

On Pilgrimage - March 1968

By Dorothy Day

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Summary:

Revels in the beauty and worship of newly composed liturgical music. Gives details of her visit to the Taena community in England and eulogizes Fr. H. A. Reinhold for his labor activities. Mentions a new edition of Ammon Hennacy's autobiography, praises his activism and nonviolent stance but rejects his criticism of Scripture.

(DDLW #863).

It is the third Sunday in Lent as I write, and I have just come from a glorious celebration, the eleven o'clock Mass at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, St. Nicholas Avenue and West 118th Street. St. Nicholas Avenue is just one block west of Seventh Avenue in New York.

It was a special Lenten Mass composed by Mary Lou Williams and is being sung every Sunday during Lent by the entire congregation, led by the young people's singing group, with Mr. Ed Bonnemere directing. One came away feeling as though one had truly celebrated Mass, offering worship, adoration, glory to God, not to speak of penitence.

The prayers sung and recited are very much to the point. At the Kyrie Eleison the choir sings, "For my lack of hope," and the congregation answers, "Lord have mercy." And the petitions are repeated, "For my lack of faith, for our failure to care, for letting ourselves be paralyzed with fear, for our divisions, for our jealousies, for our hatred, for not being peacemakers, for our lies—Lord have mercy on my soul."

There is a climax of beauty at the singing of the choir, after the Sanctus—"Dying, you destroyed our death; Rising you restore our life. We will sing of you until you are seen by all the world." As for the Great Amen, which is still more or less ignored by all our local churches, it is hard to describe the ecstatic "Glory to God, to Jesus Christ," and the half dozen repeated Amens followed by a final strong one sung by the entire congregation.

This was a musical event, and I do not think there has been anything to compare with it in any of the so-called folk masses being sung in colleges and churches around the country. The setting of devotional words to swinging, popular tunes may make an appeal to many but there can be no comparison with the music we heard today.

Another Liturgical Note

I am reminded that either in the newspaper printed by the Progressive Labor Party or the Trotskyites, there is a news note that Fidel Castro has been seen at one of the swing Masses in Havana recently. Were they trying to insinuate the idea, the suspicion, in the minds of his opponents of the left, that he is truly a Catholic at heart, and cannot stay away from the Mass?

It is to be hoped that such religious music as Mary Lou Williams' whose profile was published in the **New Yorker** some years ago after her conversion to Catholicism, will be recorded and reach those in Latin American countries who have already brought out some remarkable Masses

Taena

It is a very rainy Sunday as I write, a good day to be thinking of England again and remembering my visit to Taena community which I should have written about a few months ago when I returned from England. But the **Catholic Worker** is timeless, as one of our priest friend writes us from the heart of Paraguay whose copy of the CW takes three months by ground mail to reach him. Not to speak of our always being late in coming out. (We are trying to start a new style, printing at the end of the month instead of six weeks early as most magazines in the great world do.)

In the confusion of living in two places, New York and Tivoli, I had misplaced my note book and only now found it. I wanted it not only because my memory is poor as to names, but because I wanted the vital statistics the pages contained.

To get to Taena you take a bus at Victoria Station and you arrive at Cheltenham a few hours later. I was met there by Mrs. Winifred Hislam who, since her husband's tragic death in France a little over a year ago, has been teaching school and living in the town away from the house that her husband, a true craftsman, had built. Her house in town is opposite a park which was still green, and out in front were birch trees and evergreens. The table was set for a luncheon feast and Laurie's pottery and all six daughters were there and two families besides, so that there were seventeen children in all. Mrs. Mary Swann, mother of Mrs. David Miller, who had been helping us in Tivoli when she met David, was also there. We no sooner got up from the table when we set out for a supper meeting at Taena. We drove there, to be divided up between the Ineson and the Seex families though we united later for a meeting, one of the weekly ones they hold in the community, this one on **Prayer**. The Lowery's who are silversmiths and earn their living by making jewelry and wedding rings, among other things, and the potter of the community was there. But other members of the community did not come, and we omitted compline in the chapel, I think because it had turned quite cold. Anyway, attendance at meetings or at prayer are not compulsory any more than they are at the Catholic Worker community.

