

July-August

% Dorothy Day

1948, 109 - 129

Summary: 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. (DDLW #482).

**

August 1

JUNE AND JULY I have spent on the farm at Newburgh, where the retreats have been going on apace. There was a study week in June with Father Victor White and Father Pierre Conway, Dominicans, and then retreats with Father Taggart, Vincentian, [and] Father Fiorentino [and] Monsignor Betowski, both from the New York diocese; and Father Veale, Josephite. One of the retreats was a family retreat, though we had not expected it to be, but the long weekend of the Fourth of July was a temptation, and there were four families, one with five, two with two, and one with one child.

Hans had just finished laying the floor of the barn in time, putting up the stairs and screening it in. Michael Kovalak helped as he always does in a crisis, and Bob Campbell showed up in time to make the screens for the windows and the doors. The great difficulty of the weekend lay in the fact that a nest of swallows [was] shut in by the screen door, and it had to be left open so that the mother swallow could fly in and out with food. By the end of the weekend, both mother and father bird were teaching the young to fly. Now the screen door can be closed again.

Although the only family retreat was planned for Labor Day weekend, and we are receiving reservations for that all the time, still another family of six has asked to come for the mid-August retreat, and now there is a mix-up as to whether we can have it on August 15th or whether it must be changed to the 22nd.

This has been a month of much housekeeping, extra responsibilities sent to us for care, extra people arriving we did not expect, including two extra retreats not scheduled. Among the guests were Clara Faviano, Edith Pietraniello, Anne

Ricupero, and Frances Palmiotti, with their own children and some others besides, making fourteen in all. They were Celia Ricupero, Chickie Sclafani, Jimmy Deodato, Anthony Deodato, Cosmo Ricupero, Anthony and Mary Ann Pietraniello, Nicholas and Morris Palmiotti, and Frank Faviano, all from Mott Street. . . . They liked the Newburgh farm so much that they thought it would be wonderful if some of the neighbors would chip [in] together and buy an old inn which is for sale down the road. We wish they would. We could practice mutual hospitality, each taking the other's overflow, not to speak of enjoying the wonderful Italian cooking. The girls made spaghetti while they were on their Friday-to-Monday visit, and I was an appreciative guest, since in addition to taking over the new barn dormitory, they used the canning kitchen and cooked their own meals. They arrived the same weekend as Monsignor Betowski and his retreat group, but Monsignor Betowski is well used to the Catholic Worker and its friends, and joined them one evening after conference for coffee and conversation.

"Your column will not be a pilgrimage this month," one of the men on the farm says, "since you have not been off the place for two months almost." I had begun to feel not only that life was like a "night spent in an uncomfortable inn," as St. Teresa has it (and the weather has been so very hot that the group of us who sleep up under the roof have felt that our inn is indeed not what it should be in the way of comfort), but I also had begun to feel like an innkeeper. And then suddenly, on a moment's notice, I went to West Virginia for a five-day visit to my daughter and her family.

Walter Vischer and I drove down in the Chevrolet, '32, and we started off at dawn on a rainy, humid morning. Going through Montgomery and Port Jervis and over through the mining section, running south of towns such as Tamaquay and Pottsville, we hit the superhighway and traveled along it at a smooth clip of thirty-five miles an hour (the car would not make more) until we reached Fort Littleton, where we emerged, thirty miles or so from Tamar and Dave's. We had no lights on the car and went through four tunnels with fear and trembling. The first two seemed barely lit, and we stayed in back of another car. We were off the highway by three o'clock, and in another hour or so, traveling due south, we reached the Rock Gap district south of Berkeley Springs, where Tamar and Dave have their seventy-acre farm. Our only troubles had been two flat tires. Tamar was out berrying, and during the few days I was there, we picked blackberries and dewberries and ate berry shortcake and made jam. The orchard had some early apples, and the babies, Rebecca and Susannah, brought in pails of them, which we made into apple jelly, which with goat's milk cheese goes most delightfully on whole-wheat bread. When we were not doing up jams and jellies, we were down in the brook, which is deep enough to swim in, and shallow enough, with a good sand bank, for the children to play on, so it was a vacation indeed. I do not know of a happier way to spend an afternoon than sitting in a shallow brook with babies paddling happily around. There were little crawfish on the bottom, little minnows darting between your fingers as you try to catch them, boat flies on the surface, and beautiful blue dragonflies flying just above the

water. There were neither mosquitoes nor flies nor gnats. The sun-warmed waters of the brook made up for all the “pail baths” we had been taking through the heat. We washed the children’s clothes before we went back to the house, and we picked Indian pipes and pennyroyal as we went back through the field.

