

THE LONDON CATHOLIC WORKER



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Cullinan

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Above: Wet'suwet'en hereditary chief Freda Huson (Howihkat) arrested at gunpoint while performing a ceremony to commemorate the Indigenous women murdered near the pipeline in British Columbia, Canada. Story on page 10. **Photo:** Amber Bracken

Where scholars become workers

Henrietta Cullinan

For this issue of the newsletter there is a theme: the work of our hands, or, indeed, just plain work. Peter Maurin, founder of the movement, had much to say about work and workers. Dorothy Day describes him as a 'workingman'. One of 24 children, raised in a peasant family in France, he had tried homesteading in Canada, and joined work gangs in America before they met.

In Easy Essays, the series of declamatory poems he published over and over in the Catholic Worker newspaper, Maurin describes his vision of 'scholars and workers' living together and learning from each other, in farming communes and 'outdoor universities'. The scholars would learn to use their hands and become 'dynamic' and a 'driving force' while the workers would learn — it's not so clear what the workers would learn. Although he repeats this pairing many times, it takes a bit of imagination and further reading, to see who these scholars and workers might be and the work they'll be doing.

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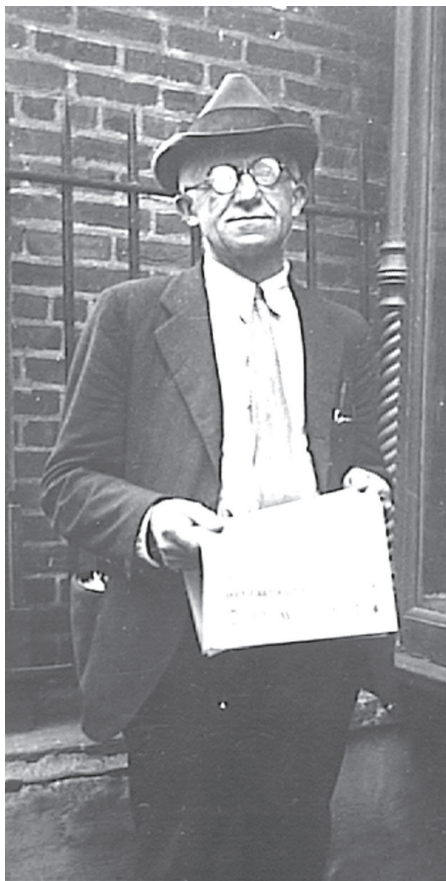
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from Easy Essays

Outdoor Universities

Someone said that the Catholic Worker is a movement for down-and-outs. And it is a movement for down-and-outs, including down-and-out business men, down-and-out college graduates and down-and-out college professors. In the Catholic Worker, besides being fed, clothed and sheltered, people learn to use their hands as well as their heads. And while they learn to use their heads to guide their hands, the use of their hands, improves a great deal the working of their heads.



[continued from front page]

Dorothy Day writes in her introduction that Maurin was wary of 'class consciousness' and didn't like the use of the word 'worker' in 'Catholic Worker'. He saw the houses of hospitality and farms as communities, that would build 'a new society in the shell of the old', a vision of equality that would benefit everyone. The scholars and workers will join communities, along with 'down-and-out' businessmen, academics, college professors. Perhaps in nineteen thirties New York these were the people who weren't used to mopping the floor. 'In the Catholic Worker/ people learn to use their hands/ as well as their heads.' (See left hand column)

Day writes also that Maurin was 'literal'. Through 'daily practice of the works of mercy', the scholars will become workers. They will be feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, literally by hand. Scholars will do the manual work and learn from the manual work. This remains the main business of a Catholic Worker house.

These days in London, the scholar and the worker could easily be one person. Scholars take menial jobs. Everyone's a worker one way or another. College lecturers and pizza delivery drivers, catering staff and cleaners all struggle to get by on a zero hours contract. Employees forced to work such long hours they are unable to care for themselves, can install an app. that will summon a cleaner, a driver, a nutritious meal even someone to buy a birthday present, which creates even more precarious jobs.

At the London Catholic Worker, at least, this working with the hands and the head person is one and the same. When Urban Table first started, I remember a certain volunteer who reminded me of a character out of Absolute Beginners, with a slightly greying quiff and cigarette trousers. He did the manual work of the soup kitchen as if it was nothing, tossing the tables and chairs around, washing up and wiping down, all the while keeping up a stream of jokes, film sound tracks, and celebrity gossip. Being new to volunteering, I thought: here is someone who really knows how to make light work.

Over ten years later, all sorts of PhD students and businessmen come and volunteer at Urban Table. A few make heavy weather of chopping onions or avoid the washing up. But I've heard some say they learn something new every week: that carrots can be black or yellow, as well as orange, that potatoes are not a staple and that a meal is not a meal without rice. Nothing focuses the mind like hearing one of the guests outline his budget for the next two weeks under Universal Credit.

The 'daily practice of the works of mercy' is not just humanitarian work. Here I encourage you, the reader, to reflect on your own experience of working with your hands. In this newsletter there are several examples. Ghazal Tipu, an office worker, interviews an activist cobbler. Margriet Bos 'looks into the kitchen' at Giuseppe Conlon House and sees cleaning, fixing and building. While mending sleeping bags, Anne M. Jones, is faced with the injustice and cruelty of the refugees' situation in Calais. Johannes and Nora both talk of the effects of this work on their own mental health.

For myself, waking in the small hours at the local night shelter, I discover fears I haven't been attending to: fear of intimacy, of cultural misunderstandings, of humiliation – I'm sometimes treated like a servant – and awkwardness at my own house – owning privilege.

Dorothy Day writes, 'Love casts out fear, but we have to get over the fear in order to get close enough to love them.'

