

GLASGOW CATHOLIC WORKER

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'Faith, Works, Love, Mercy'

Work and St Benedict

The understanding of work favoured by business, the press and most politicians is clear: they demand 'workers not shirkers' in 'hard working families', and see society menaced by 'scroungers'. Work - even degrading and socially



Inside an Amazon warehouse

useless work - is an unequivocal blessing: employment is not simply good but the basis of real personhood - the lack of it constitutes a moral failing that excludes those guilty of it from the human community.

Most contemporary opposition to this sees a humanised or democratised workplace as fundamental; higher wages, better conditions, workers exercising greater agency in their daily lives. Whilst these aims are noble ones - and ought to be supported by Catholics - they also leave more fundamental ques-



Craig Fisher - St. Joseph the Carpenter

tions about the nature of work untouched.

On both the right and left, more radical critics of the prevailing idolatry of work advocate the 'end of work' through the maximisation of automation. The right-wing strain of this ideal seeks an end to the welfare state alongside this: the left-wing seeks an end to Capitalism. Both strands of thought draw inspiration from a very old intellectual tradition, dating back to Ancient Greece, that views work as a curse, and free time - 'leisure' - as the only human time.

The two poles of the debate - between all work as good in itself, and all work as bad in itself (insofar as it limits the truly human realm of 'leisure') - reflect a common

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My journey from Polaris submarine Executive Officer to making 'The Case against UK Trident'.



Robert Forsyth -Going on patrol 1972

Without any exaggeration the use of nuclear weapons during the Cold War would have threatened the existence of humanity. The policy of 'Mutually Assured Destruction' would almost certainly have caused a 'nuclear winter' similar to the global climate change that killed off the dinosaurs.

In 1972 I was 33 years old and had been a serving submarine officer for 12 years when I was appointed Executive Officer (2nd in command) of one of the two crews of the Polaris missile submarine HMS Repulse. As such, I was directly involved in the authenti-

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intellectual inheritance. Since the Industrial Revolution - and, arguably, the Protestant Reformation - work has increasingly been seen as a matter of utility, an expression of basic animal needs, and value as created by human activity alone, rather than by the 'right use of things', which medieval Christians had prized. The relationship of humanity to the natural world, to animals, and to other humans, in this worldview, is necessarily and rationally instrumental, a matter of maximising (human) pleasure and minimising pain. As R.H Tawney pointed out in 'Religion and the Rise of Capitalism', as God was withdrawn from the economic life of European societies, the rule of profit increasingly came to dominate both economic and political worlds.

This common ground between 'anti' and 'pro' work perspectives is apparent in the symbiotic relationship between 'work' and 'leisure' in

the world today. The drive for production inside the workplace is matched only by the drive for consumption out with it. As the critic John Berger noted, in our economy "to spend is to live" - and in order to spend, it is necessary to work. An increasingly nihilistic leisure is simply the other side of the coin to increasingly dehumanising work.

These tendencies, have, however, theological roots as well. What Eugene McCarragher calls the 'False Gospel of Work' - a belief in all work as a unequivocal and even sacred good - has deep roots in British and American Calvinism. The Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper took an almost equally strong stance against work in his 'Leisure as the Basis of Culture'. And for centuries it was thought that monks and nuns ought to avoid work itself as 'worldly', an obstacle in the way of drawing closer to God.

The rule of St. Benedict - written in the sixth century - changed this, and offers an important insight into how Christians should view labour. Benedict proposed something new in monasticism: not only that monks should labour when necessary to support themselves, but that a monk is only truly a monk "When they live by the labour of their hands". Although it proved to be a successful model for communities, Benedict's injunction wasn't based on the virtues of self-reliance or hard work for the sake of it, but on an understanding of labour itself as a means of holiness. The manual work of the monks participated in the spiritual life of the monastery and the church as a whole; ordered by moral and spiritual criteria. Labour - far from pulling people away from God - was a way for humans to participate in a sacramental reality in which work is a form of prayer.

