

# On Pilgrimage - May 1954

Dorothy Day

*The Catholic Worker*, May 1954, 2, 8.

*Summary: Paints a picture of Catholic Worker community life—the house, work, prayer, needs, and volunteers. Lists the summer programs for Peter Maurin Farm and Maryfarm. Describes her Holy Week observance. (DDLW #668).*

One of the things we are always emphasizing in our work is that we are not organized or incorporated but are individuals practicing the works of mercy. A group, and often it is a changing group, live together, and work together. None of us have paid salaries but we get three meals a day, a room, clothes. Besides us in the house, forty or fifty when the library floor is crowded as it is in bad weather, there is the bread line, two or three hundred a day. They get bread and coffee for breakfast, and bread and soup for dinner. We have to buy all our food, although last week almost a freight train full of bread came in from all sides. We were giving it out with the clothes, and to the bread line to take away, as well as eating it ourselves all week.

The house, at 223 Chrystie is red brick, double, set back a little from the street, with iron lace work on front porch and steps. There is a back paved courtyard where we have meetings in the summer. The rest of the year the Friday night meetings are in the house.

## Returns

We are living pretty comfortably now. You can't work for twenty-two years without improving conditions somewhat, both on the farm and in the city. Everybody works hard and gives himself, and the good Lord, through our friends and readers have been faithful in supplying the means to keep going. We just finished our spring appeal, and I don't know yet whether two-thirds of the bills are paid, and we are enough out of debt to keep our creditors satisfied with the bits they will get all summer to keep us going. Most of the appeal comes in in small amounts and one or two readers send in a hundred or two hundred dollars, once in a while a thousand, sudden windfalls, often from those we never know before—just to keep us knowing that no matter what the bill, if we pray hard enough, aid will come. God will see to it even if He has to find some old prophet like Habakuk who brought the bowl of stew to Daniel in the lion's den. He said to his Heavenly Father rather grumpily, "I don't know Babylon, I don't know Daniel and I don't know where the lion's den is," but the Lord God brought him there, and so too He rescues us from our predicaments.

One of the things which make us happy is to see the response in people. God sends helpers too when he sees fit, and all we can do is just keep praying for them. Last year Betty Lou went to Peter Maurin Farm, and Kate White came. She leaves and Helen Russell arrives. Helen goes to work in Harlem and Sue Caufield enters the picture. Men and women, and students, of both sexes, come to give us their help for a summer or winter or for a year, or sometimes just in their spare time. They marry, they move to other cities and to the country, they have children. This month Dick and Barbara Donnelly had their first baby, a boy. This month Martin Corbin and Rita Ham got married May first. One week a baptism, another a marriage, and always the sacrament of the Eucharist and of penance. On May 2 Becky Hennessy was confirmed. Our life of grace and our life of the body goes on beautifully intermingled and harmonious. "All is grace," as the dying priest whispered to his friend in **The Diary of a Country Priest**. The Little Flower, also said, "All is grace."

## Visiting the Sick

Things are always happening. This month Eleanor Corrigan and Catherine Odlivak went to the hospital. Catherine's trouble is simple but serious, a heart condition, and she may be operated on. Eleanor's is complicated but not so serious.

I was thinking of Eleanor, always frail, taking care of a family of children while her friends went to the bedside of a dying mother, and taking care too, often enough of a sister's family when the latest was born.

Saving for a piano so that she could practice with her beautiful voice, she never quite got there because always some call was made on her for the money she saved. Last year she broke her ankle, and when that healed she suffered an ulcer on the cornea of her eye. She never complains so no one ever realizes the crosses that make up her life.

Catherine too, worked with us at a time when we had a serious mental case, a girl who talked night and day, who took off her clothes to give them to the poor, and she not only nursed her then, but when she came out of the hospital, it was her soft and gentle ways that were most healing, it was her patience and loving kindness that helped heal a badly maimed mind. Catherine's room was in back of mine at Mott Street and I remember coming on her so often kneeling by the side of her bed after lunch, reading her Bible. She spent a good deal of time on her knees, praying for all of us no doubt.

Everyone always enjoys my writing about people after they are dead, and I thought this month that why not tell more about the living, people like Eleanor and Catherine, and Julia Moran who helped so with the women and all the children we cared for summers, who on her wedding day a few years ago could greet some of those young girls she herself had so often helped and who were now married and had their babies with them.

Women's place is to love, it is a simple enough job to love and to nourish. And this summer we have need of more volunteers to help take care of the little Puerto Rican children who are going to have two weeks' vacation on Peter Maurin Farm. We want two big tents, that will hold six to eight each, the kind that can be screened in, so that we can put them up down by the brook, at the end of the field in a sandy lot out of Fr. Duffy's way. There is a wood lot

and another sunny field that will do for a ball field and there is the beach two miles away and a car to take the children every afternoon down to the shore. We have a seining net and we'll get some clam forks, and there will be digging of clams and fishing and a gathering of specimens and shells, not to speak of sand castles and wells and tunnels. What we need are tents, a few cots, bedding and helpers. We have the place and money will come to buy the food for them. Thank God, we have a few helpers but we want more. It's a 24-hour a day job and one must be a lawyer, doctor, nurse, philosopher, historian, theologian, story teller, poet, musician and so on, as Chesterton says, when you take care of children. But don't let me frighten you. Love takes care of it all.