The first Easy Essay is called, 'Blowing the dynamite'. Maurin writes that the 'scholars' – yes them again – have placed the message of the Church, 'in an hermetically sealed container and sat on the lid.' Through the work of their hands, they will 'blow the dynamite' of the Gospel message.

The next work for the works of mercy, then, is to teach us to love.

Henrietta Cullinan is a teacher, peace writer and activist and edits this newsletter.

Left: Peter Maurin photo: Jim Forest
(creative commons licence)

Work - life balance in a Catholic Worker house

Nora Ziegler

'Now what we call "bourgeois" [...] is nothing else than the search for a balance.' Steppenwolf, Herman Hesse

It's common sense, for a healthy work - life balance, that one ought not to work and live in the same place. In a Catholic Worker community, we not only live and work in the same place but that place is also very often messy, crowded and unpredictable. In the years I have lived in such a community I have often felt anxious because of the lack of balance and stability. I felt I lacked power over my time, my health and important life choices. I'm sure this powerlessness is experienced by many in my community and much more so by those who live there because their right to work and have a 'private life' in the UK is denied.

Do personal boundaries, for example between work and home, empower us? Or do they only protect the power we already have? Do such boundaries protect unjust distributions of power? To reflect critically on the role of boundaries, we need to challenge the distinctions assumed in the personal boundary as a concept. For example, the distinctions between public and private space or work and 'free' time. Instead of treating these distinctions as natural and timeless, we can consider them as historical categories tied to a specific economic and social system.

According to Marx, these distinctions originate in the division and alienation of work. When we work, we transform subjective ideas into objective reality. We put part of ourselves – our commitment, time, imagination and energy – into our work. Under capitalism, work becomes an abstract commodity. The value of a commodity is severed from its usefulness as a thing, from the people who produced it and all the personal qualities they put into it. Work as an object is severed from the context in which it is bound up with the subject. This separation

causes multiple divisions: between work and rest, private and public life, manual and intellectual work, and between commodified work (a 'real' job) and excluded or undervalued work, such as volunteering or housework.

Boundaries that aim to balance work and rest can reinforce the alienation between the two. For example, at Giuseppe Conlon House we live and work in the same place but we divide our time so that we are either 'on' or 'off duty'. When I am 'on duty', I am constantly available to anyone who asks me for something, knocks on the door or calls the phone. I feel the need to be always helpful, polite, competent, professional and productive. Therefore, when I am 'off duty' I want to be absolutely unavailable, rude, incompetent and unproductive. Neither of these states reflects me as a person. I begin to feel less and less myself both when I am working and when I am resting.

Mounier's Personalist philosophy takes a dialectical approach to opposing categories such as work and rest. This approach recognizes that such categories are mutually exclusive but asserts that they are not independent of each other. Yes work is different from rest and my personal space is different from social spaces. But the one can only exist with the other. They are part of each other. Instead of seeking to balance two opposites, a dialectic approach seeks mediation where both sides in their extreme form most fully participate in each other. Where work and rest, personal and social space, are different but integrated.

We can think of alienation as a framework in which work/rest, personal/social space etc. are opposed and hostile. Dialectical mediation is the creation of a new framework in which these categories are not opposed. Mounier's Personalist dialectic describes the 'personal life' as such a framework. The person exists as both material object and conscious subject at the same time, both a completely social creature and an individual with a rich interior life. In the person these contradictions are not eliminated but integrated and engaged. The person is movement and struggle, not a static thing.

[continued on next page]



The Catholic Worker in the UK

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Giuseppe Conlon House offers hospitality to destitute refugees. We also run the Urban Table soup kitchen on Sundays, 2:30 — 4:30 pm at the Round Chapel, London E5 0PU. We organise acts of nonviolent resistance and produce this newsletter.

The Catholic Worker Farm

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The Farm offers hospitality to destitute women. We grow organic vegetables and have a poustinia and hermitage retreat. Mary House also offers a home to four destitute women with children.

Glasgow Catholic Worker

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We offer a place of welcome for asylum seekers and destitute refugees in the centre of Glasgow at the Garnethill Multicultural Centre, open Saturday 9:00— 1:00pm, and a soup kitchen on Friday nights. We keep a vigil at Faslane Nuclear Base and hold monthly meetings and prayers.

[continued from page 3]

Alienation is the commodification of the person: living as if I were a thing that can be split into parts and divided from my social context. The powerlessness I experienced while living in community is a result of this alienation. Boundaries such as the separation between on and off duty may help me cope but they also reinforce the underlying problem because they assume alienation as a given and reproduce it. However, alienation is also produced by internalised and structural divisions beyond our control, such as sexism, immigration laws or wage labour. Therefore, the answer is not to simply eliminate the boundaries that help us cope.

Instead, we can try to create a new framework in which these divisions lose their power. If boundaries assume alienation, an alternative framework should assume that the person – each person – is a dynamic, both introspective and active, being capable of making decisions and exceptions, changing their minds and moods, learning and healing. This means creating spaces where people, whether they are working or resting, are allowed to be themselves with all their weaknesses. Spaces where people have equal access to resources for both rest and self-care as well as active participation and decision-making. Spaces where everyone works with their mind as well their body. It involves recognizing the ambivalent nature of any boundary and building communities in which power is shared and redistributed.

