

On Pilgrimage - May 1967

By Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, May 1967, 2, 10.

Summary: Praises the changes in the liturgy of the Mass—"I do love the guitar masses." Paraphrases a talk she heard on the price of peace. Frustrated with the new postal requirement to use zip codes in mailing the paper. (DDLW #850).

Here is a gem I found in C. S. Lewis' **Letters** (Harcourt, Brace and World):

"The advantage of a fixed form of service is that we know what is coming. Extempore public prayer has this difficulty: we don't know whether we can join in it until we've heard it—it might be phony or heretical. We are therefore called upon to carry on a critical and devotional activity at the same moment, two things hardly compatible. In a fixed form we ought to have gone through the motions before in our private prayer; the rigid form really sets our devotions free. I also find that the more rigid it is, the easier to keep our thoughts from straying. Also it prevents getting too completely eaten up by whatever happens to be the preoccupation of the moment, war, and election or whatnot. The permanent shape of Christianity shows through. I don't see how the extempore method can help but become provincial and I think it has a great tendency to direct attention to the minister rather than to God."

C. S. Lewis "speaks to my condition," as the Quakers say.

The New Liturgy

Which leads me into reflections on the new Masses, the intimate Masses, the colloquial Masses, the folk-song Masses, and so on. By the intimate I mean those where everyone gathers close around the altar inside the sanctuary, as close to the priest as possible. Even the young ones have a hard time standing, shifting from one leg to the other, the girls with high heels ("If I'd know it was to be like this I would have worn my sneakers," one said), the older rheumatic ones with ever-increasing pain. By the intimate I also mean those offered in small apartments before a small group. I understand that permission for this has been granted in Harlem for some time now, and priests are offering the Mass in the poorest of homes block by block in their parishes, during the week-bringing Christ most literally to the people. This is wonderful.

But there is also the attempt made by some young priests to reach the young, to make the Mass meaningful to the young (the bourgeois, educated, middle-class

young) where novelty is supposed to attract the attention but which, as far as I can see, has led to drawing these same young ones completely away from the “people of God,” “the masses” and worship in the parish church. There is the suggestion of contempt here, for the people, and for the faith of the inarticulate ones of the earth, “the ancient lowly” as they have been called. Their perseverance in worship, week after week, holyday after holyday, has always impressed me and filled my heart with a sense of love for all my fellow Catholics, even Birchites, bigots, racists, priests and lay people alike, whom I could term “my enemies” whom I am bidden to love. Our worst enemies are of our own household, Scripture says. We are united, however, as people in marriage are united, by the deepest spiritual bond, participation in the sacraments, so that we have become “one flesh” in the Mystical Body.

I do love the guitar Masses, and the Masses where the recorder and the flute are played, and sometimes the glorious and triumphant trumpet. But I do not want them every day, any more than we ever wanted solemn Gregorian Requiem Masses every day. They are for the occasion. The guitar Masses I have heard from one end of the country to the other are all different and have a special beauty of their own. I have been a participant (it is not that I have just heard them) in such Masses with the Franciscan Brothers in Santa Barbara, with the students at St. Louis University, at the McGill Newman Club in Montreal and many other Newman meetings, and in Barrytown, New York, where the Christian Brothers, our neighbors, have a folk Mass every Saturday at eleven-fifteen. They are joyful and happy Masses indeed and supposed to attract the young. But the beginning of faith is something different. The “**fear** of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Fear in the sense of **awe**.

Here is another quotation from C. S. Lewis, in **Miracles** (Fontana Books; paperback):

Men are reluctant to pass over from the nation (sic) of an abstract and negative deity to the living God. . . . An “impersonal God”—well and good. A subjective God of beauty, truth and goodness, inside our own heads—better still. A formless life force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap—best of all.

But God himself, alive, pulling at the other end of the cord, perhaps approaching at an infinite speed, the hunter, king, husband— that is quite another matter. There comes a moment when the children who have been playing burglars hush suddenly: was that a real footstep in the hall? There comes the moment when people who have been dabbling in religion (Man’s search for God!) suddenly draw back. Suppose we really found Him? We never meant it to come to that! Worse still, supposing He had found us?

The Price of Peace

Every first Friday evening in New York (except July and August) a PAX meeting is held in the hall over the Paraclete Bookshop in New York City. Last week,

after the Mass at seven p.m., Barry Ulanov gave a very impressive talk, which we hope to get on tape from the PAX group (of which I am a sponsor) and replay here at Tivoli.

