

Spring Appeal - April 1963

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Writing on the feast of St. Joseph, she focuses her appeal around Peter Maurin's call for a philosophy of work and gives examples of "faint beginnings" that illustrate his ideas. (DDLW #802).

BELOVED, - Joy be to you always!

(This was one of St. Paul's greetings.) Here it is time to write to you, our Catholic Worker readers, once again, our semi-annual appeal, for help to continue our work. Our problems are still with us, unemployment and unemployability. Automation is not the whole problem. There will always be destitution of mind and body in many of those around us. We cannot begin to deal with one without dealing with the other. Of course it is better by far that men should be given the means to help themselves. We agree that helping others to "help themselves" is a good thing. But a beginning must be made and often that is a good meal, a place to come to, and the society of others. "It is not good for man to be alone." Our God said it.

How to give a philosophy of work, that elusive thing Peter Maurin was always talking about. That is a problem that is always with us too. Because if fire is twice bread,

as the Arabs say, work is thrice bread. It is good to write about this on St. Joseph's Day because he was a worker, on occasion homeless, a displaced person, in exile for a time, but usually with work enough for him and his Son. We know so little about him, only that he worked hard and dreamed when he was troubled, and prayed, but come to think of it, the Gospel did not say anything about his praying. But with the Benedictines, work is prayer. So we need to pray to St. Joseph to teach us how to work, what to work at, and where the work is.

If we had Peter Maurin's philosophy of work, we would not need to worry. He used to say to people looking for a boss, "fire the bosses." He used to say, "Work—not wages." He used to say, "Labor is a gift, not a commodity, to be bought and sold." All of these are hard sayings, hard to understand and to work out. But to act on them is to make a beginning in building another social order—to lay the first stone in the new city. In all these slums and skid rows of our cities, strangely enough, one sees these ideas in their faint beginnings. The man who makes a push cart out of a discarded baby carriage and collects rags, bottles, cardboard to sell for his rent money; Karl Meyer in Chicago collecting the discarded fruits and broken boxes and dented cans from the trash cans of the alleys of the Gold Coast in Chicago; Ed Forand at our place, going early mornings to the markets to get the discards and to give

a token payment. And I remember too one of our early helpers, Charles Rich, who sold gardenias on the street to pay for bed and board and spent the rest of his time in our great libraries studying about God and man.

When I look around us at Chrystie Street's St. Joseph's House and at the Peter Maurin Farm I see how many there are among us who **have** a philosophy of work, earning their own way and responding to the needs of others in all the "service" work of putting meals on the table each day, cleaning, sorting out clothes, and in endless clerical work which goes with so widespread a community as ours, a never ending and time consuming work.

It is good to apologize here for all the letter answering we **don't** get done, what with too many people around, too much sickness this winter on all sides. Even to visit all our sick in the various city hospitals takes days. Please realize our deep gratitude and know that if you have not been thanked, our Lord blesses you the more abundantly to make up for our lack.

I am praying to St. Joseph to help us work harder, and to prompt your dear hearts to help us again, in the name of God who makes His sun to shine on the just and the unjust and who forgives us all our mistakes, seventy times seven times. May Joy, the light of our souls, be with you always.

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