(All community has its ups and downs. For instance now that we are having two Masses, morning and evening at the farm, we are omitting rosary and compline. And in town, for one reason or another, the noon day rosary has been omitted for some time and we are no longer singing compline as we did for some years while Tom Cornell was managing editor. Let us hope that we begin again as we have kept beginning again all through the years. This parenthesis is supposed to be confession, penitence and promise of future amendment!)

The meeting was held in the living room half of what was the squire's house, which is a huge rambling affair, of forty rooms or more. It was warm, there in the room, what with the open fire, but the halls of the house were draughty of course and closing doors after one in fall and winter is a necessity to conserve heat.

The subject of the evening was not the kind that led to any openness or self revelation, what with the usual Anglo Saxon reserve. People give themselves away much more in discussions over labor, race or politics. But it was an enjoyable evening. Before she left us Winifred gave me copies of C. S. Lewis's children stories, which Martin Corbin had read to his children at Tivoli and recommended highly. It is a series of six books boxed, and before I left England I had already read three of them!

It was the second birthday I had spent in England and I was most happy to receive two others gifts. Hilary and Ron Seex gave me Benjamin Britten's **Abraham and Isaac** record, and a copy of the **Jerusalem New Testament**.

I slept that night in a vast room (we would have had four beds in it at a house of hospitality) which was warm because it was above the old fashioned country kitchen where we all breakfasted and dined the next day. The long table stretched from end to end of the big room.

Was it Sarah Elizabeth, 12, or Rebecca Jane, 14, who gave me all the vital statistics? And which one was it that I taught knitting to, and who was it I promised picture post cards of Indians, and a copy of Ammon Hennacy's book? (I have not forgotten my promise but someone in the west will have to send the picture post cards because we do not have any around New York. Maybe some of my friends in Tucson or Winslow or Albuquerque will send a few to me, to admire first before I send them on. I am an ardent collector of post cards myself, liking most especially those which have to do with men's toil, their work and housing.) Anyway, here are the names of the Seex children, offspring of Hilary and Ron. Hilary is the mother. There is Imogen Ann, 3, John Sebastian, 5, Peter Hilary, 7, Rachel Margaret, 9, Joseph Francis Martin, 11, Sarah Elizabeth, 12, Rebecca Jane, 14, Robert Paul, 15, and Benjamin Mark, 17. I was happy to hear that the two oldest work on the farm. They also possessed motor cycles. As to the animals, there are 43 cows, 22 calves, 48 sheep, 20 chickens, 2 dogs, 12 cats, and 2 hamsters.

In the Ineson family there are John Gabriel, 9, David Paul, 14, Jamela Jane, 18, Janet Francesca, 20, Peter Malcolm 23 and Ruth, 26. The Casserly's have

Kieron, 7, Brendan, 12, Sean 17, Micky, 22 and Sheila, 26.

In the Lowry family there is Daniel Peter, 8 months, Owen, 2, Ruth, 4, and Dominic Quentin, 6.

We all went to Mass that morning at Prinknash Abbey (pronounced Prinnish), and it was too wet to walk across the fields and through the beautiful green countryside, so everyone went by car to the nine o'clock Mass which was crowded with many families.

I loved my visit to the Taena families and feel very close to them and wish they would continue to get out their bulletin as they used to. But with all the children and all the work, and the earning of a living outside the community as well as in it, one can understand its omission. But there is an increasing interest in community and we are hoping to be printing more material on community in general and to learn more about communities past, (like that of the Jesuit Reductions in Paraguay which lasted for one hundred and fifty years, and the kibbutzim of the present day in Israel about which the late Martin Buber has written so beautifully in **Paths in Utopia**. We hasten to add, these are not Utopian dreams but bear in them the ideas and the beginnings of the solution of our problems today, of agriculture, of city slums, of unemployment and many others, as Peter Maurin our founder has always said.)

