

# *On Pilgrimage*

Dorothy Day

## **June**

*Summary: Describes the hustle and bustle around the farm—planting, building, cooking. Ruminates about conversion, calling each person to a revolution beginning with themselves—to make a start toward a new way of living based on distributism. Says distributism is neither communism nor capitalism but based on individual ownership of land, tools, workshops, and factories. Keyword: economics (DDLW #481).*

June 10

Maryfarm, Newburgh

EVERY DAY the planting goes on. Tomato plants, cabbage, celery, asparagus, rhubarb, peppers, carrots, beets, beans – so much that I cannot think of it all. Today, a hot June day, it has been onions. Jane has begged onions from the wholesalers, and John Filliger and Tom and George and Jim have been out since lunch putting them in. They were soft ones which they were unable to sell. We have not been able to buy onion sets; the time for them is past, the onion growers around Florida, New York, tell us.

The cow is giving twenty-four quarts of milk a day, and we can use every bit of it, with eighteen sitting down to table, quite aside from retreats. People come to retreats and stay awhile. People pass by on the road and come in to stay weeks. Several leave and several arrive.

Last week it was Father Francis Meenan's retreat that brought the crowds, a retreat for men, and they all said it was the best yet. I went to New York to take care of the office so that all at Mott Street could come to the farm over the Memorial Day weekend. No one on our block seemed to be going away for the holiday. It was as noisy, as crowded as ever. On Sunday morning there was one of those tragedies which attracted a still greater crowd. A woman down the street who had lost her husband a few months ago was washing her windows on a Sunday morning, fell three stories to the ground, and was killed instantly. I passed her on my way home from Mass. With the crowd and the ambulance out in front, I thought it was someone being brought to the hospital, a routine we had become used to. It was a terrible shock as I passed down the middle of the street to see the figure of a woman lying in the gutter, amongst all kinds of litter, half-covered with a piece of brown paper from a neighboring butcher shop.

It always seems [to take] an interminable length of time for police, ambulance, doctor to arrive. The priest arrived first.

It was quiet enough around the office. A few visitors came in, bringing boxes of clothes. Marge was housebound, what with the children having measles, German measles, and chicken pox right after each other. Women were sick in the house, and some who were not sick were disorderly.

During the last two months, Johanna and Tommy have been praying for a [new] station wagon to take children and their mothers to the farm. They had gone up in [one] to Newburgh last year, but this year the old wagon has fallen apart. So they had started to pray. Lo and behold, a friend of the farm turned over his 1932 Chevrolet to me, and after seventy-five dollars' worth of work on it, I was able to drive Bridget, Anne, and Dave back to New York in it with no mishaps. We came over the new Storm King highway, picked sweet clover on the way, [and] enjoyed the view of the river if we did not enjoy the sound we made between the echoing mountains. We sounded either like a Mack truck or an aeroplane, but I trust after we get the muffler fixed (there are a few large holes mended with tin cans), we will have a little more holy silence. I was afraid the children would feel that St. Joseph had let them down. I myself was much pleased with the car. But the children were delighted and insisted on calling it their station wagon. I had no sooner arrived boasting in my new conveyance when Tom Sullivan informed me that another friend had given a 1924 Columbia which was in much better shape all around – upholstery, engine, tires, general appearance, etc. To think of it – a car for the farm and a car to pick up stuff around New York! Both small cars that do not use too much gas. The men in the office talk of exchanging the two for a truck, but I am dead against it. These will get us there.

When I returned to the farm last Tuesday, I brought Johanna with me to recover from her measles, German measles, and chicken pox. Since she arrived she has fallen on her nose, barked her shins, had a skirmish with the dog, made friends with the bull, and helped milk the cow. Now we learn from New York that Tommy has mumps, so she just won't go home until this awful siege is past. The only thing left is whooping cough.

As I write, supertime approaches. Helen has gone down the road to collect some promised rhubarb, Florence is mending here on the porch where I write, Peter is reading, and Charlie is tearing around inside, concocting one of his wonderful desserts. He has been serving us tender milkweed tops which taste like asparagus, and we have also had lamb's-quarter, dock weed, and dandelion greens aplenty.

