

Spring Appeal

Dorothy Day

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Summary: An appeal for money to carry on the work of hospitality, and to buy and repair an old house. Compares the CW approach to the city and states' way. Notes that Jesus tells us to ask for what we need, and that our Heavenly Father knows what we need. (DDLW #251).

Spring, 1967

St. Joseph's House of Hospitality

175 Chrystie Street

New York, N.Y. 10002

Dear fellow workers in Christ,

We reach those we can, which means those who come to our door. Holy Mother the city and holy Mother the State are doing much to relieve the want of the unemployable and the displaced. But there is plenty of room for the non-governmental agencies, and for the individual who believes with Eric Gill that Jesus Christ came to make the rich poor, and poor holy.

I think most of us wish to be poor, to simplify our lives, to throw out the trash and make more room for the good – to put off the old man and put on the new – to be new creatures, as St. Paul said. It's the essence of Spring that it makes all things new, though there is not much suggestion of Spring on this March snowy day that I write. But none of us wish to be destitute. And it is the destitute who come to us day after day for help. "Deal your bread to the hungry and take those without shelter into your house," we are told at the beginning of Lent. That has meant that we have grown into a community of sorts, and somehow or other the Lord has blessed us and sent us what we needed over the years. But He told us to ask. "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you." I love those words and recommend them to all. Pascal even elaborated on the second part and put the words into the mouth of our Lord, "You would not seek me if you had not already found me," thinking, I suppose, that there is no time with God. The seeking is the finding. So I write with confidence in regard to the rest of the Lord's words and I am asking again, and knocking again at your doors, as we have done for many years, twice a year, and you have kept answering. But it is like the manna, there is enough for the day, and we never have anything left over. Someone said once, "You are certainly

a success in your voluntary poverty. You have managed to maintain it for these many years.” But again I repeat, it is not destitution, but a sharing which the Lord Jesus enables us to do because He continues to multiply the Loaves and Fishes for us, day after day. What need of foundation funds, or government funds, to do the work we do? St. Hilary commented once, “The less we have of Caesar’s the less we will have to render to Caesar.” And Jesus Himself said, “Your Heavenly Father knows you have need of these things,” food and shelter, and the means to keep on doing the work He has given us to do, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

It is the month of St. Joseph, traditionally speaking, and being a woman I appeal in the name of St. Joseph as the head of our house and he in turn appeals to the foster Son he cared for. Nothing like having intermediaries! So now I am appealing to him, not only to send us the money, through your generous hands, to pay our bills, but also to help us obtain the house we are trying to buy to take the place of the scattered apartments we are now living in. (The roof is in danger of falling in on the house we occupy during the day for office, meeting room and breadline.) We must move, but how, when the housing code calls for such changes in the repair of a house before we can move in: which four contractors estimate will cost us \$50,000? An enormous sum, which we shudder to think of, let alone ask St. Joseph to concern himself with. And yet, the city estimate of the cost of a new house to provide shelter for homeless women is \$700,000, according to a news story, whereas the house we have in view costs \$35,000 plus the repairs of \$50,000. As I speak of these sums it is almost as though I were playing a game of Monopoly with my grandchildren and not talking about Catholic Worker needs.

But to count the way city agencies count – we have provided 8,760 nights’ lodging for **women** (not counting the men) in the last year, and at Chrystie Street alone have served meals to 109,500 guests, men and women, those who work with us as volunteers and those who come to get help, because we all sit down to the same table, “knowing Christ and each other in the breaking of bread.”

So, hoping against hope, as St. Paul said, I appeal to you again, our dear readers and fellow workers.