I left the Taena community of families that cold Fall afternoon, to go on to another type of community, Stanford Abbey, to which we also feel close since both last month and this month we are using the wood cuts of one of the Sisters, Sister Meinrad, who has given us some of her beautiful work.

R. I. P.

Elsewhere in this issue we have Helen Iswolsky's good strong article on the work of Father H. A. Reinhold, but I must add my remembrances to her account.

My memory may be at fault chronologically, but it seems to me that we first met in 1934, when there was a Catholic Charities Convention in New York. (I know that the **Catholic Worker** was only a year or two old at the time, because I had taken a publicity job with the Catholic Charities and had to write feature articles in the way of interviews with Senator Robert Wagner, Postmaster-General James Farley and others. For which I got \$25 a week! Every penny counted with this new venture in journalism.) Father Reinhold was there, in his capacity as port chaplain of Hamburg, and it seemed to me there was a suspicious attitude toward him. "Who is this man who travels across oceans to discuss the spiritual welfare of seafarers?" We were pretty isolationist in those days and the church in American had not yet begun to be disturbed by the rising power of Hitler. Father Reinhold's interests were as broad as the world. He had become interested in the **Catholic Worker** when he was still in Germany and become one of our earliest subscribers, because we had dealt

with the longshoremen's strike on the West Coast and the work of port chaplain Fr. Kelley, who had backed Harry Bridges in his fight against the shipowners. When he came to see us in our first headquarters on East Fifteenth Street I told him about the Communist-inspired Hunger March on Washington in December, 1932, which many seamen and longshoremen had joined.

When Father Reinhold returned to Germany he wrote an article about the **Catholic Worker** for **Blackfriars**. Later he had to flee Hitler and after living in Switzerland for a short time, he came to New York, where he worked in a parish, in Jamaica, as I remember. In May 1936 there was a seaman's strike which led to a strike of sixty thousand East Coast seamen in the winter of 1936-37. The Catholic Worker, which by that time had settled on Mott Street, started another headquarters on Tenth Avenue, where we fed seamen sandwiches and coffee from morning till midnight. The place was always jammed—there was reading matter and a good radio—and Father Reinhold, who continued to be interested in seamen, visited us there.

I remember the night very well and how he began to talk to the men. It was not a formal meeting; all the men stood around with coffee cups in their hands, and Father Reinhold talked to them about the Church and social justice. It was a brief talk, but it had repercussions: he was called back to the Chancery office and told that if this happened again he would be asked to leave the diocese. He was told that no priest made a speech in the New York diocese without first asking permission, and that the Church did not enter into politics and labor.

Father George Barry Ford gave him hospitality for a time and I think it was not long after that he went to the West Coast to live in the Cathedral rectory in Seattle, where he soon had a group of young people around him interested not only in the liturgy but also in labor. Practically every one was a member of the local Teamsters' Union but the labor movement did not give them much scope for activity. They soon decided, with Father Reinhold's encouragement, to start a house of hospitality and when I arrived on a speaking trip I found half a dozen young men lined up on the station platform holding **Catholic Workers** like banners in front of them to identify themselves. Father's life at the Cathedral was an active one but he helped our group to say Compline each night and to have Friday evening discussions. He certainly broadened and deepened their outlook and the intellectual life of the group was enriched.

On occasion Father Reinhold visited friends in the East and filled speaking engagements throughout the country, and in New York he resumed contact with his friend Don Luigi Sturzo, that great Christian sociologist who stood so firmly against Mussolini that he was exiled to England where he started the Peace and Freedom group. During the blitz, Don Sturzo managed to get to the United States, and the two friends, both exiles from their own land, met again. Somehow I never thought of them as exiles, both were of such international stature. This friendship reflected another of Father Reinhold's interests, in addition to liturgy and labor: politics.

