

# MANNA *in the wilderness*

December 1998

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

Volume 13, Number 2

**“The Mystery of the poor is this:  
That they are Jesus, and what  
you do for them you do for Him.  
It is the only way we have  
of knowing and believing  
in our love.” -Dorothy Day**



*Thanks to your support, this past year we have given out over 26,000 paper bowls filled with hot nutritious food, and most were refilled with seconds, thirds and fourths.*

Dear friends;

In August we began our 13th year serving the poor in Las Vegas. We have taken the financial gifts you have given us and multiplied them. This past year we have given out over 26,000 paper bowls filled with hot, nutritious food, and most were refilled again with seconds, thirds and fourths. Our hospitality house continues to be used as a day center for homeless families seven days a week, and thanks to your generosity, 36 families (73 children) have shared the beauty and safety of our home this year.

With your enduring financial support we are excited about starting a new outreach ministry this January. The goal of this ministry is to nurture a relationship between the Catholic Worker family of volunteers and families we encounter in our community that are in need of ongoing material and moral support. We will gather for prayer, prepare food boxes, leave in pairs to visit the families, then regather together for reflection and closing prayer.

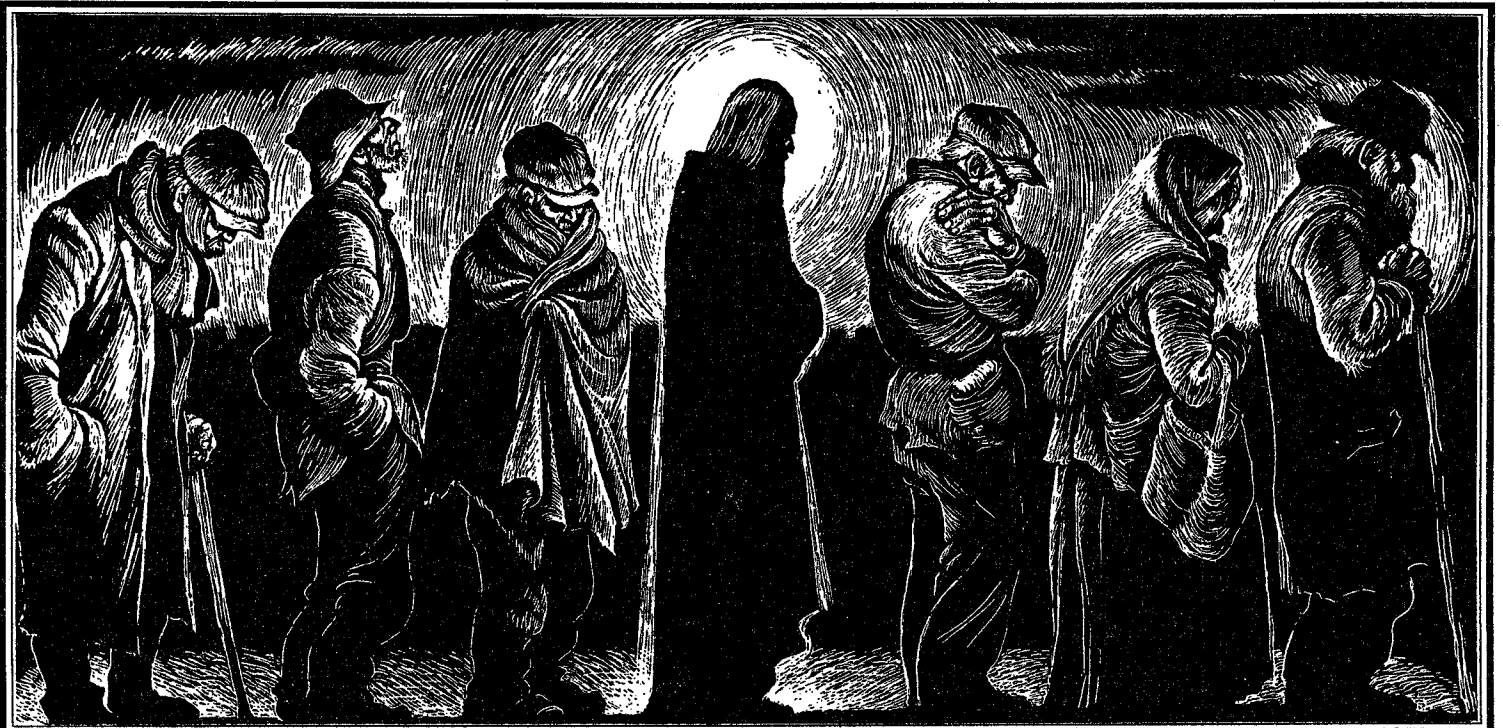
Thank you for your encouragement and support,

