

Spring Appeal - March 1961

Dorothy Day

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*Summary: Asks readers to “forgive the seventy times seven times we go on asking.”
Recalls biblical stories where people are fed in seemingly hopeless situations.
(DDLW #779).*

March, 1961

St. Joseph's House
175 Chrystie Street
New York 2, New York

To all God's beloved (and do not doubt it, –that is what you are):

It is a miracle and a mystery to me and always will be, how we keep going, these 28 years with nothing in the bank and debts piled high. But we survive, and since where love is, God is, –and God is life, we do more than survive, we really live. Not that we are “living it up,” as the saying is. Rather, we are living it down, what with being pushed back deeper into the slums again, between the Bowery and the Puerto Rican district. Notice the new address, a house spared by the new subway link, a few doors off Delancey Street, that famous East Side thoroughfare on the way to the Williamsburg Bridge to Brooklyn. We love this East Side, where the poor throng (somehow they cannot be swept out of sight in the clean-up of the city), and there is gaiety and freedom there these first premature spring days when the old people take to the park benches to watch the graceful play of the children, and mothers sun their young, and lovers see only the golden light on the still leafless sycamore trees in the long park between Forsythe and Chrystie streets.

When we are down to our last penny, and I am asked by the CW family to write an appeal again to our readers, I like to read over some of my favorite passages in the Old Testament: the story of Elias sleeping sadly under the juniper tree and the angel bringing him a hearth cake and a vessel of water; the story of the widow woman who had only a handful of meal in a pot and a little oil in a cruse, and who yet shared it with the prophet who was dying in the famine; the story of Habacuc, the prophet who was going to feed the reapers in the field with pottage and bread and how the angel took him by the hair of his head from Judea to Babylon to the lions' den, to feed Daniel, who sat in his prison with

the beasts, not asking to be delivered, but thanking God for his dinner. "Thou has remembered me, O God, and has not forsaken them that love Thee."

We too are not asking to be delivered from the slums, or from our poverty, but we are asking for bread, for ourselves and for our family, here at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, for Peter Maurin Farm, for those who come to us at the beach houses, who come to us daily for food. And for the money for rents to house us all. We will try to do our share; we will work hard for our bread, we will give what we have though it is only a mess of pottage, a bit of meal and oil; we will consent to be devoured by the destitute, God help us, as our Lord is devoured by the multitude daily, in bread and wine.

And for all the rest of the money we need for food and shelter, we ask you again to be to us as the angel and the widow and the prophet Habacuc. The happiest lesson of Scripture is LOVE and "love is an exchange of gifts" as St. Ignatius said. So, as Joseph provided for Mary and Jesus, as Mary gave Jesus to us, as Jesus gives Himself, we are asking you too, to give, and forgive the seventy times seven times we go on asking. God bless you always,

In His love,

Dorothy Day