

On Pilgrimage - March/April 1979

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Comments on numerous books, recollections of childhood, and mentions various friends and visitors. (DDLW #597).

Peggy Scherer and Dan Mauk, now managing editors of **The Catholic Worker**, are a very good team. Peggy was formerly with the Peacemakers, and Dan is a former Franciscan. (I am listed as editor and publisher.)

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Just finished that incredible book, **The Gadfly**, by E.L. Vornick. I have an 1897 edition. My sister-in-law Tessa and I wept over it years ago, at the beach house on Staten Island.

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Received in the mail a review copy of **Jeremiah** by Ernest D. Martin, a “study for congregations,” published by Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pa. 15683, \$1.95. Long ago, I read **Hearken to the Voice**, a book about Jeremiah by Franz Werfel. The latter was famous for his **Song of Bernadette**, which was made into a movie.

Years ago, on Mott Street, when we started a Bible study group, a priest told us we were not allowed to study Scripture without a priest present.

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News of the death of Allen Tate on radio. Also received word of the death of Dorothy McMahon of Little Canada, Minn., a very close friend.

News of renewal of the draft. And a television discussion of women in combat – their capacity to throw grenades, participate in killing!

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“Hell is not to love anymore.” Woke with the quote in my mind. Where is it from? My memory, oh, my memory!

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Mary Lathrop Pope brought lunch over. Then, she and Tamar went out to visit bird stores. Our Australian friends had sent me, some time ago, bird chats which fascinated them.

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Dan Mauk went with Deane Mowrer down to First Avenue to go shopping. She is very little beside his height. Dan studied with the Franciscans in Detroit. The Franciscans there helped Lou Murphy, years ago, to start our two Detroit houses of hospitality, named for St. Martha and St. Francis.

I must get a copy of the **Little Flowers of St. Francis**. “This then is perfect joy.” We used to read a chapter each night, after compline, at Tivoli Farm. We also used to say the Angelus at meals, which brought about Peggy Conklin’s conversion. “May I, by Thy Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of Thy Resurrection,” is part of the prayer. Once, John McKeon, one of our best writers, said, “Do we really mean it? We’re asking for it.” Peggy Conklin said, firmly, “I do!” Later, she was instructed by Fr. Jack English, who used to be head of the Cleveland house of hospitality, later worked with us on Chrystie Street, and joined the Trappists in Conyers, Georgia. The Bishop of Atlanta, whom I met at the Council in Rome, said Jack was a good priest, and that soldiers stationed at Fort Benning came to the Abbey to make their confessions to him. Jack himself had been part of a bomber group flying over the Mediterranean in World War II. He and Tom Sullivan were never pacifist. Tom, who worked in the Chicago house, later ran the house on Chrystie Street, and still faithfully keeps in close touch with both the Catholic Worker and the monks at Conyers, was in the eastern “theater” of the war, as the saying is. Men look back on a war as a colossal drama in their lives. Hence, “veteran’s” organizations. What a mixed up group we are!

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Two nights of **Gone with the Wind** on television.

The women in the house are making valentines in the dining room – it is the warmest place in the house.

Peggy Scherer just came up with a loaf of home-made bread!

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Ann Perkins called. She had visited England recently and is still looking for **The Humiliated Christ in Russian Thought** by Goredetsky for me. Before she left for England, she found for me an Anglican prayer book, which is easier to use than our complicated Office. Such a faithful friend.

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Tamar’s daughter Becky, and granddaughter Lara came for a visit. Tamar left with them, with all her things. The corner seems very empty. Stanley Vishnewski took them to the bus for Vermont.

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No mail today – Washington’s birthday. Storms from the west and northeast. Frank and Peggy cleaned the sidewalks of the snow. I envy them their vigor.

Had a discussion on Camus and **The Plague** with Kassie Temple when she brought my morning coffee.

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Will Wittkamper of Koinonia, which is a truly Christian community in Americus, Georgia, sent us a box of pecans. I must write and thank him. Years ago, some of us went down south and stayed at Koinonia. The only time in my life I was under gunfire. We took turns to keep watch at night to protect the barns at the roadside from the flaming torches threatened by racist neighbors. It is an interracial community. One night, a bullet whizzed past my head and I was terrified. How weak, not to say cowardly, the “flesh” is.

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There was Wagner all day on WBAI radio – **The Ring**. I heard Wagner years ago at the old Metropolitan Opera House, where it was easy to hang over the top balcony and see all the tremendous orchestra, as well as one side of the stage.

Frank brought up **Granma**, the Cuban newspaper, which carried, in a box on the front page, the message of Pop John Paul II to Fidel Castro, blessing Cuba, a communist country, as the Pope flew over Cuba on his way back to Rome from Mexico. St. Catherine of Siena used to write to the Holy Father, calling him “Our dear sweet Christ on earth.”

