

Day After Day - January 1943

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Summary: A general summary of the Catholic Worker after 10 years—list of houses and farms (open and closed), marriages, births, deaths; whereabouts of workers; her travels. Notes they making an attempt at applying a personalist, communitarian philosophy, and quotes Eric Gill’s notion of “a cell of good living.”

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Knitting is very conducive to thought. It is nice to knit a while, put down the needles, write a while, then take up the sock again. It is twenty-seven below zero at Warner, New Hampshire, where our Association of Catholic Conscientious Objectors maintains a camp this past year and six months. They need socks, sweaters, mufflers at the camp. The men on our breadlines need them too. We hope some of our readers are knitting for them.

Synopsis of a Year

As I write this, it is the end of the year (and the end of our first ten years!) and it is good to give a general summary of the work. Our paper has gone down in circulation, mostly on account of the cancellation of bundle orders, but the single subscribers have increased daily. The circulation now stands at 55,000. During the past couple of years we have printed ten thousand copies each of two pamphlets, *War and Conscription At the Bar of Christian Morals*, by Monsignor George Barry O’Toole, and *In the Vineyard*, Essays on Catholic Action, by Father John J. Hugo, of Pittsburgh. Both of these writings appeared serially in our paper. Both are 90-page booklets.

Houses and Farms

In connection with THE CATHOLIC WORKER, we have continued to maintain houses of hospitality where the works of mercy can be practiced through voluntary poverty (none of us or our helpers receiving pay), and the help of readers of the paper and our kind neighbors. Clothes and food are provided to all who come, and lodging is provided for as many as the house will hold. Our houses are

small, holding anywhere from a few to fifty. Houses are open at the present time in Boston, New York (two), Rochester, Buffalo, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh (two), Cleveland (two), Detroit (two), South Bend, Chicago, St. Louis and Seattle. Houses have been closed in Worcester, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Troy, New Haven, Rutland, Burlington, Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Akron, Toledo, San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles.

That makes a sum total of sixteen houses still open, and sixteen closed. Six farms connected with houses of hospitality are operating in Massachusetts, Michigan, Minneapolis, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York, and there are four individual farms at Rehoboth, Mass., Cuttingsville, Vt., Cape May, N.J., and Ramsey, Ill.

Houses and farms are imperfect expressions of our personalist, communitarian philosophy. As St. Francis said, “you do not know what you have not practiced.”

Eric Gill’s Philosophy

As Eric Gill said in his autobiography, “If I might attempts 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, type-designing, engraving, stone carving, drawing—these things are all very well, they are the 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 toward re-integrating bed and board, the small farm and the work shop, the home and the school, earth and heaven.”

Deaths, Births and Marriages

During this one year there have been seven marriages. Eddie Priest, Joe Zarrella, Bill Callahan, Marjorie Crowe, Margaret Bingham, Hazen Ordway, Ann Mack, all of whom have been closely associated with the New York house. The latter came to us during the last six months and married Jon Thornton of the Baltimore house. Marjorie Crowe worked with us for the last year and a half at the New York house. She had met Joe Hughes at the Buffalo house. Eddie Priest, Joe Zarrella and Bill Callahan all met their wives at the Catholic Worker office. Hazen met his at a pacifist gathering last February.

Marjorie Crowe Hughes had a baby girl Joanna, at the Easton Hospital in mid-December, and Dorothy Gauchat had a baby girl, Anita, in mid-October on Our Lady of the Wayside Farm at Avon, Ohio. Frank O’Donnell and his wife had a sixth son at St. Benedict’s farm at Upton, Mass., and Him and Helen Montague had a son, after three girls, at Easton. (Probably I’m leaving out a great many of the vital statistics of the movement. Stanley with his social notes should be on this job.)

During the year there were two deaths, that of Steve Hergenham at St. Rose's Cancer Home down on the East River, and of James McGovern, first mate of a tanker, torpedoed last winter. There was an account of Steve's death in the paper, and a further account of his life and contribution to our work in New York and on the Easton farm. But we have not talked of Mac's death. It was so hard, so cruel, we could not write about it at the time. Mac's body was washed up in an open boat with that of a number of others on the coast of Panama, dead of hunger and thirst, some months after the torpedoing of his boat.

Jim McGovern

He was one of our earliest friends; first reading the paper, he wrote us, as he lay in the bunk of his ship somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico. He used to send us substantial hunks of his pay, and once he brought me a silver rosary from Mexico for a birthday present.

