

On Pilgrimage - July 1955

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Summary: An account of moving everything from Maryfarm in Newburgh to Peter Maurin Farm on Staten Island and the birth of Tamar's seventh child, Martha. (DDLW #240).

During the two months since the last issue of the Catholic Worker came out, the great move from Newburgh, Maryfarm, to Peter Maurin Farm, Staten Island, has been accomplished and all the men have been housed and settled, and the furniture is still being sorted out and spread around. Fr. Faley is in his own quarters, with his own furniture, and with the additional comfort of windows facing north and south, so that he has had a little breeze these torrid days of July. Philip is in the dormitory. Joe Roche and Jim the carpenter have a room next to Fr. Faley's, then there is Hans's ship's cabin, and next to him a room at one end of the carpenter shed for John Fillinger who in this month has made hay, milked the cows, tended the vegetables and built a shed for the hay and machinery in back of the other farm buildings. It is all on a small scale, compared to Maryfarm, but we are all together and we are near the heart of the work, which is Chrystie street. Joe Cotter has his private room in a converted chicken coop down behind the stone tool house, a little room which was occupied in the past by Emily Scarborough one summer, and Hector Black (who is now with the Society of Brothers) for a two week's retreat a few summers ago. Chickens and rabbits have also lived there since. Bill and Mike have a room in back of the chapel, and the dormitory on either end of the barn accommodates the others. All in the house are women except Stanley who has himself and his press in a cubby hole of a room, with a low ceiling which makes it hot in summer, and with no connection with the furnace, which makes it cold in winter. Stanley saved us from being burnt up one night last month, when one of the women smelled smoke and called him and he went downstairs to find the couch in flames. No more overstuffed furniture in the dining-room-library where cigarettes can fall between the cushions and smolder. Three bookcases now take the place of the couch, and are far more useful.

Great News

After the jail, after the moving, after we had all settled down getting straightened out, Tamar quietly proceeded to have her seventh baby, with neatness and dispatch as she usually does. I had gone over to her home, a mile away to spend the night for the first time, now that the last of six truck loads had come down from Maryfarm and the moving was all but done. Fr. Faley had said his first Sunday Mass that morning, the heat had been broken that afternoon by a great thunder and lightning storm during which Prasse's barn next door was struck by lightning. John and the men rushed over to help save the herd of pedigreed goats from the blazing barn, and the Hennessy children and Paul Yamamoto and the Scarpuli's who were spending the afternoon at the farm all stood by in fascinated horror. When I took the Hennessys home that night Dave had to go to work on the graveyard shift, from eleven until seven the next morning. "You'd better stay," Tamar told me.

It was a little after midnight that she called me, and with Vicenza Baglioni coming over from Peter Maurin farm to stay with the rest of the children, we got down to the little hospital in Princess Bay just in time. Martha was born at one thirty Monday morning, July 11th and is being baptized on the feast of St. Martha.

It has been a happy time these past two weeks, staying with the children. Tamar felt so well she was able to come home on Thursday morning after three days in the hospital. It was hard to keep her down but by applying herself to making a hooked rug she was able to keep quiet for a week.

In the two months since the paper came out last there has been Fr. Casey's annual retreat, the picketing and the arrest and the experience of three police courts and two detention houses, the move from Maryfarm and the birth not only of my grandchild, but also of two other babies at Peter Maurin farm, and finally the death and burial at Calvary, of our old friend Fr. John Cordes. May he rest in peace. He had been sick for years, but confined to the hospital for the last year, and his death came as a result of a heart attack and was a surprise to us all. We ask the prayers of our readers for him.