

Notes By The Way - September 1945

By Dorothy Day

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Summary: Describes the celebrations taking place in New York City following the announcement of the end of the Second World War. Writes about pilgrimages and their pilgrimage in thanksgiving for peace as well as in penance for having used the atomic bomb—a ten mile walk in the city at night accompanied by song and prayer. Gives accolades for the cooks, the volunteers at the farm, and those in the city. (DDLW #414).

The last line of the last Notes By The Way announced that we were going to make a pilgrimage for peace. And now peace is here, thank God, and our pilgrimage will be in thanksgiving as well as in penance for having used the atomic bomb.

We heard the whistles blow when we were on the farm, and all the group gathered together to sing the Te Deum.

In New York, on Mott Street, the joyful festivities continued for several weeks. We thought at first there would be an octave of rejoicing, as the noise, the confetti, the street dancing went on and on. It began on the feast of the Assumption, continued during the feast of San Rocco, and block after block had dancing and parties. There was no drinking, no disorders. Grandmothers and two year-olds danced, and the juke boxes were pulled out into the streets, and firecrackers were set off from housetops, and bands played, and the atmosphere was one of joy.

The flags are still flying in the streets right now because within a week another feast, that of San Gennaro, not celebrated during the war, will begin and continue for five days. Then the Chinese down the block will have some more victory parades, as they did during the first rejoicings, and it is hard to see how the feastings and the parading can be any more elaborate. By the end of September we will begin to settle down hereabouts for the fall and winter, digging ourselves in, one might say, to face coal shortages, more unemployment and the illness and hardship that comes with poverty and breadlines. The poor know how to rejoice, we are glad to say, just as profoundly as they know how to suffer.

It is September 14th, and quarter of 9 in the evening. All afternoon it has rained cats and dogs, pitchforks and hammer handles. Our work went on as usual—men filled the hall and our neighbors had a hard time getting up and down stairs while the bread line went on between 4:30 and 5:30. Gerry (yes he is back for good now) and Dave Mason and Charlie O'Rourke were working in the backoffice and Jim and Joe in the front. Jane was baking bread upstairs and I went out to visit the sick. And all the while we were worried about the rain and the pilgrimage which is going to take place tonight, beginning at twelve midnight. We are going to walk from Hester and Mott street, up to Mother Cabrini's shrine at 190th street and Cabrini avenue. Quite a few have been calling up to find out

if we are going to have the pilgrimage just the same, and we Have said yes. Now as I write, the rain has stopped. Every now and then there is a cool breeze but it is generally muggy. It is the time, after all, of equinoctial storm. Last year at this time there was a hurricane which tore up trees all over Manhattan and just skirted the farm at Easton, where the first retreat of this year of retreats was taking place.

We need to make pilgrimages. Catherine de Hueck Doherty's article on pilgrimages in a recent CATHOLIC WORKER, aroused widespread interest, and many wrote in telling us how much they enjoyed it. Then we wrote of the pilgrimages of the Italian women in the neighborhood—good sturdy pilgrimages of 116 blocks, and barefoot at that. Every year they make such a pilgrimage to our Lady of Mt. Carmel's shrine. Friendship House had a pilgrimage which Julia writes about for this issue, and we announced in our last issue this pilgrimage of tonight.

We need to make pilgrimages, and this one, starting on a feast of the Holy Cross and ending at Holy Mass on the feast of our Lady of Sorrows, is in penance for our use of the atomic bomb, for our sins and omissions in this war, in thanksgiving for the ending of the war. We are starting at midnight, and when we stop to rest on the way up, we will sing as the chimes sing at Lourdes—"Parce Domine, Parce populo tuo, ne in aeternum irascaris nobis."

At the Drop of a Hat

When I called up this evening to find out how Maryfarm was getting on (it costs forty-five cents for five minutes), I found that another retreat was going on that I knew nothing about. An army sergeant had arrived, desirous of a retreat, also Mrs. Ellis and a friend from Cleveland, also Mary Jennifer from Wilmington, Delaware, and John Daly from Georgia, not to forget Jack English, who had just finished Fr. Ehman's retreat and was quite ready to make another. Fr. Pacifique Roy, our chaplain at Maryfarm, had just come back from a visit to Montreal and as he is always ready to give a retreat at the drop of a hat, he started giving another retreat after a short rest, and it was still going on when I telephoned tonight. At midnight they were going to have a holy hour and promised to remember us on our pilgrimage. The next retreat that I know of at this writing will begin the Monday night before Thanksgiving and last for the week.

Cooking

Down at the farm, praise God, we have wonderful help for the summer, with a Pittsburgh contingent helping us—Mildred Petty, Cecelia Hugo, and quite a few other girls, not to speak of Hans Tunneson, Duncan Chisolm and Joe who came down to recover from some broken ribs, made a retreat and stayed to help, and others besides.

In town, on the other hand, we have been very short-handed in the kitchen. I'm hoping later to get some steady help for Chu and Shorty. When one or the other take a day off, Bill Duffy and Rumanian John help. And Dave Mason also is pretty regular in cooking for the house at night. There was one week there when Dave was making a retreat that I had to enter in on the KP job and I learned a lot. How to make a stew for one hundred and fifty, for instance. Fifteen pounds of kidneys, ten pounds of macaroni, five pounds of onions and a bushel basket of broccoli makes a wonderful meal. And what a job the bread slicing is when it is for one hundred and fifty twice a day! A bread slicing machine may be the "extension of the hand of man" in this case.

I can never say enough in praise of Chu and Shorty. They always move with such alacrity to help any latecomer, to pass the salt, to get extra silver. They never whisk the plates away as though they wished to get through. They not only cook, they clean up afterward, and sweep out the coffee room and polish the pots. And they always stand to eat their own meals and no one can persuade them to sit down to the table.

Later...

Yes, we made the pilgrimage, and there were nine of us, four men and five women. We started out at one a.m. and what with a few rest stops, there was just time to get to the shrine in time for the six-thirty Mass, Saturday morning. In fact, Dave Mason and I had humbly to admit defeat at 168th street, and make the last mile on the subway in order to be there on time. The others, with younger legs, were able to speed up their pace and arrive just as we reached the door of the chapel. It was a long walk, we all agreed, probably over ten miles, but it was a good night for walking, so warm that we did not need wraps. We stopped in Union Square, in Columbus Circle, at 100th street, 125th and 150th, and at each place there were convenient benches to rest.

We said the fifteen decades of the rosary, and the beads also for the seven sorrows of our Lady.

Also we sang--The Ave Maria, the Pater Noster, the Salve Regina, besides the other seasonal hymns to our Lady. Also the Parce, Domine, and the Attende, Domine.

It was a happy pilgrimage, though painful, too--but that is the way penance is--difficult but most satisfying.