When his boat put into Marcus Hook, he used to rush up to New York to visit us, if only for a few hours, and many a party he attended at the first headquarters of the C.W., back on Fifteenth St.. He was a young fellow of thirty and felt his responsibilities as mate very keenly. He was blond and shy, with a great intensity of manner. He loved to read and wrote me many a letter about books from board ship. He told me he had fallen away from the faith for a while (he was a graduate of Marquette University of Milwaukee), and then one Easter Sunday he had gone to St. Patrick's Cathedral on shore leave and had heard there Bishop Fulton Sheen. The latter recommended some of Paul Claudel's books in the course of his sermon, and Mac got them, and reading them, came back to the faith.

He and Frank O'Donnell, our first business manager, who is now on St. Benedict's farm at Upton, Mass, used to like to roam the town together and I can remember them telling me of one Russian Café over on Avenue "A" that they went to, to distribute Catholic Worker leaflets.

A Restless Soul

In December, on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, he picketed the Mexican consulate with us, and I remember what a cold day it was, and how good the hot coffee tasted when we sneaked away for fifteen minutes to rest our weary legs. Mac was used to standing and walking the deck, from his hours on watch. He showed me pictures of an ice-covered boat that struck chills to my heart.

During the Christmas holiday he met Dorothy Weston's former room mate at college, fell in love with her most precipitously, proposed and was engaged all in the course of that most happy season.

I remember his wedding day, in May or June, when he came over to Charles Street (our office had moved that spring) to clutch my hand and stammer, happily, "I hold you responsible for this, so you've got to pray for me."

Now he is gone, and his wife and baby are back in Indiana with his folks.

"Our Least Brethren"

In listing houses of hospitality that have been closed, I should state that the reason for the closing was lack of workers rather than lack of need for the houses. There are always the poor, as our Lord reminded us. There are always the lame, the halt and the blind, people being discharged from hospitals, unemployables, vagrants. There are always these, "our least brethren," in whom we may see Christ as he told us to. And the harder it is to see him under dirt and drink and vermin, the more we are exercising our faith. "Love is surrender," we had been told on our retreat in July. "Give yourself to God in the poor." And how else can we show our love for God?

Scattered

But due to war, our workers are scattered. Gerry Griffin is somewhere in Palestine right now in training before launching off on a career of ambulance driving around Tunisia. Lou Murphy and Joe Zarrella are accepted by the Field Service and will be going to Africa soon. The whole Chicago crowd, and some of the Milwaukee crowd, are scattered in camps or on islands in the Pacific. Jack English of Cleveland, and Ossie Bondy of Windsor, are somewhere in England. Others of our movement are in our conscientious objector camp at Warner, New Hampshire, enduring the isolation and detachment of what is practically a concentration camp. Others are working in the Alexian Brothers Hospital in Chicago, some as nurses, some as maintenance men around the hospital.

During the last month, F.B.I. representatives came to Mott street and picked up David Mason, one of the three leaders of the Philadelphia Catholic Worker activities, for refusing induction. He is forty-four years old, but is protesting conscription by his refusal. At present he is held over on West street at a Federal Detention headquarters until his trial, or until we raise \$1,000 bail and get him out until the trial, so that he can enjoy a bit more freedom.

Traveling

During the last year (I have been going over my date book), I have spent five months away from Mott street in travel and in visiting our houses and farms around the country. Three of those months was on a trip to the West Coast. The time away was distributed as follows: January, one week; February, three days;

March, three days; all of April, May and half of June; October, three weeks; November, one week; December, two weeks. During the summer I was away a week for our yearly retreat at Pittsburgh. Seven months out of the twelve I have spent at St. Joseph's house, Maryhouse and a few weekends at Maryfarm.

Need for Volunteers

Now I am away again, accompanying my mother South, for she was not well and no other member of the family was free to go. Here I can finish up the Peter Maurin book, and on my way home, I shall visit reader friends in southern cities which have seemed so inaccessible, due to lack of finances and lack of supporters. Peter Maurin is in New York, and so are Arthur Sheehan, Jack Thornton, and Charlie O'Rourke, so the work will get done, the houses will go on, the paper will come out, and, God willing, I will be home in February.

We are indeed grateful to volunteers, so any of our readers around New York who can give us some time for clerical work, or work around the houses, will they please come down and ask to be put to work?