



A Novena of Novenas for Justice, Peace, & Creation

81 days of intercessory prayer and catechesis for peace among nations, justice for all people, and the care of Creation, commencing the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, June 20, 2009 and ending on the Nativity of Mary, September 8, 2009.+

This call to prayer consists of 9 consecutive 9 day novenas. Each novena has a general intention, the prayers, thoughts for the Journey, and an act of caring for Creation. Each novena is dedicated to one of the titles of Mary, plus a saint. In addition, each day we will pray the Novena to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the

conversion of the United States Catholic Bishops. The purpose of these novenas is not the mechanical recitation of words, but a genuine act of prayer, a prayer of the heart.



The spirit of this novena may be found in these words of Oscar Romero. . . “It is very easy to be servants of the word without disturbing the world: a very spiritualized word, a word without any commitment to history, a word that can sound in any part of the world because it belongs to no part of the world. A word like that creates no problems, starts no conflicts. What starts conflicts and persecutions, what marks the genuine church, is the word that, burning like the word of the prophets, proclaims and accuses; proclaims to the people God's wonders to be believed and venerated, and accuses of sin those who oppose God's reign, so that they may tear that sin out of their hearts, out of their societies, out of their laws – out of the structures that oppress, that imprison, that violate the rights of God and of humanity. This is the hard service of the word. But God's Spirit goes with the prophet, with the preacher, for he is Christ, who keeps on proclaiming his reign to the people of all times.”

The Daily Prayers

The novenas consist of two sets of prayers: an “ordinary”, which is the same every day for the 81 days of the novena of novenas, and a “proper”, which are the special prayers related to the particular novena being prayed during that nine day period of prayer. The daily prayers are given at the beginning of this booklet. Also included in this “portrait” version of the booklet are the daily meditations. This symbol + means to make the sign of the Cross. The first and fourth prayers are the same every day, the second and third prayers change from novena to novena.

The First Prayer of the Novena of Novenas

+ Let us pray together in peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, peace to all nations, and solidarity among all peoples. Give us strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Open our eyes to see the beauty, joy, redemption, and goodness which comes through obedience to your Son our Lord. Teach us to be a refuge of hope for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.

The Second and Third Prayers of the Novena of Novenas

These are the proper prayers for each novena, to Mary and a particular saint, found in the weekly sections below.



The Fourth Prayer of the Novena of Novenas, to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the U.S. Catholic Bishops

+ Most Glorious and Venerable St. John Chrysostom: Grace shining forth from your lips like a beacon has illumined the universe. It shows to the world the treasures of poverty; it reveals to us the heights of humility. Teaching us by your words, O Father John Chrysostom, intercede before the Word, Christ our God, to save our souls! Pray for the bishops of the United States of America, who do not teach or practice the Catholic faith in its fullness, that God will deliver them to orthodoxy, and reform their ways of living, so that as exemplars of orthopraxis, they will protect all life, from the moment of conception to the time of natural death.

Teach them true solidarity with the poor, so that they understand the consequences of their moral abandonment of entire nations of human beings to a collective fate of cruelty and violence because they were in the way of the American Empire and its gluttonous lust for oil, supremacy, and blood. As you refused to obey the aristocratic commands of your era, help our bishops turn away from the political demands that cause them to preach a false gospel of moral relativism regarding war and peace.

Having received divine grace from heaven, with your mouth you teach all people to worship the Triune God. Instruct our bishops with the wisdom of the Gospel, so that they repent of their material cooperation with the objective evil of unjust war, and call all people, in authentic word and deed, to live in solidarity, peace, and justice. All-blest and venerable St. John Chrysostom, we praise you, for you are our teacher, revealing things divine! Pray for us that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. O God, Who by the

preaching and teaching of Saint John Chrysostom has given us an example of fortitude in the face of persecution and political corruption, grant that we who reverence his life and ministry may also imitate his example of fidelity to wisdom, truth, justice, and beauty, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.



June 20 - June 28 Our Lady of Sorrows & Archbishop Oscar Romero

Our Lady of Sorrows, most holy and afflicted mother, queen of martyrs, you stood beneath the cross and witnessed the agony of your dying Son. We pray for those who will die today because of war, economic chaos, injustice, and exploitation, especially the children. Prepare them for the agony, despair, and terror of the violence that is upon them. Comfort them and hold them close to the bosom of thy Wounded Heart as they drink deeply of the bitter cup which is forced upon them. Wipe their tears, calm their fears, welcome them to peace and safety. Eternal rest grant to them, and may perpetual light shine upon them.

