

New York: Catholic Worker Books, 1948

% Dorothy Day

1948, pp. 3-26.

Summary: 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. (DDLW #476).

January

January 5

Around****Newburgh, New York, five miles outside of****which Maryfarm is located, we had more snow than sleet so we did not have the jewelled fairyland display of the countryside closer to New York. The wind blew the snow in drifts waist high and Father Becker of Georgetown, who was our guest over Christmas had plenty of manual labor helping Hans, John, Joe and Frank get paths shovelled to and from the barns, the men's house, the road, etc. For two days the mail did not get through, though some bold truckmen kept the road open from Middletown to Newburgh.

New Year's Day, the feast of the Circumcision, we did not have a priest but we were able to get to the nearest church before the second storm broke. Right after the nine o'clock Mass we ran into sleet for a while and Walter, who was driving had to get out and clean the windshield with his pen knife three times in the five miles.

I hate to talk about our abundance in these times of high prices. But the peasant who has not been displaced from the land can tell the same story as we—the story of food put away for the winter. John and Frank are busy smoking eighty pounds of bacon, ten hams and ten shoulders of pork, keeping the fire in the

smoke house going with applewood. We have an ancient orchard so old that it has to be uprooted and replanted so we have plenty of wood. We have a barn full of apples, thanks to a neighbor, plenty of potatoes, and still some of our own cabbage and turnips, besides a few thousand cans, thanks to Dave Mason and Joe Cotter.

Our good cook Charlie, who has had a wide experience with railroad gangs and institutions kept us supplied with pies and that topped the holiday meals. Neither Maureen, Marie Therese nor I could hold a candle to him in the kitchen. I did the bread-baking, four pound-loaves a day and it was the delicious unkneaded bread of Sir Albert Howard's recommendation. Marie Therese said that she had made it before without success, but it was because she did not have her dough stiff enough. One should be able to pick it up and, flouring one's hands, form it into loaves. Neighbors brought us fruit, coffee, cookies and in spite of the storm we had visitors, Eileen Egan, John O'Donnell, Dave Mason, Dick Roland (of Brooklyn Catholic Action) Stanley and Walter Vishnewski. Jane O'Donnell was home for the holiday and we all missed her, especially her godchild Hans.

It was a happy Christmas time with everyone receiving Communion together. It was good to have Fr. Becker's informal talks every evening, in addition to homilies at Mass and discussions during the day. It was good to get to bed early, and read Dickens and listen to the snow hit against the window panes in the attic which is the warmest part of the house.

Downstairs it was cold in spite of the furnace (our first use of coal this winter). The walls and ceilings are unfinished and so the wind whistles through. The kitchen is warm, but one has to keep coats on in the dining room. Peter Maurin, what with being so inactive, found it hard to keep warm in spite of woolens, sweaters, stocking cap, and a blanket over his knees. His cough got worse, so when I suggested a visit to Mott street his face lit up. He can be in my room, next to Marjorie, and Joe Hughes, and the children can run in and out and Peter will love that.

Johannah likes to boss him, and she softens her bossiness by putting her pink cheek against his and hugging him. "Peter, you are just an old man and you've got to drink your orange juice." (My daughter used to say when she was a little girl, 'When you get little and I get big, I'll take care of you!') Peter is "little" to Johannah now.

We had to call the doctor for Peter when he went to Mott St. because his excitement at the change of scene led him to overdo it. The doctor diagnosed his cough as cardiac asthma and said otherwise all was well. So he is not trying to venture out for any walks in this weather. Kay Martin and the baby Joe are in the back room and their stove is so roaring hot that Peter's bedroom is well heated too. And Hazen and Joe and Dave and Mike have dropped in to see him for a little conversation.

There is a skeleton staff at the farm now that the Christmas****holidays are****over. The next retreat will be Easter week, for****women, but we

hope also before then to have a Lenten retreat at the beginning of the season.

I left the farm at 8:10 in the morning, catching the bus which goes right by the door straight in to New York. That same bus returns past the farm at 9:30 every night.

I must remember to bring out the point that in describing the comfort of our Christmas on the farm, I do it to contrast the city and the country. If we who are tied to the city, cannot go villageward at once we can begin to hold it as an ideal for our children, and begin to educate them towards it.

In a few weeks I am borrowing a car and going to West Virginia where my twenty-one-year-old daughter is now settled with husband and babies. She is expecting another so I shall be there for several months writing about my family which after all is like all families so that when I write "I" and "mine," my readers put themselves in my place and it is their own hopes and fears and joys and sorrows they are reading about, common to us all.

January 17, '48

West Virginia 5 degrees

When you are in the country the temperature is important. To write I lie in bed with a hot water bottle at my feet, a loose old coat covering me. A bathrobe would not be enough. The hot water bottle is a pint size whiskey bottle.

This is a typical country bedroom, one window facing north, the other west. There is a roomy closet, a door into the front hall, flanking which there are two other bedrooms, and another door to a northeast room, also two windows that get the morning sun. There is a narrow flight of stairs leading down to the summer kitchen. There are eight rooms in the house, a porch front, side and back, a good tin roof. On this farm there is a shed, pigpen, chicken house, smoke house, an old cannery from which the machinery has been removed, and which is used now to house goats: the four does, one buck and two kids. There is a well and pump in the cannery, and a pump on the back porch of the house. Fifty-five acres of hilly woodland, and twenty acres of fields go with this farm for which the owners are asking two thousand, five hundred dollars. We are two miles from the highway, three miles from a store and twelve miles from town and church.

