KENOTIC REVOLUTION, REVOLUTIONARY DESCENT:

The Spiritual Politics of Dorothy Day

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Dorothy Day is perhaps the most important figure in twentieth century North American Catholicism, even though she is little known in our circles. Her life alongside the poor and her commitment to active non-violence won her as much criticism as it did praise. Ever faithful to the Church and scornful of capitalism, not every American Catholic understood or shared her views. A layperson, a mother, a grandmother, a worker, a revolutionary and a deeply religious woman, Dorothy offers us a new way of life for these difficult times at the start of the twenty-first century.

She felt comfortable in a socialist, anarchist and pacifist environment, where she earned her reputation for her daily commitment to the poor, as well as the prophetic talent she possessed, right up to the end of her life. She passed away in 1980, and was officially declared a “servant of God”, while her road to canonization is ongoing. She was a founder of a Catholic anarchist movement in 1933, and remained a charismatic leader of that group for almost fifty years. Many were surprised that the *Catholic Worker* Movement managed to continue its work so well after her death. The extraordinary thing about Dorothy Day was not in what she wrote or in what she believed, but rather in the fact that there was no difference whatsoever in what she believed, what she said, what she wrote, and her way of life.

However, Dorothy Day did not acquire this socio-political commitment through her Christian faith in an easy or peaceful way. Instead it was her religious experience that she discovered progressively, and only managed to make it part of her life after years of internal and external struggles. Dorothy was born into a hardworking family that cared little for religion. The anti-clerical tendencies of her father took precedence over the weaker Anglican religiosity of her mother, and it was only in her early adolescence that Dorothy had any contact with the Church. During her youth, she moved in more progressive, bohemian and secu-

lar circles. Her worries, her friendships, and the environment in which she lived led her far away from anything related with the Church. One issue that we do need to clarify then is how Dorothy Day came to develop a Christian faith and a commitment to the Church.

This booklet therefore aims to look at the figure of Dorothy Day, examining the radical and alternative position she adopted, as well as offering some suggestions that, based on her life and work, may help to throw light on our own situation, and encourage our own commitment to such issues. We will firstly do this by focussing on the early stages of her life, or in other words, the way she defined her relationship with the world and with her own spirituality. It is only by examining these *roots* (from the Latin word, *radices*), that we will be able to understand the radical aspect of her life and her public standpoint. Secondly, we will be looking at the close link that existed between this daily spirituality she lived out, and her political vision. This booklet will therefore be looking at how Dorothy Day's idea of revolutionary descent (in the spiritual sense) and kenotic revolution (in the political sense) offer a valid and radical alternative way of confronting the discourse and dominant practices of globalised capitalism in the world. Before that however, and in order to help the reader, we will present a brief portrait of Dorothy Day, containing the main events in her life.

1. REVOLUTIONARY DESCENT: SEEING THE WORLD FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE POOR

The key element of Dorothy Day's revolutionary non-violence lay in what we could call her radical descent into the world of poverty. Bearing in mind that Dorothy was at the same time a social reformer, a political activist and a spiritual leader, we will now have a closer look at her journey into poverty, and how it was linked to her socio-political ideas. We have divided the analysis into four sections, beginning with the synthesis of different elements that made up her life. We will then be looking at how this synthesis unfolded in her way of looking life and history, in her way of experiencing reality, and in her discovery of Jesus Christ in the midst of the city. In other words, her faith-and-justice synthesis displayed itself in three specific practices of descent with revolutionary consequences: she opened her eyes (and other persons' as well) to the struggle for justice; she became part of the life of the poor; she embodied this message in her public life, in prison and on the street.

1.1. From conflict to synthesis

The life of Dorothy Day could be seen as a consequence of the profound synthesis of elements that she encountered in her life, and ultimately embodied. There was a fusion of faith and justice, tradition and revolution, religion and politics. In the early stages of her life, these aspects seemed to be totally opposed, and that is why we will be examining this issue in more detail now, through her own autobiographical writings, to see how these elements evolved over the years.

While she was still studying at secondary school, at the age of only fifteen, she wrote that "I wanted, though I did not know it then, a synthesis"[1]. Some months later, when she joined the Socialist Party in the University of

Biographical details of Dorothy Day

8th November 1897 She is born in Brooklyn, New York
1907 Her family moves from San Francisco (where the earthquake hit in 1906) to Chicago
1914-16 While at the University of Illinois in Urbana, she joins the local branch of the Socialist Party
1916 She moves to New York (East Side). She works in various left-wing newspapers, staying in contact with the anarcho-syndicalist movement IWW, and the pacifist group League Against Conscription.
1917 She is arrested in Washington DC, following a women's suffragist demonstration
1918 She works as a nurse in New York
1922-3 She lives in Chicago (where she is detained in the office of the IWW) and New Orleans
1924 She publishes *The Eleventh Virgin* (autobiographical novel)
1925-29 She returns to New York (Staten Island). Common-law marriage with Forster Batterham
1927 Her daughter Tamar Teresa is born on 3rd March
1927 She is received into the Catholic Church on December 28th
1930-31 She moves to Mexico and Florida
December 1932 Washington DC. Demonstration against hunger. She returns to New York, and meets Peter Maurin
1933 First edition of the newspaper *Catholic Worker* (May 1st)
Winter 1933 First house of hospitality for beggars, unemployed, homeless people and drug addicts. She will live among these people until her death.
1935 First farming commune on Staten Island, NY
1936 Thirty-three houses of hospitality in the USA
1936 Spanish Civil War. The pacifist editorial stance of the *CW* causes them to lose two-thirds of their readership and subscribers
1938 She publishes *From Union Square to Rome*
1939 She publishes *House of Hospitality*
1945 Fifteen houses of hospitality close as a result of their pacifist stance during the Second World War
1942-46 She becomes a Benedictine Oblate in the Portsmouth monastery, Rhode Island
1943-44 "Sabbatical year" or spiritual retreat
1944 Tamar's wedding (19th April)
1948 She publishes *On Pilgrimage* (a collection of articles from the CW)
1949 Peter Maurin dies, May 15th
1952 She publishes *The Long Loneliness* (her main autobiographical work)
1955 11th July, Martha is born, her seventh grandchild
1955 She becomes a Benedictine Oblate in the monastery of St. Procopius (Lisle, IL)
1955 She is arrested following an act of civil disobedience against the plans for nuclear defence. The protests and arrests would recur over the years that followed, up until 1961
1957 A visit of solidarity to "Koinonia", a Christian inter-racial farming community. Although shot at, she is unharmed
1959-60 She becomes a postulant of the Jesus Caritas Fraternity (Carlos de Foucauld)
1960 She publishes *Thérese* (a biography of St. Thérese of Lisieux)
1962 She takes part in the setting up of American PAX (later known as Pax Christi)
1963 She publishes *Loaves and Fishes* (the history of the Catholic Worker movement)
1963 She joins the "Mothers for Peace" group that visits John XXIII after the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*
1965 She takes part in the setting up of the Catholic Peace Fellowship
1965 During Vatican Council II, she joins the days of fasting and prayer organised by Lanza del Vasto in order to demand a condemnation of nuclear war
1967 She takes part in the International Congress of the Laity
1972 She publishes *On Pilgrimage: The Sixties* (a collection of articles from the *CW*)
1973 She is imprisoned for the last time during the protests of the United Farm Workers of César Chávez in California
1976 She takes part in the International Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia
1980 She dies November 29th. At that time, the newspaper has a circulation of 95,000; there are 70 houses of hospitality and four farming communes.

Illinois and read some of the great Russian novelists like Dostoyevski and Tolstoy, she began to realise that "there was a real conflict going on in me" (*The Long Loneliness*, 42), a conflict between religion and the new perspectives on reality that she was encountering. "I felt that my faith had nothing to do with that of Christians around me" (*LL*, 43).

