

On Pilgrimage

Dorothy Day

Catholic Worker Books, New York, 1948, p. 2.

Summary: Introduces the book as “a woman’s book, and for women,” dealing “with things of concern to us all, the family, the home, how to live, and what to live and what we live by.” (DDLW #475).

Foreword

“All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.” This is the refrain of the three young men who opposed (by non violent resistance) the ruler Nabuchodonoser and were thrown in the fiery furnace. But the fire became as a refreshing wind, breathing upon them, and their ordeal became a time of joy, and they lifted up their hearts in exalted praise and blessed God. The song they sang is one which made an early appeal to me from the time I first heard it in a little Episcopalian Church in Chicago on 35th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue, until this very day.

I have spent happy hours during this last year with Beckie and Susie in a wicker rocking chair, in front of a fire in the kitchen of an old farm house down in West Virginia, singing our morning prayers: “*All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord. Oh ye ice and snow, oh ye cold and wind, oh ye winter and summer, oh ye trees in the woods, oh ye fire in the stove, oh ye Beckie and Susie and Eric, bless ye the Lord! Praise Him and exalt Him above all forever.*”

It is a song with infinite variations. You can include the neighbors’ cows and horses; the Hennessy goats and chickens; all the human beings for miles around. You can draw in all those in *The Catholic Worker* movement, scattered throughout the country, all the readers of the paper, all the people on the breadlines.

I sang this song with exultation as a child, as a young mother, and now I am singing it as a grandmother. And it’s in the missal, if anyone wishes to sing it after Mass, to himself, or to children of his own.

You can make up the tune as well as add to the words, and the Lord does not mind, nor do the three youths who first composed the song. What are we here for anyway except to praise Him, to adore Him and to thank Him?

So, dear God, let this book praise you, too, and all the work of my hands, whether it is breadbaking or writing. It is a woman's book, and for women, and I may repeat myself, but mothers always do that to be heard. I have talked about many things, and many things are implied. It is not a true journal, but written from month to month in the midst of much toil. But it deals with things of concern to us all, the family, the home, how to live, with what to live and what we live by. There are accounts of New York, West Virginia, Pennsylvania -I have strayed no farther this past year, and it deals with the humble people of these places, and the things that concern them. I pray God to bless the book and you who read it.