Nora Ziegler is a member of the London Catholic Worker

Right: Rita Corbin, *The works of mercy, the works of war* seen in Catholic Worker communities across the US and the UK. This version came from the Cherith Brook Catholic Worker, Kansas City

becoming body

these days I discover myself
more and more displaced
within these warped contours
of the machine, pulling
me out of place, pulling
me out of time, time
now with no seasons
no rhythms
no day or night
to guide me

all replaced
with one rhythm
one beat
relentlessly reworking my DNA
reforming my flesh and bone
around restless mind
frantic
unimaginably empty
angry
violent
seeping into the deepest pores of
my being

but I do not consent
pacing up and down, captive
tiger wrenched from the forest floor
sorrowed
knowing in my limbs that this is not
right
not how things were made to be

and so
these days
I wander city streets differently
slowly becoming body
made of skin that hurts
and bleeds
and longs for touch, fragile canvas
alive with memory, marked
with absence and presence
alien in a foreign land
made not of mud
nor wood, nor streams
but cold hard glass and concrete
tombstone for the ancient rhythms
of the earth

my response
each day to become softer
to become gut
to become hear
to kneel down now to worship
only at the temples of warmth and
kindness
to beg for tenderness
vowing definatly to fill each day
with tears
with laughter
with dance
and to hug my father
before the day is done

Sam Donaldson

Sam Donaldson is a poet, organisational coach and activist, living in Hull. He lives in Matt's House, a small intentional community. He is a Quaker, with a passion for silence and stillness. His latest book, *Poems Saves Lives*, is published by Proost





Above: Shoemaker, Nicholas Cooper, stretches the leather uppers over the last for a bespoke pair of Oxfords. **photo** Nicholas Cooper

To be an artisan

Ghazal Tipu

Shoemaker, dressmaker, silversmith and potter – traditional professions like these are a curiosity for me. As an office worker who types at a keyboard, I imagine there is a sensory pleasure that comes from feeling the coolness of clay, touching textures like velvet, organza and linen, and the smell of leather, that engulf the senses.

Writing in *The Guardian* last summer, Richard Godwin highlighted how pottery offers ‘an antidote to the onslaught of tech – and a sustainable creative outlet in a wasteful society.’ (*Throws of passion: how pottery became a refuge* 25 August 2019) This revival brings into focus what I feel is lacking in my own life as an office worker – a sense of groundedness and a connection with the earth.

I admire the skill and dedication involved in making handicrafts. Unlike in a factory process, the artisan designs and fashions a unique product with her bare hands. And unlike the hours spent creating batch products and yielding profits for a faceless corporation, I imagine there is real pride in creating handicrafts. Upon completing her work, the artisan stands back, wipes her brow and admires her artistry. Callouses bear witness to hours and years of mastering a craft.

I interviewed Nick Cooper, shoemaker, lecturer and activist, to explore how he arrived at his profession and craft, and to find out the personal and spiritual fulfilment he finds through working with his hands.

Why did you decide to become a shoemaker?

I did a religious studies degree and then didn’t find anything I wanted to do with it. I certainly didn’t want to do teaching which was the only obvious progression. Working with leather sounded like it required precision, which I like, but not as much precision as wood and I wanted that extra room for error. There was also something about the British shoe trade having nearly died out that attracted me. I thought that on the one hand it could be hard to make money but I also wouldn’t be competing with loads of people and I think that’s true.

What do you like most about it?

So, the thing about leather being a bit more forgiving when you make errors turned out to be true. You can often just stretch it a bit more or (don’t tell anyone) carefully shrink it with a heat gun. Shoes are small and so the upfront, material cost is not bad. Most of all, I love the thrill of the making process. Manual skill is definitely my thing. The process where you tension the leather

upper over the last is my favourite part. It reminds me of building bike wheels where you have to evenly tension a whole form, and the boundary between my brain and the object I’m working on becomes blurred. It’s a very spiritual feeling of doing the thing I’m meant to be doing.

How does it allow you live out your faith?

I was reading *Spiritual Fitness: Christian Character in a Consumer Culture* by Baptist theologian, Graham Tomlin. He talked about the value of learning a craft or some kind of skill that takes a lifetime to perfect and therefore requires personal development such as patience, diligence and delayed gratification. You not only get the satisfaction of the end result of the craft itself but of learning by proxy that you can’t be a bull in a china shop within any area of life. Sometimes a whole week’s work can be lost by one small mistake and you have to be able to sometimes just go home, try to stay calm, come back and start again – knowing that it is the journey as a whole that is of the highest value.

There is something as well about the feeling that our work, whatever it is, is a continuation of the act of creation. What we sow, I believe, is a new chapter in the story of creation, and work itself is a spiritual pursuit that goes on into eternity. I thoroughly dislike the words ‘eternal rest’ or at least what this often wrongly implies.

How does it feel to work with your hands?

If it’s what you want to do and it comes naturally to you then it feels good – that is my experience. It might sound like a cliché but I feel in touch with the earth and what’s sacred, I believe that all matter is sacred if God created it. It also feels hugely fulfilling, making something that is socially useful. I do however feel a sadness about using a material that was once part of a living creature, a debate that I have never fully resolved even though I use only clearance leather and off-cuts.

Ghazal Tipu is a communications professional and writer who volunteers at Giuseppe Conlon House and Urban Table.

New Year amongst the broken zips

Anne M. Jones

Obsessed with fixing as many sleeping bags as possible, from the giant pile in the corner of the 'Collective Aid' warehouse in Calais, I focus on nothing but zips, pliers, needles and thread, for four days. The work is a type of theme and variations, the theme being zips. One variation is the zip that is apparently totally jammed, then me tugging it so hard with pliers that it eventually re-slides back into life, up and down its zipper teeth. Often this action results in a reverse opening from feet to head end instead of the normal head to feet. This is not a disaster because then all I need to do is sew up the head end and open a small space along the seam of the feet, for a head hole. Hey presto, a resurrected sleeping bag. This is but one variation, and if you have been patient enough to read this far I will not test your patience any further, except to hope you now have an insight into the satisfaction gained, that led to my obsession. My tally of mending, after four days, was 35 sleeping bags, four coats, and a tent. This equals approximately seventy nights of warmth, maybe longer if the nights stay dry enough, or if the refugee is lucky to have a tent for sufficient time before the police slash it and move him on.