Towards the end of the second part of her autobiography entitled "A Time of Searching", she discovers that "it was the great mass of the poor, the workers, who were the Catholics in this country, and this fact in itself drew me to the Church" (*LL*, 107), and this also helped her to bring this conflict to a new, though still fragile, form of synthesis. In 1926, she wrote that "I had become convinced that I would become a Catholic; yet I felt that I was betraying the class to which I belonged, the workers, the poor of the world, with whom Christ spent his life" (*LL*, 144). This struggle did not of course end with her full and formal incorporation into the Church. With the scandals that she witnessed going on in the Church, she found it difficult to reconcile her view that the Church was the Church of the poor. "There was plenty of charity, but too little justice" (*LL*, 150). She would put her deepest thoughts on paper: "How I longed to make a synthesis reconciling body and soul, this world and the next (...). No wonder there was such a strong conflict going on in my mind and heart" (*LL*, 151). In the middle of all this, she travelled to Washington DC through her work as a journalist, to cover the Hunger March, led by Communists, and this was a scene that I consider to be the key episode in her struggle to overcome this inner conflict she described, which brought her closer to experiencing this new form of synthesis.

This passage is found at the end of the second part of *The Long Loneliness* and describes the time she embarked on a profound personal quest, which took place when she was thirty-five years old. Dorothy speaks of a mix of emotions of happiness, pride, bitterness, self-absorption and sinfulness. She asks herself "where was the Catholic leadership in the gathering of men and women together" (*LL*, 165). In this particular frame of mind, she went into a church and offered up "a special prayer, a prayer which came with tears and anguish that some way would open up for me to use what talents I possessed for my fellow workers, for the poor" (*LL*, 166). Forty years later, she recalls: "Today is our anniversary. In 1932 I prayed at the Washington Shrine to the Blessed Mother to open up a way to work for the revolution! When I got back to New York Peter Maurin was waiting for me"[2]. Peter would also search for "a new synthesis" (*LL*, 170) and this would ultimately come about through the Catholic Worker. Considering the narrative dynamic of *The Long Loneliness*, the practical consequences that emerged from this prayer, and the personal testimony of Dorothy Day, it is clear that this episode marked a turning point in her search for some kind of synthesis and resolution.

So how did Dorothy Day articulate this new found synthesis? Given that

she was not a theologian or much of an intellectual, what she did was to simply use the popular ideas of her time; however, she made these ideas her own, and used them in a creative way, exploring, exploiting and embodying the consequences that were implicit to such beliefs. She was able to turn traditional doctrines around, by adopting them in a deeply personal way as was her talent, as well as radicalising them through her daily proximity to the poor. This is why it can be said that the synthesis of her life had an implicit theological aspect, in what decades later would be coined as the faith-justice pair.

1.2. Opening her eyes to the painful side of life

Since the days of her youth, Dorothy Day was a woman that paid attention to life, in all its different shades and details. *The Long Loneliness* allows us to follow her trajectory in this regard, and see how her spirituality emerged from her very personality, her character, her style, her virtues and limitations. The religious conversion of Dorothy (as with anyone), was formed from her humanity, and of course transformed through grace. When she was only fifteen years old, she wrote to a college friend: "How I love the park in winter! So solitary and awful in the truest meaning of the word. God is there. Of course, He is everywhere, but under the trees and looking over the wide expanse of lake He communicates Himself to me and fills me with a deep quiet peace" (*LL*, 33). It is not surprising that years later in 1962, she came to the conclusion that: "It seems to me that I have always had a sense of an immanent spiritual world" (*AIG*, 62).

When she was sixteen years old and still living in Chicago, she went through a period of formation that we could call "social mysticism". In a beautifully written narrative, she recounts the way in which her "reading began to be socially conscious" (*LL*, 36), how she learnt from Carl Sandberg "to look on the people as he did, with love and hope of great accomplishment" (*LL*, 37). This awakening was almost like learning to walk again, with her journey taking a new direction: "When I read *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair I began taking long walks towards the West Side rather than going to the park or lake" (*LL*, 37). A new significance was given to her sense of smell: "I collected odors in my memory, the one beauty in those drab streets" (*LL*, 37). It was as though she heard different voices and music for the first time that "played too on the strings of my heart" (*LL*, 38). Through this new way of reading, seeing, walking, smelling and listening, she finally began to realise that: "I had received a call, a vocation, a direction to my life" (*LL*, 38). This direction was that of a radical descent into the life of the poor, a life in which years later, she would find her Christian vocation.

One of the first things she noticed upon her arrival to New York in 1917 was that "silence in the midst of city noises oppressed me" and that "the poverty of New York was appallingly different from that of Chicago. The very odors were different. (...) It is a smell like no other in the world and one never

can become accustomed to it" (*LL 51*). Some years later, when Dorothy Day took part in the suffragette demonstrations in Washington, she recalled how "there was a religious flavour about the silent proceedings" (*LL*, 73), even though the participants were for the most part non-believers. It was clear that since her youth Dorothy Day had, through her awareness of the insignificant details of life, developed a sensitivity that was maintained and became even sharper throughout her life.

Another event that strengthened her ability for reflection occurred in 1925. She was 28 years old and pregnant, she had gone to live in Staten Island and as she herself admits, it was as though she was learning to breathe in a different way: "If breath is life, then I was beginning to be full of it because of him **[**Forster**,** her partner]" (*LL*, 135). She sometimes referred to this moment as "the beach experience," and described it years later in her personal diary: "I was 'born again by the word of the Spirit', contemplating the beauty of the sea and the shore, wind and waves, the tides. The mighty and the minute, the storms and peace, wave and wavelets of receding tides, sea gulls, and seaweed and shells, all gave testimony of a Creator, a Father almighty, made known to us trough His Son" (*AIG*, 62). Throughout her life and works, there are several examples that illustrate the depth of her personal, social and spiritual openness to the life of God present in the world. Her choice to live among the poor gave her a particular perspective on reality, which strengthened and radicalised her natural tendency to notice and value the details of daily life[3]. For this reason, we can say that one of the main characteristics of the spirituality of Dorothy Day is that which the father of political theology, Metz, called a "mysticism of open eyes", or that which in Ignatian tradition is called to "seek and find God in all things", or in other words, to be contemplative in action.

1.3. Experiencing reality among the poor

In 1942, during the Second World War, Dorothy Day was harshly criticised for the pacifist stance of the Catholic Worker. Many people accused them of being cowards and afraid of the suffering and deprivation that war entailed. Her response offers some clues as to how this radical descent that we have already mentioned impacted her daily life:

"But let those who talk of softness, of sentimentality, come to live with us in cold, unheated houses in the slums. Let them come to live with the criminal, the unbalanced, the drunken, the degraded, the pervert. (It is not decent poor, it is not the decent sinner who was the recipient of Christ's love.) Let them live with rats, with vermin, bedbugs, roaches, lice (I could describe the several kinds of body lice). Let their flesh be mortified by cold, by dirt, by vermin; let their eyes be mortified by the sight of bodily excretions, diseased limbs, eyes, noses, mouths...".[4]

In the same article, she goes on to describe the living conditions of the poor, and their daily life in the Catholic

Worker. In this context, Dorothy offers a powerful contemporary version of that which the Christian spiritual tradition called the application of the senses:

"Let their noses be mortified by the smells of sewage, decay and rotten flesh. Yes, and the smell of the sweat, blood and tears spoken of so blithely by Mr. Churchill, and so widely and bravely quoted by comfortable people.

Let their ears be mortified by harsh and screaming voices, by the constant coming and going of people living herded together with no privacy. (There is no privacy in tenements just as there is none in concentration camps.)

