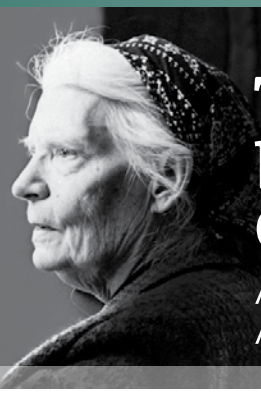
IN OUR TIME

Newsletter of the Dorothy Day Guild
Volume 5, Issue 1 Fall 2019



The Dorothy Day Guild

A Woman of Conscience
A Saint for Our Time

Dear Friends,

Greetings this beautiful Fall from the Guild! Dorothy always rejoiced at nature's miracles. How she loved the ailanthus tree that stubbornly insisted on surviving in the broken cracks of urban sidewalks. She saw it outside her window at Maryhouse (where she died among the poor and homeless almost forty years ago this November). Like her, it seemed to defy reason.

Hers was a no-nonsense reason. A reason that insisted on the logic of its conclusions. The logic of Baptism? Sainthood. Often she would quote Leon Bloy on how the only tragedy in life is not to become a saint. It wasn't canonization she had in mind, of course. Rather the journey in faith to holiness: the path extended before us all.

Virtues and their practice insure firm footing—and accordingly are one of the traditional "proofs" of sanctity. Recent issues of this newsletter have explored the great theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity; last quarter's issue focused on justice, one of the four "cardinal" virtues. This issue, we're looking at prudence, perhaps the least understood.

The prudent person, the Catechism tells us, looks where he is going. And, as James Keenan points out in "Good Talk" (please see p. 2), prudence is always in pursuit of justice.

Holding up Lady Prudence's mirror, Dorothy, as evidenced in her many autobiographical writings, always looked first to see where she had been. She harbored painfully few illusions about her sins and failings. Like the fall tree brilliant with foliage one month and barren and drab the next, the saint and the sinner, Dorothy knew well, were one and the same.

Part of her practical, prudent course of action was to look to the saints, not to revere them as much as to emulate them (see "Saintly Matters," p.6). She looked similarly to Peter Maurin who lived what he taught (see "Eyes to See, Ears to Hear," p. 9); he almost could have stepped out of Dostoevsky, whom Dorothy read voraciously. And in Kateri Boucher's "Breaking Bread" (p. 12), she would have seen the same searching for the abundant life she sought generations ago.

We look now to Dorothy's life for guidance. The Guild continues—with your faithful help—to make great strides toward completing the diocesan phase of the inquiry, the first lap of the long trek toward canonization (see "Dispatches," p. 5). The start of the Roman phase, the second and final lap, appears closer and closer. Together, we will continue to run the good race, daring prudence, assured of the finish line: Dorothy Day is a saint for our time!

P.S. You know without our having to say it (but we will!), how much we count on your support. **If you're not yet a Guild member, won't you join us? Is it time to renew? Would you like to gift someone? Or even make a donation? (See p. 15)**. And if you're in the New York area, please don't miss a very special presentation, "Dorothy Day: an Undivided Heart," with Kate Hennessy, Robert Ellsberg, and Pat and Kathleen DeSutter Jordan (p. 14 for details). Many thanks and all blessings.

JESUS DID NOT COME TO BRING A GENTLE EVENING BREEZE, BUT TO LIGHT A FIRE ON THE EARTH... MAY THE SPIRIT, WHO MAKES ALL THINGS NEW, GIVE US HIS OWN DARING PRUDENCE... SO THAT THE FIRE OF MISSION WILL CONTINUE TO BURN.

POPE FRANCIS

**The "Ichthus" image ("the sign of the fish") was used by the early Christians as an easily recognizable symbol for Jesus. Dorothy Day's saintliness, we pray, will become increasingly recognizable—easy for all to see.*

AND THIS IS MY PRAYER: THAT YOUR LOVE MAY INCREASE EVER MORE AND MORE IN KNOWLEDGE AND EVERY KIND OF PERCEPTION, TO DISCERN WHAT IS OF VALUE... FILLED WITH THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

PHIL. 4:9-11

GOOD TALK
with James Keenan, S.J.

(It is a pleasure to share "good talk" with Fr, James Keenan, awarded the 2019 John Courtney Murray Award by the Catholic Theological Society of America for a lifetime of distinguished theological achievement. Currently the Canisius Professor at Boston College, Jim is a Jesuit priest, moral theologian, bioethicist, prolific writer and author. His many books include ***Virtues for Ordinary Christians*** *[a Church Book, National Pastoral Life Center] and* ***A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences*** *[The Catholic University of America Press].)*

In past issues we've explored the theological virtues (faith, hope, charity)—since their practice is part of the "proof" of holiness—and recently we have begun to explore the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance). I admit that I've been somewhat dubious about examining prudence, since I've always thought of it as a "bland" little virtue, a kind of "yellow light" that serves only to slow things down.

Keenan: When I teach the virtue of prudence in my courses, I assign Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1963 "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." It's one of the great American works of writing. In it, King is responding to white Christian pastors who insisted that African Americans' fight for civil rights—and their marches for freedom—were asking too much too soon. MLK's reply is about timing, a reply often echoed in the famous phrase "Why we can't wait." I love teaching this because it corrects our idea of prudence as simply meaning "caution."

> Prudence is mainly about two things: getting to the end, in the name of justice.

Too many people think of prudence that way. Caution is a worthy part of prudence but is only one of its many elements. In fact, caution is not the basic thrust of prudence. Prudence is mainly about two things: getting to the end, in the name of justice. So first, prudence is about determining the means to get to the end. That's why King told the white pastors: you are slowing us down; you are our obstacle. Their appeal to "moderation" was not a healthy appeal. In following the white man's moderation, African Americans would never reach their goal. The white pastors acted as if they cared but were offering little more than a "delaying" tactic. Indeed, they were like the white police who would block the marchers, or worse, attack them, as at the Edmund Pettus Bridge where the marchers were beaten. The police were trying to stop the marchers. But so were the white pastors. In fact, their tactics were worse; they were using what Augustine would call "resemblance vices," vices that look like a virtue but are false.



Familiar signage in the South of Jim Crow

Whose "moderation" were the pastors that King was addressing talking about? That's what he wanted to know. Did these whites understand how awful the lives of African Americans were, how wrong it would be to move toward equality at the white man's pace? They used "moderation" as if to suggest prudence, but that was not true prudence. It was nothing more than an insidious delaying tactic that could undermine the civil-rights project. Prudence, on the other hand, is the measure of the mean between too much and too little. The pace of the white pastors was too little. They "used" the word "moderation," but they didn't mean moderation. Nor prudence. Nor virtue.