*Gary Cavalier*  
Gary Cavalier

*Julia Occhiogrosso*  
Julia Occhiogrosso

(ABOVE ARTWORK BY DAVID KLEIN)

CHRIST OF THE BREADLINES (1953) BY FRITZ EICHENBERG



# THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

by Lawrence Holben

Dorothy Day often identified the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ as the basis for everything the Catholic Worker is and does. This somewhat startling claim is based upon the fact that, with numerous mystics and theologians before her, Day saw in the Mystical Body of Christ an expression of an indissoluble, eternal interconnection of human beings with God and with each other.

The source of that interconnectiveness is the Incarnation, in which the Eternal Uncreated takes on created human flesh and, in that inexplicable mystery, not only saves women and men individually from the destruction of unbridled ego attempting to be God unto itself (which is the core meaning of sin), but also takes individual human beings up into the loving oneness of the Trinity. As the Orthodox proclaim: "God became human that humans might become God."

By the Incarnation, Christ (and therefore the undivided Trinity) is now potentially or actually present to us in every other human being. With the Incarnation, human persons are not just images of God (their common gift in creation). They are, if they will only let themselves be, literal dwelling places of the One who cast the galaxies into space and gave life to all that is. Therefore, it is not metaphor to declare that what we humans do to each other is, unmistakably, what we do to God. It is fact.

Further, in the Incarnation we are not only brought into a new unity with God, we are brought into radically deeper and more significant relationship with each other. This is because, as individuals become part of Christ, they also become part of all those countless women and men — past, present and future — who similarly share the divine indwelling. All are together now members not only of a common physical race, a common species, but of a new organism — the Mystical Body of Christ.

That organism has as its unifying principle the Holy Spirit, who, as St. Augustine explained, is in Living Being that fire of love which is the fundamental communication perpetually dancing between God Creator and God Redeemer in the Trinity.

If all this is true, if the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ expresses reality, then there are immediate, inescapable consequences: No longer is it merely a matter of law that we should care for the weak, minister to the poor, protect the exploited. Rather, as St. Paul points out, it is — in the highest and simplest sense — a matter of what we might call enlightened self-interest that we do so. This is because if any part of the Body suffers, we all suffer. Whether we see it or not, every time human life is diminished, every time a woman or man agonizes needlessly, every time hope is extinguished, every time injustice prevails, we are each in a fundamental and profound way wounded.

In that context, the "radical" social teachings of Jesus (renunciation of worldly goods for the sake of others, turning the other cheek, giving the coat off one's back to another in need) cease to seem idealistic or visionary. They become immensely and immediately practical. What other response could one have to a part of one's own body, the presence of Christ?

Similarly, the traditional "corporal works of mercy" so emphasized by Catho-

lic Worker co-founder Peter Maurin and the Catholic Worker from its inception (feeding the hungry, healing the sick, clothing the naked, offering hospitality to the homeless, visiting those in prison, burying the dead) cease to be what they always risk becoming in conventional "charity" — a condescending legalism in which one doles out a tithe to the "unfortunate" (with one eye on a promised heavenly reward). Rather, those works are a necessary response to family, to the Head of the family Himself, the incarnate Christ meeting us — as Mother Teresa has often put it — "in His most distressing disguise."

from the book *All the Way to Heaven; A Theological Reflection on Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin and the Catholic Worker*. Published by Rose Hill Books. To order this book or receive a free catalog of other Catholic Worker related books phone: 1-800-43-PEACE.



## PLEASE JOIN US:

**Wednesday-Saturday, 6:00 a.m.:**

Morning Prayer at the house

**Wednesday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m.:**

Serve breakfast at Ethel Pearson Park (E and Washington St.) to the homeless.

**Tuesday, 5:30 p.m.:**

Mass or Liturgy at Catholic Worker house, potluck following.

**Seven Days a Week:**

Hospitality (IHN) to 3 to 5 homeless families, we need volunteers.

**Third Saturday of each month, 8:40 a.m.:**

Gather at house to pray, deliver food baskets and reflect together.

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Las Vegas Catholic Worker  
(702) 647-0728  
500 West Van Buren Avenue  
Las Vegas, NV 89106-3039

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