

On Pilgrimage - December 1966

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Summary: Recommends two books on pacifism, visits her daughter in Vermont and then friends in Montreal. Attends the funeral of Jane Marra who started the Catholic Worker in Boston. (DDLW #846).

Someone said to me last month, "What are you going to write about if you are no longer going on pilgrimage around the country?" And she went on to tell me she would miss travelling in thought with me since she could not go herself. One of the pleasantest ways to travel very often is with a map and guide book, right in your own bed at night, especially if you have been to the places described, which are always turning out differently from the way you had pictured them in your mind.

On two afternoons we had visitors from Puerto Rico this last month, both at Tivoli and Chrystie Street, and it was a pleasure to sit and talk with these Catholic, nonviolent friends of the Nationalist Party, which is working for independence of Puerto Rico from United States domination of their culture and their economy. We will have more to say about Puerto Rico in a future issue of the paper in which we also hope to have a thorough review of two books which have recently come out. One is **Non-Violence and the Christian Conscience** by Fr. Pie Regamey, O.P., published by Herder and Herder with a preface by Thomas Merton and a foreward by Stanley Windass. One of the chapters, dealing with the violent gentleness of Christ, speaks of the gentleness having the infinite intensity of divine love, a terrible love, a consuming fire.

"The world offers us," Pie Regamey writes, "the spectacle of a colossal expenditure of energy, where men excel when they are called upon to kill or destroy, but for constructive work they hang back and drag their feet in apathy." We have been passing the book around, and one of the group at Tivoli, Marge Hughes, said it was like making a retreat to read it.

The other book is **The Pacifist Conscience**, being "classic writings on alternatives to violent conflict from ancient times to the present," edited and with an introduction by Peter Mayer. Published by Holt Rinehart and Winston. One of the articles I wrote during the Korean War is included in the book. It is an expensive book at \$7.95, but a veritable encyclopedia of background, early internationalism, theory and practice in the 20th century, a chapter on conscientious objection and a last section on Christian Pacifism

and Non-violence today, in which I am included, together with Martin Luther King, Danilo Dolci, C. Wright Mills and Diederick H. Lund, who wrote of pacifism during the occupation of Norway by the Germans. There is also the beginning of the Freedom Rides,

Bayard Rustin and George Houser's original "journey of reconciliation" sponsored jointly by the Congress of Racial Equality and the Fellowship of Reconciliation in 1947.

With the increasing tensions in Latin America, Africa and Asia, we need constant study of the nonviolent revolution in which we are engaged.

Visitings

When the last issue of the **Catholic Worker** came out, I was again visiting for two days at my daughter's in Perkinsville, Vermont and then for four days in Montreal with my granddaughter, who is in her last year of nursing school at St. Mary's hospital. I stayed in Montreal at the pilgrim's hospice, which is at the foot of the Mount where the great shrine of St. Joseph stands overlooking all of Montreal. Which meant that I could get to Mass at the shrine church each morning, breakfast in the cafeteria and then go about the city to visit my friends, Dixie MacMaster and her mother, Dr. Karl Stern and his wife, Jack Birmingham and his Browser's bookshop at 3505 Avenue du Parc, where there is plenty of room to sit around and dip into all the books which you thought were out of print and which he has painstakingly found and made available. Jack's idea of a bookshop is a place where like-minded people interested in mutualism, peace and freedom can get together and plan economical publishing, translating, etc.

On Sunday morning Sue and I went to the Russian liturgy at Our Lady of the Presentation and met Father Ledit, S.J. who was taking Father Leoni's place for the day.

Father Ledit's work is to give retreats thirty six times a year, six days each, a most difficult schedule. But one can see he is a man of great energy. The ikons were painted by Norkus, a Lithuanian educated in Russia, Siberia, Denmark and Canada, in that order. The mural above the altar was painted by Mother Mercedes, now prioress of the Carmelites in Morristown, New Jersey. The liturgy lasted from ten to twelve and then there was a requiem (though that is not what they call it) for the Russian mother of three women present at the Liturgy, who had prepared a feast for the congregation which was served afterward with the usual coffee and rolls. There was beautiful singing from the choir and even the babes in arms received communion.

Abbe Saey

In the afternoon Sue and I went with Karl Stern to visit an old friend, Abbe Saey, at St. Ireneus Church at Atwater and Workman Streets. We sat in a little apartment all painted and furnished with built-in bunks, tables and bookshelves, ready for occupancy by some of his forty or fifty **Samaritaines**, women who go out every other day to work in the homes of the poor, washing and scrubbing and caring for children and the sick. And every other day is spent in prayer and study in the church. Among the **Samaritaines** is Fr. Saey's mother, now eighty-five, and there are eight in their infirmary. The day of the **Samaritaines** begins at six with a meditation and then Mass. They live on alms and keep silence except where charity and their work makes speech necessary. It was they themselves who rejected the hour a day of recreation and talk which Father Saey suggested for them. He gives two conferences a week and two on Sunday. The room was lined with shelves of books, all uniformly covered with brown paper and neatly titled. They enjoy the best of spiritual reading and conversation, one might say, with the great. They listen to them and speak to them and to God in prayer.