Benedict's rule might point to an opposition to those who would pose the maximisation of a formless, nihilistic 'leisure' as the measure of human flourishing - "Idleness" - he states - "is the enemy of the soul" - but he also emphasises that labour forms only a part of the monks daily routine. It is exactly the intrinsic, non-utile, value of work for Benedict that precludes it dominating life in the way it often does today.

In the gospels, Christ meets Peter and Andrew in the midst of their work, not outside it: the incorporation of these apostles into the new creation comes through a transformation and uplifting of their labour



Ora et Labora, "pray and work"

as fishermen, not by a rejection of it. Although the distinction between work and play, utile and non-utile activity, is one that will remain this side of Heaven, it should be seen by Christians as potentially harmonious, not necessarily conflicting. In thinking about how work and labour can be transformed, it is necessary to differentiate between kinds of work; not on the basis of 'efficiency' or pleasure, but on what kind of work is truly human - what William Morris termed "useful work", as opposed to "useless toil". The catholic worker tradition has a rich history of ideas and experiments in realising 'The Social Reign of Christ the King'; the contributions of Fr. Vincent McNabb O.P and the catholic land movement - especially McNabb's emphasis on 'hand-work and land-work' as especially reflective of Jeremiah's description of the divine artisan. The rediscovery



Christian living in a time of crisis: Saint Benedict. Benedict directs us to think not just of the means, but the ends of production; against the idolatry of work he reminds us of a purpose to work that is more, but never less, than human. By looking to the deeper

moral and spiritual meaning of work - in other words, towards God and to our natures as His creations - it becomes possible to imagine ways in which work could be transformed, and become a fully human, creative endeavour, fulfilling the commandment in Genesis "to cultivate and to care".

Madoc Cadhain

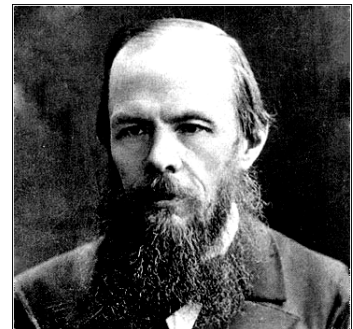
The Character of Work

By Dorothy Day

Our Maggie, when she was saving money towards settling in West Virginia, had a job in a neighboring village from eleven at night until seven in the morning, on an assembly line where a few motions glued a Timex watch box together, which box is discarded of course as soon as the watch is taken out. Small factory work in the country would not be so bad if something useful were being turned out. But what a torture to do such useless work! I am reminded of the words of Dostoevsky, in *The House of the Dead* (his Siberian prison experience):

"The idea has occurred to me that if one wanted to crush, to annihilate a man utterly, to inflict on him the most terrible of punishments so that the most ferocious murderer would shudder at it and dread it beforehand, one need only give him work of absolutely, completely useless and irrational character.

Though the hard labour now enforced is uninteresting and wearisome for the prisoner, yet in itself as work it is rational; the convict makes bricks, digs, does plastering, building; there is sense and meaning in such work. The convict worker sometimes grows keen over it,



Fyodor Dostoevsky

tries to work more skilfully, faster, better. But if he had to pour water from one vessel into another and back, over and over again, to pound sand, to move a heap of earth from one place to another and back again—I believe the convict would hang himself in a few days or would commit a thousand crimes, preferring rather to die than to endure such humiliation, shame and torture."

The Catholic Worker, October-November 1974, 2, 8



A monk in the Pluscarden garden

ery and revitalisation of this tradition for our times - menaced by ecological disaster and social-economic crisis - is overdue.

In this we can learn from a fellow

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cation of any order to fire and the authorisation and conduct of subsequent missile launch.

We were constantly briefed that under no circumstances would we fire our missiles unless the Soviets had already fired nuclear weapons at us.

In pre-patrol discussion with my Commanding Officer we agreed that, under such exceptional circumstances, despite The Geneva Conventions and although it might be a futile retaliatory action merely adding to the nuclear bonfire, we would obey an order to fire solely in the hope that it might save some of the world. It was only that the thought that this retaliatory (Second Strike) policy was most unlikely to be ordered that let us sleep at night.

