

Fall Appeal - October 1968

Dorothy Day

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Summary: An appeal for help on the mortgages for their new house on Christie Street. Reminds us that love of the poor requires an act of faith, as sometimes love is a hard struggle. (DDLW #890).

Beloved fellow workers:

Last year at this time I wrote my appeal from our old house on Chrystie Street and the apartments on Kenmare Street. I wrote then about Cesar Chavez' farm workers, who were living with us then, organizing the boycott in New York, of table grapes, 95% of which are grown in California and picked by hand by the most neglected of the poor in the country – the agricultural workers. The strike is still going on, the boycott is still in effect. Here in greater New York the pickets are being given hospitality by the Seafarers International Union in Brooklyn. I spoke of their hard work, their non-violent resistance to injustice, their patience, the long suffering of the poor.

This Fall, I am writing you news about our new house, into which we moved in July. The house is full, we are all under one roof and aside from paying rent on a little store across the street which will be our clothes room, and for two apartments for two of the women who have been with us for years and need to be alone, the cost of housing is covered by quarterly payments on our two mortgages. Hans Tunnesen, who has cooked for many years at our Tivoli farm, said once, "No matter what happens, nothing matters as long as we are together!" Peggy wrote once that the question God will ask each of us as we pass beyond and come before Him is, "Where are the others?" The others, of course, are the neighbors we might have passed on the road, those fallen ones we encounter. I mean those who are termed the unworthy poor, who may never be able to help themselves. I must confess that it is a more reasonable work to help the poor to help themselves, as the saying is, or to work for justice rather than charity. But we are taught in the New Testament to go beyond reason, and live by faith – faith that it is Christ Himself in the poor whom we are helping and loving.

"To recognize that we love calls for a great act of faith, of which there is only one thing to say: do it. Believe that God has created you and renewed you in such a way that you love. Believe it, and you will discover that it is true." (**A New Catechism**, Herder and Herder) Dear Lord, I believe in love. Help Thou mine unbelief.

They say that the early Christians got tired of hearing the Apostle John, the one who lived the longest of all the apostles, telling them to love. "Dearly beloved," he wrote, "Let us love one another . . . Everyone that loves is born of God and knows God. He that loves not, knows not God, for God is charity . . . My dearest, if God has so loved us, we ought to love one another." So we love Mike and Scotty, and Paul and Arthur and all our fellow fools for Christ, as St. Paul puts it, and sometimes we grow in love, and sometimes it seems a hard struggle to love and we have to remind ourselves that we love God as much as the one we love the least. Certainly living together, working together, eating together helps us grow in love. It is good to see the fellows take turns to wash the feet of an old sick man every night. It is good to see the young and beautiful serving with gentle kindness the miserable and corrupt who have not yet "put on incorruption." To go on in the faith, hope and love which makes all things bearable.

It is our friends and readers who have helped us buy this house, which has two mortgages and has cost an immense sum to rebuild according to law for occupancy. Our creditor, the bread man, for instance, has let our bill run to five hundred dollars or more. The grocer's bill is almost two thousand. There are the quarterly payments on the mortgages, and can anyone take a third one to help drag us out of the deep debt which oppresses us? Every dollar sent in counts, and a dollar buys a lot of beans for the soup. So help us again, as you have helped us these past years, since 1934!

With love and gratitude,

DOROTHY DAY