

Appeal - October 1961

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, October 1961, 2.

Summary: With the bank account at one dollar and grocery bill to pay, she appeals for help. Says "I like writing an appeal when we literally have nothing." (DDLW #785).

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175 Chrystie St.
N.Y. 2 October 1961.

Beloved:

That is what you are to the Lord, and to us too, and since I pray every day for all who read the paper and write for the paper, for those who eat with us and for those who send us the help which enables us to feed the 6,000 or so who sit at our table each month, consider yourselves well prayed for. St. Teresa said she was so grateful a heart that she could be bought (I suppose she meant her gratitude could be bought) with a sardine. Another time she said she was so poor in her convent that they did not have the fuel to cook a sardine, if they had had a sardine. That is the state we are in now. I asked Charles Butterworth how much money we had in the bank yesterday and he said a dollar. St. Francis would say that is good to be flat broke, but the grocer in the country who has supplied us with staples all summer does not feel that way. We have been so overwhelmed with guests, ambassadors of God, as Peter Maurin used to say, that our bill there is over \$2,000 and since he is a neighborhood grocer, he cannot pay his supply house and his shelves are getting empty and he is losing customers. There is no co-operative near and we do not believe in the abolition of private property through chain stores.

No use saying I do not worry, and sometimes I think the destitute have more faith than I do. People do not stop coming, nor do they go away. One time last month we ran out of food at dinner, and Dianne called out, "We have no more, you will have to go away." But no one went. They just sat, and she raked and scraped up an impromptu soup from everything in the larder. Just to sit down and have something hot in their stomachs, even on so hot a day, – to know us in the breaking of bread, to know each other in the breaking of bread, to know Christ in the breaking of bread, that is what it meant.

When Dianne, who had been cooking all that day to give Stuart time off, said

sadly, “you will have to go away,” I thought of Tom Sullivan (who is teaching now) and how he said about our two useless horses at the farm at Newburgh that had sore feet and could never work, – “Let’s give them a bag of oats and tell them to go away.” (We managed to sell the horses.) How hard it is to always be anxiously looking over the food to see if there is enough to go around.

But of course there will always be enough, I know this when I write this semi-annual appeal to try to catch up on our bills. I picked up the Scriptures and opened up on the very page where God was giving directions to Moses about the manna. “Only take enough for the day,” He told them, “and the day before the Sabbath, enough for two days.” If they tried to store up more it turned to corruption in their hands.

I like writing an appeal when we literally have nothing, when we have to send it out piecemeal, borrowing money to do so, and then joyfully open the letters to see whom we are hearing from. Dianne and Stuart are so confident that they have told our landlord we will take the big storeroom next day for the additional \$75 a month so we can take care of the children in our neighborhood who are running in and out all day. Young Angel, who seems like anything but an angel when he climbs on our roof and sends down bags of water (water bombs) on our heads, and young Israel and all the others who sing compline with us at night will now have more of a place with us by day. One more kind of war, that of the children and adults, will be lessened and appeased. It is all part of the work of making peace. And for all this work , we ask you again with loving gratitude, to help us.

Yours, in Christ Who is our Peace,
Dorothy Day