

On Pilgrimage - October 1961

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, October 1961, 2.

Summary: Bits of news of her upcoming speaking engagements and the activities of many workers—answering correspondence, leafleting in Moscow, and on retreat. Reflects on doing “the duties of our state in life” and the need for a sense of Divine Providence. (DDLW #786).

As usual we are going to press late this month, on the eleventh, and when our readers will receive the paper will depend on how much help we get around the office to mail it out. There are births, marriages, and deaths among us, and sicknesses of one kind or another, and people to drive to the clinic and to wait with to bring them home. In general we are *living*, and it is hard to get down to writing about living and its problems. Stuart Sandberg who makes up the paper each month, and also makes up the meals each day, says that we have plenty of copy so I do not need to write much. Dianne helps with the house, with the women, with the cooking, with answering our voluminous correspondence, and of course with the children. And she is always calm.

Jim Forest, just released from the Navy as a conscientious objector, is doing valiant work on the correspondence, too.

All this month I have written additional chapters on my new book, and it is now finished, Stanley is typing it and it will soon be in the hands of the publisher. So I can work on correspondence again.

Speaking

Tomorrow, October 6, I will visit my daughter in Vermont for the weekend and then go on to Erie, Pennsylvania for a few talks. I will visit Jack Thornton and Mary and her ten children and then I must return quickly to New York to speak to a group at New York University. A few days later I have a talk at a Unitarian Church in Chester, Pennsylvania, and at the end of the month, at Holy Cross College and at Clark College, in Worcester, at St. Anselm's in Manchester, New Hampshire, at a Quaker school in New Hampshire and at Putney Graduate School in Vermont. These are just little trips, these comings and goings, but they take a lot of time.

Each time I set out, I try to clean up my desk, finish up unfinished business and so on. On a long trip one can relax, have a sense of travel, sightseeing.

End of a Season

Judith Gregory is going to be at Putney until December first, and she said she was longing to stay in New England for the “color season.” As for me, I am longing to stay in the beach house on Staten Island now that the five families who have visited us during the summer are all gone, leaving mute reminders of their presence in the shape of clothes, toys, old bathing suits, a flannel strainer for Puerto Rican coffee and innumerable specimens of rocks, shells, and whelks’ cocoons. It is all strangely silent, the beach is deserted, the gulls scream and fight over the fish that come in on the tide. Fishing boats, six of them, are out daily in the bay, trawling for menhaden, or moss bunkers, which are sailed to the factories in New Jersey to make oil for paints and the bulk for fertilizer. I tell the children the oil is used to make oleo margarine. It could be, at that, since England uses whale oil for her margarine.

Astors [sic] and goldenrod, blue sailor and second growth honey suckle are still blooming. Our pear trees are heavy with pears which Ralph and Joe have been preserving. It has been a good year for fruit. Our neighbors have shared their grapes with us.

I think one of the sadnesses of Fall is that the children are back in school and there are long silent hours every day which you think they should be enjoying too. It is as though they were going off to work each day, shut up in school rooms.

Retreats

Deane Mowrer has just come back from a retreat at Regina Laudis at Bethlehem, Connecticut, leaving last Sunday and returning Thursday night laden with apples, sweet smelling herbs, and a fleece from Lauren Ford’s sheepfold, which we will wash, tease and make into big fat comforters like the Doukhobors do. It will be fun sitting around the long table at the farm, working at the wool.

Charles Butterworth, Walter Kerrel, Ed Forand, Jean Walsh, Janet Burwash, Ralph Madsen and I all made our five day retreat over Labor Day at Mt. Saviour, with Charles de Foucauld secular fraternity. Stuart made a private one at the same place later. Dianne made hers at Grailville, Loveland, Ohio.

As for other members of our family, whether they are included on our masthead or not,—Ammon Hennacy is busy in Salt Lake City working at his one man revolution in the shape of a house of hospitality there. Mary Lathrop is helping him, working at housework by the day to escape taxes and to pay the rent of the

house—The Joe Hill House and the St. Joseph’s Refuge. We are printing excerpts from their last letters.

During the month a Carthusian from Vermont wrote to ask about Ammon, missing his name in the paper. “Is he dead?” he wished to know. “If so I will pray for him.” No, he is very much alive and wants anyone passing through Salt Lake City to visit him at 72 Postoffice Place.

We have been so overset with long articles that we have not been able to continue our writing about Cuba. Dianne wrote an article this month and we will try to cover this issue further, printing letters and answers too in the next issue, God willing. Meanwhile, pray for us, and know that we are trying to see things in the light of our faith, in the light of eternity.

Karl in Moscow

News came today that Karl Meyer, our Chicago editor, and thirty other peace marchers arrived in Moscow, distributed peace leaflets in Red Square, and talked to the students at Moscow University. Radio accounts told us that the students protested when authorities had limited the talks of the pacifists to fifteen minutes, but the pacifists won their point.

Love Casts Out Fear

There is of course much fear in the world today and a sense of imminent disaster threatening.

When St. Ignatius was asked what he would do if he were told he would die in an hour, he said that he would go right on doing what he was doing.

So we too, if we have a sense of Divine Providence, and abandon ourselves to it, will go on doing what we are doing, “the duties of our state in life,” of our vocation.

The world is very beautiful around us these days and there are glimpses of heaven here and now. Of course we love this life and the joys of music and sunlight and children’s laughter. But we know too that “the ear is not satisfied with hearing, nor the eye with seeing.” But we know also that “eye hath not seen nor ear heard what God hath prepared for those who love him.” All things happen only by His permissive will and “all things work together for good to those who love God.” So we pray for that,—that we learn to love, that we grow in love.