

PRAYER SERVICE

Embracing Peter Maurin's Vision of Justice and Equality

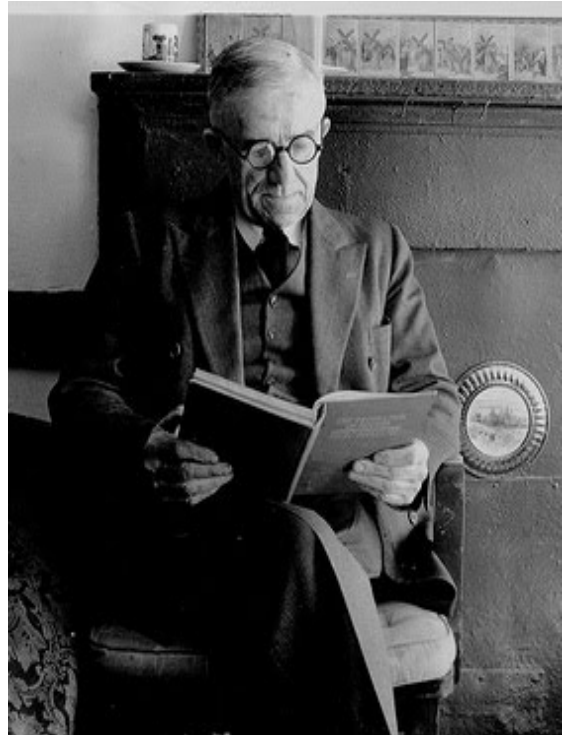
CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: God of the New Covenant, we thank you for the life of Peter Maurin, a philosopher and social critic. To many, he was just one more radical, a street-corner prophet joining the likes of Jesus and St. Francis of Assisi. His perplexing and rebellious words troubled many as well as inspired others like Dorothy Day to become peace negotiators and to challenge institutions that thrive on greed and corruption. Nudge us to make time in our busy lives to ponder the words of our brother Peter and to embrace the principles of the dignity of the human person and subsidiarity in our daily lives and ministries. Amen.

Reader 1: Today, we remember the life of Peter Maurin who was born into a peasant family on May 9, 1877, in the Languedoc region of southern France. He co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement in 1933, alongside Dorothy Day. At the age of 16, Maurin joined the Christian Brothers and lived out his Christian faith through simplicity, service to the poor, and advocating for systemic change. His time in the military and in the Catholic lay movement, Le Sillon, further urged him to reconcile the relationship between religion and politics. Maurin made his way to New York City in 1932 where he embraced a life of poverty, seeing it as a gift from God.

Most of his days were spent either at the public library or sharing his ideas with anyone who listened. "The way to reach the man on the street is meet the man on the street," he reasoned. Maurin's ideas have been viewed as radical. He was an unconventional thought leader and social activist who connected his intellect with the reality of poverty and inequality in the world. He expressed his ideas through short pieces of verse that became known as *Easy Essays*. He believed in driving his point home by constant repetition, like the dropping of water on the stones of peoples' hearts.