This is a good house, a good farm in spite of the fields being far from****the house beyond the woods. It is renting now for ten dollars****a month.

Down the dirt road across a brook about twenty****five feet wide and a foot deep there is another farm for sale, seventy acres, for twelve hundred dollars. Good barn and chicken coop, granary, pigpen, garage and smoke house, but the seven room, low ceilinged house is in very bad repair and the porch on the side

is caving in. Also there is a spring in the cellar and some rainy seasons there is a foot of water under the house. Whether this can be drained and the house repaired in this era of expensive materials and scarcity of craftsmen is a question.

There are other good farms in the neighborhood for three thousand and thirty-five hundred and everywhere the soil is good, the bottom lands fertile, the hills covered with pine and oak (no one burns coal), there****is hunting and fishing.

Here on a neighboring farm, priced at six thousand, a farmer raised and educated three boys and a girl. But he operated the cannery, as well as farmed. Others farm summers and work winters, leaving early and arriving home late, leaving their wives to tend to the children and the animals, wood and water. It is a lonely life for a woman with many small children. It is a life of solitude in city and village anyway, since a young mother cannot get out, but in town neighbors and friends can at least drop in.

Spring, summer and fall are so beautiful in the country but the winters are hard. Life then is in two rooms and the bedrooms are grim. The children may get out but they soon run in with streaming eyes complaining of hands and feet and already our two here have chilblains.

Yesterday the snow fell all day and the children ran out getting pans of it to eat. David says it is called the poor man's manure as it is filled with chemicals that enrich the soil. It tastes sooty just as it does in the city. The wheat, barley and rye in the bottom lands, green and frozen, was soon blanketed. The hills, ridges and paths were outlined and all was black and white, blue and grey with a hint of lavender behind the trees, and the gorgeous fresh green of the pines. Today with the sun out, gold and blue is added to the bright, cold picture. We are indeed in the dead of winter, in the depths****of winter.

Tamar's baby is due in ten days now, and we are praying the pains will not come at night nor in such cold when it will be hard to start our borrowed car. The path from the house to the road is icy and hard to get down. We could not get to Mass this Sunday morning because of that path, so perilously steep and treacherous.

Our days are spent in cooking, dishwashing, clothes washing, drawing water, keeping two fires going, feeding babies, consoling babies, picking up after babies. The bending and lifting alone should take the place of all exercise. But tomorrow we are going to pretend our long porch is the deck of a ship and we are going to take a brisk walk up and down and around, just to get out of the house and enlarge our vision a bit. It always fascinated me, how the Bronte sisters paced the floor of their living room in front of the fire. It must have been a very large room. My friend Tina has a habit of pacing the floor and in small quarters it can be nerve-wracking for nonpacers.

On my way down here I bought some supplies and I shall list the prices. Whole wheat flour from a mill, nine cents a pound; buckwheat ten cents. And at a farm woman's store, home made candy seventy cents a pound, sorghum, seventy-five

cents a quart, butter ninety-five cents, beef for a stew fifty cents a pound (there was much fat). Home made aprons were eighty-five cents and a dollar. Patchwork quilts were twenty-eight dollars.

Thinking of cash crops to sell by mail perhaps, there is candy, aprons, Tamar's homespun, home woven materials etc. It would supplement the tiny income from D's mail order book business (he specializes in Distributist authors so his field is limited).

How to live—that is the question. Daily expenses, how to meet them? The goats are not giving milk now. Skim milk is ten cents a quart (the farm wife is always contributing some sauerkraut, a piece of pork, etc.), canned milk is six-twenty a case.

January 19

Last night it went down to four below. The water froze in the jug in the bedroom, my feet were cold all night. Susie woke up at four thirty and cried for an hour. I could hear her even in the far room upstairs. David got up and built the fire and went himself to a camp cot and Susie slept in with Tamar. She gets colic so there is no telling whether she is spoiled or sick. She has been waking up in the night all winter. Becky, who will be three in April, does not mind the cold so much.

Today as usual, dishwashing, cooking, baby tending. I wrote a few letters in time for the mailman, received a few. I could not get my borrowed car started. We need kerosene for the lamps and for the small portable bedroom heater. Five gallons for eighty-five cents. Candles thirty-five cents a dozen. We do not read late as we are too tired, David with constant woodchopping, water fetching, etc. Every time he comes in the house the children clamor for his attention.

Today we found Spike, the young buck goat, a splendid animal, dead. A farm tragedy. Two of our four does are already "lined" as the local saying is, but the other two just had doe kids. Our neighbor has a three-legged buck, and a kid buck which he will now raise, though he and his wife had intended eating him. The goat heart, liver and kidneys are very large but there is not too much meat on the frame. They are as good as lamb if prepared right.

We do not know what killed Spike. He was eating the same as the others, corn husks, fodder, some corn, salt and water. The others all seem to be thriving. The ground is too hard to dig a grave and he is lying there in the end of the barn. They say there is a wild cat in the neighborhood and we should look after our stock. One year it was a pack of dogs that killed four goats.

The moon is increasing to full and it is now the coldest time of the month. Tamar is uneasy about her time. She feels "funny" she says. We do hope and pray she is not taken in the****dead of the night when it is coldest and hard to get the

car started. And so hard for her too to go out into the night and the cold. I do wish she could have it at home.

We are so far from church, and the snow kept us from getting to Mass Sunday. So we read the epistle and gospel for the day and have been doing it daily since. Sunday's epistle was about the marriage feast of Cana. When my friends are in sorrow and trouble, or even when they are just without spirit, I like to pray, "Jesus, they have no wine," or "Mary, they have no wine." It is a good prayer for many sad hearts today.

