

THE CATHOLIC WORKER



LA CARPA

The Invisibly Visible

By Erica Olson

The many men and women who dedicate their days and nights to collecting recycling, whether rummaging through garbage bags outside of homes or through public garbage cans, or picking up bottles and cans thrown on sidewalks or in gutters, operate in public spaces and so are “visible.” It is hard to miss them, often hauling whatever they have found on their backs; yet it is easy to not “see” them. Do the people who pass them on the street recognize the service they are providing for the city and environment? Does the government recognize them as public agents in city waste management? In that sense, they remain very much invisible.



The other day I was walking home from the Habitat for Humanity office, pushing a load of recycling on my dolly. It was a pretty heavy load of paper, so I was huffing and puffing up a hill. A woman took notice and approached me asking what kind of materials I recycled. I said that we were trying to support some of the homeless men and women who live off of recycling and that we collected pretty much anything: paper, plastic, aluminum, cardboard, etc... She said that she worked at a pharmacy around the corner and that daily she discarded cardboard and plastic that I could take. I was shocked and excited, but I couldn't fit any more on the dolly that day. I promised to drop by another day to see how we could work something out. The next week I returned and we agreed that going forward, she would

set aside cardboard and plastic from Monday to Wednesday, and Thursday we could drop by and pick it up. As I walked away, excited to have another business on board, I couldn't help but wonder that if it had been one of our friends from the Catholic Worker pushing the dolly, if she would even have approached.

I was so happy to be proven wrong! The other day one of our friends Gilberto dropped by the house, and he told me that a woman noticed him hauling recycling recently and approached him. She said she worked at a bank and that they had some plastic bottles from cleaning materials that he would be welcome to have. This made me realize that I need to have more faith in people, that many in fact do notice the struggle of others around them and want to help out. This gives me hope that we will be able to find individuals and businesses interested in participating. We just have to work at turning these happenstance moments of people noticing us and reaching out, into regular visits. Maybe the bank where she works at could have a more intentional participation in our endeavor, providing us with plastic and paper on a monthly or even weekly basis. Creating a partnership with the bank, and not just the one individual, brings the exchange out in the open, between equal parties. A formal schedule could be established to have the collection on certain days and at a certain time. Reflecting on this is giving me a good push to knock on more doors of businesses, organizations, schools, etc. to start setting up routes and scheduled pick-up times.

At the same time, I am aware that when someone begins to put aside their recycling for us, that we may be taking it away from someone else. For instance, at the pharmacy that just agreed to work with us, I wonder who had been picking up the cardboard and plastic that they would leave on the curb? I rationalize entering into partnership with places like this, knowing we will be helping those living on the street, but I can't help but question if one or more people came to count on every day being able to find something there: another “invisible worker” trying to get by.

I also understand, though, that to be recognized and potentially integrated in a more formal way into the waste management system, it is important to be organized. Would that open doors to having formal contracts with providers? Would it give them bargaining power with the buyers of the materials? It may not be the desire of every collector to organize into a formal structure, like a cooperative, and “work” for the city, but as the city is designing and implementing its new waste management program, it should at least recognize the work being done by the informal collectors and take into account those who would like to be included. Something worth fighting for!

Meditations from the Founders of the Catholic Worker Movement



From Day after Day

Dorothy Day, 1946

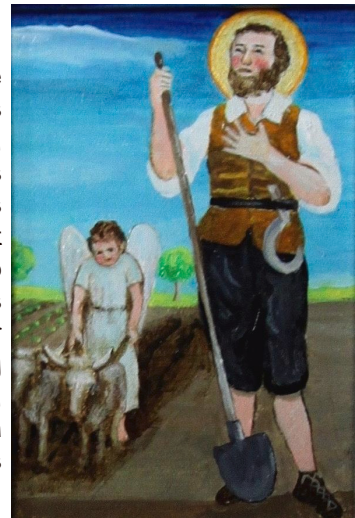
All the way to heaven is heaven, because Christ said, "I am the way." And work should be part of heaven, not part of hell. In the black underground caverns where the miners lose all light of day - month after month, from early fall till late spring - there is a glimpse of "everlasting night where no order is and everlasting horror dwelleth." We want to change man's work; we want to make people question their work; is it on the way to heaven or hell?