Second, prudence is about pursuing justice! Prudence is always in the pursuit of justice, that is, to give each his or her due. King's letter is about the fact that the African American was not living in a just world. The "laws" themselves were meant to deny African Americans equity and justice. Jim Crow and other laws which codified and solidified racism were not "true" laws because they were not just laws, a point that King made in his letter, quoting Thomas Aquinas. The "prudence" of the Jim Crow laws was a "prudence" that kept telling African Americans they were NOT equal to the white man, that they were not to be in his place or walking at his time or speaking with his freedom. But these were not "true" laws because they were not "just" laws. A law that is not fair is no law at all, for all laws must be just. King's prudence, then, was a just prudence, a true prudence, a virtuous prudence.

You've proposed that there should be only two cardinal virtues: justice and prudence. Last issue, Stanley Hauerwas talked about the foundational quality of justice. As the proud son of a bricklayer, he's long held an appreciation for a strong foundation! I wonder how being the proud son of a New York City policeman may have added to your appreciation of prudence?

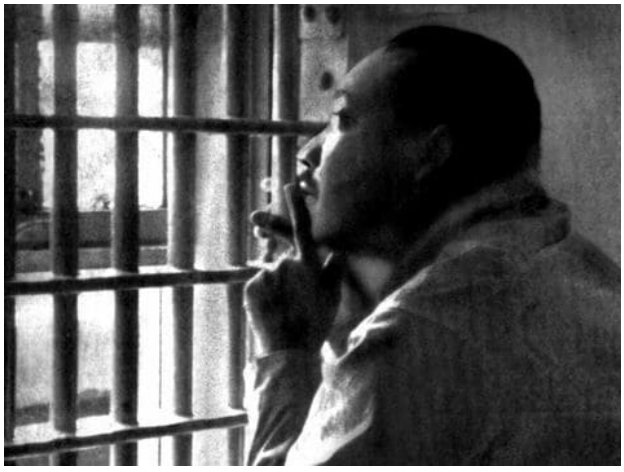


Prudence, holding a mirror to herself

In the 1950s and '60s, my Dad was a police officer in NYC. In fact, the last position he held was as a commanding officer of Manhattan South Homicide, the same position as Kojak! I grew up as the son of a man who knew the truth about N.Y. I remember once we walked past a few women who were sex workers. He said, "You know, you cannot judge a book by its cover, because these women, who are often forced to do this work in these conditions, are really very honest and very helpful to the most needy in the city." Then he added that those who traffic them, their pimps, were the worst. He was teaching me how to prudently understand and distinguish the true from the false.

When I entered the Jesuits, I told him that Dorothy Day was coming to my college, LeMoyne. He called her, "Moscow Mary." I asked him why. "She's a commie." A few weeks later, he contacted me. "I asked around," he said, "and all the cops who know her say, 'She's the real thing.' Sorry, I called her that name." It's prudent to admit when you are wrong, especially when you were, as in his original comment, unjust.

He taught me many other ways to understand how to see the true and the false.


Martin Luther King, Birmingham city jail, 1963, holding a mirror to his fellow Christians

Five years passed between Dorothy Day's conversion and her founding of the Catholic

(Good Talk, cont'd on p. 4)

(Good Talk, cont'd from p. 3)

Worker. She lost many of her old radical friends and found no new Catholic ones with the same commitment to the poor. We're told she prayed often for the grace of "discernment." Is discernment another facet of prudence's practice? And what might it look like?

I think discernment is a form of prudence. A lot of people, when they read *Amoris Laetitia*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis on marriage, think "discernment" is new. But in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Peter and James hold a Council to determine what precepts of the Jewish law need to be a part of the journey to become Christian. The Council had to discern where the Holy Spirit was leading the new community of the followers of Jesus. And they made a very significant judgment about dropping circumcision and other Jewish rules, meaning that Gentiles didn't have to effectively become Jews first in order to become Christians. So, we have been practicing discernment for a long time.

Real discernment has a visceral side as well. The discernment of spirits requires that one listen in a variety of ways: to your heart, your mind, your sentiments, your feelings. I tell students that discernment works on three levels. First, you search your mind—you list your thoughts about trying to make a decision. Then you search your heart—to figure out what's right or wrong, what's truly good and loving and what is not. Finally, you search your guts. What do your guts tell you? I think when you get to your guts, you are really into discernment.

Discernment takes time. It's not known for quickness. It's where you settle down into a deciding mode.



My image of Dorothy sitting in the middle of a park whenever there were nuclear-attack drills is telling. She would simply go and sit on a bench—making it perfectly clear that she had discerned the need to protest this preparation for war that was being masked as a public-safety event.

You've written about how virtues in practice can conflict with one another. I think of all the competing loyalties in Dorothy's life. Her multiple talents and roles: a writer and an activist, the founder of a growing movement, a single mom of a young daughter and then the grandmother of a big family, to whom a whole generation of American Catholics looked for leadership. So many different demands! Is part of prudence's task simply to sort them all out?

In a word, yes. Prudence requires one to descend into the details, and in the details are found a variety of multiple roles that one has. Conflict is inevitable. That's why discernment is so necessary. Always, always, always. Think of the Father of the Prodigal Son. We need to realize that as soon as the father went running to welcome back his long-lost son, he knew he would trigger the resentment of his righteous elder son. How could he not? His decision to embrace the one will mean risking the indignation of the other. Conflict: it's unavoidable.

You've pointed out that as we develop the virtues, we will form our conscience. What contribution does prudence make in shaping conscience? How did it effect Dorothy, do you think?

In the mother church of the Jesuits in Rome, the Gesu, the very first image you see as you enter is an enormous statue of Prudence in the cupola (inner dome) of the church. She is holding her chief icon, a mirror. Prudence holds a mirror because she needs to look to and learn from the past. Only by reviewing what she has done and learned as the result of her decisions can she learn how to make better decisions for the future. Prudence depends on a person reflecting on what he or she has done and whether the decisions proved to be right or wrong. That is why we are always called to examine our consciences as to whether what we did turned out to be for the good or not. The reflective life is a condition for the prudent life.

But the mirror is also a way of not only seeing what's behind you: it also lets you see yourself. And so Prudence needs you to examine not only what you decided to do and what you did, but why you decided on this course rather than another. In other words, prudence lets you examine not only your actions but also your motivations. This is the true examination of conscience.

