

On Pilgrimage - January 1979

By Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, January 1979, 2, 7.

Summary: Jottings about music, books, visitors, and liturgies. (DDLW #595).

Jobs to do: Clear the desk of old mail, and clear out books in my room – they are two deep on some shelves. I have eleven shelves cluttered with them!

A concert on radio – Richard Strauss' **Salome**. I heard it at the old Metropolitan Opera House years ago – it was considered decadent music then. The Johnsons, a couple who lived at the Catholic Worker and later had charge of our first farming community, were scandalized at my going to hear it.

Julia (Smith) Moore died in the night at St. Vincent's Hospital. She had received the last rites. I wasn't told until the morning. Julia said to me once, "I have enjoyed every day of my life." Poor dear, she had also been a panhandler, par excellence, for years. Jane Sammon came up to sit with me, knowing how long Julia had been with us. Jane is a most tender and sympathetic (the word means "suffering with others") person, and has proved it by her feeling for Tina de Aragon, since they met as patients in the hospital. Tina is my sister-in-law's sister.

* * *

Dr. Marion Moses had supper with me, and checked my heart, lungs, etc. Marion is specializing in environmental medicine, fighting against poisonous sprays used both in peace and war. She has worked with Cesar Chavez on the West Coast.

There are hints of renewal of Selective Service again.

Went to 5:30 p.m. Mass at our parish church – the singing was weak, as it also is at Vespers in our house. No strong voices like our Puerto-Rican fellow-parishioners. It is a joy to go to the 10:15 a.m. Mass on Sunday and hear them sing.

Received a box of delicacies from Patrick O'Connor for Christmas – mostly cheeses. He was the editor of Curtis Books, which published my books. And some reader sent Stanley Vishniewski some cheese from Gethsemani Abbey for the house.

Gary Donatelli is home from his pilgrimage to Rome (and to visit his relatives in Italy). Reading over my old diaries, to enjoy again one of my own pilgrimages to Rome in the past, I recall, too, past crises we have lived through.

Joan Welch visited – we talked of the sadness of the farm closing at Tivoli. We have such an attractive (physically and mentally) crowd here now in the First and Third Street houses, that everyone wants to be here. More stimulus in the city.

But it is good to have Deane Mowrer here. What a valiant person she is.

I am still reading Fr. Geoffrey Gneuchs' manuscript on Peter Maurin. It is so good to keep Peter's seemingly simple "Easy Essays" in mind – his repetitions – his sense of being a teacher – his idea of the troubadors, chanting the "Easy Essays" at Columbus Circle, with Marge Hughes, a joyful follower and cooperator, responding to Peter's "To give and not to take" with "That is what makes man human." Many tragedies in her life, but a steadfast cooperator to this day, Marge is now working with a group in West Virginia. A rare person, who knows "the duty of delight," to use that phrase of Ruskin's which I love.

I am also reading a "Boney" book (Australian mystery story) about a half-aborigine detective named Napoleon Bonaparte. One learns much about that vast country from these books. I have a series of them in the bureau drawer. Also the "Rabbi" books. It is a little "escape" library, which fellow-workers make use of.

The Friday night meeting before Christmas, Carmen Mathews read Dickens **A Christmas Carol** for us – much to the delight of all.

Children came from the Nativity Church with Sister Eileen to sing Christmas carols for Maryhouse. They all sat in front of our Christmas tree in the dining room.

Our Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve was in the auditorium at Maryhouse – very crowded, people from both houses, and many others – Kiernan Dugan, Jacques Travers, Mary and Kevin Pope, etc. – with us.

On Christmas Day, Kassie Temple and Mike Harank (he dressed as Santa, with a huge pillow for a belly) went around the house, giving presents. Mine – Thomas a Kempis’ **Imitation of Christ** – a lovely little book, long a favorite with me. Kassie, who often brings me morning coffee, also brought up one of the **Anne of Green Gables** series.

I must get Stanley, “our bookfinder,” to search for **The Arundel Motto**.

Listening to Sergei Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto #3 being played on the radio. I met him at the Loeb’s house in Chicago many years ago.

I have been watching **Mourning Becomes Electra**, by Eugene O’Neill, on television, and today I listened to the opera **Electra** on the radio.

Feast of the Holy Innocents – we must pray for the Berrigans and all those at the Pentagon demonstrations.

Jeanette Noel, from Hubbardston, Mass., whose house burnt down, is coming to stay with us. She will live at St. Joseph House, but I hope we will see much of her at Maryhouse, too.

Last night (New Year’s Eve) there was some noise, but not like Mott Street years ago. A quiet day, today. I am reading Gaskell’s **Charlotte Bronte**. We had Mass tonight in our chapel. Eileen Egan and her brother were there, Stanley too. We all ate in the dining room.

My daughter Tamara arrived, unexpectedly, in time for supper. She is so used to the cold of Vermont. She brought a tiny terrarium she made in a glass Christmas tree ornament.

Father Lyle Young brings me the **New Yorker** magazine every Wednesday, when he comes, as he does faithfully rain or snow, to offer mass.

Stanley Vishnewski gave his slide show on the history of the Catholic Worker for our Friday night meeting, January 5th. I went to the auditorium to see it. In spite of the snow, there was a good crowd.

I must get out and **walk** more. My resolution for the new year ... but now there is a new snowfall, and walking is hazardous.

Dostoevsky wrote a story called **The Honest Thief**, about a man who had only a “corner” of a room. I asked Wally and Rose Carmen, who went to Russia not long after the revolution, as many, young enthusiasts did, if people actually lived in “corners.” The Carmens said they certainly did on their first visit, sharing with Claude McKay and Langston Hughes.

(Right now, due to inclement weather, Stanley is “living” in one corner, Tamar in another, and I am in a third!)