

Day After Day - December 1936

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Contrasts the joy at the birth of a calf to the coffee line of poor clad and unemployed men. Delights in symphonic music on the radio, Protestant visitors, and letters supporting their work. Expresses gratitude for gifts and St. Joseph, their householder. (DDLW #433).

The happiest and most joyful event of the month was the birth of a calf on the Catholic Worker Farm. At three o'clock in the afternoon Victor left his pots and pans to go up to the barn cistern for water, and looked in to say hello to the cow. She was placidly munching then. An hour later Jim and John Fillinger went in, and there was the calf. I got down to the farm three hours later and the little one was gamboling around, answering to the name of Bess, and actually cavorting with the joy of life that was in her.

The boys had fixed up the barn, new roof, new sides, whitewashed within, lots of bedding on the floor, and everything so snug and bright that it was a pleasure to contemplate the scene. It was dark and the light of the lantern cast long shadows. Never again will I meditate on the third joyful mystery without thinking of that scene which brought home so closely the birth of our Saviour amidst the kindly beasts of the field.

We were all so happy, and it was one of those moments of pure unalloyed joy so rare in this life.

Mott Street

Contrasted with this warm, homely scene, is the one at Mott street every morning when a hundred men or so come in to have cups of coffee. They are without coats, many of them without underwear. Their feet show bare through the cracks in their shoes. We haven't even women's sweaters to give them. By eight o'clock as I am coming from the seven o'clock mass the fire is roaring in the kitchen back of the store where we hold our meetings, but the front store is cold. We make about nine gallons of coffee in two big pots, and put the cans of milk and the sugar in it. We have about forty cups and everyone has to take his turn. There is never enough bread to go round.

Personal Responsibility

We didn't have any intention of starting a coffee line. When we didn't have clothes we invited the men to have a cup of coffee. With the cold weather the group has grown steadily larger.

We work without equipment, and the men haven't even any room to sit down. We haven't any money left in the bank after buying stamps to mail out this issue and we can't charge stuff for more than a week at a time from the co-operative grocers who are struggling along without funds. But that is all in the hands of St. Joseph. He is our patron and householder and it is up to him to take care of these needs. I haven't any doubts about it. I've seen him perform daily miracles around here for the past three and a half years and I know that if we do our share, he is perfectly faithful to fulfilling his obligations. Our share is to give up everything but coffee and bread ourselves for breakfast, and then we can be assured that he will feed the rest.

There are bright aspects to the morning work. One of them is the radio hour of symphonic music over WNYC. Thanks be to God for that. We have coffee to the tune of Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner and Tchaikovsky. We serve notice on WNYC that we don't care for concertos or chamber music. We like something loud and resounding.

Another bright spot is contemplating how men, deprived of all worldly goods, insufficiently clad and fed, maintain their courage and dignity as men. Of course there are those who drink and I must confess to a lack of patience with them. But the majority of them are truly men and I respect them for their endurance and for their patience, and for the hope which they cling to in the face of tremendous odds.

Protestants

During the month a Protestant group of nurses from Hackensack, New Jersey, were brought on a Reconciliation Tour to visit the headquarters of the Catholic Worker and lunch with us. There were too many to feed at once, so while one batch were eating—it was Sunday noon—I talked to them and told them our aims and purposes; and when Peter Maurin had finished talking to the second contingent in the rear offices, they came in to be talked to some more.

Letters

The morning mail gives indication as to how the work is spreading. One letter this morning from a Congregational minister out in Portland, Oregon. Another letter from someone in India enclosing an article by Prof. D. N. Sen, M.A., O.B.E., with the note—"How the Catholic Church appeals to Prof. Sen after reading the encyclicals and THE CATHOLIC WORKER of New York. He is a famous head priest of the Patna Temple of the Progressive Hindu sect called the Brahma Samaj."

Another letter comes from an Italian priest in Chicago who tells us not to send THE CATHOLIC WORKER any more, that we should go to Italy to find out about Fascism before writing about it and ends, "Viva Mussolini!" We refer him to his eminent confrere Don Luigi Sturzo, the priest who was head of the Popular Party in Italy, exiled by Mussolini with a price on his head. His book, Italy and the Fascismo, published by Harcourt Brace, is well worth reading.

Still another letter comes from a priest in Nova Scotia who says the coal miners in his parish all await eagerly the coming of the CATHOLIC WORKER every month.

And so it goes, from all over the world.

Thanksgiving

It was a Happy Thanksgiving. The girls at Cathedral high school, who make up baskets for the poor every year sent us down three baskets of left overs from their supplies and we certainly thank them for their generosity.

One of the girls who used to be in the House of Hospitality and now has a job came over with a turkey for us and it tasted all the better because she is one of God's least and has little or nothing for herself. One of the neighbors contributed a bunch of wood for our fireplaces, *which he had gotten from a demolished pier.* The Italian neighbors are starting to object because of our coffee line, claiming that we are bringing an undesirable element into the neighborhood. St. Anthony will have to take care of this attitude of theirs.

Visiting the Prisoner

Among the corporal works of mercy that we don't get around to is visiting the prisoner. One of the ways we can do it is by sending papers for distribution. Father Robert J. Booth, Chaplain of Clinton Prison at Dannemora, New York, has suggested to his friends that it would be a great help if they could send gifts to the prisoners under his care.