

Day After Day - November 1942

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, November 1942, 1, 4, 5.

Summary: Recounts her travels throughout the Midwest, reviews CW accomplishments and establishments, updates on various Catholic Worker activities, and those serving in the armed forces. Notes the creation of two conscientious objector camps and the formation of the Association of Catholic Conscientious Objectors. A lengthy description of people and activities centered on the farm at Avon, Ohio. (DDLW #386).

Dear Gerry: (On your way to Egypt and hoping this will reach you in Cairo)

This has been a month of journeying for me too. Bishop Schlarman of Peoria, invited me to speak at the Catholic Rural Life Conference which was held in his city from October 3 to 6. I visited Davenport, Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, Carthagen, Cleveland, Toledo, Pittsburgh, Harrisburgh, Easton and now home to get out the November issue. We were sorry to have missed the October issue, but there was not a cent around (Bishop Schlarman paid my expenses of the trip west) so we could not pay bills, nor get out an issue of the paper. Now the appeal is out and many of our friends have responded so that all the bread bill, the coffee bill, the corner grocery, the doctor, the dentist, farm and city bills, are paid, and even most of the printer. We are overjoyed, and happy too at all the letters which came from our friends around the country, missing the paper. We had not missed an issue for a long time.

I had a good visit with various groups and stopped at six of the houses and two of the farms on this trip, and when the boys began telling me all the news, and began asking after the news from New York, I began to see more and more how much was being accomplished, little by little.

In the last year, for instance, two conscientious objectors' camps for Catholics have been established, and the Association for Catholic Conscientious Objectors which we set up at 115 Mott street has done a tremendous amount for the clarification of thought. The women's house was established on Bayard street and has cared for a good sized family for this last year. Usually around twelve women and two children; and then some extra families have come for help during the year.

We kept the camp going this summer, by turning it over to John Fleming for his Porto Rican group up on Lexington Ave. And the farm at Easton now has five

families, including nine children.

It is good to go around and visit the houses and talk of the work to be done, and bring news to each other of the work going on all over the world. We in Mott street receive mail from Australia, England, Canada and from all over the country, so it is good to keep what unity we can, in spite of the fact that many of CW workers are in the army. Mike Strasser, of Milwaukee, for instance, is in a commando division down in Texas. He went, he said, in a spirit of blind obedience.

To whom, I wonder—to the state, or to his spiritual advisers. John Cogley is still at camp down near St. Louis, and is in the signal corps of the aviation corps. So is Tom Sullivan. Jim O’Gara is in Australia, or perhaps even in the Solomon Islands by now, in a machine gun division. Jack English, of the Cleveland group is in England, and he sent me a copy of Nehru’s Glimpses of World History this last week. Ossie Bondy wrote again the other day, a good long letter, with news of the Catholic community at Ditchling, and enclosures of the Bishops’ pastoral letter in England and news of other communities of lay people. He promises to write us an article on Catholic lay community life soon.

Lou Murphy, head of the two houses in Detroit and of St. Benedicts’s farm outside of Detroit, has enlisted as ambulance driver with the American Field Service and will be here in New York soon to wait for his sailing orders.

On the C. O. camp there is news on another page.

Detroit News

Louis Murphy told me news of three of our friends in religion, from Detroit area now in enemy territory. There is Brother Gabriel who went with the Capuchins to Japan, a layman, member of the third order, formerly a member of the United Auto Workers Union at the Packard plant in Detroit. There is Fr. Leon Sullivan who helped start the ACTU in Detroit, and who in his zeal for the worker caused consternation in clerical circles by picketing the Ford plant. And then of course Fr. Don Hessler, our old friend from Maryknoll, who took so many pictures around the CW which have appeared in old issues, whose family donated the Detroit farm, who said some of his first Masses at our houses and farms around the country. He volunteered to remain in a concentration camp at Hong Kong.

They are all remembered with love at prayers every evening at the Detroit house.

Richard Herbert is in charge of the work in Detroit, now that Lou is forced to separate himself from it for a time. Dick’s real name is Hebard, a French name, and he has been working with Lou for the past five or six years. He travels to and from the farm in the big orange truck (with a shamrock painted on the side) keeping things going on the land and in town.

“Ever hear how we came to get this beauty,” he asked, referring to the truck. “When the play Arsenic and Old Lace came to Detroit, they had a bright idea which helped us out a lot. They wanted twelve old men to act as corpses in their play. All they had to do was to make a curtain call. They paid them one-fifty a night, and every night they had different men from the House of Hospitality. The men handed the money into the house for the truck, and it cost \$260. A down payment had been made by Mr. Moore, of the Birmingham, Michigan, Holy Name Society.”

Dick told about the anniversary celebration the house had had the week before I got there. “Pat Connelly played the concertina, and Blackie, our general maintenance man who remodelled the house for us, stayed down in the basement and propped up the floors while everyone did square dances.”