Finally, the mirror is also to make sure you know yourself. Not only your moral strengths and your limitations, but everything about yourself. Are you quick on your feet? Do you need more time to decide than others? Are you afraid of the dark? Knowing your specific qualities help in making good actual decisions. In fact, knowing yourself is the key to becoming a moral person.

(Good Talk, cont'd on p. 8)



VOX POP

Prayer — in its original form a petition — is the voicing of hope. "The people" continue to sign the petition (available on back cover of this newsletter or at www.dorothydayguild.org), asking that Dorothy Day be named a saint — and to hope they will be heard.

Dorothy Day is a prime example of what the common man/woman can do to "love their neighbor". By action and not just prayer.
Harvey Blair, Oro Valley, AZ

She has inspired me in so many ways to be aware of the poor.
Patricia Miller, Spokane, WA

Dorothy led a simple, prayerful life and was devoted to helping the poor. She as a layperson is a shining example of how to live by putting her trust in God.
Patricia Busch, Tarrytown, NY

She lived the gospel.
Damian Barta, Skoki, IL

She is a woman for our time -- single, Catholic, committed woman for our day.
Dorothy Dwight, Chicago, IL

Dorothy Day has so inspired me. I cannot stop reading her books!
Donna Zalewski, Strasburg, PA

DISPATCHES!

We are pleased to announce that our team of 108 volunteer transcribers has completed initial transcriptions of Dorothy Day's 6,800-page set of diaries! The first step—and a major milestone—in what is a rigorous, demanding, multi-step process.

The second step is for each page to be read by a five-person team of veteran transcribers who review for errors and apply a second set of eyes to those pesky "indecipherables." Then, transcription coordinator, Dr. Joe Sclafani, re-checks the reviewers' work. Two-thirds of this work has been completed.

The third and final step is to copy every page onto A4 paper and place, in turn, into special, acid-free boxes (after all this, you can appreciate why!). All will be stored in a set of locked cabinets specially designated for the Dorothy Day inquiry.

Cause postulator in Rome, Dr. Waldery Hilgeman, pronounced the transcriptions "perfect!" on his recent visit to New York. Dr. Hilgeman was impressed with progress in collecting evidence, but noted several areas that need attention, due to evolving Vatican regulations on causes for sainthood. These include:

- Having one of the theological experts (censors) read the original documents we have collected—the actual diaries and letters—as opposed to their copies. The latter are anthologized in two highly recommended collections, edited by Robert Ellsberg (published by Marquette University Press and in paperback from Image Books).
- Obtaining all law enforcement records regarding Dorothy's eight lifetime arrests. Apparently, it is unusual for a candidate for sainthood to have such a rap sheet! Each arrest will need explanation and context, especially the one for her being swept up in a raid, charged as a prostitute, in what was deemed a "disorderly house." (It was, in fact, an IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] "flophouse" in Chicago—cheap lodgings—that was the target of the infamous Palmer raids aimed at political radicals when Dorothy unfortunately was staying there).
- Taking testimony from about twenty "expert witnesses." Unlike the "eyewitnesses" who are people who knew Dorothy Day well, the expert witnesses are Church officials who will be asked to reflect on Dorothy Day's sanctity in light of her practice of "heroic" virtue and her reputation for holiness.

The Dorothy Day Guild Advisory Committee is happy to announce the addition of six new members. Created in 2005 to help guide the can-

(Dispatches cont'd on p. 7)

("The Vine and the Branches"—a metaphor for Christian discipleship and an apt image for the growing Guild—inspired the iconography in this column by Catholic Worker artist, Ade Bethune.)

SAINTLY MATTERS

As she crisscrossed the country by Greyhound bus, visiting one Catholic Worker house after another, Dorothy Day was perennially asked to define the movement. She proffered many explications but seemed to have a special preference for saying it was a school. A school for learning, in the words of St. Paul, how to put off the old man and put on the new. A school for asking what it might look like if we took the Gospel seriously and attempted to apply it both in our daily lives and to the world around us.

Dorothy looked to the saints as her teachers since they after all had asked the same question. Who better to go to for help in responding, here and now, to the singular call that binds together all Christians: the call to be holy.

The help she sought was not academic. The learning she wanted was the wisdom of the saints' lived experience. Likely she knew from her schoolgirl love of the classics that the Greeks associated the great virtue of wisdom with the "feminine." (And one can only surmise, based on her own lived experience, her nodding appreciation!).



St. Theresa of Lisieux

But the perception of prudence (the focus of this current newsletter) as being a kind of poor second cousin, only a "practical" wisdom, would probably rankle her.

Certainly, at least when it applied to her faith, practical was the point. Her struggles, once she settled on her vocation at the Catholic Worker, was not with her mission but with how to carry it out. So it's not surprising that she would turn for guidance in a very special way to two women saints, Teresa of Avila and Theresa of Lisieux. Though both were steeped in the Carmelite tradition, conventional thought (wisdom?) saw them as quite apart from one another. For Dorothy, they formed a dyptich that framed her spirituality.

She first learned of 16th century Teresa of Avila from a pre-conversion reading of William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Teresa complained of suffering from a half-heartedness in her first 20 years as a nun that had deadened her life and spirit. Dorothy identified with her desire to break free of what Teresa deemed her spiritual "mediocrity." Break free she did. She became a tireless administrator and reformer (founding 14 monasteries), traveling days on end between them (her "greyhound" was a donkey). Dorothy wrote of her shortly before the Catholic Worker's founding in 1933:

> I had read the life of St. Teresa of Avila and fallen in love with her. She was a mystic and a practical woman, a recluse and a traveler, a cloistered nun and yet most active.

Teresa became for Dorothy a model of the synthesis she sought between prayer and action. One of her favorite Teresian passages, found in *Interior Castle*, is arguably the ultimate "practical" insight: we can only demonstrate our love of God by our love of our brothers and sisters:

> The surest sign that we are keeping these two [great] commandments is, I think, we should really be loving our neighbor: for we cannot be sure if we are loving God, although we may have good reasons for believing that we are, but we can know quite well if we are loving our neighbour.

At Root…

Dorothy drew freely from the saints, Scripture, and Church teaching and tradition, excerpting quotations for *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, like these on prudence and virtue:

Find your delight in the Lord who will give you your heart's desire.

Psalm 37: 4

The words of the wise: incline your ear, and hear my words, and let your mind attend to my teaching. For it will be well if you hold them within you, if they all are ready on your lips.

