

# About Many Things in N. Y. And on Farm

Dorothy Day

*The Catholic Worker*, July-August 1939, 1, 3, 4.

\*Summary: A collection of “odds and ends of things that happen around the Catholic Worker:” cleaning, weddings and births, the activities of the Mott Street office, *CW*’s correspondence, a day at Maryknoll, the Easton farm, and her plans for some recently donated property on Staten Island. Notes “To live with children around is good for the spirit.” (DDLW #344).\*

This column has always been to write about the odds and ends of things that happen around the *Catholic Worker*, to tuck in the bits of news that are forgotten until the last minute. Sometimes the most important news appears here, such as the birth of a new baby this past month to Frank and Loretta O’Donnell. They have four boys now and it was a joyous sight to see three of them at Mass on the farm. Damien, the oldest of the four, and he will be four in September, leads not only his own family but the whole farm in saying grace at meals, when he dines with us all at the communal table. He says it very heartily indeed.

## Activity in Mott St.

Out in the back yard Gerry O’Shaughnessy is engaged in mending shoes. Out of two discarded pairs he can make one good pair. Also we are buying leather and rubber heels and many of our friends from the coffee line come in to use the equipment on hand.

In the circulation office there is now a sewing machine and a tailor, one of the Union of Unemployed, mends clothes every day. There is many another shop we could set up if there were space for them. Next month Eddie Priest is removing his print shop to the barn on the lower farm and combine bee-culture with his craft as printer. Which means a reception room for the office on Mott Street. It’s pretty hard for our visitors, two or three groups at a time, to try to engage in discussion in the one crowded office we have. And also it is pretty hard for those who are engaged in filing and typing and letter answering, to concentrate on the work to be done with the constant stream of visitors.

We had intended this summer to make a sitting room out of the back yard, but the men from the line are using it as a place to mend shoes and clothes and every available place is taken.

## A Day of Ferocious Activity

A day of ferocious activity. The heat has kept up so long that everyone got tired of drooping around about it and got to work, manual work. Filing, typing, writing letters and articles for the paper—everything came to a stop. Even visitors were conversed with on the run. Everybody was busy. There was a good excuse for it. A wedding was slated for the next day. Kitchen and dining room were the scene of the first activities. There was no money for paint so everything had to be scrubbed, benches, tables and floor. It may not look clean to our friends and visitors but we know that it is. The stairs were scrubbed down, windows washed and fresh curtains put up. . . . All that took place last night. And today after the wedding the fever of cleanliness still possessed us. I can say us because I washed dishes for an hour or so during the breakfast at which fifty people were served. Now, thanks to Dorothy Gillespie, from Ironton, Minnesota, the curtains are washed and ironed for the editorial office and thanks to Joe Zarrella the room is scrubbed and polished. Joe is still polishing while from the middle of the floor, Peter Maurin indoctrinates two visitors from Connecticut and Ohio.

Joan Ayres and Timothy O'Brien are the two who received the Sacrament of matrimony, at the seven o'clock Mass at Transfiguration. Breakfast followed immediately and lasted until ten. Frank O'Donnell drove in with a crowd from the farm for the wedding, his wife, Jim and Helen Montague and the baby, Frank Mammano, Stanley Vishnewski, Dan Irwin, John Filliger, and several visitors who had been vacationing there.

The wedding was no sooner over when we began making sandwiches for the eighteen who were going back out. There were nine children among them, Mary, Christina, Catherine, Georgia, Annie and Jo-jo Giogas; Roderick and Roland Maul and Eiliner Woods.

Tim and Joan are going to live at 163 Mott Street, one flight up, so they will have a lot of visitors. Many of our friends hereabouts live five flights up and are practically hermits.

## Letters

Those of the staff who try to keep up the filing report that we are receiving more letters than ever before. It is hard to answer all these letters satisfactorily. Often, in the rush of work, we can only send brief acknowledgment. The letters we wish to answer at length we often save for several weeks so we beg our readers to be patient.