General intentions: For the redemption of structures of violence, oppression, exploitation, and despair with beauty, goodness, mercy, and peace. Reparation for sins against life. **The First Work of Justice and Peace:** Live simply and justly in solidarity with the poor and marginalized and be a good neighbor. Make no war on them, rather, be one with them in spirit, truth, and love. **Act of Caring for Creation.** Pick up trash in a public place.

Oscar Romero, prophet of justice and peace, you stood in solidarity with the poor and oppressed even unto your own death. May your holy example strengthen us with courage and wisdom as we do the works of justice and peace, beauty and wisdom.

Thoughts for the journey. Today many swords pierce the heart of Mary. Injustice, oppression, violence, war, murder -- sins and structures of sin against justice and peace. We know that within our hearts are the seeds of the problems the world faces. If we are going forward in the work of justice and peace, we must begin with an examination of our own lives. How do my sins of omission and commission create and support structures of injustice and oppression? How do I participate in and profit from the social sins and unjust wars of this age? What must be redeemed in my life so that I live in solidarity with those our society has pushed to the edge and further, into the abyss? How can I change my life so that I promote peace, rather than demanding war?

June 29 - July 7 Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Martyrs of Latin America



O Mary, blessed Lady of Guadalupe, bright dawn of the new world, Mother of the living, to you do we entrust the cause of life: Look down, O Mother, upon the vast numbers of babies not allowed to be born, of the poor whose lives are made difficult, of men and women who are victims of brutal violence, of the elderly and the sick killed by indifference or out of misguided mercy. Grant that all who believe in your Son may proclaim the Gospel of life with honesty and love to the people of our time. Obtain for them the grace to accept that Gospel as a gift ever new, the joy of celebrating it with gratitude throughout their lives and the courage to bear witness to it resolutely, in order to build, together with all people of good will, the civilization of truth and love, to the praise and glory of God, the Creator and lover of life.

General Intention: The unjust exercise of authority, and the sins and structures of sin against life. **The 2nd Work of Justice and Peace:** Hear the truth when it is spoken to you. Discern the signs of the times and speak truth -- to power, to the people, and to the Church. **Act of Caring for Creation:** Start a compost pile and compost all your organic refuse.

Pray for us, Martyrs of Latin America. Bring to our remembrance this day all people who are killed in wars, tortured in jails, disappeared in the night, starved for food, subjected to oppression, driven from their homes, unlawfully imprisoned, denied religious liberty, excluded from economic opportunity, marginalized by poverty, targeted by racial and cultural prejudices, silenced by violence and injustice. May we hear and remember the tragedy, joy, despair, and hope of the voices that call to us and to history for justice, reconciliation, and peace. Help us by the grace of God to build a world without injustice. Amen.

Thoughts for the journey. In this Novena we honor Mary as Our Lady of Guadalupe, protector of the unborn, patron of all those who are oppressed and persecuted. We also remember the martyrs of Latin America, victims of cruel conflicts between world empires and corrupt ruling classes.

Throughout history, we have drawn circles around certain groups and said, "These people are not human -- dispose of them as you choose." The holocausts are too many to count. Do we really believe that human life is precious and deserves respect and protection? That depends on where the alleged person is located, socially and physically. Some people simply aren't considered to be real people.

They may be too old, and too sick, and too poor, just give them a shot and put them out of our misery. Or perhaps they live on land which is coveted by others more powerful than they. Society has developed many ways to ease this process, starting with the NewSpeak vocabulary that describes these events. Structures of sin always defend themselves vigorously. There is enough tragedy in this to go around. Abandonment by fathers, violence against women, unjust economics that encourage abortion, terrorism, mandatory contraception & sterilization, demonization of the poor (especially young single mothers), cartelized and corporatized health care and so on. Here is where we remember that the Lady of Guadalupe took upon herself the image of a young pregnant Aztec maiden in a place of oppression and injustice, demonstrating God's love for everybody.

