

Day After Day - June 1945

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*Summary: Inspired by an exhibition of Georges Roualt's paintings, she considers his favorite themes—the judge, the prostitute, and the clown—saying there is some “of each in all of us.” Describes people who live the folly of the Cross—a doctor living with the poor in Washington, those in conscientious objector camps, and those in jail for refusing the draft. Opposes peace-time conscription. Issues an appeal for *Blackfriars* magazine and recalls early meetings with Jacques Maritain. (DDLW #411).*

A cold, rainy May, and now June is beginning the same way. Coats and sweaters are still necessary. The men that come in on the line need shoes and socks, coats and shirts. Not many clothes coming in right now. The last two days it has rained. I asked one young fellow how he got that way, and he said he had missed his ship, been “rolled,” had slept in doorways and eaten on the “line” while waiting for his ship to come back to port. Every day those come in who have fallen among thieves and been robbed. Some with cracked heads, with black eyes, some with hospital pallor.

On the farm visitors begin to come over week-ends, and during the week. There are two long tables in the long dining room under the barn which we have turned into chapel and dormitories and Hans presides over the tables. Planting, building, a general clean-up goes on all the time. Always plenty of work to be done. But the physical work is a relief after seeing many people at Mott street, after the desk work, the din of the telephone, the many sad and woeful tales that oppress the spirit.

One afternoon last week I went up to the Museum of Modern Art on West 53rd street to see an exhibition of Georges Roualt, the great religious painter of the present day. A modernist, a Frenchman, a friend of Leon Bloy. A review in the *Commonweal* had called attention to the exhibit or I would have missed it. He portrayed especially three types, the review said—that of the judge, the prostitute and the clown, and into those types we all fall. Besides we have some of each in all of us. The judge is the Pharisee, the righteous, the bourgeois materialist. The prostitutes are those who are fornicators in the sense that they are unfaithful to their spouse, Christ, and turn from love of God to love of creatures. There is the possibility of salvation, of conversion, here, of course. We are all sinners. The clown is the fool for Christ, one who lives the folly of the Cross, the Idiot, the Don Quixote, the tragic fool.

Poverty

Certainly any one who chooses poverty in this world is considered a fool. So in this classification fall such friends as Dr. Elizabeth Walsh, who lives in Fides House down in Washington, in the Negro section, a little house, two rooms on a floor, which she shares with several Negro co-workers, and which is thrown open every afternoon and evening to all the children in the neighborhood. Several other young women are working with her, Ruth Ann Brennan, Eleanor Horner; also some of the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity come several afternoons a week and direct the activities of the boys.

Down the alley in back of the house at 1123 New Jersey avenue (that avenue is tree-shaded and wide) there is a barren stretch of alley houses and a cluttered vacant lot which Dr. Walsh and her friends are going to clean up for the children. The back and front yards of Fides House are about ten feet square and do not allow of any extensive activities.

Dr. Walsh teaches at the Catholic University. She is the author of "Saints in Social Work." And she believes that while there are poor, she is one of them; while there are slums, she will live in them. She, and Dr. Furfey, who works with her, are true personalists.

I had occasion to visit Fides House last month, when I spoke to a group headed by Dr. Furfey, the aim of which is to hold meetings to call for the speedy termination of the war, by a negotiated peace rather than by demanding unconditional surrender.

While in Washington I had the great joy of being present at the ordination of Henry McDyer, who used to work with us on Charles street and who picketed the German embassy with us back in 1934. He is now Fr. Cajetan and it was a great joy to receive his blessing. He also is one of the fools for Christ. He rejoices in manual labor, in menial tasks, in the idea of being a servant of all.. And what else is this but folly in the eyes of the world? Especially in these days of modern machinery, the white collar job, the leisure state.

Baltimore

I visited some more "fools" at Baltimore during this week's trip. These are the conscientious objectors who are stationed at Owings Mills, Rosewood Training School, and who in their fight against war and conscription work twelve hours a day, (no pay) and little time off. The children in the training school are imbeciles and idiots, feeble-minded and cripples and epileptics. Here is one of the "camps" for C.O.'s under the auspices of the Association of Catholic Conscientious Objectors. There is also a "camp" at the Alexian Brothers Hospital, Chicago. There are also many Catholic C.O.'s at Trenton, North Dakota, where there is a building project under government auspices.

The issue of peace-time conscription is coming up and hearings are going to be held in Washington before the Senate and House committees these first weeks in June. Many Catholic organizations, and the Bishops of the country have issued statements against the passage of such a bill at this time, when the country is still in the midst of war. They have recommended the postponing of the consideration of it until some time after the war.

And Greater Fools

Most foolish of all are those who have refused to accept conscription altogether and have gone to jail because of their beliefs. We have not the exact figures as to how many there are in this category, but thank God there are a few who have withstood the State.

If such a conscription law passes, then indeed, accepting the point of view set forth in Fr. Hugo's article, "The Immorality of Conscription," we will try to build up a mighty army of fools willing to go to jail rather than submit to the tyranny of our enemy the State.

Wanted

We would like very much to have those copies of the Dominican monthly *Blackfriars* which contain articles by Fr. Gerald Vann, which deal with War and the State, and which takes recognition of the necessity of such a propaganda as ours in a long-range program of education for peace. We were talking of these things to a distinguished priest visitor, a chaplain in the Navy, one Monday morning during the month, and it is difficult to speak along these lines to men with ribbons and stars on their breasts, indicating the suffering and horrors they have been through. I always make an act of contrition after such visits, for overmuch speech and presumption. A few days after this visit, I picked up the morning paper to find that our visitor had been Father O'Callahan, the Jesuit chaplain of the Franklin.

Maritain and the Pope

Another news story of the month which filled our hearts with expectancy was the account of Jacques Maritain's being received by the Holy Father. Several months ago there had been a farewell party for M. Maritain at the New School of Social Research to which Peter and I received invitations. With great boldness, I decided to ask him to present some issues of the Catholic Worker to Pope Pius XII.

On our first meeting with Maritain, when he came to see us at the Fifteenth street store where we started our work, he won the hearts of all the little group who were there working with us. When he returned to France that time, Margaret Stasavage, the Lithuanian girl who was helping us cook, insisted that we give him a box of home-made fudge to take on the boat to his wife as a little going-away present. In the spirit of tradition, I took a loaf of home-made, unleavened whole wheat bread and a pair of socks which I had knit and presented it to him, with the issues of the Catholic Worker, as a parting gift from us here at the Catholic Worker. He promised, with his usual gentle cordiality, to make selections from the papers and give them to the Holy Father.

Another Distinguished Speaker

Our Friday night meetings are continuing and we are going to have to find more chairs, or build more benches to accommodate the guests. Monsignor Nelson, pastor of St. Andrew's, comes on the dot of eight, and leaves on the dot of nine-thirty, so we beg visitors to be prompt. There are conferences on the Bible, enlightening the eyes, warming the heart. We are afraid to say how much we wish to thank him, for fear of depriving him of an iota of heavenly reward.