Let their taste be mortified by the constant eating of insufficient food cooked in huge quantities for hundreds of people, the coarser foods, the cheaper foods, so that there will be enough to go around; and the smell of such cooking is often foul...".[5]

As for the sense of hearing, in 1957 she wrote about her experience in prison: "Shouts, jeers, defiance of guards and each other, expressed in these ways, reverberated through the cells and corridors at night while, rosary in hand, I tried to pray. Noise – perhaps that is the greatest torture in jail. It stuns the ear, the mind".[6] One last example, this time regarding the sense of taste, we find in the public fasting which took place during the final session of the Second Vatican Council in Rome, 1965, while the Council Fathers were discussing and ultimately reached the point of condemning nuclear war. Dorothy writes:

"As for me, I did not suffer at all from the hunger or headache or nausea which usually accompany the first few days of fast, but I had offered my fast in part for the victims of famine all over the world, and it seemed to me that I had very special pains. They were certainly of a kind I have never had before, and they seemed to me to pierce the very marrow of my bones when I lay down every night".[7]

It is therefore easy to understand what we are referring to when we talk about the embodied spirituality of Dorothy Day. Her focus on the physical bodies of the poor moves away from any spiritual, disembodied or meditative interpretation. In this way, the doctrine of the Body of Christ and the Catholic tradition of the spiritual senses take on a new meaning and are given a radical aspect because of her choice to live among the poor. The physical body and the senses do not just offer us an isolated personal experience of socio-political reality, but instead open us up to this reality. It is only in this context that Dorothy's personal encounter with Christ takes place, through His historical body among the poor.

Reflecting on the consequences of the execution of the anarcho-syndicalists Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927, Dorothy Day recalls that the entire population of poor and working-class people mourned their deaths, and that she then discovered "that very sense of solidarity which made me gradually understand the doctrine of the mystical Body of Christ in that we are the members one of another" (*LL*, 138). That doctrine, which was very prevalent at the time, is the second theological idea that allowed Dorothy Day to reach

her point of synthesis. She herself states in the introduction to The Long Loneliness, that she found in the Church "a body with which to love and move, love and praise. I found faith. I became a member of the Mystical Body of Christ" (*LL*, 8).

In this way, the Body of Christ offered a concrete solution for the deepest desires of Dorothy, which was her yearning for communion and solidarity. In her own words:

"I always felt the common unity of our humanity" (*LL*, 29); of course the problem is how to achieve and how to live out this unity in everyday life. "Community: that was the social answer to the long loneliness" (*LL*, 229). For Dorothy Day, the expression 'the long loneliness' meant 'spiritual hunger' which could only be fully satisfied by seeing God. In the final paragraphs of *The Long Loneliness*, Dorothy says: "Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship. We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community" (*LL*, 293). From this point onwards, Dorothy would live out the implications of the socio-political aspect of her beliefs. For example, the Catholic Worker was never understood as an organisation, but was instead viewed as a body of people, an organism (*LL*, 183), a notion that was clearly inspired by the image of the Body of Christ. Through this configuration, which was closer to the anarchist tradition of a horizontal structure of leadership rather than the vertical structure common to hierarchies of power, Dorothy combined a devout spiritual experience with a radical socio-political aim.

1.4. Living among prisoners and homeless people

In 1976, Dorothy Day made a brief appearance before the International Eucharistic Congress of Philadelphia, which was to be her last public appearance. There, she recalled her spiritual life with these words: "My conversion began many years ago, at a time when the material world around me began to speak in my heart of the love of God (...). It was also the physical aspect of the Church which attracted me. Bread and wine, water (all water is made holy since Christ was baptized in the Jordan), incense, the sound of waves and wind, all Nature cried out to me".[8] In these words, we can see how a condensed version of her spiritual vision became a physical and material reality. She often referred to this reality as the "sacrament of life" (for example, *LL*, 194), in an expression which would be made popular years later by the liberation theologian Leonardo Boff.

This sacramental vision of the world is strengthened in the mystery of the Incarnation, which Dorothy understood as being not simply a historical event in the past, but rather an on-going process. "My entire conviction at this time [of conversion] was that the Word is made Flesh today – the Incarnation is now. There is no true brotherhood of man unless we see Christ as our brother" (*AIG,* 63). Thus, she is able to conclude:

"When we meditate on Our Lord's life we are meditating on our own. God is to be found in what appears to be the little and the unimportant. Don't look back 1900 years. Look around us today" (*AIG,* 68). In the rest of this section, we are going to look at two examples of how Dorothy Day lived out this spirituality of the Incarnation.

In the first place, let us consider her discovery of the Incarnation in the context of *prison*. Her first stay in prison in 1917 had a profound effect on her life. She experienced a dual process of personal conversion: on the one hand, "I lost all feeling of my own identity," but at the same time she felt strongly identified with the other prisoners: "I was that mother whose child had been raped and slain" (*LL*, 78). She lost her former identity, and went on to recover it again, but this time it was renewed, through her sense of identification with the other prisoners. In some way, during her time in prison, she began to take on a new identity. Five years later, she was imprisoned again, this time in Chicago, and in relation to this experience, she described how she shared as never before, "the life of the poorest of the poor, the guilty, the dispossessed" (*LL*, 94). Arrested in 1956 during a non-violent protest, she writes: "I felt a sense of such closeness to God. Such a sense of His love, such love for His creatures…" (*AIG,* 109). This process of incarnation that Dorothy experienced in prison is also discussed in the following text, written years later. "On our detention floor there were six women waiting for trial for homicide. (…). But there, mingling with them, all the day with gates open and corridor free, we were sisters. We saw in ourselves our own capacity for sin, violence, hatred" (*AIG*, 171-2). The dramatic force of these texts and experiences reflects the effects that the doctrine of the Incarnation had on her life: in the same way that Jesus Christ took on our human form in flesh, Dorothy Day took on the shared physical identity of the prisoners.

The second example shows the radical nature of Day's belief in the Incarnation of Christ, and in His *fraternity with the poor*. This example actually just concerns one particular moment in her life, but it is an incident that should be seen in the context of her whole life, which represented a radical surrender to the cause of the poor, (otherwise, this would simply seem to be a superficial or trivial anecdote). I am referring to her encounter with a leper, a scene which is a familiar one in Christian history (from the accounts of Jesus of Nazareth to those of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius of Loyola or St. Francis Xavier, many Christians have received grace through their communion, service and physical contact with lepers as well as other marginalized groups who have been stigmatised by society).

Dorothy writes: "I had 'kissed a leper' not once but twice, consciously, and I cannot say I am much the better for it".[9] The first time, her encounter was with a woman who had cancer of the face and was begging in the street; as Dorothy passed, she tried to kiss her hand. "The only thing I could do was kiss her dirty old face with the gaping

hole in it where an eye and a nose had been. It sounds like something but it was not" (*LF*, 79).

The second occasion took place following one of those familiar scenes of conflict in the context of exclusion. For reasons we will not look into here, Dorothy was in a situation where she had to refuse a bed to a "drunken prostitute with a huge toothless rouged mouth, a nightmare of a mouth" (*LF*, 80). Yet on doing so, she kissed her and embraced her. What could have come across as a cold bureaucratic or administrative decision, as is often the case within the parameters of social intervention, became instead an expression of fraternity and communion, an opportunity for a personal encounter in which both women revealed their human side.

In summary, the spirituality of Dorothy Day (her experience of Jesus, the Body of Christ, the spiritual senses, and her living out of the Incarnation) evolved into a journey of descent towards the most marginalised sectors of society, a radical journey with revolutionary consequences.

2. KENOTIC REVOLUTION: THE POLITICS OF DOROTHY DAY

We are now entering into the second part of this booklet, in which we are going to analyse the political implications of Dorothy Day's spirituality. The first part showed how her life and spirituality made a journey of descent, which we have described as a radical movement with revolutionary consequences. This descent, which allowed her to share the life of the poor, turns reality upside-down, has clear socio-political consequences and provides the basis for a real revolution from the lower echelons of society. This section will begin by developing a theological framework that will help us to understand more about the novelty of this upside-down revolution. Here we ask for a little patience from those readers who are a little less used to overtly Christian and theological language.