This is my stint for the month in the cold but well lit warehouse, where I perch on the bags for warmth, and am grateful to friends who gave me wrist warmers and a bright scarf for Christmas.

This visit was delayed first by a Eurostar cancellation, then by a breakdown in my central heating which caused a two day wait for a promised engineer who never appeared. One good result from working in warehouses is that I am better at coping with

cold than I was a few years ago. However, the delays did mean I had to travel on a Sunday, so when I arrived, after a calm crossing, I knew the bus service to the warehouse would be minimal. Striking up a conversation with another passenger, we agreed to share a taxi, with me being dropped off first at the warehouse then her at the station.

'Oh goody,' she exclaimed, 'I shall see a real refugee camp.'

I explained – again – that there is no 'camp', that refugees are forced to sleep in fields and hedgerows, wherever they can.

'Why camp in Calais?' she asked, 'Why not a nice, warm place like Provence?'

There are now over a thousand refugees in the Calais area, and every day sees more small boats prevented from attempting the perilous crossing. On the 30th December a boat containing twenty people, including a heavily pregnant woman, was seized on a beach near Marck.

My inner life inspires my work, and, though I miss contact with refugees themselves, I obtained a glimpse of the world of one when I was asked to urgently mend gashes in a tent. The support worker was insistent that the man would not take a replacement, that this one had become his home, he had rescued it after it had been slashed, and he did not want a pop-up tent. 'They make him feel he is suffocating.'

As usual, I met old friends, made new ones, including a group of paramedics who were busy dispensing 70-100 doses of flu medication every day. Here, the words of advice we hear at home,

'Rest, stay in the warm,' are meaningless for those in the fields. However, in the town there is now a community centre open everyday in addition to one run by Secours Catholique.

We all took ourselves to a local bar on New Year's Eve. At midnight I was given a rose, a glass of wine, and someone placed a plastic, lighted bow on my head; all the French kissed one another, and an hour later all the British sang, 'Auld Lang Syne.'

A few hours later I was back in the icy warehouse, mending sleeping bags, while pondering on last night – and wondering what changes might be seen here in the coming year to improve this cruel situation: lives held on hold, totally wasteful of time and resources (the French word, 'gaspilleuse', is so much more expressive). But we volunteers keep on keeping on because this seems preferable to being observers in this endless tragedy.

Anne M Jones, peace and human rights activist, and Quaker, volunteers at Giuseppe Conlon House. For a copy of her book, How Long, how long must we wait, (Annex Publications, 2019) email anne.150@phonecoop.coop

Below: Ade Bethune, *Acts of Mercy*



'Jesus wept'

Broeder Johannes Maertens

Sometimes, I feel as if I have left Calais as a broken person. It is not so much that I have suffered direct trauma or violence, but the daily confrontation with suffering, especially that of the young men and women, making their way to the UK, deeply 'scratched' my soul.

One day, one of our young guests, Jonas, walked into the house with his left trouser leg soaked in blood from the knee down.

'What happened?'

He said the CRS (French National Police, best known for riot control. ed.) had hit him on the knee.

'Quick! Get the doctor!'

Luckily there was a retired GP living opposite that we could always call upon. This was one of the many blessings of our house. It was a place of many small miracles.

It was OK! Nothing broken, no stitches needed, just a lot of bleeding. I guess a lot of blood always makes us panic. This wasn't the first or last time Jonas was confronted with violence on the streets. A few weeks later, Alex, another volunteer, and I came back from collecting bread and witnessed Jonas and his friends being physically attacked by French right-wing extremists.

Having travelled through Libya, Jonas had been through a lot already. He used to laugh it all away. He joked about what had happened to him and his friends. He would almost always be laughing especially in the evening, at table. I guess it is one way of coping with the harshness of life.

Take up your cross

I, however, don't have this youthful resilience anymore, if I ever had it. The exposure to violence and the daily suffering in Calais led me to a certain brokenness; a brokenness that brought me close to my friend-refugees; a brokenness that brought me much closer to God. Being Christian has given me lots of joy and fullness of life, but in that fullness also lies the Cross.

'Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord' Psalm 130:1

There was one day I never will forget. I had just arrived back in Calais from an urgently needed break. The night before, a young refugee had died on the highway, trying to get to the UK. With my colleague, Aman, from Caritas, I went to the Eritrean refugee community, who were living next to the highway, to tell them that one of their friends had died. They knew already. We just came to confirm his name. When we told the *diakon* (the Eritrean Orthodox deacon) he started deeply lamenting and wailing to God. His cry pierced the cold air, through the border wall, through my flesh and bones and anybody else there. Sami, too, screamed angrily around him. Out of the depths they were crying, calling to God in deep grief and anger. Why God, why?

During Lent we will read how Jesus wept when he saw in Mary and Martha grieving at the death of his friend Lazarus. '*Jesus wept.*' The shortest verse in the King James Bible says it all – God cries with our suffering, God in Jesus cries with us.

Some nights in Calais, after days of hard labour and seeing suffering, I wept. It was the only thing left to do. I knew God was there and I supposed that sometimes God wept with me for all the suffering and injustices that happened there. *Out of the depths I call you Lord. And all along you are there with us.* It gives me some comfort to know that God is there, but it doesn't take the pain away and it doesn't heal the many injustices. Many a time, I had the feeling there was no answer to the question, 'Why?'

The Cross of death and the Cross of resurrection

As Christians we believe that death doesn't have the last word. '*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*' (1 Corinthians 15:55) Resurrection and justice will follow after death. In the Gospel story, Jesus restores Lazarus to life. Jesus knows He has to go the same way; a terrible time of public humiliation, physical suffering and death lies in front of Him and He knows his mother and friends will grieve for Him.