Proverbs 22: 17-18

All your ways may be straight in your own eyes, but it is the Lord who weighs hearts. To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

Proverbs 21: 2-3

The just care for the cause of the poor; the wicked do not understand such care.

Proverbs 29: 7

Happy the one who listens to me, attending daily at my gates, keeping watch at my doorposts.

Proverbs 8: 34

They (the commandments) are not heavy to the man that loves whereas they are a burden to him that does not love.

St. Augustine

To not progress on the way of life is to regress.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Man is perfected by virtue.

St. Thomas Acquinas

As face mirrors face in water, so the heart reflects the person.

Proverbs 27: 19



St. Teresa of Avila

From its very beginning, the Catholic Worker attempted to embody this insight by reviving the daily practice of the works of mercy: to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless. And in its earliest years, to forge the practice of the works of mercy and the practice of non-violence, rendering them inseparable. Until her death in 1980, Dorothy lived out this fusion—on soup lines and picket lines, in demonstrations and jail cells—participating in the great social movements of her day.

But Dorothy was always aware of the smallness of human efforts: our cumulative actions like those few loaves and fishes needing to be multiplied. Over the years, she increasingly stressed the need for great faith in God, looking to that other great Carmelite, Theresa of Lisieux, only a few decades her junior, for encouragement. Unlike the Spanish Teresa, this French saint never left her cloister. Her engagement with the world came through her receptivity to God's love, her willingness to be just a "little grain of sand" allowing the power of God's love to work through her.

Theresa counseled the "Little Way" of growing our capacity to love. The "little" but not easy way of practicing forgiveness, charity, and patience among those nearest to us. No term came closer, in Dorothy's mind, to describing the ideal Christian way of doing things—simply, immediately, directly—trusting to their lasting effect.

In *House of Hospitality*, her first full account of life at the Catholic Worker, Dorothy reflects that "we are not contented with little achievements, with small beginnings." And seemingly to remind herself more than anyone else, she writes:

> We should look to St. Therese, the Little Flower, to walk her little way, her way of love. We should look to St. Teresa of Avila who was … greatly daring in what she wished to do for God.

And she added her own eminently practical, prudential twist:

> Do what comes to hand. Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with all thy might. After all, God is with us.

And so, she knew, are the saints.

— C.Z.

(Dispatches, cont'd from p. 5)

onization project—and to insure that her legacy be fully recognized and transmitted—the Committee's founding members knew Dorothy personally. Many had worked with her at the Catholic Worker, and some were present at the exploratory meetings convened by Cardinal John O'Connor on whether the New York Archdiocese should promote her cause.

But new needs have emerged—in anticipation of the completion of the initial diocesan phase of the Archdiocesan Inquiry and the start of the final Roman phase—and so many more talented, committed people want to help. They may not have known Dorothy personally (some were not even born at the time of her death), but they all have been personally impacted by her life and witness.

An enthusiastic, grateful, and warm welcome go to these new members: **Kevin Ahearn**, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Manhattan College, former president of the International Movement of Catholic Students; **Elias Bahou**, Director of Business Development for St. Peter's Way Tours; **James Boyle**, retired businessman, catalyst for annual Dorothy Day lecture at Manhattan College, his alma mater; **Carmina Chapp**, Catholic theologian, educator, and founder with her husband, Larry, of the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker Farm in Harveys Lake, PA; **Deirdre Cornell**, author, former Maryknoll lay missioner, long active in migrant ministry; **Colleen Dulle**, journalist and producer of podcasts and videos at *America* magazine; **Blanche Johnson**, social worker and board president, Bigs and Littles NYC, a youth mentoring program; **Luis Pena**, Hispanic Outreach Coordinator for the Office of Hispanic Ministry, Archdiocese of NY; **Joseph Sclafani**, retired physician who coordinates the cause's transcription process, and **Gabriella Wilke**, Marketing Coordinator for *Commonweal* magazine. D

(Good Talk, cont'd from p. 4)

One of the things you stress concerning the virtues is that they must always relate to concrete situations, to real life. This makes me think of the famous story in 1951 when Dorothy was asked by Msgr. Edward Gaffney of the Archdiocese to consider dropping the word "Catholic" from the paper's title (*All the Way to Heaven*, pp. 190-193). Dorothy begins her response by assuring Msgr. Gaffney of her "love and respectful obedience to the Church, and our gratitude to this Archdiocese…." She then recounts that she did consider "that we could change the name rather than cease publication of *The Catholic Worker*." But on further reflection, she wrote Msgr. Gaffney, to do so would likely cause scandal and "put into the hands of our enemies, the enemies of the Church, a formidable weapon." Somehow in her letter to Msgr. Gaffney she managed to communicate not only her love, prayers, and obedience, but her astute awareness of the negative effect such a decision would have on the Church. She was apparently so convincing that the issue was never brought up again. Prudence in action?



ROBERT LAX

Day (far right, sitting on bench) and other Catholic Workers, Washington Square Park, NYC, July 20, 1956, in protest of "Operation Alert" civil defense drill that led to her arrest.

A historian recently argued that if you really knew saintly persons, you would realize that they were too dangerous to be models for children. If you really knew what they were like, you knew how extreme they were. Think of Francis of Assisi or more extraordinarily Catherine of Siena who hardly ate anything in the last years of her life.

Thomas Aquinas says that all virtues but one should observe the mean, that is, aim for the point between an excess of too much or a deficit of too little; all virtues except charity. Charity, he said, does not observe the mean. You can never love God enough. Charity knows no limits. Think for instance of how alike Mother Teresa of Calcutta was to Dorothy in being known for outdistancing us on the way of the Lord. Their passage of following in the footsteps of Christ shows excesses that prudence might not allow us to follow in our daily lives. In some ways we can follow them, but in other ways we can't—their charity is just so strong.

Anything you'd like to add?

I met Dorothy once. In the spring of 1971, I was eighteen years old, a freshman at LeMoyne College and a Jesuit novice. I was friends with the people at International House, a student-led Social Justice Community that Daniel Berrigan had founded. Dorothy spoke on "Saints and Heroes of Our Day," and specifically on Cesar Chavez, Julius Nyerere, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn. I remember the evening, fifty-eight years ago, as if it was yesterday.

The day after the lecture, International House was having a lunch in Dorothy's honor. In planning it, the students decided that she was most likely a vegetarian, because, as they explained, "she was a saint." (The decision to be a vegetarian was not made as frequently in 1971 as today.) I simply asked what they were serving. Tofu sandwiches, they said. I asked, quite apart from her being a saint or not, "Do you know if she has eaten tofu?" "She's a saint, she must be a vegetarian; what else would she eat?"