2.1. Theological framework

This general framework consists of a three-fold articulation of various basic doctrines of Christian faith and their implications in relation to socio-political life. The three elements are Incarnation, Eschatology and Creation. Note the order we have placed them, since it bears significant importance for our proposal. Theological and moral discourse usually follows a chronological order (Creation, Incarnation, Eschatology) but here we will give priority to the Incarnation as the liberating revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. We will show how this perspective has important socio-political implications.

The first stage could therefore be called the "politics of the Incarnation". As Christians, we find the main source of our political actions in the contemplation of Jesus, the Incarnation of God, the person that was born in Bethlehem, lived in Nazareth and Galilee, and finally died on Mount Golgotha. Embodied in Jesus, we find a totally

different political focus: adopting a humble approach, this is a figure that chooses a life among the poor, bases that life on service, and follows a journey of radical descent. The life of Jesus announces the arrival of the Kingdom of God, which has already arrived and is present among the people. He announces that the wishes of the poor will ultimately be fulfilled, "today", with His arrival (Lk 4: 21). Yet His presence is one of such humility that it would almost go unnoticed: it is present like the mustard seed. When we talk about politics, we tend to think about power, finance, structures, laws, pressure groups or political influences. Nevertheless, as Christians we should never forget that the politics of Jesus and the politics of the Incarnation offer an entirely different focus.

On a second point, we are aware of the tension that exists between the present and the future Kingdom of God. We are called to acknowledge, embody and reinforce the reality of God's Kingdom on Earth, but at the same time we are aware of the fact that we are not of this world (Jn 15: 19). "Do not be conformed to this world", St. Paul reminds the Romans (Rom 12: 2). Furthermore, in saying "yes" to embodying this alternative example of humility in the face of an unjust system, we are being invited to say "no" to any form of thinking that goes against the Kingdom. And thirdly, from this perspective, we can be much more open and able to make suggestions for the general organisation of society. Universality encourages creation. Our concern for the common good is not an abstract one, but instead finds its roots in the specific experience of the community of believers.

In summary, we are faced with a three-fold strategy: firstly, the positive alternative of daily incarnation; then, the permanent eschatological criticism; and finally, a realistic concern for society in its entirety based on the universality of creation.

As a result, when we consider the socio-political implications of this vision, we realise the importance of the Incarnation. The Church is called on to embody the real presence of Christ in the world and through this, the Christian community offers a real alternative to the dominant system. As Christians, our first word has always been "yes", because we have experienced the miracle of Christ, and we are invited to demonstrate this reality in the public arena. In actual fact, it is not a matter of the Church "having" a social system of ethics, but rather of it *being* a social ethical system in itself. The Church itself is a system of social ethics, in that as a community of believers, and as an institution, it represents the incarnation of a way of truth, charity, justice, service, and also a radical journey of descent, which is revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This "politics of the Incarnation" is the first and most important step, precisely because in our current theological context, this message is often forgotten or misinterpreted.

Once we have highlighted the need for a "politics of the Incarnation", we can then move ahead and put forward a proposed way of life that maintains a creative tension with the other two areas, which we can call the "politics of

eschatology" and the "politics of Creation". In the socio-political arena, these two contrasting notions are linked to the terms denouncing and announcing. Ignacio Ellacuría referred to this same issue with the words utopia and prophecy: "The prophecy of denunciation, on the horizon of the Kingdom of God, marks out the ways that lead to utopia. Prophecy's 'No', prophecy's negation pointing beyond in itself generates utopia's 'Yes' by virtue of the promise that is the Kingdom of God already present among human beings".[10]

What this text demonstrates is the need for a Christian model which combines the "not yet" aspect of eschatological prophecy with the more positive vision of utopia's "already", encountered and realised (at least in part) in our history. The following section will illustrate how Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker lived out this three-fold theological model (Incarnation, Eschatology and Creation) in her daily political approach.

2.2. The politics of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker

It is not easy to outline in brief the political vision of the Catholic Worker. There have been various attempts to categorise it, (as Christian socialism or communism, distributism, economic voluntarism, communitarian personalism, revolutionary non-violence, anarchism, decentralisation, political localism...), and yet there has never been one single political sector or term which adequately reflects the complexity and originality of this way of viewing public action. Peter Maurin used the slogan "cult, culture, cultivation" in order to sum up his vision. At other times, he would refer to it when talking about the *houses of hospitality*, "agronomic universities" or *farming communes*, and roundtable discussions. For this reason, I believe that the three-fold political vision which was developed in the previous section (Incarnation, Eschatology, Creation), offers a broader framework which allows us to interpret the politics of Dorothy Day and of the Catholic Worker in a flexible way, which is more in tune with reality. I will be working within this framework from now on in order to demonstrate its instructive qualities.

2.2.1. The politics of the Incarnation

The first and most obvious example of the politics of the Incarnation apparent in the Catholic Worker can be found in their houses of hospitality. These offer a social space for the poor, the homeless, the unemployed, those who feel excluded, undocumented migrants and marginalised sectors of society, and are a space in which they can recover their dignity as human beings. In these houses, a new form of reality emerges, which embodies an alternative vision of reality in a Christian vein, and in this sense, they are not simply dedicated to the rehabilitation of homeless people, but rather the rehabilitation and transformation of society. The houses represent a two-fold project, that of offering hospitality, and that of building a community - two distinct aims which need to co-exist in a creative manner. In this way, they are offering an alternative to the more official model that domi-

nates State-run social services, with its bureaucratic mentality and formal and individualistic strategy of "rehabilitation". In the houses of hospitality, there is no such thing as workers and "users", or Bourgeoisie and proletariat. Instead, everyone shares the same roof and is in a sense "de-classed" by means of this radical descent that establishes a community.

The houses of hospitality set up by the Catholic Worker movement, in contrast with other social services institutions, are not focused on efficiency. They practice the corporal works of mercy in such a rigorous way that they not only reject conventional politics, (in both a religious and secular format), but they also emerge with an anti-triumphalist message in the cultural arena. This vision of politics seems closer to the same emphasis of Jesus in the Incarnation, because from His birth in Bethlehem up to His death on the cross, He was neither excessively accomplished nor triumphalist. In fact, analysts agree that the influence of the Catholic Worker was never down to its numbers, its organisational capacity or its visibility, but was simply down to its moral and spiritual integrity. We should perhaps take other political aspects into account, but from a Christian point of view, it is clear that the Incarnation highlights the need for silent, humble and lowly service. And neither should we forget that such attitudes, when lived out in the public arena, inevitably carry a political influence.

The second example of how the Catholic Worker represented the politics of the Incarnation can be found in farming communes. If the houses of hospitality saw themselves as a direct and immediate response to the injustices of modern society, then the farming communes were like a long-term program offering a radical alternative to the dehumanising system of industrialisation, capitalism and consumerism. The "green revolution" of Peter Maurin proposed a decentralised economy, a notion that was perhaps a little idealistic, but which was based on the medieval model of social integration. Nevertheless, it is certain that even in the first generation of the Catholic Worker, the failure of the movement to "go back to the land" was observed by all commentators.

However, on further reflection, we are led to the discovery of two interesting points. One of these is the fact that the farming estates held a powerful appeal for younger generations who were not satisfied with urban life or the ecological crisis. Even some of the houses of hospitality in the city developed a type of "mixed system", built on the basis of fostering relations with a rural commune that was already in existence, or by creating a little market garden themselves, which would facilitate both human and humane interaction with Nature. In a time of "sustainable development" and *green* parties, this element of their work also has clear political implications.