Violence, harassment and humiliation are part of life for refugees in Calais. Almost daily the CRS dis-

mantle the little camps and chase the inhabitants away. A new wall was erected. Barbed wire blocks the spaces under bridges or in the fields where refugees would sleep. Death often comes close to the border. Border policies are the result of political choices and therefore also ethical choices. Some people say borders don't kill, but they do. The whole idea of a border is to limit and restrict human movement and sometimes that leads to death.

God calls us back to life

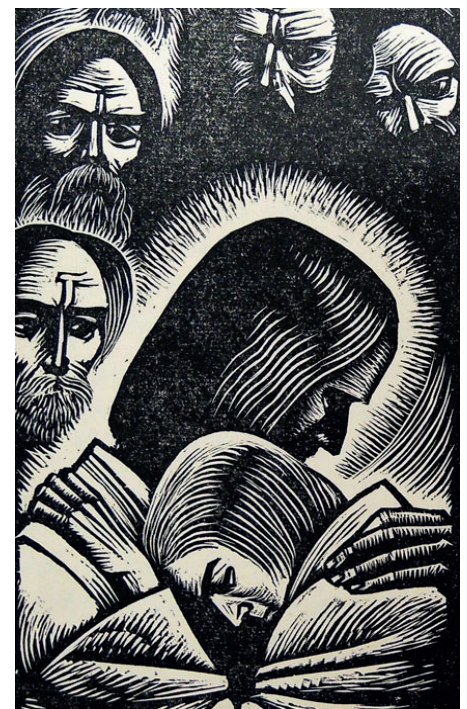
During Lent, we look towards Easter. We look towards resurrection and the hope this embodies. We experience many resurrection moments, when God calls us to stand up from the depths, from our pain and trauma. For instance when refugees are allowed to settle and rebuild their lives once more, when people rebuild their homes after war, when people are restored in their dignity.

God has blessed me in living with refugees and the pastoral work has given me much joy, but it has deeply scratched my soul. Out of the depths I have learned to call to God.

Jonas has refugee status in the UK and has a job. The 'diakon' waits in the UK, and risks being deported to Italy. The body of the Eritrean man was taken back to his family in Eritrea. (Jonas and Sami are pseudonyms)

Br. Johannes Maertens is a live-in volunteer at Giuseppe Conlon House

Below: Fritz Eichenberg, illustration (detail) for Dorothy Day's *The Long Loneliness*





Above: Margriet Bos prunes a tree at the Amsterdam Catholic Worker. **Photo:** Frits ter Kuile

A glimpse into the kitchen

A day in the life of Giuseppe Conlon House

Margriet Bos

It's a quarter past six. My alarm is ringing. I quickly get dressed. At half past I close the gate behind me and my bike as quietly as possible and heave myself up the steep slope of Mattison Road, on my way to the Ladies' Pond on Hampstead Heath. After a particularly refreshing swim around the pond with some other brave, early birds I cycle to the nearby church of St. Dominic for Mass. An hour later I'm back home, where everything is just as quiet as I left it. I've got half an hour before morning prayer.

The fifteen minutes of silence during the prayer are a treat. Last year I started practising centering prayer, a daily 20-minute routine of sitting down and shutting up, making space for God. Over here silence is found more easily than in Amsterdam as the house is a lot bigger. Daily prayer even takes place in a real church, part of the community premises that is mostly used for storage. The former confessional is filled with tins, packages and jars of food.

Even though their absence makes the silence more intense, I regularly find myself wishing for some children to run around, like they do in the Amsterdam Catholic Worker, making too much noise and creating a joyful buzz. Luckily Harricat and Carla, the cats, despite the fleas and leaving hairs all over the place, provide some cuddles and softness in this predominantly male household.

Morning meeting

At 10am all the volunteers gather in the deep armchairs of our cosy back sitting room. We discuss the day's expected events.

Johannes will clean the showers and toilets, and the big plastic boxes where we keep donated bread, and pastries as well. Today we are due a large bakery donation. Most of it gets eaten here, but tomorrow I'll take bread to the local mosque and on Sunday we will distribute some at Urban Table, when about 70 people come for a hot meal. Bramble will work on the website and an article for the newsletter. In the afternoon – when all the guests leave the house and most of us have a break – she'll welcome day visitors for coffee and a chat and a shower. Roland promises he'll get the internet going again. It's just like being at home, there is always something broken or lost.

Handy woman in the making

I plan to work with Chris, who comes every now and then to fix stuff around the house, on a newly built partition. The wooden frame and the plasterboard is up. Today I'll get a crash course in plastering; something I've never done before. But Chris is a good teacher and I enjoy learning new practical skills. He's very aware that English isn't my first language. When he suspects I don't know a word, he repeats it halfway through a sentence in a questioning tone and asks if I get it. He underestimates my vocabulary a bit, but that's a nice change from the people who seem

to completely forget I'm not English and sometimes ask me the meaning of an (English!) word.

Trials

When we've finished, I catch up with some emails about last summer's action at the military base in Büchel, Germany against nuclear weapons. In the meantime there are two cases here for which I should prepare; one for my arrests during the Arms Fair last September and one for a climate action during Extinction Rebellion. I don't intend to add any more actions with possible legal consequences, so those works of resistance shouldn't get too out of hand.

Spiritual accompaniment

Later in the afternoon, Sister Katrina rings the doorbell. She lived in the community at Dorothy Day House in Hackney, before Giuseppe Conlon House began. She and I did an action during the DSEI Arms Fair and it was a very pleasant collaboration. All volunteers are advised to look for a person with whom to discuss their spiritual life and development. At first I didn't give it much thought as I was planning to stay just a short time. But when I met Katrina I changed my mind, as she understood my Catholic Worker life of hospitality, simplicity, nonviolent actions and prayer so well and lives it herself. I always dread opening up to someone on this level and it's no different now. But our conversation is enriching and I'm glad Katrina made the time to see me.

