

On Pilgrimage - May 1946

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*Summary: Reaffirms doing the works of mercy—"It is our program, our rule of life."—and voluntary poverty. Asks us to "consider our daily occupation in the light of a work of mercy." Recommends *The Snake Pit*, a book about conditions in mental hospitals. Extols gardening. (DDLW #424).*

We emphasize in this issue of *The Catholic Worker* the works of mercy. It is our program, our rule of life. The works of mercy include enlightening the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, comforting the afflicted, and to aid in this work we have retreats at Maryfarm, Easton, Pa. We just finished one Easter week, and now the next will begin Monday, May 20, and we would like everyone to be there Sunday, May 19th. Easton is only two hours out of New York, and two hours by bus from Philadelphia. These retreats in silence are joyful experiences, a beginning of heaven, a practicing for heaven.

Elsewhere in this issue there is a chapter from a novel begun 14 years ago, interrupted by these occupations and taken up again now to be finished and published by this fall, we hope, by ourselves. We also intend to publish Peter Maurin's easy essays again, with a foreword by Monsignor Ligutti, also to be ready this fall.

The chapter from the novel is printed in this issue both because it is a bit of Peter Maurin, our theorist and founder, and it is a bit of the retreat. While we talk of the destitution in Europe and the rest of the world, we are not unmindful of the shanty towns we have all over our own country both during the depression of the thirties, and even now. Much as we detest destitution, we must never cease talking about the love of poverty which was in all the words of our Lord. If we really leave all things to Him, He will care for us because we are of more value than the sparrow, this we know. And in addition to the material help we have to give, we must also give the spiritual help, we must comfort the afflicted by telling them the meaning of suffering, the golden coin hidden in suffering, and this we cannot do unless we ourselves try daily, and forever to practice that poverty we are always talking about. There is no solution without this practice of poverty. We can never be done talking about it, this need of stripping ourselves, or allowing ourselves to be deprived of this world's goods. We can never give enough, considering the state of the world today.

Work and Community

We must consider our daily occupation in the light of a work of mercy. We must work together. The second installment of Irene Mary Naughton's article on Work is printed in this issue. We hope it will make people think about their jobs. Are they contributing to the system which has brought about war and famine? Irene Mary Naughton is a graduate of Manhattanville and is working with us at Maryfarm, and if you want clarification, write to her. John Curran has long been working with us both in Mott Street and with farming groups connected directly or indirectly with the work. He works with his hands as well as with his head.

The Mentally Ill

Next month we hope to have an article on visiting Mary, one of our friends who is confined in a state hospital for mental cases. We were reading this month "The Snake Pit," the story of a young woman's experience of a year's confinement in a mental hospital. We realized from reading that book how necessary it was to bring food to our friends in such institutions. No matter how good and careful is Holy Mother the State, in her endeavor to provide for the material wants of the afflicted (why, oh why, are not these poor ones taken care of free of charge by Holy Mother the Church, who has always done corporal works of mercy?). Nevertheless, they are apt to go hungry if they are well mannered. First come, first served, and the picture in "The Snake Pit" is not a pretty one. I want to thank the author for writing that book, which is done with great sympathy and understanding, and will help all those who have relatives in mental hospitals to understand them, and thus will be helping the afflicted. We urge our readers to read this book, which holds one's interest from beginning to end. There is not a jarring note in the book.

Manual Labor

How peaceful a work is gardening and how restful for a tired mind. This last month there was a great deal of planting done on the farm at Easton. Fields of potatoes were put in. John Filliger was busy behind the plough all the month. We have a new team of white horses which we bought from a good neighbor for \$125, practically a present. We have Dolly, our brown, half-blind horse, whom we all love, and who served us so faithfully during the winter, hauling down wood from the hillside. Long rows of onions, carrots, cabbages, have been planted and there is a field of turnips going in next week. We need a freezer and we need a root cellar. The latter we will dig, but we must pray for the former.

I put a flower garden in myself this last week, all around the little cabin where I work when I am at Maryfarm. And I'm going to paint and scour the place when I next go down, so that my year-old granddaughter Rebecca will not get so black when she comes to see me and goes crawling and mopping up the porch in her little seersucker overalls. The factories in Easton, two miles away, send up their soot and smoke to our hillside, and the sheepswool is well blackened with it. We have all the reminder of the city right below us as we sit on our peaceful hillside. Rebecca had tea with me last week, applesauce and a soft-boiled egg, and when my herb garden gets going I shall serve mint teas to guests on occasion, tasting and seeing that the Lord is sweet.