

On Pilgrimage - July/August 1962

Dorothy Day

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*Summary: Mentions her travails in getting a new book about the Catholic Worker movement, *Loaves and Fishes*, ready for the publisher. Disapproves of the attitudes and behavior of “a group of beats” who came and went, especially their sexual behavior and disrespect for the body. Hopes to travel to Brazil and Cuba. Recommends reading Chekhov and numerous other books. (DDLW #792).*

My New Book—the work on which has kept me from my other writing (except some letters)—is out of my hands, aside from reading the galley proofs. At least it is finished if I can keep out of the way of the particular editor to whom I have been assigned. I had thought all the work was done, the work accepted, the contract signed, and “just a few little odds and ends, loose ends, to be attended to.” Ed Sammis was the editor Harpers assigned me to. He broke it to me gently. A few additional paragraphs here and there. And then he began to question me. “Who was Peter Maurin and what did he look like, more details about him. You make Ammon Hennacy come alive but not Peter.” I’d have to do a few additional chapters! Of course I was glad to have this direction. It was good to have an editor who knew nothing about the beginnings of our work, who could draw from me all those details needed to make our work, its beginnings and its continuance understandable. So I worked steadily for months on the revision. I am rather like the sorcerer’s apprentice when I get at the typewriter. When I am turned on, a flood of words come and hundreds of new pages pour out. All of which had to be sorted over by Mr. Sammis and woven into the narrative, as he said.

All the while I worked I kept reminding him, not that I wanted to complain, but that I was pretty well occupied by the life of the family, my own and the Catholic Worker family here in the New York environs, made up of scores of people in town and country. There were births and deaths, marriages, and engagements, and of course always the conflicts that go with community living. I would say that we are living in a hard school where from day to day there is a war going on in which we can only use the weapons of the spirit, and try to practice the non-violence we talk so much about. During the winter this conflict took the shape of a war between young and old, the twenty year olds and our senior citizens, as they are euphemistically called by the press. Since we were a community of need, it was the young ones, two of them, who in this case left to continue their work elsewhere. The next crisis was a moral one, not a simple one of techniques, or emphasis, or choice between two goods. A group of beats or those desiring to follow the life of beats, descended on us. This lasted some months. They came, they went.

Love and Sex

My criticism was that they despised the life forces within man, that they were nihilistic rather than pacifist, that their contempt was directed against the very body of man, that temple of the holy Spirit, and that all the four letter words they used so glibly (and so reminiscent of our prison days) was to express this contempt, this hatred,—not only of the square, of the bourgeoisie around them, but of the life force in man himself. Also they lived and moved among the poor as though they were not there, taking their meager housing space, pushing in to table at the CW to get their share of the food, and so living that they disregarded the affront they offered the simple, reticent, decent and modest men among whom they lived.

All winter I had been reading Chekhov, his letters, stories and novelettes and the very basic philosophy of work that he expressed in his plays and stories gave me good ammunition in my talks about man's necessity to earn his living by the sweat of his brow, not to be a parasite on the social body, but mindful of the common good. I talked too on sex and chastity, and in addition to the Gospel teaching of Jesus, I cited Soloviev's book, "The Meaning of Love," but those to whom I wished to speak were not there. I felt again the great gulf between youth and age. "You can only tell people what they already know," Ade Bethune had said to me once, quoting St. Augustine (if anyone knows the exact quote I would like to have it.) A priest wrote in and asked for a copy of my talk, and the letter was lost and I wish he would write me again if he reads this.

Another occasion for my speaking on the subject of sex, was to a group of non-Catholic students, participating in sit-ins and freedom rides, and puzzled by the changing standards of our times, especially relating to sex. Certainly sex and its place in life is as pertinent as the discussion of war, capital punishment, and the role of the State in man's life. I seldom speak at state universities or non-Catholic colleges without the question of overpopulation, birth control, abortion, and euthanasia coming up. The entire question of man's control over the life of others, over the life forces within man, is one of the most profound importance today. Kirilloff debated the question—Did God create me or is my life my own, to do with as I chose? And as an absolute gesture of defiance, an assertion of independence, a denial of God's existence, he took his life.