Meanwhile it's almost dinnertime. Johannes walks around with a bell, ringing it in the church, the house and the hall so as to let everyone know dinner is ready. We enjoy a lovely meal together after which I go to my room to read a bit. But after an hour or so Mirjam knocks on my door; there will be a film in the backroom, do I want to join? I quite like the idea so I put away my book, as well as my intention to get to bed on time...

Margriet Bos, of the Amsterdam community, was recently a live-in volunteer at Giuseppe Conlon House

This article first appeared in 'n Korrel Zout, the Amsterdam Catholic Worker newsletter and was translated by the author.

Giuseppe Conlon House Update

Over Christmas we received an enormous amount of donations from supporters of the house, both in terms of money and food. We are hugely grateful for all that generosity, which will keep us going for some time through the New Year. We were also lucky enough to get some help from Frank and Chris who stepped in for a bit while we were short of volunteers. So much of what goes on here depends on people who aim to be, as Peter Maurin said, go-givers rather than go-getters.

Local grocery shops donated food as well, and we recently received a large number of pomegranates. It's like this sometimes; an unexpectedly large amount of one thing comes along, and then we have to figure out how best to use it all. So, it's been pomegranate in fruit salads, pomegranate with chocolate sauce, dried pomegranates, pomegranate molasses... Some of us here had never seen a real pomegranate before moving into the house. How lucky we are!

We had some happy news amongst our guests, with one finally being granted leave to remain in UK, and another being granted, after a seemingly interminable wait, his national asylum support accommodation. Amongst the community members, we were sad to say goodbye to Richard, who was with us for over a year and has been such an amazing and inspiring support for the community. We were also sad to say goodbye to Margriet, who visited us from the Amsterdam Catholic Worker and stayed on to help us out. While it was sad to see both of them leave, we welcomed them back again a few weeks later for a visit!

We have been given a grant for a new kitchen, and plans for this are well underway. To be presented with so many options is quite a luxury but also a headache-inducing responsibility. Which is the best combination of worktops and cupboards? What material? What colour? What design? Which is the most durable design? Is that design compatible with that colour? Is that the right cooker? How to get the best possible quality on our limited budget? What would Jesus do? There's no shortage of opinions

in community! Many thanks to Sarah and Rob, for all their support and patience in the designs (and the lovely vegan cake).

We were lucky enough to have a visit from Haringey Anti-Raids, who ran a workshop on immigration raids and helped all of us here know our rights and know how to look out for immigration raids. There's quite a movement growing around resisting immigration raids, with more information, and some inspiring videos, available at antiraid.net.



This is why I rebel

James 'Iggy' Fox died on 6 February. He was 25, had given up a career in science to join XR and fought hard for the cause, especially for Indigenous rights. He wrote this article for issue 3 of The Hourglass.

Science alone is silence. For people to act on science's warnings and apply its solutions, its message needs shouting from the rooftops. Scientists are getting on the streets, refusing to be scribes of the apocalypse.

After seven years studying, researching and protecting nature as a wildlife conservationist, I stopped fieldwork and deferred an MSc in order to rebel full-time. Because no matter how many surveys I ran, how many turtle nests I protected, or how many young people I educated about 'sustainability', the seas kept rising, forests kept burning, plastic kept clogging the beaches, and our data kept showing that wildlife was being decimated.

After joining the #XRSnowflakes affinity group, I realized that as an activist my voice could be far more influential than it had been as a scientist.

On 13th August, six of us were arrested at London's Brazilian Embassy for taking non-violent direct action to highlight an ecological and human rights emergency. We did it as two thousand Indigenous women marched on Brasilia to defend their lives and lands, and three days after the Dias do Fogo, when thousands of fires were lit to clear deforested land in the Amazon.



Above: James 'Iggy' Fox protests at the Brazilian Embassy in August 2019. **Photo:** Bramble O'Brien

I don't want to go to prison, but I'll face whatever I need to. My actions aren't about sacrifice, or arrest for the sake of it. Knowing the science, I have no choice but to tell the truth, and stick to my morals in the face of that truth. I won't stand by and watch the world burn.

Right now, the truth is that Latin Indigenous people are facing genocide: the Brazilian state has blood on its hands, as do the extractive corporations destroying Amazonia. While the real criminals sit in plush offices profiting from ecocide, obliterating the natural world we depend on, those who resist their atrocities are killed or thrown in jail.

I'm rebelling in love for this world and the wild. In compassion for the Indigenous, local and First Nations peoples who are persecuted protecting the ecosystems we all need to survive. In rage for the environmental defenders murdered every week – my siblings in the fight for life.

Beyond a carefully prepared statement, I answered 'no comment' to most questions in the police interview. But I did look the detective in the eye and tell him one thing:

'I'd quite like a future. Right now, my future is on fire, and in Brazil, they're killing the firefighters.'

When the forest is ablaze in a valley, sometimes all it takes is a few extra Snowflakes on the mountainside to trigger an avalanche that will put the fire out. Will you be one of them?

The Wet'suwet'en Crisis

Bramble O'Brien

On 10th February 2020, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, armed with K9 units and assault rifles and accompanied by helicopters and snipers, invaded Unist'ot'en, a land defence camp on the border of the territory of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation in Northern British Columbia. They came to enforce a court injunction that cleared the way for a multi-billion dollar liquid natural gas pipeline. Their opposition was a handful of unarmed Indigenous land defenders.

In early 2019, I was living with the Vancouver Catholic Worker, volunteering with a women's health collective, and trying to come to terms with the heartbreaking reality of the streets of Vancouver: the enormous homeless community, many Indigenous, living in poverty which I would not have believed possible in the developed 'West'. Hearing of the struggle the Wet'suwet'en clans were facing, I hitched a ride with a fellow Ontarian – a member of the Ojibwe First Nation – up to the Wet'suwet'en's Yintah, or sacred land.

