

The Catholic Worker aims to create a new society—
in the

SHELL of the OLD

ST. LOUIS Catholic Worker
issue # 1

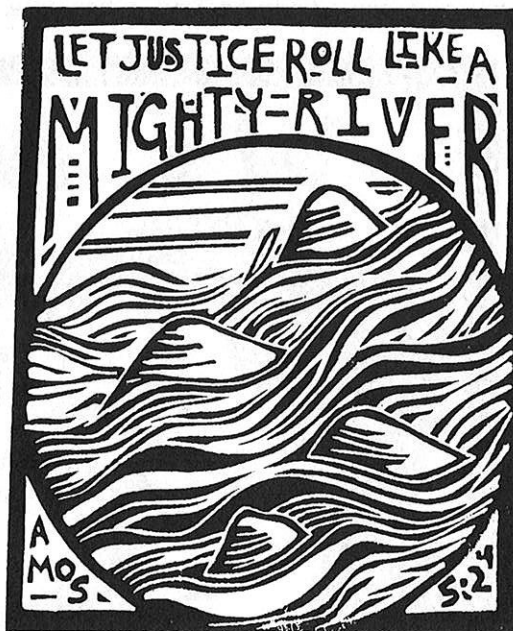
Bulldozers & F35s - The Tools of Capital

They said to be there at 6am. The cops were going to be there at the brink of dawn to remove people from their home and community. I was on donut and snack duty to ensure that people had something comforting to ease the trauma of another spring, another displacement. We rose early to hand out snacks and basic needs. We were there to stop state repression and its tools: dump trucks, patrol cars, bulldozers, and government officials who pretend to house humans displaced by the violence of eviction.

Saint Louis city tries to evict the Riverfront Community every spring. When it was zero degrees this Christmas, the city left the camp alone. Mutual aid workers brought propane and warm layers around the clock. Yet, it never fails that when the leaves bud and the sun returns, so do camp evictions and the closure of shelters. This year when April arrived, three city funded shelters closed (Hope House, St. James, and Asbury).

Because homelessness is only a winter problem. But homelessness wasn't even a winter problem in 2017 when our city closed St. Louis's biggest homeless shelter on Christmas eve eve, displacing nearly 300 people. Meanwhile, our city sits on thousands of dollars of funding specific to homelessness. To this day no new shelter has been created to address this need. People frequently call 211 searching for somewhere to lay their head and the answer is the shelters are full. There is nowhere. The city claims that it housed 19 people amidst the Riverfront eviction; yet within two weeks many have returned to the camp. The patrols have continued along with bulldozers. The 6am early morning wake up continues: "who can watch cops this morning?" By 10am: "We need more people - they have bulldozers."

I had another early wakeup call recently at the Midwest Catholic Worker Faith & Resistance Retreat. We arrived at Truax airbase in Madison, Wisconsin at 5am. St. Louis Catholic Workers joined the Midwest Catholic Workers to disrupt the morning shift change. Truax air base will soon house F35s: a hybrid fighter jet and nuclear war plane. F-35s will be capable of carrying two B61-12 variable capacity nuclear warheads, up to four times more powerful than the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The environmental impact will be terrible as these jets emit 7 tons of CO2 every hour. Their presence will add Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAs) into Madison's water supply.



These chemicals cause serious health impacts like cancer and contaminate water. Nearly 300 people live in the contour zone where housing is "incompatible" for nuclear war practice. Several schools are in this area ensuring that children will play alongside the war planes.

Yet, the city and state have gone along with this project because military manufacturers have bought out Wisconsin politicians by investing in their campaigns. So who cares if our water is damaged, our children can't hear, and we disrupt and displace a neighborhood with folks of color? At least the rich and the politicians keep their pockets heavy. By the end of this project, our government will have spent \$1.7 trillion of taxpayer dollars on these nuclear war planes for our "protection." Meanwhile, our unhoused neighbors get frostbite in the winter, get their homes bulldozed come spring, and our military prepares to annihilate life as we know it.

I recently heard a saying about how the backpacks that unhoused folks carry are the burden of a society built on the economy of war. Our most human need for rest becomes absurd in our capitalistic state. Economic gain is priority, rather than human beings having a place to lay their heads. Weapons manufacturers make billions for our country to fight wars that perpetuate greed, colonialism, and white supremacy. Our early rising becomes a prayer to wake the public up from their slumber. To say destruction of people's homes is not humane. To say money does not matter more than human life. To say that weapons of war kill us; they ensure our climate fails, people die, and our most basic needs aren't met. Bulldozers and the F35s have the same purpose: to protect the capital of the rich, while human beings are beaten and left by the waste side – the river side.