Within a radius of a mile, there are four or five farms for rent either for five or ten dollars a month. The houses can be lived in, and if one owned them (the price range is from two to three thousand), repairs could be done little by little. The ground is good bottomland. There are streams for fishing, and there is hunting. There are pines and black walnut and locust on the gentle hills, and there is pulpwood to be cut for selling and plenty of wood for the fires in winter. Taxes are low, and there are no gas or electric bills. But, and here is the rub, the nearest town, of 1,500 inhabitants, is twelve miles away with its church and schools and hospital. The larger towns of Martinsburgh and Winchester are each about thirty miles away. But it’s surprising how much company one has, how neighborly people are. And the joy for the children in such surroundings! But there is a price to pay for all this beauty, and that price a willingness to accept the poverty of the people on the land. Old houses, oil lamps, wood heat, water to be carried in pails, the tattletale gray of clothes so washed, and the quiet, the solitude of life with neither radio, newspaper, nor telephone, . . . where the daily mail becomes the event of the day.

People are more afraid of such a life than they are of the atom bomb! And so Peter talked of agronomic universities, farming communes, so that people could go in groups, and in groups hold each other up. Man is not made to live alone; he is a social being. So where there is a crowd, they flock together. Peter used to say, “They are not communitarian; they are gregarious.”

Let us hope that Maryfarm at Newburgh will give a taste for the simplicity of life on the land and the courage to face it, and that other Maryfarms throughout the country will be performing the same function. A place to make retreats, to learn to meditate, to think in the heart, “to be quiet and see that I am God,” a place to learn to work, and a place to go from, as apostles, and make a life for the family.

**

August 8

AN ACCOUNT of a day in my life, the first day of a retreat, spent in silence and prayer. I am not the author of these retreat notes, since I was taking down what I heard. Yet the priest who gave the retreat would not claim them either. He would give credit to St. Paul, to St. Thomas Aquinas, to St. John Chrysostom, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis de Sales – to any and all of the saints quoted. Or he would give credit to Father Lacouture, S.J., or Father Pacifique Roy, S.S.J., or Father John J. Hugo, secular. They all give the same retreat, having made it with the first-named priest.

The cost of our retreats (there are four or five through the summer) is what one can pay. If one is just able to pay fare, one pays nothing. Maybe a poor visitor

pays two dollars, maybe five, and then someone comes along and pays a hundred, so as to include his poorer brothers. These retreat priests believe in sowing what they have – food, shelter, spiritual wealth. The Lord has to take care of things. If we get down to bread and water, well, then all the better [the] retreat. As it is, we had very good meals three times a day – so good, so enjoyable, that it was a pleasure to fast on Friday to thank our Lord.

My notes are incomplete! I am just taking bits of them here and there and using them. I had made the retreat many times before and had made copious notes.

For inexactitude in quoting, for putting the emphasis here or there (where I needed it, probably), please excuse me. I realize that it is hard to print such fragments as this without doing a grave injustice to those priests who give the conferences. But I do want just to give a taste of my retreat, as though to say to others, “Come and see that the Lord is sweet.” Learn of Him and find rest for your souls.

Or as Isaiah wrote and St. John paraphrased, “All ye that have thirst of desire, come to the waters, and all ye that have no silver of your own will and desires, make haste; buy from Me and eat; come and buy from Me, wine and milk [that is, spiritual sweetness and peace] without the silver of your own will, and without giving me any labor in exchange for it, as ye give for your desires. Wherefore do you give the silver of your will for that which is not bread – that is of the Divine Spirit – and set the labor of your desires upon that which cannot satisfy you? Come, harkening to Me, and ye shall eat the good ye desire, and your soul shall delight itself in fatness.”

For years, in houses of hospitality around the country, speaking and writing and working, we have been trying to change the social order. Now these last years I realize that I must go further, go deeper, and work to make those means available for people to change themselves, so that they can change the social order. In order to have a Christian social order, we must first have Christians. Father Lallemand talks about how dangerous active work is without a long preparation of prayer. Aldous Huxley quotes him at length in *Gray Eminence*.

The desert fathers had these same ideas. When times became so bad (when there was universal conscription, for instance), they retreated by the tens of thousands to the desert wastes to pray, to work, and God knows what the world would have been without them. St. Ephrem came out when there was need and started a hospice during a pestilence and retired again to pray.

First Conference

Christ is with us, though our eyes are blinded, just as He was with the disciples at Emmaus. To keep the attitude of listening! The retreat will be as successful as our silence. Silence of the whole being, all our senses, all our powers. Keep

only the power of loving. Control our eyes. The eyes let in much noise, just as do the ears. We need solitude, silence of mind. The mind definitely makes a noise. Stay in the company of God. By not looking at others, as well as by not speaking to others, we keep in solitude. Renew resolutions of silence every day.

[Just before coming on this retreat, I was reading Newman's historical essays on St. Basil and St. Gregory, their friendship, their differences. St. Gregory made resolutions of silence very often, for all of Lent, for instance. Newman admired this great discipline, "at his age," too.]