Love is There

They have some beautiful customs at the Detroit house. One of them is to hang a statue of St. Anthony and St. Joseph on the two tables where the men of the breadline are fed, with a vigil light burning before it. Before each meal they say the Angelus. The house is well kept by the men, and shows the loving care they bestow upon the place which has become for them a home. Nazareth shop in back of St. Francis House continues to function as a shoe repair shop and for work of all kinds that those with skills are able to do around the place. There were twenty-four men living in the house and about three hundred a day being fed.

Martha House

Molly is in charge of the woman’s house, now that Marie Conti has had to return home for a while on account of family duties. The house managed so long and so well by Marie, holds twelve women, though a family with children has been squeezed in to tide over an emergency.

I spent the night at Martha House, and my roommates were two old ladies, one of whom with very lame knees hobbled three or four blocks to Mass the next morning, to be praying for Mr. Murphy, she said.

There were six of us that sat down to breakfast that morning, and it was a feast with eggs, jam and cookies.

The Sisters of Charity at St. Mary’s hospital, send food Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays and the Daughters of Izabella have a show once a year and see that everything in the way of canned goods and staples is provided.

Marie Funke, one of the women I had been used to seeing helping around the house was missing that morning. She had died the month before, of cancer of

the liver, and worked up to three days of her death, trying to help in every way she could around the house. Louis or Molly had to sit with her all one Saturday afternoon before the doctor came, to keep her in bed, and by evening she had to be taken to the hospital, and by Monday she was dead.

Harvest Mass

“You should have been at the harvest Mass at the farm,” Dick Herbert was saying that morning, after he got through repining because I had not been at the St. Francis House celebration.

“We had everything around the altar out at the farm—pumpkins, corn, oats, rye, eggs, milk, cabbage, sheaves of wheat, potatoes, carrots and onions, and Fr. Clement Kern offered up the Mass of thanksgiving, remembering especially Fr. Hessler, the prisoners in Japanese concentration camps, all the soldiers in general and all the benefactors of the work.”

As for the crops, Dick’s report quoted 262 bushels of oats on four acres; no wheat; 62 bushels of rye, a failure, that; a good crop of corn; buckwheat not in yet; plenty of good regular garden crops and four acres of potatoes. Also 35 tons of hay in the barn. There are seven cows, two milkers, five heifers; sixty chickens, fifteen pigs. They sold 23 and got \$260; two horses, six cats, a dog, Tony. There is a new roof on the house since I was there last, and new fencing.

Cleveland Farm

The farm at Avon, Ohio, is wonderful, and the progress on it amazing. They have an open air chapel—rather one wing is built, open in front, with benches and prie Dieux out in front. The altar is made of field stone and cement. The three walls of stone, too. It will in its final shape be cruciform, and they can well do it bit by bit. The lumber in the present part cost only fifty dollars.

In this last year since Dorothy and Bill Gauchat came on the farm to live there has been two other couples who stayed several months and went away. There is a large house which can accommodate twelve men, and a barn—all this building has been done by Bill, with some help from the men. They built their own house, the men did, but he does not believe in asking them to build the houses for the married couples. They can do that themselves, and as he himself is a skilled carpenter, electrician, and handy man, having built a house for his mother, and worked on a farm before, he can well teach them.

Beyond Expectation

The more I see of the young girls who come to the CW, the more I think they all ought to have a winter at Ade's. Dorothy here said she did not like cooking or housekeeping, and wanted to stay in the city until she began living there with Ade. Never an idle moment. She expects a disciplined life, such as she herself leads. It does me good to talk to Dorothy about the place, as she spent a year and a half up there. It is all and more than I expect of it.

Here they have a wonderful little home, four rooms. The lumber came from an old schoolhouse which was given them if they could tear it down, and three years ago some of the men from the house, together with Bill, took three weeks to take the place apart; a friendly truck driver made twenty trips to get all the material out here. The farm is twenty miles from the city. They kept collecting doors and windows and odd bits and it is with all these materials they have built the men's house and the barn and their own. Their house faces south, and being a schoolhouse, the windows are tremendous, reaching to the ceiling, and they put four together so the south wall of the house is all window, letting in the sun. This has taken two and a half years.

Craft and Agriculture

The farm supplies the house in the city with much of their food, and they sell butter and eggs for extra money—also wholewheat flour, tomatoes, apples, grapes, of which they have an abundance. Bill does two days' work a week, and odd jobs, and Dorothy does Christmas cards, lettering jobs, etc. They are certainly combining craft and agriculture, but both of them are workers.

There are 76 acres here, all flat, many fruit trees, two horses, five sheep, one goat, one sow and nine pigs, one cow and two heifers, only five rabbits (the rest sold or eaten), goat gives four quarts and cow 28 quarts a day. They paid \$125 for her, 90 chickens. They buy 100 pounds chicken mash a week, no other feed.

I made butter yesterday, four pounds, and the buttermilk was wonderful. They sell two pounds, 45 cents a pound, a week. They get 55 cents a dozen for eggs, white leghorns, very small. They are going to raise their own chicks, not buy day-old or week-old ones, hereafter.

Bill sheared all the sheep with a pair of shears. They paid \$24 for the five; had three young rams; sold them for \$21 and kept the wool.