

On Pilgrimage

By Dorothy Day

Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1999.

Summary: States the objectives of the C.W. and defends it against the accusations of other Catholics and secular thought. Writes on such themes as marriage, sex, 10VQ' human condition, poverty, economics and a variety of Church doctrines. All of these topics are treated from an orthodox Catholic point of view. The book is adapted from the diary she kept in 1948, when she spent the first four months with Tamar (daughter) and the rest of the year at Mott street and the retreat farm in Newburgh. She noted that the book could be called a woman's book, since parts of it are directed solely to women. As usual, much of the book dwells on the day to day happenings in her life. (DDLW #5).

The expanded edition published by Eerdmans includes a foreword by Michael O. Garvey and a substantial introduction by Mark and Louise Zwick that highlights Dorothy Day's early life and her commitment to the Catholic Worker movement.

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CONTENTS

Foreword

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.”

January

Deep in Winter at her daughter's farm in West Virginia they await the birth of Tamar's third child. Reflects on country life and a woman's spirituality in the midst of small children and housework. Describes her efforts at prayer. Reflects on the handicrafts Tamar practices and the worth of a country economy, a way to be co-creators with God. Notes the duty to find joy and resist despair. Long quotes from Eric Gill on a decentralized economy. Keywords: family, poverty, personalism, distributism, capitalism, socialism, communism.

February

Still awaiting Tamar's baby, she mentions neighborly visits and reflects on her family history, and criticizes poorly written books about Mary and the saints. Writes of “feasting and fasting” as Lent begins, enumerating the many mentions of food in the Bible and quoting Dostoevsky's character Father Zossima on the importance of fasting.

March

Finally Tamar's son Eric is born. She comments on the child's baptism and the beginning of her own faith. Considers the role of women as nourishers and upbraids herself for being self-indulgent, quoting St. Theresa of Avila at length on penance. As signs of Spring arrive they move to a "new-old" house and she plans to return to New York.

April

Ponders the mystery of the love of God for man and man for man. Urges readers to come to their farm for a retreat to renew strength for the apostolate. Express disdain for the Kinsey report on American sexual behavior and presents a sublime vision of sexual love. Includes an extensive passage by Fr. John J. Hugo who himself quotes saints, mystics, scripture, and Church prayers to illustrate how the nuptial union is an analogy of God's love for us.

May

Praises God for May, the month of Mary and full of beauty. Recalls the Catholic Worker began in May sixteen years ago and summarizes their program and the many allied movements of the lay apostolate. Says their pacifism and distributism distinguishes them from other movements. Focuses on voluntary poverty as exemplified in Peter Maurin's life, especially since he became ill. Reflects on holiness and the call to all to become saints. Includes quotations from her winter's reading. Keywords: Gandhi, machine, philosophy of work

June

Describes the hustle and bustle around the farm—planting, building, cooking. Ruminates about conversion, calling each person to a revolution beginning with themselves—to make a start toward a new way of living based on distributism. Says distributism is neither communism nor capitalism but based on individual ownership of land, tools, workshops, and factories. Keyword: economics

July-August

Relishes life on the land, saying it is a place to retreat to, find God, and to go forth from as apostles. Summarizes five retreat talks whose focus is to increase the desire for sanctity, to a more complete love of God. Gives examples of her failure to love and the struggle to renew love of God and neighbor.

September

Calls picketing and demonstrating works of mercy—"rebuking the sinner, enlightening the ignorant, counseling the doubtful." Reflects on the challenge of over-mechanization and urges changing over to more "living criteria" for life. Contrasts the noise of New York with the quiet of the farm, a good atmosphere for prayer and reading—"refreshment, light, and peace."

October

Vivid description of the pulsing sounds of worship and smells of death in a black neighborhood in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Admires the works of mercy

at Mary Frecon's house of hospitality, and example of "the little way." Recalls the wonderful time children had at their labor day retreat and laments their expenses on the farm and for the breadline in the city.

November

An essay and meditation about love in its many forms, human and divine. Quotes scripture, saints, secular writers, and especially Soloviev on love. Concludes that the Catholic Worker is "still trying to work out a theory of love, a study of the problem of love so that the revolution of love instead of that of hate may come about and we will have a new heaven and a new earth wherein justice dwelleth." Includes a poem whose theme is dying and rising. Deeply personal account of being with her dying mother. Includes prayers and meditations on death and dying. Prays to the Little Flower for her mother. Evidence of answered prayer came in a variety of roses from different sources.

December

Meditation on the spiritual weapons of voluntary poverty and manual labor. Lists work to be avoided and personal practices of nonparticipation while exploitation in labor continues. Calls for decentralized living. Recommends growing in acceptance of God's providence and seeing good in others. Reflects on silence during Advent, a time of waiting and a time to examine one's conscience, a time "to see only what is loveable."