The farming experience has a second aspect that I feel to be more profound and perhaps even more important than the first. I am referring to what could be described as the "politics of failure." In my opinion, there is no point in trying to argue that the farming

communes were, or are, an implicit success. Personally, I would admit the failure of this initiative. Having said that, from a Christian point of view, what I am refusing to accept is that politics should always as a matter of course be aiming for success or victory. As Dorothy Day wrote, "the Christian point of view was to keep in mind the failure of the Cross" (*LL*, 216). On another occasion, she reflected on the effects of the Catholic Worker with the following words: "How little we have attempted, let alone accomplished. The consolation is this – and this is our faith too: By our sufferings and our failures, by our acceptance of the Cross, by our struggle to grow in faith, hope, and charity, we unleash forces that help to overcome the evil in the world." (*LF*, 204). I am convinced that any project of Christian politics needs to accept a certain amount of this politics of failure, unless it wants to succumb to an imperialist or capitalist theology based on continuous and deceitful success.

2.2.2. The politics of Eschatology

Various studies have come together to highlight the central role played by Eschatology (that is, the doctrine regarding the end of the times and the aim of history), in the religious conversion of Dorothy Day, above all with the emphasis on the fact that this is not simply a form of eschatology that has already been "realised" but rather something that continues to be realised and verified (veri-fy: make real) in daily life: Eschatology is the force that feeds and promotes the growth of the alternative style of life of the Catholic Workers.

Christian Eschatology functions as a permanent corrective in the face of all human achievements, since they are always only partial or provisional in nature. If the perspective of the Incarnation tends to say "yes" by providing a concrete alternative, then the eschatological vision says "no" to any work that goes "against God's Kingdom". Within the Catholic Worker and in the socio-political sphere, this eschatological vision develops in a special way through active non-violence and through the practice of civil disobedience. More specifically, three strategies can be mentioned here: conscientious objection to war and military service, objection to taxes, and finally, going to prison. Since the general pacifist element of Dorothy Day is most well known, we will focus on the other two aspects here.

Dorothy herself wrote: "I have been behind bars in police stations, houses of detention, jails, and prison farms (whatsoever they are called) eleven times".[11] From the age of twenty until she was seventy-seven years old, the *experience of prison* was always present in her life. Nevertheless, it is not easy to determine exactly how many specific occasions we are talking about, given that sources differ or do not offer precise details. Different studies seem to agree on the fact that there were seven detentions in prison during her life: twice before the founding of the Catholic Worker (in 1917 and in 1922) and following this, five more occasions (during the protests against the Civil Defense Act between 1955 and 1959, and finally in 1973, when she joined the struggle of undocumented migrant workers in Califor-

nia, led by César Chávez). These incidents demonstrate that Dorothy was not 'obsessed by the idea' of civil disobedience as though it were a permanent necessity, but they also show that she was not afraid of going to prison when it was necessary either, in keeping with and remaining faithful to her non-violent commitment.

In the first part of this booklet, we have already looked at the effects that imprisonment had on Dorothy Day's life and on her way of viewing the world. The fact of going to prison was not an end in itself of course, although it shows that Christians should be able to overcome utilitarianism and go beyond the obsession with efficiency. The experience of prison could be compared to that which we would call a metaphor in relation to language: it represents a dramatic break from the ordinary, quiet life, in such a way that a new perspective on life is opened up. For Dorothy Day, imprisonment was a space in which the incarnated solidarity of God was dramatically revealed through pain and suffering. We could actually say that the lifestyle advocated by the Catholic Worker is a kind of incarnated metaphor. Once more we come across the dilemma between the Incarnation and Eschatology; between the *yes* and the *no* response to the world, which also offers a specific way of choosing a life of poverty, in both a spiritual and political way.

The second element of the active non-violence lived out by Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker is that of fiscal objection or *refusing to pay taxes*. This is a practice that combines the anarchist, distributist and pacifist elements of the personalist view of the Catholic Worker, in a specific and public way. Conscious that "war is the health of the State" (*LL*, 243-273) and that a significant percentage of taxes were dedicated to military expenses, the Catholic Worker practiced tax resistance. On most occasions, this conscientious objection actually only applied to federal taxes, given that local and autonomous taxes were considered as being more focussed on providing social services. In this sense, perhaps the greatest homage paid to Dorothy Day following her death, was the decision taken by Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle, to encourage the citizens to refuse to pay 50 per cent of their taxes in protest against the spending on nuclear weapons in 1981, an action that caused great commotion.

There is still another issue that I would like to highlight regarding the Catholic Worker's stance on tax resistance, because it clearly shows the relationship that existed between Dorothy's political activities and her daily life of voluntary poverty. Normally, tax resistance is expressed through a public statement in which the undersigned declares their refusal to pay their taxes. However, the Catholic Worker was able to do this using a much simpler and more radical method: by remaining under the poverty line, *Workers* are not obliged to pay taxes. In other words, they avoid paying taxes by choosing a certain lifestyle that categorises them as being "officially poor". This tactic (less controversial than the former, but just as public), allows them to establish a clearer connection

between military expenses and social inequality. It also offers a constructive solution which is neither superficial nor simply symbolic, but is instead a form of protest which bases its political action in a life shared with the poor, a choice which verifies (veri-fies: "makes real") the daily practice of non-violence. In other words, it creates a unifying link between the politics of the Incarnation (voluntary poverty) and the politics of Eschatology (tax resistance).

2.2.3. The politics of Creation

Having reached this point, it is possible that some modern and progressive groups will be under the impression that Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker have ignored the structural vision of the whole, and that they are instead stepping back from the political sphere, or that they are not actually becoming involved in the search for the common good, by only working out partial or fragmented solutions. In my opinion however, the definition of 'political arena' or the 'common good' does not need to go hand in hand with a Constantinian framework, in other words, it does not necessarily mean that the role of the Church is to organise society as a whole.

As I see it, there clearly is a place for the "politics of Creation", which includes all members of society. However, this politics of Creation, in good Christian theology, is subordinate to the Incarnation and eschatology. From a Christian perspective, the only way to promote and live out our lives is in taking the path of humility and poverty. The uniqueness of the Incarnation was in its message promoting the universality of the common good. This is the narrow path, the humble and tiring path of the Gospel. It is the way of radical simplicity, which we can call the kenotic revolution. From this perspective, we can now look at how Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker focussed their socio-political vision. Although it would be useful to study in detail the concepts of economic decentralisation and political localism which are fundamental aspects of the Catholic Worker's stance, I will only be examining two aspects more closely in this section: the labour issue and the so-called "clarification of thought".

It has often been pointed out that Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day had a particular way of seeing the world of *work and the issue of labourers*, because her position was much closer to trade unionism than the French peasant was. A well-known expression that Peter Maurin used to say in relation to this was, "Strikes do not strike me", which highlighted a clear distinction between his position and that of the labour movement. Nevertheless, from the very beginning, the Catholic Worker did all it could to help workers in their struggle to achieve better conditions and higher pay (see *LL* 207-227). Particularly in the early years, in the context of the Great Depression of 1929, the Catholic Worker was actively involved in labour issues. It supported the National Recovery Act of 1933 within the *New Deal*, it gave its backing to the legal reform of 1935 regarding child labour, and joined with the syndicates on several issues, among those the famous sea-workers strike of 1936-37.

At that time, Dorothy Day wrote an editorial revealing her position in relation to strikes: "Let us be honest and confess that it is the social order which we wish to change. The workers are never going to be satisfied, no matter how much pay they get, no matter what their hours are. And it is to reconstruct the social order that we are throwing ourselves in with the workers, whether in factories or shipyards or on the sea".[12] In other words, the Catholic Worker understood that the struggle regarding wages was not enough. Dorothy knew that the "unions still fight for better wages and hours, though I have come more and more to feel that that in itself is not the answer" **(***LF***,** 83), given that this approach uses the same logic as the capitalist system. As an alternative, Dorothy Day proposed a civilisation that would be based on voluntary poverty.

