

Day After Day - January 1939

By Dorothy Day

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Summary: An open letter to Peter Maurin, who is travelling, conveying the latest news from New York—visitors, news of strikes, conversations, and a needs list for the farm. Says their work is for a pluralist order, for the common good seeking concordances with others' points of view. (DDLW #339).

Dear Peter:

The last we heard of you, you were in Butte, Montana going down into the mines with our Catholic Worker representatives there. Did you get a chance to make any points? Next week you will probably be up in an airplane having a round table discussion. I do not know any address that will reach you, so I am hoping that the January Catholic Worker will catch up with you to give you the latest news of Mott Street.

Xmas Present

I have a confession to make to you. A man came in the other day who needed some shoes. Fortunately, we had a pair which just fitted him. His old pair were alright but several sizes too small, so I told him to be sure to leave them for us to pass on to somebody else. As he sat here in the office changing, he apologized for his socks which were full of holes. For the last week a Christmas present for you beautifully wrapped in tissue paper and tied up in red ribbon had been resting on my desk. It felt like socks, and tearing open the corner, and finding that it was socks, I knew you would not mind if I gave your present to our brother in Christ. I hope Frances Tamke, who gave you the socks, will not mind either. There were two pairs and I have saved one for you. They may, or may not, be here when you get back.

Tuesday Forum

We have had some very good meetings since you left, the best one being Bill O'Meara's when he gave us a digest of Maritain's "True Humanism." He got married December 26 to Ruth Byrnes. I had dinner with Maritain before he left and he says that next year he would like us to arrange a meeting for him some place like the Labor Temple or the Manhattan Lyceum, a rank and file meeting, as it were.

Emmanuel Chapman came down the other day to dictate a translation of some material which Maritain had written before he left, for a pamphlet which we are bringing out.

Brophy and Bridges

A few weeks ago I spoke down in Washington before an afternoon group, and in the evening had dinner with John Brophy and Harry Bridges. Bridges expressed a great admiration for Bishop Lucey and said that the workers on the West Coast all lost a valuable friend when he was made a Bishop and transferred to Texas. He felt pretty badly about the death of Father O'Kelly and said that the workers certainly liked him out there in San Francisco. He spoke with great admiration of the hierarchy of Australia, too. My radical brother has now gotten to the point where he talks of the sins of churchmen rather than of the sins of the church. But Bridges speaks of the sins of the system and speaks of the churchmen being caught in it. He was baptized a Catholic but has never practiced his faith. His wife is a Protestant but his daughter was baptized a Catholic. She said that she will probably go to a Catholic college. He spoke with affection of Father Droletin New Orleans and admires much the work he has done there. Bridges expressed a desire to read Father Swanstrom's book on the water front situation and we sent him a copy at Christmas. If you see him in San Francisco will you ask him to write a brief review of it for the paper. Brophy wrote us a nice Christmas letter which we are printing in this issue of the paper. Whether or not Bridges is Marxist in his philosophy, I believe him to be a man of integrity and that while pointing out fundamental differences in philosophy we should seek concordances. Remember that question?

A Jesuit Speaks:

"It is necessary that one who desires to be serviceable to heretics of this present age should hold them in great affection and love them very truly, putting out of his heart all thoughts and feelings that tend to their discredit. The next thing that he must do is to win their good will and love by friendly intercourse and converse on matters about which there is no difference between us, taking care to avoid all controversial subjects that lead to bickering and mutual recrimination. The things that unite us ought to be the first ground of our approach, not the things that keep us apart." (Peter Favre, *M. H. Fabri Monuments*, page 400).

Strike Duty

Things have been very quiet in New York this past month aside from constant visitors at the office and hundreds of letters to write. There have been several strikes, such as the taxi cab drivers and meat handlers, but they were settled almost as soon as they started. We didn't even have time to get up and distribute

papers at the meetings or picket lines. You will remember the little argument we had with friends over the teamsters' strike. We had spent the afternoon at their meetings and distributed some thousands of papers, and when we returned for supper we found some teamsters at dinner who assured us that there was no strike, somewhat after the fashion of Japan in the Chinese-Japanese war. Nobody seems to understand that when we are out at strike meetings or picket lines or demonstrations distributing the paper, we are trying to bring the social teachings of the Church to the man in the street. They also insist upon believing that we are participating in the strike or endorsing one faction against another. We do not know the least thing about factions in the various unions. How could we keep up on them all? The great job that **The Catholic Worker** has to do is to try to reach the workers, bring to them a philosophy of labor, speak to them of Christian solidarity, and point out the need of a long-range program.

Join the Union

Most of the time you have to begin over and over again with fundamentals, impressing upon them the need of joining the union, attending their union meetings, thinking and studying about the problems which face them, and perhaps out of this rank and file membership articulate leaders will arise. That is in the hands of God. Our work is not to get the Communists out and get our own clique in. We have no candidates to push. It is all the workers that we are trying to reach, all the leaders, whether they are Communist or Catholic. We are out to convert others to our point of view, to work for a pluralist order where Agnostics, as well as Catholics, Protestants and Jews, can work for the common good. And it is only in the measure that Catholics exemplify by their lives the teachings of their Church that they can attract others to their point of view.

Holiday Spirit

We had a very lovely Christmas, although a hectic one. Mr. Breen was sick in bed but comfortably so; also Catherine Travis; also Mrs. Johnson, who burned her back with a mustard plaster. The cook disappeared that day and I had charge of the cooking for our 70 dinner guests. There was plenty of help in the kitchen—Shorty, Caroline, Kate and Ruth, and thanks to our butcher, who donated chickens, and to some teachers of Bayonne, who donated the rest of the dinner, we had a very good meal.

Building Fund

If you meet anybody in your travels that wishes to contribute to the Catholic Worker Farming Commune Building Fund please tell them that we must build a house for Arthur and his son, and Frank Mamano, our barber, not to speak of a new roof for the barn and the new roof for the lean-to on the house, a large-sized pig pen to take care of the 150 pigs we expect by next year and the assembly room on the top of the hill where you can lecture undisturbed until two o'clock in the morning. When it comes to the little houses, just a few hundred dollars would pay for the lumber. Perhaps somebody will make themselves responsible for one or another of these projects. Another thing that we need is a new horse or rather two new horses. Poor old Prince died of old age and the glue works carried him away. We have got to get another by March for the Spring plowing and there is not a cent in the bank. So please call these things to the attention of all our friends, and little by little we will manage. I would like to get two new places built up by Summer.

May God be with you on your travels, and bless you on your apostolate. I've written our Los Angeles group to put you to bed for a week and make you observe Holy Silence. Please pray for us all.

Your fellow worker in Christ,

D.D.