

MANNA *in the wilderness*

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Hope: A Story Unfolding

by Julia Occhiogrosso

I grew up in a Brooklyn, NY middle-class family, one of seven children, who were cared for and had our essential emotional and physical needs met. While there were times of sorrow or loss, these experiences were never traumatic enough to spiral into despair. Indeed, building on this foundation into adulthood, I recognize that I have mostly been able to navigate life on the perimeter, as a voyeur of other's oppression, trauma and victimization.

I have never had to suffer the intrinsic violence born of poverty and oppression. I have never had to sleep vulnerable on pavement. I have never had to flee my homeland because of the threat of war and personal violence. I have never been wrongfully imprisoned. I have never been forced to work against my will. I have never been subjected to torture or physical abuse.

I have often wondered what kind of interior strength is necessary to carry people through experiences of grave suffering. How do they rise from this degree of human devastation with their hope intact?

When I joined the Catholic Worker many years ago, I made a choice afforded one standing on the peripheral position of privilege. By living and working in hospitality houses and soup kitchens and other Catholic Worker projects, I had an opportunity to move toward the center of the lives of the poor and oppressed.

When I was eighteen, I spent a summer as an intern with the Los Angeles Catholic Worker working with the children living on Skid Row. My young heart could feel the disparity as I visited families residing in the squalor of Skid Row hotels. Stepping over broken glass through the putrid maze of hallways, I found my way to the door of the ten-by-ten room housing a family from our summer program. Shining in this darkness was two-year-old Jenny and four-year-old Jonathan. They were smiling with excitement at the arrival of their Maestra. Their parents, smiling along with them, invited me in and offered some pan dulce. I crouched myself down to take a seat at the kiddie table that filled the space. We proceeded to share in the sweet aroma of delicious food and the caring

conversation. I remember being moved by their joyful hospitality, alive in these grim surroundings.

Joining the Catholic Worker, I have responded to the invitation to see Christ in the suffering ones in our midst, to search out and care for the Divine One present in the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the sick and the imprisoned. What I did not anticipate is that in my response to this Scriptural mandate, I would not only meet the crucified Christ in the oppressed of this

built upon the success or failure of work for justice. But rather, it emerges from my living, engaging, and participating in the unfolding story of Divine love. This story has, from the beginning of time, incorporated a sacred mingling of suffering and solace, grief and generosity, persecution and solidarity. It is a story that uncovers injustice through acts of mercy and compassion.

When I see myself as a character playing my role, my small part in this story, I recognize that I am connected to the ones who came before me, whom I have been inspired by, who have lived and died to move us incrementally forward toward the



Ray McCollum and his wife Diane made 360 pumpkin spice cookies and bagged them for our food line on March 26. PHOTO BY DIANE MCCOLLUM

world, but I would also touch the wounds and break sweet bread with the resurrected Christ as well.

A willingness to move in close to the suffering realities through compassionate relationship, mercy and tenderness, has not buried me in hopelessness.

It is true that many of the concerns and issues we have been involved in over the years have gotten worse. The housing crisis has increased exponentially. The Nuclear Clock is closer to midnight. Unchecked consumption and market capitalism propel us into environmental devastation. Each day wars unleash untold suffering around the world.

While these realities are disturbing and require a response, none of this can destroy my hope. Hope, in its true essence is immune to destruction. My hope is not

Beloved community.

In the same way, I can see my role in contributing to the next chapters that will be embodied by the generations to follow. No longer does the suffering of this world exist in a meaningless, chaotic vacuum. Rather, it is the consistent expressions of human compassion in the face of suffering that repeatedly reveals the timeless and abiding presence of Divine love, a love uniting us all in a collective tapestry of beauty and meaning.

Each gesture of kindness, mercy or self-emptying love prepares us to endure with hope. Our capacity to acknowledge, accompany and in some small way, to alleviate the grave suffering in this world, is the true antidote to and for despair. In the end, it is what gives and sustains hope.

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Easy Essays

Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day co-founded the Catholic Worker movement in New York in 1933.

Here are five of Peter Maurin's "Easy Essays," which he would recite in his heavy French accent to anyone who would listen. As a journalist, Dorothy was inspired by Peter's idea of producing a newspaper, and the first copies of the Catholic Worker were sold on May 1, 1933 for 1 cent each.

A booklet of 13 Easy Essays is available for \$2 (postage included) from the Las Vegas Catholic Worker at the address at the bottom of this page. The booklet includes reflections by Dorothy Day on Peter Maurin.

A Case for Utopia

The world would be better off
if people tried to become better,
and people would become better
if they stopped trying to become better off.
For when everyone tries to become
better off
nobody is better off.
But when everyone tries to become better
everybody is better off.
Everyone would be rich
if nobody tried to become richer,
and nobody would be poor
if everybody tried to be the poorest.
And everybody would be what they ought to be if
everybody tried to be
what they want the other person to be.



ENGRAVING BY FRITZ EICHENBERG

Blowing the Dynamite

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.

Christianity Untried

Chesterson says:

"The Christian ideal
has not been tried
and found wanting.
It has been found difficult
and left untried."

Christianity has not been tried
because people thought
it was impractical.

And people have tried everything
except Christianity.

And everything
that people have tried
has failed.

They and We

People say:

"They don't do this,
they don't do that,
they ought to do this,
they ought to do that."
Always "They"
and never "I."

People should say:

"They are crazy
for doing this
and not doing that,
but I don't need
to be crazy
the way they are crazy,"

The Communitarian Revolution
is basically
a personal revolution,
It starts with I,
not with They.
One I plus one I
makes two I
and two I makes We.
"We" is a community,
while "they" is a crowd.

We will be Closed
July 21-31
Nov. 25-27

Donations:

Checks: Please make checks
payable to

"Las Vegas Catholic Worker"
and send to:

Las Vegas Catholic Worker
500 W. Van Buren Ave.

Las Vegas, NV 89106-3039

PayPal Giving Fund:

<http://lvcw.org/giving>

Credit Card Donations:

<http://lvcw.org/donate>

What Makes

Humanity Humane

To give and not to take,
that is what makes humanity humane.
To serve and not to rule,
that is what makes humanity humane.
To help and not to crush,
that is what makes humanity humane.
To nourish and not to devour,
that is what makes humanity humane.
And if need be,
to die and not to live,
that is what makes humanity humane.
Ideals and not deals,
that is what makes humanity humane.
Creed and not greed,
that is what makes humanity humane.

ABOVE EASY ESSAY CHANGED TO INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

PLEASE JOIN US

COVID-19 Procedures:

Call or e-mail to schedule your volunteer morning. Please do not just show up. Do wear a mask. Gloves and aprons provided.

To Schedule: (702) 647-0728 or
mail@lvcw.org

Thurs.-Sat., 6:00 a.m.

Morning prayer at Catholic Worker

Thurs.-Sat., 6:15 a.m.

Over 300 "To-go" Meals served to poor & homeless people (6:15 a.m.: meal assembly, 7 - 7:30 a.m.: distribution of the meals)

Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.:

50 lunches taken to the homeless

Second Sat. of the month:

Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast (please call if coming)

Third Sat. of the month:

Deliver food boxes to homes in need.

We are a Participating Member of Nevadans for the Common Good

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