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Peace Pilgrim Takes Steps Against Gangs

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Peace Pilgrim, the woman who has been walking across America in the cause of peace for almost 24 years, has returned to Detroit to take on the gangs.

Ms. Pilgrim, who refuses to give any other name, will walk through gang territories this week spreading her message of love and courage.

SHE STARTED her special mission to Detroit Wednesday by walking around downtown for a few hours in the morning. She said that her stroll was peaceful.

"What is afflicting Detroit to the greatest extent is fear," she said. "By being afraid, you attract to you the very thing that you fear."

"I fear nothing, and I expect only good," she said.

Ms. Pilgrim started walking for peace Jan. 1, 1953, and stopped counting the miles 15 years ago when she hit 25,000. She won't give her age ("I think of myself as ageless") but old newspaper stories indicate that she must be around 70.

SHE HAS THE springy, impatient step of a child and she stares when she talks with the unblinking blue eyes of a true believer. This is her sixth visit to Detroit since she started her pilgrimage, but the message she preaches has remained the same almost word for word over the years.

"I will walk until given shelter. I will fast until given food," she said. "I eat only fruit, vegetables and whole grain, because I wouldn't kill a creature."

"I have no fear, and no one can make me fearful."

She refuses to give details of her personal history except to say that she was poor as a child and then made a lot of money. She gave it all away when she decided to dedicate her life to "giving rather than getting."

She travels now without a penny on her,

carrying only a few personal items like a comb and a toothbrush in her blue tunic.

"Why would anyone want to rob me?" she asked. "I have nothing."

She wants to show that her own love and trust can disarm dangerous and mean people faster and more effectively than what she calls "the law of claw and jungle."

She will spend one week here before walking south for the winter. When she bounded across a downtown street like a track star Wednesday, someone observed that she is at least careful in crossing streets.

"Oh, I just don't want to block traffic," she said.