Hans Tunnesen is busy working on a new floor in the unused barn, which will be a dormitory for mothers and children. (The barnyard will be made into the bull pen for the youngsters that Tim O'Brien wrote about some years ago.) We got the lumber for two hundred and seventy-five dollars, and we haven't a cent to pay for it. Brescia, the lumber man in Montgomery, is trusting us, and we

told him we would have to pay in dribs and drabs, just as we could beg it. So those of you who are interested in family retreats are invited to chip in. There are six retreats scheduled for the summer months, and there will be weekends in the fall. We have already had three retreats this spring. Of course it will be during the summer months that the families will wish to come, so we could not wait for the lumber. St. Joseph was so prompt in sending the cars, we are sure he will take care of the barn floor and staircase and chimney for us.

June 20

SOME TIME ago, Douglas Hyde, one of the editors of the *London Daily Worker*, became a Catholic. In an article in the *Catholic Herald* of England, he wrote,

In 1943, I libeled, in the course of my work on *The Daily Worker*, a Catholic paper, *The Weekly Review*, and a number of its contributors. In preparation for an anticipated court case, which in fact was never heard, I read through the paper's files for the preceding year and studied each issue as it appeared.

I had accused it of providing a platform for Fascists at a moment when Fascist bombs were raining down on Britain. I came in time to realize that not only had I libeled it in law but also in fact.

For years my cultural interests had been in the Middle Ages. My favorite music was also pre-Purcell; in architecture my interest was in Norman and Gothic; in literature my favorites were Chaucer and Langland. We had a family joke which we made each year when holidays were discussed: "Let's go on a trip to the thirteenth century."

And these were the interests of the people behind the *Weekly Review*. I came to look forward to the days when it appeared on my desk. A natural development was that I became increasingly interested in the writings of Chesterton and Belloc. . . .

A good Communist must never permit himself to think outside his Communism. I had done so, and the consequences were bound to be fatal to my Communism.

That, as it were, is the mechanics of my introduction to Catholicism.

Not long ago at a mass meeting of the workers in a Finnish factory, when the question was asked which they would prefer, Communism or capitalism, they shouted, "Neither."

It is never too late to begin. It is never too late to turn over a new leaf. In spite of the atom bomb, the jet plane, the conflict with Russia, ten just men may still save the city.

Maybe if we keep on writing and talking, there will be other conversions like Mr. Hyde's. It was reading an article that got Father Damien his helper Brother Joseph, at Molokai. It was reading that converted St. Augustine. So we will keep on writing.

And talking, too. They always said in England that the Distributists did nothing but talk. But one needs to talk to convey ideas. St. Paul talked so much and so long that in the crowded room one young lad, sitting on the windowsill, fell out of the window and was killed like a woman down the street from us, last week. Only she was not listening to the word of God but washing windows on a Sunday morning. And it was sad that there was no St. Paul to bring her to life. Her life finished there. But we are still alive, though we live in a city of ten million, and one can scarcely call it life, and the papers every day carry news of new weapons of death.

However, we are still here. We are still marrying and having children, and having to feed them and house them and clothe them. We don't want them to grow up and say, "This city is such hell that perhaps war will be preferable. This working in a laundry, a brass factory, the kitchen of a restaurant, is hell on earth. At least war will teach me new trades, which the public school system has failed to do. This coming home at night to a four-room or a two-room tenement flat and a wife and three children with whooping cough (there are usually not more than three children in the city) is also hell." And what can be done about it? We are taught to suffer, to embrace the cross. On the other hand, St. Catherine said, "All the way to heaven is heaven, because He said, 'I am the Way.' " And He was a carpenter and wandered the roadsides of Palestine and lived in the fields and plucked the grain to eat on a Sunday as He wandered with His disciples.

