

Fall Appeal - 1972

Dorothy Day

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Summary: While appealing for help, she extols the constant stream of young volunteers who come to the CW, "as to a school," preparing them for careers in line with the works of mercy. Notes their folly and reliance on the "little way" of St. Therese. (DDLW #524).

Catholic Worker

October, 1972

36 East First Street
New York City 10003

Dear, dear friends of the CW:

I often wonder at the miracle of your continuing response to these appeals which have been going out to you these last 40 years. People praise *our* perseverance! We marvel at yours. One of the reasons we can keep going (besides your help) is that there is a constant stream of new young friends and volunteers who come to us as to a school, a "free university," and who learn to love and esteem voluntary poverty and manual labor (teachings of St. Francis and St. Benedict). By this sharing they love their brothers in Christ, the destitute they want to serve, the lovable and the unlovable.

There is a hard core of "old timers" who have been with us since the beginning, some workers and some scholars; and if the latter are more articulate, the former know, as the old Wobblies knew, that they can keep Houses of Hospitality going, and that "an injury to one is an injury to all," even if they could not discuss ecclesiology or the Mystical Body of Christ. They know how important they are to the work.

I can say, too, that we rejoice at seeing these same young people, who have given us some years of their lives, go on to the vocations which they have discovered they have in the fields of "health, education and welfare," religious and secular.

One thing I like about writing these appeals is that they are a little report of progress for those who get the 85,000 copies of the CW we print 9 times a year.

I am writing from the farm at Tivoli this time where I am happily recovering from a summer of flu, coughs, exhaustion (my own and others), and I say happily, because in a community there is loving care, and I've had more time to read.

It is good to travel, as I have these last years, visiting other houses of hospitality and farming communes, and I can say that I rejoice to see this day when non-violence has taken on ever deeper meaning, what with a Vinoba Bhave, a Lanza del Vasto, a Danilo Dolci (India, France and Italy), and here at home Cesar Chavez and Charles Evers, both of whom I had the happiness of visiting this past year.

One could of course enumerate the horrors of our wars, our preparations for wars. Reading history, of both Church and State, keeps one from despair. "All times are dangerous times," St. Teresa said. But seeing as we do the happiness and beauty even in our own life of disorder and even squalor, we can find joy in working towards a new order.

I rejoice in town, at the House of Hospitality, to see Mary on her knees by her bed in our crowded dorm on the women's floor while in her shopping bags, which the destitute are always lugging around, half-eaten hunks of bread, among her clothes, testify to the hunger, the fear of hunger, that haunts the poor.

On the farm there is a population of 60 or 70, everyone working at harvesting and canning right now, or re-roofing the long dormitory between chapel and kitchen which shelters men off the road, wandering workers or wandering scholars.

The work is hard. The struggle against the "all-encroaching State" is harder. But if God is with us who can be against us? In Him we can do all things. We do know that God has chosen the foolish of this world to confound the wise. So please help us continue in our folly, in the "little way" of St. Therese which attracts so many to participate in our work.

We are not hopeless of a better world and rejoice that so many young people are practicing "survival" in communes, or hermitages, in manual labor and to some extent, the ascetic life. And after a few semesters with us, they go back to finish or begin the courses which prepare them better for those works of mercy the Lord commanded us to do.

Our love to you, and gratitude always,

Dorothy Day