

Feast of St. Joseph

Dorothy Day

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Summary: An appeal asking for contributions for mounting bills. Describes their coffee and soup lines, and says there should be hospices in every parish, and "where in faith one sees Christ in the old, crippled, the mentally and physically destitute. (DDLW #927).

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Dear Fellow Workers in Christ:

How good it is during Lent to read the stories of God's unquestioning love for the poor. I mean it seems as though He loved them especially for their poverty which keeps them helpless at the gate, as Lazarus was, unable to do anything for themselves. The stories of Jesus were simple, and echoed those of the prophets—we are to share our bread with the hungry and take the harborless into our house.

It is always hard to write an appeal for funds even though our Holy Father said a few years ago that one should never be afraid to go into debt to take care of the needy, and He went on to talk of "the eminent dignity of the poor." We write this spring appeal in the name of St. Joseph whose month it is. No use asking him to help us write it. He was a man of few words. We will ask his help in fasting from speech for a few days after we finish. That should please him! We will ask him, too, to move your hearts to send us to help pay our ever larger bills, the running expenses of our family.

It takes six pounds of coffee, five pounds of sugar and eight quarts of milk (so Charlie says) to serve our coffee line in the morning. At Peter Maurin farm, we bake and send into the city 300 pounds of bread a week and are given a good deal besides. The soup we serve is good pea and bean soup with plenty of vegetables. We cannot treat each man in the line individually or see his particular need, or love him as we would wish, seeing that each one is unique, each one loved by God in a special way; but by cooking as Roger and his crew are doing, with care and skill, we do what we can. And then there are those who come to live with us at St. Joseph's house, and Maryfarm and Peter Maurin farms are always full to bursting.

A few weeks ago I went to visit old Willie Doyle in the city farm on Staten Island. He is old and crippled but he seemed very young and spry compared to

the bent and palsied aged I saw there. I hunted him through dreary corridors, down dormitories where there was a futile attempt at privacy made by placing half walls of metal between the beds. Finally I found him in the basement smoking room, which was as grey as the rest of the building, an ugly uniformity everywhere, as bare and gaunt, as hopeless and dreary as any punishment cell in any penal institution. Willie was warm and sheltered and fed. Dealing in the tens of thousands as they do, the city could do no better. But what a reminder of the need for hospices in every parish in the country, where in faith one sees Christ in the old, the crippled, the mentally and physically destitute. The city and organized charities do a tremendous job, but there are always the odds and the ends. Even the Welfare Department of the great City of New York feels called upon again and again to appeal to us, too.

“You who are fasting now in Lent,” St. Gregory writes, “these are the men I bid you help. Clasp the afflicted man as if he were gold. Take the sufferer into your arms as if he were your own health, the welfare of your wife and children and all your house. Men shackled by illness, men cooped in some narrow lodging place or corner, like Daniel in the den; these wait for you, the friend of the poor, to be another Habacuc to them.” Please work with us and send what you can.

Gratefully in Christ,
DOROTHY DAY