

Fall Appeal - Oct/Nov 1971

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, October-November 1971, 2.

Summary: Tells of bare cupboards and comments on hunger in the world. Says the war in Laos and Cambodia is producing "a reflected violence at home." Quotes St. Augustine on giving what is superfluous to the poor and that giving be combined with respect for others. (DDLW #514).

St. Joseph's House
36 East First Street, N.Y. 10003
October 1971

Dear fellow workers whom we love:

Last night three people came in a half-hour after dinner was over, and we were cleaned out. The cupboard was bare. We had meatloaf and spinach and by the time I got in from 5:30 Mass the potatoes and gravy were gone and only a cup of spinach remained. A most healthy meal. But there were apples from the farm. God be thanked. Which meant enough apple sauce for everyone that evening and for the soup "lions," as Marge's little children used to call our guests years ago, this morning. As for the late late guests, we had a sack of oatmeal, quick cooking, and with margarine and sugar and coffee and apple sauce, they too were served. Another old man came in later and just wanted two slices of bread. "I have an onion," he said. Even as I was writing this a student came in and asked if he could have breakfast and supper with us. "I'm working part-time and trying to go to school, it would ease the strain if I didn't have to buy meals," he said.

Knowing the cost of one sandwich when I am traveling, I can see how much of our money goes for food for maybe sixty or seventy-three-meals-a-day in town, and the soup line which goes up to 200 according to the time of the month. At the farm they have grown a great amount of vegetables and there are fruit and grapes, so a hundred pound sack of brown rice or whole wheat flour makes everything go far. All this means that I am writing another appeal for help from you, our readers and coworkers. Have you ever read Knut Hamsun's **Hunger**? There is so much hunger in the world even in these times when we can grow so much food.

Hunger makes for bitterness and anger. We are living in a time of violence what with the war extended to Laos and Cambodia. There is also a reflected violence at home, which shows in our thoughts and words often.

St. Augustine has some good advice about voluntary poverty which enables us all to do the works of mercy. "Find out how much God has given you, and from it take what you need; the

remainder which you do not require is needed by others. The superfluities of the rich are the necessities of the poor. Those who retain what is superfluous possess the goods of others.”

To serve others, to give what we have is not enough unless we always show the utmost respect for each other and all we meet. One of the most moving things in the Attica tragedy was the insistence of the blacks that their religion be respected, the garb of the Moslem, the rejection of pork. When one thinks of the pomp of the Church in its worship, “worship the Lord in holy attire,” the Psalmist said; when one remembers that Brother Charles of Jesus was converted by seeing the faithfulness of the Moslem to prayer; when one remembers the integrity and dedication of Malcolm X after his conversion to the Moslem faith, one can only cringe at the lack of respect shown these men of Attica in their demands for religious freedom. Certainly it was one of the demands which could have been negotiated, yet their insistence in that respect for themselves and their fellows only ended in their death.

And I think too that that is what our soup line means. All the young students who live with us show their respect by doing the menial jobs, cleaning toilets, scrubbing floors, washing dishes. Men from this Bowery area also help with the mailing of the 80,000 copies of the Catholic Worker each month. It is a community activity, a little “industry” in which all share in the profits, those profits meaning a place to live, food, clothing, companionship, etc. Of course it is work which men need most. We are ever conscious of that. But we all have that, we are self employed, with no bosses! And no wages! “From each according to his ability and to each according to his need.” Or, as St. Paul puts it, “Let your abundance supply their want.” So God bless us all, and you too, who have helped us over the years, and will again, we know.

Love and gratitude,

DOROTHY DAY