DO NOT DEFRAUD YOUR NEIGHBOR

by Gary Cavalier

In his annual World Peace Day message on January 1, 1999, the Pope made his most critical attack yet of “materialistic consumerism”, equating it as an evil to rank with Marxism, Nazism and fascism. Pope John Paul II also criticized the free market system and its inadequacies; “Who is responsible for guaranteeing the global common good and the exercise of economic and social rights? The free market by itself cannot do this because in fact there are many human needs which have no place in the market.” He denounced “materialistic consumerism” as an ideology in which the “exaltation of the individual and the selfish satisfaction of personal aspirations become the ultimate goal of life” creating a worldview in which “the negative aspects on others are considered completely irrelevant”.

Our free market capitalist economy is based on trying to get all we can. A Christian economy is based on trying to give all we can. The first Christians lived much differently than we do today. Acts 3:44 states; “Now all the believers lived together and shared all their belongings. They would sell their property and all they had, and distribute the proceeds to others according to their need.” Acts 4:34 states; “There was no needy person among them, for those who had acquired land or houses, sold them and brought the proceeds of the sale. And they laid it at the feet of the apostles who distributed it according to each one’s need. Throughout the centuries, Catholic religious orders have struggled to follow this model, living together, sharing their resources and helping the poor. St. Francis and Mother Teresa and many other Catholic saints provide us with alternative heroes to our economic system based on greed and its “heroes”.

I gave a talk last year to a church group, and one of the people objected to the group giving us a donation because Catholic Worker foundress Dorothy Day was a “socialist”. Have we forgotten we were living like third-world people before the hard-fought checks on pure free market capitalism such as Social Security, Worker’s Compensation, child labor laws, Disability, Medicare and all the other “socialist” programs that monitor free market enterprise such as divisions which control worker safety, food standards and pollution?

Sixteen of Jesus’ Twenty-eight parables are about money. The only person to ask Jesus how to inherit eternal life is the rich young man who went away sorrowful. Jesus tells him; “You know the commandments: You must not kill; You must not steal; You must not bring false witness; changes with a clever twist the commandment “Do not covet what belongs to your neighbor” into “You shall not defraud your neighbor”. In Jesus time wealth was in owning land, primarily acquired through the debt-default of the poor. Like today, poor farmers lost their land by placing

“You have made it a den of thieves”

Christ Drives the Moneychangers out of the Temple by Fritz Eichenberg

You must not defraud; ”. The rich young man said to Jesus; “Master, I have kept all these from my earliest days”’. Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him, and he said, “There is one thing you lack. Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” Jesus

loans with big landowners, then lost their property during a year of bad crops due to drought or other conditions. Jesus unmask the young man’s wealth as “defrauding his neighbor” by using his affluence and power to acquire property from

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GOOD NEWS

- Catholic Worker Volunteer Tim Wertzberger has been awarded "1998 Nurses Assistant of the Year, State of Nevada." Tim has a college degree but chooses to work at a convalescent center as an aide for close to minimum wage.
- Valley High School teacher Stevi Carroll asked each of her students to contribute one dime for our Christmas breakfast. The teenagers contributed enough to buy 36 pounds of ham!
- The Women's Volleyball Team of San Jose State were in Las Vegas for a tournament and helped us serve our Thanksgiving meal.
- Hats & Hands gave us hundreds of scarves, gloves, socks and hats to give out this cold winter. Hats & Hands is a Las Vegas network of men and women who knit hand-made "warm fuzzies" all year for the homeless, for AIDS patients, cancer patients and newborn babies in need.
- Christ the King Catholic Community has been chopping and bringing ingredietns for beef stew every week of Lent.

EASY ESSAY by Peter Maurin

In the first centuries of Christianity the hungry were fed at a personal sacrifice, the naked were clothed at a personal sacrifice, the homeless were sheltered at a personal sacrifice.

And because the poor were fed, clothed and sheltered at a personal sacrifice, the pagans used to say about the Christians "See how they love each other." (Peter Maurin is co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement.)

Loyal volunteer Francis Straba passed on in December 1998. For twelve years Frank came twice weekly to help serve our breakfast meal to the homeless.

PLEASE JOIN US:
Wednesday-Saturday, 6:00 a.m.: Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.
Wednesday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m.: Serve breakfast at Ethel Pearson Park (E & Washington St.) to the homeless.
Tuesday, 5:30 p.m.: Mass or Liturgy at Catholic Worker, potluck following.
Seven Days a Week: Hospitality (IHN) to 3 to 5 homeless families.
Last Saturday each month; 9:00 a.m.: Deliver food to homes in need, gather for reflection & prayer, call for info.

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Loyal volunteer Francis Strabala