Not much time for prayer these busy days. Only the short ones. And not much time to think of self either; or comfort, physical, spiritual or mental. So that is good too. "Self" is the great enemy. "Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me."

In a way of course taking care of your own, children and grandchildren, is taking care of your self. On the other hand there is the sacrament of duty as Father McSorley calls it. There is great joy in being on the job, doing good works, performing the works of mercy. But when you get right down to it, a work which is started personally often ends up by being paper work—writing letters, seeing visitors, speaking about the work while others do it. One can become a veritable Mrs. Jellyby, looking after the world and neglecting one's own who are struggling with poverty and hard work and leading, as such families with small children do these days, ascetic lives. There are vigils, involuntary ones, fasting, due to nausea of pregnancy for instance, but St. Angela of Foligno said that penances voluntarily undertaken are not half so meritorious as those imposed on us by the circumstances of our lives and cheerfully borne.

The christian life is certainly a paradox. The teaching of St. John of the Cross (which was for beginners, he said) is of the necessity for detachment from creatures; of the need of travelling light through the dark night.

Most of us have not the courage to set out on this path wholeheartedly, so God arranges it for us.

It would seem to the unthinking that mothers of children, whether of one or a dozen, are intensely preoccupied with creatures; their little ones, food, clothing, shelter, matters that are down to earth and grossly material such as dirty diapers, dishes, cooking, cramming baby mouths with food, etc. Women's bodies, heavy with children, dragged down by children, are a weight like a cross to be carried about. From morning until night they are preoccupied with cares but it is care for others, for the duties God has given them. It is a road once set out upon, from which there is no turning back. Every woman knows that feeling of not being able to escape, of the inevitability of her hour drawing ever nearer. This path of pain is woman's lot. It is her glory and her salvation. She must accept.

We try to escape, of course, either habitually or occasionally. But we never can. The point I want to make is that a woman can achieve the highest spirituality and union with***God through her house and children, through doing her

work****which leaves her no time for thought of self, for consolation, for prayer, for reading, for what she might consider development. She is being led along the path of growth inevitably. But she needs to be told these things, instructed in these things, for her hope and endurance, so that she may use what prayer she can, to cry out in the darkness of the night.

Here is her mortification of the senses:

Her eyes are affronted by disorder, confusion, the sight of human ailments, and human functions. Her nose also; her ears tormented with discordant cries, her appetite failing often; her sense of touch in agony from fatigue and weakness.

Her interior senses are also mortified. She is alone with her little ones, her interest adapted to theirs; she has not even the companionship of books. She has no longer the gay companions of her youth (their nerves can't stand it). So she has solitude, and a silence from the sounds she'd like to hear, conversation, music, discussion.

Of course there are consolations and joys. Babies and small children are pure beauty, love, joy—the truest in this world. But the thorns are there of night watches, of illnesses, of infant perversities and contrariness. There are glimpses of heaven and hell.

January 20th

Six degrees above zero this morning but by afternoon it warmed up so it was like spring. The men worked out in the woods and in the afternoon Tamar and the babies and I went to town to see the doctor. He is a nice casual soul, assuming that if there is anything worrying you, you will tell him. No examination. Just a weekly visit and when the pains begin, he says, go to the little hospital and they will call him.

We had him examine Sue too as she is restless, irritable and very wakeful at night. He finds nothing wrong, thank God.

I am trying to read some of Garrigou-Lagrange on the Interior Life every night. I am too dog tired to read much. He writes: "As everyone can easily understand, the interior life is an elevated form of interior conversation which everyone has with himself as soon as he is alone, even in the tumult of a great city. From the moment he ceases to converse with his fellowmen, man converses interiorly with himself about what preoccupies****him most. This conversation varies greatly according to the different ages of life; that of an old man is not that of a youth."

What kind of an interior life can a mother of three children have, who is doing all her own work, on a farm with wood fires to tend and water to pump. Or the grandmother either?

Here is my day. With Sue waking at all hours of the night for attention, we sleep late—that is, until seven-thirty. Then there are those shuddering hours of building fires in kitchen and living room and waiting for the water to boil for that warming, encouraging cup of coffee. The babies are not in too much of a hurry for their bottles. They are very giddy indeed first thing in the morning and talk and shout and run around in bare feet unless I get them dressed in double quick time.

Breakfast of sausage, hotcakes, apples and coffee. Dishes, water heating for clothes, breadbaking. That was today. Yesterday it was pumpkin pies. These things do not take all morning so I have time for writing letters. Then there is the arrival of the mail, at 11:30 in the morning, always something to look forward to in the country, with a book arriving from a friend, a package of food from my sister. Yesterday it was fish balls, cheese, baby food, candies and two toys. Today there was the letter from a friend, asking if her boy and girl, 16 and 15, could spend their vacations here, which would help pay bills nicely for a few months besides being enjoyable company. But can they put up with poverty, confusion, dirt, disorder? There is that old saying “Order is heaven’s first law.” But the way people use it irritates me, reminding you that “cleanliness is next to godliness,” “a place for everything, and everything in its place!”

Babies know nothing of such things, nor that “wilful waste makes woeful want.”

