

Day After Day - January 1942

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, January 1942, 1, 4.

Summary: Laments the country at war. Describes the hectic Christmas period, the many gifts, the ongoing work of hospitality, the illnesses of workers, her travels, and reading for the month. Asks forgiveness for not getting all the letters written. (DDLW #378).

Since ours is the only paper published by a group of Catholic pacifists in the world, and since we are trying to print as much material as possible which throws light on our point of view, we may seem to be overly crowded with one subject. But in this issue there are letters from some of our groups, telling of the works of mercy which are still being carried on; and on the farm page there is a story written by the manager of the Easton Farm, Larry Heaney; there is the delightful article on “Herbs” by Graham Carey, one of the leaders of the decentralist school. There was an article on Racism in Harrisburg, an atrocity story about the victims of class and race war here in America, but we did not use it because we felt it was unintentionally an incitement to class and race war. It was too long and too terrible a tale.

News of the Month

It has been a month terrible in the history of our country and even now as we listen to the radio, and read the newspapers, it is hard to believe that we are in the grip of such a gigantic struggle. It is not only a colossal battle over the face of the earth, against other nations, but it is also the slow beginning of the toppling of the finance capitalist system. Already a Voice speaks in Washington and even Congress is forced to listen and assent, “without controversy.” There will be some debate, it is conceded, over the rise in prices, “a matter which is of interest to every housewife’s heart,” the radio commentator said this morning.

But aside from housewifery concerns there is supposed to be no free discussion on what is taking place today, involving countless millions of men, women and children, half the national income and the very form of our government itself.

At 115 Mott

At St. Joseph's house, Maryhouse, and the office of the CW, the work has gone on as usual, rather more hectic on account of the holidays. Friends overwhelmed us with gifts, and there was plenty of food for the feast days, and also many gifts of clothes came in. If shelter were only as easy to get! Our houses are always crowded and there are always extras to pay for in a Bowery lodging for the night.

Our semi-annual appeal had gone out late in November, so there were many letters to write. And then Christmas presents began to come in, and we have indeed had a hard time to keep up with the mail. We beg our friends to pardon lateness in answering their letters. (Julia begs me to mention that while she was home for the holiday, some of her mail disappeared so please forgive her if she seems to be remiss in answering our friends.)

There was much work to do, cooking and feeding people, and there were the sick to visit. Steve Hergenhan is still at Roosevelt Hospital able to sit up for fifteen minutes a day now. He says he dreams of cold spring water, of sour milk "clabber" just out of the cool cellar at Easton. Edith Fox, one of the girls in from Maryhouse has been in the hospital since Christmas and will be home tomorrow. She is a Swede, with bright blonde hair, only twenty, and she has been helping us, selling the paper on the street. One more country represented in our midst. We like to emphasize nationalities in order to emphasize the universality of Catholicism.

There were other illnesses amongst us and family duties to perform. There were visitors from early morning to late at night, friends from seminaries and colleges who were home on vacation.

So Excuse Us, Please

All this is to get our correspondents to excuse us for seeming remissness in answering the mail. We do, indeed, thank our good fellow workers who remembered our work. May God bless them all.

During the month there was again some travelling, and speaking engagements. December first I spoke at St. Finbar's in Brooklyn, at St. Patrick's in Elmira, visited the house in Baltimore and friends in Montreal.

I had intended to make a west coast trip beginning this month to cover our houses in Seattle and Sacramento and San Francisco. But I am afraid that trip will have to be postponed until April, due to some pressing engagements here in the east, one of them an invitation to speak by Bishop Cushing of Boston. I am looking forward to a more leisurely trip in April, when I can cover more of our houses and groups, and not have to hasten back.

Reading during the past months, mostly during traveling, whether by train, bus or subway, was “The Family” (novel) by Federova; True Devotion by de Montfort; Graham Greene and Sigrid Undset; Darkness at Noon by Koestler; Raissa Maritain’s story of hers and Jacques student days and their friendships; Jacques Maritain’s St. Paul.

For spiritual reading the New Testament and Father Hugo’s notes on Father Lacourtire’s retreat and my own notes taken during our retreat this summer, and Maritain’s St. Paul.