This morning as I went to Mass my eyes stung from the fumes of the cars on Canal Street. I crossed a vacant lot, a parking lot filled with cinders and broken glass, and longed for an ailanthus tree to break the prison-gray walls and ground all around. Last night all of us from Mott Street were at a meeting at Friendship House to hear Leslie Green, Distributist, and the talk was good and stimulating so that in spite of the noise, the fumes, [and] the apathy which the city brings, I was impelled this morning to write. My son-in-law, David, has also been deluging me with pamphlets. He has one of the best libraries in the country on the subject, and deals with the books and pamphlets which discuss Distributism.

We could list perhaps fifty among our friends, and if we went through the files of our readers we could find many more who have gone to the land. These toeholds on the land have meant, however, that the young, married couples had a little stake to start with. They had, or could borrow, a bit of money to make a down payment on a farm. Their families could give them a start if it was only a few hundred dollars. (There was an ad in the *New York Times* yesterday of a farm for sale for twelve hundred dollars, three hundred down and twenty-five dollars a month.) Even with the bit of money, however, faith, vision, [and] some knowledge of farming or a craft are needed. People need to prepare themselves. Parents need to prepare their children.

On the one hand, there are already some toeholds on the land; there are those farmers already there who have the right philosophy; there is still time, since we have not as yet a socialist government or nationalization of the land. We have some government control, but not much yet. Not compared to what there may

be soon.

On the other hand, there are such stories as that in the last issue of *Commonweal* about the de Giorgio strike in the long central valley of California, of fifty-eight thousand acres owned by one family, of two thousand employees, of horrible living conditions, poor wages, forced idleness, “times of repose” between crops, when machines are cared for but not men, women, and children. *The Grapes of Wrath* pattern is here, is becoming an accepted pattern. Assembly-line production in the factory and mass production on the land are part of a social order accepted by the great mass of our Catholics, priests and people [alike]. Even when they admit it is bad, they say, “What can we do?” And the result is palliatives, taking care of the wrecks of the social order, rather than changing it so that there would not be quite so many broken homes, orphaned children, delinquents, industrial accidents, so much destitution in general.

Palliatives, when what we need is a revolution, beginning now. Each one of us can help start it. It is no use talking about how bored we are with the word. Let us not be escapists but admit that it is upon us. We are going to have it imposed upon us, or we are going to make our own.

If we don’t do something about it, the world may well say, “Why bring children into the world, the world being what it is?” We bring them into it and start giving them a vision of an integrated life so that they too can start fighting.

This fighting for a cause is part of the zest of life. Father Damasus said once at one of our retreats that people seemed to have lost that zest for life, that appreciation of the value of life, the gift of life. It is a fundamental thing. Helene Isvolsky, in a lecture on Dostoyevsky at the Catholic Worker House last month, said that he was marked by that love for life. He had almost been shot once. He had been lined up with other prisoners and all but lost his life. From then on he had such a love for life that it glowed forth in all his writings. It is what marks the writings of Thomas Wolfe, whose writing was a Niagara.

But how can one have a zest for life under such conditions as those we live in at 115 Mott Street? How can that laundry worker down the street, working in his steamy hell of a basement all day, wake each morning to a zest for life?

In the city, very often one lives in one’s writing. Writing is not an overflow of life, a result of living intensely. To live in Newburgh, on the farm, to be arranging retreats, to be making bread and butter, taking care of and feeding children there, washing and carding wool, gathering herbs and salads and flowers – all these things are so good and beautiful that one does not want to take time to write except that one has to share them, and not just the knowledge of them, but how to start to achieve them.

The whole retreat movement is to teach people to “meditate in their hearts,” to start to think of these things, to make a beginning, to go out and start to love God in all the little things of every day, to so make one’s life and one’s children’s life a sample of heaven, a beginning of heaven.

The retreats are to build up a desire, a knowledge of what to desire. “Make me desire to walk in the way of Thy commandments.” Daniel was a man of “desires.” Our Lord is called “the desire of the everlasting hills.”

Yes, we must write of these things, of the love of God and the love of His creatures, man and beast, and plant and stone.

