

Fall Appeal - October 1976

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, October 1976, 2

Summary: An appeal for funds for their work. Confined to bed, she describes the hubbub of children and guests around her. Although they raise a lot of food, they still need to buy other provisions, including tea, for "the line." (DDLW #916).

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Dear Fellow Workers in Christ:

This morning, I woke with mixed feelings, which continued in the background of my mind even while I read my morning Psalms. Am I doing penance for my effrontery at having continued, at my age (79), to gad about the country? Am I like Mrs. Jellyby in "Bleak House," who was always concerned about foreign missions, while her children went unwashed and unfed at home?

My penance consists of lying in bed in one of our Houses of Hospitality for the last three weeks, "enjoying" bed rest as prescribed by our good friend and doctor nearby. All I can say is that Kay-Kay, Karen, Kachina, Charlotte Rose, Tanya, plus other two and three-year-olds visiting us, can make a lot of mess and tumult. Several of the "older generation" can make quite a furor too, as they fall over the booby traps of toy trucks and doll carriages. Bowery language spills out. More noise! Am I at First Street, Third Street, I wonder, or in this "quiet" haven at Tivoli, our farm with a view?

My truly pleasant room is just off the living room, which is so large that it can hold a crowd at Mass on those Sundays when we have a priest here—up to one hundred people when there has been a conference—"ordinary time" we are about fifty. (Our quiet chapel, where six or eight of us say Vespers each night, is on the river side of the house and is much smaller.) My room faces east, one of four bedrooms facing a green hillside. It gets the morning sun. Our farming takes place on the level acres at the top of the hill. In the woods are hermitages for a hardy few. (There is a lot of praying done around here, and a lot of suffering.) This letter, I am sure, goes to homes where there is the same suffering of body, mind and soul. And yet, the good mother keeps cheerful. Rejoice! And again I say, Rejoice!

Our appeals, which we send out once a year, are hard to write, and it is a continuing miracle that they are so generously answered. It is a constant

reminder that we have a loving Father, Who lets no cry go unanswered, but we have to be “importunate,” Jesus said, when He told the story of the man who had more company than he could feed.

So, no use worrying about how to pay oil bills, gas bills, food bills. No matter how many vegetables and fruits we raise and preserve (and in the city beg from the markets), there are always more and more hundred-pound sacks of beans and oats and rice and flour to buy, to make our soup and to bake our bread. We raise soy beans, pinto beans (lots of shelling and winnowing to be done). And what about coffee and sugar, and the comforting cup of tea for “the line!”

So, here we are again, appealing to our readers to continue to help. And God bless you all for your goodness to us and to the lame, the halt and the blind, who make up our family.

DOROTHY DAY