A common criticism was that this stance mistakenly forgets the issues of structural injustice found in modern societies (for example, how wealth is created and distributed), and therefore, tolerates the very existence of an unjust system. In fact, this was the very same criticism used initially by Dorothy Day against the Church, in which she saw "plenty of charity but too little justice" (*LL*, 150). Years later, in 1972, she wrote as part of another editorial: "Breadlines are not enough, hospices are not enough. I know we will always have men on the road. But we need communities of work, land for the landless, true farming communes, cooperatives and credit unions".[13]

I do not believe it would be fair to interpret the different emphases in Dorothy's writings as if they reflected a change in her thinking. Instead they show an understanding of these issues that was both complex and radical. It is complex because it takes on board many different issues at the same time; and it is radical because it does not conform to one clear superficial solution.

A second element that illustrates the way in which the Catholic Worker lives and understands the "politics of creation" or the universality of the socio-political elements can be found in its intellectual dimension. As Dorothy Day was a journalist, she viewed the *Worker* as a newspaper above all; for his part, Peter Maurin was an intellectual, and this led him to create roundtable debates for the clarification of thought, which was also a fundamental part of the *Worker* from the outset. It therefore seems clear that the Catholic Worker did not just maintain a charitable, sectarian or naive stance, but instead always actively sought to improve the whole of society.

The Catholic Worker newspaper is an unlikely example of how the editorial stance and the internal structure of the paper coincide in a very coherent way. In this way, the movement of the Catholic Worker and the newspaper mutually strengthened each other. The circulation of the newspaper reached a maximum level of 190,000 copies in May 1938, an impressive number for a radical and minority paper. The roundtable discussions for the clarification of thought also intended to move beyond the minority groups of militants and thus expand their constructive proposal in the face of a new society.

In the same sense, we should take into account the fact that the Catholic Worker is not necessarily a permanent vocation. Instead, many of its members only remained in contact with this hospitality and pacifist movement for a few days, weeks, months or years. Yet what is important is that the majority of these members remained profoundly changed by their experience, and that experience often influenced their future decisions. So, the Catholic Worker became a sort of training camp for living out the Gospel. Dorothy Day herself described it in the following way: "What is it all about – the Catholic Worker movement?' It is, in a way, a school, a work camp, to which large-hearted, socially conscious young people come to find their vocations".[14] The "wildfire effect" of a minority movement, which offers an alternative lifestyle to those who have been excluded from society, cannot be underestimated as a transforming element of that same society.

In particular, the influence of the Catholic Worker can be seen in many of the Catholic progressive movements in the social, political, and intellectual context of North America. I will mention just four examples. The Association of Catholic Trade Unions (ACTU), a small but influential group, was founded by John Coy in 1937, a former Catholic Worker. The magazine *Commonweal*, one of the most respected voices among Catholics in the USA had as its editors between 1949 and 1984 two *Workers* from Chicago, John Cogley and James O'Gara. Dorothy Day herself wrote more than thirty articles for this publication. In the political arena, the experience of Michael Harrington in the Catholic Worker was documented in his book *The Other America*, which had a great influence on the federal programme "War on Poverty" in the sixties, with Kennedy and Johnson. More recently, we can recall the role of Robert Ellsberg as editor-in-chief of the publication *Orbis* (which played a fundamental role in the introduction of liberation theology to the English language), where he arrived after living five years in a Catholic Worker house in New York.

In summary then, it seems clear that Dorothy Day did understand the complexity of social reality and the need for offering an equally complex solution. She was convinced that Christians should always maintain a close relationship with and among the poor, creating alternative solutions from within their social perspective. She also knew that the followers of Jesus Christ, a figure that was crucified for His love of God and of the poor, are called to reinforce this opposition against the forces of evil. Finally, she knew that Christians have a responsibility to work for the common good, which springs from these other two elements, and it is from this sense of responsibility that specific personal vocations may arise. However, it is important to be aware of the order in which these three factors come, in particular that it is not simply a chronological order, but is also a theological and political one. This is what we have described as the politics of the Incarnation, the politics of Eschatology and the politics of Creation.

3. AN INTEGRATED PROPOSAL

In this third part,[15] we will be putting forward an integrated proposal in three steps, as a means of applying and fulfilling the insights of Dorothy Day in our own context. This is also important because some interpretations of the Catholic Worker movement can tend towards a sectarian view, without taking into account the political implications of withdrawing from the public arena. In my opinion, it is right to criticise the Constantinian model of understanding power (a dominant model, which can be seen as both misguided and dangerous). It is a meaningful criticism from a Gospel perspective, and also agrees with some recent discussions from left-wing alternative groups, which propose changing the world without being in power.[16] However, while this is a sensible and necessary viewpoint, it is also true that it sometimes appears to forget that in withdrawing from a nation's political arena, the whole situation may in fact worsen, particularly in relation to the poor. In my opinion, different elements and different contexts need to be considered at the same time, each requiring a different focus pertaining to each individual situation.

3.1. A proposal in three steps

In order to clarify my point of view, I will be putting forward a proposal for Christian contribution to social transformation divided into three steps, which exposes the "political thinking of Dorothy Day" and applies it to our situation. In my opinion, as Christians living in the modern world, we often forget the first of these three points that I am going to raise, but this is why I believe this first point to be the most important and most urgent of them all.

1) *Political imagination*. Our current situation shows a clear need for obtaining real and radical alternatives to the oppressive system of global capitalism. As Christians we should show that it is possible to do without a culture that is characterised by the ownership of

private property and the presence of armies, and replace it with a real form of non-violent socialism. We need to show through our own lives that this other world is possible. Every Christian individual and community, without exception, needs to become involved in this task. It should not be seen as something optional or superfluous: instead it should be about remaining faithful to a particular way of life, and this is the most important contribution that Christians can make to our world. In the first place, this lifestyle will create opportunities for social resistance against the system and secondly, it can create an alternative to the global system.

2*) Non-violent direct action*. On some occasions, Christians need to say a clear and absolute "no" to certain decisions taken by States, governments or companies. In these cases, it is possible that some form of action, whether it be non-cooperation or civil disobedience, may be necessary. Although only a few Christians may feel personally called to carry out this type of radical action, the Church as an institution and its respective communities should support these persons directly.

3) *The common good and the Welfare State*. In the meantime, Christian churches should not ignore daily political life or legislative processes, given that many important decisions are taken in this area, (decisions which have a great influence on the lives of the poor). For example, it is very important to struggle in order to maintain the (limited) social conquests of the Welfare State against modern-day neoliberal attacks. In my opinion, this is the most common approach of Christians who become involved in socio-political issues. Nevertheless, in accordance with the discussion followed up to this point, this step is not the most important one, and should only be considered as a conclusion of the first two steps. Some Christians with a high level of technical training should be responsible for putting forward proposals which would spring from alternative suggestions offered by the *whole* community (as we explained in the first step).

If we look more deeply at this proposal, we can see that it is actually just an adaptation of the classic *principle of subsidiarity* of the social doctrine of the Church. Everything that small communities and local bodies can do at their level, they should. It is an injustice and an unnecessary hassle to assign responsibilities to large associations when smaller organisations can carry them out just as well. This should be the main emphasis, particularly at a time when we tend to ignore such issues. But at the same time, this principle of subsidiarity also makes it clear that greater and more influential socio-political bodies (national states or international institutions), need to effectively and adequately carry out all the tasks within their area of responsibility, because they are actually the only ones capable of carrying them out. It is also worth bearing in mind however, that in keeping with this principle, such initiatives should not wait on the ecclesiastical hierarchy, if certain proposals can be put in motion among smaller Christian communities.