Abbe Saey started to give retreats in 1937 and ceased to give them in 1942. He can no longer give retreats, and the women with whom he works are silent, so there are no new recruits for this work. I warned him that if I wrote about this work he was liable to receive visits from many kinds of applicants, so great is the hunger for holiness, but so few count the cost or can pay it. However, anyone attracted to such a vocation should be given a chance to try it. No one could live in such silence or in such hard manual labor if she was not called to it, if she did not have a true vocation for it. These women, who lead this life in the world, read the **Catholic Worker**, I am happy to say, (those of them who

read English) and they pray for us, and so does Father Saey. A long time ago a cloistered sister told me that she did not read the paper and I asked her to read it so that she would

pray harder for us.

There is a young group of priests who wish to update the **Samaritaines**, but, as Father Saey points out, there is not much updating to be done about the family wash of the poor.

Two parishes are merging, and there is a rumor that he is to be transferred. But he has outlasted pastors and other vicars at St. Ireneus. Karl told me that Anne Freemantle once asked him where to go to confession and he sent her to Father Saey. When he saw her on her return her comment was, "Another St. John of the Cross."

On the St. Lawrence

The next morning I started for home but stopped at Caughnawaga, an Indian village, to visit with Father Plante, the nephew of Father Pacifique Roy, the priest of whom I have written so often, and he gave me more material for the book I am writing, *All is Grace*.

We talked about the retreat movement, about the family, about Indians, and about the river itself, which we looked out on while we ate lunch together in a little sitting room in the old rectory.

Up to forty ships a day go through the locks of the St. Lawrence and they seem to ride high above you, great vessels of twenty-six thousand tons, bearing wheat or iron ore. In mid-December everything is frozen and traffic stops, but it begins again around Easter. They are contemplating, it is said, another great waterway connecting the Hudson with

the Richelieu and the St. Lawrence, fighting the weather which closes the St. Lawrence Seaway so many months of the year. They have robbed the Indians even here at the reservation, taking the river front, which is now Crown property, for Seaway.

Boston Requiem

Two weeks after I got back I received a telephone call at Tivoli telling me of the death of Jane Marra, who was responsible for starting all the Catholic Worker activities in the Boston area. She was to be buried from the cathedral on Wednesday, so Tuesday noon I took a bus from Albany at one-thirty, which brought me into Boston at six. Calling John Cort's home, I found that I was just in time for the wake. Arriving at the funeral parlor, I met Arthur Sheehan, Ignatius O'Connor, Catherine Ahearn, John Kelly, the Corts and Charles Dastoli, Oni Shea and her husband and two of her children, and two of the Little Sisters of Jesus who live in that area and work at manual labor in a Catholic Hospital. There was a beautiful service led by Father Francis from the British Honduras.

The wake service is contained in **Our Parish Prays and Sings**, a book published by the Liturgical Press at Collegeville, Minnesota. There were additional readings from the Scriptures, including that wonderful scene from the 36th chapter of Ezekiel, which has so comforted me in time of war: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live. Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done it, says the Lord."

The next day, after a requiem Mass at the Lady Chapel in the Cathedral, we drove out to Waltham to the Marra family plot. It was a sunny day. Father Francis said the prayers at the grave and gave a homily with great simplicity and beauty. Our hearts were warmed, and we were happy for Jane, that she had finished her course in peace and joy and could look back on a full and fruitful life. She had started the Catholic Worker in Boston, and Arthur Sheehan and John Magee had come to live in the house on Tremont Street which Peter Maurin and Stanley Vishnewsy and others had often visited. They had sold papers and carried on discussions on the Boston Common. Hospitality continued for many years. The Upton farm was bought by the Boston group; four families settled there and twenty eight children grew up there. Ed Willock came to the Boston house and decorated its walls with murals, and went from there to help start the Worcester House of Hospitality, and married one of the girls who came to help; later he came to New York to start the magazine **Integrity** with Carol Jackson. From that magazine came a community of families up the Hudson, within commuting distance from New York, who built each others' houses and aided each other in sickness and in health. That community is still there, and the farm at Upton, though both the old Boston and the Worcester houses are no longer operating. But John McKenna, a teacher, and the former Cathie Sullivan, who is now his wife, have been running a house of hospitality in the slums of Boston and now at Roxbury, for the past year.

It is not of these things that the newspapers spoke in their obituaries of Jane Marra. They told of her active and successful life in the trade-union movement of Boston, and her work as secretary of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union for many years. She had aided the worker in the needle trades, and she had helped the unemployed and the unemployables. A great and beautiful life. May she rest in peace.