

# IN OUR TIME

Newsletter of the Dorothy Day Guild  
Volume 5, Issue 2 Spring 2020



## The Dorothy Day Guild

A Woman of Conscience  
A Saint for Our Time

Dear Friends,

Greetings, in solidarity, from the Dorothy Day Guild. In this time of social distancing, we embrace you! We are realizing anew how profoundly connected we all in truth are. Something the saints have always understood. Clearly Dorothy Day did. As a young radical she was attracted to the old IWW (International Workers of the World) slogan, “An injury to one is an injury to all.” Later, she grounded this expression – and the Catholic Worker movement she founded with Peter Maurin – in the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ where we are told, “we are all members, one of another.”

Dorothy always insisted that it was Peter, a poor man, who “made one feel the magnificence of...our daily lives, the material of God’s universe and what we did with it, how we used it...” “To give and not to take, that is what makes man human,” he wrote in one his deceptively simple “Easy Essays.”

Seemingly from the beginning – when the Apostles debated about who should be highest in the kingdom and the poor quarreled about who was receiving the most from the common table – we Christians have struggled with the vice of luxury. Perhaps that’s why the practice of the virtue of temperance – the theme of this newsletter – is critical to the consideration of a candidate’s cause for sainthood. We sinners know what we need from our saints!

But we had no way of knowing when we started to work on this issue, the third in a series on the cardinal virtues, how pressingly relevant temperance – the proper use of material things – would be. The stark image of row upon row of empty grocery store shelves (not to mention the inflated prices for critically needed medical supplies) has brought it all home to us. Literally. But the poor, as Dorothy knew too well, can’t afford to stockpile. And our solidarity as human beings in Christ means that none of us can afford to succumb to that other deadly virus, as diagnosed by Pope Francis: the virus of indifference to the most vulnerable among us.

Special thanks for this issue to David Cloutier for his unraveling some of the many strands of this persistent question of the ethics of “surplus” (please see “Good Talk,” p. 2). And to Kathleen DeSutter Jordan for her generously “Breaking Bread” (p. 12), upholding us with “sacred conversation.” And, of course, please read about the Cause’s substantive progress – made with your faithful support – in “Dispatches!” (p. 5.).

How often, and especially in these fearful times, we find ourselves asking, “What would Dorothy say?” We suspect she would find inspiration in the maxim of St. Francis of Assisi (see “Saintly Matters,” p. 6) to rejoice even in times of tribulation. Not only because we see less dimly the reality of our dependence on God and on one another, but also because we share more closely in the precarity of the poor.

Peace to you. And gratitude. You remain, as Dorothy would put it, our “holy community.”

**P.S. If you’re not yet a Guild member, won’t you join us? If you are a member, is it time to renew? Would you like to gift someone? (See p. 15). Or if you can, please donate to this year’s Loaves and Fishes Campaign (p. 8). Thank you, again and again.**

WHERE IS MY FAITH? IN POWER...  
IN MONEY? IT IS IN THE LORD!

THIS IS TRUE POWER: THE POWER OF  
BROTHERHOOD, THE POWER OF CHARITY,  
THE POWER OF LOVE, THE POWER OF  
HUMILITY. THIS IS WHAT CHRIST DID;  
IN THIS LIES TRUE FREEDOM. AT  
THE SERVICE OF THIS FREEDOM LIES  
THE POVERTY PRAISED BY THE BEATITUDES.  
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.

DO NOT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES  
TREASURES ON EARTH, WHERE MOTH  
AND DECAY DESTROY AND THIEVES  
BREAK IN AND STEAL. BUT STORE UP  
TREASURES IN HEAVEN... FOR WHERE  
YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE ALSO WILL  
YOUR HEART BE.