Marj Humphrey and Jane Sammon sent me this card from Puebla Mexico: “Dearest Dorothy, CELAM is drawing to a close – please pray as the Bishops draw up the final document. We’ll send our thoughts and reports on what has happened soon. Archbishop Romero from El Salvador spoke last night – what a beautiful man, so committed to the poor. A reporter, who said he was an atheist, went up and hugged Archbishop Romero and thanked him for what he has done for the poor and oppressed in El Salvador. Love, Marj and Jane.”

I am remembering my own visit to Mexico in 1929.

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Stanley brought me in an old, old copy of **Elsie Dinsmore**, which I had read when I was in the fourth grade at 37th Street in Chicago. I liked the religiosity of it, began to read Scripture and tried to pray a long time before climbing into our double bed with my sister Della, who complained of my cold feet. It was a time of double beds! My father carried a Bible with him always, but my mother’s only manifested interest in religion was Christian Science, which she tried to believe in, although she never attended any services. When I had violent migraine headaches at fourteen or fifteen, she had “treatments” offered for me by a “practitioner” across the street from us on Webster Avenue in Chicago. When I had played with Lenore Clancy in Chicago at the age of twelve, I had wanted to become a Catholic, but my southern father bade me go to the Episcopalian Church, which I did and was formally baptized. When I was in high school, a friend gave me **The Wide, Wide World**, which led me to **Queechy**. These romantic, religious novels, deeply rooted in love of nature and a “philosophy of work,” as Peter Maurin would say, were favorites with me.

We are looking for a new farm. This afternoon, Ruth Collins, Frank, Stanley, Kassie, Dan, Betsy, Geof and Mike went from here by bus, and Peggy, Peter and Alan drove down from Tivoli also, to look at the house and land in Warwick, N.Y., about forty-five miles from New York City.

I listened to **Parsifal** on the New York Philharmonic concert on radio. Deane and I had supper together in my room.

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I am re-reading **The First Circle** by Solzhenitzyn, after I found a clipping of a review “For God and Mother Russia” in the March 19, 1974 **Newsweek**. I have a great admiration for Solzhenitzyn. He has been called a “a holy fool.” When I finish **The First Circle**, I will re-read **A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich** and **Cancer Ward**. The latter sounds morbid, but I find it inspiring.

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Mass in the house tonight. It is a Welsh Martyrs day. Eileen Egan brought flowers. She was born in Wales, and I gave her a book about the Welsh. Eileen is so much a part of the Catholic Worker. We were companions on two world trips, financed for me by Janet Burwash and Marguerite Tjader-Harris. Marguerite and Helene Iswolsky toured Russia together, and she was present at Helene’s death.

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Tamar, her daughter, Martha, and grandson Bryshen are here, on their way to Florida to pick oranges. They are joining a group of pickers, and Tamar will baby sit for them. They are staying overnight with Mary and Kevin Pope. They came over here for supper in the dining room. Bryshen, fifteen months old, is in perpetual motion.

Dan Mauk brought me **Pillar of Fire** by Karl Stern (psychiatrist), which he picked up in Dayton, Ohio, while Dan was there for a visit with friends at St. Leonard’s Friary. Karl Stern was a dear friend from Montreal who often visited us at Tivoli.

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Good, long letters from Jean Walsh, of Bayonne, N.J., who worked with us for a time at Staten Island and Tivoli, and from Mary Durnin, now living in London, but originally from Milwaukee; both very close, very intimate friends, whose letters are stimulating indeed, a source of joy, to be read and re-read. I must write Mary and thank her for her “travelogue” and the picture of the Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld at the Pope’s election in Rome. Two of the Little Sisters of the Gospel, Sisters Simone and Amy, were at our Mass in the house tonight.

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Marj and Jane are on their way to Guatemala and El Salvador. They send wonderful letters and cards. (Later, an article for the paper!)

Stanley and I watched the movie **Wuthering Heights** on television.

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I am much re-assured about the new farm in Warwick. Ruth Collins and John Coster are negotiating its purchase, and the sale of Tivoli.

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Father Hugo used to say, “The best thing to do with the best of things is to offer them to the Lord, to give them up.” And very often, He gives them right back! And more besides!

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St. Patrick's day – I went to the 5:30 p.m. Mass at Nativity Church. Afterward, Kay Lynch and a friend came to visit from Dushore, Pennsylvania, near Scranton. Kay and her mother stayed with us at Tivoli for a while, and Kay accompanied me, driving me on a difficult speaking trip to Washington, D.C. and further south, years ago. Her mother, now eighty-nine, sent me a bed comforter of patchwork, which she had made.

A wonderful St. Joseph's day. Much feasting, and Mass in our chapel. **P.S.** Later, the day at St. Joseph's House was anti-climaxed by five panes of glass broken by a "celebrant," but here at Maryhouse, it was peaceful.

"This then is perfect joy!"