

Called To Be Saints

By Dorothy Day

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Summary: Emphasizes the need to strive for holiness. Lists the various retreats offered on the farm and notes secular writers and books with the same message. Quotes St. Thomas who describes holiness as “the end to which one must tend.” (DDLW #418).

We have written along these lines before. In fact, so constantly these past thirteen years of the paper’s existence, that the argument about counsels and precepts still goes on and charges of heresy are bandied back and forth—Manicheism, Jansenism, and a few others. We haven’t time to look them up and see what they are about. The Scriptural retreat, the Thomistic retreat, the Pauline retreat, the Little Way retreat we have on the farm, and one could call it many names, is to teach us the ABC’s of learning to be holy.

Naturally speaking, people are filled with repulsion at the idea of holiness. We have so many sad examples of Pecksniffs in our midst. But now we are filled with encouragement these days to find that it is not only the Catholic Worker lay movement, but writers like Ignacio Silone, Aldous Huxley and Arthur Koestler who are also crying aloud for a synthesis—the saint-revolutionist who would impel by his example, others to holiness. And recognizing the difficulty of the aim, Silone has drawn pictures of touching fellowship with the lowly, the revolutionist living in voluntary poverty, in hunger and cold, in the stable, and depending on “personalist action” to move the world. “Bread and Wine,” “The Seed Beneath the Snow” are filled with this message.

According to St. Thomas: “Now the perfection of divine love is a matter of precept for all without exception, so that even the perfection of Heaven is not excepted from this precept, since it is the end to which one must tend.” (IIa. IIae, qu. 184, art. 3, ad 2 um.)