

Fall Appeal - October/November 1975

By Dorothy Day

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Summary: Speaks of loneliness and how community dispels it, even though quarrels sometimes erupt. Explains where the title of her autobiography, The Long Loneliness, came from. (DDLW #564).

Month of the Teresas and Francis,
also our Guardian Angels

Dear fellow workers in Christ,

Once I was visiting John Cort's large family, while his wife was in the hospital having another baby. "Go easy on that honey there," he said benignly to the rest of his brood sitting around the breakfast table, devouring pancakes. "We have another mouth to feed, as of today."

I thought of that as inclement weather increased our population at the farm, where I am staying this month, and more men had come in "off the road." These sayings come into our minds as we start worrying about bills. To pay for Maryhouse's repairs as we go along (no debts there), we have had to run up bills at St. Joseph's house and the farm—food, heating, light, taxes, mailing of the paper, and this appeal, with costs going up all the time. "Always enough for one more. Everyone just takes a little less." "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God." (St. Luke 17:26).

One good thing—on the farm there is always work to do. Peter Maurin said, "There is no unemployment on the land." It means "work, not wages," however. (That was a slogan of the radicals of the 30's). Our farm of eighty acres is mostly woods and hillside, but there are ten level acres for farming, and we do raise more vegetables than we can use or preserve. Plenty to go to the city for the soup line at harvest time. There are three goats and a heifer, and a few chickens. Most of the young people here are vegetarians, though we have meat once a week on Sunday, and cheese and eggs (occasionally) and plenty of beans for the other days. If it is not the agronomic university that Pete Maurin longed for, it is at least a hint of it, a beginning.

Community is a dispeller of loneliness, which so many of the poor and afflicted suffer from. Stanley Vishnewski, who joined us back in 1934, regales us with Lithuanian sayings, one of which is, "It is better to quarrel than be lonely." As in every family, there are occasional outbreaks of wrath, and of course, in our extended family of 60 or 70 on the farm, they break out now, and again, as they also do at First Street in the city. Little samples of class war, race war, flare up in the men's dormitory, which is often crowded, in bad weather especially. War between workers and scholars, and black and white, occasionally erupts. It is good practice to exercise our faith in nonviolent resistance.

“Better to quarrel than be lonely.” Stanley’s reminder comforts me, because loneliness is a real suffering, like hunger and cold. The title of my book, **The Long Loneliness** (part of an autobiography) was a phrase in a saying of Mary Ward, a nun put into prison in the seventeenth century in England for following her radical vocation in the world, instead of in the enclosure. Maisie Ward wrote her biography in a book, published in 1933, called **The English Way**. “Now begins the Long Loneliness,” Mary Ward wrote. That loneliness is felt by the prisoner, the patients in mental hospitals, and indeed, by all of us at one time or another. (Readers have often asked me where the title came from.)

Somehow, the Catholic Worker houses (and many continue to spring up around the country) have come to be dispellers of that loneliness. There is, indeed, a sense of family, and I rejoice in it when I see our 85,000 copies of the paper going out all over the continent—indeed, around the globe.

To all those who read our appeal, who have kept this work going over the years, we appeal again and pray God to bless you. You are part of us and we love you. “Love is an exchange of gifts,” some saint wrote—I think it was St. Ignatius.

Thank you, also, for the grace which gratitude brings to us (grace being a participation in the divine life). It gives us increased strength and love to keep going.

Your fellow worker in Christ,

DOROTHY DAY