

Christmas

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, December 1934, 4.

Summary: Three reflections: a child's view of Christmas, trusting in God to guide one's work, and picketing as passive resistance to injustice. (DDLW #199).

Christmas is coming and Teresa and Freddy are drawing pictures of the Nativity. Freddy tells the story, as they work industriously at the kitchen table, of the big boss Herod and how he heard about the little Christ baby being born, and how scared he was that his temporal power was tottering. Freddy's father, a Sicilian, is one of those people against whom the Protestant accusation is leveled that Catholics never read the Bible. Freddy's father doesn't, it is true, but he listens attentively to the Gospels and Epistles and he comes home and tells them at meal times to his little family. He tells them with reverent love, feeling intensely that the Good God sent His Son here to be with us. When Freddy's father hears Christ's words in the church he lays them to his heart and ponders over them as Joseph did. Probably Joseph didn't do much reading either, but listened a lot.

When I hear Freddy and Teresa tell the story to each other, each filling in the gaps, it comes fresh and clear to my mind.

"And the cow breathed on the little baby Jesus and kept it warm," Teresa says delightedly. "Cows are very warm animals, I know. Father McKenna's place down in Staten Island has cows and I leaned against them while the brother was milking them. They didn't mind at all. I was a very little girl then. I'm sure the little baby Jesus didn't mind being in the stable at all. Probably there were chickens, too. And maybe the shepherds brought their littlest lambs to show them to Him."

Christ came to live with the poor and the homeless and the dispossessed of this world, I pointed out to them, and he loved them so much that he showed himself to the workers—the poor shepherds—first of all. It wasn't till afterward that he received the Kings of this earth. So let us keep poor—poor as possible—"In a stable with cows and chickens," Teresa finished joyfully. "And then it will be easier for me to have God in my heart."

Revolution

We have all probably noted those sudden moments of quiet—those strange and almost miraculous moments in the life of a big city when there is a cessation of traffic noises—just an instant when there is only the sound of footsteps which serves to emphasize a sudden peace. During those seconds it is possible to notice the sunlight, to notice our fellow humans, to take breath.

After hours of excitement and action and many human contacts, when even in one's sleep and at moments of waking there is a sense of the imminence of things to be done and of conflict ahead, it is good to seek those moments of perfect stillness and refreshment during early Mass.

Then indeed it seems that God touches the heart and the mind. There are moments of recollection, of realization when the path seems straighter, the course to be followed perfectly plain, though not easy. It is as though the great Physician to whom we go for healing had put straight that which was dislocated, and prescribed a course of action so definite that we breathe relief at having matters taken out of our hands.

Such a moment came this morning with the thought—the revolution we are engaged in is a lonely revolution, fought out in our own hearts, a struggle between Nature and Grace.

It is the most important work of all in which we are engaged.

If we concentrate our energies primarily on that; then we can trust those impulses of the Holy Spirit and follow them simply, without question. We can trust and believe that all things will work together for good to them that love God, and that He will guide and direct us in our work. We will accomplish just what he wishes us to accomplish and no more, regardless of our striving. Since we have good will, one need no longer worry as though the work depended just on ourselves.

Picketing

When the Campion Propaganda Committee went to picket before the office of the Mexican consul for the first time—and it was the first time Catholics in this country had ever picketed as Catholics—we asked those who were engaged in the work to recall Christ's way of the cross as they walked for Him. Once again Christ in His Mystical Body is being tortured and put to death, and we as Catholics were showing our silent grief and horror. When we go again in a body on December 12, the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe whose heart is once again being pierced with the sword—we can hold in mind also the death of the three men and the child (and more of the sixteen injured may be dead by now) who died for picketing the church in the state of Chiapas to prevent the army officers from going in and defiling the sacred place.

It is only by passive resistance that we can oppose our enemies. Picketing is a form of passive resistance to injustice.

In the United States there are the beginnings of what we are opposing in Mexico. We must protest now, while we have the opportunity. There is no use waiting until socialization of children is under way in the United States. The other day Mrs. Katherine Burton, who has a monthly page in *The Sign*, was visiting the office and she told us of educational trends in the public schools in Bronxville, New York. The courses in biology include detailed discussion of sex and birth control and this for ten-year-old children—and the course is described as “from the amoeba to man”. It sounds like Mexico!