“You make it sound too nice,” my daughter once said to me, when I was writing of life on the land, and voluntary and involuntary poverty, which means in specific instances . . . doing without water, heat, washing machines, cars, electricity, and many other things, even for a time the company of our fellows, in order to make a start.

And others have made the same accusation who are making a start on the land. And I know well what they mean. One must keep on trying to do it oneself, and one must keep on trying to help others to get these ideas respected.

At Grailville, Ohio, there is not only the big school of the Grail Apostolate, where there is electricity, modern plumbing, [and] a certain amount of machinery that makes the work go easier and gives time for studies; but there is also a sample farm, twelve acres, with no electricity, no modern plumbing, no hot water, where the washing is done outside over tubs and an open fire, and yet there, too, the life is most beautiful and a foretaste of heaven. There one can see how all things show forth the glory of God, and how “All the way to heaven is heaven.”

Artists and writers, as I have often said, go in for voluntary poverty in order to “live their own lives and do the work they want to do.” I know many a Hollywood writer who thought he was going out there to earn enough to leave to buy a little farm and settle down and do some really good writing. But the fleshpots of Egypt held him. And I knew many a Communist who had his little place in the country, private ownership too, and not just a rented place, a vacation place.

Property is proper to man. Man is born to work by the sweat of his brow, and he needs the tools, the land to work with.

The principles of Distributism have been more or less implicit in much that we have written in *The Catholic Worker* for a long time. We have advised our readers to begin with four books, Chesterton’s *What’s Wrong with the World?* and *The Outline of Sanity*, and Belloc’s *The Servile State* and *The Restoration of Property*.

These are the books which Douglas Hyde must have read, which gave him the third point of view, neither industrial capitalist nor Communist.

In a brief pamphlet by S. Sagar, made up of a collection of articles which ran in *The Weekly Review*, Distributism is described as follows:

To live, man needs land (on which to have shelter, to cultivate food, to have a shop for his tools) and capital, which may be those tools, or seeds, or materials.

Further, he must have some arrangement about the control of these two things. Some arrangement there must obviously be, and to make such an arrangement

is one of the reasons why man forms communities. Men being what they are, every society must make laws to govern the control of land and capital.

The principle from which the law can start is that *all* its subjects should exercise control of land and capital by means of direct family ownership of these things. This, of course, is the principle from which, until yesterday, our own law started. It was the theory of capitalism under which *all* were free to own, none compelled by law to labor. [Popular magazines like *Time* and the *Saturday Evening Post* are filled with illustrations of these principles, which all men admit are good, but unfortunately the stories told are not true. It is the reason why great trusts like . . . Standard Oil and General Motors have public relations men, why there is a propaganda machine for big business, to convert the public to the belief that capitalism really is based on good principles, Distributist principles, really is working out for the benefit of all, so that men have homes and farms and tools and pride in the job.] Unfortunately, in practice, under capitalism the many had not opportunity of obtaining land and capital in any useful amount and were compelled by physical necessity to labor for the fortunate few who possessed these things. But the theory was all right. Distributists want to save the theory by bringing the practice in conformity with it. . . .

Distributists want to distribute control as widely as possible by means of a direct family ownership of land and capital. This, of course, means cooperation among these personal owners and involves modifications, complexities, and compromises which will be taken up later.

The aim of Distributism is family ownership of land, workshops, stores, transport, trades, professions, and so on.

Family ownership in the means of production so widely distributed as to be the mark of the economic life of the community – this is the Distributist's desire. It is also the world's desire. . . . The vast majority of men who argue against Distributism do so not on the grounds that it is undesirable but on the grounds that it is impossible. We say that it must be attempted, and we must continue to emphasize the results of not attempting it.

