

On Pilgrimage - November 1961

By Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, November 1961, 2, 8.

Summary: Laments that schools take up too much of children's time, depriving mothers "help from her community." Urges reading, especially the scriptures, the psalms in particular. Is encouraged that the encyclical Mater et Magistra encourages cooperatives. Thinks the U.S. policy toward Cuba is counterproductive. (DDLW #787).

May God bless those who have done us good and helped feed and shelter all those who come to us each month. We haven't begun to thank all who answered our Fall appeal. Several of the young fellows around the place have been busy writing acknowledgements, and there are many of the letters which I wish to answer personally, so I stack them all in a drawer in my desk, and do some every day. If people who write me personally do not hear from me at once, please excuse it and know that I do enjoy writing letters and will answer during the coming month when I will be staying home instead of doing so much speaking.

Fr. McSorley of the Paulists told me once that I should go where I was invited so this last month I have spoken at six colleges, one graduate school (Putney), at the Meeting School at Rindge, New Hampshire, at a Unitarian Church, to two groups of the Christian Family movement, to some Young Christian Workers, to a Serra [sic] Club and to a Newman Club, and at a communion breakfast of an Altar and Rosary society. It was a crowded month of going and coming, around the East, and at the beginning and end of it I had the joy of visiting my daughter and grandchildren in Vermont.

While there I was examining Nickie's catechism book in which he was supposed to write answers to questions at the end of the chapter studied. He wrote about **Atom** and Eve being put out of the garden of Eden, and to the question as to when did God make man, he answered succinctly "Last." And why love God? "Because He made me."

I continue to think that children are overcrowded with homework and have too long hours in school. Tamar's children leave at seven-fifteen in the morning (the boys getting up early to bring in the wood and milk the cow and put the cow, heifer and steer into the field). They get home at four-fifteen and have to sit down to homework. Eric, thirteen, was tearing his hair over a paper he was required to write, five thousand words on mental health! The four older children spend hours looking up things in the encyclopedia and in written homework and book reports.

Certainly children do not have much time to be part of the home under our present school system. The public and parochial schools both claim all the waking hours of children. Friday night is given over to studying catechism, Saturday morning is given over to catechism classes and Sunday morning to Mass. Which

leaves Saturday afternoon for a football game and Sunday afternoon for more homework. Which leaves a mother of nine children with very little help from her community. In spite of this schedule however, Sue will get a batch of bread in the oven and help with the supper and Becky will iron dresses for the five girls going to school. But life is too much of a rush even in the country.

Reading

St. Jerome wrote, "Let sleep creep over you holding a book, and let the sacred page receive your drooping face."

"Reading is the oil that keeps the lamp burning." With the guidance of a priest some of the young people in town have had Scripture classes last month. Abbe Bouyer's "Meaning of Scripture" is a wonderful introduction to the Bible. When I spoke at St. Anselm's, Mary Perkins Ryan gave me her latest translation of his work "Introduction to Spirituality," in page proofs and I am looking forward to reading that. Notre Dame Univ. press brings out his work.

In these days of almost hysterical fear of war and annihilation it is good to read the psalms morning and evening in the Short Breviary obtainable from the Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn., and nearer home, Fr. Frey's psalm book which contains all the psalms as given in the big breviary for each day in the week. It is a small purse size book, and reading these prayers of the Church, one is praying with the Church and obtaining that confidence in God and His care of us that makes for a peaceful heart.

Again we have no article from Ammon, but next month we will have some book reviews from his pen. Many have complained at the lack of book reviews lately, and reminded us of the splendid work of Betty Bartelme and Beth Rogers keeping us up on the great output of our Catholic press. And Judith Gregory will review Lillian Smith's **Killer of the Dream**.

Mater and Magister

We want also to print excerpts from the Holy Father's latest great encyclical. "Within the confines of subsidiarity," writes Fr. John F. Cronin, S.S., "it allows for much social experimentation. There is a deep optimism in the Pope's approach."

"We are all equally responsible for the undernourished peoples," the Pope writes. "The solidarity which binds all men and makes them members of the same family imposes upon political communities enjoying abundance of material goods not to remain indifferent to those political communities whose citizens suffer from poverty, misery and hunger and who lack even the elementary rights of the human person."

“Therefore it is necessary to educate one’s conscience to the sense of responsibility which weighs upon each and everyone especially upon those who are more blessed with this world’s goods.”

He warns against imposing our culture on others and takes up the problem of population growth, and he talks of the “noxious fruits of isolationism, colonial exploitation and economic imperialism.”

He calls for worker participation, asking that workers “be able to participate in the ownership of the enterprise itself.” He urges that small business and firms consisting of craftsmen should be protected and encouraged, and cooperatives build up. “The warm papal endorsement of cooperatives is particularly significant since previous social encyclicals and addresses did not give much attention to this form of enterprise,” according to Fr. Cronin.

The Paulist Press, 180 Varick St., New York 14, has issued a very good edition of this encyclical which deserves our thorough study. There is much about rural life, and our agricultural problems which our Catholic landowners in California would do well to study.

Cuba

I received two letter from friends in Cuba this last month, and hope to be able to write to some of the priests there. Sidney Lenz has a long article in the November issue of **Fellowship**, thirty cents a copy, Nyack, New York. This is the second article he has written and he traces the progress of the revolution, and the growth of communist power. After a long article filled with praise for the accomplishments of the revolution which remains basically humanist and continues being a **Communist revolution led by non-Communists**, he writes, "The Cuban revolution is clearly at a turning point. If the United States were to reestablish diplomatic relations and even a minimum of trade, it is certain that the dogmatic influences would decline rapidly. If President Kennedy really wanted to strike a blow at Communism, one prominent Cuban writer, also disturbed by the situation, told me, ‘He could do it in ten minutes by reopening his embassy here. The Communists would fight it and lose ground. Fidel would agree to it immediately and undercut them. After all, we can remain friendly to Russia without a Communist movement internally. Nasser has done it. So have others.’

“To the extent that the United States continues its embargo and political offensive, the dangers within Cuba intensify. We as a nation have it within our hands, even now, to strengthen the most important humanist revolution in Latin American history. We can also by our vulgar and sterile anti-communism, help the Cuban Communists win the greatest victory possible—to take over a revolution they opposed, from the hands of the non-communists who made it.”