



The Vermont

Catholic Worker

www.vtcatholicworker.org

Economic Blackout: November 25-December 2



artwork by Sarah Fuller, www.sarahfullerart.com

A coalition of grassroots organizations has launched a coordinated, nationwide economic shutdown from November 25 to December 2, demanding an end to corporate rule and political corruption.

The coordinated campaign, dubbed the Mass Blackout, urges Americans to completely withdraw their participation from the consumer economy during the busiest and most profitable shopping week of the year, including Black Friday (November 28) and Cyber Monday (December 1). That includes halting all spending, canceling subscription services, avoiding ad-driven platforms such as streaming services, and refusing to work.

Organizers note that Small Business Saturday (November 30) is exempted from the blackout, and participants are encouraged to use that day to invest in community-based, ethical alternatives to major corporations, preferably paying with cash.

~From the official press release
at blackoutthesystem.com

From a Catholic perspective, we find the aims and means of this movement to be very much in line with the economic principles of Catholic Social Teaching. In his foundational 1891

document *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII laid out some basic principles of a just economic system, which includes the rights of workers to strike when such conditions are not being met.

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Catholic Framework for Economic Life enumerates and encapsulates these principles into ten basic points. I won't get into all of them here, but will offer some thoughts on a few of them.

- **The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy.** It might be worth clarifying too that this principle applies to "Natural" or human persons, not to "corporate persons." Our media and our politics tend to look at economic indicators such as stock market performance, which favor corporate interests but don't take into account how the average person is faring. Which brings us to another important point from the Bishops' document.
- **A fundamental moral measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable are faring.** *Rerum Novarum* reminds us that, "The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State". By contrast, our government has a tendency to cater to the needs of the wealthy and privileged, while the poor and vulnerable must rely on charity and welfare programs.
- **Society has a moral obligation, including governmental action where necessary, to assure opportunity, meet basic human needs, and pursue justice in economic life.** Our society is failing miserably in this fundamental principle. This is why we are calling for a drastic and dramatic action against the bloated, consumption-driven economy, while also encouraging a shift toward a

more localized and personalized economy.

For us as Catholics, we can see this as an opportunity to reclaim the seasons of Advent and Christmas. Our society seems to have adopted the Cult of Mammon as the *de facto* State Religion, co-opting the season to make it a crass and materialistic celebration of conspicuous consumption. This is our chance to remember, in the immortal words of Dr. Seuss, that *maybe Christmas, perhaps, doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.*

~Deacon Josh



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Upcoming Events

Tuesdays, 6:00pm: weekly informational and planning meetings at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, 7415 Williston Road, Williston, Vermont. We meet downstairs in the parish hall.

November 25-December 2: Economic Blackout Movement! See the article in this issue of our newsletter.

Saturday, December 13th: 12:00 Noon. We are planning to prepare and serve a lunchtime meal for those in need in the Williston area. Details are being worked out, so join our planning meetings to learn more!

January, 2026: St. Joseph's Cathedral in Burlington has offered the use of its parish hall for preparing and serving evening meals for those in need in their neighborhood. Let us know if you would like to be involved in planning and carrying out this ministry!

Contact Deacon Josh:
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Room for Christ

From the Catholic Worker archives

It is no use to say that we are born two thousand years too late to give room to Christ. Nor will those who live at the end of the world have been born too late. Christ is always with us, always asking for room in our hearts.

But now it is with the voice of our contemporaries that he speaks, with the eyes of store clerks, factory workers and children that he gazes; with the hands of office workers, slum dwellers and suburban housewives that he gives. It is with the feet of soldiers and tramps that he walks, and with the heart of anyone in need that he longs for shelter. And giving shelter or food to anyone who asks for it, or needs it, is giving it to Christ.