We find this message also in the mysteries of the many Martyrs of Latin America. They were condemned by politicians. The bullets and bombs were paid for by the powerful. They were targeted because they were poor. Their deaths were enabled by structures that dehumanize and depersonalize human beings. Like unborn children, a circle was drawn around them & they were proclaimed as fair game. Empires counted their deaths as collateral damage. Their voices call to us for justice & remembrance.

July 8 - 16

Our Lady of the Precious Blood and St. Franz Jagerstatter



Precious Blood, Ocean of Divine Mercy: Flow upon us! Precious Blood, most pure Offering: Procure for us every grace! Precious Blood, Hope and Refuge of sinners: Atone for us! Precious Blood, Delight of holy souls: Draw us!

St. Franz Jagerstatter, in a time of great injustice and violence, you bore heroic witness to peace, beauty, and holiness. Your devotion to truth shows us the way to reconciliation. Your example of fortitude brings us courage. Your life of beauty in the face of appalling evil fills us with hope. May your heart of



love inspire us so that we will witness, remember, teach, and proclaim the Gospel of life and love for all peoples, everywhere, and not count the cost.

Thoughts for the journey. His lifeless body was taken from the Cross and laid in her blessed arms. How the tears must have flowed as she cradled Him in her arms, He who once had been a little baby, bouncing on her lap, a young man who followed in Joseph's footsteps as a carpenter and who taught in the Temple confounding the wise, a fearless prophet who healed and taught and brought hope. How His life must have passed before her eyes, as her tears mingled with His most precious Blood. "A sword shall also pierce your heart." At the first Eucharist, she received the Cup from His hands -- did she understand even then what was to come? "She kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."

"For in Christ all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross through him. (Colossians 1:19-20a). "And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

How great is the need for reconciliation in this world! But reconciliation is more than an oppressor saying, "I'm sorry" who then goes and continues a lifestyle of oppression, who closes his eyes to the consequences of injustice. Reconciliation is not the denial of injustice, it is the correction of the objective disorders that cause the harm. The call to reconciliation is not the Voice of the Oppressor saying "Cooperate with our violence against you." No, it is the witness of the Precious Blood of Christ that reconciliation is *praxis* -- it is action rooted in spirituality. Faith without works is dead.

This is not a comfortable process; it is easier to just blame the victims. Many close their eyes to structures of injustice and exploitation and greed, processes that make people poor and keep them "in their place." The poor become a fearful Alien, the Other, to be mastered, confined, counted, regulated, and exploited for the good of the ruling political and economic elites. Our Lady of the Precious Blood without fear and full of love stands against all oppression and injustice, she comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comforted and calls us to the same journey.

St. Franz Jagerstatter was an Austrian farmer who was killed by the Nazis during World War II because of his refusal to bear arms and serve in the German military. His example of fortitude in the face of the most appalling evil is a reminder that reconciliation begins with truth -- and leads to a personal commitment to live the Gospel, even at great personal risk. His example is of great importance in our day, as the United States wages unjust wars, and calls upon all people to support its crusades of death and slaughter. In the face of so much blood and death, we are called to remember the victims of imperial tyranny, and to stand in solidarity with them.

General Intention: The reconciliation of persons and peoples. **Third Work of Justice and Peace:** Make injustice visible -- witness, remember, teach, proclaim, tell. Light candles, do not curse the darkness. **Act of Caring for Creation:** Refrain from eating meat or fish one day each week.

Our prayer is that through true reconciliation, all people will learn how to be one in solidarity with each other, so that all persons and peoples acknowledge the human personhood and dignity of each other, and live together in peace upon the earth. And as the song says, let this begin with me. Our praxis is a prayer, and this is the prayer that is most pleasing to God.

July 17 - 25

Our Lady of Good Counsel and Matthew Talbot



Most Glorious Virgin Mary, you were chosen by the eternal Counsel to be the Mother of the Eternal Word made flesh. You know that our thoughts on earth are sometimes full of fear and uncertainty. Send us the gift of counsel to teach us how to discern God's will and to guide us in all we do.

Matthew Talbot, you were born into poverty, among a marginalized people, and you went right to the edge as an alcoholic. In these times, the strong prey upon the weak and violence, despair, alienation and oppression rule the hearts of many. We pray that your example of solidarity with the poor will inspire us to follow your path and open our hearts, minds, and homes in hospitality and welcome to those who are in need. Amen.