New Houses

My book, which the publisher wishes to call "The Cost of Love," and which I urge to be called "Loaves and Fishes," will be about Peter Maurin and the Catholic Worker, how it started, and continued through his life time and how it has gotten along since his death. It was good to bring the Catholic Worker story up to date, to let people know that we go on in spite of jail sentences, evictions, the comings and goings of people—that we are a family, and our very readers make up that family together with us at Chrystie Street and the farm. To let them know that there are other houses starting up. There is not only Ammon's House of Hospitality in Salt Lake City, but also the new one, St. Elijah house in Oakland, and St. Demetrius house in Boulder, Colorado. People come and go, houses open and close, but there are always readers of the paper, inspired by the charm of Lady Poverty and the means

she offers, and by the love of their brothers to embrace this life and begin to study all it entails in non-violence and personalism.

Brazil

Probably the book will come out next January. By then many other things will have happened and I will have to write another book. Perhaps a book about Brazil. I suppose the grapevine has spread the news that I am contemplating a trip to Brazil and making all my plans and suffering many delays. My book *The Long Loneliness* has been translated into Portuguese by Aimee Amorosa Lima and has been widely circulated these last few years. So our work is known there. The McCloskey articles about the Catholic Worker movement which was part of his Harvard thesis was translated into Spanish and circulated in the Argentine.

Passports

I have obtained a passport with no difficulty, swearing that I would defend my country by those means which did not conflict with my conscience. The passport was sent to me three days after my application. But having been invited by a number of friends who have been to Cuba or who live in Cuba now, to come and see how things are going there now, I decided I would as a journalist apply for a Cuban visa. One of our readers, a rabbi from Boston, whom I had met at Fr. Robert Hovda's in North Dakota, wrote me that he had had no difficulty in getting a visa from the United States government as editor of a Jewish magazine. So I sent in my letter of application together with my passport three weeks ago and have heard nothing since. It should not take more than ten days, one of our experienced traveller friends assured me. So I wait.

Meanwhile, without the passport I cannot get my Brazilian visa. At that embassy I was assured that if one stayed only two months one did not need a visa. But the steamship line (Danish) which goes to Brazil sent me word this morning that they would not receive any passengers who did not have a visa to Brazil in their hands two weeks before sailing.

Change of Plans

More news has just arrived which makes me believe that it would be better for me to postpone my trip to Brazil until next April—but I am still trying for the Cuba visa and if it comes through (it is supposed to be even slower on the Cuban than it is on the American side), I shall be able to give more direct reports from these as to the co-operative farms, the family, the church and the clergy.

There is a good staff at both farm and beach and city, and I feel that this is a good time to do this travelling and writing, especially since God has sent me the means, most unexpectedly, to pay my fare. I am offered hospitality and can live on rice and beans so this will be no luxury trip. I ask our readers' prayers that the way will open up to me on these travels, this pilgrimage.

GOOD READING I have done this summer.

For most stimulating discussion about the coming Council in Rome and the Liturgical movement read WORSHIP published at St. Johns, Collegeville, Minn. Also The Briefery, 7215 North Ridge Avenue, Chicago 45, Ill. Jubilee and Summer issue of Cross Currents, Commonwealth and America. Monthly and weeklies.

For most complete coverage of peace news subscribe for THE PEACEMAKER (\$2 a year), 10208 Sylvan Avenue (Gano) Cincinnati 41, Ohio.

The Poor Man's Prayer, the story of Credit Union beginnings, by George Boyle, Helicon Press, Baltimore, Md.

Two books on the Montessori system, one by Nancy Rambusch, published by the Helicon Press, and another by Standing, author of the life of Maria Montessori, published by the Academy Guild Press, Fresno, Calif. Both of these books will be reviewed by Eileen Fantino Diaz in the next issue.

Down and Out in Paris and London, and Road to Wigan Pier, both in Paper-backs, and by George Orwell. These books are recommended for anyone who is working with the poor. For all those who talk about whether people are rehabilitated, converted or grateful these books are a must. Also all of Chekhov's plays and short stories.

As for spiritual reading, The New Testament Reading Guide, Gospels and Epistles with introduction and commentary, published by the Liturgical Press, Collegeville. The Pamphlet Bible Series, Commentaries and complete text of each book of the Old Testament, a new volume published each month by The Paulist Press, East Fifty-ninth St., New York City.