## Retreats

The above is the Peter Maurin Farm program for the summer. Maryfarm has its program of retreats and its nightly hospitality for wayfarers. There is gardening and farming going on and year round days of recollection and private retreats. The retreat house atmosphere is there, and since the chapel is in the house, and there is a beautiful library and conference room, there is a great atmosphere of space and peace in the air. The men's quarters are in the barn and carriage house and converted chicken coops, and we hope eventually to have more hermitages in this lay Carthusian atmosphere. The women have the house, with its dormitories and two attic rooms.

The retreats this summer are as follows:

Father Marion Casey,  
of Hutchinson, Minn.

July 12-16, beginning Monday  
a.m. but guests can come the  
Saturday before.

Father Robt. Brown,  
chaplain of St. Mary and  
Elizabeth's Hospital,  
Louisville, Ky.

August 9-13, and guests are  
welcome to come early and  
stay late.

Write Jane Judge, Maryfarm,  
Newburgh, N. Y., Rte. 17K

These retreats are a time of silence and prayer and bring with them great joy and light. So do plan to spend part of your vacation with us.

## Happenings Of The Month

**April 7.** We went to press. Helen came in and told me she wanted to work with Eileen Fantino and Mary Ann McCoy in their apartment in Harlem. The day she visited there on one block there was a dead baby found in a garbage can, and a man committed suicide across the street by jumping off the roof. Never had she imagined such poverty.

**April 9.** A group of us from the Peacemakers, War Resisters and Catholic Worker picketed City Hall and visited the deputy Mayor, protesting the Hydrogen Bomb experiments.

**April 10.** Mr. Howell and a group of thirty students from Adelphi College visited. It is hard to talk briefly on what we are doing and why.

**April 13.** Made a day of recollection with Mae Bellucci at the convent of Mary Reparatrice on 29<sup>th</sup> St. Magnificent conferences by Father Dickerson, S.J. one of the Russian Institute at Fordham. Mae gave me the life of Abbot Dunn of Gethsemane to read.

**April 14.** Went to Peter Maurin farm for the rest of Holy Week. Helen Dolan sent de Lubac's **Aspects of Buddhism** for Hisaye Yamamoto to read and me Cardinal Suhard's writings.

**April 15.** Holy Thursday. We all went to Mass at Our Lady, Star of the Sea, Huguenot where Fr. Hyland gave a very fine sermon to the children. The procession moved me to tears as usual. Everyone in this little parish signed up for adoration, and every hour the rosary, litany of the saints and the prayers afterwards, and the litany of the Blessed Mother were said, over and over again through the day and night, a perfect fountain of prayer, rising from this replica of the Garden of Olives. "Could ye not watch one hour with me?" The parishioners indeed watched. Becky and Susie and Eric and I were there in the morning, and in the afternoon Peggy, Kenneth, Ralph and others and I went to St. Margaret Mary's, Fr. Monahan's Church, St. Clare's in Great Kills, and Our Lady of Lourdes at New Dorp Beach. It was a cold blustery day. In the evening we drove through the rain to the Franciscan monastery on Todt Hill for Tenebrae which was beautiful indeed. Hisaye and little Paul were with us and Paul slept late the next morning.

**Good Friday.** The Mass of the presanctified was offered by Fr. Duffy at St. Joseph's in Rossville.

**Holy Saturday.** Again, at Rossville. Fr. Duffy kindled the new fire, blessed the font and offered the Holy Saturday Mass. It was moving indeed, with just a score of us there, participating.

That evening I was driving Becky, Susie, Eric and Nickie to the store and they started quarrelling while I was doing the shopping so that when I came out tears were streaming down cheeks and there were wails about who kicked whom. In desperation I said, exercising the priesthood of the laity, "we will all now make a good act of contrition—Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee and I detest all my sins, my fightings, and quarrelling, and harsh words and kickings,—"

There was complete silence and suddenly a great calm descended. Peace was restored. And I thought with intense gratitude,—Oh what would we do without prayer, without faith, without our guardian angels to help us! Reading this month about the Little Flower's childhood I

was amazed to see that she had remembered things that happened when she was two and a half years old, and that she considered she had reached the age of reason by three. So one must remember these things when looking at little Mary Elizabeth, two and a half, so piously folding her hands for grace, looking so holy and reverent. We don't give our children half credit enough for intelligence even, let alone recognizing what miracles grace works in their souls. The Paulson family reads aloud from the Bible at every meal to the children and the Cort family recites Prime at breakfast and who can say what heavenly dews are refreshing those little souls and bodies around us.