Mysticism was another of his interests. I have one of his books, a compilation of spiritual writings called **The Soul Afire**, which, along with his monthly columns in the Benedictine monthly **Orate Fratres** (now called **Worship**), published by the Liturgical Press at Collegeville, Minnesota, are treasured parts of our library here at Tivoli.

Ammon Hennacy

And now for another decidedly different, and most American, personality. Up to the time when Ammon began visiting the Catholic Worker house of hospitality in Milwaukee, I doubt that he ever met any Catholics. Back in 1938 the Spanish civil war caused great dissension among Catholics, and some of those who visited and engaged in the discussions at the Friday night meetings in Milwaukee were veterans of that war. The first time I met Ammon I had been invited by the Bishop of Milwaukee to speak at a Catholic social-justice meeting held in the largest auditorium in the city. Nina Polcyn had a group coming to her house later and Ammon piled into the car with me, beginning his conversation, to the amazement of the other ladies with us, by asking me what jails I had been in. Before I had a chance to reply he launched into the story of his life. This became for us a familiar pattern. Ammon had been a reader of the **Catholic Worker** and as soon as the house was started he began to frequent its meetings, becoming a goad to the group there. He sold the paper in front of churches, getting rid of hundreds each month, and his person-to-person contacts led to much discussion and clarification of thought. With the coming of the Second World War, his refusal to register for the draft or to pay taxes led to his going west and beginning a "Life at Hard Labor," which was the name we gave to the series of articles he wrote for the **Catholic Worker**, which are included in his autobiography, **The Book of Ammon**.

A new edition of this book has just appeared, paper bound, with a green and yellow cover, good paper and clear type, printed by a Salt Lake City printer under Ammon's direction, and including an additional chapter explaining why he no longer considers himself a Catholic. His real conversion, he writes, took place in Atlanta Federal Prison during World War One, when he read the Bible from cover to cover and found himself a believer, and compelled by the force of the Sermon on the Mount to love his enemies. In this case his enemy was the warden of the prison, who had ordered a crazy prisoner to be strung up by chains to the bars of his cell eight hours a day as an added punishment for felling a guard with a blow which resulted in his death.

He read the Bible through four times and the New Testament many times more and learned the Sermon on the Mount by heart. The World of God had such a profound effect on him that the rector of a midwest seminary who read his writings in the **Catholic Worker** and knew that he was not then a Catholic, said, "He received so great a light that it blinded him," meaning, I suppose, that it blinded him from some aspects of the truth. It did, however transform him

so that he has always transcended his surroundings, and has had the strength to endure a life of hard labor, for a score of years pretty much alone, doing all kinds of agricultural work in Arizona, subsisting on a diet which did not include meat or fish, walking great distances, picketing, fasting and praying.

I have on my shelf both Thoreau's **Journals**, borrowed from a young hermit here at Tivoli, and Ammon's book. For me, Ammon's is the greater book, dealing as it does with the greatest problem of modern times: war—international and class war, and what one man can do to take a stand against it and make the beginnings of another way of life. I cannot pick it up without becoming engrossed in it, and have just finished reading some paragraphs about Ammon's work in a date orchard and his conversations with his fellow workers. Thoreau was a naturalist, of course, but Ammon too is a keen observer of nature and of what has been done to increase the yield of this land flowing with milk and honey.

What I want to criticize, however, is his attitude toward scripture. He quite obviously no longer reads the Bible, and his attitude to St. Paul—"that he spoiled the message of Christ" is childish in the extreme. "As for the Bible," he sums up, "there may be some word of God in it, but most of it is folk lore." I think that if he read such books as Father Bruce Vawter's **Path Through Genesis**, and Father John McKenzie's **Two-Edged Sword** and **The Power of Glory**, he would be both enriched and ennobled.

Anyway, I was glad to get a present of his new copy of his book, which he sells for \$3.00. (See "Joe Hill House" for mailing address.) Please, send him more for mailing, and to help run his House of Hospitality in Salt Lake City, because by last accounts he was earning only fifty cents an hour, cleaning brick.