

On Pilgrimage - February 1979

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Snippets about her thoughts upon rising—from Scripture, Peter Maurin, dreams—and visitors during the month. (DDLW #596).

Woke up this morning with these lines haunting me: “Joyous, I lay waste the day.” “Let all those that seek Thee be glad in Thee, and let such as love Thy salvation, say always, the Lord be praised.” (From Wadell’s **Desert Fathers**.)

This afternoon, I listened to **Tosca** on the radio.

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Katy, my granddaughter, telephoned Tamar and me from San Francisco. She had visited Ysaye Yamamoto just outside Los Angeles. “Si,” who had been in a relocation camp during World War II, came to us when she got out, and married Tony de Soto, whom she met at the Catholic Worker farm in Pleasant Plains, Staten Island. A good and happy marriage.

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Watched Eugene O’Neill’s play **Beyond the Horizon**, on television.

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Dr. Marion Moses had supper with me, and checked my heart, lungs, etc. Marion is specializing in environmental medicine, fighting against poisonous sprays used both in peace and war. She has worked with Cesar Chavez on the West Coast.

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There are hints of renewal of Selective Service again.

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Sad news of my great-grandson, little Justin Haughton’s death (struck by a car) in Vermont. I, too, feel prostrated. Grief is numbing.

Stanley brought me a hard cover copy of **Dr. Zhivago**. Becky Haughton’s Lara (my first great grandchild and little Justin’s sister) was named after Becky and I had seen the movie, which was a great one, with a haunting musical accompaniment.

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My brother John came for a visit and brought me **The Cathedral** by Huysmans, whose book **En Retour** had started my conversion, in New Orleans in 1928.

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Awoke this a.m., half-remembering a dream in which someone said, “our country is the best country in the world.” I wonder if it was the influence of Tom Cornell’s recent account, when he visited me, of his trip to Nicaragua. He had just been there and returned (see article in this issue). Or our faithful Ed Forand’s influence. He is an ex-Marine, who served in Panama. Or Smokey Joe, who had landed there with the Marines at the time I was working for a Communist Party affiliate, which was sending medical supplies to Nicaragua. My conflicting emotions!

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Beautiful cards are sent in with donations. One came from an Eskimo Cooperative in Canada. I have been keeping the card as a book mark in my Bible. “The world will be saved by beauty,” as Dostoevsky wrote.

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Woke to the echo of Peter Maurin’s words, “strikes don’t strike me.” He was not in favor of labor conflict – class war. His program was round-table discussions for clarification of thought, houses of hospitality, and farming communes. It is wonderful to have reprints of his **Easy Essays**, and constant repetition to make them familiar, “help incarnate these ideas.”

Peter was very disappointed, at first, that we did not print **only his essays**. He commented, “everyone’s paper is no-one’s paper,” and “Man proposes, but woman disposes.” But he diligently sought speakers, whom he had at **nightly** meetings for clarification of thought, and he did not hesitate to invite Columbia College professors, such as Carleton Hayes, and Wall Street men, such as Mr. Woodlock of the **Wall Street Journal**, and John Moody of the Moody Investment Service, to speak to us at these nightly meetings, which packed our storefront headquarters. Peter certainly got at the **roots** of our acquisitive society. But we are so busy with the corporal works of mercy that we often neglect the spiritual ones. Maybe people here, who are deeply interested in Peter’s ideas, will get us back to Peter’s fundamental concepts.

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Psalm 49, v.3: “They shall give thanks unto Thy Name, which is great, holy, wonderful.” The invocation of the Name – the Jesus Prayer – J. D. Salinger’s story **Franny and Zooey**, a little masterpiece which started many young ones praying. The Holy Name – “Hallowed be Thy Name.”

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Eleven of our young men volunteers are now working at St. Rose’s Home for incurable cancer patients. The nuns take care of the women patients. I was

reading the life of Rose Hawthorne (Mother Alphonsa) when I first met Peter Maurin. She was the foundress, and started the work in her own apartment.

Stanley Vishnewski showed me his slides, in my room. He has a pictorial history of the Catholic Worker. Stanley, at age 16, back in 1933, and Dolan and Egan were the first to “join up” with Peter and me. Dolan and Egan came to my door each day, for a dollar for a “flop” and a meal.

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We had hard, baked potatoes for supper, and cabbage overspiced. I’m in favor of becoming a vegetarian only if the vegetables are cooked right. (What a hard job cooking is here! But the human warmth in the dining room covers up a multitude of sins.) Stanley is still a “growing boy” – he can hardly eat anything.

Another food grievance – onions chopped up in a fruit salad, plus spices and herbs! A sacrilege – to treat foods in this way. Food should be treated with respect, since Our Lord left Himself to us in the guise of food. His disciples knew Him in the breaking of the bread.

Fritz Eichenberg came tonight, through the bitter cold, from peace Dale [sic], Rhode Island, to give us his talk and slide show at our Friday night meeting. He brought me a beautiful book of ikons, and a tiny book of animal proverbs, “wisdom of the beasts.”

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Psalm 100: “O be joyful in the Lord.” When Kassie or Marj bring in my morning coffee, I can say the above verses. My grandfather, who fought in the Civil War, used to have a glass of wine or whiskey at night, which he called his “O-be-joyful.”

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Watched Gene O’Neill’s **Ah, Wilderness** on television – his one happy play.

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We will have Mass in the chapel tonight at 7:30, if Father Lyle Young can get through the flooding rain storm.

(He did get through.)

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Marj Humphrey and Jane Sammon are in Mexico for the Bishop’s Conference at Puebla. (We received a first report of their pilgrimage this morning.)

Peggy Scherer spoke at the Friday night meeting and showed slides of her trip to Mexico and Guatemala.

Jean Walsh called from New Jersey about a possible house for us in Tottenville, State Island. So many are concerned about our move from Tivoli.

My **memory** is so bad – old age is certainly trying. Friends are too solicitous for my health.

Movies on television are a great temptation, but also a good distraction in time of sorrow. Tamar and I watched “The African Queen,” with Katharine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart. Unbelievable, but interesting. Tamar enjoyed it.

There was a mini-earthquake in Brooklyn, Staten Island and New Jersey – I’m waiting for Frank to bring in **The New York Times**, so I can read about it. Why was not Manhattan Island affected? What a thought! Unimaginable to think of those two, fantastic World Trade towers swaying with a sudden jarring of what we have come to think of as solid earth beneath our feet.

Yet, I sat one day in a rocking chair, fifty years ago, nursing my tiny daughter in front of a large mirror which hung on the wall in my beach bungalow in Staten Island, and suddenly saw the mirror begin to quiver, as though a train or truck (neither of which could have been within miles of us) had suddenly passed the little house, making it tremble.

Elie Wiesel spoke on the radio about the holocaust and **no-one crying out**. But **The Catholic Worker**, and **Commonweal**, and Doctors Chapman and Pollock – both, I believe, graduates of the Institute of Medieval Studies at Toronto (much esteemed as a center of learning by Peter Maurin) – all protested – Bill Gauchat, head of the Cleveland Catholic Worker group, too.

David Spier, my nephew, and Ben and Tony, two of his three sons, visited today.

One of my birthday presents last November was a subscription to the **National Geographic** magazine. I love it, not only for its texts (I can still be “on pilgrimage” while reading it) but also its pictures and maps.

I woke up this morning with a tune running through my head – “He has the whole world in His Hands. He has the whole, wide world in His Hands.” So, why worry? Why lament? “Rejoice,” the psalmist writes, “and again I say, rejoice.”