

On Pilgrimage - December 1967

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Reports on Catholic Worker participation in demonstrations in New York and at the Pentagon against the draft. Says they refrain when participants repudiate non-violence, which they practice. Says we have to pray for deliverance from fear of our enemies. Gives details of her visit to England, the many friends met and groups visited. Went on a pilgrimage and had speaking engagements. (DDLW #858).

One of the outstanding things about the Catholic Worker I always feel is that everyone around the place is seeking love, is seeking God, whether they are articulate about it or not. Fr. de Lubac says you cannot go wrong if you are on the side of the poor, and the volunteers who come to us are so absorbed in the work around St. Joseph's House, 175 Chrystie Street, that they have no time to write for **The Catholic Worker**. They are expressing themselves in deeds, not words, and are well content. What with meals to get, cooking to do, the hungry to feed, the naked to clothe, the sick to visit at Bellevue, and then of course the paper to mail out each month, they put in a long day and part of the night.

No Reports

Consequently we get no reports of the demonstrations they also find time to go on. Right now George Amrhein is down at Whitehall Street lost among the thousands there, and I'm praying he does not come back with a cracked head or a bruised back. Only yesterday Conor Cruise O'Brien, a brilliant writer and critic of modern literature, was injured by kicks from a policeman. Others were injured in the attempt which was being made to block entrance to the induction center near the Battery. It is a week of protests and the fervor is mounting to turn the protest into resistance and resistance into more active forms of interference. With threats of violence the police are afraid, and thousands of extra policemen are doing extra duty.

The Catholic Worker has participated in the Monday and Tuesday demonstrations which emphasized non-violence, but when some others of the forty-two organizations which make up the **Stop the Draft Week Committee** repudiate non-violence, we cannot go along with them. George is there as an observer.

Washington Demonstration

When it came to the October 21 demonstration in front of the Pentagon in Washington, Chris Kearns drove fifteen participants, including two children, to and from Washington. Nicole d'Entremont, Tom Hoey, George Amrhein, and Mary Kae Josh were there. Tom and Mary Kae actually were the first to sit down rather than let themselves be pressed back by the military police.

I got some flavor of the Washington affair from Mary Kae this morning, over breakfast.

She hated the shouting and the cursing, she said. It was right and necessary to take to the streets and demonstrate, but to do so with anger and contempt for police or soldier was neither right nor effective. She told me how bitterly cold it was and how someone loaned her an overcoat which came clear to the ground. The vigil went on all night and the inactivity made it a time of real suffering. She told me of a conversation she had with a young MP who told her there was nothing he would rather be doing than sitting in a warm place looking at TV or reading the paper. She found out in further conversation that he wanted to go into his medical studies but was drafted before he could begin.

As Mary Kae told me these things, I could picture to myself a little island of peace and fellowship in the midst of the thousands of participants, and I hoped there were many more of them. It is a time when a great deal of praying needs to be done, and I am sure that even those who would scoff at the idea, and I have heard these scoffs often enough, are glad of the prayers. Hate is a lonely thing. It is one thing to hate evil, but people are people, brothers and sisters, with one common Father. One of the prayers I say often is that verse from the psalms which begs God to deliver us from the **fear** of our enemies. It is fear itself that engenders hatred and violence. We have to transcend fear and seek and find another source of that energy which gives us strength to love, to grow in love.

The Catholic Worker never seems to go under its own banner, most of the groups being made up of personalists, shall we say, rather than rugged individualists. Perhaps we ought to go with banners. Marty Corbin says perhaps we should identify ourselves. I do know that we should have an inquiring reporter around the place, to piece stories together that should have been written by the actors therein.

I Was Away

Meanwhile it seemed to me I was at the other end of the world, yet still a part of the Catholic Worker family, even a spokesman for it. On the boat going over, I spoke to the freshman class of seminarians on their way to the American seminary in Rome, and later in Rome itself I spoke to young ordained priests who were remaining at the **Casa**, as it is called, on Humility Street, as someone termed the street of Our Lady of Humility.

In England

In London it was good to see Peter Lumsden again, who is earning his living “charring” and teaching people to drive in order to get out of paying taxes for armaments. Earning little and living poor is one of the things Ammon Hennacy taught all the young men who came under his influence. Unfortunately there are many who admire him but do not imitate him in his self-discipline.

