

CATHOLIC WORKER



The Lie of Us-Them

*Peace is not possible if we forget
that we are all one in God's eyes*

BY SCOTT SCHAEFFER-DUFFY

HUMANS TEND TO DEMONIZE OPPRESSORS AND LIONIZE THE OPPRESSED. ONCE EVIL ACTS OF A DOMINANT GROUP ARE EXPOSED, ITS MEMBERS CAN DO NOTHING RIGHT. My Irish Catholic great grandparents' opinion of the British solidified when English landlords in Ireland made record profits on wheat and cattle while a million Irish Catholics starved to death. It took a very long time for many Irish Catholics to admit that the Irish Republican Army committed atrocities too, albeit on a smaller scale. Progressives tend to give resistance movements a pass. Worse yet, we are often seduced into the delusion, that once the oppressed take power, utopia will necessarily ensue. We fail to remember the nightmare of the French Revolution or the more recent abuse by Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, the darling of the left in the 1980s.

Naivete allows us to assume that human beings are divided into good and bad groups. Mistreatment of indigenous children in Catholic residential schools and clerical sex abuse convinced many to put Catholics in the bad column. It's now commonplace to hear Native American concern for the earth and spirituality lauded. Similarly, people disgusted with the flaws of western religion sometimes idealize Eastern religions. Knowing the wrongs of familiar organizations can lead us to conclude that lesser known organizations are not just better, but pristine.

Little attention is paid to the horrific violence of Buddhists against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar or to Inca and Aztec human sacrifices prior to the arrival of the conquistadors.

Us-them thinking deludes us into assuming injustice is innately defeated by replacing a bad group with a good one. It has long been argued that the election of more women, people of color, and young people leads to Shangi-La. We forget the cruelty of Idi Amin in Uganda and Margaret Thatcher in Britain. We must also bear in mind that Kim Jong Un was only 27 when he took command of North Korea.

While it is important that governments should include fair representation of all members of society, it is not proven that certain groups are necessarily saints or sinners.

As a Catholic Worker, I oppose the oppression of the Palestinians by Israel, but I do not display the Palestinian flag. I assume that my work to promote human rights in the Holy Land will continue under Palestinian rule and

only diminish when a government, representing all those who call that land home is established.

I look to wise people like Jesus, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand, who welcomed everyone. Ardern embraced policies of empathy, morality, and openness. Mandela accepted whites in his new government. Gandhi opposed Hindu nationalism. Jesus welcomed Samaritans, tax collectors, and Romans.

If the aftermath of a revolution features show trials and executions, the seeds are sown for the newest regime's eventual overthrow. Pope Paul VI said, "If you want peace, work for justice." Revenge must never be confused with justice. The unspeakable evil of the Holocaust does not justify the oppression of the Palestinians. The murder of thousands of civilians on September 11th didn't justify the killing of hundreds of thousands in the Mideast. Confucius warned that anyone seeking revenge should "dig two graves." Violence never ends violence. While it appeared the US victory in World War II would usher in a Pax Americana, the Korean and Vietnam wars taught us otherwise.

On October 9, while speaking on Boston Common, Senator Ed Markey denounced the "heinous attacks" and "vicious murders" committed by Hamas against innocent civilians, children, and seniors, and called for the release of the hostages, but was booed when he went on to say, "the United States and the international community must keep pushing for diplomacy and the ending of civilian casualties on all sides," and, "There must be a de-escalation of the current violence."

"NO!" The crowd seemed to say, "A hundred to one Palestinians must be killed for every Israeli. Only then will Israeli Jews be safe."

Markey's call for de-escalation in Israel-Palestine, like Pope Francis' call for negotiated peace in Ukraine, is denounced as appeasement at best and collaboration at worst. Few people look at history. Fewer recall the abysmal failure of the twenty years of ruthless US war on Iraq and Afghanistan. Millions dead. Trillions spent. Nothing accomplished.

Attempts to kill all the bad guys never work. Unless we understand the real and perceived injustice which motivate bad guys, we cannot vanquish their rage. We are

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SPRING DINNER AND AUCTION A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

Some changes are great as we found out when we decided to move the annual dinner and auction to Spring. And you responded with attendance and support. Covid was under control and we were ready to get back to seeing each other and renew, with our supporters, our enthusiasm for the work we do. The weather cleared and the turnout was outstanding.

The first surprise of the evening was the presence of the “Let’s Reminisce Band” who touched our memories with tunes of past times and offered a pleasant background for socializing..

