

On Pilgrimage - June 1980

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Increasingly weak and confined to her room, she notes all the activity around her—visitors, cards, news of protesters, anniversary celebrations, speakers, and proofs for the next edition of the CW paper. (DDLW #605).

Diary Notes

Wed., 3/26—Woke up remembering that we go to press soon with our miniscule (compared to **The New York Times**) eight-page paper, and I think my usual wandering thoughts of what I could write about myself, as a woman born in 1897, a woman of long life, of varied experiences.

Thurs., 3/27—“Whose face is on this coin?” Jesus asked. “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” “The less you have of Caesar’s, the less you have to render to Caesar.” The New Testament and the words of Jesus—The Sermon on the Mount—the foundation of our work—voluntary poverty and manual labor. “Sowing and Reaping.” “Sow sparingly and you will reap sparingly.”

All of Chaim Potok’s books are very enlightening (**My Name is Asher Lev, The Promise, The Chosen, In the Beginning, Wanderings**). Reading Potok made me turn to Scripture more and more, to supplement my daily reading of the psalms of David.

Sun., 3/30—Palm Sunday—we had a beautiful Mass in the auditorium at Mary-house, beginning with the blessing of the palms in our back garden.

Sat., 4/5—Easter Saturday—listened to Wagner’s opera **Parsifal** on the radio.

Sat., 4/12–Tina de Aragon called. We are all “dying daily,” but she has the accompanying pain of cancer. Her beautiful carving of Our Lady, which we have in the Chapel here at Maryhouse, keeps Tina very close to me. Tina’s statue was carved from Lignum Vitae, a South American wood, the hardest in the world. She suffered pains in her arm for a year after carving it.

Transit strike has ended. It was very exciting to watch its coverage on television—the whole city moving to work on foot, through rain part of the time, moving over bridges from borough to borough.

David Spier, my nephew, came down from Stuyvesant Falls, N.Y. to tell me of his mother’s death (my most dear sister Della) yesterday. David had been out to Victoria, British Columbia to see her recently..

Sun., 4/13–Doris Harmon, my sister Della’s sister-in-law, and her daughter Alice came to see me. How very kind of them all. They knew how close Della and I always were from earliest childhood, playing together, confiding together.

Tue., 4/15–Jane Sammon came in tonight—visiting the sick. I had felt very ill this morning—am physically a little better tonight—very weak, however. Dean Mowrer is also coming down with the flu.

Thurs., 4/17–Tina telephoned, having just heard of Della’s death. Just a brief call—of consolation and understanding.

The only mail today was a letter from John Givins, old faithful friend, who still addresses me as **Dorthy** Day. He was a seaman—lives in Seattle now. He fought in the Spanish Civil War. Now he is a retired longshoreman, after traveling the entire West Coast, and is happily married with wife and children.

Wed., 4/23–Kathleen DeSutter Jordan visited, bringing me **To the Finland Station**, by Edmund Wilson, which is, as he described it, about the revolutionary tradition in history and the rise of Socialism.

Fri., 4/25—Father Geoff, Jane, Dan Mauk, Mike Harank, Mary Mullins, David Beseda, David Rice, Kathy Bellefeuille have gone to Groton, Connecticut to protest the launching of another Trident Submarine.

Peggy Scherer is down from the Marlboro farm with asparagus, which Frank is cooking for my supper.

Thurs., 5/1—May day. First issue of **The Catholic Worker** in 1933. Papers were distributed in Union Square today as they were in 1933. We had a special dinner and Mass and a party here. The auditorium was packed with people from both houses and the farm, and guests.

Read reviews in **Commonweal** of books by Michael Harrington and Malcolm Cowley. My sister Della would have been interested in the latter. How one misses a sister!

Fri., 5/2—Bright and sunny. I slept hard until 8 a.m. Woke to symphonies and a pleasant sense of a good day yesterday, a celebration of Catholic Worker beginnings. There are beautiful flowers (an iris and two roses) on my television set, and a plastic swan, given to me by one of the women in the house, which reminds me of Wagner's Lohengrin.

Wed., 5/7,—Woke to the sound of an ambulance at the door. One of the women at Maryhouse was on medication which disagreed with her and, on the call of the young woman who "had the house," (No one likes to be designated as "in charge.") the ambulance came with its intern, plus the usual police car, plus two other police cars—the first car had broken down.

Fri., 5/9—A cool, sunny day. Feeling weak. Visited Deane Mowrer in her room down the hall. Doris Harmon called—we had a good talk on the phone about Della. Proofs for the May issue of **The Catholic Worker** are back from the printer.