The Catholic Worker farm at Newburgh has ninety-six acres. We are raising hay, corn, vegetables, pigs, chickens, a cow. Every few days the dog, King, has brought in woodchucks, and some of them weigh eight pounds. He must have caught fifty this year. Down at the docks on the Hudson River the Negroes fish without a license for fish and eels. It is woodchuck season, and you can eat the woodchucks now. You skin them as you do rabbits, and roasted with sage dressing they make a good meal, and they are cleaner than chicken or hog. Right now Carmela and Florence are sitting out under the crab apple tree, stringing beans. There are peas and broccoli and Swiss chard besides lettuce for salads. It is getting easier to feed the forty or so retreatants who come every few weeks to the farm, and the twenty who are here all summer.

I tell these things to make the mouth water. In the fall we are going to put in a field of wheat, and next summer, God willing, we will have our own flour for the

good whole-wheat loaves that come out of the oven every day.

For the average worker it is more and more difficult to get food. Butter, oleo, and fat are sky high. Meat costs a fortune. Food prices have gone up 133 percent and milk 85 percent. We saw these figures in a magazine recently to advertise milk as a food. How to live, how to feed a family! Most of all, how to find shelter!

We are not expecting utopia here on this earth. But God meant things to be much easier than we have made them. A man has a natural right to food, clothing, and shelter. A certain amount of goods is necessary to lead a good life. A family needs work as well as bread. Property is proper to man. We must keep repeating these things. Eternal life begins now. "All the way to heaven is heaven, because He said, 'I am the Way.' " The cross is there, of course, but "in the cross is joy of spirit." And love makes all things easy. If we are putting off the old man and putting on Christ, then we are walking in love, and love is what we all want. But it is hard to love, from the human standpoint and from the divine standpoint, in a two-room apartment. We are eminently practical, realistic.

Irene has charge of the clothes distribution at Mott Street (besides having charge of the women's house and writing for the paper and seeing visitors), and the other day a mother of eleven children, nine of them living, came in to get clothes. They are all living at the municipal lodging house on Third Street. The other afternoon when the rain had stopped, Irene and I walked down Mott Street to Bleecker where Mott Street ends, then over to the Bowery and up one block to Third Street, and there, just to the east of the Bowery, is the big building that used to be the Bowery Y.M.C.A. and which is now a municipal shelter.

I was familiar with the place because it used to have a "clean-up system" before the days of D.D.T. (which you can use like a talcum powder), and there once in a while I used to bring my old friend Mr. Breen. He was a very dignified old man, with a beautiful beard, and he walked with a cane. He looked like Chief Justice Hughes. He had worked as Sunday editor of the *Washington Post*, and he had worked for the *New York World*, written reviews for the *Commonweal*, poetry for us, and had assisted us, during his last years, in answering our large correspondence. His wife and children had died, he had fallen into bad times, and during the Depression we became his family. For a time he had slept in the world's largest bedroom, on a dock down at South Ferry, where the municipality put up about twelve hundred men every night. He used to tell us a story of one old man who evidently thought he was in a cathedral, so vast was the long, dim dock at night, and in his nightshirt, with his long sticks of legs making him look like a strange bird, he used to "make the stations" down the inner aisle between the double-decker beds, pausing at every seventh bed to pray.

Mr. Breen had many such stories of the poor. We had to take him, as I said before, to the Bowery Y for a clean-up every now and then. One could bathe at leisure, have one's clothes cleaned and pressed, and have a shave and a haircut



– all for seventy-five cents. We used to go in state in a taxi cab. It was very hard to get Mr. Breen to go, and he would only go with me. As we went up to the desk and the very courteous young man behind it, Mr. Breen would look at him haughtily and say in lordly fashion, “I have come to be deloused.” Then he would turn to me with a sweeping bow, thank me for my escort, and I would leave him there for the night.

Now this building is part of the municipal lodging house. On either side of the entrance hall there are beautiful rural scenes painted on the walls, a road through the woods, a country field, and around the tiled halls, children from one year old and up are playing, slipping in and out between the hordes of young and old, black and white, drunk and sober men who are also served, who also are “clients” getting their lodging for the night and several meals a day. The men were registering at the desk as we came in. They all could write their names on the ledger; they were all literate. After they registered, they were all taken upstairs to the dormitories to bed. It was five-thirty. No one was taken in after nine.

