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Aims and Purposes

The Catholic Worker

1939

We repeat again and again that our work is to bring men back to Christ. The workers of the world are lost to the Church, Pope Pius XI said. We are of the workers, they are our brothers, we are all members or potential members of the Mystical Body of Christ. This means Catholic, Protestant or Jew; black, white or yellow; German, Italian, Japanese as well as every other race. Fr. O'Connor of Dunwoodie said that since there is no time with God, we must look upon all men as fellow members of the Mystical Body. St. Paul persecuted the Church one day and was her most ardent Apostle the next. So we must look with love on all. If one member suffers, the health of the whole body is lowered, so we must regard the suffering of the workers throughout the world and bring them back to Christ so that they may work for a new social order, a new earth wherein justice dwelleth, for love of Christ, and in the strength that Christ will give them.

Our program for our own lives is simple: to clarify thought by constant study and discussion; to live in and work for more Houses of Hospitality which will be centers of the Works of Mercy; and to establish farming communes throughout the country where there

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is a cure for unemployment, where there is room for private property and where there is room for the family.

How are we going to maintain these, or even start them? By embracing voluntary poverty so that we are not afraid of hardship, so that we can work in the Little Way, St. Therese speaks of. By hard work, manual and mental; by putting all our own resources into the work; and because we have given all, not to be afraid to ask of others, so that in their generosity they can contribute. We have faith that if we give to the extent of our means and abilities, God will prompt others to help with whatever else we need.

The question as to how we are supported is always asked? We truly can say that we live from day to day. One day last month the Edison Company threatened to shut off our gas and light. There was no money in the bank and the bill was ninety-five dollars. The next morning an envelope was mailed to us from Harrisburg with exactly ninety-five dollars in it, an anonymous contribution. The worker and the unemployed, even, send in small contributions. Priests and Sisters have helped us from the beginning from their poverty. Occasionally (it has happened about five times), there was an overwhelming gift of a thousand dollars, and on one occasion, two thousand dollars. These big gifts which are very rare give us the feeling that always when the burden gets too heavy and we are groaning over the weight of many bills, the Lord will regard our lack of faith which causes us worry, and remind one of our readers to help us by wiping out half our bills at one fell swoop. Let us pray this happens this month, as our printing bill with this issue goes up to \$1,800 again. When we get really desperate we send out a mimeographed appeal to our friends, and many small contributions help us out for a time. But we live on the faith that all the poor, all the workers must live on today. No worker has security in his job. One who is working today may join the ranks of the unemployed tomorrow.

The reason we emphasize the living of our program is because we know that example must go with the written work to enliven

it. We cannot know what we have not practiced, St. Francis said by trying to live the program we are upholding, we try to show its practicability. We are not sociologists dealing with paper men and women, paper families. We are not drawing up blue prints, and contemplating them from behind an editor's desk. We are most painfully living our ideas. I say painfully, because we must be constantly humiliated at our failures, at the difference between the ideal and the real.

But to change the social order we must make men, and men cannot be made in a day or in a year. It is a life time job.