Man gains his bread by his work. It is his bread and wine. It is his life. We cannot emphasize the importance of it enough. We must emphasize the holiness of *work*, and we must emphasize the sacramental quality of property, too. That means the property of the poor. They have very little of it. We know that it is dangerous, it corrupts, it is almost a testing ground in this life of attachment and detachment. We must love it as a sample of God's providence and goodness and we must be ready to give it up.

Saint of the Month

Saint Isidore, the Laborer; Feast Day: May, 15th

To be recognized as a Saint by the Church, seems out of reach for the average person...that it is reserved only for those who have done great, meritorious things, such as found a religious order, be declared a Doctor of the Church, introduce (in many cases impose) the Christian faith in other countries or cultures become Pope, or die a martyr. Among those in the Litany of the Saints, there is one who stands out because he did nothing that actually "stood out." That Saint is Isidore, who was a humble farmer in Spain at the turn of the 12th century, who spent his entire life working for a rich landowner. In his poverty, he was generous to those around him, sharing the food on his table to the destitute, leaving for himself only what was leftover. He would attend Mass every day before going to the fields and, even though he would arrive later than the rest of the workers, he would be seen tilling the land with angels on either side of him, helping him work faster. Out of his relative invisibility, Isidore has made visible the sacredness of the work of the poor.



From Easy Essays:

"Scholars and Bourgeois"

Peter Maurin



The scholar has told the bourgeois that a worker is a man for all that.

But the bourgeois has told the scholar that a worker is a commodity for all that.

Because the scholar has vision, the bourgeois calls him a visionary.

So the bourgeois laughs at the scholar's vision and the worker is left without vision.

And the worker left by the scholar without vision talks about liquidating both the bourgeois and the scholar.

The scholars must tell the workers what is wrong with the things as they are.

The scholars must tell the workers how a path can be made from the things as they are to the things as they should be.

The scholars must collaborate with the workers in making a path from the things as they are to the things as they should be.

The scholars must become workers so the workers may be scholars.

MEDITATIONS ON THE CROSS

THE COPTIC CROSS

BY STANCIL

The typical form of the Cross used by the Coptic Church, as well as Ethiopian and Eritrean churches, is made of vertical and horizontal beams of equal length that intersect at the middle. Each beam terminates in three points, representing the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Altogether, the cross has 12 points symbolizing the twelve Apostles of Christ. The Coptic script surrounding this cross translates to "Jesus Christ, Son of God."



St. Mark brought Christianity to Alexandria during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero in about 43 AD. Christianity in Egypt spread quickly during the 50 years following St. Mark's arrival. By the 4th Century and the reign of Emperor Constantine, Christianity flourished in both Egypt and Ethiopia. These early Christians became known as Copts, from the Greek name for Egyptians.

Coptic Christians are the closest direct descendants of Ancient Egyptians. The Coptic language in use today was derived from Hieroglyphics, and despite persecution by the Roman Empire as well as the Muslim invasion and dominance, Coptic Christians and their language have survived to this day. During many years of living in Cairo, I worked and worshiped with Coptic Christians, and I became aware of their custom to have this cross tattooed on the inside of their right wrist. The Coptic Cross tattoo is a meaningful statement and outward expression of their faith. How do you show your faith?

Food for Thought (expanding what it means to be Pro-Life):

"Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills."

- Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*

Wish List

To be determined.....

If you are able to donate, you can take the following steps:

1. Make out a check to Erica Olson (can put "donation" in the memo line or include a little note to that effect).

2. Send the check to:
Northwest Bank
4100 Edison Lakes Pkwy, Suite 300
Attn. Michele Banes
Mishawaka, IN 46545

Thank you!!


For more information, contact:
Erica Olson at: erica.olson2@gmail.com


Activists in a Circular and Solidarity Economy

General Profile of Waste Pickers:

I have been reading a study that was done by WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing) in 10 cities across the global south about the informal economy, including a focus group of 750 men and women active in the waste picking sector. Here are some of the statistics that came from their research:

 **64%** are from ages 26 to 50

 **80%** have some primary or secondary schooling

 **75%** do not have any other source of income

 **66%** work independently

 Average family household of **4**

Informal Economy Monitoring Study, Sector Report: Waste Pickers; WIEGO, February 2016



This month's activities in numbers



4 loads of plastic

1 load of paper

1 load of cardboard collected



Books Sold this Month: **93**

88% were used books

66% were delivered on foot