Our prayer should be, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." We should ask God to teach us the secrets of His love. Insist on this love with importunity. No other love is happy unless it finds its roots in this. Loving God seems to be loving nothing? But there is a definite way. We must learn the rules. There is infinite happiness waiting. Also, it will free us from the slavery of other loves. God is nothing else but love. "Where love is, there God is." All other loves pale in comparison. Our nature is not built for so strong a love, so we must change our nature. "Enlarge thou my heart, that thou mayest enter in." How can you tell if a person loves you? By their thoughts, words, and deeds. Our love is made up of our actions. There is a conformity, a union of desires, tastes, deeds. Many people want to and do make sacrifices, but there is not much change in the temperature of their love for God. On this retreat we study ourselves first. Our Adam life. Everyone has that. But there is our Christ-life too. We are children of God. Grace is participation in the life of God. Human life is natural to us. Supernatural life is added unto us. We have new powers.

Second Conference

Good actions may be human or divine. There is confusion in regard to these. The only actions which lead to God are divine actions. Supernatural action has God for its end. The natural has ourselves. Action has value according to whom the action is directed. The act of eating, for instance. For our own pleasure, or to build our bodies to strengthen them to serve God (I Cor. 8). There is such great waste in our lives in just good actions. The whole burden of the retreat is to do all actions for the love of God. Divine love is as different from human love as human is from animal.

Our greatest danger is not our sins but our indifference. We must be in love with God. It is not so much to change what we are doing, but our intention, our motive. It is not sufficient that we refrain from insulting a person; we must love. This retreat is to increase our love for God. When we say that we love God with our whole heart, it means whole. We must love only God. And that sets up the triangle – God, the soul, the world.

The wife wants the husband's whole love. Suppose a husband pays no attention to his wife, and we say, "Well, he does not beat you, does he? You should be satisfied that he does not kill you. What are you complaining about?"

It is the same with God. He is not just content that we are not in a state of mortal sin. Mortal sin is the sin of the Pharisee, putting Christ to death in our hearts. Mortal sin, according to St. Thomas, is a turning from God to creatures. We must do more than avoid mortal sin. We must do more than just stay in a state of grace.

[I remember some years ago Father Hugo saying that if a mother had an imbecile child, and someone tried to comfort her by saying, "But he has life," she would not find much comfort in that. She wants her child to grow in mind and body. If we say, "But I can get away with this or that; I can do so much and have so much, and still stay in a state of grace," our souls are like the mind of that imbecile child, with no development and no growth.]

The question comes to your mind, then: How can we love our husbands, our children, our mothers?

All other loves I have must be a sample of the love of God. All the world and everything in it must be samples of the love of God. We must love the world intensely, but not for itself. We are human beings; we do not cease to be human beings, but we are baptized human beings. At death we are going to join God with the amount of love we have gathered for Him. What we have when we die we will have for all eternity. "As the tree falleth . . ."

[Outside the chapel where we are having the conferences, the early morning mist has lifted. The hot sun shines through the haze. The birds sing; there is the hot sound of locusts in the trees.]

Two people who are deeply in love are thinking of each other all the time and what they can do for each other. So we must be with God. The love of God is more intense than any human love. Keep asking for this love.

Third Conference

Our heaven starts immediately on baptism. God is most generous in increasing graces, in increasing this heaven within us. Supernatural actions bring with them a reward, an increase. Natural actions bring a natural reward and end at the grave. We must try to amass more and more of God in our hearts. "Our hearts were made for Thee, O Lord, and find no rest until they rest in Thee." We have such a capacity for happiness that nothing here will satisfy it. "Enlarge Thou my heart, that Thou mayest enter in." If we had not heard of God, if we had not been baptized, we could go on looking for happiness here with no fault.

A farmer has a crab apple tree and engrafts a sweet apple tree on it. By baptism we have engrafted the divine on our human tree. If other branches break out, these take nourishment away from the engrafted tree. The farmer keeps lopping them off. We are children of God because we have His own divine life in us by grace. Grace life goes on into eternity. The blood tie ends at the grave. We form

part with God because He has given us of His life. We must cultivate divine life, let it get all the nourishment. “Whether you eat or whether you drink, do all for the glory of God.” This does not mean that we do not enjoy our spaghetti for lunch. God gives us natural happiness too, in order to help us to love Him. We do not give up spaghetti because we like it. We eat to nourish, to serve God because we love Him.

There are good actions, supernatural and natural, divine and human. There are bad actions – sin. We turn from God, from good to evil, from light to darkness, from heaven to hell. We are going to be saints in heaven to the degree that we are on earth. Natural actions are imperfect actions and lead to venial sin, which leads to mortal sin. So we are separated from God. No one sins to offend God, but to gain pleasure. Natural actions mean a slight turning from God. Sin and purely natural actions show difference in degree. When we commit a mortal sin, it is not a sudden thing. We started to move to that mortal sin a long time ago. The more we go in for purely natural actions, the more we have the tendency to sin. Fight mortal sin? Impossible. Fight venial sin? But natural actions feed tendencies which lead to venial sin, which leads to mortal sin.

