



## THE GOOD LIFE: CULT, CULTURE & CULTIVATION

Peter Maurin, co founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, said the Irish Monks who Christened Europe between 500 and 1000 AD, laid the foundations for medieval Europe by establishing “centers of thought in the cities, houses of hospitality for the practice of Christian charity and agricultural centers where they combined *CULT*— that is to say Liturgy, with *CULTURE*— that is to say Literature, with *CULTIVATION*— that is to say Agriculture”.

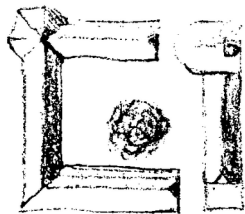
Ursula Siegmund, who spent a year at the Catholic Worker in Olympia (Washington State, V.S.) in the 90-ties, now lives at the Franziskus Gemeinschaft near the village of Pinkafeld in Austria. The community is a miraculous example of Peter’s ideals, with families and single people, nineteen all together, living a semi monastic life.

*CULT*, - prayer - is at the heart of the community. At six in the morning, at noon and at six in the evening the community gathers in the chapel for half an hour of silence, prayer, thanksgiving and lecture of the scripture. Each week someone is responsible for opening morning prayer. When we visited, quotes from Gandhi were read to start the day.

One morning at seven my youngest, Onno (7), came running to me, exclaiming in utter amazement, ‘Papa, papa, Martin wears a priestly gown!’. He had come to know Martin as the supreme hay stumper, creating an impressively wide and high pile on the wagon while the rest of us raked it all together and pitched it upwards to Martin, Onno’s bigger sister pulling the wagon with a 47 year old tractor. Onno was also impressed by Martin’s skills as an apple tree climber, filling more crates than I and my two children together. And now this weathered 72 year old farmer wore a priestly gown! Martin is indeed a priest who got permission from his bishop to join the community. Daily mass is said for whoever feels called to join, both from the community and from the wider community.



*CULTURE*: Since there is no t.v., reading is valued. The library in the basement is not too big, but once every 12 weeks Ursula goes on a two hour bus ride to Vienna to borrow up to 20 books at the main library which then circulate through the community.



EDAMTJHIEGEMENEGUICY - A. 7097 DIMKAGGIN

I agree with Jim Forest in his recently updated biography of Dorothy Day, ‘All is Grace’, that *CULTURE* means each person becoming an artist or craftsman in his or her field of endeavor. And there are many fields of endeavor in this community. In winter time, rugs are woven and candles are dipped. Year round different cheeses and butter are made, as well as various jams, honey and sausages. Tons of tomatoes are dried, pickled or turned into sauce. And building one’s own house is quite a craft as well. They started in 1981 sleeping at night in the 260 year old chapel on top of this hill and praying there in day time, slowly adding on more space resulting in the current square of buildings which incorporate a less baroque and easier to heat chapel and all the adjacent barns, stables and a glasshouse. And isn’t culture also one’s whole attitude of living simply off the sweat of one’s own brow, not exploiting others, and sharing one’s resources with those who are less fortunate?

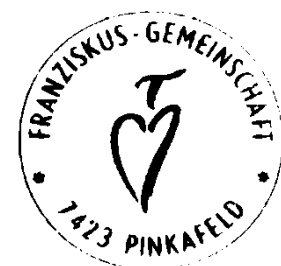
Hospitality is not the purpose of the community, but a natural part of life. Guests come from all kinds of situations: young people looking for direction, homeless, religious enjoying a sabbatical, refugees, pilgrims, people looking for orientation or a purpose in their life.

CULTIVATION: I'm sure Peter Maurin would be very happy to see the large garden full of vegetables, fruits and flowers for the chapel. Peter would roll up his sleeves to join the harvest from the fields of organic potato, cabbage and wheat. Like in Peter's home village in France, twice a week bread is baked in a wood fired oven. He would love to see the big press and a cellar full of apple juice and cider. At Peter Maurin's last speech in 1944 at the wedding of Dorothy Day's daughter Tamar, he spoke out against the raising of pigs for profit. But Peter would surely enjoy a piece of meat from the two pigs that dine on acorns falling from the oaks and leftovers from the kitchen, or from the rabbits being fed the grass from the lawn, or from the sheep grazing a steep meadow, or an egg from one of the chickens raised on home grown corn & grasshoppers. When we were there, my children helped peeling, sorting and bagging an endless stream of wheelbarrows full of sun dried beans for the winter stews.

The community made it's own natural waste water treatment system. The water that leaves is sampled twice a month by the government and is of very good quality. The residue is left for three years and then returned to the fields. Hot water for showers and central heating is generated by a solar boiler and by large wood burners in the basement. In winter time the wood is collected from the surrounding forests. There's also a solar cooker using parabolic mirrors to cook old potatoes for the two cows.

The community initiated and helps to run a 'fair trade shop' in the village. On Fridays they fill their one and only car, a van, with fresh produce, flowers, honey and bread to sell at the local farmers market. The community members share a common purse. Additional income comes from EU subsidies to mow the orchards and plant beds of sunflowers, occasional donations from guests, some children's benefits and old age pensions. Monthly parts of the income and at the end of the year all surplus money, is put into a 'sharing account' for the projects of their friends in Africa, South and Central America and Eastern Europe. 'Friends', because they know the people and projects they support through contact by mail and mutual visits. In their biannual newsletter 'Francesco' they also ask for support for these people and projects and stimulate a wide circle of friends and interested people to contemplate ways of living simply and prayerfully wherever they are.

Four generations live under one roof and some older members already rest in peace in their simple but lovely tended graves behind the chapel. Quite a few members of the community slowly approach old age and the changes this brings are challenging. But for answers to the big challenge of how to survive sustainably as humanity, we may look to this community for a good way of life without exploitation of each other and in loving harmony with creation.



Deo gratias!

Frits ter Kuile  
Jeannette Noel Huis  
Amsterdam