

Appeal - May 1962

Dorothy Day

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Summary: A semi-annual appeal for funds, noting their expenses for food, rent, and even burials. Says it's foolish, but calculates they've served 132,000 meals since the last appeal. Points to the widow who fed Elias when he begged and her reward. (DDLW #931).

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N. Y. 2

Beloved –

Spring is here, the Winter is over and gone and the voice of the turtle dove is heard. In this case the turtle doves are some of the kids who want to know when they are going to the farm and the beach house again. True, there is not a bud on a tree as yet, but on our Staten Island farm they are hunting to see if the dappled green and maroon of the skunk cabbage is up, and in the city they watch for the first swelling of buds on the trees across the street from St. Joseph's house and on the little trees along the Bowery. We remind our readers so that they will be grateful that these trees were cultivated by the prisoners on one of the prison islands in the East River. Many of those who come to eat with us or stay with us for a time have been in those prisons.

These semi-annual letters of appeal are to help us keep going in the works of mercy, feeding and sheltering our brother. There is plenty of visiting the sick and the prisoner and over the years, innumerable times, we buried the dead, the most expensive work, and usually done on the installment plan. Right now we are paying out well over a thousand dollars a month in rents for the building on Chrystie Street and the ten or twelve apartments in the neighborhood, and there is gas and electric and heating and all the staples like peas and beans, coffee, tea, sugar and milk, eggs, oleo and bread, very little of which is donated. Ed gets an abundance of vegetables and salads and fruits at the market early mornings and our butcher who is a member of the Edith Stein Guild is generous to a fault in the meat he gives us for very little, God bless him. Somehow, what with good cooks, the editors taking turns, Bob Steed, Charles Butterworth, Ed Forand and Walter Kerell, and the able assistance of Charlie Keefe for the soup line (the best pot-au-feu in the world) we eat well, sometimes scandalously well, according to some of our visitors. But in the life of poverty the poor always have feast or famine, what with shopping around and taking loving care in the preparation. This business of eating is important, the sustaining of life. Heaven itself is compared to a heavenly banquet. After Easter, which will be late spring, we will have to have a fish fry on the beach in memory of the time our Lord breakfasted with his disciples.

And that is another expense that is coming up – the families which will take turns in coming to the beach houses and perhaps to the tent on the farm unless some hermits make for it first. Sometimes we have had as many as four families at a time, not to speak of the three mothers and children we had with us last summer. Two of them are still there with most adorable babies.

How many meals have been served since we called on our readers last October? At the rate of 400 a day at least, there would be 132,000, an impossible number. Truly that is a foolish way of reckoning. We might as well count the breaths we draw, the steps we take.

These are works for peace – and how completely opposite are the works of mercy to the works of war!

So again we beg you with confidence to help and in return can send you only the best of writings we can gather together in *The Catholic Worker* and a promise of remembering you in our prayers, works and sufferings of each day. So do remember the widow woman in Scripture who went out to gather a few sticks to cook herself and her family a hearth cake with the last of her oil and meal, and how in her charity she sacrificed even her family to feed the old man Elias who begged for food. And her reward was that the cruze of oil was never diminished and she was blessed a hundred fold. May St. Joseph the good provider, pray for us all.

In Jesus caritas,
Dorothy Day