

Day After Day - October 1935

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Shares some of the struggles of survival of the early Catholic Worker effort. Rejoices in the birth of a new baby in the community, for whom she and Peter Maurin will serve as godparents. Neighbors and friends have been generous to the Catholic Workers, presenting gifts from food to sacred images. Shares some intimate moments with her daughter, Tamar Teresa. (DDLW #293).

K Travis, one of the girls in the Teresa-Joseph Cooperative, came in this morning and brought us two big cauliflower and the change from the dollar that bought them. We were deeply touched. It was a bit she made from house cleaning. The cauliflower we can make into a very good dish tonight, combining it with rice and cheese.

We have not bought meat around here since Lent, but we have eaten it, since a Brooklyn friend, Helen McCormick sends over cases of Home Relief Beef every now and then. Sometimes it is very good indeed, and sometimes it tastes like the cattle had gone hungry and thirsty a long time. Margaret is always trying combinations of stews, cooking it with kale from the country, cabbage, plain potatoes, noodles, etc., for our one big meal of the day. Breakfast and lunch both consist of cereal and coffee.

During this past month a new Catholic Worker baby has arrived. Now there is Teresa, Barbara, Christopher and Damien, nine, one and a half, one year, and the last is now just three weeks old. We went to the Christening Sunday night, P. Maurin and D. Day godparents, and afterwards part of the fun of the feast was to see what was in the house to eat. A can of corn, a can of peas, one slice of bacon apiece, tomatoes, cheese, fruit and coffee made a regal repast, prepared and set on the table by the men while the women discussed babies and diets, etc. The guests were rather conscience stricken at eating up everything in the house, there being no money in the Catholic Worker community. But the new mother comforted all with the assurance that there was fruit and oatmeal in the house which would do for breakfast, lunch and supper the next day. It was a joyful occasion, baby slept like a log through the christening, just shooting out his fists at the priest now and then (here's where he gets accused of being anti-clerical) and the supper was enhanced by a fine symphony coming over the radio, and the playing of Heifetz. An occasion such as this holds just about the truest, happiest one can ever know in this life. Thank God for this newest Catholic Worker who may some day be heading a farming commune in this storm-tossed country.

Mrs. de Aragon presented the office with a most gorgeous tapestry of Christ the King, three feet by six, I should say – the copy of a tapestry which hangs in a French cathedral painted by herself. It now graces the office and we feel rich in these specimens of the handiwork of our gifted friends. We now have a magnificent statue of St. Anthony, the one which the Cardinal admired so much when it was exhibited several years ago, an oil painting of St. Anthony brought in by an anonymous friend of the paper in a taxi one early morning; a statue of our Blessed Mother, donated also by the de Aragons which has been blessed by one of the Holy Fathers and journeyed here from Rome, through Spain and South America; a statue of St. Joseph brought to us by Father Dougherty of his parish; a wall piece of Our Lady and the Child, designed by Ade Bethune, and executed in carpet by Lawrence Doyle; and there are also designs and drawings of Ade Bethune who, with Peter Maurin, ranks in the minds of the Catholic Workers as the genius of this concern.

The Month Passes

Went down to the country today to see Teresa and we went walking through the country roads where the fallen leaves were thickest and she could scuff through them. Fall has a special smell which we welcome each year – the smell of burning leaves, or rotting apples, of concord grapes. In the city there is the smell of roasting chestnuts on the street corners, and through the Italian sections, the smell of fermenting wine.

Teresa was filled with the small chatter so dear to a mother's ears. About the feud between the day students and the boarders and how the boarders are going to be real good and show them; how Mother Chiarini is going to have a feast day; how one little girl there has a father and mother abroad; how music lessons are progressing.

It is a dear little school, Teresa's St. Patrick's Academy, nestled down in Richmond, in the center of Staten Island. There is a spirit of simplicity and poverty there, and it makes us happy to go there and visit the tiny chapel and say a few prayer while we wait for Teresa. Down one road there is a bakery from whence comes the warm filling smell of baking. Teresa visited there with Mother Chiarini last week and it was a wonderful place with a baker flinging a huge wad of dough over his shoulder and wielding a knife as big as a scimitar. . . Up another hill is a tall hill with a light house on top of it. Down another road there is an expanse of low land, fading into Arthur Kill. There are woods and fields and hills and the children go for long walks. There is but a patch of land with the convent so they take the country side for their roaming. It is good to walk, to pause in the turmoil of our lives to collect leaves, the seed pods of the gum trees, the mitten leaves of the sassafras, and to try to locate the sleepy crickets, singing in little rock gardens by the side of the path.