

We Appeal to You in the Name of Saint Joseph

By Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, April 1953, 2.

Summary: Appeals for all to do or give a little knowing that God will do the rest. Says since we are all brothers we must be subject to every living creature to be like Him, serving rather than being served. (DDLW #648).

Dear fellow workers in Christ:

I am writing this appeal at Maryfarm, where our rural house of hospitality and retreat house is crowded to the doors. Every bed in the carriage house is taken although half a dozen of those beds are for transients who drop in from the road for the night or week end. The three tables are full in the dining room and there was so much extra company on Sunday that it looked humanly impossible to stretch the food to cover the additional guests who showed up unexpectedly. Yet it is a miracle that is performed over and over again at The Catholic Worker. The stories in the Lenten Gospels about the cruse of oil which was not diminished, and the pot of meal which was never empty is repeated again amongst us.

We have been reading the story of the Pilgrim who learned to pray without ceasing, and since reading it, we notice how that theme recurs over and over in the Mass. It is necessary to pray "at all times and in all places," it reads at the beginning of the Preface is over and over again WITHOUT CEASING we should call upon God. Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you. So we have come to you, our readers, again and again, asking you to come to our assistance and give us what we need for food, clothing and shelter.

We none of us can do very much for each other, and really, it seems that God does not expect very much of us. He asks us each to do just a little, and He will do the rest. He asks us to give our mite, like the widow's; our few loaves and fishes, like the little boy's; or handful of meal, like the widow's; our mess of pottage like Habbakuk's; he asks us to wash in the Jordan, a simple cure in the face of so gigantic a physical evil as leprosy. He asks us to do just a little, and the He takes hold and does the rest. He will do the rehabilitating, in His own good time, He will change the heart, taking away the heart of stone, He will comfort the afflicted, and give strength to these all but overcome by moral conflicts.

We have been working for twenty years trying to perform the works of mercy listed in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew. And what change is there in ourselves or those we try to serve? Who can measure these things? "To persevere is to progress," a saintly abbot told me recently. What change have we made in the social order? All I can see is that Anna, who shuffles around in four coats and three hoods and in a man's oxfords, who used to peer in the door and be served her food in the yard like a dog, now is no longer afraid and comes in to sit down

with her fellows. She, and thousands like her, have heard the good news, “call no man Master, for all ye are brothers,” and are growing in the knowledge that to live this doctrine means that we must be subject to every living creature and then we will be like Him, serving rather than being served.

We know each other as brothers, in the breaking of bread, serving around six hundred or more meals a day in New York, besides these at Peter Maurin Farm and Maryfarm. At Peter Maurin farm Hans and Ed baked 19,200 loaves of bread this past year, and that in flour alone has cost about \$2000. The wholesaler is content to be paid twice a year, and Tony the grocer and the Essex street also wait. And twice a year, we look at our empty hands and wonder what to do. And then when we read these Lenten Lessons we are cheered.

May God prompt you to help us, giving us what you can spare, or indeed what you cannot well spare. The widow was starving when she was asked to give her the last bit of meal. But we can assure you that God will return it a hundred fold. It is an historic fact. So again, in the name of St. Joseph, we appeal.

Gratefully in Christ,

‘ DOROTHY DAY