At lunch, I got to sit next to Dorothy. She asked who I was, and I explained that I was a Jesuit novice. She was happy to hear that. When she bit into her sandwich she said, "What's this?" She opened it and looked at me. "It's tofu," I said. "They said that since you are a saint, you must be a vegetarian, and so figured you'd like tofu." "I hate when they call me a saint AND when they do things like this," she said. "Dorothy," I asked, "would you want to come to the Jesuit novitiate, and I could make you a ham and cheese sandwich?" "That would be delightful," she responded. So, I drove her to the other side of campus, to where our novitiate was.

So let me ask. Where is the prudence in this little story, and where is the lack of it? And why? D

Eyes to See, Ears to Hear

Perhaps Prudence's mirror is two-sided: reflecting our true selves and revealing the true light of others. Clearly, looking from both sides, Dorothy's meeting Peter Maurin can be construed as one of the most prudential encounters in contemporary Christian history. Prudential and providential. For Dorothy always said that without Peter there would be no Catholic Worker (and many would argue the converse is at least equally true).

What Dorothy saw in Peter others freely admit they likely would have missed. Maybe it was his poverty that opened her to his wisdom. Or maybe, simply, his holiness. In any case, Peter, this poor man, this itinerant worker and scholar, gave Dorothy the riches of Catholic social teaching, of the saints and writers of history, of the traditions of Catholic belief and practice over time. And she recognized its treasure, determining not to bury it.

She who wanted the abundant life discovered its contours in the movement they co-founded. Dorothy wrote about Peter's inspiration—and the remarkably consistent shape and steady direction of the movement—in the many articles that appeared in **The Catholic Worker** *throughout the years. Here are some highlights:*

When I first saw Peter Maurin my impression was of a short, broad-shouldered workingman with a high, broad head covered with graying hair. His face was weather-beaten, he had warm grey eyes and a wide, pleasant mouth. The collar of his shirt was dirty. But he had tried to dress up by wearing a tie and a suit which looked as though he had slept in it (As I found out afterward, indeed he had.)

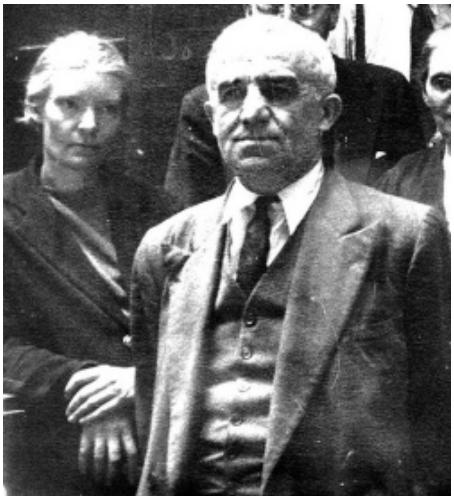
What struck me first about him was that he was one of those people who talked you deaf, dumb and blind, who each time he saw you began his conversation just where he had left off at the previous meeting, and never stopped unless you begged for rest, and that was not for long. He was irrepressible and he was incapable of taking offense.

The night I met Peter I had come from an assignment for **The Commonweal**, covering the Communist-inspired "hunger march" of the unemployed to Washington. I had prayed at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, that I might find something to do in the social order besides reporting conditions. I wanted to change them, not just report them, but I had lost faith in revolution, I wanted to love my enemy, whether capitalist or Communist.

I certainly did not realize at first that I had my answer in Peter Maurin. I was thirty-five years old, and I had met plenty of radicals in my time and plenty of crackpots too; people who had blueprints to change the social order were a dime a dozen around Union Square.

At that time Peter Maurin was fifty-seven, had never married, had been "away from the Church" in his youth, had worked with Sangnier and his social studies group in Paris, and had sold its paper, **Le Sillon**. He believed in going to the people in town and countryside, because first of all he was of the people himself....

I had been a Catholic only about four years, and Peter, having suggested that



Peter Maurin and Dorothy, circa 1933

I get out a paper to reach the man in the street, started right in on my education; he was a born teacher, and any park bench, coffee shop counter, bus or lodging house was a place to teach. He believed in starting on a program at once, without waiting to acquire classroom or office or meeting hall. To reach the man in the street, you went to the street. Peter was literal.

(Eyea to See, cont'd on p. 10)

(Eyes to See, cont'd from p. 9)

The Catholic Worker was financed like the publications of any radical "splinter group." If we had had a mimeograph machine, it would have been a mimeographed paper. But we had nothing but my typewriter, so we took our writing to a printer, found out it would cost $57 to get out 2,500 copies of a small, eight-page sheet… and boldly had it set up. There was no office, no staff, no mailing list. I had a small pay-check coming in for a research job which was just finishing; two checks were due for articles I had written, but these were needed to pay overdue rent and light bills. Father Joseph McSorley, the Paulist, paid me generously for a small job of bibliography which I did for him; the late Father Ahearn, pastor of a black church in Newark, gave me ten dollars; Sister Peter Claver gave me one dollar which someone had just given her. These were our finances. We took that first issue of the paper into Union Square that May Day and sold it for one penny a copy to Communists and trade unionists….



Peter, the worker/scholar

Peter never took part in any of the work of the paper, except to turn in each month half a dozen "easy essays," many of which he insisted that we repeat over and over again. He was the kind of teacher who believed in repetition, restatement, and the continual return to first principles.

"People are just beginning to realize how deep-seated the evil is," Peter said soberly. "That is why we must be Catholic radicals, we must get down to the roots. That is what radicalism is—the word means getting down to the roots."…. What he wanted was to instill in all, worker or scholar, a philosophy of poverty and a philosophy of work.

He was the layman always. I mean that he never preached, he taught. While decrying secularism, the separation of the material from the spiritual, his emphasis as a layman, was on our material needs, our need for work. food, clothing, and shelter, Though Peter went weekly to confession and daily to Communion and spent an hour a day in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, his study was of the material order around him….

He constantly urged individuals to practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; he urged bishops to establish Houses of Hospitality. Somehow the two planks of the program got mixed up. I can remember well enough how it happened. He had written a series of essays addressed to the bishops, pointing out to them that canon law called for the establishment of hospices in every bishopric. When a reader who had been sleeping in the subway came into **The Catholic Worker** office one day and disclosed her need (the apartment and the office were already full), Peter's literal acceptance of "If thy brother needs food or drink, feed him, and if he needs shelter, feed him" meant that we rented a large apartment a block away which became the first House of Hospitality for women. Now we have two houses, on First St., and Third St. Here the works of mercy are still being practiced by the group who gets out **The Catholic Worker**, living without salaries, in voluntary poverty. "Feeding thy brother" started with feeding a few poor men. It became a daily breadline in 1936, and the line still forms every day outside the door.