Lord, in your servant, Matt Talbot you have given us a wonderful example of triumph over addiction, of devotion to duty, and of lifelong reverence of the Holy Sacrament. May his life of prayer and penance give us courage to take up our crosses and follow in the footsteps of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen."

Thoughts for the journey. See how Our Lady carefully guides the steps of her Son. What advice did she give to the servants at the wedding at Cana? "Do whatever he tells you" – feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, challenge unjust structures, speak out against oppression and hypocrisy, love God and love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Matthew Talbot was born in a slum in Dublin, Ireland in 1856, and died in the same town in 1925. His journey led into the dark depths of alcoholism. But by the grace of God, he experienced a true and lasting religious conversion, and spent his life among the poor, practicing evangelical poverty, working at labor jobs and giving most of his money as alms to the poor and for the benefit of missions. He helped people find sobriety. His life was an evangelical witness to the power of the Gospel to transform the most alienated & to bring new life to community in the midst of despair. He reminds us of the precarious place of those we push to the edge. Often they fall off, into the abyss. They are all around us, but we don't notice them because they are really good at hiding from us. In their experience, to be noticed is to be abused, hurt, wounded. Their defenders are few, their enemies are many. Through the example of Our Lady of Good Counsel and Matthew Talbot, we can learn to open our eyes and hearts to see the poor who are among us, and stop doing harm to them.

July 26 -August 3

Our Lady of Perpetual Help & Sts. Vincent de Paul & Louise Marillac



+ O Mother of Perpetual Help, you who are called the refuge and the hope of sinners; be the refuge and hope of all who are excluded from sharing in the goodness and bounty of Creation. Help me, for the love of your son Jesus Christ, to stretch forth my hands to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless. I bless and thank Almighty God, who in His mercy has given me this confidence in You, which I hold to be a pledge of my eternal salvation. Mary, tender Mother, help

me. Mother of Perpetual Help, never allow me to lose my faith, hope, and love. Amen.

St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, your lives were heroic examples of justice, compassion, and mercy. We ask your intercession today on behalf of all who are excluded from participation in the bounty of Creation. Teach us to live simply, that others may simply live. Bless our efforts to ensure just distribution with discernment and prudence. Amen.

General Intention: For all those pushed to the edges of human societies. **Fourth Work of Justice and Peace:** Protect the poor and powerless -- listen, learn, educate, organize, empower participation, and respect life from the moment of conception to the time of natural death. **Act of Caring for Creation.** Grow some of your own food!

General Intention: Justice in the distribution of the Earth's goods. **5th Work of Justice and Peace:** Work for reconciliation with truth, evangelism, catechesis, orthopraxis. **Act of Caring for Creation:** Walk, ride a bicycle, car pool, & take public transportation more, drive less.





Thoughts for the journey. From the Catechism of the Catholic Church. "2402. In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labor, and enjoy their fruits. The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race. However, the earth is divided up among men to assure the security of their lives, endangered by poverty and threatened by violence. The appropriation of property is legitimate for guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of persons and for helping each of them to meet his basic needs and the needs of those in his charge. It should allow for a natural solidarity to develop between men." "2403. The right to private property, acquired by work or received from others by inheritance or gift, does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of mankind. The universal destination of goods remains primordial, even if the promotion of the common good requires respect for the right to private property and its exercise."

Now is the time to open our eyes to see the sins against just community that occur daily. Merciless and corrupt governments and international agencies encourage the exploitation of the powerless for unjust gain. Globalization, enforced by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the WTO, is making the poorest of the poor even more miserable and wretched and hopeless. Thousands die every day from the consequences of chronic hunger, many of them in countries where large corporate farms grow food that can't be eaten by the locals for export. War destroys resources and creates poverty and misery. Billions are at risk. A just community respects both property rights and the social mortgage on the property. Yet, too often the property rights of the poor are accorded scant protection. Traditional lands are appropriated for the enrichment of others, making the original owners tenants on their ancestral farms. (Think about this when you buy a banana.) Sometimes the poor are killed for their land. In the past 30 years, millions of units of low income housing have been destroyed in the US by politicized eminent domain pogroms against which the poor neighborhoods have no defense. When a powerful government agency wants a cross-town freeway, the nearest poor neighborhood will do just fine.

