

Day After Day - With Those Who Labor In South's Vineyards

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The Catholic Worker, January 1940, 1, 4, 5.

Summary: Chatty account of a trip with her daughter to Alabama where she visits St. Peter Claver, union halls, and the local bishop who is involved with work on behalf of seamen. Misses being home in New York and is grateful for the news of a good Christmas there. (DDLW #352).

Coming up to Mobile on the bus from Miami there were two flat tires. The first occurred right outside a Seminole Indian village, so Teresa and I had the chance to visit and take some pictures of the Indians and the way they live. The filth and barrenness of their villages is indescribable. Their homes are small, bare platforms where they sit during the day and lie out to sleep at night. They cook over open fires in iron pots, and the men's occupations are fishing and trapping. The women don't seem to do anything but sit.

We encountered a terrific storm, a real cloudburst, so that it was hard going for a time; but we ended up by being an hour and a half late. To make up the time before we got to Mobile, the driver cut out all lunch stops, and had it not been for Aunt Jenny's lunch which she packed for us we would have gone hungry for ten hours.

Teresa had her first all-night trip, and when we got into Mobile, she went to sleep at once, right after lunch, and slept right through until six the next morning.

We are staying with Sister Peter Claver and her order, the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity. They have charge of the charities and live next door to the Cathedral.

Southern Industry

Sister's brother is chief counsel for the Labor Relations Board in Washington, and one of her sisters is active in the Newspaper Guild in Newark and New York. It was Sister Peter Claver, we recall to our readers, who gave to the *Catholic Worker* the first dollar donation to the work, a dollar which had been handed to her for missionary work. It was Sister Peter Claver whom Teresa and I visited three years ago, and who gained admittance for me to the Gulf State Steel Mills

in Gadsden, where the employer was bitterly opposed to organization. One of the group of sisters here is doing catechetical work around southern Alabama, and one of the little mining villages she visits to teach the children and adults has huge signs, "No Meddlers Wanted," and other warnings to organizers. There are reputed to be machine-gun nests set up, though what they are for except to keep in check the advertisedly contented workers I don't know. Surely an organizer or two would not need a nest of machine guns to repel them. Usually the bum's rush has been sufficient.

The work of Sister's order, whose Mother House is in Philadelphia (and whose sisters were the first to help us there), is to build up the apostolate of the laity and to reach the abandoned ones in all parts of the country. Father Joachim, who gave our retreat last August, where seventy-two of our number gathered on the Easton Farming Commune, is one of the priests of the men's order which Father Judge founded, and it is he, our readers will recall, who edits *The Preservation of the Faith* (Don Sturzo has a splendid article in the last number), and who published my "From Union Square to Rome."

Bishop Toulon

Today we went down to visit the National Maritime Union on Mobile. They have new headquarters on Church Street, and in addition to a large auditorium for meetings there is a two-story building for offices and recreation rooms and a hiring hall. A great improvement on the store they had on Government Street. James Drury is in charge, originally from Chicago, but here in Mobile for a number of years. Sister Peter Claver went with me to pay the call, and, of course, the presence of a sister meant a discussion of the Church's teachings on labor and what was being done in different parts of the country in the labor movement. Most of the men were familiar with the *Catholic Worker*. One of them said that ninety percent of the men knew the paper and asked for a bundle to be sent down to the hall. Drury wants to meet Bishop Toulon here, and Sister will arrange the interview when he returns from Baltimore in a few weeks.

Had two good visits with the Bishop, the first half an hour after we arrived, after being up all night on the bus, and the next evening he came over to the Sister's house to pay a call and stayed until ten. We spoke of the lay apostolate and the work among seamen, and he said he would like us to start a headquarters down here. He has always evidenced an interest in our work, and his interest in agrarian movement is intensely practical. He has sponsored Father Terminiello in his work further upstate with the sharecroppers in his endeavor to build up a cooperative farm.

Before he left he gave me Fr. Martindale's prayer book for seafarers, which I passed on yesterday to Lagos, the Spanish fisherman at Pensacola who showed us around the fishing smack. I wish we could get thousands of these little pamphlets.

The Bishop said that he has always been interested in the work of seamen, since he has always lived in port towns. The Pensacola Apostolate of the Sea, which is in his diocese, is the most practical headquarters of those that I have visited, and is doing more real work down with the men.

Christmas

For a month now I have been away from New York, what with my mother's illness in Florida and stopping in Alabama on my way north. With the Bishop's invitation to speak in various schools, I shall be here for several weeks more.

It is a long time to be away from home, as Mott street is to all of us. I have been hearing from the crowd; how good a Christmas they had; how Mrs. de Bethune knit socks for all those who work on the breadline and those on the farm; how she got her friends to donate 800 pairs of socks for the men on the line; how still another woman sent in 800 pieces of Danish pastry; how Mother Mary Magdalene sent a present for everyone in the house; how the girls decorated the dining room and kitchen. All this news of festivities would have made us homesick indeed if we had not been spending the first Christmas with mother in seven years. As it was, it was a happy holiday for us, too.

We certainly are grateful to all our friends who have been helping us to pay our bills and sending us the means to do the work, their work, as well as ours. God bless them all.