Sue is at the age when food goes in her ears, her hair, all over the floor. She will not be fed. Fortunately there are the chickens to eat all that she tosses riotously around. Becky, aged two and a half, is neat and tidy in her eating, but her toys, papers, books, anything she can lay her hands on is also flung here and there. My back aches with constant bending. We are trying to buy one of these wonderful dustpans with long handles. Lunch next, and dishes****and hanging up the wash, and today to the doctor which meant a bath and all clean clothes for the children. Then on the way to town Becky got sick and vomited all over herself and****me and the car which means more washing and cleaning. She had insisted on helping with the bread baking and eaten large hunks of whole wheat dough, apples, topped by milk, potatoes and baked cabbage for lunch.

Home just in time for supper, and more dishes and bottles and undressings and so on.

Not to speak of their innumerable rescues from imminent danger all through the day from the time they wake until the time they sleep.

How to lift the heart to God, our first beginning and last end, except to say with the soldier about to go into battle“Lord, I’ll have no time to think of Thee but do Thou think of me.” Of course, there is grace at meals, a hasty grace, what with Sue trying to climb out of her high chair on the table. Becky used to fold her hands and look holy at the age of eighteen months but now she does nothing. If you invite her participation she says, “I won’t.” If you catch Sue in a quiet, un-hungry mood, she will be docile and fold her hands. But rarely. She is

usually hungry and when she starts to eat she starts to hum, which is thanks too.

But there is that lull in the morning before the mailman comes when I can take out the missal and read the epistle and gospel for the day, and the collect which is always pertinent. That is refreshment always.

“The language of the Gospel, the style used by our Lord, lead us more directly to contemplation than the technical language of the surest and loftiest theology,” Garrigou-Lagrange says. So this reading, directly from the Gospels and the epistles of St. Paul are the best I can have. The author of “The Cloud of the Unknowing” talks of the conscious stretching out of the soul to God. So I must try harder to pause even for a fraction of a minute over and over again throughout the day, to reach toward God. We certainly feel the need of physical stretching.

What do I talk to myself about? When I am truly alone, with no babies around, as when I am in church alone, I pray. I say the rosary, I read my psalms, make the Acts: adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, supplication. And there is time. At home, kneeling by my bed, or in the bitter cold saying my prayers in bed, they are brief, half conscious, and the planning, the considering, the figuring of ways of “**making ends meet**” goes on. Until I catch myself and turn to God again.

“All these things shall be added unto you.” “He knoweth that ye have need of these things.” St. Teresa of Avila says****we should not trouble our Lord with such petty trifles. We should ask great things of Him.

So I pray for Russia, for our own country, for our fellowmen, our fellow workers, for the sick, the starving, the dying, ****the dead.

January 21st

Feast of St. Agnes

In reading about the feast today, the custom of giving the Benedictine nuns, who have their convent at the site of the church of St. Agnes, two white lambs to raise until Good Friday, is very interesting. They are shorn and the wool is used to make the Bishop’s palleum.

Tamar was especially interested in this as she had her sheep too, and spun the wool and woven it. Knowing how timid and stubborn sheep are, though they can become pets, and also how dirty they are, and how hard to keep clean, we wondered at the nuns and how they put up with them. When the lambs are taken to the Holy Father to be blessed they have probably been cleaned and combed. But is Rome as sooty a city as Easton, Pennsylvania, for instance where we kept four sheep and an angora goat? They were most distressingly dirty all

the time. It was joy to wash the wool and see how creamy white it could become. The angora wool was white as snow.

It is fun to wash, teaze and card the wool—I can do all those things though I cannot spin or weave. Tamar learned those skills in Canada, where the convent schools, *Ecoles Manageres*, all teach these crafts. The tuition is only \$18 a month, or was when she went there five years ago. Then there is the cost of materials too. She spent from October until Easter in a school at St. Martine and came back with these delightful skills. While there she wove material, cut it out and sewed it into a suit, a dress and coat, all in two weeks! It is not the kind of a suit which will ever wear out. She has her loom now which cost ninety-five dollars, and a spinning wheel which was purchased for her in Canada for thirteen dollars. She can spin a hank of wool in half an hour. From three sheep she got enough wool to make, when sent away to be cleaned and spun at a mill up in Maine, 15 lbs. of single ply thread for weaving. I have heard it said that it takes nine spinners to keep one weaver busy. Weaving goes very fast, once the loom is set up right. Our friend, Mary Humphries out in St. Joseph, Minnesota, says it takes the whole family to set up her loom—and as she has five children she means, I suppose, that they all insist on being in on it.

When we went driving down to the Fish Hatcheries at Ridge today we found in the store there some woven rag rugs for four dollars apiece. I shall get two as soon as I can to start furnishing my own bedroom, which I have decided to put under the patronage of St. Ann as she was a grandmother. To earn some money I must write a few more articles, and Catholic magazines pay very little indeed.

Tamar would weave some rag rugs but her loom is set up in a beautiful plaid design (her own home-dyed wool) and she must finish the cloth she has on it. Right now it is pulling, she has some intricate job to do on it, and waiting as she is these last days for the new baby, she is letting it go for smaller jobs such as knitting socks for Susie.

Besides weaving, she says, is not the work for pregnant women. In Ireland and in Scotland, it was the work of men, according to Father Vincent McNabb. Fishermen in their off season became weavers. It can become too heavy work for women, if they sit long at it and the muscles of stomach, and thighs as well as of the arms, shoulders and back, are called into play.

To continue the story of Tamar's education, after her winter in Canada which she remembers especially for its cold and the preponderance of sweets in the diet; she spent a year as an apprentice in the home of Ade de Bethune, artist in stained glass windows, wood carving, wood cuts, lettering, etc. Ade is interested in making things in general and has, over a period of years, made everything she uses, including hats, shoes, socks and dresses and has raised food such as chickens and rabbits for her table.