We used to get a little paragraph from "one" who evidently did not wish to burden us with answering. He or she sends in a dollar every week and this steady contribution surely is a Godsend. Often it pays for a bed when the house is crowded (actually three beds, as we put up our surplus guests over on the Bowery) and many a time it has paid for dinner. Now "one" (We recognize the handwriting

on the envelope) does not write any more. This taciturnity is disturbing to us who are garrulous. Impersonal as the missives were, they were most enjoyable. What about sending us quotes from what you are reading—anything—but do come out of the silence!

A young priest sent us a half dozen holy pictures which had been touched to the relics of St. Teresa of Lisieux, St. John Vianney, St. Dorothy, St. Bernadette, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Albert, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. Margaret Mary, Blessed Imelda, and asks for a prayer that he will become a holy priest. This is to let him know, if he is reading this, that Margaret Bigham of the Rochester House, Julia Porcell and Caroline Clements of the New York House, Florence Weinfurter of the Milwaukee House and Dorothy Gillespie of Minnesota, all have one of the cards, and they are all remembering to pray for him. And so am I.

## **Maryknoll**

Last Sunday a crowd of us, Peter Maurin, Eddie Priest, Margaret Bigham, Julia Porcell, Paul Lee, a Korean, and I drove up to Maryknoll for the Day of Departure. Father Hessler, Fr. Krock, Fr. Duchesne and others of our friends are on their way now to the Orient and we were both loath and glad to see them go. Glad that they had not been chosen for administrative or teaching jobs, glad that they were setting off for the high adventure; sorry that we were no longer going to enjoy their visits to Mott Street on their rare days off.

It is indeed a high adventure and it was a moving experience to go up there and say goodbye to them. They are going to the ends of the earth, to a life of danger, of toil and hardship, a life of loneliness often, but the love of God warms their hearts, and they are going with a high spirit of loyalty and sacrifice in the service of a King for whom they would be happy to lay down their lives. May they always keep that spirit of adventure, that thrill of the spirit, which is so contagious, and may they light the fire in many hearts. Modern crusaders, their weapons prayer, they go with courage to whatever awaits them. When we recite compline in all our groups it is always with a thrill that we respond to the call, “May the Divine Assistance remain always with us,” with the reply, “and with our absent brethren!”

## **Farm**

Catherine Reser’s article takes the place of the regular farm column this month, so here are bits of news from Easton. The greatest news is that we had Mass every day during the month of July. Father Joseph Woods of Portsmouth Priory was with us for two weeks (three Sundays) and Father Palmer of Brooklyn is still there. These two men have brought a sense of peace and power to us all and given us a perspective in regard to our work. They have brought to the

work gifts that we can never repay and we will be forever in their debt. May God bless them both!

It is hard to measure the progress in the spirit. Father Faber says that if we are constantly checking up on ourselves and making beginnings, we are on a safe path. Having priests with us helps us to make these beginnings, to renew our courage and our fervor.

Having children on the farm is also a great good to the place. In addition to the eight or nine visiting children, there are Teresa and Arthur, Maurine, and the O'Donnell's four children who belong to the place. To live with children around is good for the spirit. It develops patience and makes one realize that farms and communities grow slowly like children. There is the physical business of three meals a day, the sleeping and eating and raising food and shelters for eating and sleeping. And the impatience that many feel at the repetition of daily tasks for these mundane needs is mitigated. The children are growing and developing though it seems as though only yesterday they were tiny infants.

John Mella is back from Minnesota where he and his wife and baby were visiting relatives, and soon his little family will join him on the farm too. One more baby with us.

## Acquisitions

John Filliger is proud of his new hay wagon, a sturdy, low-slung affair which looks as though it would last forever. We also have canning equipment—pressure pot, canner, and cans, and the last day I was down at Easton, twenty quarts of beets were stored away, and twenty quarts of blackberries. The work was going on apace because there was a lull between batches of children, and they could use the barn to work in. Now they will probably set up outdoor canning operations. It is strange to think of lack of space in the country as well as in the city, but so it is. Next year our Harlem and relief children will go down to a Staten Island beach where we have a lot, but no building. St. Joseph will have to find the way to put up a cabin on it for us, big enough for ten children and three or four adults. We came into possession of the lot too late to do anything about it this year, but next year will see us clam-digging and fishing and establishing a garden in Staten Island.