

Simplify! A Downward Mobility Exercise

“The only way we have to show our love for God is by the love we have for our sister and brother. Love of each other means voluntary poverty... It means non-participation in those comforts and luxuries which have been manufactured by the exploitation of others... It means what Peter Maurin calls regional living, fasting from things not grown in the region where one lives.

Poverty means having a bare minimum in the way of clothes, and seeing to it that these are made under decent working conditions, with proper wages and hours. While others suffer, we must suffer with them. While our sisters and brothers suffer from lack of necessities, we will refuse to enjoy comforts. These resolutions, no matter how hard they are to live up to, no matter how often we fall and have to begin over again, are part of the vision...” - Dorothy Day

Could you consume it **more justly** (Bulk, Local, Organic, by Sharing, Recycled, Used, Biodegradable, Refurbished) or **not at all**?
Think about now, and the next 2 years of decision making.

1. Cell Phone (accessories, type of plan)
2. Clothes (regular, dress-up)
3. Computer (What type? What software? How much time spent at it?)
4. TV, Mp3 Player
5. Music and Movies
6. Furniture
7. Kitchen supplies, appliances
8. Hygiene supplies (toilet paper, shampoo, toothpaste, soap, make-up)
9. Transportation (Car, Bike, Walk, Public Transport, Flying, Train)
10. Shelter (townhouse vs. free standing, green elements vs. standard, co-housing or shared space vs. single family)
11. Weekly groceries
12. Choice of diet
13. Books, magazines
14. Power tools
15. Office supplies
16. Going out to eat

Building a New Society: Some Suggestions, both Effortless and Audacious

1. Dress (tastefully) from thrift stores.
2. Gather two neighbors and set up a sharing system for power tools and lawnmowers.
3. Spend regular time with a prisoner (In St. Louis, call the Criminal Justice Ministry at 241-8062).
4. Question why we have prisons (Read *Are Prisons Obsolete?* by Angela Davis).
5. Start a garden. Grow way too much, and bring the produce to someone in need.
6. Explore the spiritual weapons of prayer, fasting, and nonviolent civil disobedience.
7. Transform your guest room into a Christ Room.
8. Work to keep military recruiters out of your school (Check out resources from “Alternatives to Military Service”).
9. Attend one more social justice event a month. Bring a friend. Make a donation.
10. Help plan the next event, join the committee, or assist the planning board.
11. Fast from your car and give away your TV. Enjoy the seasons in a new way.
12. Refuse to pass the buck to the state.
13. Volunteer as a family at your community garden (gatewaygreening.org has a St. Louis list).
14. Refuse to buy from companies using sweatshops (organicfairtrader.com lists alternatives).
15. Question the morality of making money without doing labor.
16. Start a justice organization at your school.
17. Sell those stock and bonds, and make a regular donation to a local justice organization (St. Louis Justice and Peace Shares is one good option).
18. Prioritize service as an extra-curricular activity.
19. Feel personally responsible for homeless, mentally ill, and drug addicted people in your city.
20. Immerse yourself in a loving relationship with someone born without your privilege.
21. Find love a harsh and dreadful thing.
22. Find love.
23. Share your labor with an elderly neighbor.
24. Declare a moratorium on new technology in your household.
25. Discern what your immediate needs are; return the rest of your possessions to the poor.
26. Hold a family discussion on who is considered “the least of these” in today’s society.
27. Support worker-owned businesses and local cooperatives (cityfoodcoop.com is a St. Louis option for groceries).
28. Resist the spiritual poverty of seeking the best of everything while other children go without basic necessities.
29. Recognize the freedom that voluntary poverty could provide for your time, spirit, and the community.
30. Learn skills in nonviolent communication, consensus decision making, or community organizing.
31. Barter with friends for hair-cuts, oil changes, fresh vegetables, and skilled jobs.
32. Experiment with regional living: next summer, only consume things produced in your locale.
33. Build a loving community of people to enact these crazy experiments.
34. Give at a personal sacrifice, rather than out of excess.
35. Consider your complicity in the Iraq war, and consider ways to withdraw your support. (unitedforpeace.org, wartaxboycott.org, insteadof-war.org)
36. Seek self-sufficiency: learn one new craft or new skill a year.
37. Share it with the community.
38. Pray, struggle, fail, struggle, and pray some more.
39. Envision a new society with the shell of the old, starting with you, your family, neighbors and friends.
40. Explore co-housing and communal living options in your area (see ic.org, cohousing.org).
41. Get a bike, get a hybrid, or get walking.
42. Seek out service organizations when you go to college.
43. Ban any purchases of new books, music, and household items in your family.
44. Ban any purchases.
45. Acknowledge your own racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, and ageism.
46. Be inclusive to a fault in your groups, meetings, and activities.
47. Study Wendell Berry, Ivone Gebara, Peter Kropotkin, or Martin Luther King.
48. Sacrifice convenience for justice on a daily basis.
49. Vote with your actions every day of the year.

Thanks to Bill Kellerman’s “100 Suggestions for Being a Catholic Worker” for inspiration.