Sts. Vincent de Paul and Louise Marillac are two of the patron saints of justice in the distribution of earthly goods. They lived 350 years ago, but their influence continues today in the many lay and consecrated religious movements that grow from their ministry. The Vincentian apostolates are primary agents of fulfilling the Gospel's call to justice in the distribution of the bounty of creation. They show us that the path towards reconciliation is illuminated by justice.

August 4 - 12

Our Lady Queen of Peace and St. Joseph



+ Our Lady Queen of Peace, mystical rose, Bless those who create and sustain a culture of life and love with endurance, hope, and abundance. May the candles we light glow bright with hospitality and hope, respect and love, peace and justice. Help us to turn away from war and embrace peace.

Holy St. Joseph, Worker and Father, In faith you welcomed our Lord when we was yet within his Mother's womb. You opened your heart in

obedience to the Word of God. You protected Jesus and Mary and provided a home for them of peace, safety, and holiness. We honor you as patron of the Poor, and all who serve them, of Workers and Carpenters and Builders. Your heroic example shows us the way that we should go and we trust in you for protection in our time of need. Holy St. Joseph, Guide and Protector, Open the minds and hearts of all who by their actions give power to structures of sin that enable oppression. Help us to understand the consequences of sins against justice, charity, and the care of Creation. Turn oppressors from ways of darkness, and help them to embrace the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Holy St. Joseph, help the helpless, comfort the dying, bring justice to the poor, and peace to all nations. Amen.

Thoughts for the journey. Here we are, eight years into a series of unjust wars in the Middle East to protect our so-called "right" to oil. Hundreds of thousands have died. Violence rules the day. The US Empire is presently at the top of the world heap, but like all empires, we have no place to go but down. Ash heap of history here we come! Our national bloodlust for war is driving us toward that abyss. The US Catholic Bishops are guilty of material cooperation with these unjust wars, thus gravely harming the Church's witness to the protection of life from the moment of conception to the time of natural death.

Peace is the fruit of justice, as Pope Paul VI reminded us. All people are connected, rich and poor. The Gospel and these times call us therefore to the work of justice, to the celebration of life, goodness, beauty, virtue, responsibility, and joy. As we practice peace, non-violence, servant leadership, harmony, community, voluntary cooperation, and the proper stewardship of God's creation, we may eventually get good at it, especially if we pray without ceasing.

In the May 1977 edition of the Catholic Worker newspaper, Dorothy Day wrote about events in the first years of the movement. . . "When bills piled up and creditors came, we used to go to church and pray, all of us taking turns, and we called this "the picketing of

General intention: For the conversion of the rich and powerful. **6th Work of Justice and Peace:** Celebrate life, goodness, beauty, virtue, responsibility, and joy. Practice peace, non-violence, servant leadership, harmony, community, voluntary cooperation, and the proper stewardship of God's creation. Pray without ceasing. **Act of Caring for Creation:** Bake your own bread.

St. Joseph." Once when I asked an unemployed chambermaid if she would take a half-hour of "picketing Saint Joseph" over at Precious Blood Church, she asked me if she was to carry a sign." There's been a lot of picketing of St. Joseph since those days. St. Joseph is our protector and guide. Each year, when we bless the St. Joseph's Table at Epiphany Church, I am always moved to tears at these words of that blessing. . . "All-provident God, the good things that grace this table remind us of your many good gifts. Bless this food, and may the prayers of Saint Joseph, who provided bread for your Son and food for the poor, sustain us and all our brothers and sisters on our journey towards your heavenly kingdom. "

August 13 - 21, 2009

Our Lady of the Assumption and Sts. Isidore and Maria



+ Holy Mary, Mother of God, your Assumption into heaven is a sign of the triumph of good over evil and the coming renewal of all Creation. Help us to be visible signs of hope and comfort for all we meet and give us strength and inspiration to do the works of healing and renewal.

Saints Isidore and Maria, Show us that we are not separate from the natural world, but part of one sacred earth community. Remind us that creation is good and bears the imprint of Christ from beginning to end. Reveal to us that the full expression of God's generosity and blessings are found through oneness in the Mystical Body of Christ. Teach us the dignity of work and the necessity of charity. Amen.

For centuries, the Church has blessed the fruits of the soil on the Feast of the Assumption. Here are the traditional blessings for this purpose.

