

A New Year Begins

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Summary: Lauds their daily routine of prayer, reading, and hospitality in New York and around the country. Says they feed 900 for breakfast, and a couple of hundred at lunch and supper. (DDLW #369).

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Stanley, Teresa and I were walking home from the library down at Chatham Square on East Broadway. It was one of those cold sparkling evenings with a bright moon and crackling stars. You could eat and drink the air it was so good.

“There used to be a well in the middle of Chatham Square,” said Teresa, “where everyone came for water.”

“There are still two wells on Mott street from which factories get their water,” Stanley said.

“There used to be a stream on Canal street, and Mr. O’Connell used to fish there,” Teresa went on, longingly.

“And there used to be a twenty-acre lake just off Canal street, but they filled it all in,” Stanley added.

Times are changed since those days in old New York, but I was thinking as they chattered on either side of me, that the Catholic Worker had not changed much these last eight Advents. The work goes on, the paper comes out, the most important thing seems to be meals and beds, and people who need them. This very evening before we stopped at the library we were looking for another House of Hospitality, not too far away from Mott street, to take care of an overflow of women in need, one of whom will have a baby by the time we get the new house.

Our days are the same. Mass and Communion, breakfast, and people all the day, people in need, and people who want to help, trying to know God, to love Him and serve Him in their fellows. And that is all that life is. The writing, the traveling and speaking flow out of it. The reading and study are to enable us to do it better. The moments that we have now are what count. The past is gone and the future we cannot know, thank God.

“This is My Refreshing!”

And how important is the work of each one of us! The men in the kitchen, the men who run the breadline, the fellow who keeps the yard clean, old Pop who straightens up the fifth floor. They are working for each other. They are working for the movement all over the country. And they are doing the most important work. “*This is my rest, refresh the weary, and this is my refreshing,*” the Lord said. (Isaias 28.12.)

Last month a Daily News reporter wrote a story about missions and places where a down-and-outer could get something to eat. He came when we were lowest in food in the summer, and he came at the end of the line that night, so all he got was hot boiled cabbage (he mentioned that it was hot) and black bread. He said that one was treated well at the CW but he said that “150 a day were fed.” This hurt Peter Clark and John Cannan, who have charge of the breadline in the morning and the lunch and supper at night respectively. There are 900 or so to breakfast and a couple of hundred for both lunch and supper. None could criticize Peter’s coffee and John’s meals have been so good, so often—soup for lunch and meat, potatoes and salad for supper—that he thought it was too bad the world should have been informed otherwise. Never mind, these fellow workers of ours are refreshing the Lord, and not just a Daily News reporter.

Ask any of these men if we should feed the hungry in Europe and they know only one answer, because they are the poor, they are the little ones of Christ. They know poverty, they have been on breadlines, they have heard talk of the undeserving poor. They are not teachers, scholars, diplomats. They have been the destitute, and now they are the poor. “Those who are in honor are without understanding.”

Our Father Compassionate

Pius XII warns us against “the peril of moral depression, a want of confidence consequent upon the weakness of Faith, Hope and Charity. Now, these three theological virtues, rays of light and bonds of love between man and God, gain fresh fire from the flames darting from the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. In contemplating this Heart and its open wound, men would come to understand that God is for them not only the Lord who must be served and before whom one must tremble, but He is also the compassionate and tender Father, who is to be loved and who loves. Then the most depressed heart would beat high again and the most perturbed spirit be calmed.”