Day After Day - April 1945

Dorothy Day

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Summary: New life brings joy and excitement to Maryfarm as Tamar gives birth to a baby girl while a new kid and new crops enrich the farm. A retreat and the Holy Week liturgy brings spiritual renewal to those at Easton. (DDLW #409).

A month of great joy.

"O God, who dost ever multiply Thy Church by a new progeny, grant to Thy servants, that they may retain in their lives the mystery which they have received by faith."

This was the collect for Tuesday in Easter week, and on that day my daughter gave birth to a baby girl at the Easton Hospital, a few miles from the Catholic Worker farm.

That afternoon a beautiful snow-white kid was born, a welcome distraction on an exciting day. It was a wonderfully full month. The fruit trees were pruned, the wheat fields sowed with clover and alsike, a salad and herb garden put in, new fruit and nut trees planted, and then, after a month of delightful weather, the rains and wind started.

Good retreat weather, everyone said, because on April 2 we were starting a Spring retreat on the farm. The last retreat started in a blizzard.

This, of course, was a retreat of rejoicing, and it was a time of rest and consolation. It is wonderful to live and work in silence for days, praying, studying, listening to conferences, meditating. Everyone had a task to do, helping cook, make bread, set tables, and with four conferences a day, prime and compline and a sung Mass, and spiritual reading at table, the time flies. We read St. Peter and the early days of the Church, by Fouard. The very day we read about St. Philip and the treasurer of Candace, of Ethiopia, in the epistle for the day, was the day we read about it in Fouard. It made very good background reading for the season. Eleven made the retreat.

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During Holy Week we celebrated the last supper, setting the long tables in the refectory with unleavened bread and wine, bitter herbs and wild garlic with a dressing in a big dish in the middle of the table, and we tried to get lamb to roast, but could not, so we took what was said to be beef instead. There were about fifteen of us from the farm at table, and there was just a morsel of meat each, just enough to give us an idea of what the Passover feast was like. Next year we shall have a roast lamb, we hope, from the farm itself. During the meal we read the story of the Last Supper. The children, little John and Catherine, were there, but the smaller babies were put to bed.

Good Friday every one tried to fast, but while one ate only black bread and drank water, another took bread and milk, another peanut butter and bread and water, another bread and black coffee. At any rate, all fasted, to a certain extent, and there was no cooking that day in the kitchen. Of course, for those three solemn days, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, we went down to Easton to Mass, but on Easter Sunday we offered a glorious Mass on the farm, with the altar decorated in white blossoms from the trees in the woods, and from the sweet cherry down the road. For the offering the Thorntons brought bread and parsnips; the Hemingways bread and cake, and the Smiths bread and a wood carving by Eva.