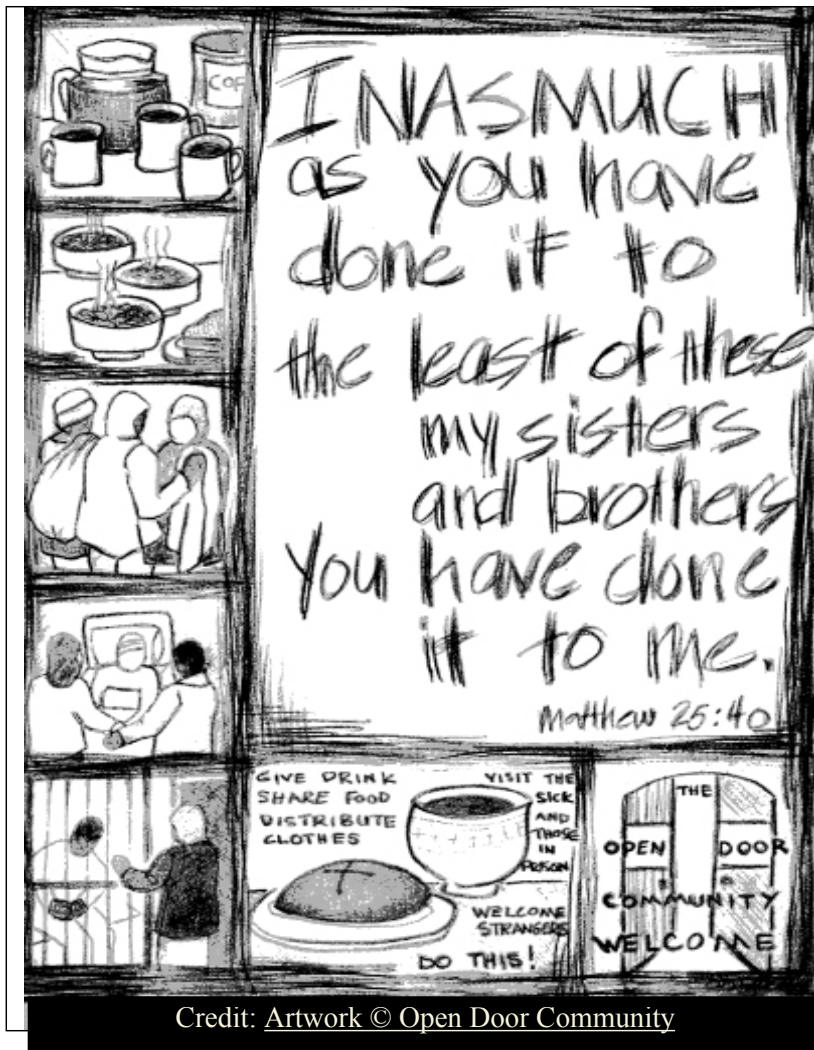
One of Maurin's greatest legacies was starting weekly "round table discussions for the clarification of thought" among the Catholic Worker communities. Peter Maurin died on May 15, 1949 in Newburgh, New York.



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Reader 2: God of the New Covenant, inspire us to respond to the signs of our times with a Gospel vision of justice and equality. With Peter Maurin, who believed that a life of poverty not only embodied the salvation message preached by Jesus, but served as a witness to the community around him...

All: We yearn to walk the road that leads to a life of service, equality, and systemic change rooted in prayer and Gospel love.



Credit: Artwork © Open Door Community

Reader 3: God of the New Covenant, inspire us to respond to the signs of our times with a Gospel vision of justice and equality. With Peter Maurin, whose simple lifestyle freed him to study and pray, and gave birth to a vision that took the form of a social order infused with fundamental Gospel values...

All: We strive to become advocates for change by truly embracing the principles of Catholic social thought by looking to history and the signs of our times in a way that promotes a peaceful transformation of society.

Reader 4: God of the New Covenant, inspire us to respond to the signs of our times with a Gospel vision of justice and equality. With Peter Maurin, who taught that love for God and neighbor were the characteristic of the first Christians—a love expressed through the daily practice of the Works of Mercy...

All: We undertake the Gospel mandate to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, and to become everyday people of mercy, justice, and love.

Reader 5: God of the New Covenant, inspire us to respond to the signs of our times with a Gospel vision of justice and equality. With Peter Maurin, who repeatedly advocated the return of the ancient Christian practice of 'Houses of Hospitality' for pilgrims...

All: We seek to create 'Christ Rooms' to share food, clothing, and shelter with people in need, and to receive the 'ambassadors of God' in our homes, neighborhoods, and faith communities.

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Reader 6: God of the New Covenant, inspire us to respond to the signs of our times with a Gospel vision of justice and equality. With Peter Maurin, who viewed the philosophy of work as a gift and as a vocation that one should explore and develop...

