

On Pilgrimage - April 1949

By Dorothy Day

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*Summary: Upset over the labor conflict between the Archdiocese of New York with its striking cemetery workers, she insists on only non-violent techniques and calls for love to overcome bitterness and resentment. Says Peter Maurin wanted to overcome divisions between clergy and laity. Notes her new book *On Pilgrimage* “is selling slowly and steadily.” (DDLW #493).*

Seasonably cold, the radio weather man says, but these March days always seem to be the coldest days of all. The sun is getting brighter, little green buds are coming out on the privet hedges in Columbus Square, my daughter writes me of all the planting she is already doing in the way of salads and early peas, and flowering shrubs, and we do know that spring is on the way. The very word Lent means spring, and indeed the season is austere and invigorating and joyful.

Naturally speaking we have been none too joyful this past two months, what with the cemetery strike going on. That is the reason we are so late in going to press. We couldn't bear to write about it until it was settled. So here it is, the middle of the month that I write this.

The story of the strike is told elsewhere; to me its terrible significance lay in the fact that at one end of the world Cardinal Mindszenty and Archbishop Stepinac are lying in jail suffering at the hands of the masses, and, here in our at present peaceful New York, a Cardinal, ill-advised, exercised so overwhelming a show of force against a handful of poor working men. It was a temptation of the devil to that most awful of all wars, the war between the clergy and the laity, a heightening of the tension which is there and which it is the work of both to try to overcome. Peter Maurin always spoke of the division between the clergy and laity, the worker and the scholar, and pointed the necessity of overcoming it.

Our pacifism must be a complete pacifism, and our love must grow in strength to overcome bitterness and resentments. Yesterday while I prayed in our parish church, there was a baptism going on, and I thought how close the priests were to our hearts—how they came to us in all the most holy and happy moments of our lives, birth and death and marriage with the life giving sacraments which their anointed hands alone could bring. And I thought too of the kind of love we should have for each other, if we were to see Christ in each other, a love which discounted the irascible remark, a confident love, a love which at times might look like folly indeed.

What more foolish a love is there than that portrayed in the gospel—the father for the prodigal son, the love of the shepherd for his sheep, the love which asked the servants to sit down so that the master could minister to them, wait upon them, wash their feet in a gesture of total and utter abandonment of love! And how far we are from it all!

Such a struggle going on shows how far we are from it, and how near to the surface class war is here in this country. There need be no Communist influence to fan the flame of resentment, the sense of injury which working men have been feeling over the years.

And in this struggle as in all the other varieties of war we have known, our job is to build up techniques of nonviolent resistance, using the force of love to overcome hatred, praying and suffering with our brothers in their conflicts. During all the picketing which went on at Fiftieth street, the pickets spent as much time in church as they did on the picket line.

The Book On Pilgrimage is selling slowly and steadily. I meant to mention in this column that one of our readers donated five hundred dollars to put to the printing bill on this book. It is a good thing too, because try as hard as he can, it is impossible for Tom Sullivan, who has charge of the funds, to put aside the dollars that come in for the book, to pay the printer. The money is immediately misappropriated for running expenses of the house. We are already preparing another book, all of Peter's written paragraphs, letters, comments, which have appeared in THE CATHOLIC WORKER since the paper was first printed in May, 1933. Peter did not write much—just the Easy Essays which appeared from month to month, and many times repeated. But in collected form they amount to a book of some three hundred to four hundred pages. They will be illustrated by Ed Willock, of **Integrity**, and it will be better bound than **On Pilgrimage**. We learn by our mistakes. Two months ago when I spoke to Peter about the book he expressed a preference for the title, CATHOLIC RADICALISM, so that will be the name of it.