

Anarchism & Christianity – June 11, 2026

Anarchism: *A holistic movement (social, political, etc.) that believes in self-organization and rejects top-down hierarchical structures. It is to work together as equals where no one has control or dominance over anyone else. Instead of an elected or appointed ruler, all people make decisions through voluntary agreement – often through small scale communities in consensus. It is a cooperative society without rulers. It is not ‘chaos’.*

Principles / Ideals of Christian Anarchism

- A **rejection of all “gods”** as a means of change; be that the state, the market, the institutional church.
- **Personal responsibility / Personalism** - every individual possesses inherent dignity, self-determination, and depth - and that human interaction should be based on direct, equal relationships rather than treating people as objects.
- **Non-violence** (aka pacifism / anti-war) as a way of life – in collective and personal interactions.
- Creative, **active resistance** (direct action) to oppression and violence. Voting is not sufficient.
- **Downward mobility** aka **“voluntary poverty”** – self-emptying of those with privilege for the common good – a trust in abundance and provision.
- **Communal living** and radical sharing – holding all things in common.
- **Subsidiarity** - matters should be handled by the smallest, most localized authority capable of resolving them effectively rather than large institutions (Catholic Social Teaching).
- **Distributism** - the world's productive assets should be widely owned rather than concentrated (Catholic Social Teaching).
- **Radical hospitality**; welcoming the ‘stranger’ into households (personal – not the agency of state or church).
- Rooted in prayer and collective and individual **spiritual practice(s)** – foundation for sustainable living.
- **Consensus decision-making**; collaboration and non-hierarchy; slower - no one left out.
- **Means of Production**; cottage industry & guilds - food, art, clothing, learning – *roundtables for the clarification of thought* - all in the hands of the people (DIY)
- **Grounded in love and grace.** A trust in a God of self-emptying (‘the scandal of incarnation (God becoming human), the footwashing - and cross [state torture inverted to liberation through nonviolence]; a God of power-with - rather than power-over.

Sacred Texts from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures:

- **The Jubilee** (Leviticus 25, Luke 4, etc.) - a radical economic and social reset when, every 50 years, all debts were forgiven, indentured servants were freed, and ancestral land was returned to its original families (plus land lies fallow rotating crops / rest - every 7 years and in year 50 complete rest for all – party year!)
- **Be Like Other Nations** (1 Samuel 8) – Wandering tribes with no aristocracy – but rotating judges and prophets. God has no representative. People say: “Give us a King!” -
- **The Magnificat / Song of Mary** (Luke 1) “Cast Down the mighty, send the rich away empty”.
- **Beatitudes** (Matthew 5, Luke 6) “Blessed are the poor, the meek, the peacemakers, the grieving, the just, the persecuted. Woe to the rich.”
- **Sheep and Goats** (Matthew 25) – “When you do to the least of my siblings you do unto me.” (Works of Mercy – visit the sick, feed the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit prisoners, bury the dead)
- **The Beloved Community** (Acts 2) “hold all things in common – to each according to need.”

The Catholic Worker Movement

...is perhaps the most prominent and enduring expression of Christian Anarchism

See www.catholicworker.org

Summary by Jim Forrest - 1995

The Catholic Worker movement was founded in 1933 during the Great Depression by Dorothy Day at the urging of Peter Maurin. It is best known for houses of hospitality located in run-down sections of many cities, though a number of Catholic Worker centers exist in rural areas. Food, clothing, shelter and welcome is extended by unpaid volunteers to those in need according to the ability of each household. In 1995 there were 134 Catholic Worker communities, all but three in the United States (*179 currently listed – June 2026 – including Uganda, South Korea, Hawaii, Philippines, Dominican Republic).

“Our rule is the works of mercy,” said Dorothy Day. “It is the way of sacrifice, worship, a sense of reverence.”

The Catholic Worker is also the name of a newspaper published by the Catholic Worker community in New York City. From 1933 until her death in 1980, the editor was Dorothy Day, a journalist who was received into the Catholic Church in 1927. Writers for the paper have ranged from young volunteers to such notable figures as Thomas Merton, Daniel Berrigan and Jacques Maritain. (Many Catholic Worker communities publish newsletters or journals chiefly for local distribution.)

Beyond hospitality, Catholic Worker communities are known for activity in support of labor unions, human rights, cooperatives, and the development of a nonviolent culture. Those active in the Catholic Worker are often pacifists people seeking to live an unarmed, nonviolent life. During periods of military conscription, Catholic Workers have been conscientious objectors to military service. Many of those active in the Catholic Worker movement have been jailed for acts of protest against racism, unfair labor practices, social injustice and war.

Catholic Worker communities have refused to apply for federal tax-exempt status, seeing such official recognition as binding the community to the state and limiting the movement's freedom.

With its stress on voluntary poverty, the Catholic Worker has much in common with the early Franciscans, while its accent on community, prayer and hospitality has Benedictine overtones.

“We try to shelter the homeless and give them clothes,” Dorothy Day explained, “but there is strong faith at work. We pray. If an outsider who comes to visit us doesn't pay attention to our prayings and what that means, then [t]he'll miss the whole point.”

It is unlikely that any religious community was ever less structured than the Catholic Worker. Each community is autonomous. There is no board of directors, no sponsor, no system of governance, no endowment, no pay checks, no pension plans. Since Dorothy Day's death, there has been no central leader.

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