Mr. Ulanov spoke about non-violence and reminded me of that quality of awe, speaking of peace as awe-ful in that same sense. Are we willing to pay the price of peace? Are we really thinking of what peace means? It seems to me that we have not yet begun. It is easier when the price is forced upon one, as Belgium was forced to give up the Congo, as empires, beginning with England, have been forced, in the inexorable stride of history, to give up their colonies. But even though this peace, or beginning of peace, the first steps towards peace founded on justice were made, it meant an austerity regime forced upon the workers in Belgium, which resulted in a general strike on the part of those whom Orwell called the exploiting workers. They had profited by the greed of their rulers, and were not prepared to accept the changed situation, and the sacrifices entailed. Peace is indeed awe-ful when one considers the cost, the giving up not only of financial interests but also of prestige, "face", and a real conversion of heart and mind. And every worker, everyone of us in this country, is somehow involved in the struggle for peace in Vietnam. We want peace without that victory which prelates have called for. We have scorned those prelates, but we ourselves are living off the boom which this war has brought about. It is a fearsome thing to think of. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God."

That quotation comes to mind when I think of the retreat which Father John J. Hugo is going to give, God willing, at St. John's Church in Coyleville, Penna., June 25-July 1. We don't know what the living conditions there will be like; we may have to stay in guest houses or motels nearby if it is not possible to convert the large parish hall into dormitories. Women may have to take turns with the cooking. There will be complete silence during the week, so that the Holy Spirit can speak. This is the first open retreat that Father Hugo has given for some time, and we do not know how many people will come on the spur of the moment, or who will register at the last minute.

For the past three summers, Father Hugo has given us retreats here at Tivoli, but since this is a house of hospitality, a guest house, a conference center, and an inn by the side of the road, there were constant interruptions and not the silence needed. Our own family of about thirty-five, men, women and children, able and disabled do not take very kindly to reading at table of the **Prison Memoirs** of Father Delp, or the **Life of St. Vincent de Paul**, for instance. And one senses that the kitchen force is champing at the bit, trying to get the tables cleared, the dishes finished and other necessary work under way. So we are trying this experiment: a retreat at Coyleville. Right now I know of people who are coming from Pittsburgh, Louisville, Cleveland and New York. Coyleville is ten miles on Route 42 out of Butler, Pennsylvania, which is about twenty-five miles north of Pittsburgh. So look to maps.

I myself will go a little earlier to Coyleville to see what preparations I can help in. I am looking forward to this retreat like a thirsty man to a spring in the

desert. Those who wish to attend can write to me here at the Farm or to Father Hugo, at Fenelton, Pennsylvania.

Father Hugo is the author of **The Gospel of Peace, In the Vineyard, The Immorality of Conscriptio, Catholics Can Be Conscientious Objectors** and the retreat notes **Applied Christianity**. All but the last were published in The Catholic Worker over the years.

The most unhappy Happening which has taken place recently for the Catholic Worker—equal indeed to the delay in the acquisition of a new St. Joseph's House of Hospitality—is the Zip code business. Once before we went through a mailing crisis: with zoning numbers during the Second World War. There was a dearth of young men in the place (and nobody ever wants to do office work anyway). Every month we print 90,000 copies of the Catholic Worker, and our card files are enormous. Once before we had to rearrange everything according to zones and cities and now there is a more complete and difficult rearrangement to do. Each and every card has to have a Zip code marked on it, and each and every stencil has to have that same number typed in. People take turns sitting at those infernal machines, the stencil typewriters, two of them, and work until neck and back ache with the torture of it. They are not used to what is really the painful labor of the typist. Also, some of them are sick people to begin with. We have little steady clerical help. There is more glamour in demonstration, the direct action of such communication being helped by the distribution of the very paper which we are trying to get out into the homes and on the streets.

Besides, we are occupied in the house of hospitality with cooking meals, serving a soup line, giving out clothes, and attending to the needs of the fifty or so people who make up the immediate family there at 175 Chrystie Street, besides the breadline. Everyone is a volunteer. There are no salaries. We all get food, clothing and shelter. (The city and state provide medical care but we bury our own. There is a terrible dignity about dying, as there is about birth, and these great events need to be accompanied by appropriate reverence and ceremony. I myself like a solemn Gregorian Requiem Mass for such an occasion.)

Yes, we need help before the Post Office shuts down on us entirely, or the paper is still more delayed in getting mailed out. Our combined issue for March-April, was because of this need to work on the Zip code, which I am happy to say is now half done. But I am truly pleading for help on this job and in this filing-card system, to help us get it up to date. And while we are at it, we apologize too for our lateness in acknowledging mail, which is piling up at an alarming rate. Expect to be thanked and have your questions answered sooner or later.