing peace among the nations, the work of promoting justice in human relationships and respect for the rights of those sanctified by the Lord's redemption.

These labors of the church suppose bloody struggles and painful conflicts, but they are part of the Passover of Christ, a Passover that will not be completed until Christ returns again. This night presents the church waiting for the dawn. You heard the words of the Easter proclamation singing the glory of this beautiful paschal candle that we have lit in the midst of

this assembly, this thick candle with a cross as its mark of glory. This candle is a symbol of Christ; it is the church illuminating the night with the light of Christ. The deacon sang, "May the night remain bright until the morning light announces that now there is no need for this candle. It is day! The brilliance of the new day illuminates the people who continue their pilgrimage here on earth". This candle represents the church; as long as there is night, she will burn brightly until the first light of morning, when Christ returns. We still cannot see the splendor of the glory of the risen Christ, but through the church he is preaching, forgiving, sanctifying, and guiding the souls of those who allow themselves to be led.

Therefore, sisters and brothers, we are going to conclude this Liturgy of the Word with the renewal of our baptismal commitment. We are going to bless the water that will be used to baptize the children, the font in which we also were incorporated into this paschal mystery.

This night is beautiful not only because Christ has risen above pain and death but because this tomb and this victory have become ours, thanks to the baptism instituted by Christ so that all those born of flesh may by baptism become incorporated into him and thus become children of the redemption and candidates for eternal glory and victory. Let it be so. ■