Downstairs, meals were still being served. They had soup or stew, as we could see from the windows outside, two slices of bread, and huge mugs of cocoa.

I don’t know how many thousands of men are served every day, are lodged every day. What was occupying our minds was the fact that forty-five families were lodged there too, with six, eight, nine children. The mothers sat around, the fathers came in to report the result of their day’s search for rooms. (And who wants families of four children even, let alone nine?) The children restlessly ran from end to end of the hall, and we tried to talk.

“Isn’t there a playroom?” Yes, but the colored, the Puerto Rican, the Italian, and the “American” children fought. It was nerve-racking. There were separate bedrooms for different members of the family; it was not overcrowded. There is a doctor for the women and children. The city was doing what it could. Up at 26th Street, another branch of the municipal lodging house, there were other families and more men. What they were trying to do was bring all the men down to Third Street and get the women and children away from the Bowery and up to 26th Street, where there was a playground, a dead-end street, the river, and more light and air.

Yesterday two Irish Christian Brothers came to call and told us of Harlem, where their order had a school in what was the largest parish in the world. There were thirty thousand people in it, it was estimated. Families fleeing the hunger of Puerto Rico were living three families to an apartment. It was the most congested, most neglected section of the city. With all these thousands, the church on Sunday was only half full. It is not a leakage from the Church; it is a landslide.

We have been working on these problems at the Catholic Worker for the past fifteen years, and we can say with all sincerity that things have never been so bad as they are now, even in the worst of [the] Depression. Now men may have

work, but they lack homes. There may be odd jobs, poorly paid jobs, something coming in the way of work, but the housing situation gets worse and worse. Everywhere it is the same. In every city and town the story is the same. There are no apartments; there are no houses.

Mr. O'Daniel, father of the eleven we were visiting, had had a job as janitor. In order to make their profits and avoid the penalties of rent gouging, the owners of the building he was in had transformed a twelve-apartment house into a twenty-four apartment house of two-and-a-half rooms each. The board of health got after the owner for having a large family of children in the basement, and he had let them go. No one wants to employ families; none want to rent to families.

And of course we can understand the homeowners' point of view. Once we saw a cartoon in the *Saturday Evening Post* of a mother rebuking her child. "Don't deface the wall, William. We *own* this house." In other words, what you own is taken care of. Property means responsibility. Property is proper to man.

But what a need there is to arouse the conscience! To call attention to the poor! "Are there any more poor?" This fatuous question has been asked me so often by well-meaning listeners at meetings that one must answer it. "What about the bricklayer and his huge wages? Never have wages been so high." And what do high wages mean when there is no just price? Anyway, with all the talk of high wages, most of the people around here that I know are working for thirty and thirty-five dollars a week. Also, the great white-collar class of young men and young women are getting along by living at home, profiting by the industry and thrift and better housing opportunity of their parents.

People sooner or later will have to admit that things are rapidly getting worse, not better. People said during the war that Hitler had the theory that the bigger the lie, the easier it was to get people to believe it. It seems to me we have quite a number of these big lies.

There is the lie of high wages.

There is the lie of widespread ownership.

There is the plentiful production lie.

There is the everyone-consuming-more lie.

S. Sagar says that the great danger of today is not a revolt of the proletariat but the lethargy of the proletariat. He also says that the "preliminary to any steps taken towards Distribution was the creation of the *will* to take them."

Here is one quotation from Pope Pius XII which ought to be considered a mandate along these lines:

We confirm what only recently we had occasion to expound. For Catholics, the only path to be followed in solving the social problem is clearly outlined in the doctrine of the Church. The blessing of God will descend on your work if you do not swerve in the slightest degree from this path. You have no need to think

up specious solutions or to work with facile and empty formulas for results that prove only a delusion. What you can and ought to strive for is a more just distribution of wealth. This is and this remains a central point in Catholic social doctrine.