One way of combating the system, she says, is to stop buying the products of our machine world, our capitalist industrial society. If you want a rug, make it. If you want rosary beads, or crucifix, make them. The crudest samples of

your****own work will be better than that which you can buy very often. Ade lives in Newport and Tamar stayed with her and****her family for a year. Part of her education was to shop intelligently for the family groceries. How to buy and cook cheap****cuts of meat, how to bake and churn, keep a kitchen fire going, how to care for small animals in a back yard, how to letter and bind a book. For a Christmas present Tamar lettered a chapter from Eric Gill's *What is Christianity* and bound it in sailcloth for me.

There were weekly evenings when one of the monks from Portsmouth Priory came and gave a course, whether it was philosophy or theology for layfolk (woman layfolk at that) I do not know. There were concerts of chamber music at friends' houses, folk dances on Friday nights, evenings of visiting the Marine hospital to teach crafts to the wounded sailors.

How to take care of the money you had, how to earn money by taking care of children, sitting with invalids, repainting murals in an old church,—this too, was part of the course.

The well-to-do know how to care for what they have, increase it, add to it, so they can help others. The poor are notoriously extravagant. They have so little, it scarcely seems worth saving. They have so little, they are always seeking compensation in spending, consoling themselves with luxuries for the necessities they cannot have, such as a home, a garden, space, security of a fashion. If I mention money often in this account, it is for a purpose. Few people know how others live, the hand to mouth existence that is theirs, their fear of debt, their lack of opportunity.

My mother used to say, "Them as has, gits," meaning, I suppose, that if one had capital to make a start, one could increase what he already had. Capital to start farming, or a book business, or a weaving school, or even a boarding house.

Say, for instance, Tamar wished to take in summer guests. She would need money to furnish three bedrooms, —bed springs, mattresses, dressers, curtains, shades, rugs, paints, calcimine, washstands, pitchers, basins—quite a little outlay.

One would need also the energy to do the cleaning or painting, or the money to pay a neighbor to do it. And would one's neighbors wish to do such paid work? Here in this independent community they come gladly to help wash, cook and clean, when there is illness, but would they come as paid help? And as Americans we are unused to receiving help. Our America!****Its faults and virtues; our fierce independence, and our pride. Our generosity and our fear of making fools of ourselves. "Fools for Christ." If we were only truly Christian, "putting on Christ," putting on the life of the Holy Family, in simplicity and manual labor!

When I talk about poverty I do not mean *destitution* which is something quite different. Nor do I want to "talk poor mouth" as my mother used to say. I talk about the poverty of young people newly married, the girl without dowry, the young man without anything, either a team of horses, or a sum of money, or a

truck, to make a start in life. Mainly because their parents were also poor, or had many children, or at any rate no tradition of the parents' duty to educate and start their children in life. I read somewhere that according to Jewish law, if a father did not give his son a trade, that son did not owe his father support in his old age. St. Paul, a scholar, was a tentmaker, a weaver of goats' hair.

Peter Maurin, founder of a movement, a man of vision, changing the course of thought of thousands, has talked for fifteen years of crafts, of manual labor. Yet how many have tried to acquire a skill, either to carpenter, lay brick, make shoes, tailor or work at a forge? Many, thinking of the family, the need for a home and space and food, have turned to the farm. But a farmer needs capital, and many skills, besides the *habit of work*. A village economy could use doctors, barbers, veterinary, baker, launderers, canners, builders, shoemakers, tailors, etc. Not to speak of weavers. Every man, doing some particular job, could be an artist too and from his work, beauty would overflow. As Peter always put it, there would be a syntheses of cult, culture and cultivation.

Today it was warmer and we went to the neighboring farm for our milk. It is an old log house with ancient box wood in front, but all is in bad repair and unpainted. The hills rose in folds on all sides and there was the beauty of yellow fields, green pines and blue sky. But the fences were down, the barns decrepit, all decaying. It is this way everywhere in the country. One old woman and her son are left, the others all gone to the cities. At all the farms they sell their cream and one can buy only skim milk, for ten cents a quart.

People lived far more substantially, far more beautifully once.

I remember Tamar saying before her marriage—"I don't care if we have no food, I am going to have flowers around my house." But paint and mended fences are needed too, and that means money, time and strength.

It is true we have here "no lasting city," no abiding dwellings; it is true we are on pilgrimage, but, as St. Catherine of Sienna said "all the way to Heaven is Heaven for He said 'I am the Way'." So it is our duty to take the materials God gives and take up our job of co-creator, and do the best we can.

St. Francis' first job was to clean up a church. The family's first job is the home.

January 23rd

Had to omit my writing last night as I took over the baby****tending. Susie has been wakeful every night for months, starting crying at midnight, sometimes keeping it up for hours, sometimes sleeping restlessly in bed with David and Tamar. So that Tamar can get some good nights' sleep before her time comes, I am sleeping downstairs with the children and they take over my room upstairs at ten.

As usual Sue woke at 12:30 but she went to sleep after I took her in bed with me, though restlessly. She is spoiled, of course, but if we let her cry, Becky wakes up and cries with her “Take Tudie in, take Tudie in,” and her distress is for her sister as well as for herself.