[An ad in the *New York Times* some time ago: “I took God into partnership, and after that there were no stoppages, no strikes.” How to bring God into business and make it pay! All this and heaven too! Tom Girdler, famous head of Republic Steel, endorses the book advertised in this way. It was in the Republic Steel strike in Chicago in 1937 that the Memorial Day massacre occurred, where twelve were shot dead and a hundred wounded. Maybe it is since then that God is being taken into partnership by the author of this book and by Mr. Girdler. The natural motive: making the business pay. No wonder that religion is called the opiate of the people.]

The only way to get rid of sin is to get rid of the roots of sin. Going to confession to get rid of the habit of mortal sin is like lopping off the top of the rank weed. The roots remain. Fighting sin is like bailing out a boat without bothering to stop up the leak.

What causes us to commit sin? Because we do not love God. It is not one drop of cold water poured into the barrel of hot water that chills it, but it is many drops. It isn't the one hundredth day of the fast which causes a man to die of starvation, but the days of weakening. Every purely natural motive weakens us.

The battle against mortal sin is a hopeless one. We must attack roots: the natural motive. Then sin will be dried up. The Christian fights on this plane always. Our whole attitude towards the world must be changed (St. Paul). All things NEW (II Cor. 5:17). Like being in love.

Why this pull in us? This double attraction? Before the Fall, all our powers were obedient. Now they are in rebellion. They are off balance, unruly, gotten out of hand. To lead a spiritual life we must bring back that obedience. Bring back *purenature*. Now it is weakened (Rom. 7). The law is spiritual, but I am flesh, sold under original sin. For that which I work, I understand not. For I do not that good which I will, but the evil which I hate, that I do. There is a law of the flesh. All people are essentially good. But there is that which is in them – the law of the members fighting the law of the mind, captivating them in the law of sin against the law of the spirit. Unhappy man that I am – who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God by Jesus Christ our Lord. It is by denying satisfaction to the flesh that we strengthen the spirit (Rom. 8:13). Wisdom of the flesh is death. Our Adam life and Christ life are like white and black threads all tangled. Gradually and slowly we must take out of our lives all that is of self (Gal. 5:16-17). There is a double attraction. Some lives are a turmoil because people are strengthening both Adam life and the Christ life at the same time.

When we were baptized, a seed was placed in us. It tries to grow into a full-blown tree of holiness. Everyone is given that seed at baptism. It is not too late to begin cultivating this seed [to] the degree of sanctity God intends for us. The burden of the retreat is to uncover that sanctity and let it grow, to start now. The only purpose for which we were made was to become saints. What is to be done? How is it to be done? Continue asking Mary that we be taught.

[It is half-past five, just past benediction. I am sitting by the little statue of St. Anthony by the flowerbed. There are two large, fat robins and three smaller ones. There are two woodpeckers bigger still, with very long bills. There are three tiny birds so small the grass almost hides them. A chipmunk runs across the grass, and a little rabbit, scarcely bigger than the woodpecker, races across the lawn to stand posed under the flowerbed. A typical St. Anthony scene.]

Fifth Conference

What did Christ say about this principle we have been talking about? He condemns our use of the things of the world. All the things we can love outside of God are three: the world[ly] goods, body goods, soul goods. Goods of soul are friendship, love, honor, praise, glory. The goods of world and body are obvious. Every action has an end, a means and a result. He commends their use for God, He condemns their use for natural motives. St. Luke says, *Blessed are you poor; woe to you who are rich.* This is in regard to world[ly] goods.

Blessed are you who hunger now; woe to you who are filled (body goods). Goods of soul: Blessed are you who weep; woe to you that now laugh. Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you. Woe to you when men shall bless you. The world is the opposite of Christ. (St. Luke is more the ascetic than St. Matthew.)

Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you. They can only hate the natural. They cannot hate the grace in you. If we practice these things, then people say we are crazy. Fine. We are then fools for Christ. Then, perhaps, they will leave us alone. People in love wish to be alone, anyway. So God lets these things happen so that we can be alone. If anyone takes thy goods, ask them not again. If you love them that love you – sinners also do this. Do good, hoping for nothing thereby.

There are so few saints because they will not act like this (Matt. 6). Justice is good, but if we are rewarded by men, we have then received our reward. The majority of Catholic lives are made up of good actions for natural motives. *“I did this or that for them, and they did not say thanks.”* When this happens, be happy. God will give you thanks. If you are disturbed, it shows the natural motive. So many good actions wasted.

[Outside the sun has set; the trees are breathing coolness. Such quiet. Only the locusts again.]