3.2. From proposal to action: three examples

These principles should be lived out in the daily life of Christian communities. In our socio-political actions, it often happens that we expect answers from the hierarchy to matters in which we ourselves are actually the social and ecclesiastical point of reference (which is yet another example of how we live trapped and restricted within a hierarchical model of political actions that seeks to influence us from above, as in, from a position of power). Sometimes we look for specific answers in Papal encyclicals, without realising that by their very nature they are supposed to be general in character, and yet we do not put in the energy and creativity required to embody imaginative alternatives in the daily life of our own ecclesiastical communities. Or we may feel disappointed when the Bishops' Conference lacks the desired force in its public statements, without realising that the ecclesial base did not provide them with the creative scope they needed in order to offer a strong alternative. This is why I will now go on to illustrate my proposal with a few simple examples in relation to the political, cultural and economic arena.

In the first place, let us consider *the moral position of Christians on violence, power, war and peace*. In the twentieth century, although we have seen much progress and (limited) success in the domain of political nonviolence, there has been no significant improvement in relation to the abolition of armies as a way of resolving international conflicts. As Christians we have contributed to the creation of alternatives to violence, but in fact, no meaningful and global alternative has been offered by the Church. For example, what would happen if the same number of Christians who at this time work as military chaplains (in Spain, there are over 150, according to figures for 2004), dedicated all their time to the study, development and planning of alternative methods of nonviolent defence for the next fifty years? What would happen if all the parishes and Church movements carried out a training programme in active nonviolence for all their members? I believe that this would be the best contribution that the Church could and should make in order to attain world peace. But in the meantime, should the Church remain silent in the face of war, military research, arms trafficking, and other such issues? No: I am fully convinced that it should raise its voice so that it can be heard clearly, forcefully and meaningfully. And finally, as the third step, these Christians who feel called to participate in direct actions of civil disobedience should continue to follow their calling, because their actions will be much more significant and powerful in the context that I am proposing.

My second example relates to the *socio-economic arena* and deals with the possibility of *socialism*. The most common stance among Christian socialists is that of trying to influence a party's politics so that the decisions taken are as progressive as possible in relation to social welfare, taxes, public services, social care, civil rights, and so on. Under normal circumstances, I

would agree with such proposals and would not have any problem with this argument (except for the fact that the discussions needed to make these decisions can be so sophisticated from a technical point of view, that when it comes to actually influencing a specific issue, the Christian influence may have by that stage waned or dispersed). In any case, what I will say with certainty is that the most important contribution of Christian socialists is not in the domain of taking very sophisticated political decisions, but instead is in the area of creating real and public alternatives to capitalism. In other words, we should insist in living daily practices of shared property, in creating institutions that break with the logic of the markets, or in developing imaginative experiments that show that it is possible to live another way. Furthermore, such individuals or groups would be occasionally required to say a clear "no" to capitalism by using certain public methods of non-cooperation, such as boycotts.

The *socio-cultural* example is linked to the issue of *immigration*. In keeping with the type of proposal that I am putting forward, the Christian stance on this issue should be to move towards creating a real community of "nationals" and immigrants (with or without legal documents), regardless of their origin, language, economic status or cultural baggage. Our most important political contribution in the area of immigration would be in demonstrating that it is possible to achieve an integrated community without any type of division. This would involve a totally different way of understanding integration, education, health, working conditions, legal status, Church worship, community relations, the State and citizenship: in other words, a real alternative way of life. It would of course be desirable that some Christians would be able to make more sophisticated suggestions in this area in order to improve and regulate immigration laws and international relations; and that other Christians would join the struggle in a more active way, by opposing unjust laws or by becoming involved in campaigns of civil disobedience. In any case, I would like to insist upon the fact that only a real and radical Christian alternative way of life would provide the necessary context in which our proposals and actions would be meaningful and coherent.

CONCLUSION. THE BODY OF CHRIST AS RADICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

To conclude, I would like to return to that image of the Body of Christ, so loved and so often recalled by Dorothy Day, because it seems to me that it offers a practical means by which we can bring together different suggestions and different fragmented communities, providing them with a real alternative to the capitalist system.

These days, particularly in the Fourth World and on matters of exclusion,[17] we do not have a People capable of "obtaining" their integrated freedom. It seems that the People, as a collective subject powerful enough to change history, has lost its focus. What we are finding now, particularly in the Fourth World, is that a great number of people are suffering what can only be described as dehumanisation, to such a degree that they would find it difficult to consider themselves as members of any revolution. The risk faced is that of leaning towards individualism or retreating into a form of spiritual privacy. This is why I believe that the term the Body of Christ offers a realistic framework, which is both embodied and powerful, and which is capable of directly confronting the injustices we face on a daily basis.

The Body of Christ speaks clearly and plainly on the subject of torture, domestic violence towards women, death corridors, the sexual abuse of minors, abortion, anorexia, bulimia, teenage pregnancy, rape. The Body of Christ embraces the junkies who drag their Aids-stricken bodies through the streets of many big cities, children whose bellies are bloated due to starvation and thirst, bodies crippled by bombs or mines, injured bodies of uninsured workers, bodies of beggars lying on street benches, dead bodies of

those trying to cross the Rio Grande Border, bodies of prisoners in solitary confinement or packed into cells. In the words of the "Aims and Objectives" of the Catholic Worker Movement in 1940:

"This teaching, the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, involves today the issue of unions (where men call each other brothers); it involves the racial question; it involves cooperatives, credit unions, crafts; it involves Houses of Hospitality and farming communes. It is with all these means that we can live as though we believed indeed that we are all members one of another, knowing that when 'the health of one member suffers, the health of the whole body is lowered'".[18]

The Body of Christ speaks of a communion, of inclusive relations, an unconditional welcome, of union in the midst of difference, of belonging to a shared world. The Body of Christ speaks of the Eucharist, the Lord Jesus and His miracle cures, the Cosmic Christ and the final resurrection of all people, all touches, embraces and tears of human history. The Body of Christ builds up the Church as a real and visible alternative to the dominant system. The Body of Christ shows that another world really is possible.

This Christian and theological notion has therefore got political implications of a revolutionary nature. Let us hear the words of two contemporary philosophers from the anarchist tradition. Toni Negri and Michael Hardt write:

"Globalization must be met with a counter-globalization, Empire with a counter-Empire. In this regard we might take inspiration from Saint Augustine's vision of a project to contest the decadent Roman Empire. No limited community could succeed and provide an alternative to imperial rule; only a universal, catholic community bringing together all populations and all languages in a common journey could accomplish this. The divine city is a universal city of aliens, coming together, cooperating, communicating".[19]

And these authors finish their book with the following words: "Militancy today is a positive, constructive, and innovative activity. This is the form in which we and all those who revolt against the rule of capital recognize ourselves as militants today. Militants resist imperial command in a creative way.… This militancy makes resistance into counterpower and makes rebellion into a project of love."[20]

In the same vein of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker, radical Christian communities could be our way of embodying this loving plan of God in an authentic anti-Empire, the Body of Christ. We are called to live out a path of radical descent with revolutionary consequences, in order to be able to set in motion a real kenotic revolution.

APPENDIX: PETER MAURIN, KENOSIS AND REVOLUTION

Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker, died in 1949. In his obituary, Dorothy wrote: "Peter was the poor man of his day. He was another Saint Francis of modern times".[21] She herself used these words again in *The Long Loneliness*:

"Peter had been insulted and misunderstood in his life as well as loved. He had been taken for a plumber and left to sit in the basement when he had been invited for dinner and an evening of conversation. He had been thrown out of a *Knights of Columbus* meeting. One pastor who invited him to speak demanded his money back which he had sent to Peter for carfare to his upstate parish, because, he said, we had sent him a Bowery bum, and not the speaker he expected. "This then is the perfect joy", Peter could say, quoting the words of St. Francis to Friar Leo when he was teaching him where perfect joy was to be found" (*LL*, 287).