Lindsey Myers lived at the Phoenix Catholic Worker from 2016-2018. She currently works at Assisi House where she helps support and house formerly unhoused and marginalized folks. She resides at the Sophia House community and enjoys sunshine and a good cup of joe.



All So Different, All So Beautiful

As we celebrate the Catholic Worker movement's 90th birthday it's sometimes asked what the secret to our longevity is. When Dorothy Day passed in 1980 some wondered if this ragtag group of spiritual misfits would be able to survive the loss of such an illustrious founder. Many amongst the movement will say one key to our lastingness is actually baked into the philosophy that Dorothy and her co-founder Peter Maurin handed down to us; a belief in decentralization.



Practically, there is no CW headquarters deciding who is or isn't a Catholic Worker. Instead it's more of a philosophy or way of living our lives. If we find ourselves sufficiently aligned with the Catholic Worker movement we can call ourselves CWs and just begin the work, no credential or experience necessary.

In day to day life this value of decentralization means that the work and life of each Catholic Worker community looks different everywhere you go. There is no cookie cutter way of doing it, no pre planned schema, just a desire to see justice done. This decentralization means the movement is beautifully adaptable.

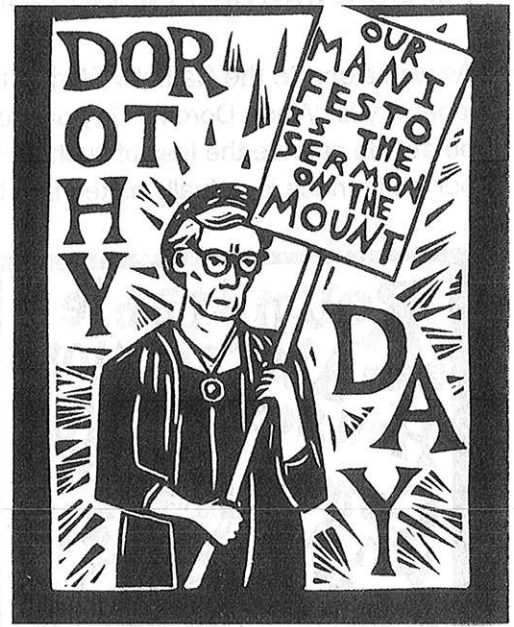
For the past year I've been lucky enough to travel to different Catholic Worker communities around the country to see how it is they do the work in their context, how it is they mold their CW life to fill the needs of their place and time.

Often this is on a very practical level. When Eric and Jodi first started the Cherith Brook CW in Kansas City they noticed there were few sanitary shower options in their area, so they started offering showers. When an organic farm near Half Moon Bay, CA wanted help distributing their produce to those in need of fresh healthy food the CW project there set up a free grocery distribution to feed insecure farmworker families. According to CW lore, the Las Vegas CW began its manifestation by simply going out with cool water to those on the hot summer streets.

When folks find out I've been going around and seeing all these wonderful projects I'm often asked which is my favorite and I'm being truthful when I say that there isn't one Catholic Worker that I like most. There is so much beautiful work going on! I really enjoyed sitting outside the Clark County jail and handing out snacks and cigarettes with Hope from Emmaus House in Chicago. I loved learning to milk a cow with Brenna when I visited St. Isidore CW farm. I thought the Mustard Seed Farm's project of distributing their wonderful produce at the low income health clinic was a brilliant idea. The comradery of prepping four hundred meals at the LA Catholic Worker soup kitchen is addictive.

There's also the work of resisting unjust systems (a central tenet of the Catholic Worker movement) which is just as adapted to place and time by CWs as the works of mercy. While the Catholic Workers of Winona, MN protest silicon sand mining for use in fracking and the Guadalupe, CA CWs protest ICBM nuclear weapons testing near their home, the LA Catholic Worker lead workshops to correct their archdiocese's laudatory remembrance of the California mission system and the Worcester CWs lead an exorcism of a union busting Catholic hospital.

In truth, the vision growing from Peter and Dorothy's foundation for a new society in the shell of the old is so all encompassing it's hard to live every element of the Catholic Worker. In the real world this looks like a variety of spectrums that CWs will fall onto. In prayer there are communities that spend hours a day together and others that spend 15 minutes a week and everything in between. Living Peter Maurin's vision of increased agricultural self and community reliance manifests itself into huge farms for some CWs, a modest patch of salad greens for others, and may be totally absent from the CW experience for the rest. There are so many other CW values on which you'll find CWs moving up and down these spectrums: anarchism, simple living, time spent protesting, active community building, just to name a few.