T. says she feels as if she could scarcely drag herself about, or lift her feet from the floor. She laughs at her own ungainliness and shuffling steps. But she is not suffering from sour stomach and sickness as she was last week. This sounds over-realistic as I write, and I have remembered these last few days a book I read years ago, a supposedly realistic account of early married life with pregnancies, little babies, dirt, disorder, egg on the tablecloth, kind of emphasis. It was a dreary tale. There is a wonderful quotation from Stevenson in a recent review “True realism always and everywhere is . . . to find out where Joy resides, and give it voice . . . For to miss the joy is to miss all.”

Another lovely quotation from the same review is: *****There is an idea abroad among moral people that they should make*****their neighbors good. One person I have to make good: myself. But my duty to my neighbor is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy—if I may.”

The latter reminds me of Father Faber’s conferences on Kindness. The former of St. Paul—“all that rings true, all that commands reverence, and****all that makes for right; all****that is pure, all that is lovely, all that is gracious in the telling; virtue and merit, where ever virtue and merit are found—let this be the argument of your thoughts.”

There is so much fear and distraction these days over the state of the world—there is sadness in the Pope’s Christmas message, in articles, in letters, in all endeavors. And yet surely, “all times” as St. Teresa said, “are dangerous times.”

We may be living on the verge of eternity—but that should not make us dismal. The early Christians rejoiced to think that the end of the world was near, as they thought. Over and over again, even to the Seventh Day Adventists of our time, people have been expecting the end of the world. Are we so unready to face God? Are we so avid for joys here, that we perceive so darkly those to come?

It is one of the strange paradoxes of the Christian life that we can say with St. Paul, “As dying, yet we behold we live.” We can suffer with others, we can see plainly the frightful chaos, the unbelievable misery of cold and hunger and bitter misery, yet all the time there is the knowledge “that the sufferings of this time are not to be compared to the joy that is to come.”

Often we comfort ourselves only with words, but if we pray enough, the conviction will come too, that Christ is our King, not Stalin, Bevin or Truman. That He has all things in His hands, that “all things work together for good to those that love Him.”

Oh, but the misery of those who do not, of those who because of suffering turn from Him and curse God and die!

It is hard to think of these things. It is not to be understood, we cannot expect to understand. We must just live by faith, and the faith that God is good, that all times are in His hands, must be tried as though by fire. "I believe, Lord, help Thou my unbelief."

January 25th

There is another attitude of despair, which I cannot agree with that expressed by Peter Michaels in *Integrity* last November. He writes: "It is too late for any purely economic or political nostrum, even a good one. It is interesting to speculate as to whether Belloc's and Chesterton's Distributism (which was essentially an economic scheme) might have saved England and possibly Europe, if it had been applied, in, say the 1920's. One wonders if some correction of the ills of usury wouldn't have mended many matters once. Quite possibly so. While we were still suffering from acute mortal sin there was the possibility of turning back, and whereas it would have to be accompanied by a turning back to God also, it could possibly have started with economic reform. Chesterton's insistence that we go back to where we took the wrong road, and his insistence also that it had to be done very quickly, were probably quite correct at that time. It was the eleventh hour. We didn't turn back. Now it is midnight and we are dying!"

I don't like to use cliches but sometimes they are wonderfully apt. Fr. Gillis tells the story of the preacher all puffed up with his sermon who later greets one of his parishioners in the sacristy,

"I want to tell you how wonderful your sermon was, Father," he said.

"And what, my good man, was it that especially struck you," said the priest, hungry for praise.

"That part about, 'it's never too late to turn over a new leaf'."

When T. read this outburst of Michaels she said "he still must eat, he still must live!" And that is the point—we are still in the flesh. Body and soul are not separated. We still have to take care of Brother Ass, and the most of us must do it by the sweat of our brows. How are we going to feed, clothe and shelter ourselves? By going along with big business? By continuing to work for the Gallup Poll, the Anaconda Copper, Standard Oil, Metropolitan Life Insurance, and go right on adding our little bit to the sum-total of chaos?

To be a personalist does not mean to be a quietist. No matter if it seems hopeless, "we must hope against hope." "In peace is my bitterness most bitter." These are hard words to understand, but we can at least remember that all times are in the hand of God.

There are so many writers, so many who think, who talk, among us. What can we do? We can "be." In all the fifteen years Peter Maurin has talked of manual

labor, how many we know have learned a trade? There are printers, stained glass window makers, there are a few. But so many go right on in their white collar jobs in business offices.

A priest we know who does not like our emphasis on Distributism, decentralism, or whatever one wishes to call it, said one time, "It is too late for anything but love." That sounded good to many people. But that same priest was going about his business having his church repaired \$20,000 worth.

No, all times are dangerous times. St. Paul said, "It behooves us all to act, if we have wives as though we had not."

So even in those days, a holy and happy perspective on the present time was enjoined. To be aloof, to be superior to the heat or the cold, the buffetings of fortune, this holy indifference is good and to be admired. I can remember how the heroes in my girlhood romances which I read in my teens, all had this lofty indifference.

Here is a wonderful quotation from Eric Gill:

"When I consider how we Christians exhibit our Christianity –making it appear that there's not a ha'porth of difference between Christians and anyone else—neither in our daily life and behaviour nor in our political and economic theory—when I consider this, I say, I don't see how we can expect to convert the world. Perhaps we don't expect to; we are quite comfortable with our manners and customs. . . .