The one encouragement we had that there might be an end game to this nightmare was that in 1968 the five then nuclear powers had signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty committing themselves to ridding themselves of nuclear weapons – albeit to no time scale.

I completed my submarine sea going time with command of a nuclear Hunter-Killer submarine (SSN) HMS Sceptre and in 1980 decided to leave the Navy as I had no real wish to serve on surface ships. For the next 25 years I followed a civilian career keeping in very loose social touch with my former naval friends and, as HMG did not greatly publicise its change of policy, I took no great interest in deterrence other than to wonder why we still kept a nuclear powered ballistic missile-firing submarines (SSBN) continuously on patrol after the USSR had collapsed when there was no longer any apparent nuclear strike threat to the UK or

Europe. However, I did think that perhaps as the need to replace Trident approached this would be a good opportunity for us to lay down our nuclear arms.



Polaris submarine HMS Repulse

I therefore began to follow the Trident replacement programme proposals with rather more attention but became increasingly disillusioned at the constant reference to the need to retain nuclear weapons for protection against 'rogue states'. I wondered just how I and the rest of the world would view a nuclear missile landing in the heart-land of a Middle or Far Eastern rogue state with the totally devastating effect this would have on not only on its own civilian population but also the nations around it. So I

'My catalyst for real change occurred while watching the Trident Replacement debate in Parliament on TV'

started to take an even deeper interest; particularly as the decline in our defence budget was reducing our surface and submarine fleet to near critical mass to pay for Trident which was now part of the naval budget. At first I merely questioned whether the RN had its spending priorities correct and wrote an article in a journal, The Naval Review, but still got severely criticised by many of my peers for even daring to question the need for Tri-

dent.

My catalyst for real change occurred while watching the Trident Replacement debate in Parliament on TV. In that debate PM Theresa May famously said she was prepared to press the button to kill hundreds of thousands of people (which inevitably must include civilians). She also said that anyone who did not support the Government plans to defend the nation was a Traitor. At this point I sat up and wondered quite why she was so aggressive? Just what was HMG's Policy that needed Trident so badly it was prepared to bully Parliament into submission.

That was two years ago almost exactly. Since then I have carried out a lot of research, read as widely as I can and spoken to a number of NGOs – including two visits to the New York based International Humanitarian Law Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy.

Reading USAAF General Lee Butler's writings and Dan Ellsberg's book The Doomsday Machine opened my eyes further and gave the lie to our 1972 pre-patrol briefing that we would only fire in retaliation! I now have no doubt that UK would have joined the US in a massive First Strike intended to pre-empt any chance of Soviet or Chinese retaliation – and would also have caused the nuclear winter. Reading ex RN Commander Rob Green's book Security without Nuclear Deterrence has also become an important primer for me.

This undermined my whole confidence in the rationale on which my 33 year old alter ego had justified taking Polaris missiles to sea and – somewhat late in the day as I am now 79! – created an absolute mistrust of the rationale behind our continuing reliance on nuclear weapons. In particu-

lar it has caused me to fear just what today's SSBN CO's are told and whether they realise the legal jeopardy they may be in despite what the UK Military Manual tells them..

The completion of my journey and the conclusions drawn from it have been encapsulated in my paper 'The Case against UK Trident' published in a naval magazine Warships International Fleet Review in July and, at the same time, presented to a Naval/MOD audience at a 2 day Deterrence symposium in Portsmouth. The article itself together with other key facts affecting the UK's ownership of Trident can be found on my website at www.whytrident.uk under NEWS.

See also a recently published article in the Sunday Herald which can now be found on his website The Ferret at theferret.scot/trident-nuclear-submarine-commander/

Robert S. Forsyth



Comment

Robert Forsyth's journey is fascinating coming as he does from a naval, establishment, pro-nuclear background, but ending up on the side of the anti-nuclear angels. His journey of disillusionment is salutary, and exemplary.

