

On Pilgrimage - February 1980

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, February 1980, 7.

Summary: Diary jottings of people coming and going, music listened to, books read, and little delights. Describes herself as “on the shelf” and quotes a prayer of Ephraim the Syrian on sloth. (DDLW #602).

Diary Notes:

Jan. 1—Isabella Levitan Yanovsky telephoned. Nina Polcyn Moore also called up—we had a good, long talk. Bill Barrett went back to the Franciscans, but he will be here on and off.

Jan. 4—Watched I. F. Stone on a television interview—very good—“All the world wants Jefferson’s moral strength.”

Jan. 6—Heard a Boston Symphony Orchestra program on TV. Then listened to Wagner’s **Siegfried** on the radio.

Jan. 10—Ruth Collins and Kathleen DeSutter Jordan visited, and Tina de Aragon called.

Jan. 13—“Solar power is thirty years away—nuclear power is necessary”—so they say! Our new farm is very near the Indian Point nuclear power plant.

Jan. 14—A rainy and cold Monday. Salty Wheatena for breakfast! I ate a banana instead.

Jan. 17—No snow yet. What a strange winter! I’ve been too weak and nervous to write in my diary. Dr Karl Stern used to say he could tell a person’s health by their handwriting.

Jan. 24—Ruth Collins called. She is sending me down some Dorothy Sayers mysteries. (I must re-read Dorothy Sayers’ introductions to Dante.) Ruth introduced me also to the Boney books, about an aboriginal detective in Australia. She is our real estate advisor, and has worked for many years on providing housing for the poor in Harlem. She loves dancing at Roseland (which the Maritains wanted to visit years ago). She is a fearless woman and a bird watcher. God love her.

Jan. 25—Dr. Marion Moses is our speaker at the Friday night meeting tonight. She is soon leaving for California to visit with Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers. She is interested in environmental medicine.

Margaret Quigley Garvey, from the Davenport, Iowa house, stopped in for a visit. She is in the city for a Pax Christi-USA meeting.

Jan. 26—Still no winter at all. No snow, ice or sleet.

Saturday's Psalm 104 reminds me of **Joseph and His Brethren** by Thomas Mann, which Peter Maurin gave me to read (someone had given it to him). It also reminds me of the Potok books (**My Name Is Asher Lev**, and others).

I have been happy with Father Frey's little Psalm book, arranged for daily reading, which Stanley gave me (bought at the book store next to the Franciscan church on 31st Street). I remember, when traveling to the West Coast to speak many years ago (the priest who invited me had sent me the train ticket with a Pullman berth), I awoke early in the morning and saw the porter, sitting in a made-up compartment nearby, reading this same little book of Psalms.

C S. Lewis' **Reflections on the Psalms** is very illuminating. Lewis is my favorite theologian.

Tom Cornell visited this afternoon. He met his wife, Monica, at the Catholic Worker. They have two lovely children.

Tonight there is a "cabaret" party in the house. Father Geoff, O.P. is the master of ceremonies.

Jan. 27—Kathy Clarkson has gone for a long retreat in the Southwest.

Eileen Egan called to tell me of the death of Mairead Corrigan's sister, Anne, who had lost her children in Northern Ireland some years ago. Their killing gave rise to the Peace People's Movement.

Jan. 28—Dr. Marion Moses called me from the airport, on her way to California. Jean Kennedy, my godchild, visited this afternoon. She brought flowers. I showed her family pictures and we talked about our children and the Sheeds. Mary Lathrop Pope also came by—helped me mend my skirt.

Watched Leonard Bernstein on TV tonight, conducting the orchestra and playing the piano at the same time—it reminded me of Sasha Maruchess, who was a friend of his, and how he had rejoiced the night Leonard Bernstein first conducted the New York Philharmonic when the regular conductor became ill. Whenever I watch an orchestra, I always want to re-read **The First Violin** by Fothergill.

Jan. 29—**How Green Was My Valley** was on TV tonight—a movie about Welsh miners. Eileen Egan is from Wales.

Finished one Dorothy Sayers mystery and started another, **Gaudy Night**. I also have Joseph Tey books—an equally good writer. When I broke my arm at the age of twelve, Aunt Jenny, my mother's sister and my favorite aunt, sent me one Sherlock Holmes book a week, till I read them all.

There are seven women living at St. Joseph House on First Street, and Maryhouse on Third Street is full.

Jan. 30—A move to re-instate draft registration of men—and women!

Feb. 1—Bitter cold—wind also. The tree across the street was golden yellow in the sun this morning.

Gary Donatelli, Don Whitman and others have been distributing leaflets on Church teachings about disarmament each Sunday morning in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Feb. 4—Early morning visitors—Sis DeAngelis, with Rosemary Haughton, who is from a community in Scotland. She had visited us at Tivoli years ago.

There were excerpts from **La Boheme** this p.m. on radio—my favorite opera in my twenties. Now, I prefer Wagner.

Feb. 6—Mass at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium.—Dr. Marion Moses telephoned.—Later, I watched the Luciano Pavarotti Master Class program from Juilliard School on TV.

Feb. 9—Ann Perkins visited, with English shortbreads. Delicious!

Listened to Verdi's **Otello** on radio from the Metropolitan Opera House this afternoon.

Feb. 10—Sunday Mass at 11:30 a.m. in our auditorium. Later, enjoyed Offenbach's **Tales of Hoffman** on the radio.

Feb. 11—Monday—bright, sunny, cold. Bill and Louise Callahan sent some wonderful old photos of Stanley, and the Easton farm, and the old Mott Street house of hospitality.

Mass at 7:00 p.m.—Father Peter of the Little Brothers of the Gospel. Little Brother Maurice and Little Sister Simone came too. They are an order started by Charles de Foucauld. It was Peter Maurin who first told me of them.

After Mass, watched Leonard Bernstein conduct Brahms' **Symphony No 1** on T.V. To see it on television is better than just hearing it on radio.

Feb. 13—Deane Mowrer is going down to Washington, D.C. on March 8th, with a group from both houses, St. Joseph's and Maryhouse, and from Peter Maurin Farm, to vigil for a week at the Pentagon. I envy her her vigor. Here I sit "on the shelf" and recall the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian:

Sorrow on me, beloved! That I unapt and reluctant in my will abide, and behold, winter hath come upon me, and the infinite tempest hath found me naked and spoiled and with no perfecting of good in me. I marvel at myself, O my beloved, how I daily default and daily do repent; I build up for an hour and an hour overthrows what I have built.

At evening I say, tomorrow I will repent, but when morning comes, joyous I waste the day. Again at evening I say I shall keep vigil all night and I shall entreat the Lord to have mercy on my sins. But when night is come, I am full of sleep.

Behold, those who received their talent along with me strive by day and night to trade with it, that they may win the word of praise and rule ten cities. But I, in my sloth, hid mine in the earth and my Lord makes haste to come, and behold, my heart trembles and I weep the day of my negligence and know not what excuse to bring. Have mercy upon me, Thou, Who alone art without sin, and save me, Who alone art pitiful and kind.

It would be ungrateful not to find enjoyment in my inactivity, not to "rejoice always," as the Psalmist said. Was it Ruskin who wrote about "the duty of delight?" What a nice phrase!