

On Pilgrimage - January 1956

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Reviews the past year in terms of vocations, marriages and births, including Tamar's sixth child. Details Christmas celebrations and notes "the duty of delight." Remembers those who have died. Repeats the necessity to work for peace and disarmament "in season and out of season." (DDLW #697).

All newspapers seem to be running a digest of all that happened during the year, and glancing over my diary, or even without glancing over my diary, it is easy to say that the best news was Tom Sullivan's going to the Trappists, Jack English's continuance in the Trappists, Al Gullion going to the Seminary in Canada, Frank Lakey's going to the seminary of St. Philip Neri in Boston, and now the news that Joe Monroe is also planning to go there. But what a job is before him! Four years of Latin in one! As for marriages during the year, there were two, those of our non-Catholic friends who had stayed with us, Lee Peery and Ann Perry, and Hisaye Yamamoto and Tony de Soto. There is a letter from Lee in this issue of the paper. As for babies, two were born at Peter Maurin Farm (or rather at the hospital near the farm), and Tamar had another, Martha, in July. Now Tamar has two July babies, two August babies, one December, one February and one April. And her own birthday is in March and David's is in May. Which makes a lot of celebrating going on in that family. There are always cakes being baked for birthdays or saints days, and cakes go with bonfires and weiner roasts and marshmallow roasts, and much singing and good cheer. They even celebrate Guy Fawkes Day in their own fashion. There is a merry Dickensian atmosphere about the family which is most cheering.

Christmas

And speaking of Dickens, we had a most delightful evening, just before Christmas when Carmen Matthews, the actress who has been a friend and benefactor for a great many years, came down to read us THE CHRISTMAS CAROL. Everyone in the house came to hear her. Though many think our Friday night meetings too intellectual, especially when the young philosophers get going, and stay away from these discussions (forgetting Peter Maruin's adage that the workers should be scholars and the scholars workers) on this occasion everyone in the house turned out. It was breath taking, the way she combined acting with reading.

Tony Aratari had come in the night before and gathered a crew together for decorating the tree and the downstairs rooms, and all looked festive and gay. And besides the gift of herself and her warm loving heart and genius, Carmen brought a huge turkey and other goodies, and still other substantial help.

There was still another party with Joe Monroe the day after Christmas. He started everyone singing Christmas carols in the library and pretty soon Eddie took over and showed himself a true master of ceremonies, as he led in the singing and started the assembled company to dancing. There was not a phonograph in the house working, so everyone sang and clapped their hands for the folk dancing, and the old and the young danced the Virginia reel with much grace. There was even a touch of costume, what with the head dresses Veronica brought down from her inexhaustible store of things necessary which she holds in readiness in her room, under her bed, in her dresser, in her closet. (The overflow goes into my room.) Evelyn, Millicent, Rose, Agnes, Eleanor, Veronica and Hatty and Annabelle, and all the rest of the women and the men, young and old, joined in.

All this merry making lightens the heart, and makes one realize how necessary it is to cultivate a spirit of joy. It is psychological truth that the physical acts of reverence and devotion make one feel devout, the courteous gesture increases one's respect for others, to act loving is to begin to feel loving, and certainly to act joyful brings joy to others, which in turn makes one feel joyful. Irene Naughton discovered that phrase of Ruskin, "the duty of delight" and I have used it many times since.

Travelling

Last Christmas I spent in St. Louis and had the great joy of midnight Mass at Monsignor Hellriegel's church. No one who has ever participated there could ever forget it. My travels continued through January to February 8th and since then I have divided my time between St. Joseph's house on Chrystie St., Peter Maurin Farm, and my daughter's home in Rossville, Staten Island. Since we sold the farm at Newburgh in July there has not been the monthly trip there. Still, there is enough moving back and forth to make one feel very much the pilgrim.

During the year there have been quite a number of deaths amongst us. I returned from my Western trip in time to visit Henry Sanborn and Shorty Smith at St. Vincent's and Bellevue Hospitals respectively. And they both had beautiful and peaceful deaths with their friends near them. Three of our priest friends have died during the year—Father McKenna, the Marist, for whom I worked at the Marist Novitiate at Prince's Bay, Staten Island, and who gave Karl Adam's book, **The Spirit of Catholicism** to me to begin my Catholic education. Father John Cordes and Father Paul Judge also fell asleep in the Lord. And just this last month Andy Stier and John Murphy. Murphy had worked with us at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality these last ten years, died at St. Vincent's Hospital, where he was surrounded with most loving care up until

the end. Both Henry Sanborn and John Murphy were buried from the Holy Name Center on Bleecker Street. Father Brennan and Father Melody have been extremely kind to us, and it is good to see the great love they have for their work among the men on the Bowery. We all miss Murphy very much, with his ready sense of humor. Veronica Flanagan gave him such tender, loving care the last two years of his life that I feel it is an example of God's providence and a sample of the kind of care we should give the old and the sick. Tom Cain had lettered one of his beautiful signs, and we tacked it on Murphy's door, "Unto old age and gray hairs, O Lord, forsake me not." When there is such a sample of loving care, it is as though the pain of the whole world were lightened and the burden of the aged lifted a little. Veronica was telling me this Christmas that for the last three years she had given Murphy the same Christmas present, a beautiful white silk scarf which he would admire for the Christmas season and then give back to her to take care of for him. When she was making up little Christmas gifts for the women in the house, she told me about it, and recalled how Murphy would say quizzically, "That scarf again?"

It is good to be home this winter, and the book on the Little Flower is finished except for a last chapter in which I keep trying to give reasons why I have added to the number of books written about the Little Flower, and this is the kind of a chapter that could go on and on from day to day. Harpers has the rest of the book, and I am awaiting their decision on it.

I am reading at present two most beautiful works, **The Life of Our Lord** by Fouard, which I keep in town by my bedside, and **The Public Life of Our Lord** by Archbishop Goodier.

With the closing of the case by Judge Bushnell's decision in regard to the civil defense demonstration last June (the defendants were found guilty but sentence was suspended) the long ordeal is over. Undoubtedly there will be other occasions when it is necessary to demonstrate publicly trying to bring to the attention of our brothers what the Pope has proclaimed in his Christmas message. We must proclaim in season and out of season the necessity for all of us to work for peace and the disarmament that will bring about peace.