

Fall Appeal - November 1953

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Says they are servants of those who send help for the work of hospitality. Notes their continuance is a miracle and that their purpose is to show the providence of God. (DDLW #658).

Dear Fellow Workers,

Our dear Lord Jesus has told us how to reckon with our talents so as to increase our goods and indeed rather specifically. Right after the parable of the talents, He tells the story of the shepherd separating the sheep from the goats. The “blessed of the Father” are those who fed the hungry and thirsty, gave hospitality to others, clothed the naked, visited the sick and the prisoner. They will possess all things, more even than the hundredfold promised. O the importance of hospitality, how it is stressed! In Luke 11 right after teaching the disciples how to pray He goes right on to tell the story of the friend coming to ask for bread for still another friend who has just come ill off a journey. This work of mercy isn’t even for “the poor” but for a friend. Over and over again we are asked to imitate God’s generosity, because everything we have belongs to Him anyway and He can give or take away in the twinkling of an eye. “Keep on asking for help for the works of mercy for hospitality,” He tells us, “and if only for your importunity, you will get help.”

Sometimes I think the purpose of the Catholic Worker, quite aside from all our social aims, is to show the providence of God, how He loves us. We are a family, not an institution, in atmosphere, and so we address ourselves especially to families who have all the woes of insecurity, sin, sickness and death, side by side with the joys of family. We talk about what *we* are doing because we constantly wonder at the miracle of our continuance.

For twenty years now we have maintained St. Joseph’s House of Hospitality and fed, clothed and sheltered tens of thousands. The breadline still goes on—about five hundred meals served daily. (Just since the last appeal that means 91,000 meals served. This isn’t accurate, of course. It’s probably more.) Fifty people share the house in New York and about 25 each at Maryfarm, Newburgh, and Peter Maurin Farm, Staten Island. Just the heating bill for these places is appalling. Tom Sullivan, who has to sit down and face the bills which come in, is the one who is most growing in faith. “Lord, I believe these bills will be paid.

Help Thou my unbelief.” No use trying to be business-like. None of us have that talent. The paper sells for a cent a copy and the printing bill is big: No salaries are paid to anyone. So there is not that overhead. We want far more than a weekly wage. We want God to teach us love. Without it we are sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

We are asking you who are poor yourselves, you who have no room in your homes to personally practice some of the works of mercy, to count us your servants, and send us the means to do it for you. We send out this appeal twice a year, and I write this appeal in Church.

Too often we get the credit for the works of mercy, and so, God help us, have our reward. But the Lord will know who was responsible. You’ll get all the credit in Heaven where they keep books quite differently from the way we do here on earth.

If you have no money, maybe you have an extra blanket you can spare, since a lot of ours were burnt up in the fire last spring. If any of you raise wheat maybe you will send us a sack of wheat. I’m not afraid to ask in detail like this. We never get more than the Lord wants us to have. Sometimes we wish He would send enough to build a few houses since we are bulging at the seams at Maryfarm and Peter Maurin Farm, and have plenty of land to spread to. Our village of Christian families, our agronomic universities, will come about, in the Lord’s good time. Meanwhile, we’ll be quite content to get our current bills paid.

May God bless you abundantly and may you, too, grow in love.
Your fellow servants in Christ,

DOROTHY DAY