The great thing about this model the CW offers us is that we can all start in our own way, little by little. We don't need to live at a big or official CW house, we can just do it wherever we are in life. We can share from our excess. The extra coat in your closet belongs to the one who has none, advocated Dorothy Day and John the Baptist. We can start building alternatives to the troubled structures of the world, plant a seed whether literal or metaphorical. We can begin clarification of thought to begin understanding where we are, how we got here, and where we need to be going.

The Catholic Worker offers a revolution that will take all of us and lets us know that now is always the right time to begin taking steps, "by little and by little" as Dorothy Day would often quote.

Theo Kayser has been a part of the Catholic Worker movement since 2010 in communities including the Los Angeles CW and Karen House among others. He currently travels to different CW houses around the world and blogs about them at catholicworkertheo.blogspot.com and hosts the Coffee with Catholic Workers podcast.

"There is nothing new about mutual aid—people have worked together to survive for all of human history. But capitalism and colonialism created structures that have disrupted how people have historically connected with each other and shared everything they needed to survive. As people were forced into systems of wage labor and private property, and wealth became increasingly concentrated, our ways of caring for each other have become more and more tenuous."

"What we build now, and whether we can sustain it, will determine how prepared we are for the next pandemic, the climate-induced disasters to come, the ongoing disasters of white supremacy and capitalism, and the beautifully disruptive rebellions that will transform them." - Dean Spade *Mutual Aid*

The St. Louis Catholic Worker hopes to build a world where it is easier to be good, a world where each has according to their needs and gives according to their abilities, a world where interactions between peoples and communities is direct and personal and is governed by Love and concern for the common good rather than harmful institutions such as extractive capitalism or a militarized, carceral state.

To this end we advocate:

-Clarification of thought: to know where we are, how we got here, and where it is we should be going

-Mutual Aid: to share from our excess and receive in our need through direct and reciprocal interaction with our human family

-Resistance: to oppose oppression wherever it is found

The revolution we propose would be non-violent, decentralized, sustainable, soil based, abolitionist, personalist, communitarian, spirit led, and immediate. We hope that all people of goodwill might join this effort in their own place and context so that we might together help to build a new society in the shell of the old.



Becoming Irresistible

"We convert, if we do at all, by being something irresistible, not by demanding the impossible." Those words by May Sarton were posted in a Catholic Worker farm's office. The sign originated at the homestead of Wally and Quanita Nelson who were early pioneers of the modern war tax resistance movement. After the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, people including Ammon Hennacy, an early member of the Catholic Worker, organized actions around tax day in 1946 with their refusal to pay for war and to raise awareness of the enormous amounts of taxpayer money going to war annually.

What drew me into the Catholic Worker and war tax resistance was the irrepressible joy of the people in these movements. They were able to look at the heaviness of militarism while also addressing the needs within their communities. My introduction to the Catholic Worker coincided with becoming a war tax resister. I was blessed by a community of support who instructed me in the Catholic Worker tradition of opposing the preparation and practice of war as it robs our communities of resources needed for health care, housing and other basic needs.



The practice of war tax refusal has helped center many of the values or aims of the Catholic Worker, communities of mutual aid that celebrate our interdependence. Both of these movements have provided a means to live out some of our deepest life enhancing values. They dispel the myth of scarcity and strengthen networks of solidarity to systemic injustice. The movements have deep roots in opposition to war and prioritizing the Works of Mercy. This life work celebrates abundance, by being intentional about how we invest our talents and gifts, sharing resources with others and embracing a way of simple living rich in possibility.

Recently we held three events in St. Louis around Tax Day and were bolstered by each other in taking action and the overwhelming positive response of those in the streets. We are currently making plans to do more. So many of us have been challenged over the past few years, in knowing how to be engaged in the issues of the day. I have felt supported in this work through my community, NWTRCC (see below) and the Catholic Worker movement. Former St. Louis Catholic Worker Carl Kabat's words come to mind, "Do what you can, then sing and dance." Sometimes it's easier to do with others.