Dorothy recalled the importance of this episode in their lives: "*This, then, is perfect joy*. How often that has been used around the Catholic Worker, making us laugh for joy at the sudden light and perspective given to our problems".[22] Perfect happiness is not at odds with the notion of suffering, on the contrary, it often springs from the lifestyle of voluntary poverty.

Peter Maurin embodied the ideal of the Catholic Worker, in that he brought together intellectuals and workers. He was a learned man who used his lap as a writing desk, and his pockets as drawers: he was a very humble man who always refused any social position or acknowledgement which was not in keeping with a life of poverty. His whole life was a form of radical descent. As Dorothy used to say, "He had stripped himself, but there remained work for God to do (...) God did it for him" (*LL*, 281). God seized Peter's

mind, his ability to think, to write, and to argue. He was ill for more than five years, and during that time, despite the fact that he had been a brilliant orator he was unable to speak. If Peter's life could be seen as a clear example of active purification by following Jesus Christ, his latter years were equally demonstrative of the effects of passive purification, to use a phrase of St. John of the Cross. The following reflections written by Dorothy Day in another context, could be directly applied to Peter: "The true anarchist asks nothing for himself. He is self-disciplined, abnegated, and accepts the Cross without asking for compassion, without complaining" (*AIG*, 141). What can be learned from Peter Maurin in relation to the link between "revolutionary descent" and "kenotic revolution"?

Peter's life, his illness and death were a clear embodiment of the consequences of this radical descent, which as Christians, we know as "*kenosis*". By following Jesus Christ, Peter Maurin "made himself nothing, …he humbled himself and became obedient to death" (cf. Phil 2: 7-8). And it was precisely this kenotic descent that had revolutionary consequences, because it placed him among the poor, as part of a movement from which there was no return. Maurin often used the former slogan of the International Workers of the World and its notion of "building a new world from the remnants of the old" in order to verbalise his revolutionary plan. But again, we need to understand that Peter's revolution was a kenotic upside-down one. It was not a revolution based on efficiently organizing influential leaders, but was instead based on offering humility and service to the poor, and with the poor. It was not a revolution that sought to take power, but was instead an "im-potent" revolution, which renounced power. It was a revolution in reverse, a revolution which (like Mary in the *Magnificat*), turned the *status quo* upside down.

In summary then, the type of spirituality that brings about identifying oneself personally with the kenotic Christ has political consequences, because it leads to a radical alternative way of life that revolutionises the dominant system, an alternative way of life that may not be very appealing, but that will be profoundly revolutionary.

NOTES

1. Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*. Introduction by Robert Coles (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 39. It will hereafter be referred to as LL.
2. William D. Miller, *All is Grace*: *The Spirituality of Dorothy Day* (Garden City, NY: Dobleday & Co., 1987), 191. This work is actually a collection of spiritual notes of Dorothy Day. Hereafter it will be referred to with the initials AIG. This particular quotation comes from a letter to her friend Nina Polcyn, December 8th 1975.
3. During a spiritual retreat she writes in her notes: "From her retreat notes: "Perhaps hagiographers were too prone to wallow in vomit, pus, sputum –the utterly repulsive– all to make their 'point', as Peter [Maurin] would say, showing how the saints rose *above* the natural, the human, and became supernatural, superhuman, in their love" (*AIG,* 105). Dorothy never felt the need to abandon this harsh human reality, and instead found this supernatural love right in the middle of this same human misery.
4. Dorothy Day, "Why Do the Members of Christ Tear One Another?": *The Catholic Worker* (February 1942). Cited at http:// www. catholicworker.org/dorothyday, doc. # 390.
5. *Ibidem*.
6. Dorothy Day, "Dorothy Day Writes from Jail": *The Catholic Worker* (July-August 1957). Ellsberg, *o. c.*, 281. During a 1948 retreat she wrote: "The city has been so full of noise lately. (…) Noise has been one of the things that oppresses me" (*AIG,* 132).
7. Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage": *The Catholic Worker* (October 1965). Cited at http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday, doc. # 832. For a presentation on the general theme of "faith and the senses" in her own spiritual diaries, see AIG, 65-74.
8. Dorothy Day, "Bread for the Hungry": *The Catholic Worker* (September 1976). Cited at http://-www.catholicworker.org /dorothyday, doc. # 258.
9. Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 79. Hereafter, all references to this book will be with the initials LF.
10. Ignacio Ellacuría, "Utopía y profetismo desde América Latina. Un ensayo de soteriología histórica" (Utopia and Prophecy in Latin America) in *Estudios Teológicos*, *vol. II* (UCA Editores, San Salvador 2000), LF. 233-293; here, 252-3.
11. DD, "On Pilgrimage": *The Catholic Worker* (May 1974). http://www.worker.org/dorothyday,doc.# 540.
12. "Our Stand on Strikes": *The Catholic Worker* (July 1936). Edited by Robert ElLSberg (ed.), *Dorothy Day:* Selected Writings (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 241.
13. "Of Justice and Breadlines": *The Catholic Worker* (January 1972). Edited by ElLSberg (ed.), *Dorothy Day*: *Selected Writings,* 252.
14. Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage": *The Catholic Worker* (March-April 1975). Cited at http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday, doc. # 548.
15. Here I refer to part of my article "De la liberación a la resistencia. Una mirada a la teología de la liberación desde el corazón del imperio": *Revista de Fomento Social 59* (2004) 521-551. (Tr: From liberation to resistance. A look at liberation theology from the heart of the empire). The dialogue between myself and Ildefonso Camacho can be seen in this issue, and my response can be seen in the following issue.
16. See John Holloway, *Cambiar el mundo sin tomar el poder. El significado de la revolución hoy* (Mataró: Ediciones de Intervención Cultural, 2003). (Original version in English: *Change the world without taking power. The meaning of revolution today*).
17. See A. Rodríguez Teso (coord.), *Preñados de esperanza. Sentir, pensar y gozar a Dios desde la exclusión* (Madrid: Cáritas Española, 2001) (Tr: Filled with hope. Feeling, thinking and enjoying God from the perspective of exclusion), and José Laguna, ¿De la liberación a la inclusión? (Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justicia, 2004), (Tr: From liberation to inclusion?).
18. Dorothy Day, "Aims and Purposes of the Catholic Worker Movement": *The Catholic Worker* (February 1940). Cited at http: // www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday, doc. # 182.
19. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 207.
20. *Ibid*., 413.
21. Dorothy Day, "The Story of Three Deaths": *The Catholic Worker* (June 1949). Cited at http://www.-catholicworker.org/dorothyday, doc. # 495.
22. Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage": *The Catholic Worker* (May 1976). Cited at http:// www.catholicworker.-org/dorothyday, doc. #569.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. The title of this booklet may be a little surprising and even "countercultural". In the modern world, we don't often talk about social descent, revolution, or about being at the lower end of society...

– What did you feel on reading the title of this booklet, and reading about the synthesis that existed in Dorothy's life?

2. The first part of this booklet demonstrates how, in making the choice to live her everyday life among the poor, this changed, authenticated, blended and radicalised the spiritual and political vision of DD.

– What can we learn from this and what consequences can this bring about in our own lives?

3. We have seen how it is not easy to categorise or put a label on the political vision of DD: "I refuse to accept that politics ought to necessarily lead to success or victory".

– What solutions does this provide for our own complex social reality?
– How can we merge a life of service with political commitment?

4. "We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community" says DD.

– What new paths are open to us in our own particular communities following the reading of this booklet?
– How can we combine within these communities the commitment to the issues of hospitality, pacifism and immigration?

5. Finally, the ecclesiology of the Body of Christ is put forward as an alternative to the dominant system. This idea "has political implications of a revolutionary character".

– Can faith be considered as a form of alienation?
– Do you think that faith and justice are inseparable?
– How do you believe this should be lived out as followers of Jesus?