Once, when I looked around our crowded house of hospitality and asked Peter if this is what he meant when he talked about houses of hospitality where the works of mercy could be performed at a personal sacrifice, by practicing voluntary poverty, which meant in turn stripping one's self of the "old man" and putting on the "new," which meant Christ, so that we could be other Christs to our brothers, in whom we were also to see Christ, Peter sighed and said, [that at least] "It arouses the conscience."…

He had invitations to speak at colleges, seminaries and groups throughout the country. Through the houses of hospitality which have been established, he has built up groups for round table discussions. Through the farming communes, he has directed attention to fundamental economic ideas.

To him there is a synthesis about all his

ideas—they fit together; as blueprints for a new world they are unsurpassed, idyllic. But, when it comes to working them out, given the human material, the lack of equipment, the vagaries of human nature—there is the rub! Do they work? Does Christianity work?…

Peter does not find it at all extraordinary to expect people to try to begin now to put into practice some of the social ideas, not only of the New Testament, but of the Old. Unless we try to put these ideas into practice, we are guilty of secularism…. Unless we are trying to put the social ideas of the Gospel into practice, we are not showing our love for our neighbor…. Unless we are putting these social ideas into practice, recognizing the correlation of the soul and body, we are using religion as an insurance policy, as a prop, as a comfort in affliction, and not only is religion then truly an opiate of the people, but we are like men who "beholding our face in a glass, go away, not mindful of what manner of men we are." D

Confounding the Wise

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," so St. Paul declares. Prudent is hardly the descriptor that leaps to mind when trying to understand the work Dorothy and Peter started. Foolish is more likely. As late as 1974, Dorothy wrote in the paper that "many of us are viewed as holy fools in the eyes of our friends and readers because we try to share the suffering of the poor."

As a passionate lover of Russian literature, Dorothy knew well the meaning of holy fool. The character of Prince Myshkin in Dostoevsky's **The Idiot** had long captured her imagination. Myshkin is portrayed as a childlike, pure character who wins all hearts by his very simplicity. As Dorothy writes admiringly, he "willingly accepts suffering, is easily put upon, answers offense by begging forgiveness, and exaggerates the good in others while constantly overlooking evil."



Writing late in her life on May Day of 1976, Dorothy reflected on the beginnings of the Catholic Worker movement and life lived among "the lame, the halt, and the blind." Again, she brought in her beloved Dostoevsky, this time, the famous phrase from **The Brothers Karamazov**:



"Sometimes life is so hard, we foolishly look upon ourselves as martyrs, because it is almost as though we were literally sharing in the sufferings of those we serve. It is good to remember—to clutch to our aching hearts those sayings of Fr. Zossima—'Love in practice is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams.'"

If the genius of Dostoevsky helped Dorothy arrive at the mystery of God's presence in the poor, it was her genius that refused to unravel it, sentimentalize it, or idealize it. Only to live out its implications. She never turned back. A confounding foolishness—and a holy one.



by Kateri Boucher

(Kateri Boucher, twenty-four, lives at Detroit's Catholic Worker house, where she became its newest community member only a few months ago. She is also the associate editor of ***Geez****, a print magazine for social justice, art, and activism aimed at "the over-churched, out-churched, un-churched, and maybe even the unchurchable" in both the U.S. and Canada.* ***Geez*** *includes a dedicated section on the Catholic Worker and has won frequent accolades for its spiritual coverage at the UTNE Independent Press Awards.)*

Growing up as I did in Rochester, New York, long the home of a Catholic Worker community, Dorothy Day was a familiar name. I don't remember how old I was when I first heard about her, but I definitely knew she was "up there" with other people like Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and maybe even people in the Bible. But whenever I heard people talk about her and the Catholic Worker movement, I never understood what the whole thing was about. (Is Catholic the same as Christian? Was Dorothy still alive? Who was organizing all of this?). I do remember bagging sandwiches at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality in Rochester, however, and knowing that, somehow, Dorothy Day had something to do with it.



Simple beauty, Day House kitchen

Despite being introduced to Dorothy at a young age, only now am I beginning to get to know her as more than just a name. In the past year, especially, her presence in my life has become more explicit. In September 2018, I moved to Detroit without any real job or plan. I had spent a summer there a couple years prior, and fallen so in love with the city and the Catholic Worker community there that I decided to move back for good.

As I packed up my car in Rochester, one of the items I happened to grab was an old framed icon of Dorothy Day my mom had given me. I still didn't know much about Dorothy—just enough to know that I admired her—but I decided to pack the icon anyway. Part of my intention for the year was to learn more about the Catholic Worker tradition, which was so central to many of my friends and mentors in Detroit, including Lydia Wylie-Kellermann, who had been born in Detroit's then-CW house. I hung the frame in my new bedroom, where I could look at it daily and (hopefully) soak up some of Dorothy's influence.

Within a few weeks of moving, a job and a plan seemed to find me. I was offered an unexpected position with *Geez* magazine, a quarterly print publication on art and activism for people "on the fringes of faith." And a few weeks later, I found out that Detroit's Catholic Worker house (Day House) was in need of someone to move in and help during a time of transition. For forty years, Day House has provided hospitality for women experiencing housing instability, as well as a space of gathering for weekly Mass, open potluck, and community events. Although I wasn't sure what I was doing, I decided to say yes.

So, suddenly, without planning it, I found myself beginning work with a radical Christian print publication and preparing to move into a Catholic Worker house of hospitality. I remember thinking, "Well, it might be time to finally read some Dorothy Day."

Luckily, I didn't have to look far. Last winter, in preparation for moving into Day House, my friend and I embarked on a road trip to visit other Midwest Catholic Worker houses and farms. Wherever we went, I made a point to pick up

whatever Dorothy book I found lying around. In Milwaukee I started reading Kate Hennessy's *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty* (and I was so enthralled that they were kind enough to let me borrow it). In Chicago's Emmaus House I flipped through the pages of *The Long Loneliness*. At St. Isidore Farm in Cuba City, Wisconsin, it was Dorothy's diaries, *The Duty of Delight*, edited by Robert Ellsberg.

