

# On Pilgrimage - December 1960

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*Summary: Vignettes about gardens, movies, readings, tributes to helpful police, speaking trips, a visit to Tamar in Vermont, and her grandchildren's hunting exploits. Reiterates Peter Maurin's program of cult, culture, and cultivation. Distinguishes between poverty and destitution, natural and supernatural poverty. (DDLW #774).*

One of the men at Peter Maurin Farm is still in Richmond Memorial Hospital and has had two operations. He is getting along fine and we expect him home for Christmas, He is enjoying reading a book on greenhouses and that is the work he is looking forward to for the rest of the winter. He has spent a long life of hard work, in greenhouses, dairy farms and truck farms on Long Island and in New Jersey.

We are hoping to have salads through the winter and rejoice to see the lettuce coming up. Tamar, in Vermont is still getting potatoes, carrots, beets, swiss chard and pumpkin out of her garden. And Carl Paulson, whom I visited last week, at Upton, Mass, where he has all the work he can do in stained glass for churches, and medallions for homes (he needs helpers) has also a very good garden still. The children all work with the Grange, where Mary Paulson is president of the juvenile group, and it was wonderful to see the broccoli, the Brussels sprouts, carrots, beets and so on still coming out of the garden at Thanksgiving. What gardens!

During the month, I have been attending meetings at St. Vincent Ferrer's hall, taking a course entitled **The One God**, given by Fr. Bonaventure Crowley who is a vigorous and inspiring teacher. I had to miss some of the meetings of the two month course, due to speaking engagements, but I tried to make up for those I missed by reading the appropriate passages in St. Thomas. It was easy to see the difference between learning from a teacher and from a book. The courses are starting again in January I believe and they are attended by a hall full of listeners,

Another evening in town I went to our little neighborhood movie on East Third Street, The American Theatre, where we see Russian films on Thursday evenings once in an awhile. This night Mary and Ammon and I saw **Peter the Great**. Afterwards we went for hot chocolate to Janet Burwash's on Delancey Street where I spent the night. Janet works for Catholic Charities and practices voluntary poverty, living under the same conditions as to housing with the people whom she serves. She is also a member of those who are interested in the spiritual legacy of Charles de Foucauld and who meet together once a month. Since there are five of us at the Catholic Worker who are also part of this group, we feel Janet is much a part of the **Catholic Worker**.

One Friday night meeting this month was Carmen Matthews reading **Ivan the Fool** by Tolstoi. The loft was packed with many young people, a few of them beatniks who listened intently and with evident enjoyment. It is lovely to be read to. Deane Mowrer is partially blind and gets records from the New York public library and is read to by others around the Worker. But few have such a delightful voice as Carmen Matthews and such a happy animated way of expressing herself in face and gesture.

## Police

November 5<sup>th</sup> I attended a requiem memorial Mass for deceased New York police with the relatives of a former policeman who stayed with us for some time due to illness. It was very moving to see literally everyone receiving Holy Communion in that large church, St. Stephens on 28<sup>th</sup> Street. Announcement was made that the widow's pensions were to be increased from fifty to seventy dollars a month, and I was amazed at how little these families receive. There has been a scandal about policeman taking second jobs, and they have been fined and suspended in some cases, and no attention has been paid to the evil which made this necessary. We have known a good many fine men among the police—the traffic cop who used to be stationed for Canal and Mott Streets who loved us all, (what sympathy he showed when we had to move from 115 Mott) and the Elizabeth St. Station policeman who used to bring us in a monthly offering of five dollars out of his meager pay, and Whitey the bluff and hearty one on the beat, and the pious one who used to come in and say a prayer in front of the crucifix in our kitchen when I was away on a trip, for my safe return, and who used to give cigarets to his prisoners, men from the Bowery picked up for drunkenness. And many were glad to be picked up out of doorways and alleys on cold winter nights. I remember another who gave us milk for a motherless child who was tramping around with his father who was looking for work, and more recently the kindly officer who told me to sit up close to the drivers when we were arrested for civil disobedience in the air raid drills, and to hang on the spare tire so that we would not be so jolted in the springless police wagons.

