

Day After Day - November 1936

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Summary: Reflections on our being children of one Father, thanksgiving, the worth of spreading the "Christian revolution" by distributing the Catholic Worker paper, distributing clothes, and other stories of life on Mott Street. (DDLW #307).**

There is a notebook in my purse in which during the course of the month I jot down quotations from books I am reading, prayers for special occasions, reminders of things to be done, and ruminations in general. Father Gratry said that it was a good idea to write down one's meditations, so though mine sometimes are begun on a crowded street corner and continued in the subway, I jot some of them down afterwards as I have time.

On the Waterfront

As I waited for the traffic light to change on my way to the Seamen's Defense Committee headquarters, I was idly saying my rosary, which was handy in my pocket. The recitation was more or less automatic, when suddenly like a bright light, like a joyful thought, the words *Our Father* pierced my heart. To all those who were about me, to all the passerby, to the longshoremen idling about the corner, black and white, to the striking seamen I was going to see, I was akin, for we were all children of a common Father, all creatures of One Creator, and Catholic or Protestant, Jew or Christian, Communist or non-Communist, were bound together by this tie. We can not escape the recognition of the fact that we are all brothers. Whether or not a man *believes* in Jesus Christ, His Incarnation, His Life here with us, His crucifixion and resurrection; whether or not a man believes in God, the *fact* remains that we are all children of one Father.

Meditation of this fact makes hatred and strife between brothers the more to be opposed. The work we must do is strive for peace and concordance rather than hatred and strife.

On the Farm

The trees are getting bare, but still it stays warm. Coming down at night from the city, the warm, sweet smell of the good earth enwraps one like a garment. There is the smell of rotting apples; of alfalfa in the barn; burning leaves; of wood fires in the house; of pickled green tomatoes and baked beans than which there is no better smell, not even apple pies.

There is a warm feeling of contentment about the farm these days, the first summer is over, many people have been cared for here already, and we started out with capital of a thousand dollars and nothing else at all. From day to day we did not know during the course of the summer where the next money to pay bills was coming from, but trusting to our co-operators, our readers throughout the country, we went on with the work. In spite of our collective faith, there could not help but be a feeling of strain at times when there was so much to be done and no money for tools or equipment, not even enough to pay for food. But now all our bills are paid, and there is a renewed feeling of courage on the part of all those who are doing the work, a sense of confidence that the work is progressing.

This month of thanksgiving will indeed be one of gratitude to God. For health, for work to do, for the opportunities He has given us of service; we are deeply grateful, and it is a feeling that makes the heart swell with joy.

During the summer when things were going especially hard in more ways than one I grimly modified grace before meals. We give Thee thanks O Lord, for these Thy gifts, and for all our tribulations, from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord, Amen. One could know of certain knowledge that tribulations were matters of thanksgiving; that we were indeed privileged to share in the sufferings of our Lord. So in this month of thanksgiving, we can be thankful for the trials of the past, the blessings of the present, and be heartily ready at the same time to embrace with joy any troubles the future may bring us.

Mott Street

One of the girls has written an account of the doings at Mott street this past month. One thing she did not mention is the fact that our house reeks of the wine keg. The back yard between the front house where we have two apartments and the store, and the rear house which is St. Joseph's House proper, has been filled with huge barrels and from early morning until late at night there has been what should be a rustic job going on. Barrels are washed out, grapes come in by the truckload, the cellars are open to the warm, fall air, the work of making wine for the whole neighborhood is underway. Some of the Italians in the front house are making barrels for this family or that in the neighborhood. And this is not a matter of scandal or extravagance. The Italians with their spaghetti and wine dine frugally and healthily, and there are few real drinkers amongst them. Some day we will bring Teresa's camera, which she won at a school raffle, into town and take pictures of pushcart-lined Mott street, St. Joseph's house, and the wine keg-lined yard between the houses and publish them in the paper. Until we can afford a picture page, however, our readers must be content with these word pictures.

