

Fall Appeal - October 1960

By Dorothy Day

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Summary: Says they are "broke again and are beggars." Lists their expenses and improvements that were needed in city and farm on Staten Island. Recalls Saints Paul, Joseph ("the householder"), Francis, and Therese. (DDLW #772).

St. Joseph's Loft
39 Spring Street
New York 12, New York

Dear fellow workers in Christ,

It is good to sit down to this letter right after Mass when you still feel God is so close, and prayer still in one, like a warmth and strength. Outside it is grey and cloudy and fog horns come up from the river and one must burn electricity in the day hours. In the damp a slum seems like a dung heap and age and decrepitude and human misery remind one of Job. Only the young, and our neighborhood is filled with the young, shine like bright cheerful birds in the grey morning. There are not only the children but all the young Puerto Ricans who work in the factories around on Lafayette Street and Broadway. Harry Golden says all those little factories are filled with debt collectors on paydays, getting their share first from the thin pay envelopes of the poor. (All this section of New York west of the Italian section, west of the East Side, are filled with small loft work shops and factories.) On the one hand we are a country of abundance, and on the other of destitution. The newcomers are tempted to buy on the instalment plan and pay interest to finance companies and this emphasizes always the evils of usury. That is why we refused interest from the city—to make our point strong and clear. Together with this witness, we run articles in the paper on credit unions and voluntary poverty and ways of doing away with it. People say, "Who will answer your appeal, when you are so improvident?" But just the same we write with faith in our readers that they will be generous and help us as they have so often these last 28 years. As a matter of fact we only sent out one appeal these last two years, because we were living on the money that came in from the purchase by the city of our St. Joseph's House on Chrystie Street. We also added extra rooms to the beach houses and put in two new cesspools, two furnaces, a plumbing system for the C.W. community on the farm on Staten Island. In town we pay rents not only in St. Joseph's Loft but also on eight apartments and on furnished rooms and beds on the Bowery. We live more than ever from day to day in town renting as the poor do. The taxes on Staten Island (and we of course pay all real estate taxes) amount to several thousand a year. What with the Narrows Bridge going up, taxes were doubled this last year. All this by way of accounting. At St. Joseph's Loft alone, our food bill is at the least \$1,140 a month, and rents are \$676. The cost of printing is around \$900. And of course there are no salaries and the expenses of the editors are included in

such food and shelter and enough clothes come in for us all. In the city we are among the destitute but on the Island we are blessed with the beauty of the farm and beach, and over a weekend there will be as many as forty, like last Sunday, who came for a day of recollection and discussion. Fr. Conway from the Dominican House of Studies came last weekend and started us all studying more about the one thing needful, to know God and love Him and be happy in this life and the next. (That next life which seems so imminent during these discussions on disarmament at the United Nations.) I often feel that the farm is an oasis of prayer and adoration and intercession for all, as well as a place to shelter the wounded of the class warfare all around us. Not to speak of the war against sin, most important battle of all.

Yes, we are broke again and are beggars, like St. Francis whose birthday is October 4. He too illustrated the paradox of Christianity by first advising his followers to give away whatever they had, and then telling them to beg some of it back again, not only for their own sustenance but to give to others. It is the foolishness of the Cross that St. Paul speaks of. It is the foolishness not of the childish but of the child, and it is the way of spiritual childhood that St. Therese of the Child Jesus whose birthday is Oct. 3 tells us about. I have a book coming out about Therese this month, published by Fides Press, Notre Dame, Ind., and it would be nice if there were enough royalties to pay some of the bills. But only best sellers do that so we have to depend on our readers to support us. This is also the month of the Guardian Angels so we are praying too, not only to St. Joseph the householder, and St. Francis the poor man and St. Therese, but also to your guardian angels, to prompt you to help us again. And may your help return to you a hundredfold.

Gratefully in Christ
Dorothy Day