Interestingly, he deals with the Non-Proliferation Treaty. By this (signed in 1970), the nuclear powers agreed to work towards the elimination of their nuclear weapons, ("vertical disarmament") in return for which the non-nuclear states agreed to forswear possession of these ("horizontal disarmament"). That was the plan, anyway. I remember as a young (and very naïve) activist thinking at the time "Good. We're going to get rid of nuclear weapons". Boy, was I wrong... Far from eliminating their nuclear arsenals, the USA and UK went on to modernise these by replacing Polaris with Trident, just as they intend to modernize Trident in 2025, which will be carried on the new Dreadnought-class submarines.

When the Trident was introduced in 1994, the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence described it as "a significant enhancement (my emphasis) of the UK's nuclear capability". By Article VI of the NPT the signatories undertook "to work in good faith for the elimination of nuclear weapons". However, far from de-escalation and disarmament, the 9 rogue nuclear states are all at present engaged in modernising their arsenals, improving their lethality and usability. UK policy has always been to replace outmoded weapons with newer, more effective ones. Thus, the obsolete free-fall W177 bombs were replaced by the superior Polaris missile, Polaris upgraded by Chevaline, Chevaline by Trident, and so on. We have taken no steps towards de-escalation and elimination. To be frank, the NPT is a dead duck.

It was recognition of this stalemate that inspired the formation of The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). This is a coalition of non-governmental organizations in one hundred countries promoting adherence to the United Nations nuclear weapon ban treaty. Accordingly, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, (TPNW) is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons, with the goal of leading towards their total elimination. It was passed on 7 July 2017, by 122 states at the UN.

The catastrophic, persistent effects of nuclear weapons on our health, societies and the environment is at the centre of public and diplomatic discussions about nuclear disarmament. This is the basic principle underpinning what has become known as the "Humanitarian Initiative."

The Vatican was one of the first states to sign this new Treaty. The Pope thinks we should "Ban the Bomb". The British government thinks we should carry on regardless. What do you think, and what are you going to do about it?

Brian Quail

SAINT MARGARET Queen of Scotland



Those who instruct others to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity

A prayer to St Margaret

Pray for us, our dearest St Margaret, Queen of Scotland and faithful servant of the Church,

You, a refugee who endured the misery and tragedy of war.

O' blessed St. Margaret, pray to the Lord our God for all refugees and victims of war in our world today,

And pray also for us that we may open our hearts and make our nation a safe haven for all those seeking asylum.

May we, like you, offer mercy and compassion to all, in Christ Jesus name.

Amen

Mary of Paris and Dorothy Day

In the past year I've discovered the Eastern Orthodox Saint Mother Mary (or Maria) of Paris – and I fell in love. It struck me immediately how much in common this great lady had with Dorothy Day – although they were separated by location, and had different political and social situations to deal with – they also have a startlingly similar story.

Dorothy Day as born in Brooklyn New York in 1897. Mother Mary (Elizabeta Pilenko) was born in 1891 in the Latvian city of Riga. Dorothy was raised in a very nominally Christian home, with parents who travelled to California and then Chicago, but she had very little true religious education. Mother Mary was raised in an Eastern Orthodox home but by the time she was 14, when her father died, she decided that life was too cruel to believe in a grand creator and she embraced atheism. Dorothy, while having a lifelong interest in religion, ran in staunchly atheist circles as a young lady. Mother Mary embraced the socialism that was spreading throughout Eastern

Europe of her youth while Dorothy Day embraced the socialist movement growing in America – both were political, articulate women who could debate and teach about politics, history, and literature and remained so for the rest of their lives.

Mother Mary, while very involved in the leftist intellectual movements of her day, also had a sense of disappointment in these movements – she encountered what she called a lot of “talk” without a great deal of self-sacrificial action, particularly among the intellectuals. Slowly she started revisiting the Orthodox faith she had left behind, as it offered a passion and a vision of Christ as a “heroic” man who truly helped people. Her life became very complex in these years, involving multiple marriages, and also great risk to her life because her political views did not always match the views of the Bolsheviks. (She escaped near execution at one point) She drew closer to the living Christ, and when she had to flee her home land, she ended up in France, a committed Christian. When one of her children died Mother Mary's faith took on a new dimension, as she realized, at her daughter's side, that all life was an



Get involved:

Round Table Discussions

On the 3rd Tuesday of every month we meet to discuss a topic and help us together to clarify our thoughts.

