

Day After Day - February 1935

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Notes the many visitors to the Catholic Worker—a Socialist, a bishop, priests, others—small miracles and conversations. (DDLW #214).

This morning a young Socialist to breakfast [sic]. (Usually as I come from mass there is somebody waiting at the door to get in.) He had formerly been a Communist, and now he is a Socialist. He was lamenting the lack of zeal in the Socialist group. “It seems,” he said, “that the Catholic Workers and the Communists have it all.”

We spoke of the arguments as to the existence of God, notably the argument from conscience. The Communists have absolute standards of right or wrong, regardless of what he may say. Their practice of self-criticism prove this. From whom do those standards come? They would say, from Karl Marx or Lenin, I suppose.

In the evening I attended a meeting where there was a young Catholic lawyer who had just returned from a visit to Mexico. He was enthusiastic about the public improvements in the State of Sonora, the playgrounds (there was one place just as good as Jones Beach!) and the roads, and I don't know what-all – and the fact that the peons were earning two pesos a day on some of the plantations and could wear silk stockings! Rodolpho Calles must have some good points, he said. This in spite of the fact that not a church is open in the state and not a priest allowed! When I contemplate civilization which offers us silk stockings and playgrounds and electric ice boxes in return for the love of God, I begin to long for a good class war, with the civilizers and the advertising men for those same civilizers, lined up to be liquidated.

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Bishop Busch of St. Cloud, Minnesota, came in for a call this morning and gave us his blessing. When we saw his book on “The Art of Living with God,” which deals with the “ordinary workings of the Holy Spirit in the human soul,” we took it away from him, with his consent. He had read *The Catholic Worker* in Rome and made up his mind there, he said, to pay us a visit on his way back to his diocese. We were immensely pleased and honored at his visit. He contributed to our work, too, and it was an answer to prayer, because the paper had just come out and we needed money for the mailing. Bless him, dear Lord.

In the afternoon, Father Ehman, from Rochester, came in and we had a good visit, and before he left he blessed Barbara, who is being bothered with her gums, poor baby, and lo! not long afterward the first tooth sprouted, a real miracle, Margaret, her mother, says.

Did I ever mention that other miracle that Margaret boasts of, perpetrated by St. Anthony? An Armenian friend who is a poet had lost a large manuscript on which he had been working for some years. When he came in one evening and told us about it, Margaret started praying immediately to St. Anthony and the very next morning a young lad came in bearing the manuscript. It had been in a large envelope bearing the Catholic Worker address, fortunately. The boy refused to be rewarded and left, taking with him a copy of the Catholic Worker, though he said he was an Episcopalian worker. Nevertheless, Margaret still insists it was St. Anthony in disguise who brought back the epic.

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Franciscan spirit grows hereabouts. Last night Mr. Minas, who is devoted to our black cat, was discovered washing her chest with my washrag and drying her with my towel and then anointing her with a warming unguent for a bad cough! It is good I discovered him in the act. Then big Dan, our chief-of-staff on the streets of New York (who sells the paper, either on Fourteenth Street or in front of Macy's, every day) took one of my blankets to shelter the old horse who helps us deliver our Manhattan bundles of papers every month.

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Father Nicholas, of the Immaculate Conception Church, preaches very good sermons on prayer. This morning he was talking of the gifts of the Magi, frankincense being not only prayer, but union with God. And he pointed out that even the busy housewife, with a raft of young ones about her heels, could be united to God as she went about her daily work. Another Sunday morning, this month, he spoke on ejaculatory prayer—the necessity of making short aspirations of love during the day.

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Went to the Cenacle at three this afternoon, going up on the bus through the heavy fog. The trees on the Drive were beautiful standing out so alone—the only things of beauty in a grey dark world. I love such days, so much is hidden, and only single things like a tree or bush stand out. These are good days to walk in, not too cold, and if you go down by the docks at the foot of 23rd or Fourteenth or Tenth, the world seems to come to an end right there. There is a rare stillness only broken by the sound of the water washing against the piers. And when, as along Riverside Drive you have the trees as well as the sense of the water (if you do not have the sight of it) there is a poignant midwinter beauty, a very restful interlude in a crowded life.

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A Franciscan missionary priest from China came in this evening with Mr. Walsh, who is a pressman down at the American. Mr. Walsh has been one of our supporters for the last year and it is to due to his efforts that many missionary priests in China have received copies of The Catholic Worker. He has lived there some time himself and has a keen interest in the affairs over there.

There was good conversation for some hours and before Father Burtschy left he said that he would see to it that some of the writings of Peter Maurin were translated into the Chinese for one of the two Catholic dailies. It was great to contemplate seeing Peter's Easy Essays in Chinese, but it was astounding to contemplate the fact that there two Chinese Catholic dailies.

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Other interesting visitors during the month were: A Maltese Catholic who spoke glowingly of the devotion to St. Paul, which still exists at the present time on the island of Malta; and a formerly I.W.W. Marine transport worker who was converted to the church some five or six years ago who is interested in The Catholic Worker movement.

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An interesting work which has been undertaken by Robert Cutler and his associates down in Parkersburg, West Virginia, where there are only 2,500 Catholics out of a population of 50,000, is the getting of information about the Church into the secular press and the distribution of Catholic literature.

In the last four months they have distributed 2,500 pieces of literature. There are only four young people undertaking this work, one of them an invalid girl. What they are doing in their community could be done in many others all over the country. Mr. Cutler came up to New York to gather together Catholic literature and pamphlets and found a very generous response wherever he asked for cooperation.