Sun., 5/11—Anne Fraser Kaune was in for a breakfast of pancakes. Anne and her husband Steve are moving to Brooklyn near Jacques Travers' house of hospitality

and Prospect Park, where my family lived before moving to Florida for good. Anne and Steve's apartment house across from St. Joseph House on First Street has been turned into a cooperative. The Lower East Side is becoming fashionable. Our real estate and water taxes will be going up!

Tue., 5/13—A lovely visit with my grandson Hilaire Hennessy, on his way home to Vermont after sheep-shearing in the South. He got one dollar per sheep for shearing them. Hitchhiking home, he arrived at St. Joseph House on First Street after midnight, and slept on a bench on the first floor.

Watched Gene O'Neill's play **The Iceman Cometh** on television tonight. The setting of the play was Luke O'Connor's tavern which used to be on West Fourth Street and Seventh Avenue. I recognized two of the characters in the play as Terry Carlin and Hippolyte Havel.

Thurs., 5/15—Deane, Peggy, Mike Harandk, Mike Vincent, and others have gone to Virginia for their trial tomorrow for demonstrating at the Pentagon in March.

Fri., 5/16—Father Henri Nouwen is our Friday night speaker, so we had a large crowd for Mass and for the meeting.

Nina Polcyn Moore is here for a visit. We talked of our visit together to Russia some years ago. My trip was financed through friends. Nina, owning a book shop at the time, St. Benet's in Chicago, and making money, came with me. She is Polish and now lives in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, where Sinclair Lewis' **Main Street** was written (a great, best-seller).

I'm reading **Five Red Herrings** by Dorothy Sayers.

Mon., 5/19—so many disaster in the news; heavily contaminated Love Canal near Buffalo, New York, the eruption of Mt. St. Helen's in Washington, race riots in Miami, Florida, floods in New Orleans! Here in New York all is serene but muggy. I am losing my taste for coffee in the morning. When my daughter Tamar comes I will be a tea drinker.

I am now reading Josephine Tey's *Brat Farrar*.

Thurs., 5/22–Lee LeCuyer is visiting from St. John’s college in Annapolis.

My sister Della’s daughter, Sue Myake, and her two daughters, Dorothy and Joanna arrived from Victoria, British Columbia. Sue’s husband, Mike, is a micro-meteorologist (anything that falls—a snowflake or raindrop—is a meteor). Tamar arrived tonight from Vermont. They’ve come for a memorial service for Della and Franklin Spier to be held in our Maryhouse auditorium this Saturday.

Mon., 5/26Tamar went out to breakfast with Deane. She is leaving tomorrow to return to Vermont. I did not go downstairs to mass this evening.

Mike Harank has planted morning glories in front of Maryhouse again. The strings for them to climb on go up to the third floor. Beauty!

Sat., 5/31–Tristan and Isolde on radio this afternoon. I used to go to standing room for all the Wagner operas in the top balcony of the Metropolitan Opera House–fascinating to look down.

Margaret Lloyd, Doris Harmon and Tom Sullivan telephoned. And a letter came from Pat Rusk today from Detroit.

Sun., 6/1–There is an old saying that in a field where poison grows, there is also found its antidote. In the past, we’ve had the horrible news of the community in Jonestown, Guyana, which had begun in California and ended in tragic deaths. And today, my granddaughter Susie, her husband Jack McMurry and my three beautiful great-grandchildren, Tanya, Kachina and Charlotte Rose, stopped by for a visit on their way to The Farm, Summertown, Tenn. The headquarters of a community, which also started in California, that is dedicated to the welfare of the family and not death. They had been living on one of the community’s farms in Franklin N.Y.

Some letters, cards and gifts received:

Father John Vaughn, Minister General of the Franciscans, sent me prayers and blessings through Bill Barrett. . . From Bill Griffin–beautiful heather. . . The tiny, potted, ginkgo tree that David Gauchat brought me from Our Lady of the Wayside, Avon, Ohio a few years ago, is now almost two feet tall.

Letters from my granddaughter Maggie Hennessy, and from Marge Hughes, both now living in West Virginia; from Alice Kathryn Casper; from Dr. William Stringfellow, telling of the recent death of poet Anthony Towne; from John Iannuzzi of Ellicott City, Maryland, reminiscing of old friends the Scarpas, and Father Louis Farino and Father John Hugo; and from Marie Knisley, Lucille Lynch, Jane and Marion Judge, all sending generous gifts and a beautiful card with this quote from Sigrid Undset:

And when we give each other Christmas gifts in His name, let us remember that He has given us the sun and the moon and the stars, and the earth with its forests and mountains and oceans—and all that lives and move upon them. He has given us all green things and everything that blossoms and bears fruit and all that we quarrel about and all that we have misused—and to save us from our foolishness, from all our sins, He came down to earth and gave us Himself.