

On Pilgrimage - April 1953

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Summary: Reflects on Holy Week and the themes of suffering, joy, and gratitude. Talks of spinning wool. (DDLW #649).

This last week of Lent and the climax of Easter are the peak of the year. As a holy season it is unmitigated joy. Somehow the sufferings of daily life, the uglinesses around one are suddenly changed, lighted up, transformed. Love, suffering, joy, all go together. It is a mystery. "With desire, have I desired to eat the Pasch with my disciples," our Lord Jesus Christ said. Holy Thursday gives us the strength for Good Friday.

Many years ago, Ade Bethune made a little booklet, illustrated and illumined with texts, THE WAY OF THE CROSS. The note of the little pamphlet which is now out of print is joy. "You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and your joy, no man takes from you." From station to station, as Christ proceeds from Pilate, taking his cross, falling beneath it, meeting his mother, Simon of Cyrene, Veronica, falling again twice, encountering the women of Jerusalem, being stripped of his garments, being nailed to the Cross, dying, being buried,—through all these Stations the refrain is repeated, "My yoke is easy,—My burden light. . . Fear not, for I have conquered death. . . In the world you shall have distress, but have confidence, I have overcome the world." And it ends, "My grace is enough."

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Joy and gratitude go together. Gratitude for everything, giving thanks at all times and in all places. And it is a good time to thank our readers who are helping us in so many ways with the work. The letters that come in with help to pay the bills are very reassuring. One reader tells how she has turned her house into a house of hospitality for her poorer relatives, often the shiftless ones. It expresses the folly of love. Another is knitting cheerful afghans for us. Bishop Haas of Grand Rapids and Archbishop O'Boyle sends us help and good letters and this is just the beginning of answers to the appeal which goes out during the month of St. Joseph. We are praying we have enough to catch up on the bills and republish the book of Peter Maurin's essays which is being redesigned by David Way, and illustrated by Fritz Eichenberg. Next editions will be sewn, not stapled.

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I have had a few hours of spinning last month at the Peter Maurin farm. Madeleine Sheridan of Canada, sent me a spinning wheel last year, and Lauren Ford of Connecticut a fleece of one of her sheep, and Ammon Hennacy the black fleece of another. I spin as an exercise in relaxation, and to indulge in a work which the Blessed Mother must have engaged in often. When I learned how a few years ago, I asked her help especially. Gandhi's followers spin for half an hour a day as part of the village program of India, a program of reconstruction as important to our times as the non-violent resistance which is taking place in South Africa. Certainly I remember to pray for the leaders of India in the great task ahead of them when I am engaged in this delightful occupation. I am spinning the good strong wool, to knit new feet in a long pair of home knit stockings which Ammon Hennacy wears under his rubber boots when he spends nights irrigating. The stockings were knit by Helen Demoskoff, a Doukobor who has just finished serving a term in prison in Ontario for conscience's sake. We hope to have a letter from her in the next issue.

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As this goes to press a telegram arrives from Ammon Hennacy, announcing the death of the Old Pioneer, on whose acres he lived, and whom Ammon admired as a man of great integrity. The telegram brought joyful news also. Linn Orme was baptized a Catholic by Fr. Dunn the night before he died.; Ammon and the Old Pioneer had close love for each other and I was happy indeed to have met him on my recent visit to Phoenix.

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Tomorrow I go to Staten Island to my daughters to baby-sit for a week end, so that David and Tamar can be present at the wedding of his youngest sister in Washington, D.C. What a joy that will be. Last time I was there, Susie, 6, was showing me how she could read from her first reader and the word "Jesus" kept coming up. And while she read I thought of what the theologian Bulgakoff wrote once that many Orthodox believe that the very saying of God's name invokes his presence; and I thought too of Catherine of Genoa kissing the mouth of a plague stricken patient who repeated the Holy Name after her. What is that St. Bernard says? Jesus is music on the lips, honey in the mouth, and a shout of joy in the heart.