It was a long journey, over 1200 kilometres into the northern interior of B.C., through the mountains, many defaced by avalanches, which had sheered away the glacial peaks, splitting them open like cakes. The road behind us was soon clogged by the rubble which spilled into the Fraser River, flooding the valleys. This area is untamed and breathtakingly beautiful, a place where the 'the barrier thins between this world and the otherworld', as a Cree elder and land defender, who later travelled with us, described.

The Yintah is deep in the provincial interior, surrounded by dense fir woods, and accessible only by an old logging road. It is home to the headwaters of the Wedzin Kwah river, and is an area of ecological variety and richness, as well as cultural significance, including the Wet'suwet'en's traditional hunting and burial grounds. During the weeks I spent there, I worked at the Healing Centre,

alongside the Indigenous people to whom the land had belonged for uncounted generations, and the settler Canadians, Americans, and Europeans who had come from far afield to try to show support.

It was, and never has been, a protest camp. Unceded and unconquered territory, the Yintah is the Wet'suwet'en nation's home, and they simply established the Unist'ot'en checkpoint in order to determine whom they allow within its borders. Coastal GasLink is one in a succession of seven different oil and gas companies, that – under prime ministers Stephen Harper and now Justin Trudeau – have attempted to force a pipeline through the territory. Like the others, its actions are illegal. Nevertheless, the Wet'suwet'en's struggle went unnoticed for many years, quietly ignored by mainstream Canadian press. It came to international attention on 7th January 2020, following a militarised raid on Unist'ot'en, when the UK's *Guardian* published leaked RCMP documents authorising a 'lethal overwatch' – a license to kill Indigenous land defenders.

On 10th February, Wet'suwet'en hereditary chief Freda Huson (Howihkat) and other land defenders were performing a ceremony to commemorate the missing and murdered Indigenous women who have disappeared around the pipeline man-camps, and along the 'Highway of Tears' in B.C. The militarised RCMP arrived, arrested them at gunpoint, and drove over the ceremonial fire. They then escorted CGL workers into the territory.

The provincial government has justified this violence by claiming that the nation's band councils had signed benefits agreements with CGL. But even if they had done so without coercion, the band councils' authority extends only to the federal reservations, little pockets of land within the wider territory. Both by Wet'suwet'en law, and Canadian law – established in a 1997 Supreme Court case *Delgamuukw v the Queen* – it is the Wet'suwet'en nation that has sovereignty over the territory. And their hereditary chiefs, whose authority includes and exceeds the reserves and extends to the entire 22,000 square kilometres of traditional lands, speak for the Wet'suwet'en nation. Regarding the pipeline they have said, consistently and unequivocally, no.

Multinational investment corporations, including the UK's Royal Dutch Shell, have shares in the CGL pipeline, and billions are at stake. But all across Canada, protesters are rising up in support of the Wet'suwet'en. There are a few deeply important issues in focus – the ecological concerns around pipelines in general, the question of whether or not this particular pipeline is environmentally or economically viable, the economic desperation of the reservations which pressures them into accepting projects like this, etc. – all of which are complex. But the main issue is straightforward: the Canadian government has committed a grave injustice by forcing a pipeline through unceded territory against the direct, expressed wishes of the people to whom it belongs.

Bramble O'Brien is a live-in volunteer at Giuseppe Conlon House and edits this newsletter

Below: Royal Canadian Mounted Police stand on the Unist'ot'en bridge. Red dresses commemorate missing and murdered Indigenous women. **Photo:** Amber Bracken





Summer at the Catholic Worker Farm

Open Day

June 6th 3pm until late

Faith and Justice Retreat

Discovering a God who hungers for Justice, a weekend for young adults, **19th - 21st June 2020**

For further details visit faithjustice.org.uk

Who are the anarchists?

European Christian Anarchist Conference, camping, workshops, food, ranting, bonfire, resistance, entertainment, bring the kids, **10th - 12th July 2020, 3pm**

Farmfest 2020

Back to back musicians perform Rock, Pop, Blues, Country, Folk, Gospel and World Music.

6kW sound system.

Dedicated food and drinks tent and camping area.

BBQ grill, The Burrito Bar, The Crêperie, Mrs. Miggins' Pie Shoppe, Real Ale!

Tickets: £35 £10 for day entry – under 16s half price, and under 5s free. www.farmfest.info

The Catholic Worker Farm, Lynsters Farm, Old Uxbridge Road, West Hyde, Herts, WD3 9XJ, mobile: 07983477819, thecatholicworkerfarm.org

Regular Events

Please note earlier start time.

All events at:

Giuseppe Conlon House, 49, Mattison Road, N4 1BG

-unless otherwise stated

Bible Sharing followed by dinner. Second Thursday of the month, 6:00-7:30pm: We are using *Lectio Divina* and Kate Hennessy's *The World Will Be Saved By Beauty: An Intimate Portrait of Dorothy Day*

Refugee Vigil

Third Wednesday of the Month, 12:30 – 1:30pm at the Home Office, 2 Marsham Street SW1P 4DF.

We remember all who have died because of borders and hostile immigration policies.

Reading Group followed by dinner. Fourth Thursday of the month, 6:00 – 7:30pm.

Urban Table We provide a sit-down community meal, every other Sunday, 1:00 - 4:30pm at the Roundchapel, Powerscroft Road, London E5 0PU. *Get in touch if you would like to participate.*

All welcome. Call 020 8348 8212 for more details

Unfortunately, our house is not accessible for wheelchair users.

Write in!

We warmly invite you to comment on what is written here. We will include interesting letters in our next issue.