The auction tables were filled with wonderful items waiting for bids. Grandma’s Attic was overflowing with treasures you had forgotten you needed. The cooks had provided tasty hors d’oeuvres for those who arrived early and the tables were set with colorful spring flowers beckoning guest to get ready for the spaghetti dinner. There was a line-up at the bar and an air of happy chatter everywhere.

The attendance response was so great that we needed to set up extra tables and that’s a first!

The next surprise occurred when we opened the live auction. As we asked for help in funding some of the specifics of our work, many enthusiastic bidders answered, promising to help with donations. The response was heart-warming. Hooray!



(Continued from front page)

less likely to do this when we forget that the Israeli and Palestinian victims and all perpetrators of violence are our siblings.

By digging deeply into the hearts and histories of every person, we will find shameful examples of wrongdoing and laudatory examples of goodness. When we recall that the

Later, at the auction tables, guests found a wonderful array of items they could not resist bidding on. And the final tally was the best we had seen in years. Thank you!

At the end of the evening, we gathered, believing our Catholic Worker Annual Dinner and Auction had been a success. And tired as we were, we prayerfully acknowledged our gratitude to you, our guests and supporters, and to the myriad Catholic Workers who have gone to be with God. You have taught us well. **CW**

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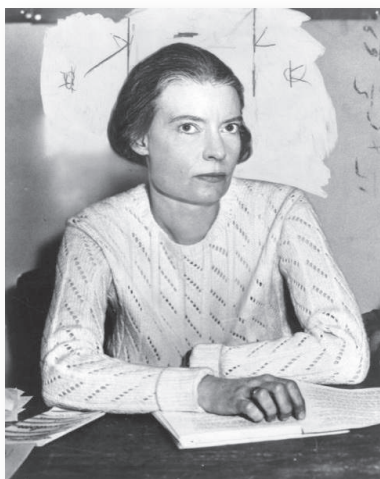
Left: Phil, Rick, and Mike at last year’s dinner.

For more information on this year’s dinner, see back page.

same God, who created and loves us, created and loved all those we hate, we will cease dividing humanity into us-them and work to amplify the goodness in everyone we meet. **CW**

Scott Schaeffer-Duffy is co-founder of SS. Francis and Therese Catholic Worker in Worcester, MA. He is a peace activist, writer, and provider of shelter for 30 years.

RUMORS OF WAR, MAYBE NUCLEAR WAR, BUT WE MUST HANG IN THERE.



BY DENYS HORGAN
San Diego Catholic Worker

On Nov. 1, 1939, in response to signs that the United States was preparing to take up arms against Nazi Germany, Dorothy Day wrote a letter to all Catholic Workers to tell them what she was doing to help steer the country towards peace instead. She reminded them that it would be hard to keep a cheerful spirit in the face of the calm acceptance of the preparation for mass slaughter.

Updated to the present day

It's mid-February now, and President Biden is retaliating against numerous terrorist groups that have been attacking U.S. bases and outposts in the Middle East. and commercial and naval ships in the Red Sea. One drone had killed three U.S. soldiers and injured another 40 or more; in Gaza, Israel is inflicting heavy casualties on innocent civilians, mostly women and children, in retaliation for the murderous attack by Hamas on innocent Israelis five or six weeks ago; Russia appears to be predominating in its unprovoked war with Ukraine; and China is bullying its way into an exclusive ownership of the South China Sea, and provoking Taiwan, which the United States is vowed to defend if attacked. War is in the air again and there is talk and a real fear that matters could easily spiral out of control into a global conflict dragging in many otherwise peaceful nations.

Back to 1939

Within a year, Germany would have annexed Austria and Czechoslovakia and conquered Poland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France. "The deteriorating global situation is becoming impossible to ignore," Dorothy wrote "She saw U.S. shipbuilding accelerating at a feverish pace, and plans to accommodate tens of thousands of new recruits at selected military bases were being rolled out.

The urgency of the situation intensified the debate in the United States over whether American interests were better served by staying out or getting involved in the war against Nazi Germany.

Dorothy wanted Catholic Workers to know where she stood: She was spending her time travelling around the country talking about the futility of war. She spoke to shipyard workers. She visited the Catholic Worker groups in Philadelphia and Baltimore, the Il Poverello House in Washington, and even what she called a "Catholic Worker cell" at the Annapolis Naval Academy.

In Baltimore, she said, she had heard much talk of the activities at Bethlehem Steel mills and the "huge airplane factory there," and always more talk of war and peace.

"All the preparations are being made for war, God help us" she wrote. "It would be hard to keep a cheerful spirit in the face of the calm acceptance of this preparation for mass slaughter and insanity were it were not for our faith," she continued. "We must have not only peace but joy in the Holy Spirit. Both are its fruits. And this would be absolutely impossible if we were not working, not only for God's kingdom on earth, but towards the life to come."

