|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| C:\Users\Cathy\Pictures\MP Navigator EX\2019_08_04\IMG_0005.jpg |  **Catholic Social Teaching:**  **Sharing the Secret…** |
| 1 July 2020 | Volume 1, Number 6 |
| **In This Issue*** **Free School Meal Provision During Covid-19 Crisis**
* **Calendar: Upcoming Events**
* **Peter Maurin and Catholic Social Teaching (Part 2)**
* **Institutional Evil? Sinful Social Structures?**

Q:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmf**Upcoming Events**The 2020 Annual Justice and Peace Conference: ‘2020 Vision: Action for Life on Earth’, due to take place in July, has been cancelled. However, a mini-conference entitled “Post Pandemic Church: Paralysed or Energised? Recovered or Re-Imagined?” will be held via Zoom in two sessions, on Saturday, July 18, from 10:30 a.m. to 2 noon (Forgotten People) and 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. (Our Response?). Please sign up via Eventbrite.Q:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmfChrist has no body but yours. He has no eyes but yours, no hands but yours, and no feet but yours. Your eyes are the eyes through which Christ’s compassion must look onto the world. Your feet are the feet through which Christ is to go and do good. Your hands are the hands through which Christ is to bless us. *Attributed to St. Teresa of Avila (1515—1582)*Q:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmfAction Foundation, a charity that is active in the Northeast, has been awarded the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a volunteer group can receive in the UK. Congratulations and warmest wishes to the group for continued success in working with people in need. Q:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmf**Did you participate in any of the activities of Young Catholic Workers?** If so, you might want to share something about your experiences. We welcome items for our newsletter on ways in which you or your organisation have made a difference. To send your submissions, or for more information on Catholic Social Teaching, please email Louise Harrison: maryalicelouise@outlook.com Q:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmfBetter or Better Off?The world would be better off, if people tried to become better And people would become better if they stopped trying to become better offFor when everybody tried to become better off, nobody is better off. But when everybody tries to become better, everybody is better off.Everybody would be rich if nobody tried to be richer. And nobody would be poor if everybody tried to be the poorest.And everybody would be what he ought to be if everybody tried to be what he wants the other fellow to be.Peter Maurin, Easy EssaysQ:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmfCold words freeze people, and hot words scorch them, and bitter words make them bitter, and wrathful words make them wrathful. Kind words produce their own image on men’s souls. They smooth and quiet and comfort the hearer.Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), French philosopher and mathematician Q:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmfThere is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever he wills.Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 280Q:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmfWhen I despair, I remember that all through history the ways of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible. But in the end, they always fail. Think of it---always.Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)Q:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmfWe have not inherited this earth from our parents to do with it what we will. We have borrowed it rom our children and we must be careful to use it in their interests as well as our own. Moses Henry Cass (b. 1927), Australian politicianQ:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmfThere are many human needs which find no place on the market. It is a strict duty of justice and truth not to allow fundamental human needs o remain unsatisfied and not to allow those burdened by such needs to perish.Pope John Paul II (1920-2005), Centesimus Annus 34Q:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmfI would prefer even the worst possible Christian world over the best pagan world, because in a Christian world there is room for things that no pagan world ever made room for: cripples and sick people, the old and the weak, and there was more than just room for them: love for those who seemed and still seem useless to the godless world. I believe in Christ, and I believe that 800 million Christians on this earth can change the face of the earth. And I leave it to the reflection and imagination of my contemporaries to picture a world in which there had been no Christ.Heinrich Boell (1917-1985), winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature 1972 Q:\140066.enu\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0088542.wmfThere can be no such thing as responsibility to oneself, strictly speaking, because in that case one can always dispense oneself.Robert Spaelmann (b. 1927)  | Free School Meal Provision During Covid-19 CrisisIn the past two years Tyne and Wear Citizens ( TWC) has been making sure all the money made available for free school meals (FSMS)goes to the students and not back to the schools or the meal providers, which sadly has been the case. Up to £88million which should have been used to feed hungry children has gone back to schools or meal providers. There has been a national campaign called ‘Just Change’ to correct this unjust situation.The campaign team for Just Change has been focusing on some of the problems that students and families have been encountering with the voucher scheme for FSMsAs member of Citizens UK, TWC are campaigning for the Government to do the following:* Confirm that schools will be reimbursed as they work flexibly in this crisis using a combination of the available approaches
* Continue the support of local schools and others to negotiate with national supermarkets to extend the voucher scheme
* Extend the voucher scheme to cover the May half term and the longer summer break.
* Enable schools to exercise discretion to issue vouchers in cases of need
* David Watson, Head Teacher at St. Thomas More RC Academy, North Shields, has expressed his concern: “We were grateful the government extended free school meal voucher scheme eligibility over the Easter holiday and temporarily included children of groups who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). But there are still problems in meal provision that urgently need attention. So far in my school, there is only a 30% take-up from families entitled to free school meals. We need to ensure all families in need know how to access support and can do so quickly.”

