



# Catholic Courier

DIocese OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK ■ VOL. 107 NO. 46 ■ THURSDAY, August 15, 1996 ■ 75¢ ■ 12 PAGES



## The Little Mandate

*Arise— go! Sell all you possess. Give it directly, personally to the poor. Take up My cross (their cross) and Follow Me, going to the poor, being poor, being one with them, one with Me.*

*Little – be always little! Be simple, poor, childlike.*

*Preach the Gospel with your life –  
WITHOUT COMPROMISE!*

*Listen to the Spirit. He will lead you.*

*Do little things exceedingly well for love of Me.*

*Love ... love ... love, never counting the cost.*

*Go into the marketplace and stay with Me. Pray, fast.  
Pray always, fast.*

*Be hidden. Be a light to your neighbor's feet. Go without  
fears into the depth of men's hearts. I shall be with you.*

*Pray always. I WILL BE YOUR REST.*

## 'Old Russian lady' leaves rich spiritual legacy

**L**orene Duquin has only vague memories of her one meeting with Catherine de Hueck Doherty, a Russian emigre born 100 years ago today, Aug. 15, 1896.

The meeting took place in 1971. A friend suggested that Duquin, then a college student in the Buffalo area, drive with her to Canada for the weekend. Duquin went along, not knowing her friend's intended destination.

The two ended up at Madonna House in Combermere, Ontario, a madonna community Doherty and her husband had started in 1947.

Duquin's contact with Doherty was brief.

"I wasn't really impressed," Duquin recalled. "The only thing I remember her saying was I could stay as long as I would follow the rules. I thought the lady was out of her mind."

And years later, when Duquin met a woman who spoke highly of Doherty, Duquin replied incredulously, "You mean the old Russian lady?"

Msgr. James Wall, director of the St. Columban Center in Derby, N.Y., likewise was impressed when introduced to Doherty in 1971.

"She struck me as sort of a grumpy woman," Msgr. Wall recalled. "I thought, 'This is the woman everyone is talking about?'"

Yet Msgr. Wall now credits Doherty and her love for the priesthood with helping to preserve his admittedly shaky sense of vocation at that

time. He became an associate priest at Madonna House in 1991. He regularly speaks about Doherty, as he did Aug. 1 at Rochester's Borromeo Prayer Center. And Nov. 22-24, the Columban Center will host a retreat based on Doherty's spirituality.

Meanwhile, in 1995, Duquin, a freelance writer who now lives in Williamsville, published *They Called her the Baroness: The Life of Catherine de Hueck Doherty*.

In the process of researching and writing the book, Duquin discovered that Doherty – who, died Dec. 14, 1985 – was more than just an "old Russian lady." Indeed, her life read more like a Russian novel.

Doherty was born into an aristocratic Russian family. At 15, she married Boris de Hueck, who ultimately proved so abusive and unfaithful that she later obtained a divorce and an annulment.

During World War I, she was decorated for her courage and her work at the Russian front with the Red Cross. When the Russian revolution swept over their homeland, the de Huecks were captured by communists and nearly died before being rescued by Finnish troops. After efforts to fight the communists collapsed, they

moved first to England then to Canada, where, because of their aristocratic background, they became known as the Baron and Baroness de Hueck. Doherty is often referred to still as the "Baroness" or simply as "B."

In Toronto, Catherine de Hueck was forced to support the family because of her husband's extravagance, inability to hold a job and eventual desertion of his wife and their son, George. She became a successful public speaker, and also began to work with immigrants and the poor. But in the process she antagonized some wealthy Torontonians and some parish priests. Her ministry collapsed, and she moved to New York City.

Once in New York, she again became a successful speaker. She also was drawn once more to the poor, especially blacks, and started Freedom House in Harlem. She attracted many people to work and live with her in voluntary poverty, and befriended Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker movement. Thomas Merton, in his premonastery days, also worked with de Hueck.

Freedom Houses soon were established in several U.S. and Canadian cities. Eddie Doherty, a reporter for Liberty Magazine and later *The Chicago Sun*, interviewed her, and the two fell in love. He voluntarily adopted her life of poverty and work with the poor, and they married in

**Continued on page 10**

**STORY BY LEE STRONG**