Results? Are we to be as perfect as St. Francis, as St. John, as St. Peter? No, we are expected to be perfect “as our heavenly Father is perfect.” Because God wants it. We must aim high because He says so. Lay up [for] yourselves treasures in heaven. What do you think about all day? Worldly things? There is your heart. Are you concerned about health, bodily goods? There your heart is. If one falls in love, all the habits of life are ruled by that love – letters, telephone calls, whatever we do.

Suppose, on getting married, a woman says, *“Are you sure you can supply me with clothes, with food?”* We are in love with God; we will have what we need. “Behold the birds of the air: they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns.”

God is a sensitive lover. God will not force you to choose Him. It is an insult to God to worry so about the things of the world.

[Right now, today, as I sit here at this conference, the five-hundred-dollar payment on the mortgage is due at Maryfarm. I haven’t the slightest idea how it has been gotten together and paid. For I am sure that it has. If by any chance it is not paid, then that, too, is His will. And we will all take it, whatever happens.

The conferences for the day are over. It is dusk, and a most delightful coolness in the air. We have just finished singing the Salve Regina, and it is almost time to prepare for bed.

Thank God there are such oases as these where one can gather strength and fortitude for the combat, the strong conflict which goes on in one’s own soul.

It gets dark as I sit here, and the fireflies add wonderful effects to the flowerbeds. The birds of the air, the flowers of the field – was ever Solomon in all his glory arrayed as one of these?]

These notes are so brief, so abbreviated, jotted down so swiftly. After I make a retreat like this, I carry them around in a little five-cent notebook which can fit into my purse, and I read them over on the subway, while waiting for a telephone message, a bus, or for the lunch bell to ring. There are so many of those brief moments of waiting in our lives. It is wonderful how sweet these notes are to the heart, though often while one is taking them down they seem like commonplaces. But when they are read over again, they have a distilled sweetness. It seems to be God speaking.

One time I was traveling and far from home and lonely, and I awoke in the night almost on the verge of weeping with a sense of futility, of being unloved and unwanted. And suddenly the thought came to me of my importance as a daughter of God, daughter of a King, and I felt a sureness of God's love and at the same time a conviction that one of the greatest injustices, if one can put it that way, which one can do to God is to distrust His love, not realize His love. God so loved me that He gave His only begotten son. "If a mother will forget her children, never will I forget thee." Such tenderness. And with such complete ingratitude we forget the Father and His love!

This morning between conferences I wept, partly for joy and partly for the misery of life, partly at being so overwhelmed with demands made upon me, and partly with fatigue and nerves. It is always a few days before I really settle down in peace and quiet to a retreat. The first day is a delight, but the second is hard. [By] the third I am well into it and beginning to feel firm and sure of the way in which I shall go the coming year.

My troubles are still with me for the first few days. For instance, during the second conference, one of the "friends of the family" came in, stood up in back for a while, sat down, got up again, sat down again. Again at rosary the chapel was crowded, so he, together with half-a-dozen others, had to kneel in the conference room. He chose a huge overstuffed chair to kneel before and, bending over it, buried his face in the depths of the upholstery. It was a heavy August day. These little things would not bother me except that from that same person as well as from a number of others there is a long history of years of such behavior, appealing for attention, coming to bang on my door at midnight, demanding attention, asking to be allowed to go to the farm, demanding it, claiming that I, by the very things I write, must care for them, support them. And the burden gets too heavy; there are too many of them; my love is too small; I even feel with terror, "I have no love in my heart; I have nothing to give them." And yet I have to pretend I have.

But strange and wonderful, the make-believe becomes true. If you will to love someone, you soon do. You will to love this cranky old man, and someday you do. It depends on how hard you try.

My mother was not a Catholic, and how much she had been deprived of back in the time of Henry VIII, when all the bishops but one went wrong! She did not understand this idea of "willing to love"; she knew only feeling. A friend

of ours, a Catholic who had made a bad marriage, was living what my mother considered a lie because she still acted as though she respected and loved her husband, still treated him as though he were the head of the house, her friend and companion. “How can she love him?” my mother used to say impatiently. “And she should not act as if she does!”

I used to try to explain that she was a Catholic wife – that on receiving the sacrament, they were “one flesh,” and how could she hate her own flesh? She had promised to love and cherish him in sickness and health, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, till death did them part.

“It’s a good thing something will release her,” my mother would add tartly, as though she did not see the point.

Such beautiful words, those of the marriage – no one can bear to give them up even if they do not believe them anymore. Of all the charges made against the Communists these days of congressional investigations, the charge of loose morals is seldom heard, so very loose have become those of *Christian* people.