Today's news is depressing

Twice within the last two days, intelligent and well-informed people I respect have told me they no longer read newspaper accounts or watch television reports of conflicts around the world because they find them too depressing. Dorothy's 1939 message is as valid for them and for all of us today, as it was back then.

Indeed, the time may be coming, perhaps sooner rather than later, when we will be called once again to be active but peaceful and non-violent opponents of a war.

Keeping the faith

But we must not lose faith. "We must recognize that peace begins within, and that peace must go together with joy and light," Dorothy reminded the members of the fledgling Catholic Worker movement.

"It is again a question very often of a will to joy," she wrote. "Just as we have to use our will to love ... We can take joy in the children among us ... We can take joy in the (upstate New York) farm and in these crisp cold days of sunlight and color. We can take joy too in the cities in that our days are full and occupied with the work we love doing, in the companionship of our fellow workers. ... We must recognize that peace begins within, and that peace must go together with joy and light." **CW**

Our World

LUNCHES FOR REFUGEES

Alicia received the call from Our Lady of Guadalupe asking for help feeding the 35 refugees who were living in a house on the Church grounds. Alicia immediately asked Mike, Mary Kay, Will and Maggie if they could up the number of sandwiches we provide on Wednesdays. So the count rose from 100 to 135. Then the call came for double sandwiches for the 35 refugees because the lunch was the only food the men got on Wednesdays. The count rose to 170.

Word went out and a new helper, Maria, responded. The next week, Maria brought her daughter Andrea. The sandwich count grew, the crew grew, and everyone is happy!

A SUNNY ALL SAINTS DAY WITH FR. PETER

The timing was perfect — All Saints Day — for a gathering at the Casita of Catholic Workers and friends, old and new. The occasion was to spend some time and celebrate that holy day with Father Peter Gyves, who was in San Diego from Boston for a few days. All were delighted to see him and hear of his work for the past five years since he left us. During Mass we offered our prayers for all those who struggle and to all the saintly people who help us in our efforts to do God's work.

A hearty lunch was served and we gave thanks to God for all that Fr. Peter has given to our community of Catholic Workers.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR
ANNUAL SPRING DINNER
SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2024 • 6:30PM
ST. MARY MAGDALENE HALL**

We received many positive comments about changing the Annual Dinner-Auction to springtime. Judging from the marvelous response, we agreed the date change was a good idea. Now is the time to plan for an evening of food, friends, and fun

NEWCOMERS JOIN SAN DIEGO CATHOLIC WORKERS

Ana and her adult son Caden joined our community last fall and already are putting their many skills to work. In December they organized a charitable collection at their church, Holy Angels Byzantine. The people responded overwhelmingly with food, clothing, blankets, and money for our Catholic Worker distribution to the individuals, migrants, and families we serve. Ana has also agreed to take over our website, updating and posting current activities. Welcome!

STUDENT WORKER RETURNS FOR CHRISTMAS

There were smiles all around when, during December, in walked Alexandra, our delightful student worker.

'Alex' is now a student at the American University in Paris, France, and returned for the holidays. But, being a Catholic Worker helper is in her blood so she spent her holiday Wednesdays in San Diego with us, doing the jobs she has done for the past four years. We pray she will return when the semester ends. We're already missing her!

NEW BREAKFAST DAYS ADDED TO OUR WORK

We are now cooking and serving a breakfast in Pacific Beach. Twice monthly, on Saturdays, Donna, our chef and her helpers, LaShana and Erin go to St. Andrews by the Sea Episcopal Church where they cook and serve a morning meal for the homeless community. Jeff and Martine, our Friday Lunch helpers do the setting up for some 50 hungry guests.

WARMTH FROM THE WINTER WINDS

A marvelous group at Saint Martin Church in La Mesa has been contributing to our blanket project. Called Women of Faith, they make and distribute "blessed quilts" adding this prayer: "We pray that it gives you comfort, hope and peace as you face daily challenges."

Our friend, Mary Margaret, has been adding these blankets to the warm blankets we have received from other donors in the community. Though spring is approaching, the need never ends for the homeless and the refugees.