As the trip went on, I felt I was getting to know Dorothy. Her presence seemed palpable at all the houses and farms we visited, each of them giving me greater insight into her life and legacy as it lives on today.

By the end of our travels, I was deeply inspired by the beauty and richness of the movement, and amazed at how it has grown and shifted over space and time. But perhaps what moved me most was finally learning more about the sheer *messiness* of it all. How so much of the movement had happened *not* according to plan, and also how much had occurred without prior planning at all—as Dorothy said, "It just came about. It just happened."



Dorothy's presence felt: Kateri's bookshelf with icon

Before that road trip, I'd fallen into the trap of romanticizing and idealizing Dorothy and the CW movement—which, I'll admit, only intensified when I heard that Dorothy was being considered for sainthood. And in the icon (still hanging above my bed), Dorothy's stoic, haloed face seemed to me the very picture of clarity, integrity, and purpose.

But when I actually began to read Dorothy's writings and to learn more about her, it felt as if I was swinging open the icon and discovering what lay behind it. And, indeed, I did find immense depths of clarity, integrity, and purpose. But I also found a record of missteps, frustrations, worry, disagreements, disorder, strained relationships, and uncertainty. In other words: I found a real human being and community, something I hadn't been expecting. Rather than detracting from my view of Dorothy and the Catholic Worker movement, however, reading about their imperfections only drew me closer in.

In the spirit of Dorothy sharing her personal writing, I'd like to offer a brief reflection I wrote in my journal at the end of our travels, including a quote from Dorothy that I found particularly moving.

"Have we failed? Dorothy asked. Yes, and on every front. (…) I must say that I am not much concerned. Failures are inseparable to work of this kind, and necessary for our growth in holiness." (The World Will Be Saved by Beauty, p. 85)

All the Dorothy this week has been so healing and relieving, and I'm learning a lot about myself in the process. How I feel so liberated reading about all the mistakes and missteps and beautiful humanity in her life and the movement. It's like I didn't know that I was so desperately seeking permission to be a messy human as I step into this tradition. Grace has been rolling over in waves. I wish we had the diaries of all the prophets and saints, and accounts from those who knew them and/or had to experience (endure?) their leadership. I am comforted by the questions, uncertainties, discord, actually. Dorothy is both so good and so deeply human.

In the past few months, Dorothy's life has continued to feel like an inspiration and a comfort. In a society that is obsessed with perfection, success, and image, it is unbelievably refreshing to step into a tradition that announces its (apparent) failures and does not run from the tensions, paradoxes, and messiness of life. Dorothy's ability to be honest in her humanity has made me feel more accepting of my own. I feel genuinely welcomed into this movement, this tradition, with hands extended from the past: "Come in, come in. You don't have to be perfect, or even good. There's room in this for all of us."

As I settle into life at Day House and my work with *Geez*, I have already been drawing from Dorothy's imperfections [failures?], grace, and honesty to get through the moments I find most challenging. Bed bugs and overgrown gardens? Sounds about right. Nearly running out of money before putting the issue to print? Just following in Dorothy's footsteps. Conflict in the community? All part of the tradition!

Dorothy's influence in my life is still in-process, still unfolding. But as I accept this invitation into the complexity of the Catholic Worker movement, I also feel Dorothy inviting me into deeper spiritual practice and grounding, deeper social analysis, and deeper solidarity with the most marginalized. Looking ahead in my own life, I know I will continue to draw inspiration and witness from looking back at hers.

"Have we failed?" Dorothy asked. "*Yes, and on every front.*" Every front! And what a life she lived. If failures are necessary for growth, I can only hope to make as many mistakes as she did—and to do so with as much passion, reflection, dedication, and overwhelming love. D

MARYKNOLL LAY MISSIONERS
MARYKNOLL SISTERS
MARYKNOLL AFFILIATES
MARYKNOLL FATHERS & BROTHERS

MARYKNOLL SYMPOSIUM

DOROTHY DAY
An Undivided Heart



SATURDAY, NOV. 16
8:30 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

MARYKNOLL SOCIETY, ASIA ROOM

55 Ryder Rd.
Ossining, NY 10545

LUNCH INCLUDED

SPACE IS LIMITED — RSVP REQUIRED:
mwinston@mklm.org or 914-236-3454

November is the month Dorothy Day was born (Nov. 8, 1887) and the month she entered eternal life (Nov. 29, 1980). Please join us for a day of reflection on Dorothy's example and prophetic witness — their blessings and challenges for us today — with people who knew, loved and worked closely with her.

PRESENTERS:

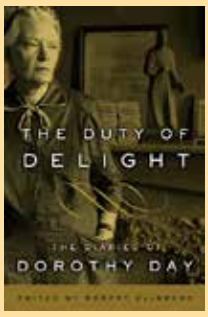
Kate Hennessy

is the youngest of nine grandchildren of Dorothy Day. She is the author of *The World Will Be Saved By Beauty: An Intimate Portrait of My Grandmother* (Scribner) and, in collaboration with the photographer Vivian Cherry, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker: The Miracle of our Continuance* (Empire State). Kate divides her time between Ireland and Vermont.



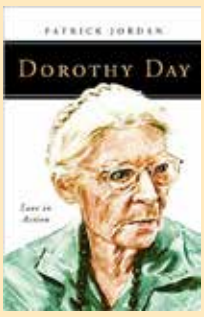
Robert Ellsberg

is the long-time editor-in-chief and publisher of Orbis Books. He worked with Dorothy Day at the New York Catholic Worker, incl. as managing editor of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper. Robert edited Dorothy Day's diaries, letters and selected writings, incl. *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day* (Image). He serves on the Historical Commission preparing Dorothy Day's cause for canonization.



Patrick & Kathleen DeSutter Jordan

were members of the New York Catholic Worker from 1968 to 1975 and later assisted Dorothy at Spanish Camp on Staten Island. Both served as editors of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper. Kathleen is a registered nurse, and Pat was an editor at *Commonweal.* He is the author of *Dorothy Day: Love in Action* (Liturgical Press) and edited a collection of her *Commonweal* writings under the title *Hold Nothing Back* (Liturgical Press).



WANT TO HELP ?

JOIN

The DOROTHY DAY GUILD

The Dorothy Day Guild is the official body charged with forwarding her cause. In turn, the steady growth of Guild membership points to the vitality of grassroots support essential to canonization.

Members make an annual offering of dues (amounts noted on membership form below) and receive hard copies of the quarterly newsletter, *In Our Time*. **If you're not yet a member, please, won't you consider joining?** And if you are, please do help spread the word and invite your family members, colleagues, and friends, in the pew and out!



