

Day After Day - September 1936

By Dorothy Day

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Summary: Reports on the progress of the lay apostolate, sends out an appeal for used clothing, and thanks a donor who gave her vacation money to the Catholic Worker rather than spend it on a trip to Bermuda. Children and animals continued to thrive on the Easton farm while city included a grand neighborhood fiesta. Reminds us that those who appear to be our enemies are still members of The Mystical Body of Christ. (DDLW #304).

We are developing the idea we have long had of the lay apostolate, and there are now amongst us enough fellow workers to send out into the fields and factories to work and attract new followers of The Catholic Worker movement. This last month four young fellows hitchhiked from the farm down to southern New Jersey to work on the commercial farms. One of them is going to enter the seminary, and the work he has been doing this summer only adds to his preparedness for the life that is before him. Another one of The Catholic Workers has gone down to work in the steel mills, and yet another has gone up to New England to get a job in any factory that suits his fancy. Two others are going out this month to yet another factory in the New York district. Reports of their work will appear in future issues of the paper.

Clothes

With chill nights upon us, we find ourselves once more in need of clothes—men's coats, sweaters, underwear and socks. The little room in St. Joseph's house which has become the wardrobe is sadly empty these days, and Rosemary, keeper of the keys, makes a point of taking our visitors in to show them the empty hangers and to impress on them the need of helping us gather together clothes for those who come to us. We beg any of our readers who have old clothes to parcel post them into the office.

Pups and Children

During this last month there have been about fourteen children at the farm all told. A few of them went back to the city, homesick, but two of the boys were so delighted with farm life that they have learned to milk the cow, hoe the corn and raid the grapevine of one of our neighbors. Fortunately it is a friendly neighbor, a Communitarian himself.

The four police puppies presented to us by this same neighbor are about as uproarious as the children. Three of them are black and tan but one, Teresa says, is peach colored. Little Annie is probably the most vociferous of the children.

Coming down to the farm in the truck, she surveyed the wide fields and woods and exclaimed on the size of the park we were passing through. Eleanor can tap dance like a professional, and her neatest trick is to tie tin cans to her feet and dance on them. The noise is very satisfying. Bernice is her big sister. She is ten and Eleanor is eight, and it was a great sight to see the motherly little girl scrubbing down her dusky sister Saturday night so that her delicious brown skin was all but veiled in soapsuds. Mary Giogas did a lot of sewing out under the apple trees for her little sister, Annie, who had a new dress to wear practically every day. She needed lots of clothes so the rag bag was raided often for pieces. Her face looked tattooed after the many slices of bread and elderberry jam which she consumed, and, as for her dresses, she looked good in what she ate, Loretta said.

Fiesta

During the month there was a grand fiesta in town which extended all around Mott street, but we were at the center of the whirlpool, inasmuch as one of our neighbors in the front house is president of the association which runs the fiesta for the Feast of the Assumption and the Feast of St. Roche. The noise was tremendous. It began with a band of fifty coming into our backyard and sitting on planks for their concert practice which lasted two hours and ended in quite a bit of wine drinking and a fight.

Outside the streets were aglow with color and light and booths were set up to sell all kinds of fruit and nuts; charcoal stoves were working overtime preparing sweet corn and broiled sausages and liver; there was a bandstand and free-lance orchestras and dancing up and down the street. All day, every day, there were processions and banners, and Saturday night with the lightning adding fireworks to the show, the statue of the Blessed Virgin was escorted with many maids of honor and children in white, carrying lighted candles and bouquets of flowers, up and down the winding streets, Mott street, Mulberry street, Hester and Canal, blessing them all.

Bermuda or Mott Street

Just when our fortunes were at their lowest ebb and there was nothing in the bank and we were wondering whether the printer would let us go to press with the four hundred and fifty dollars still owing him, a friend sent in fifty dollars. She had been planning a trip to Bermuda for her vacation but St. Joseph must have nudged her. Thank you both, God love you!

Class Enemy?

Our latest guest at St. Joseph's house is a Russian boy who was injured in the Gastonian textile strike in 1931 in a clash with a picket. Boris was a national guardsman and received a clout over the head which landed him in the hospital for eight months. Our opponents, the upholders of violent revolution as a means to achieving peace, would consider him a class enemy inasmuch as he was on the opposite side in a strike. But realizing that our conflict is with principalities and powers rather than with human beings, we see in Boris a fellow-member of The Mystical Body, badly in need of indoctrination.