All: We commit to using our minds, our hands, and our skills for the common good and to engaging in open dialogue with those who think and act differently in order to bring about collective and positive social change in our society.

Reader 7: God of the New Covenant, inspire us to respond to the signs of our times with a Gospel vision of justice and equality. With Peter Maurin, who agreed with St. Thomas Aquinas's understanding of the common good, that "man is an individual with rights, but he is also a person with personal duties toward God, self, and others"...

All: We aim to show those around us that we serve God by serving the common good and that we are charged with the responsibility of meeting the needs of all within society.

Reader 8: God of the New Covenant, inspire us to respond to the signs of our times with a Gospel vision of justice and equality. With Peter Maurin, who believed that it was impossible to have a healthy and sound society without a proper respect for the soil...

All: We choose to peel off our layers of indifference and to recognize that damage to the environment, as well as a lack of clean water and land suitable for farming, leads to hunger, illness, poverty, suicide, human trafficking, violence and war, and reduces opportunities to make a just living.



Reader 9: God of the New Covenant, inspire us to respond to the signs of our times with a Gospel vision of justice and equality. With Peter Maurin, who stood against greed and corruption...

All: We aspire to stand up to and to challenge governments, corporations, Church institutions, and other establishments that foster the sin of inequality in nations, workplaces, and places of worship.

Reader 10: God of the New Covenant, inspire us to respond to the signs of our times with a Gospel vision of justice and equality. With Peter Maurin, who described, "a politician as an artist in the art of following the wind of public opinion and who does not follow his own judgment"...

All: We espouse to exercise our voting rights and to elect leaders who will best respond and tend to the needs of our world.



CATHOLIC WORKER

Leader invites participants to pause for a moment of silence and to reflect privately or communally on the following questions:

- How do Peter Maurin's words challenge you to live out your faith in a materialistic society? What are three ways that you can further his form of activism?
- Imagine that you are in the same room with Peter Maurin; what one question would you ask him? Why?
- Imagine that you are given an empty canvas and your task is to paint a portrait of a peacemaker. What would your portrait look like? What peacemaking abilities and skills would you include? Why?
- Are you a peacemaker or peacebreaker in your local, national, and global community? How do your daily choices tell you about your values? How do these values match up with the values exemplified by Jesus and people like Peter Maurin?

Leader: God of the New Covenant, continue to inspire us to respond to the signs of our times with a Gospel vision of justice and equality. May we learn from our brother, Peter Maurin, to decry the sins of poverty and inequality that impede our sisters and brothers from living a full life. Together, we pray "*The Wisdom of Giving*" by our brother, Peter Maurin:

"To give money to the poor is to enable the poor to buy.

To enable the poor to buy is to improve the market.

To improve the market is to help business.

To help business is to reduce unemployment.

To reduce unemployment is to reduce crime.

To reduce crime is to reduce taxation.

So why not give to the poor for business' sake, for humanity's sake, for God's sake?" Amen.

Faith in Action

- Learn about the Catholic Worker Communities in your cities. Join them for their monthly "Clarification of Thought" speaking events.
- If you happen to be in Washington, D.C., join the Catholic Worker Community in its weekly peace vigil at the Pentagon (now in its 14th year) each Monday from 7:00-8:00 am.

For more information on the life of Peter Maurin go to:

- "Easy Essays," Peter Maurin, 1961, <http://www.easyessays.org>.
- "Biography of Peter Maurin," Jim Forest, The Catholic Worker Movement, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://bit.ly/1LGFrvv>.
- "Peter Maurin: A Fool for Christ," Christopher Shannon, May 14, 2012, <http://bit.ly/1YbouCK>.
- "Visiting a Catholic Worker Farm," George M. Anderson, August 12, 2002, <http://bit.ly/1RISim7>.
- "Why Not Canonize Peter Maurin, Co-Founder with Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker Movement?" Mark and Louise Zwick, July 1, 2010, <http://bit.ly/1W5V22e>.