

Open Letter to Peter Maurin From Editor

By Dorothy Day

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Summary: An open letter to Peter Maurin telling him of the latest developments during one of his prolonged absences from the New York area. There were some tragedies—her father and Mr. Breen died and Charlie the bricklayer collapsed. Many members of the team fell ill. Yet there was also joy to share—progress continued on the Easton farm and interest in The Catholic Worker movement grew both at home and abroad. Most importantly, the various workers' children brought amusement and joy into everyone's lives. (DDLW #343).

Not knowing where you are, the only way we can reach you is through the paper. We heard you were on your way to Commonwealth College in Arkansas and sent you a night letter there, but have heard nothing from them or you. Rumors reach us from Minnesota that you told someone you would be gone another six months on a trip through the South. It's a pretty hot place to be in summer. Why not put it off until Fall. Besides we need you here. Everyone is looking forward to your being on the farm at Easton for the summer.

You will remember I wrote to confess that I misappropriated the two hundred and fifty dollars you sent in January, the gift from Archbishop Cantwell of Los Angeles for the farm, and used it instead for the breadline in the city. We were terribly broke for some months. So broke when Archbishop Spellman was appointed that we did not have the three cents to get the paper telling about it. Never were we so low. We had borrowed money from our Italian neighbors and they helped out too by sending us over their left-over food. We sent out the appeal last month however, and now we are beginning to see light again. And we can restore to you part of your building fund, the part we have not already used for building on the farm. What with windows, partitions and screenings, some of it is gone.

This is truly a woman's letter, rambling, not telling the important things first. But one does not like to tell sad news.

My father died last week. He was seventy years old, and worked right up to the day before he died. Mother said that if we had all been praying for the kind of death he wanted, it could not have been better. Which was a little consolation. We were all there at his funeral, two brothers, my sister, my mother and I,—all but Donald who was in Finland at the time.

Then Saturday, three days after, Mr. Breen died. He was also seventy. After the many years he has spent with us, we miss him much now. The day afterward we had to send Shorty to the Hospital. Miss Clements had been in the hospital all week with influenza after suffering from a temperature for the two weeks previously. Columbus hospital is certainly good to us. Not only Mother Cabrini's nuns but the ambulance doctors treat their poor with courtesy and respect. A

few weeks before we had had to call the ambulance for Charlie, the old bricklayer who had been helping us on the coffee line. He had gone out of his mind and sat all day up in his room, laying bricks, and trembling all over.

All this week, too, Bill had been sick in bed. Victor took to his bed for a few days with a bad cold after nursing Mr. Breen for some weeks and Frank Datillo, fit for bed, was trying to send out the appeal. It seemed as though the whole house, healthy all winter, was suddenly stricken. Gerry, Joe and Frank, Rita and Julia, managed somehow or other to keep things going and at that they were looking after the sick half the time.

Today Frank, Bill, Eddie, Teresa and I are at the farm for a few days. It is very hot and the birds are clamorous. Eddie has started bees and one of them has buzzed about my head half way through this letter. Every now and then I get up to escape the bee and go down to admire Maurine, the Montague baby. She is six months now and can sit up and drink milk out of a glass. She dives for it with a gasp of joy and clutches the glass with two dimpled hands. Frank and his family are living in a little rented house down near the Hellerton road while he is building his rock house on the farm. We dropped by after Mass this morning and greeted Damien, your godchild and Martin and Peter who are almost as big. The Mella family are moving down this week to take the first floor on the upper farm until John also can get started on his house.

You no doubt read the account of Bernard and his baby Herbert. The latter is now three and runs barefoot and bareback all over the farm with great joy. Bernard white-washed the entire upper farm house and it looks good. The child is used to the place now and his father gives much of his time to work around the place. We are figuring on building a little pavilion, or outdoor sleeping quarters for him and the child with second-hand lumber and screening, and one also for the Professor. Little by little we are finding shelter of a fashion.

A letter came for you last week from the bursar of the Jocistes of Belgium, who is writing a 150 page pamphlet about the Catholic Worker movement. He asked permission to reprint your essays and other material from the paper and some of Ade's cuts.

We want you here and they want you in Boston for two weeks to speak at Worcester and the Upton farm and at Boston. They want you too in Philadelphia. Father Woods will be here for three weeks in July and Father Palmer for three weeks in August. So there will be Mass almost every day at the farm. Let us hear from you, and tell us what your plans are.

The cows are ambling down the hill and Rosie calls to her latest calf Billy, as she comes. The pigs are being fed and the horses are in the barn. We await now the supper bell.

All here on the farm, twenty-six of us, send our love. Pray for us as we pray for you and come home soon. We need you.