At one of the PAX meetings held in London, Archbishop Roberts had to leave early, although he was the speaker of the evening, so it fell to my lot to fill in. There were three PAX meetings, two in London and one at Spode House, where I met Father Herbert McCabe, O.P., whose removal from the editorship of **New Blackfriars** caused such a stir in England, along with his brother Bernard and his wife with their seven children. Father Conrad Pepler is warden of Spode House, where weekend seminars are conducted the year around. These Dominican centers (there are others in London, Cambridge and Oxford) are the centers of Catholic intellectual life, it seems to me. We have learned much from both French and English Dominicans.

When I was in London I also spoke at Fr. Vincent McNabb Hall. It was one of Father Vincent McNabb’s pamphlets that Peter Maurin gave me when I first met him in 1932, an essay called “Nazareth or Social Chaos.” Father McNabb used to speak in Hyde Park and he continued this activity to within a few weeks of his death some years ago.

Walter Stein, who teaches at Leeds University, was a most stimulating speaker at the Spode House conference, as was Bernard McCabe. I write this now with no notes at hand and cannot do justice to all who participated.

Other dear friends whom I saw on my visit were Barbara Wall, Margaret Maison, and Emily Scarborough Coleman, who has been living at the Hermitage, a guest house connected with Stanbrook Abbey. Here at this famous Benedictine House I spoke to the nuns, seventy of them, all very much alive and alert to what is going on in the world today. An American novice there promised us one of her woodcuts for the **CW**, and we are looking forward to its arrival. The Abbey is a center of intellectual as well as religious life.

London

In London Eileen Egan and I stayed at the Hotel Gresham, right around the corner from the British Museum. Anthony Allison, one of the members of PAX, works at the Museum and got us reader’s tickets, so that we spent some mornings there, in a most favorable atmosphere for work, since one could relieve the strain of reading or writing by wandering around that part of the museum which is given over to works of art and of antiquity.

Charles Thompson and John O’Connor met us at the airport, and found us a place to stay, which turned out to be a most interesting guest house with many student helpers. The manager and owner was an Irishman who said that he came from a family of ten children, only one of whom his parents could afford to educate. So he got his education by reading; among his favorite authors were Dostoevsky and James Joyce. He made us most comfortable

and when I was suffering from a cold he brought me a hot-water bottle, cold tablets and hot tea. Most comforting. Part of the time the hotel was filled with exotic foreign guests and one day with a crowd of trade unionists attending a nearby conference. The television room was filled with discussion about everything that was happening in the world, and the worst at that time seemed to be the devaluation of the pound. “The worst thing since Dunkirk,” we heard, “though people don’t realize it yet.”

Simon Community

One morning two young women with their babies arrived to take me to visit one of the houses of the Simon Community. It had been a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality during World War II and the refuge of many exiles. Now it is one of a chain of houses started by Anton Wallich-Clifford, a former Royal Air Force man who had afterwards been a parole officer. His work, he told me at one of the PAX meetings, had been inspired by Father Borelli of Naples, the Franciscans of Wiltshire and the Catholic Worker. The house on Malden Road was very much like a Catholic Worker house, a narrow three-story affair, with small rooms and a small kitchen and out in back a long garden which showed evidence of having been cared for but was filled in one place with heaps of plaster and rubble.

“Every time the garden is cleaned up another ceiling falls down” one of the men in the house said. He had introduced himself to us as a Digger and left to dress himself up in beads and blanket to further identify himself.

There is a training center at Canterbury and I would have liked to visit that, but my time was limited. It was Ann Power and Susie Moroney who had come for me that morning and they told me of a cooperative venture the two families were about to engage in: a house outside of London for their growing families. Jonathan and Ann Power had spent six months with Martin Luther King in Chicago some time ago, had taught for two years in Tanzania, and were filled with admiration for President Julius Nyerere and his brand of socialism, which sounds to me like the communitarian socialism of Martin Buber’s **Paths in Utopia**. Jonathan is an economist and Bob Moroney is a teacher.

The story of Taena Community, a few other visits I made to **Catholic Worker** readers, and a little pilgrimage I made to Haworth and the home of the Brontes will conclude my account of my visit to England, but there is neither time nor space to write it now. As it is, I never feel that I have done justice to the dear friends and the loving kindness they showed us.