We welcome writing, photos poems or drawings on Catholic Worker themes: faith, resistance, hospitality londoncatholicworker@yahoo.co.uk

Upcoming events

40 days multifaith vigil

Prayer and meditation vigil for the 40 days and 40 nights of Lent, hosted by Christian Climate Action and others.

Parliament Square and other locations around the country, until **11 April 11pm.**

For further details visit christianclimateaction.org

Prophets and Reconcilers

'Who are we called to be to transform the world?'

Conference hosted by Network of Christian Peace Organisations, Student Christian Movement, Pax Christi, and others.

Maria Fidelis School, 1 Drummond Street, NW1 1LY Saturday 25th April 2020

10 am- 4 pm

Tickets £8 - £15

Keynote speaker:

Fr. Martin Newell

Speakers from a broad range of backgrounds and faith traditions, will explore nonviolence, bridge-building, grassroots activism, and ways we are called to be spiritual peacemakers - a force for change in the world today

Future court dates

London Catholic Worker activists have risked arrest for the sake of peace and God's creation.

XR protest, Brazilian Embassy, August 2019, Richard Barnard, **July 12th for 3 weeks, Southwark Crown Court**, trial.

DLR action during XR spring uprising, with **Christian Climate Action**, Richard Barnard, Nick Cooper, Phil Kingston and others, **11th May 2020 for 3 weeks, Inner London Crown Court.**

DLR action during XR October uprising, Christian Climate Action, Martin Newell, Nick Cooper, Phil Kingston, Rev. Sue Parfitt, **7th September 2020 for 5 days, Inner London Crown Court.**



GIUSEPPE CONLON HOUSE

IS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS!



JOIN OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS!

THERE ARE CURRENTLY SEVERAL OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED:

- HELP PREPARE OUR DAILY COMMUNAL EVENING MEAL FOR ABOUT 15 PEOPLE
- URBAN TABLE - TWICE MONTHLY WE SERVE A SUNDAY LUNCH FOR ABOUT 60 PEOPLE IN HACKNEY
- BE THE EVENING HOST, WELCOMING OUR COOKS, SETTING THE TABLE AND DOING FOOD PICKUPS.
- VARIOUS DIY AROUND THE PROPERTY
- JOIN AS A FULL TIME LIVE-IN VOLUNTEER FOR A PERIOD OF 2+ MONTHS.
- JOIN OUR MONTHLY VIGILS OUTSIDE THE HOME OFFICE WEDNESDAY LUNCH TIME.
- HELP WITH THE MAKING AND MAILING OUT OF OUR QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED PLEASE GET IN TOUCH TO ARRANGE A VISIT.

WWW.LONDONCATHOLICWORKER.ORG CONTACT: +44(0)2083488212. LONDONCATHOLICWORKER@YAHOO.CO.UK

Support our work

We are a part of the radical, Christian, pacifist Catholic Worker movement started in 1933 in New York by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. There are now over 150 houses and communities in the United States and in other countries. Catholic Worker houses are financially independent. There are no headquarters, nor is there a central organisation. For more on the international movement visit: www.catholicworker.com.

At Giuseppe Conlon House we run a house of hospitality for around twenty homeless, destitute asylum seekers who are not allowed to work or claim benefits. In collaboration with two local churches we also serve a meal for over fifty people on Sunday afternoons.

Donations welcome!

We are not paid for this work. We receive nothing from the government. For reasons to do with our political witness, we are not a registered charity.

We rely on our readers' donations to pay utility bills, volunteer and guest expenses, for building repairs, printing, and household supplies.

Ways to donate:

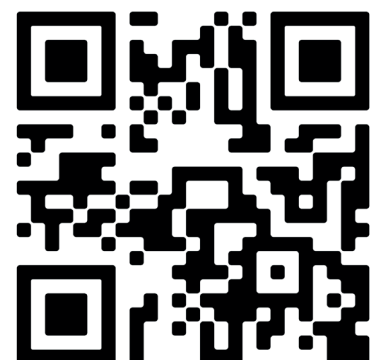
Cheque: send cheques payable to 'London Catholic Worker', to Giuseppe Conlon House, 49 Mattison Road, London N4 1 BG

Online banking: London Catholic Worker, Triodos Bank, Acc No: 20066996 Sort Code: 16 58 10

Paypal: visit our home page www.londoncatholicworker.org

Standing Order: to download a standing order form visit www.londoncatholicworker.org

or scan the QR code below.



Giuseppe Conlon House Wish List

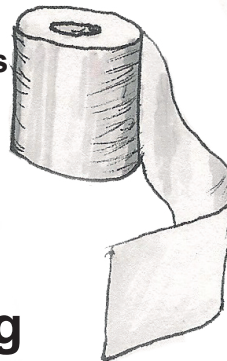
Food

- Chopped tomatoes
- Peanut butter
- Cooking oil
- Kidney beans
- Lentils
- Chickpeas
- Easy-cook rice
- Basmati & brown rice
- Oats
- Couscous
- Noodles
- White vinegar
- Hummus
- Nutritional yeast
- Tahini
- Soy sauce
- Spices & herbs
- Honey
- Muesli
- Breakfast cereal
- Fruit juice and squash
- Herbal teabags
- Chilli sauce
- Nuts and seeds



Toiletries

- Toilet paper
- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Shampoo
- Liquid soap
- Razors



Cleaning

- Eco-friendly products:
- Anti-bacterial spray
- Bicarbonate of soda
- Multi-purpose cleaner
- Toilet cleaner
- Laundry detergent
- Floor cleaner



Miscellaneous

- NEW Men's underwear M-XL
- Candles and tea lights
- Umbrellas



Please do not donate pork or pork products!

Many of our guests do not eat pork for religious reasons. Also, please do not donate soup, tinned spaghetti or baked beans as we already have enough.