"Communism started as a movement to overthrow capitalism. It is now, it appears, an equally bloody tyranny. I think the Christians have none but themselves to blame. So it is in many affairs. By our lukewarmness and complacency and blindness we have betrayed our own cause. I think we've got to learn our Christianity again. I think we have succumbed****to the prevailing and all-pervading poison of material progress. We think we can get riches and plenty by political and scientific and mechanical trickery. Trickery, that's what it comes to. Press the button and the figure works. They call it the application of science to industry. It's not. It's the application of science to money-making. And the Christians haven't seen through it. No, they think it's 'jolly fine'****and that working****men ought to be grateful for the higher standard of living and the lower standard of muscular effort.

"Well, the point here is not social reform or the rottenness of capitalist culture. The point is that the whole world has got it firmly fixed in its head that the object of working is to obtain as large an amount of material goods as possible, and that with the increased application of science and the increased use of machinery that amount will be very large indeed, while at the same time the amount of necessary labor will become less and less, until machines being minded by machines, it will be almost none at all. And the point is that this frame of mind is radically un-Christian and anti-Christian. And the point of that is that it is therefore contrary to Nature and contrary to God—as anti-God as any

atheist could wish. And that, no doubt, is why our English industrialism is so popular among Russian Communists.

"The alternative is the Cross. That's the awful fact. And it's not simply a matter of ethical behaviour, as who should say: 'take up your cross and follow me.' It's also a matter of intelligent behavior, as who should say, 'thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.' Man is made for happiness, not for wealth, and the two are entirely independent of one another and even inimical. A moderate amount of physical health and material wealth is necessary to man, that he may maintain his life. Of course! But even so it is better to give than to receive and therefore better to be given than to take. The whole of our trouble is the secularization of our life, so that we have descended to animal conditions of continual struggle for material goods. By sin-sin, that is to say, self-will and self-worship-by sin man does not descend from the superhuman to the merely human, but from the superhuman to the sub-human. Strange fact! Man cannot live on the human plane; he must be either above or below it. The marvellous feats of our mechanized (scientific) industrial world are not human feats. They are no more than the feats of highly intelligent animals and the more we perfect our mechanization so much the more nearly do we approach the impersonal life of bees or ants.

"And if I might attempt to state in one paragraph the work which I have chiefly tried to do in my life it is this: to make a cell of good living in the chaos of our world. Lettering, typedesigning, engraving, stonecarving, drawing-these things are all very well, they are means to the service of God and of our fellows and therefore to the earning of a living, and I have earned my living by them. But what I hope above all things is that I have done****something towards reintegrating bed and board, the small farm and the workshop, the home and the school, earth and heaven.

"The thing about Christianity, the thing about the Cross, about Calvary, is that it is true to man. Man, not that creature, that biped known to Science-measured as to his dimensions, his comparative dimensions, for there are no others; dissected as to his physiology; analysed as to his psyche-but man, the person known to himself and to God, the creature who knows and wills and loves, master of his acts (however much he be hindered by and subject to heredity and circumstances), therefore responsible. That is the creature who desires happiness and by the very nature of things, by his own nature, cannot find it except in God. That is why death is the gate of life." -From, Eric Gill: *Autobiography*(New York: The Devin Adair Co.)

The idea of "the cell of good living" is expressed by Ignatio Silone, by Arthur Koestler, by Aldous Huxley. Not by the movement of masses swayed by any demagogue, will things be changed. But the yeast will leaven the dough, the salt will add savor, the candle will shine out, and as Juliana of Norwich wrote, "All will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of thing will be well."

(When Susie fell and bumped her head today, T. gathered her up and rocking

her, murmured, "Everything's going to be all right, my darling, everything's going to be all right." And I know she was making, an act of hope, because outside a blizzard is raging and already the snow is a foot thick on these country roads. However, it is the month of the Holy Family. They must take care of us. God will temper the wind to the shorn lamb. So we reassure ourselves, but O how uneasy I am none the less!).

And now I read this quotation from a review of the work of Dr. Martin Buber by Ann Freemantle in the *Commonweal*. According to Buber, constructive socialism "becomes possible only through the formation of small voluntary groups of men who not merely share the means of production, or the forces of labor, but who, as human beings, enter into a direct relationship with one another and live a life of genuine fraternity. Such a socialism would have to resist any mechanization of living. The association of such groups would have to resist the dictates of an organized center, accumulation of power, and a political 'superstructure.' The focus of such groups, or cells, is not a political but a religious motivation."

January 30th

St. Martin

The weather has been bitter, fourteen below zero one morning—never above ten above zero. Which is very cold, even for New York. Every now and then we have a winter when it is colder in Alabama than in Alaska, just to turn things upside down.

All through the snow the red birds and blue birds go in Rocks. There are foxes and black bears in the woods and deer that come to the doorstep. David is not a hunter and besides we have not the right kind of a gun.

For meat we have a side of bacon which will last us the winter. We have just finished some sausage friends gave us. Once a month we have chicken. Once every few weeks we buy liver.

But in general our meals are pancakes and coffee and applesauce for breakfast, beans and raw cabbage for lunch, bread and cheese and stewed tomatoes for supper. Once a week eggs, sometimes pies, suet puddings. It is fun to seek out recipe to use what is at hand. The potato crop around here has not been good, they are green, scabrous, some soft and spongy. So they are no good for mashing or baking, only boiling with salt and margarine on them. But everything tastes delicious, and best of all is the smell of fresh baked bread in the house.

January 31st

St. John Bosco

Fourteen below zero again. Up at 5:30 to build fires and Susie has been staying obediently under the covers what with a few slaps. So we stayed in bed until 7:00. The living room warmed up but it took till afternoon to heat the kitchen, which is a north room, even with washing, baking of bread, rolls and apple pies.