At a Communist Meeting

Tonight ten of us went up to Madison Square Garden to distribute a few thousand papers before and after one of the Communist meetings which are held there every week. The Garden holds twenty thousand and is always packed to the doors. There is always a crowd who cannot get in.

“What’s the idea of distributing literature to that gang of reds,” one of our friends wanted to know. And we reply, that if one person of all those twenty thousand who throng the Garden is to the slightest degree moved by anything he finds in THE CATHOLIC WORKER, we will have considered it a good night’s work. We heard of one man who was brought back to the faith last month through THE CATHOLIC WORKER and that one bit of news was enough to make us intensify our efforts.

It is a little recognized fact that revolutions are started by just such seemingly insignificant acts as distributing literature. The first time Leon Trotsky was sent to jail it was because of printed leaflets urging the workers in Odessa to organize. In the history of the working class movement men have gone to jail, been put to death, have been sent into exile for running a newspaper and printing literature which the government considered subversive.

We Must Distribute

If the forces of the enemy set such store by the distribution of literature to acquaint the working masses with their theory of revolution (and Lenin said that there could be no revolution without a theory of revolution) then most assuredly we are doing the right thing by distributing THE CATHOLIC WORKER on every possible occasion.

There are forty thousand members of the Communist party in the United States. There are twenty thousand people in the Garden at these Communist meetings. Not by any means are a majority of them Communists. Many are sympathizers. Many are good trade unionists. Certainly the great mass of workers, convinced though they may be that better conditions can only come about through violence, do not want class war. Surely the great majority if faced with the choice between good and evil, God or the devil, would not choose evil. It is on this assumption that we are working. It is for this reason that we go out into the highways and byways, out on the street corner and the picket line with our paper.

Many of our readers throughout the country are also distributing the paper. We ask you all to help in this, the Christian revolution. Send for extra copies and give them to your friends.

In the Clothes Room

At Mott street we have an entire room devoted to clothes. Many a day forty people come in for garments and many of them have to be turned away. The other day we gave fifteen women warm coats, but there was an equal number of men who had to be turned away. The best we could do for many of them was give them warm wool scarves. We need sweaters, no matter how old or holey. We need suit coats, even if there are no pants. We need overcoats, underwear. Many of the men went away wearing women’s stockings in want of men’s. Do you know what it is like to walk the streets with bare and blistered feet in your shoes? Please help us by sending in your old clothes. We have a family of children also who need to be outfitted, as well as men and women.

One of the fathers of the church said, “the coat which hangs in your closet belongs to the poor.”

In a Courtroom

This is being written down at the County Court where I am waiting for the commitment clerk to come down from the Bellevue psychopathic ward. The paper must go to press today, but there is a work of mercy to be done. One of our women has fallen into the hands of the State (and the State is becoming an inexorable guardian) and they have decided she is psychopathic and needs to be committed to the Manhattan Hospital. It is to rescue her that I am here, to plead to the judge to release her in our care. She had been with us six months and we had known her and helped her for some two years before that. What peculiarities she has we can cope with, but aside from any mental disorder, perhaps the result of cruel hardship and loneliness and insecurity, we are convinced that a most grave injustice is being done which we must prevent.

Right now I should be down at the printer's overseeing the makeup of the paper, because Bill Callahan, who of all the crowd is best at makeup, is away, and John Cort and Eddie Priest, though they can get a story and write one—though they fit in every other way into the scheme of life of the Catholic Worker—are not as yet at ease in writing heads and balancing the front page. Not that I am so hot myself. But I should be there, I think fretfully.

However, I shall sit and wait, writing this last bit of “copy,” and as to how things are going in the crowded print shop where three other papers are going to press at the same time—I shall just have to leave that to the Lord, and our inexperienced fellow workers. When it comes to choosing which is the most important work this morning—one human being is of greater importance than all the papers ever published—I am sure our readers will agree. So when they find errors in the proof reading or in the heads, an unbalanced job in the putting together of the paper, they will please excuse us.