Joseph T. Nolan writes in *Orate Fratres*,

Too long has idle talk made out Distributism as something medieval and myopic, as if four modern Popes were somehow talking nonsense when they said: The law should favor widespread ownership (Leo XII); wages should enable a man to purchase land (Leo XIII and Pius XI); the family is most perfect when rooted in its own holding (Pius XII); and the tiller of the soil still represents the natural order of things willed by God (Pius XII). . . .

But in general there is so little facing of the problem of the land, or of machinery, which the Franciscan Belliot called one of the gravest and most disquieting elements in the social problem. How many Catholics, especially liturgists, share the anxiety of the present Pope at the agglomeration of huge populations in the cities “and the diminution of modern man by the domination of the machine”? Neither the nihilists nor the optimists who still dream of abundant production can fill our present need; a lot closer are the realists who are willing to rebuild an organic Christian society from the ground up, from the soil, who might escape the very real prospects of unemployment, hunger, and despair.

There are numerous steps that can be taken, outlined in *The Restoration of Property* by Hilaire Belloc. But how to create in men a *desire* to take them, a hope that they will be able to take them?

Things have gotten so desperate, Mr. Sagar says, goods have gotten so scarce, the effort to find housing has become so heartbreaking, that now at last today, after these many years, Distributism is going to be discussed.

The alternatives are not capitalism or socialism. We must take into consideration the nature of man and his needs, not just cash [for] commodities, food, and clothing, but a home, a bit of land, and the tools with which to work, part ownership in workshops and stores and factories.

Distributism does not mean that everyone must be a farmer. The Distributist thinks in terms of the village economy, and as for the size of the CITY (the city of God) which Cardinal Suhard talks of our building, that is a matter of situation. It may be five hundred, it may be five thousand, it may be fifty thousand population. The main thing to do is to *distribute* a the cities before the atom bomb does it. We are not suggesting that it be done by force but by education. If that seems too slow a method, probably depression, war, hunger, and homelessness will play their part. We only know it is not human to live in a city of ten million. It is not only not human, it is not possible. “Cities are the occasion of sin,” Father Vincent McNabb said, and of course any theologian will say that we should flee the occasions of sin. Pope Pius XII pointed out that it was difficult for modern youth to live in the cities without heroic virtue. (And it was never intended that the good life should demand *heroic* virtue.)

Distributism does not mean that we throw out the machine. The machine, Peter Maurin used to say, should be the extension of the hand of man. If we could do away with the assembly line, the slavery of the machine, and the useless and harmful and destructive machines, we would be doing well.

In the psalms it says, “Lord, make me *desire* to walk in the way of Thy commandments.” Daniel was called a man of desires, and because he was a man of desires, the Lord heard him.

Cardinal Suhard of Paris and Father de Lubac, S.J., both cry out against the refusal of some traditionalists to be co-creators with God and use the tools which science has put in man’s hands. But Father de Lubac also writes (in *The Dublin Review*), “Does not the discovery of new values involve the depreciation of other, perhaps more fundamental ones? And does it not breed, even while the discovery is still modest and tentative, a kind of intoxication, so that the passionate interest it arouses tends to make men oblivious of everything else, even of essentials? And so ambiguous situations pile up, leading inevitably to crises whose outcome no one can safely prophesy.”

But the essentials are food, clothing, and shelter. The essential is ownership, which brings with it responsibility, and what is more essential than the earth from which we all spring, and from which comes our food, our clothes, our furniture, our homes?

It is as a woman, a mother, speaking for the family and the home, that I protest the work of “priest-sociologists,” who in their desire to help the worker are going along with him in his errors and are accepting the easy way of capitalist industrialism, which leads to collectivism and the totalitarian state.

The warning is there, in Isaiah 26:5–6:

He shall bring down them that dwell on high; the high city he shall lay low. He shall bring it down even unto the ground; he shall pull it down even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down; the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy.

So “strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees. Say to the fainthearted, ‘Take courage and fear not. Behold, your God will bring the bread of recompense. God Himself will come and save you.’ ”