Recently I have been reading *The Meaning of Love* by Solovyov, and he refuses to accept the idea, so universally accepted, that love is an illusion, a lure, succumbed to so that the purpose of procreation is fulfilled, and then vanishing. Father Farina, in his retreats at Oakmont, used to emphasize the stages love must pass through – all love, whether love of friend, spouse, child, work, or a book one is writing: infatuation, indifference, repugnance, irritation, even hatred itself. I cannot remember the exact order, but all loves, even the love of God, must be purified by being tested, by going through the Garden of Gethsemane, through the Passion, and at whatever stage we stop, we must start again, go over it again, go through it, or rather meet the same situations and perhaps next time with greater courage.

I say I have no love to give, and yet I have to pretend I have. There is a woefully crippled young man who comes into the office, always clean and dapper, well spoiled by his mother and sisters. He is given everything that a small child is given: candy, cigarettes, movies, chewing gum, and he is insatiable for all these things; but of course he wants more. An uncle owns a farm, both the mother and the sisters work, yet he wishes to live with us, live with us on *our* farm; and of course there is no question of payment for board. No, are we not running a hospice, a retreat house, on a farm? Are we not supposed to be taking care of the poor? And is he not one of the poor? Poor in spiritual and mental and physical resources, it is true. So why do I worry about “being taken advantage of”? That is the attitude of the world, of those who give to us to give to others. “You are contributing to people’s delinquency. You are taking care of those who do not need to be taken care of. We will not help you any longer to take care of such as he.”

Of course I can go and ask his mother to pay something towards his board. If he were living at home, it would cost her to feed him. If she refuses to pay, to make a contribution, am I still to refuse him, when we have such richness – Holy

Mass every morning, a priest living with us, a way of life and instruction? We talk about our poverty, and we are indeed poor in money, but we have a house, a farm, a library, music, comfortable, clean beds, health of mind and body, and also a capacity to enjoy. Of course we share these things. The farm has come to us both in contributions and in our own hard work. The men work from morning until night with no pay. They ask with humility, not as of their right, for such things as underwear, shoes, tobacco to roll their cigarettes. They are working men who originally came to us for help, and they stayed to help us, year after year, serving a Cause, [doing] carpentering, plumbing, electrical work, farming, and cooking. And are they to work for such as this whining, spoiled cripple? they ask. His very crippled state should make him an object of our pity and our love. Mental cases, mental illness, and physical illnesses, as well as poverty, are calls upon our compassion, because we must see Christ in them, but it is so hard to see Christ in anyone who is whining, resentful, self-indulgent, demanding, hating! "The venom of asps is under their lips." I have often thought of this verse from the psalms. And how to love these, how to see Christ in them!

There are two women at this moment, as there have been many more through the year, who accept for months our ministrations, our help and lovingkindness, only to turn and rend us. Lies, scandal, accusations roll from their lips in a torrent and a flood of poison.

Last week a woman came in with a policeman. She was a very difficult alcoholic whom Irene, who has charge of the women's house, had tried to help for the past six months. Over and over again she had cleaned Ann up, had tried to get her on her feet, had helped her to jobs, had forgiven her seventy times seven rather than put her out on the streets. The last time she was drunk, she had lost ten dollars in the house and we found it. Tom has charge of the money of the house, and it was turned over to him and used for "flop money" for others, for beans for the soup, or whatnot. When she next came in, sober, with a job, and asked for her money, we told her that we had found it but used it. We live often from day to day, so there was nothing at that moment in the house to give her. We did not say that she owed us far more for her six months' stay with us. And now here she was, coming in threateningly with a policeman, demanding we give her the ten dollars.

"Give her your cloak, too," Bob said.

How to love! How to turn the other cheek, how to give your cloak and your trousers and your shoes, and then when you are left naked, you are beaten and reviled besides.

"You never get a lick amiss," my mother used to say wisely, and I suppose it is true. But sometimes the blows come too thick and heavy. From morning till night they seem to be descending. Just before the retreat, another woman, mother of a small child who had been with us several years, pulled a terrible scene, drew a knife on one of our Italian neighbors, and there was screaming, hair-pulling, one woman . . . stripped half-naked. A mob of the neighbors

gathered, the police came, and the riot not only happened once but was repeated again during the day. And with the neighbors standing guard so that the woman did not return, the end of the day saw us with one less woman in the hospice, the woman . . . evicted who had long been troubling us, abusing us, stealing from us, even inflicting violence upon us in her rages.

There was a sense of relief that she was gone, that she had met her match, that a difficult situation had been handled, but not by us – that she had been gotten rid of. But where has she gone? She is one of our many failures.

The same at the farm. A young prostitute with amnesia, so she told the police, had been picked up at four in the morning, wandering in the streets of a small town along the Hudson. She was kept in the hospital for two weeks, and then a priest and a welfare worker tried to find a place for her. None would take her. The House of the Good Shepherd refused unless the court would commit her. The court refused to commit her. No convent, no hospital, no charitable family in the parish would have her. (And one could scarcely wonder, since she would seduce any man she came in contact with, if she had her way, and she had a different tale each day of the week in her bid for sympathy.)