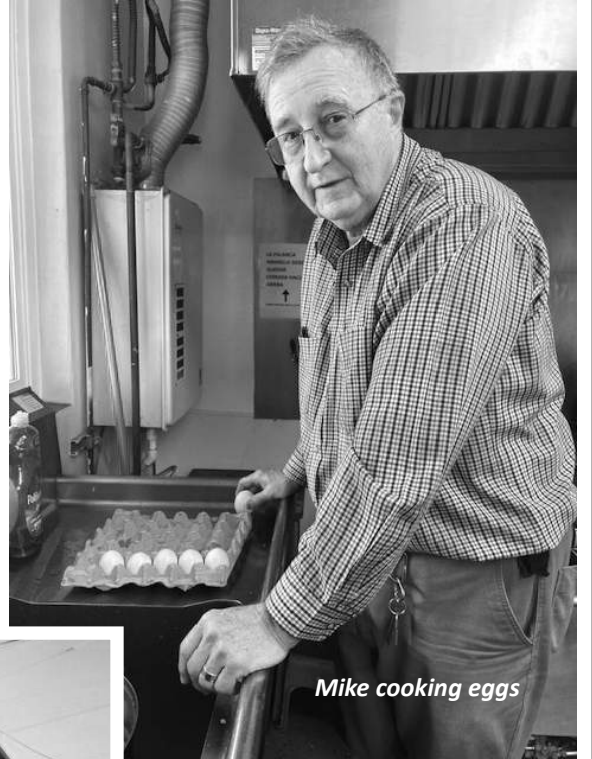


Nancy with warm blankets

Photo: Denys Horgan



Ready for Friday lunch



Mike cooking eggs



Soup maker Tom



Maite with multi-gallon soup pots



Maria, Andrea, and Mary Kay Sandwich makers



Maggie with Valentines for bag sandwiches



Alicia, Donna, and Marie Veggies for soup

Your Shoes Belong to Someone Else

Will secular “effective altruists” shame Christians into loving their neighbors?

BY TROY PANCAKE

FORTY YEARS BEFORE “EFFECTIVE ALTRUISM” BECAME A BUZZWORD, PETER SINGER, ONE OF THE MOVEMENT’S PRIMARY INFLUENCES AND PROPONENTS, TOLD A SHORT, simple parable: You are walking past a shallow pond where a child is drowning. You wade in to save the child, and in so doing, you ruin your outfit and are late to whatever appointment you were headed toward. On the surface, the moral of the story is obvious: it is immoral to pass up a drowning child for the sake of convenience. If this is wrong, Singer argues, then isn’t it similarly wrong to allow the global poor to die from preventable, poverty-related causes while we continue to purchase an excess of clothing, food, decor, entertainment, technology, and more?

Jesus told a similar parable about a man who lay dying on the side of the road, attacked by robbers, and about those who passed him by because they didn’t want to risk dirtying their reputations. The one who showed neighborly love was the one who acted like a neighbor ought to act, the one who saw it as his responsibility to help the man in need. These stories speak to our role in the world, reminding us that we too have a responsibility to help those in need. We can’t ignore the plight of Singer’s dying child or Jesus’ dying man just because the shallow pond happens to be nutrition deficiency or the attackers happen to be mosquitoes carrying malaria.

This sounds reasonable in theory, and like what many faithful Christians are already doing: giving to organizations that support poor children, drill wells for clean water, employ the homeless, or provide free healthcare. But very few Christians would meet the expectations of Singer’s proposal. In *The Life You Can Save*, he explains that it is wrong to ignore global suffering as long as we can prevent it without sacrificing our own necessities: “You must keep cutting back on unnecessary spending, and donating what you save, until you have reduced yourself to the point where if you give any more, you will be sacrificing something nearly as important as a child’s life.”

Effective altruism is a loosely connected movement attempting to live these principles. Toby Ord, another of the movement’s main voices, has pledged to set an allowance for his living expenses and give away everything above that, which has worked out to roughly one-third of his income. An influential effective altruism blogger named Julia Wise and her husband have given away half their income for over ten years. The movement is imperfect, receiving

criticism for failing to account for and address the causes of global poverty. Personally, I have questions about its utilitarian criteria for giving, the recent shift toward long-term goals and existential risk, and the fact that proximity is a factor — we can’t love a billion children like we can the wounded man or drowning child in front of us. However, when I first read Singer’s book and learned more about effective altruism, I was convicted and, frankly, ashamed.

For I am a modern American Christian who desires to be generous like Jesus yet finds it hard to give any more than I already do. I support worthy causes, but my family owns a home and three cars; we pay for our kids to participate in sports and music; we eat out and go back-to-school shopping and subscribe to Disney Plus and spend money on all manner of things most of the world would consider luxuries. I have been formed by a culture that has replaced *need* with *want*. This culture’s assumptions shape what I think is reasonable and what is excessive.

