

On Pilgrimage - February 1946

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*Summary: Explains why she is changing the name of the column to *On Pilgrimage*. A diary-like record of people and events around the Worker in January 1946—looting in the neighborhood, running out of coal, medical visits, butchering a hog. Comments on worthwhile work. (DDLW #419).*

I am selecting a new name for my column, since there are *Day After Days* and *Notes By the Way* in other papers. We should always be thinking of ourselves as pilgrims anyway.

When things get tough, I like to recall St. Teresa's "Life is a night spent in an uncomfortable inn." And from the gay way she wrote of her adventures, she agreed also with St. Catherine of Sienna, who said: "All the Way to Heaven is Heaven, for He said, I am the Way."

January 1

Last night I kept vigil at the Cenacle of St. Regis up on Riverside Drive. Just before midnight the nuns started singing, "Parce Domine, parce populo," before the clamor started outside which ushered in the new year.

Today, Father Fiorentino and Miss Brady and Carmela came down to wait on tables and serve the men on the breadline.

January 2

First rabid anti-semitism in the neighborhood. Anti-foreign in general, since two Jewish shops and two Chinese shops had their windows smashed in the New Year's eve celebrations. The little shopkeeper down the street was grief-stricken and told me how many robberies there were during the year. Just the night before last he lost a hundred dollars' worth of stock at least.

And he makes his living in pennies. Looting and stoning. It will cost him \$175 to put up grills before the doors and windows to protect him from the hooliganism in the neighborhood. This is new to us, and we have been here for ten years.

January 3

Today read most of the psalms traveling on the subway between dentists. Had to go to a specialist about an infected jaw. A cold day and we are out of coal again. Visited Julia at the Art Students League on 57th Street before I went to the dentist and saw her figures in

limestone of Mary and Joseph's betrothal. Very Jewish, warm and tender. Bob Sukoski was in tonight for supper and it made us all feel terrible to see his empty sleeve and the other arm crippled, too.

He has a strong spirit, however. God knows just how much each one of us can take. Another veteran came in and helped serve. He brought a rabbit-skin jacket from Germany, and we wished he had left it there, they are needing it so now. However it is keeping the cold from John Rider, who is with us after a terrible siege of bronchitis and looking very thin indeed. The trouble with

getting sick on the Bowery is you can lie in a hotel room for days and starve to death.

January 4

Two more veterans in, bringing clothes. Herb Walsh and Jack English help with visitors, and so Jack, who is doing cooking also, burned the soup. Five more windows broken, this time Italian.

January 5

A mild spring day. We had the station wagon in to help mail out the paper, and used it to move coal which Msgr. Nelson gave us from St. Andrew's rectory. It was an all morning job. I drove, six men loaded. There were about three ton. We were black when we got through.

January 7

Paper went to press and afterward Marge and I took a walk through the East side, buying herring and hair brushes and pricing Hebrew dictionaries for Miss Branham, whose ambition it is to read the psalms in Hebrew.

January 9

John Gavinolovitch, one of our Seattle friends, called. He had been shipwrecked off the coast of Italy on the way to Yugoslavia with a load of wheat, seven thousand ton. During these latter years of the war he has been shipping out from the East Coast and bringing clothes and what food he could to different countries. Now he is on his way home. I met him at Grand Central station, Thompson's, and had supper before he caught his train.

January 10

Today I was invited to a luncheon at Schraffts, a tea at one of the housing projects with Mrs. Simkovitch and her committee on housing, and to a Carlo Tresca meeting at Cooper Union. Could not get to any of them, what with driving the car and delivering the paper to the postoffice. If some of the returned ambulance drivers and other veterans do not get their driving licenses renewed! Grace MaGuire donated more rabbits. The food here is as good as that at Schraffs, I am sure.

