

On Pilgrimage - March 1952

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Explains how illnesses in her family kept her from a planned speaking trip. Describes a walk with a friend through push-cart lined streets in the neighborhood. (DDLW #631).

An explanation is due those in the mid and southwest who expected me to speak last month and this. Twice I announced the trip I intended to make, and twice illness at home kept me from starting out. Two cases of pneumonia and three cases of measles made home duties an obligation.

One gets to have a real love of Holy Mother the City when you have something to do with our city hospitals. There you see colored and white nurses working together happily, and the most tender care given the children. Becky, who will be seven in April, had run a fever of 106 for several days, and we took her to Richmond Memorial Hospital, where, before they even take your pulse, they start asking about money and how and when you are going to pay the bill. They shout at you, brow beat you, bully you and when you are thoroughly crushed and intimidated they consent to give some attention to the patient.

Oh the pains of poverty!

Pneumonia was the diagnosis, and when, two days later, she broke out with measles, the authorities at the hospital transferred her without notifying us to Richmond Borough Hospital. There she received the best of care for two weeks, and was sent home to light up the house again. The younger ones had been dull, indeed without her. Two of them had had light attacks of measles.

On the south side of Cobbett Cottage the crocuses, daffodils, hyacinths and tulips are all coming up and the hollyhocks are bright green under the bedding of dead leaves. The tips of twigs of privet and forsythia are changing color and there is a soggy feel in the turf under your feet. We have always contended that spring begins on February 11, no matter how many blizzards come after.

It was the fifth chapter of the first epistle to St. Timothy that urged me to stay home. St. Paul wrote, after talking about grandmothers, "If any man have not care of his own and especially of those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."

Afraid, however, of being swayed by my own desires and attachments, I asked the little Flower for a sign and got it almost immediately. So I shall stay home this spring, keep close to the family through Lent and write my new book on St. Therese. That does not mean that I won't go out to speak once in a while at a communion breakfast, or before a group. On the third Tuesday in March, I will speak at Mrs. Ed Willocks, at a family group meeting.

On this quiet Sunday a week before going to press, I came into New York for the afternoon and found Ione Thielman of Minnesota, visiting us. She has been helping the Willock family since his illness last fall, save for a few months around Christmas when she was home helping her sister who was having a baby. We went for a walk through the East Side, down a pushcart-lined street, where everything is sold from beautiful remnants of woolen goods and curios and antiques, ragged vestments, paisley shawls to old shoe horns and second hand toothbrushes. The streets were colorful and crowded and though it was cold, there was that cheerful robust air of festivity which both Jews and Italians have in conducting their small businesses.

Amazing enough, we found a beautiful book of Masses of the Dead, published in Ratisbon in 1933 with the approbation of Dr. Hocht, vicar General, which we bought for a dollar.

From a most congested neighborhood of synagogues and tenements, from an atmosphere of a Polish or Russian village, we walked a few blocks north to Third street

between Avenue A and B and visited the Church of the Holy Redeemer, where the altar was gorgeous with cala lilies and roses, surrounding the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. There are many Slavs in this neighborhood, but Germans predominate, and the streets are quiet and clean and orderly compared with the hectic clamor of the market district a few blocks below.

Family Apostolate

Ione had written to us last year, offering to come help with the Catholic Worker House of Hospitality. She is a graduate of the St. Cloud School of Nursing, and when she arrived and found the need at Marycrest, the little community where the Willocks live, she went without question there. There are three families there with twenty children

among them and three more expected. Two more houses are under construction for families with at least four children in both homes. Nearby in Shanks Village, near Orangeburg where there are many more Catholic families and a great need for volunteers to help in this apostolic field.