If you want to know more about this campaign, please go to the following website: <https://www.citizensuk.org/>. Alternatively, contact Fr. Chris Hughes at northshields.stjoseph@rcdhn.org.uk or ring 0191 2575 801 **Fr. Chris Hughes**Update: With great joy we have learned that the government has eventually decided that the voucher scheme for free school meals should be extended. Gratitude and respect to all those in the north east who were involved in this campaign. It just shows how public pressure, with a little bit of help from an England footballer, can make a difference!Peter Maurin and Catholic Social Teaching (Part 2)Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement, which was essentially a distillation of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching at a time when almost nothing was known about them among Catholics in general. Dorothy often spoke of the movement as “Peter’s Programme”, but Peter Maurin himself said, “This is not my program of action. It is Catholicism. These are the social teachings of the church.” Peter’s vision was a substantive critique of modern society and all the evils related to the economic systems of the day (which mostly are repeated in our times): greed, acquisitiveness, alienation from the land, exploitation, materialism. Peter maintained that what captivates us---such as accumulation of money or the products of industrial capitalism---also takes possession of us spiritually. He not only criticised the system, he also he also held up a model by which a ‘new society could be formed in the shell of the old’, which would better allow people to work for the common good.Despite his humble life, Peter was a deep thinker and an intellectual, often making available to the ‘man in the street’ the writings of such prominent writers as Jacques Maritain, Nikolai Berdaeyev, Hilaire Belloc, and others by summarising their thoughts in his “Easy Essays.” He traveled extensively and gave lectures at parishes, universities (including Harvard), and meetings of bishops and priests, often in conjunction with Dorothy Day’s speaking tours. Sometimes the Easy Essays (written in poetic form) are dismissed or disregarded as too quaint or too simplistic---or utopian. But that fails to acknowledge the really deep reflection needed to create many of the plays on words that made them catchy and memorable (and understandable to the man/woman on the street). He presented, in the briefest manner possible, the specifics of things like economic history and how the economy works---in a way that was understandable to his favourite audience, the man on the street. Here is one example:Interest does not interest meBut principle does interest me.Modern man maintains that enlightened self-interestis the way to see that society governs itself.But the self-interest is no longer enlightenedand no one is remembering principle.When interest becomes the only principlewhat we get is a selfish society.The Catholic Workers drew up a charter that emphasised personalism, a decentralised society, a green revolution, nonviolence, practice of the works of mercy, manual labour, and voluntary poverty. This poverty was lived in a radical way. The Catholic Workers, often at significant personal sacrifice, lived among the poorest and shared all their deprivations and degradations. Peter Maurin never had a second coat, often gave away his bed, never had his own desk, and simply ate whatever was put in front of him.Living among the poorest in the Houses of Hospitality often led to challenges. Dorothy Day wrote to an interested person, “We are not a community of saints but rather a slipshod group of individuals who were trying to work out certain principles….We could not put people out on the street…because they acted irrationally and hatefully. We were trying to overcome hatred with love, to understand the forces that made men what they are, to learn something about their backgrounds their education, to change them, if possible, from lions into lambs. It was a practice in loving, a learning to love, a paying of the cost of love.”But it is personalism that most marks Peter Maurin’s vision. Briefly stated, it asks that each of us becomes the change that we want to see in other people (including society in general). Personalism seeks to move away from self-centred individualism by taking personal responsibility for changing societal conditions, rather than looking to the state or other institutions to provide impersonal “charity.” To his mind political actions such as strikes and protests were never as effective as the simple actions of carrying our works of mercy could be. Dorothy Day once wrote, “Young people say: What good can one person do? What is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible only for the one action of the present moment. But we can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that will vitalize and transform all our individual actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes.” In many ways Peter was radical indeed (he originally suggested The Catholic Radical as the movement’s name before they decided on The Catholic Worker). But then, isn’t true Christianity itself quite radical? **Institutional Evil? Sinful Social Structures?**Neither of these terms may be very familiar to Catholics in everyday life, but they relate to a very important concept in Catholic Social Teaching. No society is perfect. But the Church recognizes the existence of sinful behaviours embedded in many societies, which tend to keep people oppressed and exploited; these actions become so pervasive that people become blind to their nature, and they then grow stronger, spread, and seem impossible to eradicate. Examples include racism, sexism, an all-consuming desire for profit, greed, and overweening thirst for power. Moreover, these conditions tend to take on an independent existence, to infiltrate the structures and institutions, and to become self-perpetuating, leading to a spiral of sin and evil. Pollution, waste, and lack of clean water; loss of biodiversity; climate change; rampant industrialization; despoliation and overfishing of the oceans; decline in the quality of human life and breakdown of society; and global economic inequality are all problems that can be traced to the habits and attitudes that constitute such ‘sinful social structures.’Even though no society reaches its full potential with respect to the common good, what takes place today goes far beyond normal human failings. The church considers that many of society’s evils are the result of accumulation and concentration of many personal sins, especially by people who * Cause, support or exploit evil
* Are in a position to avoid, eliminate, or limit social evils but fail to do so out of laziness, fear, indifference, silence, or secret complicity
* Take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing ‘how things are’
* Produce false religious reasoning in order to avoid any sacrifices required to correct the situation.

Catholic Social Teaching holds that the only way that sinful social structures can be conquered is by developing attitudes that are the exact opposite: those of solidarity and participation. And we have had a very cogent example recently, after the death of George Floyd in the US.Racism is one of the most pernicious and widespread of social sins. But a culture of privilege has blinded many white people to the reality of systematic dehumanisation which black people have always faced and still face today. The horror of a murder before their eyes has brought the idea of institutional evil before the minds of many people who previously had been unaware. Racism is not a minor aberration akin to a peccadillo but in many cases truly life-threatening. The power of solidarity has also been made visible through the amazing world reaction as protests have swept the world. Some are still taking place weeks after they began. Of course it is too early to say how successful they will be, but there is finally hope that real changes will be made, both in people’s perceptions and in changes to laws and practices.**Cathy Marshall** |