Chrissy Kirchhoefer serves as Outreach Consultant with the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee (NWTRCC) For more info: www.nwtrcc.org

"We must set ourselves with all the force we possess, against war, and the making of instruments of war, and our means are prayer and fasting, and the non-payment of federal income tax which goes for war." - Dorothy Day

ST. LOUIS Catholic Worker
care of - SOPHIA house
4547 GIBSON Ave
St. Louis, MO 63110



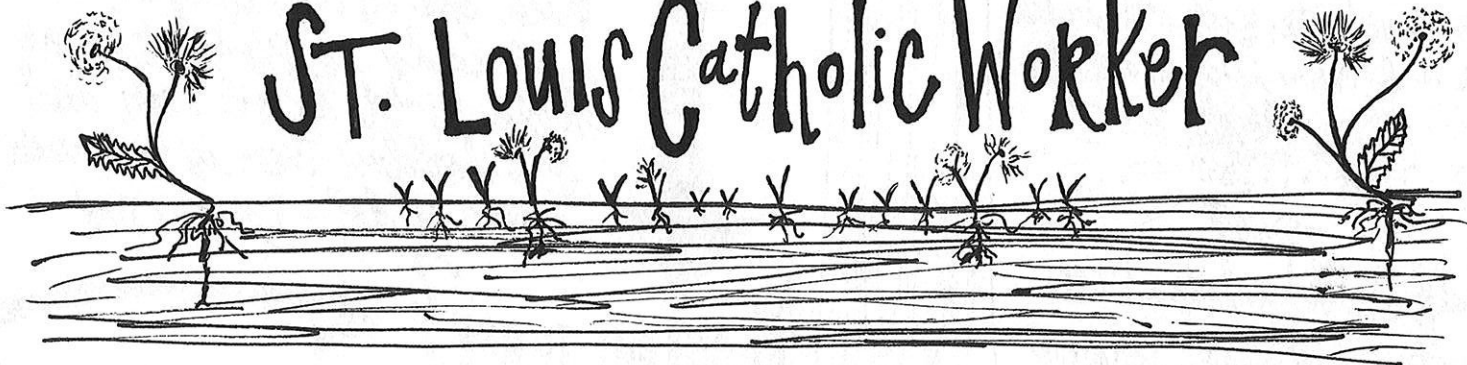
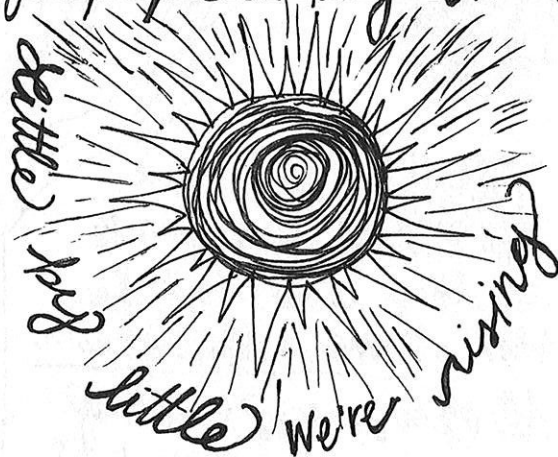
Let us create a society in which it is easier for people to be good - Maurin

hi there -

DID YOU KNOW?

There's a NEW

ST. LOUIS Catholic Worker



Catholic Worker founder Peter Maurin said, "The Catholic Worker believes in Houses of Hospitality for the immediate relief of those who are in need." We hope to do just this in St. Louis, but we need your help. We have a house in need of **serious** repairs. Are you or someone you know skilled in renovation? Carpentry? Gardening? Dry Walling? Do you know a professional skilled labor who would lend us their expertise? Do you have a house more move-in ready for which we could get started more immediately?

As we start this new StLCW project it is humbly and with limited resources, but we have faith in Love and in community as we step out on this journey. We know it will take sweat and prayer and money.



THANKS to Sarah Fullek
who provided all the prints
in this issue. Find her
work at www.sarahfullerart.com.

All other images & writing
come from LINDSEY, who doesn't
have a website, but will doodle
you a flower if you ask her.



"They shall be like a tree
planted by water, sending
out it's roots by the stream.
It SHALL NOT fear when heat
comes, and it's leaves shall
stay green; in the year of
drought it is not anxious, and
it does NOT cease to bear fruit."

← -jeremiah
17:7-8

"People say, what is the
sense of our small effort?
They cannot see that we must
lay one brick at a time, take
one step at a time. A pebble
cast into a pond causes ripples
that spread in all directions.
Each one of our thoughts, words
and deeds is like that. No one
has a right to sit down and
feel hopeless. There is too much
work to do." - DOROTHY DAY

hi-
REACH OUT TO US!

We're GLAD this first edition of *The Shell of The old*
found its way to you. If you want to make
sure the next issue also finds you send
us an email at StLouisCatholicWorker@gmail.com
with an email address, physical address or BOTH to
get on our mailing list. You can find updates at
<http://www.stcatholicworker.org> CALL/TEXT at 314-474-5500