So she was brought to us, though over our protests. She came in drunk, early hours in the morning. She begged and stole from our visitors. She lied and got much sympathy. She was taken to a job by the welfare worker and ran away from that, and now we do not know where she is. Another one of our failures. She was kicked around until she got lost. That is probably the history of her life, or perhaps I am overly pitiful, overly compassionate. I cannot get over the feeling that if we loved enough, if we were patient enough, if we were saintly enough, if we prayed enough, we would move hearts, effect conversions, and would save the lost, in other words.

Failures. It is these things that overwhelm one. Physical sickness like epilepsy, senility, insanity, drug cases, alcoholics; and just the plain, ordinary poor who can't get along, can't find a place to live, who need clothes, shelter, food, jobs, care, and most of all love – these are the daily encounters.

So it is wonderful that this retreat comes in the middle of summer, when one can stop and think in his heart about these things. I have made this retreat eight times, and always there is something new, always there is something to learn about how to progress in the love of God and one's neighbor. How can we ever give up thinking and longing for love, talking of it, preparing ourselves for it, reading of it, studying about it? It is really a great faith in love that never dies. We hope against hope, as Abraham did in the promise, and we know with something that bears witness in us that this love is true, and that the promise is there.

I am speaking of heavenly things, but heaven and earth are linked together as the body and soul are linked together. We begin to live again each morning. We rise from the dead, the sun rises, spring comes around – there is always that cycle of birth and growth and death, and then resurrection. And the great study

of how truly to become the sons of God, to be made like God, to participate in the life of God – this is the study of the retreat. It is a painful study, and one can make it over and over again, and always we need to straighten our course, adjust ourselves to this upside-down way of looking at things, which is the Christian way and which seems so often to be not common sense, not natural. It is breathing rarefied air; one must get used to this air of the mountains, so clear, cold, sharp, and fresh. It is like wine, and we have prayed to Mary and said, “We have no wine,” and she has given us wine, the body and blood of her Son, the life of her Son, the love of her Son.

About these two books which I have come across recently, *The Mind and Heart of Love* by Father D’Arcy, the English Jesuit, and *The Meaning of Love* by Vladimir Solovyov, the Russian theologian of the last century, called the systematizer of Dostoyevsky’s thought. I have always found Dostoyevsky’s message for me was love and compassion, so I was much interested in this book, *The Meaning of Love*.

My whole life so far, my whole experience has been that our failure has been not to love enough. This conviction brought me to a rejection of the radical movement after my early membership in the Socialist Party, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the Communist affiliates I worked with. “Youth demands the heroic,” as Claudel said, so the work of these militant minorities had appealed to me. One could not read such books as Sinclair’s *The Jungle* and not want to do something, join with someone to do something about it. And who else was doing anything? Employers, landlords, political bosses, all professed Christians, were corrupt and rotten to the core, I felt. What was there to love in them? Certainly it seemed madness to think of reforming them, converting them. Such an Augean stable was beyond cleaning up; it needed flushing out. So I reasoned. Youth certainly is always looking for a “strong conflict.”

It was not that I was ever disillusioned. My conviction that there was a work to be done never wavered. Things did not need to be as bad as they were. There was a possibility of change.

Certainly, too, there was always an inward conviction that we were but dust. Alone by ourselves, we could do nothing. Probably all my early religiousness as a child was still with me, and that religiousness included a conviction of sin, of the depravity that was in us all. The argument of conscience was always there. I was “bad” or I was “good.” I was bad when I hated and quarreled with my brothers and sisters, when I stole from a neighbor’s garden, when I was impure (and I felt that “dark fascination” of sex, of the physical forces in my own body, very early).

This reminds me of St. Augustine’s *Confessions* and his story of childhood wickedness, stealing for the sake of stealing, deliberately giving way to evil, to the dark forces within one. *The Turn of the Screw* is a story of childish evil. Jesus Christ knew what was in man. I was not baptized until I was twelve, but I had a conscience. I knew what was in man too. But I had too a tremendous

faith in man as a temple of the Holy Ghost, in man made [in] the image and likeness of God, a little less than the angels. Truly I did not want to know good and evil. I wanted to know, to believe only the good. I wanted to believe that man could right wrongs, could tilt the lance, could love and espouse the cause of his brother because “an injury to one was an injury to all.” I never liked the appeal to enlightened self-interest. I wanted to love my fellows; I loved the poor with compassion. I could not be happy unless I shared poverty, lived as they did, suffered as they did.