We were afraid to wipe up the floor for fear of leaving a coating of ice because in the four corners of the room things like canned milk, the water bucket, the clothes in the sink, were still frozen at ten o'clock. But we did it anyway with a well wrung out mop.

How the day goes! Outside it is unbelievably beautiful with the snow covered fields and hillsides, the green pines and the red roads showing through the snow. But one does not take much****time to contemplate this beauty. If you go out it is for wood, to empty ashes on the icy path, to take down clothes and to hang others, and it is breathtakingly cold, and the clothes freeze as you hang them up.

Men always, I am sure from my experience in the past, wonder what women do with their time. My son-in-law is too polite to say so, but I am sure he thinks "two women to two children and one house" But the work never ends.

I thought of Margaret Bosco, the mother of St. John Bosco today, and how she helped him in his gigantic work of caring for boys, and how she prayed while peeling potatoes and mending, etc., but with little children tugging at your apron strings it is hard to pray. I manage to get in the psalms of Matins every day; (next week I'll try Lauds.) and Vespers in the evening. I vary the hours in order to get more familiar with all the psalms. This new English translation from the new Latin translation, arranged as the breviary is, brought out by Father Frey is wonderful. Every day something new shines forth.

I had read somewhere that Moses, one of my favorite characters in history, was denied entrance to the Promised Land because he turned bitter against his followers, failing in love and trust. I had thought that only a legend until I read in today's, Saturday's, Matins, "Then they angered him at the waters of Meriba, and it went ill with Moses on their account, for they embittered his spirit and he spoke rashly with his lips." Ps. 105:32. (The old translation is "They provoked him also at the waters of contradiction; and Moses was afflicted for their sakes: because they exasperated his spirit. And he distinguished with his lips.")

This is a lesson in holy optimism, an argument for faith in and love for those who depend upon us. How often I fail in these ways, in plain, ordinary kindness and love and hope. Fr. Faber's spiritual conferences on Kindness are an eye opener. They are out of print now but can be obtained in any religious library.

This last month has been the month of the holy Family; now this coming month, I'm going to think of Margaret Bosco, who has not been canonized yet but was undoubtedly a saint. Her life was much like ours and she certainly did not have any electric washing machine, or gasoline ones, as they do hereabouts.

On a recent trip to the West Coast I was much struck by the price of land. Some friends of ours in Portland recently bought a place for sixteen thousand dollars, and the house on it could not be lived in so they had to rent another house a mile away. They have five or six children and are quite isolated, though they do have electricity. But there was going to be a shortage of electricity, the papers warned, urging people not to have lights on their Christmas trees. One friend with a deep freeze locker reported a tremendous spoilage of food because of failure of electricity for several days. Another said that recently when her mother had the dinner all preparing for company in the electric range the power went off for four hours so dinner was ready by eleven at night.

This is not Just sour grapes. In all the suburbs of New York City during a recent ice storm the power was off for days and heating power as well as cooking facilities were done away with. And of course, no one had kerosene or wood stoves handy!

But to return to prices, Leslie, our neighbor down the road, says, "Where do people get so much money buying such expensive farms?" In this case, the girl had received insurance after her brother's death in the war and it was on the strength of that insurance that they bought their farm. The husband works in a factory to keep it going.

Down here in West Virginia, or up in Pennsylvania, or in Vermont, I have seen farms for twelve hundred, fifteen hundred, two thousand,—beautiful farms—bottom lands, wooded hillsides, springs and wells, houses seven and eight rooms, from fifty to a hundred years old, low ceilinged, high ceilinged log houses, clapboard houses, tin roofed houses, with pig pens, chicken coops, woodsheds and barns; but humble houses too with a pump on the back porch and no plumbing, only the tubs hanging on a nail. Five hundred dollars down payment will buy one of these houses but it would be far better to have cash, and not have to pay four per cent interest to the bank. Cash is hard****to come by; people exchange help in these country parts.

Down here in West Virginia cows sell at this time of the year for one hundred****or one hundred and twenty-five dollars. Up in New York****state for two hundred and sixty. Food for humans is standardized, of course, and also the commercial feed for animals. The prices have gone up about three hundred percent in the last few years.

"And where is cash to come from?" young married people in the cities say. Around here farmers cut pulpwood, nine dollars a cord collected at your farm, and eleven a cord if you deliver it. There is work in the sand mines or for girls in a stocking factory, and in the summer in the tomato cannery.

But if the men are away all day in winter who is going to cut wood for the wife? One needs a power saw, a car for transportation, etc. But people hereabouts do without these things even if they have to walk miles to work and they prepare all summer for the coming winter, etc.

Anyway, there is quite as much security here as in the city: once you get here you see that. Really more. Employment in this machine age is tied up with preparedness, armaments, war, and recovery from war. Most of us cannot forget the depression of 1929-'39. Then one depended on the State, on the relief—and the investigator said as she surveyed the coffee pot on the stove and looked for signs of expenditures or dissipations. “What right have you got to have another baby when you cannot support the one you have?”

Land, and a home and liberty,—the liberty of Christ that St. Paul often talked of. These are what a man craves, and a woman too. But they do mean hard work, real drudgery. How dead tired one gets at night, and how wonderful sleep is. “Just resisting the cold consumes your energy,” Tamar says, after standing on her feet most of the day, cooking and washing.

There is the question of school of course. Down here it would be necessary to go to a public school. “But that certainly keeps the parents awake to their responsibilities,” T. said today. “Besides, in Easton, Helen said the children were always being urged by the sisters to bring money. With a big family there just is no money.”