We can do now what those who knew Him in the days of His flesh did. I'm sure that the shepherds did not adore and then go away to leave Mary and her Child in the stable, but somehow found them room, even though what they had to offer might have been primitive enough. All that the friends of Christ did in His life-time for Him we can do. Peter's mother-in-law hastened to cook a meal for Him, and if anything in the Gospels can be inferred, it is surely that she gave the very best she had, with no thought of extravagance. Matthew made a feast for Him and invited the whole town, so that the house was in an uproar of enjoyment, and the straight-laced Pharisees—the good people—were scandalized. So did Zaccheus, only this time Christ invited Himself and sent Zaccheus home to get things ready. The people of Samaria, despised and isolated, were overjoyed to give Him hospitality, and for days He walked and ate and slept among them. And the loveliest of all relationships in Christ's life, after His relationship

with his Mother, is His friendship with Martha, Mary and Lazarus and the continual hospitality He found with them—for there was always a bed for Him there, always a welcome, always a meal. It is a staggering thought that there were once two sisters and a brother whom Jesus looked on almost as His family and where He found a second home, where Martha got on with her work, bustling round in her house-proud way, and Mary simply sat in silence with Him.

If we hadn't got Christ's own words for it, it would seem raving lunacy to believe that if I offer a bed and food and hospitality for Christmas – or any other time, for that matter – to some man, woman or child, I am replaying the part of Lazarus or Martha or Mary and that my guest is Christ. There is nothing to show it, perhaps. There are no haloes already glowing round their heads—at least none that human eyes can see. It is not likely that I shall be vouchsafed the vision of Elizabeth of Hungary, who put the leper in her bed and later, going to tend him, saw no longer the leper's stricken face, but the face of Christ.

... In Christ's human life there were always a few who made up for the neglect of the crowd.

The shepherds did it, their hurrying to the crib atoned for the people who would flee from Christ.

The wise men did it; their journey across the world made up for those who refused to stir one hand's breadth from the routine of their lives to go to Christ. ...

We can do it too, exactly as they did. We are not born too late. We do it by seeing Christ and serving Christ in friends and strangers, in everyone we come in contact with. While almost no one is unable to give some hospitality or help to others, those for whom it is really impossible are not debarred from giving room to Christ, because, to take the simplest of examples, in those they live with or work with is Christ disguised. All our life is bound up with other people; for almost all of us happiness and unhappiness are conditioned by our relationship with other people. What a simplification of life it would be if we forced ourselves to see that everywhere we go is Christ, wearing out socks we have to darn, eating the food we have to cook, laughing with us, silent with us, sleeping with us.

All this can be proved, if proof is

needed, by the doctrines of the Church. We can talk about Christ's Mystical Body, about the vine and the branches, about the Communion of Saints. But Christ Himself has proved it for us, and no one has to go further than that. For He said that a glass of water given to a beggar was given to Him. He made heaven hinge on the way we act towards Him in his disguise of commonplace, frail and ordinary human beings.

Did you give me food when I was hungry? Did you give me something to drink when I was thirsty? Did you take me in when I was homeless and a stranger? Did you give me clothes when my own were all rags? Did you come to see me when I was sick or in prison or in trouble?

And to those who say, aghast, that they never had a chance to do such a thing, that they lived two thousand years too late, he will say again what they had the chance of knowing all their lives, that if these things were done for the very least of his brethren they were done for Him.

For a total Christian the goad of duty is not needed—always prodding him to perform this or that good deed. It is not a duty to help Christ, it is a privilege. Is it likely that Martha and Mary sat back and considered that they had done all that was expected of them—is it likely that Peter's mother-in-law grudgingly served the chicken she had meant to keep till Sunday because she thought it was "her duty"? She did it gladly: she would have served ten chickens if she had them.

If that is the way they gave hospitality to Christ it is certain that is the way it should still be given. Not for the sake of humanity. Not because it might be Christ who stays with us, comes to see us, takes up our time. Not because these people remind us of Christ, ... but because they are Christ, asking us to find room for Him exactly as He did at the first Christmas.

~Dorothy Day, 1945



artwork by Rita Corbin