Well, now at fifty, I cannot say that I have been disillusioned. But I cannot say either that I yet share the poverty and the suffering of the poor. No matter how much I may live in a slum, I can never be poor as the mother of three, six, ten children is poor (or rich either). I can never give up enough. I have always to struggle against self. I am not disillusioned with myself either. I know my talents and abilities as well as failures. But I have done woefully little. I am fifty, and more than half of my adult life is past. Who knows how much time is left after fifty? Newman says the tragedy is never to have begun.

I have been disillusioned, however, this long, long time in the means used by *any* but the saints to live in this world God has made for us. The use of force, the use of diplomacy in foreign affairs, the use of anything but the weapons of the spirit seems to me madness. Especially now since the atom bomb. This means the weapons used by either Communist or Christian, who today seem to me in both political [and] economic life to be Marxist also. The Communist believes in force, in espionage; so do the press and the pulpit of the Christian churches.

The Communist does not believe in God; he does not see Christ in his neighbor. Nor do we in the poor, the lame, the halt, the blind, the prodigal, the sinner, the harlot; nor in those of another race – the Filipino, the Japanese, the Chinese, the Mexican, the Negro. (It is only *atheistic* communism that is condemned by the Pope, we should remember.)

We too have done away with property, the land, the ownership of small shop and business, with our monopolies and trusts, chain stores, hotels, gas stations, everything on a colossal scale, wiping out the dignity of man, who has hands and needs to use them, who has a body and needs shelter, food, and clothing, who needs to live in dignity with his children and enjoy the abundant life.

What should really set us apart from all other men is our love. “See how they love one another.” In the Bible which is still, after all, the Book for all who have faith, the relationship between God and man is described as that between animal and master (the Good Shepherd), between servant and lord, between child and father, and between husband and wife. Right now, by our baptism we have been made sons of God. But who does not aspire to the joys of marriage, that love which makes all things new? Who does not long to dissolve and be with Christ? The pleasures of the beatific union are described as those of a wedding banquet or an embrace. “He will overshadow me with his shoulders.” “He will kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”

And strange and wonderful to think of, we should have something like this love for all creatures – for mate, for friend, for child, for enemy too – the kind of love that makes all things new. For God first. “My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” The love of the will, the memory, the understanding, and the love of the flesh. The tenderness of a mother for her child, the physical love and joy she feels in caressing it, contemplating it, nourishing it at the “breasts of her tenderness.” “If a mother forgets her child, never will I forget you, O Jerusalem.” “If a son ask of his father bread, will he give him a stone?”

How much there is to learn of love, that feeling of the body and soul, that teaches us what God is, that He is love.

I suppose one reason why people know so little of love is that the attitude has been that love is implanted in the human breast to facilitate the job of bringing children into the world and bringing them up.

“What a terrible force this is,” I said to my daughter once, “this love of children, of grandchildren. And it is just as strong for the grandchildren as for the children.” I had thought that such joys were finished for me. And such pains too, since all love means suffering, the sufferings of parting, separation, and loss; and of course the suffering because all relationships are not as they ought to be – we never can get enough of the other person. You love your own so much that you want to be one with them, live their life, be inside their skins, as it were.

My daughter answered me that the instinct, the love *had* to be strong, so great was the struggle sometimes, what with illness or refractoriness.

So many mothers run away from their children or put them in nurseries or go out to work because they can’t stand the “pruning,” the cutting, the suffering that such love entails. The more exuberant the growth, the more vigorous the cutting. And yet of course we should love all other children with something of this love, this aching longing to cherish and protect and save them from physical and moral dangers.

“Love can die,” people say about marital love. “It is sentimental to think of it as enduring. Once the work of procreation is done, the glamour, the freshness, the alluring charm of love is gone. It is an illusion.”

People want the ending “happy forever after.” They desire it as they desire God, but they will not journey like Pilgrim towards it. They are children and will not grow.

There is much to be thought and studied about love. The marriage act, for instance, as a sacrament for the mutual sanctifying of husband and wife. It is not the promises that make the marriage. The vows are exchanged at the altar; the marriage is the embrace itself. “I’ve heard it called many things,” a seaman said to me once, “but not a sacrament.”

For a husband to withdraw from his wife or a wife from her husband on the ground that they wish to be detached is false piety. Such a withdrawal should

be by mutual consent, for the sake of seeking a still higher path. The marriage act is a sacrament. It is also a “debt” which each party owes the other, St. Paul says. Love is an exchange of gifts, St. Ignatius said. To fast, to abstain from the marriage embrace (by mutual consent) is certainly for the health of that love too, just as fasting from food can be for the health of the body. It is a way to increase it also.

This selection is from the new edition of *On Pilgrimage* by Dorothy Day with a foreword by Michael O. Garvey and an introduction by Mark and Louise Zwick, published in 1999 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. *On Pilgrimage* is available for purchase at your local bookstore or directly from Eerdmans (800-253-7521 or sales@eerdmans.com.) Outside of the USA contact T&T Clark, LTD <http://www.tandtclark.co.uk>.