

Day After Day - April 1942

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Summary: Begins with an appeal for two worthy causes—the Bishop’s relief fund for war victims and the New York Catholic Charities. Ponders the role of citizens during wartime and our penchant for choosing men of action, like General MacArthur, as heroes rather than figures like Pope Pius XII. Envisions speaking about rayer in Wartime, the rural life movement, feeding the poor and hungry, and the use of decentralism and other means for producing social change on an upcoming West Coast trip. Denies that her strict pacifism has split the Catholic Worker movement and points out that they face more reader-resistance for their policy against denying aid to the “undeserving” poor. (DDLW #381).

Often this column is used to repair mistakes, to take care of odds and ends that come up at the last minute before going to press. We will start if off at this time by making a belated appeal, first for the Bishop’s relief fund for war victims; and, second, for the New York Catholic Charities drive. Neither of these appeals appeared in the last issue of the paper, where they belonged, because of the terrific press of work. Sometimes there are births and deaths, immediate cases of need, that absorb all our attention, and we overlook most important work to be done. It is because the works of mercy are so important a part of our program.

But now—the dead has been buried, the child has been born, the family in need has been housed and fed, the old man has been put to bed, the demented one has been listened to—and somehow this morning all is calm and quiet and there is time to sit and write. So we beg you, all our readers, to remember how great a place almsgiving plays in our salvation. We sow our earthly treasures to reap heavenly ones; we show our love for our God by our love for our brother. Our Lord Jesus comes to us in His most degraded guise, buffeted and spat upon. He comes to us suffering, and we must help bear His cross like Simon, wipe His face like Veronica, suffer with Him like his mother, wait with Him like John at the foot of the Cross—yes, and rejoice with Him in His resurrection. Those who sow sparingly will reap sparingly. We are all of us trying to put off the old man and put on the new. We are trying to strip ourselves and the poor and suffering give us this opportunity.

Fr. Lacouture says:

“If we cannot see Jesus in the poor man, we surely cannot see Him under the poverty-stricken veils of bread. The reason the world does not love the poor is because the world does not see Jesus in poor—no faith. Faith is finding God where the senses do not see Him and where they are least able to see Him.”

So we beg you all to remember the poor and the suffering, and send your contributions now to the Bishops Committee for the Relief of War Sufferers and to the Catholic Charities of New York. Both can be sent to the latter address, Madison Avenue, New York City.

Fr. Lacouture’s retreats

The spiritual guidance we have received from Fr. Lacouture’s retreat, as given by Father John J. Hugo, Mt. Mercy College, Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, is invaluable. Eighty-five of the Catholic Workers made the retreat either in Pittsburgh or on Maryfarm, Easton, Pa., last year. These are six and seven-day retreats, made in complete silence. The retreats will be given again this summer, and information concerning them may be had by writing Fr. Farina, St. Anthony’s Village, Oakmount, Pa. The schedule is as follows:

July 5th to 13th—for women.

Aug. 2nd to 8th—for women.

July 19th to 25th—for men.

Aug. 9th to 16th—for men.

All retreats begin at 8 o’clock Sunday evening, and close the following Sunday morning, except the August retreat for women, which will close Saturday afternoon.

Since the Fathers who give the retreats and the Sisters who provide hospitality for the guests believe in sowing, they do not make any fixed charge but each retreatant is asked to give what he can afford. Those who say with Peter, “Silver and gold have I none,” can give prayers.

General MacArthur

As I left the house this morning, I took a General MacArthur button away from Jimmie Brazel, one of our fellow workers, who is our air warden. I did it in order to make a point, as Peter would say. Here is one of our earthly heroes, admired and loved by all for his integrity as a soldier, his holding out in the face of gigantic difficulties. He has captured the imaginations of all. His picture is

hung in public places, people hang breathlessly on his words, undoubtedly they remember him in their prayers.