## Movies

Every other Tuesday Charles Butterworth goes to the Peter Maurin farm with three or four movies which he gets from the New York Public Library and the farm audience and the neighbor children enjoy some remarkable pictures. Jimmy Hughes has been clamoring for **Dracula**, which does not come in 16 milli-meter film, but I think he was satisfied last night when we saw a film of the north west Indians, enacted by Indians wearing masks, to depict every human emotion and we were all properly scared by the masks depicting wolves (with the proper sound effects), thunder and lightening storms and wind. It was a remarkable and most beautiful picture called **The Loon's Necklace**. We saw also a conservation picture, a story of ballet, and The Red Balloon which has won many prizes in France. Most of the pictures take half an hour, so we have a good two-hour show. Molly did not like the Indian picture—she said it would give her nightmares, but she loved the rest. We have had pictures of Alaska Eskimos, of Bolivian Indians, and many others.

## Travelling

Most of the month was taken up with letters and visitors and writings, but I traveled for one week and because I went by car I was able to cover many places. I bless Fr. Kern of Holy Trinity Parish of Detroit, who gave it to me, every time I get into it. It has been most useful on the farm when the car Fr. McCoy gave us is being used in town to mail out the paper and do errands.

This trip I used the car because I was brining artifacts to the Botolph Guild in Boston to show at a talk I gave on Peter Maurin's program of **Cult, Culture, and Cultivation**. I had with me Steve Hergenhan's Holy Family carving; Louis Christopher's crucifix; John Monaghan's crucifix; John Filligers cedar cross; Sister Prisca's stained glass crucifix (she used to be with the Rochester House); some raw carded wool; Deane Mowrer is an expert carder, a hand spindle with spun wool (mine); a knit sock from the same wool by Anne Marie Stokes; curtains woven by everyone around the farm, Roman stripe effect, from odds and ends of wool; linen towel and blanket by Tamar, both linen and wool hand-spun and the blanket hand-dyed, and a large blanket by Charles Butterworth.

Some of my listeners wanted to know if any of the work was for sale, but all of it was in use. There was also Stanley's printing and most beautiful of all, the calf skin bound hand set, and printed on hand made paper, edition of a book of poetry by William Everson, who did all this while he was in charge of the Maurin House of Hospitality in Oakland, California where forty men were put up and a thousand a day fed. Bill is now Brother Antontnus of St. Albert's, Oakland, Calif., a Dominican lay brother, in charge of their printing and of the incunabula in their library. (Francis Bates, who used to run the Milwaukee House of Hospitality is also of that house and province, and he is now Fr. Urban).

Manual labor joy and beauty and growth in holiness have come out of Peter Maurin's program of **Cult, Culture and Cultivation**. It was good to talk about and it was a good audience to talk to. Celia Hubbard is in charge of the Botolph Guild and one cannot help but remember that line in **Dostoevsky's Idiot**, "The world will be saved by beauty."

Remembering how we have been called gutter sweepers, people who loved the depraved and perverse, (because we defend murders and live with the outcast in trying to imitate our Lord) it was good to talk about all the natural joy and beauty that there is in our lives.

## Poverty Is Not Ugliness

It is one aspect of poverty that I always find it necessary to talk about, –to differentiate between poverty and destitution, and to point out how much beauty and joy there can be in a life dedicated to poverty, even the very real poverty and deprivation in the world that the older, well established religious orders know so little of. Necessarily by their life of hard work, the orders prosper, so that the holiness of the individual may increase the health of the whole so that those in administrative positions may gain a greater understanding of supernatural economies.

## Natural Poverty

It is good to distinguish between natural and supernatural poverty too. I remember John Cogley talking about this years ago, reminding us that one can practice poverty for natural motives, a point which Fr. Pacifique Roy also stressed a good deal. A Greenwich Villager can practice natural poverty to enjoy more leisure and have more time either for dissipation or for art. And only this morning I heard an interview with Agnes de Mille on the radio. She told of the ten years of poverty she endured and how after tremendous work, she finally achieved success in **Oklahoma** and became the famed choreographer she is. And all the financial success she gained for the first four and a half years of Oklahoma was a salary of fifty dollars a week under her Theater Guild contract. It was modified finally to give her one half of one per cent of the profits. "The show netted \$100, 000, 000 since it started in 1943, and anyone who invested \$1,500 in it" earned " \$50,000. "But let us not talk of money," Agnes de Mille said. She wanted to talk of the folk ballet she wants to put on which will be characteristically American. I speak of money here to show an example of an acceptance of natural poverty, in order to develop God-given talents, to be true to one's self and one's talent.