This difficulty is not new. In the fourth century, Basil the Great preached, “Some device has been concocted by the devil, suggesting innumerable spending opportunities to the wealthy, so that they pursue unnecessary and worthless things as if they were indispensable.” He proceeded to name things that are conventionally accepted: saving some money in reserve, decorations and comforts in the home, travel, extra clothes and food, and giving money to our children. According to Basil, when we spend on these “unnecessary” things, we are holding back from the people who are in extreme need. In another sermon he said: “The bread you are holding back is for the hungry, the clothes you keep put away are for the naked, the shoes that are rotting away with disuse are for those who have none, the silver you keep buried in the earth is for the needy. You are thus guilty of injustice toward as many as you might have aided and did not.”

That final line is the argument Singer makes in *The Life You Can Save*: If we have the ability to help another and choose not to, instead spending our money on non-essential things, then we are, as Basil puts it, “guilty of injustice.”

Toby Ord notes that while people object to Singer’s proposal as too demanding, Christianity rarely faces the same objection. He then posits, “Perhaps this is mostly due to ignorance among moral philosophers regarding how demanding the central views of Christian ethics really are.” Perhaps, too, there is ignorance among Christians regard-

I am a modern American Christian who desires to be generous like Jesus yet finds it hard to give any more than I already do.

ing how demanding Christian ethics really are. We give here and there and maybe, if we're really committed, we tithe our income and the church uses it to keep the lights on and we assume we've done our duty.

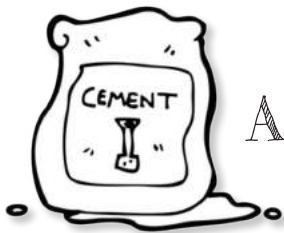
Yet I believe we are meant to be more, to do more. We are a people formed by the stories of Christ, who directed the young ruler to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor, and who commended Zacchaeus for giving away half his wealth. What people have more reason to sacrifice materially for the good of others than those whose leader sacrificed everything for them, making them rich by his own poverty, who identified himself with the hungry and thirsty and naked, whose first followers sold their possessions so that there would be none in need?

There are of course many questions remaining about what this means practically in each of our lives, starting with what is "unnecessary" and how much spending is too

much. There isn't room here to explore all the situations we might find ourselves in. But as long as extreme suffering and wealth inequality exist, there will be an ethical tension for followers of Jesus about our responsibility to alleviate that suffering. We can never entirely dissipate this tension, but we can resolve, as Basil exhorts us, "to treat the things in [our] possession as belonging to others." **CW**



Troy Pancake is a pastor based in Denton, Texas. Reprinted with permission from **Plough Quarterly**.



A 'Recipe' for this Family's Shelter

ONE MORNING ON THE WAY TO MASS, THE DAUGHTER OF THE DECEASED, BELOVED COORDINATOR OF OUR CHAPEL TOLD ME ABOUT A FAMILY LIVING IN A 6FT X 6FT tent, a single father and his three boys, two in middle school and one in primary school. They had not even a table or chair; the kids did their homework writing on the ground.

I wanted to experiment with a new method of construction that involves making a framework out of metal studs laid on the ground and filled with a mixture of half a bag of cement, one bucket of sand, and five buckets of ground esp (styrofoam.) We had made a sample batch and it seemed okay. The Padilla family helped me with a wood chipper; we crushed bag after bag of foam, pouring it into the framework in the same style as the "lift up" construction. I was quite happy with the results until it came time to raise the walls. Five of us could not budge them. I don't know how, but the next morning nine people showed up

and with considerable effort, we managed to secure them in place. Luis, Enrique, and a team showed up a couple of days later and installed electricity. They brought bikes for the newly installed family, tables, chairs, and even a television. The walls need to be stuccoed and plumbing installed, but they are safe from the elements. **CW**



Father Jaime, Catholic Worker friend, writes from Tijuana where he organizes and builds structures needed in an under-privileged community there.

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San Diego Catholic Worker

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Saturday, April 20, 2024 • 6:30p.m.

St. Mary Magdalene Church Hall
1945 Illion Street • San Diego, 92110

- Gourmet Italian Spaghetti and Meatball Dinner •
- With hors d'oeuvres, bread, salad, dessert, and drinks •

*Music and Dancing to the
"Let's Reminisce" Band*

Donation: \$25

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Tickets will be held at the door in the name of the person below.

Please make check payable to *San Diego Catholic Worker*
or pay with *PayPal* on our website *sandiegocatholicworker.org*

San Diego Catholic Worker Annual Dinner

_____ Yes! I wish to attend. Please reserve _____ tickets at \$25 each.

Enclosed is my check for \$_____.

_____ I regret I cannot attend, but I will help you provide meals, clothing, and other
services for poor and homeless men, women, and children in our community. Enclosed
is my contribution of \$_____.

Name _____ Phone No. _____

Email _____

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