

Fall Appeal - October/November 1978

By Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, October-November 1978, 2.

Summary: Decries money spent on armaments that should be for care of the poor. Appeals "for loaves and fishes, or money to buy them." Reaffirms Holy Poverty for themselves in solidarity with the poor they serve. Receiving no salary, some workers take part-time jobs to support themselves. (DDLW #592).

Dear Friends,

"Unto old age and gray hairs, O Lord, forsake me not!"

There is poverty and hunger and war in the world, and preparations for more war. There is desperate suffering, with no prospects of relief. Yet, countries are making armaments. They are using the money that should feed and care for the poor to make instruments of death for the young and healthy.

But we would be contributing to the misery and desperation of the world if we failed to rejoice in the sun, the moon, and the stars, in the rivers which surround this island on which we live, in the cool breezes on the bay, in what food we have, and in the benefactors God sends.

St. Teresa of Avila, whose feast falls in October, said she had 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, they were so poor they didn't have sticks to make a fire to cook a sardine – if they had a sardine. But she also said, fiercely, that she would rather the walls of her convents fall in on them than that they should lose Holy Poverty. So, we are not asking you to take away from us that great gift, we are just asking you to keep the work going.

It is good that our work has to be conducted in this way – that we must live in the same insecurity and worry as the great masses of poor, whose cause we espouse. It is the hand-to-mouth existence Christ lived, Who had no place to lay His head, and Who took His meals as He wandered through the cornfields with His disciples, or sat on a hilltop after an afternoon of discoursing. We are privileged in sharing somewhat in His poverty, and having to ask in order to continue our work.

"We are trying not to be burdensome to you," as St. Paul said, since it is the work for which we are appealing, not ourselves. We all work here without salaries, as you know. And, those of us who do not have to be "on the job" all the time at St. Joseph House and Maryhouse are modeling themselves on St. Paul, who supported himself while he was preaching to the Corinthians. But many of those living with us must be fed and sheltered, because they cannot get jobs on account of age or sickness.

So, we are begging you again for loaves and fishes, or the money to buy them.

And, since we know the Lord will multiply them for us, as He always has in the past, we are thanking you now.

Gratefully yours in Christ,
DOROTHY DAY****