

Farm Colony Larger, Needs Second Farm

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, September 1937, 1, 2.

Summary: Tales of children at the Easton farm, sleeping under a leaking roof, and recent donations. Tells of their prayers to St. Joseph for money to acquire a nearby farm and to build a chapel. (DDLW #325).

50 Children and Many Visitors Overflow Houses and Barns

Day After Day

“You be the father and your name is Patrick, and I’m the mother.”

“And we have so many children!”

“Yes, six have to sleep in this bed, and we’ll let two come into bed with us. Then it won’t be so crowded.”

“Come on, children, you can’t play any more, its time for bed. And don’t take so long about undressing. Father, are you going to bed?”

“No, I been sleeping all day.”

“Well, you better sit up all night then come to bed after and wake the children up. Then they’d all start crying.”

“Come on, time to get up and have breakfast, lazy. My, what a crowded house.”

No Dull Moments

The days rush by, breakfast, supper and bed. Tragedies, accidents, sickness, all greeted with equanimity. For it is the children, playing dolls outside the door while I write. Teresa, Eleanor and little Dorothy, the latter two from Harlem, one a Catholic and the other not. They are about the same size and age, the three of them, and there is never a dull moment. There are dolls and puppies and cats and books, and to see the three of them sitting in a row on the couch reading, is a sweet sight. This is the first summer with us for these little colored girls, but we hope they come every summer and grow up with us as some of the boys from Charles Street have for the past three summers. Now one of the boys is eighteen and

has worked with us on the farm all summer and wants to stay for the winter. We're glad to have him. Two of the boys converted to the rural life movement is not so bad.

During the summer we have had about fifty children with us for longer or shorter periods. A few got homesick and had to be taken back to the city. Many of them stayed for two weeks or a month. We never had less than ten at a time and most of the time there were fifteen. And when I think of the catastrophes that happen to Teresa's families of dolls, I thank the Blessed Mother for her care of all these children during the summer. Eddie got sick once from eating green apples; Charlie, an eighteen-year-old, cut his head diving, there were a few cases of poison ivy and a few cut fingers. The worst was that of little Mickie, the bad boy of the crowd, who sliced his own hand good and plenty while he was trying to put his bedmate's Sunday clothes through the corn chopper.

House Flooded

Oh, the happiness of having space this year on the farm! The rented farm which adjoins the thirty acre farm we own, has a four room house and two barns and a chicken coop. The little boys with one of the men to watch after them, have had one of the barns and plenty of floor space for extra guests who didn't mind doing without beds. The women's barn (which is also big enough to hold a kitchen and dining room), had the disadvantage that it leaks like a sieve, and during a week of rain such as this last, beds were shifted to every position till we felt we were on rafts in mid-ocean. Usually we woke up with our feet in a puddle of water. In the house the little office, the kitchen, and the two bedrooms were always filled. All summer we had two invalids with us (and the vitality of the children seemed to bring health to them too).

We can do without beds and sleep on the floor, we can sleep in wet beds; we can do with the most primitive washing and toilet facilities; but with space there is a sense of luxury.

Farm Needed

We are all praying to St. Joseph to get this farm for us in some way. It costs four thousand dollars, a huge sum, but it is certainly worth it. And what to us is an unbelievably large sum, should seem like nothing to our patron. Surely, you can see, St. Joseph, that we need this place, so can't you remind somebody who has an abundance to buy it for us?

During these two months, Mary Johnson has made 1,500 beds, let us figure, and served 4,500 meals. She gives this service to us,—the family she has adopted out of the loving kindness of her heart. Donald has washed dishes after 4,500 servings; Stephen Johnson, working in town during the summer has contributed four-fifths of his salary; a deaf girl, working at housework for five dollars a week, leaves us a dollar every week to help out; seamen from the seven seas whom we fed last winter, have contributed from twelve ships to help out; one seaman turned over \$150 on his return from a voyage; one young fellow supporting a family contributed his lunch money for a good part of the summer.

All these workers giving abundantly of the talents, energies and earnings, and giving at such a sacrifice, surely will bring the graces of God down on the work. We are sure that if it is His good pleasure, we are going to get this farm. We certainly need it, and He has not failed us yet. There were plenty of rosaries said with that intention and the prayers of little children are most potent of all.

Priest Visitors

All during the summer there were priest visitors sleeping at the farm. Father Joseph Woods from Portsmouth Priory was with us for two weeks, and Father Palmer from Long Island was with us still another two weeks. (He took lots of moving pictures.) We certainly wouldn't be without priests to offer up Mass if we had a chapel. We had to spend the money we had set aside for a chapel this year, realizing that Temples of the Holy Ghost were more important than temples made with hands. So this is another thing we need. And while we are about it, there is money for building. Two married couples on the farm now and little houses (two rooms would be sufficient) needed for them by spring. Fr. Lallemand says we compliment God by expecting great things from Him, so we're listing these wants. And there's the printing bill, by now over a thousand dollars; and the grocery bills, about five hundred.

Importunate

At the present moment we feel like the Israelites, crying out to the Lord in the wilderness. And we are sure that He will hear us.

We've been reading the Old Testament a great deal this summer. And when we pray importunately for these material needs, because we have a very large and hungry family of about a hundred, we are reminded of the words of Moses. When Pharaoh, tired of the disasters which were overtaking him, and yet greedy, told Moses to take his people and get out, only leaving the herds behind him. Moses refused. "There shall not a hoof remain of them," he said, "for they are necessary for the service of the Lord our God."

And I do indeed feel that all these things I have been mentioning "are necessary for the service of the Lord our God," so we shall continue to pray for them.