

# FARMING

## with Integrity

by Catherine Doherty

Farming plays a vital role in our world. It not only feeds people but enables us to touch and to have reverence for the earth. Farming is meant to be united with God, who told us,

*“Fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living thing... Behold I give you every seed-yielding plant which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.”*

*(Genesis 1: 28-29)*

One cannot really be false to God’s truth in Genesis but, alas, today many farms are. Animals are filled with antibiotics and hormones and even water for bigger poundage and therefore bigger money. This deception brings sickness, not only of the body—which it does, but also of soul and mind. We must not deceive. Truth must be the stuff of farmers’ work. It is better to have less produce and less profit and be truthful than to have more and be liars before God.

### Spreading the Good News

A farm can be looked at from a hundred different angles, but for me it must always be from an “apostolic” or evangelizing angle. By this I simply mean that we are engaged in the occupation of farming because we want to spread the Good News by living the gospel, and there is no better place to live the gospel than on a farm.

I see the fatherhood of God in a farm, in a true and deep, yet ordinary sense. Man is a protector and provider, and on a farm a man truly feeds his family by the work of his hands. That is why I feel so deeply that our farming is connected and united with worship. A farmer united with God walks at eventide with him; together, God and man look over the work of their hands.

### God’s Stewards

We farm because we have to eat, a seemingly utilitarian reason. Yet this embodies gospel truth; it brings us face to face with the fact that we have to work for the things we need. Ours is not a farm for profit, but for providing food for our large apostolic family of Madonna House. We share the fruit of our work at the farm, like the monasteries of past centuries, with those who come to us. We are God’s stewards in our farming.

Our farming has wide evangelizing horizons. We are making efforts to bridge the old with the new. That’s slow going because we use only low level technology. For example, we use horses whenever we can, rather than tractors. Also, we have many volunteers coming from all parts of the world and it takes time to integrate people into the work of farming. Thankfully, these friends who come to work with the earth, from whence we all came, often find interior healing through this.



The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. Mt. 4:28

Donna Surprenant

# FARMING

## with Integrity

by Catherine Doherty

Pass It On! #37



The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. Mt. 4:28

Please feel free to make copies  
and pass them on!

Additional issues of Pass It On  
can be found on the Internet at:  
[www.madonnahouse.org/publications](http://www.madonnahouse.org/publications)



Madonna House Publications  
[www.madonnahouse.org/publications](http://www.madonnahouse.org/publications)

Penny a copy — 1¢

Pass It On!

#37

### A Simple Lifestyle

Our lifestyle may appear to be idiotic: living in a simple way, using only low level technology. But the world crisis of agriculture is very obvious. In the face of a baffling international situation we are called to the mystery of childlikeness before God, looking to him for solutions. A gospel farmer is constantly alert to grow in simplicity and in gospel poverty. He often asks himself, “Can I do without this? How can I substitute something less expensive?”

There is nothing degrading about farming; everything a farmer deals with has a good purpose. The manure is going to fertilize the soil and thus help give us food for next year. Everything on the farm leads to the feeding of people. How could farming be “dirty” when it feeds the Temple of God—our persons, where Christ dwells?

Godly farming demands all of a man or woman and is a good way to become purified of our basic self-centeredness, since the demands of nature, especially of animals, are always there to remind us of the duty of the moment. And if a daily task is seen as a burdensome chore, forced upon us, as it were, this isn’t a Christian approach. The farmer hasn’t chores to do; he has a whole world to save by feeding the pigs.

### Preserving and Restoring the Soil Without Chemicals

The gospel farmer is a man of integrity and he deals with things of integrity. There is nothing deceitful about a field, for it comes from the hands of God. Slowly our farmers have begun to understand Genesis: that we really were given the earth to preserve and to restore by natural means, rather than polluting it. They have understood that we have to abandon greed and selfishness.

Here it isn’t a question of producing a lot with harmful fertilizers and pesticides that endanger health. It is a painstaking, almost back-breaking labour of love to make fertile the sandy, rocky earth of our farm, using natural means. But now the food we eat is more nourishing, more natural, and is even unifying, because the people who eat the produce of our farmers recognize their labours and bless them, and feel one with them.

Adapted from: *Apostolic Farming* by Catherine Doherty, available from Madonna House Publications.

Artwork by Donna Surprenant