## Other Towns

My speaking took me also to Westboro where I spoke before an Episcopalian group, to Upton to visit Carl and Mary Paulson who are always an inspiration, and Bill and Marion Roche who are so thoroughly good and loving that they warm the heart. Marion, the oldest daughter of the Roche's is now married but there are seven children still at home. All the nine Paulson children are at home, but Elin, the oldest, commutes to work these last months, going in to Worcester. She is an outstandingly beautiful girl, and when I saw her it was hard to realize that she was Tamar's first babysitting job. When Carl was in jail for being a conscientious objector and Mary went to the Upton farm where they had only a two room cabin, Tamar went to her for a few weeks after the baby was born to help out. Tamar was seventeen then and was herself to be married to David Hennessy the next year and start her own family of nine, and she learned a great deal of gentle wisdom from Mary.

I left the Upton Farm to drive in to Providence leaving a scene of voluntary poverty (no inside plumbing as yet) to stay at the huge Sheraton- Biltmore hotel where there was a CIO-AFL convention in progress. I was treated on this occasion by our friend William Oleksak who was in Providence to lecture on **Recovery** in Pawtucket. The hotel was a huge caravansary comfortable and no more expensive than the Leo House in New York or the Y.W. in Boston where I have often put up. When I have stayed at cheap hotels, coming into a town late at night after all-day traveling, I have on occasion found myself forced to pay as much as in a big hotel, and then have to put up with dirt, and the suspicion that the place was not all that it should be.

It was good to see all the downtown churches that are being built in our big cities which are accessible to travelers, and here in Providence the Franciscans have a church which has many Masses for night workers. (In Montreal, if you arrive by bus at eight, you can go to St. Joseph's shrine for a nightly nine o'clock Mass.)

I spoke at Brown to go to the Newman club and there were many members of the Student Christian Union there, and also Quakers. I spoke on Religion and Revolution, and the part students play in what is taking place throughout the world today.

## Pawtucket

That same afternoon, I attended the Recovery meeting and as usual got a great deal out of it. One of Dr. Lowe's records was played and some of his book read. I was particularly struck by Dr. Lowe's statements about how we **interpret** and come to **conclusions**. We so often come to "disastrous conclusion," he says and the "risk is formidable." For instance if you say that you feel badly because of the weather, you are dooming yourself to suffering half the time. He points out how often we make damaging statements about ourselves, "Why cannot I control my temper?" "Why cannot I come to a decision?" "Why am I confused." We are making statements and drawing conclusions. Outrageous statements, he calls them indignantly! We are making damaging statements, damaging to our self-esteem. If we substitute "care not" for "cannot," if we have the courage to make mistakes, to lower our standards, be satisfied to be "average," indecision and confusion are lessened or done away with.

It was very interesting to hear these things and to reflect on how often we making damaging statements, damaging to ourselves; how often we delay, postpone, because we do not feel we can do a thing right. I think of it in connection with my writing, which is hard to do as a routine task, about which I am often filled with self doubt. Proper humility will keep me from caring whether I fail, as long as I do the job I am supposed to do. How many times on a newspaper one has to pound out a story whether or not one feels "inspired" or even capable of handling it coherently.

## Recovery

I write these details because I am grateful there are Recovery meetings in New York to which I can refer people. Only this last week I received telephone calls from people in various parts of the country, who wished to send to us relatives or friends who were "emotionally and spiritually disturbed," and certainly many come to us daily who would be benefited by the discipline of these meetings. However, if they are willing to go, they are on the way to recovery, not to make a play on words. But what comes first is the sympathetic understanding, kindness and friendship, interest taken, patience taken on the part of friends and relatives. I can do little about all the problems which come in to the Catholic Worker office by way of visitors or phone calls, but I can be patient and sympathetic. And by the way, one of the rules for Recovery patients is not to talk for more than five minutes over the telephone about your symptoms and troubles, a rule to be understood on both sides.