ADE BETHUNE

RENEW

YOUR GUILD MEMBERSHIP



Memberships are for one-year, subject to renewal. But admittedly, with our modest staff, we're not able to keep track of technically "lapsed" memberships. Nor are we particularly inclined to do so, being much more "spirit of the law" than "letter of the law" types.

Instead we're trusting to your help. **Would you kindly look into when you last paid your dues and, if it's time, renew your membership?** Thank you so much. Even more importantly, thank you for all your generous and faithful support – past, present, and future!

Seeking icons! Part of the Dorothy Day inquiry calls for evidence of Dorothy's "reputation for holiness" as demonstrated by popular, visual devotions. These include icons created by known and lesser known artists. The historical commission has begun to locate and collect these works. If you have a Dorothy Day icon that you would like to share, please send the image, along with artist information, to jkorgen@korgen.associates. We so appreciate your help.

In Our Time

Editor, Carolyn Zablotny
Copy Editor, Tom Cornell
Graphic Designer, Rose Tannenbaum, Berkshire TypeGraphic, Great Barrington, MA
Lettering, Linda Henry Orell
Photographs, Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Marquette University Archives

Back issues available online:
www.dorothydayguild.org

To Contact:
c/o Dorothy Day Guild
1011 First Avenue, Room 787
New York, NY 10022
e-mail: cjzablotny@gmail.com
www.dorothydayguild.org

DOROTHY DAY GUILD MEMBERSHIP FORM

Just clip out and mail to the Guild address above. You may also submit online at www.dorothydayguild.org.

☐ **I would like to become a new member** ☐ **I would like to renew my membership**

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Email _____ **Phone**_____

$ _____ **Annual Offering: student $15; individual $25; family $40; church/organization $100**

$ _____ **Additional Donation (over and above annual membership offering)**

Dorothy Day Guild
1011 First Avenue, Room 787
New York, NY 10022
www.dorothydayguild.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 95
GT. BARRINGTON,
MA 01230

ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Kevin Ahearn
Alex Avitabile
Elias Bahou
James Boyle
Carmina Chapp
Sr. Mary Donald Corcoran, O.S.B.
Deirdre Cornell
Monica Cornell
Tom Cornell
Colleen Dulle
Robert Ellsberg
Robert Gilliam
Geoffrey B. Gneuhs
Martha Hennessy
Blanche Johnson
Kathleen DeSutter Jordan
David Mueller
Luis Pena
Phillip Runkel
Joseph Sclafani
Most Rev. Dennis Sullivan
Rev. Msgr. Kevin Sullivan
Gabriella Wilke
Louise Zwick

Msgr. Gregory Mustaciuolo
Vice-Postulator

George B. Horton
Vice-Postulator

Fr. Richard Welch, C.Ss.R.
Cardinal's Delegate

Jeffrey Korgen
Guild Coordinator

Anthony Santella
Web/Social Media Director

PETITION

Ask that Dorothy Day be named a Saint

The life of Dorothy Day (1887-1980) embodies the powerful message of Pope Francis's first encyclical, *Lumen Fidei* – "the light of faith is concretely placed at the service of justice…and peace."

We believe she is a saint for our time.

Please sign this petition to advance her cause not because she needs it, but because we today need her witness and model of holiness.

Mail to:
The Dorothy Day Guild, 1011 First Avenue, Room 787, New York, NY 10022.
Petitions also available online: www.dorothydayguild.org. Thank you!

Name _____

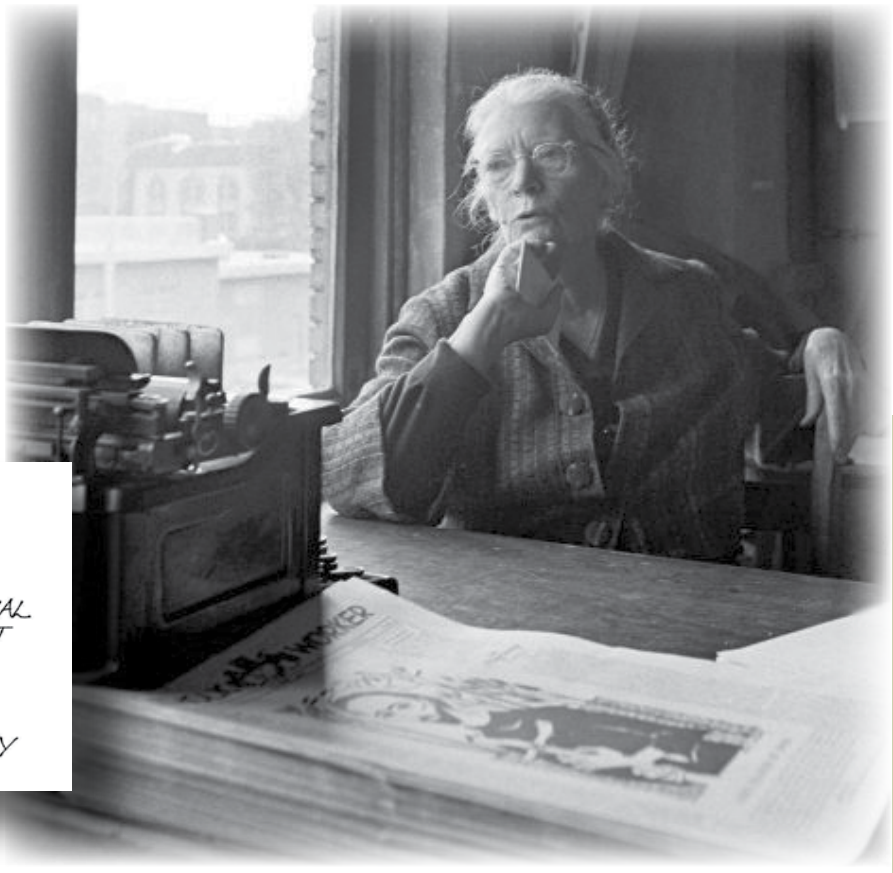
Print above and sign here _____

E-mail _____

Country _____ Street Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Comments (optional):



WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO DO? WE ARE TRYING TO GET TO HEAVEN, ALL OF US. WE ARE TRYING TO TALK ABOUT AND WRITE ABOUT THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, THE BEATITUDES, THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLES OF THE CHURCH, AND IT IS MOST ASTOUNDING, THE THINGS THAT HAPPEN WHEN YOU START TRYING TO LIVE THIS WAY.
DOROTHY DAY