Let us pray. Almighty everlasting God, who by your word alone brought into being the heavens, earth, sea, things seen and things unseen, and garnished the earth with plants and trees for the use of man and beast; who appointed each species to bring forth fruit in its kind, not only for the food of living creatures, but for the healing of sick bodies as well; with mind and word we urgently call on you in your great kindness to bless + these various herbs and fruits, thus increasing their natural powers with the newly given grace of your blessing. May they keep away disease and adversity from men and beasts who use them in your name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Let us pray. God, who through Moses, your servant, directed the children of Israel to carry their sheaves of new grain to the priests for a blessing, to pluck the finest fruits of the orchard, and to make merry before you, the Lord their God; hear our supplications, and shower blessings + in abundance upon us and upon these bundles of new grain, new herbs, and this assortment of produce which we gratefully present to you on this festival, blessing + them in your name. Grant that men, cattle, flocks, and beasts of burden find in them a remedy against sickness, pestilence, sores, injuries, spells, against the fangs of serpents or poisonous creatures. May these blessed objects be a protection against diabolical mockery, cunning, and deception wherever they are kept, carried, or otherwise used. Lastly, through the merits of the blessed Virgin Mary, whose Assumption we are celebrating, may we all, laden with the sheaves of good works, deserve to be taken up to heaven; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

August 22 - 30, 2009

Our Lady of Charity and Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange



+ Our Lady of Charity, who came to us as a messenger of peace across the sea, we know you hear the cry of all who are at the mercy of others who are stronger than they. Give your gift of comfort and courage in our time of grave need. To your motherly heart, we entrust our desires and hopes, our work and our prayers. We pray for our families, that they may live in fidelity and love. We pray for our children, that they may grow strong in spirit and in body. We pray for our young people, that their faith may increase, as well as their attachment to the truth. We pray for the sick, the homeless, the lonely, the exiled, and for all suffering souls. We pray for the triumph of love, mercy, and justice throughout the world.

Christ. Teach us the dignity of work and the necessity of charity. Amen.

General Intention: + For the creation of structures of beauty and goodness. **7th Work of Justice and Peace:** Ensure fair distribution, subsidiarity, economic opportunity, justice, and food security for everyone everywhere. **Act of Caring for Creation:** Plant a tree.

General Intention: For the gift of fortitude for all who work for justice and all who suffer injustice.+ **Corporal Works of Mercy.** Feed the hungry, Give drink to the thirsty, Clothe the naked, Shelter the homeless, Visit the sick, Visit those in prison, Bury the dead. **Act of Caring for Creation:** Support programs that provide free or low cost spaying/neutering services for the pets of low income people.

Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange, your holy example of courage and faith in the face of injustice and oppression is a great blessing for all people. We ask you to intercede before the Throne of Grace for all who stand today against the demons who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Walk with us as we journey towards peace and justice. Amen.



Thoughts for the Journey. In the early 1600s, a statue with an inscription “Our Lady of Charity” was found floating in a bay after a storm by two Indians (Rodrigo and Juan de Hoyos) and a young slave (Juan Moreno). As at Guadalupe, this revelation came not to the rich and the powerful, but instead to the poor and outcast. The same call to charity, fidelity, and service comes to us today – from “across the sea”. Will we respond in faith, prayer, and action? First we must feel the sufferings of others in true solidarity. Then, having the desire to help, we must actually do something practical! If you have food for five people, then feed five hungry people and be grateful for the opportunities. If you have food for five, and fifty ask you for food, feed whoever you can and then start asking questions – why are there all these hungry people in my community? Then you can start creating structures so that there is enough food (and justice!) for all. It’s not complicated. You don’t need a foundation, an endowment, insurance, or anything other than eyes that are open to see, and hearts that are open, and hands that are busy doing goodness, beauty, and love. Don’t let anyone tell you that you don’t have the authority to do this, because your baptism is all the authority that you need.

Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange founded the first religious order in the United States for women of African descent, the Oblate Sisters of Providence on July 2, 1829. She was born a slave on the island of Santo Domingo, but came to the United States after the Haitian revolution of 1791 and settled in Baltimore. She and her sisters started a school, widows’ home, and orphanage; they provided vocational training and taught adults to read and write. They endured many hardships, including opposition from a racist bishop. Her order today ministers in inner cities, Africa, and several countries in the Carribean. Her faith and hope gave her the determination necessary to realize her vision and create new opportunities in the midst of injustice and oppression for the victims of racism and slavery. Her example inspires us today to follow her path of service and justice, and in these words of the Oblate Sisters, refuse to “tolerate any expression of racism, prejudice, discrimination, violence or injustice that violates the sanctity of life, demeans the dignity of the human person and desecrates family life.”