We meet at 6:15. Please email us for details of where we'll be meeting.

Soup Kitchen

Help out at our weekly Soup Kitchen in Cadogan Street, Glasgow City Centre

Place of Welcome for Refugees: Saturdays 9am-1pm

Help teach English at Garnethill Multicultural Centre (Basement) 21 Rose Street Glasgow or just socialise.

Monthly Witness at Faslane Nuclear Submarine Base

Join us on the first Saturday of each month at 2:30pm outside the South Gate.

Website: www.catholicworker.org.uk

Email: glw@catholicworker.org.uk

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abomination unless one loved everybody and lived every moment in love.

Dorothy, for her part, as a young radical and journalist, started re-reading the gospels as she socialized with the atheist intelligentsia of New York City. She herself had a complex young life, involving an abortion which she regretted to the end of her days, a failed marriage and then a common law marriage with a man she was deeply in love with. By the time she became pregnant with her daughter Tamar – when she was living with her common law husband – she felt a call to thankfulness and a sense of transcendence. She felt she needed a God to worship, someone to thank on her knees for the beauty of nature, of love, and of the life growing inside her. She and her daughter were both baptised in to



Ravensbruck concentration camp

Catholic faith, resulting in her common law husband leaving her.

These two women, at roughly simi-



lar times, found themselves young, single mothers, with a love of Christ, in a world of immense conflict, and an overwhelming call to help the poor. Mother Mary became a nun in the Orthodox Faith, but was extremely concerned that she not be a monastic in the traditional sense – she wanted to be a monastic in the world, helping the most needy. Dorothy, while learning “how” to be Catholic, was distraught by what she saw as the ignoring of Catholic social teaching – where was the passion to help the poor? The story of how Dorothy met Peter Maurin, the eccentric French peasant with a passion for justice and love, and the beginnings of the Catholic Worker movement are stories unto themselves – but suffice it to say Dorothy Day started a movement whose calling was to care for the “least of these” amongst us, and her legacy can still be seen today. Mother Maria, for her part, became a radical Orthodox Nun, shocking many by her willingness to miss church services in favour of helping an individual in need, opening houses for the poor, and working with the physically and mentally unwell around the clock. The story of how Mother Mary’s life ended – in a concentration camp in WWII – and the strong speculation that she offered her life in place of another

woman about to be killed – is a tremendously moving account of this woman who has been declared a Saint in the Orthodox Church. Dorothy, who died at age 83, after a lifetime of serving the poor, advocating for peace, and being jailed multiple times for peaceful protest, has been declared a “Servant of God” by the Church and I truly believe her sainthood will be announced, hopefully in my lifetime.

Discovering Mother Mary of Paris has been a highlight of the last few months for me. To learn how this woman lived a life of heroic virtue – through some of the most complex and heart wrenching times in the past century – has filled me with awe. At a time when our Catholic Church is at its lowest moment – a time when many of us have toyed with leaving the Church because of the evil endemic in the institution – it’s a true light, a true breath of fresh air, to discover where the “real” Church exists. It exists in the lives of women like Mother Mary and Dorothy Day. As Dorothy herself said on multiple occasions – “Turn to the saints. When the Church disappoints you, turn to the saints.” The Church has not just disappointed me recently – it has horrified me. But Dorothy is now one of the saints we can turn to – considered a saint already in heaven by many of us (and hopefully to be declared one soon). As we in the Church call to many of our well-loved saints – Dorothy Day and Mother Mary – pray for us! *Tamara Horsburgh*

