

Spring Appeal - April 1957

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, April 1957, 2.

Summary: Begs for help as they are about to begin their 25th year of serving the poor. Compares the Catholic Workers to the desert fathers in their humility, gentleness, and the way their actions show a standard of values that turn the world upside down. (DDLW #720).

MARCH, 1957
ST. JOSEPH'S HOUSE
223 CHRYSTIE ST.
NEW YORK 2, N.Y.

Dear Fellow Workers in Christ:

Last week we were reading Helen Waddell's translation of *The Desert Fathers* and she writes, "their every action showed a standard of values which turned the world upside down. It was their humility, their gentleness, their heart-breaking courtesy that was the seal of their sanctity."

I could not help but think of this when we were saying our daily rosary in the library and was distracted by the bent backs, the crouching figures, the absorption of those who live with us, work with us and in these few moments each day pray with us. (It is the only religious exercise we have, and that, of course, is not compulsory.) I am not meaning to compare the men of our household with the Desert Fathers, but just the same, their lives do indeed contrast with that of the world – their baggy clothes which never fit, their complete lack of self-consciousness, their satisfaction with little – food, warmth, shelter, and a chance to live with and serve others. These are the men who make the coffee and put out the bread in the mornings, who mop up the floors, who prepare and cook the meals and wash up after them. Who paint the house, put new pipe in it, who see improvements to be made and make them, who help get the paper out and this appeal too, who take up each need as it come, whether of food, or clothes, and give of their own too. One feast day we had chicken and the very men who prepared it had to take eggs because it would not stretch.

And the beauty of it is that in every parish, in every poor neighborhood one could find in a day the men to run a house of hospitality, if only a few – two or three – would get one started.

God knows, there is always the need; the poor we'll always have with us, poor in mind and soul and body. We all fall into that category in one way or another. We are the stewards, the staff here at *The Catholic Worker*, and we are not ashamed to beg from you who have, for those who have not, because we know you are ready to give.

We are beginning our 25th year this May and the soup line goes on, and though we get the clothes we need, and the furnishings, we have to pay for our food, our fuel, our utilities. Sixty cents will pay for a bed in a cubicle in a hotel on the Bowery for our overflow.

If everyone would help a little, if you in your abundance will supply their want, as St. Paul said, we will be most deeply grateful. We ask in the name of St. Joseph, whose month this is, and he will bless you, as he has always blessed us, and will teach you to grow in that love of God because you have shown merciful love for his creatures.

Gratefully, in the love of God,
Dorothy Day.