August 31 - September 8, 2009

Our Lady of the Streets and Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin



+ My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant From this day all generations shall call me blessed. The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name He has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation. He has shown the strength of His arm, He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has come to the help of His servant Israel for He has remembered His promise of mercy, the promise He made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.



Dorothy Day, friend and partner of the poor, guiding spirit for the Catholic Worker, home always open to the unwanted, early, often lonely, witness in the cause of peace and conscience, eloquent pattern of gospel simplicity, Dorothy Day, disciple of the Lord, may we continue your gift of self to the needy and your untiring work for peace. Help us to follow your example and dedicate our lives to the creation of structures of beauty and goodness, wisdom and mercy.

Peter Maurin, Holy Fool, teach us to give and not to take, to serve and not to rule, to help and not to crush, to nourish and not to devour, and if need be, to die and not to live. As we create a new society within the shell of the old, remind us that ideals and not deals, creed and not greed, are what makes humanity humane.



Thoughts for the journey. Dorothy Day was an early advocate of women's rights who wrote for radical leftist newspapers in the early years of this century. She was a bohemian as they said in those days -- but when she looked in her heart of hearts, she found it empty. By the grace and providence of God, she found our Lord and was baptized into the Catholic Church. Thus began a journey which led to the founding of the Catholic Worker movement, together with Peter Maurin and the other first Workers.

Peter Maurin, a French peasant who came to the United States via Canada, taught that it was a great blessing to assist the rich in

coming to the assistance of the poor. Too often, "never the twain shall meet," and certainly, in this day and age, communication between the poor and the rich is perhaps the worst that it has ever been. Communication requires that each person who wants to be heard and understood must see and hear the "Other" as a human person. It's not easy, and it takes practice.

The program that Peter and Dorothy offered to the world was direct, personal involvement with other human beings. They called us to open houses of hospitality, to engage in clarification of thought, and to found agricultural communities as the seeds of new villages. They were suspicious of the imperial State, and wanted the Catholic Worker movement to be an organism, not an organization. As the empire entered a time of great triumph, they called for establishing the seeds of a new society within the old. They taught that the poor should be fed by Christians, not by large government bureaucracies. Peter wrote many "Easy Essays" -- short little works, almost poetry in their simplicity, each one packed with intense theological concepts about the human person and how we relate to one another in community. He also reminded us of the nobility -- and the necessity -- of manual labor (something we'd often like to forget in this day of convenience and instant gratification).

Dorothy and Peter worked to create and live structures of beauty and goodness. In the midst of the slums of New York, they provided hospitality to the poor while working for social justice. They learned that the works of mercy and the works of justice and peace are one and the same, different aspects of the same journey, all going the same direction. Long before it was a theological mantra, the "preferential option for the poor" was a living reality in the life and work of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. There were informed critics of current events, prophetically looking for the truth in the signs of their times, and finding Jesus in the poor, rejected, and marginalized.

Their example inspires us today to consider how we can ensure fair distribution, subsidiarity, economic opportunity, justice, and food security for everyone everywhere. First we must see the structures of sin that bind us in poverty and war, and name the demons which oppress us. As we open our eyes, our minds, and our hearts to the Spirit's guidance, we can discern our response to the signs of these times. We can buy farms and dedicate them for the purpose of raising food for the hungry. We can organize microenterprise co-operatives in every city to provide opportunity for the poor. We can look at our own individual situations, and adopt lifestyles of simplicity and frugality, rejecting the culture of materialistic conspicuous consumption in favor of a life of living simply, that others may simply live. We can minimize our use of fossil fuels, to remove one of the major causes of war. We can buy our food directly from farmers, and stop funding the destruction of the family farm community. We can discern the cry of the widow and orphan in our own neighborhoods, and be the hands and feet of God in relieving distress and creating justice. Dorothy Day used to quote St. Catherine of Sienna -- "All the way to heaven is heaven." May this be our prayer, in Jesus' holy name.

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