

# Gratitude

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*Summary: Enumerates all the things people send, especially clothes, that are rapidly distributed. Laments that "Holy Mother the State" requires them to submit an accounting since they make appeals. Notes the need to keep voluntary poverty in mind and thanks all who send anonymous gifts. (DDLW #699).*

During one of the questionings by the City as to our activities, the Investigator, a kindly and gentle person, who was always considerate enough to allow us to present our views, looked at Charlie McCormick's spring coat and generally well-dressed appearance, and said:

"Do you mean to say that no one gets a salary around **The Catholic Worker**? What do you do for tooth paste,—for recreation?"

"It just comes in," Charlie said, and I could not help but laugh to myself because we had just been talking of one of our friends who is always spending all his money on theater tickets and wanting to take us to shows. Just last week Bill McDonough of Boston came to town for a week end and took Charlie to see "The Lark," and Bill Oleksak took me to see "The Prisoner." There is recreation aplenty in books, radio concerts, walking with friends. And as for tooth paste,—that comes in, too.

One of the young women who used to visit us often while looking for a job, said sadly: "Everything seems to come in, fur coats, shoes, galoshes, furniture for my apartment—everything but a husband."

Seriously speaking, when one becomes part of a distributing agency as we have, one must keep in mind voluntary poverty, and day by day try to pare down, do without, pass on to others, and be troubled in conscience for being too comfortable while trying to make others comfortable. For instance, we have never been so warm before, with central heating. Poverty becomes very much a hidden thing and we begin to have sympathy and a high regard for those who have no appearance of poverty and yet are more interiorly mortified than we are. It all goes to make us realize more and more that we should never judge others.

Every day bundles of clothes come in by mail, or friends and readers bring them into the office and every day, Roger takes care of the men who come at ten and Annabelle takes care of the women. We always get more women's clothes than

men's (and the men's clothes are all distributed in an hour) but Annabelle works at her job from ten to twelve, and from two to four. That is, she tries to satisfy the needs of the women and children who come in at that time. Other hours she spends sorting out the stuff. Sometimes the whole office is a mass of boxes. The women's clothesroom is so small that we have to keep a big box of shoes in the library for women to try on at their leisure, and another box, like a grab bag in the office. There are toys, and household equipment and bits of material and so on. And Annabelle and Katherine are always heaping up choice bits on my desk for me to bring out to Peter Maurin Farm. One of the jokes around the place is that we are always sending back to Peter Maurin Farm what they send in to us from the clothes that are brought there. My daughter has the same trouble; she has seven sisters-in-law, four of whom have children. She gets boxes from them, she sorts out and sends in what she cannot use, and very often she finds it coming right back to her. But on the other hand, she often sends in word for what she needs and Annabelle watches out for her. Last month she needed a school sweater, it had to be blue, and they cost eight dollars in the school. Word was received at home that Eric would not be allowed in class without it, so we hunted up a battered old sweater and darned it all over and at least it satisfies the requirements of being blue, and a sweater. Eric is terribly hard on his clothes anyway. Nickie can plough through mud, go fishing around in the pond, on his way home, and come through unscathed, but Eric, a blonde, looks as though he always needed to be dipped in a tub.

Yes, we certainly are grateful for all the things that come in, and we try to write to the donors, and we certainly say plenty of God bless them's as we unwrap packages. But there are times when a package is unwrapped and the address is lost, and people do not get properly thanked, and then we can only pray to God to make up to them for it, to bless them especially, and send them all the graces they need. I can think of two such generous people now, who did not get thanked for their Christmas gifts to us—and some of them personal, too. There are those two beautiful jackets, red and brown, with quilted linings, light as feathers, that came in a package labelled "For Tamar's children." Beckie and Susie have worn them every day with delight. They found them under the Christmas tree and wore them to Mass that morning. I wish whoever brought them in would let me know so that I can say thank you again. Then there is that wonderful statue of Our Lady of Grace which came to me from a Fr. Francis (is it Father or Frater) and where is it from? I found it on my book case in my room on Chrystie Street, and do not know whom to thank. Also a statue of St. Joseph on my desk. We are going to make a little corner shrine for the Blessed Mother in the women's quarters on the top floor. I love it especially because I worked for the Marists on Staten Island once, and they had had a statue of our Lady with her arms outstretched, her hands open, in the midst of a garden of roses, at our Lady of the Elms, in Princess Bay.

And of course there are other readers who make our life rich, and warm us and clothe us and feed us too, together with those we are trying to take care of, who have not been properly thanked, so we do it now, for their packages, their

letters, the money they sent and the continued interest in and understanding of our work. God bless them all, with blessings that are heaped up, pressed down and running over.

## **Accountant**

Holy Mother the State requires now that everyone who sends out a letter of appeal register with the state and send in an annual statement of finances, and since this is a legislation for the common good, we are quite ready to comply with this law. We have begun the fearful job of filling out forms now and we wish we knew an accountant who would come in and help us with our books.

## **Community**

I have promised to write more on Community and the Land, but there has been no time for it this month, what with visits to Philadelphia and many illnesses of the usual winter variety including my own, and that last chapter of **St. Therese** to get through. The rest of the book is at the publisher so pray it comes out soon. So much of the time is spent at letters, writing, besides the ordinary business of living in a house of hospitality and a farming commune such as Peter Maurin Farm (living in a community takes time) that I will have to put off the writing until next month.

Meanwhile, what about those articles which Jack Thornton, Terry R. Tiernan and Martin Paul have promised?