Sunday night I stayed at the home of the Ambrose Kelly's (he teaches at Brown) and in the morning after Mass set out for Rehoboth to visit Frances Mazet and Mary Benson two very dear to all we try to do, unprofitable servants).

## To the Land

To turn to a lighter subject, long though this ON PILGRIMAGE already is, I had a delightful two-day visit with my daughter in Vermont, after speaking to representatives of twenty New England Catholic Colleges, near Worcester. David, my son-in-law is working as hotel clerk in nearby Bellows Falls and while visiting him there, I had the pleasure of meeting Karl Meyer's father who is Democratic Congressman from Vermont. David gets home only in the middle of the week on days off which means the children have a heavy responsibility as regards the farm. It is wonderful to see Eric and Nickie up at six thirty milking the cow, putting the calves out to pasture, feeding the pig and the chickens and then with peanut butter and honey sandwiches and milk for breakfast (sometimes they can be induced to have an egg) dash off the 3/4 mile down the road to the school bus. They are gone, six of the children, from seven thirty to four each day, and that leaves Martha, five and Hilaire, three, to do chores at home. They are willing workers. When we need more wood for the Franklin stove in the living room, they keep bringing it in until the floor is covered with it. The sorcerer's apprentice again. But they save Tamar many a step and are busy bees all day long. The baby, Catherine Ann, is an angel and is at that easy stage still where she does not even roll over so you can put her safely on the table or bed or floor and she just enjoys the change of view. Solemn at birth, she is now wreathed in smiles, a habit developed by responding to an adoring three year old brother with reddish curls and bright blue eyes. She herself is a brunette. Martha at five is very bossy with them both. Her older sisters say she looks like Marilyn Monroe. In other words she is a beauty.

One of our readers, Frances Mazet of Rehoboth, Massachusetts gave Tamar two rams which grew up very aggressive. They sold one and use the wool of the other and she has had an abundance of wool which she has spun and dyed with butternut and onion skin dyes. The children got into that job, you can be sure, and went around covered with brown stain. The butternut is a permanent brown dye which makes the wool shine as though it were mercerized. The onion skin is a golden yellow.

Tamar is weaving drapes in a monk's belt pattern and it is very beautiful on the loom. She has pamphlets on home made dyes from the government, and from Canada and South Carolina, but she says there is no natural red dye that she knows of. Blue is complicated and dangerous as one uses indigo and sulfuric acid but it is most beautiful. The easiest colors are yellow and brown,

On November 21 I am going to speak in Boston for the Botolph Guild on Peter Maurin's program of cult, culture and cultivation, and bring with me samples of some of the arts cultivated by people around **The Catholic Worker**, by both workers and scholars, and I will bring a blanket and towel of Tamar's. She uses everything else she makes, towels, table cloths, blankets, drapes, curtains, and so on.

In spite of farm chores, the boys are busy hunting and the bow and arrow season is just finished. Nickie's birthday comes in December so near to Christmas that he always gets left when it comes to serious presents. He wants a bow and arrow, he said, the kind once can shoot a deer with. He is serious too, as a hunter. He uses a rifle and had brought home squirrel this fall; Eric is best at the farm, and Nickie at hunting, but Eric is just as

enthusiastic a hunter and they both use guns since David had one and a neighbor loaned them another. One meal we had what both Martha and Hilaire called “twirl,” meaning, of course, squirrel, and it was very good. The one squirrel fed four of us, and besides we had carrots, potatoes, eggs and milk all from the farm, and of course, pumpkin pie.

Hunting and fishing are serious sports in a place like Vermont where there are pockets of unemployment, as the saying is. I asked Eric once what one of the neighbors did for a living, since he had nine children just as Hennessy’s did, and was unemployed at the time. Eric said, “Hunting, fishing, and robbing bee trees!”

But certainly the young ones will know where their food comes from and how to get it, what a good garden, apple trees, trout streams, and plenty of game in the woods. How else can one live and raise a family with the small salaries paid in country towns?