It is true that much hero worship is misplaced, exaggerated, even hysterical. But it is also true that war makes the common soldier realize the tremendous adventurous capabilities of man. Farm boys, laborers, the man in the street is suddenly trained to fly the ocean, to risk his life daily. What is cheered as remarkable in one in peace time is expected of the multitude in time of war. Gruelling hours, constant work, in medical corps, in kitchen police, often heroic sacrifice (these are times when by compulsion soldiers are expected in theory to practice the counsels of poverty, obedience and chastity. If you speak openly of the tolerated and organized brothels and saloons situated near the huge camps, you are traitorous. These things are not supposed to enter into the picture of our heroes' lives.) And if the physical capabilities of our citizens is tapped to such a degree, then what about the spiritual? They have been consistently neglected and neglected, too, by our churchmen.

Pope Pius XII

What about our Holy Father as one of the heroes of the day? Do we wear buttons to remind us of our spiritual leader? Do we hang on his words with breathless interest and greet his every utterance with joy? Do we examine what he says, weigh his words, follow his leadership? Do we meditate on what he has said, do we ponder it prayerfully, do we try to serve under his banner as valiant soldiers of Christ? If we did there would be far more pacifists today, far more conscientious objectors. Read the quotations which we use in the paper. And if you object to quotations, do not read the pamphlet issued by the N. C. W. C. in Washington, 1312 Massachusetts avenue, N. W., entitled "The Pope and Peace," ten cents, which is filled with magnificent quotations from the Holy Father. Read instead all his encyclicals, his letters, and make a collection of them. He is our leader, he is the representative of Christ upon earth.

Traveling Again

April fourteenth I expect to start out on a trip to the West Coast. The things I want to talk about are Prayer in Wartime; the rural life movement in America and our farming communes; on feeding the hungry in our cities; on decentralism as a way of changing the social order; on all the peaceful means, in fact, to be used to change the social order, beginning here and now. I haven't got a cent to pay my fare. I could go from engagement to engagement, and pay my bus fare that way (many people ask me how I get money to travel when I speak for voluntary poverty). It costs forty-five dollars to go from New York to Los Angeles, with all your meals thrown in, on the All-American bus line. A round

trip, covering the whole West Coast, would be about a hundred I guess. If you go from city to city and pay your way from each point instead of buying a round trip, it would be like buying coal as the poor do, by the one hundred-pound bag instead of by the ton. Such is the extravagance of the poor!

From the Mailbag

Mrs. Sheed is quoted to have said that I have split the House of Hospitality movement from top to bottom by “my” pacifism. The Baltimore House is closed, first because of the interracial aspect of the work there, and second because two of the boys in charge were drafted and are now in the Alexian Brothers Hospital in Chicago, working for \$2.50 a month. The Milwaukee House is closed, because all the boys were drafted and there was no one left in the group to live in the house. The San Francisco House was closed because Dick Bourret was working and (he wrote) financial help for the house was lacking. Twenty-eight houses are still running, eight not under our auspices. Many times I have seen the report of forty houses, and this has meant that people were counting the houses that have closed, those that were not under our auspices, and the farms, some of which were given up for lack of workers.

Our circulation remains at 75,000 after cutting down our bundle list drastically. We wish always to be truthful in regard to the extent of our work, and it is too bad that exaggerated statements get about.

The work suffers far more by the withdrawal of support, both in work and in money, from those who claim we are helping the **undeserving** poor, than it does from our pacifism.

Little Joys

After this somber paragraph, let us now close with joyful news. There is a new baby on the Easton Farming commune, the first son born to the family of James Francis Montague. The three little girls are Maureen, Eileen and Patricia, and they are three, two and one year and one month. The mother is well and happy. She went to the hospital with her knitting and “The Master of Hestviken” clutched under her arm. We sent her also a box of peanut brittle and the “Life of Mother Cabrini,” by Fr. Martindale. (It is Mother Cabrini’s Columbus Hospital that Helen goes to have her babies.)

And out in the little park across the street from the women’s house there is a trace of green on the tops of the privet hedges, and you can crane your neck and look up and see the buds swelling on the trees. There are buttonwood trees in the park, with their little round balls hanging therefrom. They are sometimes called sycamore, sometimes plane trees. That is my favorite word for them, since

it recalls the Blessed Mother, who has been called “the plane tree beside the still waters.”

I am writing this on the Feast of the Annunciation, this most wondrous of all feasts, and I am begging her to bless this paper, which is the expression of our work, to bless the work, the Houses, the Farms, the breadlines and, finally, to bless this littlest, latest one among us, James Francis, Jr.