Child Abuse and learning to spread the Good News

‘Apology without radical action has left unassuaged the anger of Irish abuse victims. The church’s doctrine in the confessional offers no forgiveness without a contrition that prevents future occasions of sin. But for as long as this church is perverted by warped dogma on sexuality, abuse will be rife and secretive. The fetishism of a celibate priesthood will attract abusers and paedophiles. Expect no real change while morbid obsession with sex, contraception and abortion still perpetuate St Paul’s founding sexual disgust’. *Polly Toynbee in the Guardian*

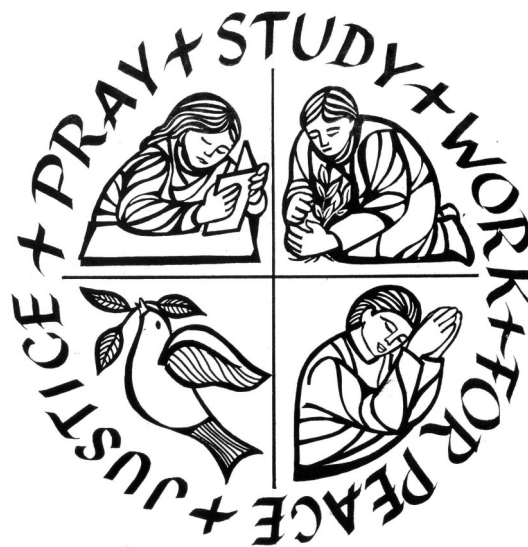
There is so much I would like to write about the abuse that has taken place by some clergy in the Church. About the pain to the children, their feelings of in some way of being responsible, the ruined lives. These clergy mocked Christ like Herod’s guards, preaching the Good News while using those most vulnerable to feed their perversions. Also about forgiveness.

But there is another side to this that the extract above helps to illustrate. When those outside the Church and many within see this happening it becomes an obstacle to the Truth that the Church must profess, the true message that the Body of Christ has for the world: ‘The Church is this Body of which Christ is the head: she lives from him, in him, and for him; he lives with her and in her.’

The article is right in that if we do not

take steps to seek out victims, seek forgiveness, make amends as far as we can and change the attitudes and structures that allowed the abuse to happen then we join in with the mockery, however the Guardian article goes on to link the Church’s teachings with the abuse; the abuse of children is in some way the result of the Church’s teaching on sexuality, celibacy and abortion and St Paul is the route of all this evil.

We are condemned for our sins and condemned by the world when the



revolutionary message of Jesus is proclaimed. The Great Deceiver will take much satisfaction in the conflation of these two. In response to the former, we must change so that as St Paul says ‘we put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry’. As for the later, Jesus founded the Church and guided by the Holy Spirit he wants us to continue what he started. As Pope Francis says in *Evangelii Gaudium* (Joy of the Gospel): “In fidelity to the example of the Master, it is vitally important for the Church today to go forth and preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear. The joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one

can be excluded.”

This is done by how we live our lives but we must also reflect on our faith, learning and discussing with fellow believers and other people of good will. It’s sad that many people find it difficult to talk about their faith. It’s also sad that Catholics don’t have the opportunity to talk to other Catholics about their faith and must leave a deep insight or a moment of Grace unshared. It is a wonderful part of the Catholic Worker in Glasgow that we are able to talk freely about our faith to each other. We pray together, the bedrock of our community, but we are also happy to talk about our faith. We have this paper which we use to reflect on our lives hopefully clarifying our ideas. Thanks to Peter Maurin we also have our monthly Round Table Discussions where we discuss in more detail aspects of our faith. Peter Maurin put it this way:

“We need round-table discussions to keep trained minds from becoming academic.

We need round-table discussions to keep untrained minds from becoming superficial.

We need round-table discussions to learn from scholars how things would be, if they were as they should be.”

The Church was given a mission to spread the Gospel and despite the failings of the Apostles chosen by Jesus, Peter lying that he did not know Christ, James and John wanting power in the new set up and indeed Judas betraying Jesus, spread the Good News they did. They learned from the Master, we to must learn from the Master and tell the world the Good News doing it “with gentleness and reverence” (1 Pet 3:15).

Michael Sutherland