January 13

On the farm these last few days. Today being Sunday, Tamar and I went for a drive along the river, calling for the Gotts on the way home to come to supper and a little celebration. The burning of the Christmas greens before the fireplace. Richard Strachan, one of our C.O. jailbirds and now in the seminary, donated a phonograph and we have three books

of Gregorian records, which we play to our visitors. Fr. Ehmann's choir at St. Bernard's Seminary, Rochester, is magnificent. They sing the first and second Masses.

January 14

Ten above zero these days in the country. When there is no wind it is good to get out and walk with Tamar and her baby. Rebecca down the road, through the fields past the little Italian cemetery and Eiclen's brook where the watercress will be ready for picking next month.

Eileen is reading us Newman's "Idea of a University" at meals. Peter, dressed in maroon-colored stocking cap and a sheepskin coat, sits and eats huge bowls of oatmeal and nods approvingly. At Athens they planted groves of trees as part of the student's work and so this spring we will make everyone who comes to Maryfarm plant trees, dig up around trees, cart manure for trees, cultivating the ones we have besides putting in new ones.

Last year on one of our walks we picked up a basket of black walnuts which had been rotting on the ground all winter. We left a dozen or so in the basket and they sprouted beautifully. Now they are planted along the path.

January 15

A smell of snow in the air. Now we are in the depths of winter. Sixteen above zero, and we justify our wearing many clothes to bed thinking of St. Vincent Ferrer, who never believed in taking off his clothes at all. A waste of time. Today is the feast of St. Paul the hermit, the patron

of weavers, because he wove baskets, I suppose. In his honor we carded goats' hair today. Blandine, who came down from Canada to teach us, did a beautiful job of washing and getting the wool ready for spinning. Now Irene is up with her for a month, learning weaving.

January 21

Cold and rainy. Today we slaughtered the hog, John Filliger shooting him with a thirty-two revolver, which was not effective, and then cutting his throat. We borrowed block and tackle and scrapers from the neighbors, set up an old bathtub under the cherry trees by the print shop and made a fire under it to boil the water. We were six months too late in the killing, John said, judging from the toughness of the job of removing the hair. The scraping took a good part of the day. Then John cleaned it, quartered it, and stored it in the milk house, to continue the job tomorrow. John, Joe Cotter and Dave Hennessey worked valiantly with some of Father's good wine to stave off the cold. Stanley is running off a four-page leaflet, one of a series to be gotten out this year. We hope to bring them out monthly on what we call our Penny Press.

January 23

Bitter cold, five above zero. Father is visiting in Philadelphia and Baltimore, so a group are walking in to Mass. The snow with its crust sounds like tinkling glass as we walk on it. The roads are so icy I am afraid to venture on them.

January 24

To the clinic with Ann Thornton, where we sat for three hours. It gave me a good chance to read de Rougemont's "The Devil's Share," a superb book. After a beautiful clear morning, it snowed and sleeted all afternoon.

January 26

In town again, and an epidemic of rats, evidently flooded out of the B.M.T subway. Ever since the recent flood in the Broadway subway they have been our companions. They walk over my desk, leaving footprints. They sit on the edge of the waste-paper basket, sniffing for apple cores from Fr. Duffy's healthful lunch. They ate a quarter of a loaf of Hans' whole wheat bread.

One ran over Marge's hand as she cut bread on the closet shelf. Bill Duffy killed two on the stairs with a rubber hose. One gray monster sat on the edge of the bench with us while we talked with Fr. Burke, Oblate of Mary Immaculate, just out of prison camp in the Philippines. As we watched the rat (the bench was quite a few yards long) Father told us how stewed cat tasted. Like chicken. He had never eaten rat.

One young soldier visiting us said sadly that now that he had lived in the Army in Europe, sleeping on the ground in mid-winter, he had learned all the things he can do without. And now he was coming back to take a job to earn the money for the things that he had learned he could do without. We are trying to persuade him to go to the Benedictine school at Benet Lake, Wisconsin, for the coming year. If a job cannot be considered a work of mercy or part of the apostolate, it's not worth working at. After all, a single man has a good deal of choice along those lines.