MATTHEW 6: 19-21

## GOOD TALK

with David Cloutier

*(We're so glad to have David Cloutier join us for this "good talk." David teaches moral theology at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He is the author of **The Vice of Luxury: Economic Excess in a Consumer Age** (Georgetown University Press), among other major books. He edits the group blog, [catholicmoraltheology.com](http://catholicmoraltheology.com) and served on the Board of Directors of the Common Market, a consumer food cooperative in Frederick, Maryland.)*

**The virtue of temperance – the practice of which is one of the many requisite proofs of Day's holiness – relates to the proper use of material things, affirming**

**their goodness while stressing the importance of avoiding their "excess." But in your writing you point out that in our consumer age, we've lost nearly any sense of what "excess" means – let alone how to critique it.**

**Cloutier:** This is such an important point. We *have* lost our collective sense of moderation – temperance – when it comes to material goods. However, it is important to note that this virtue's basic idea of balance can still rise to the surface. People generally have a sense that it is good to avoid excessive "materialism," and that saints are people who live simple lives. For example,

almost everyone recognizes that Pope Francis's holiness has a lot to do with his simple lifestyle. They have heard stories of how he used public transportation when he was an archbishop, and how he moved into simpler quarters as pope. And we also see that people continue to be scandalized over the extravagant spending of some church leaders. But, in general, what we've lost is the ability to recognize such balance in our everyday lives – in the houses we build, for example, or the unnecessary things

we buy. I focus on the concept of "luxury" in my book because it was used for so long to mark off that excess. But now the term "luxury" is used as a word of praise. We need to recover a sense of what is wrong with "too much," because the concept of "too much for ourselves" is at the heart of Catholic moral thinking about material possessions. Those with excess wealth have a social responsibility to use their wealth for the good of all. But if we can't identify "excess," we'll never meet this foundational moral responsibility!

**In the early Church, the Church Fathers offered severe assessments of the vice of "luxury." Later that severity evolved into what you call a "two-leveled approach" toward material goods: advocating either their radical renunciation or a few pious acts. Can you trace this history for us?**

If we look at the writings of, say, the Church Fathers of the fourth century, they regularly preached sermons criticizing material excess and echoed the biblical call to help the poor as the way to store "treasure in heaven." But with the rise of monasticism (and, it must be admitted, in the West, the disappearance of most excess wealth



*Shopping cart carrying all the belongings of a homeless person*



for several centuries), there was a growing sense that only **some** were called to a life of material simplicity. This didn't mean that people didn't do pious things with their wealth, from supporting those monastics to building churches to donating to beggars. But the sense of a thoroughgoing holiness of life, even in the world, faded. However, Vatican II famously spoke of "the universal call to holiness," and St. John Paul II, in his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, insisted that "the vocation to perfect love is not restricted to a small group of individuals," but is rather "meant for everyone" – that total self-giving (including the holy use of material wealth) is Jesus' call to every disciple. Indeed, John Paul used the biblical story of the rich young man (Mt. 19: 16-30) as his lead story for the Catholic moral life. He insisted that following the Commandments is just the first step; the real call is to give yourself away and follow Christ. That's the thing the rich young man is unable to do, "for he had many possessions."

**And you propose a more multi-leveled approach? As a laywoman very much in the world, Dorothy embraced voluntary poverty, out of solidarity with the poor. How do you construe her as a model of temperance, specifically your sense of "economic holiness" for us today?**

I, like many others, have been inspired by Dorothy's example. When we see Dorothy's commitment to the poor, not from the outside, but from the inside, we do see Christ in action. But it's important not to be overwhelmed by her striking example. When I've done parish presentations on my book, I end with a slide where I have pictures of Dorothy, Mother Teresa, and Thomas Merton. From a very early age, these people were my spiritual



*Number refers to past food insecure Americans, currently estimated at "only" 37 million*

heroes. Then I joke to the audience: "My book is an admission that I cannot live like them!" We can sometimes see someone who goes all-in like Dorothy and end up thinking, "Well, it's great, but I can't possibly do that." The real danger then is to do nothing instead of recognizing that the genuine invitation to "economic holiness" takes more than just one form. All the various forms, however, press us in the same direction: more simplicity, less comfort, more solidarity. In my research for the book, I discovered some Christian churches that have economic "accountability groups," where families share their budgets and discern their spending, so that they can free up more resources for works of solidarity. Bishop Robert Barron has suggested that Catholics take steps in this direction. For example, every time they contemplate a purchase, they might intentionally buy something less "nice" and devote the excess to others. These may seem like small steps, but the point is that cumulatively they have a great impact – and most important

an impact on us, turning us toward God and others in our everyday lives.

**You suggest that part of our difficulty in not seeing luxury as a moral problem is that we lack a better understanding of the relationship between the material and the spiritual – that how we handle property, for example, should have more to do with love of God and neighbor. And**



*Dorothy admired St. Vincent de Paul who counseled asking the poor for forgiveness*

**Dorothy, from the very beginning, described the Catholic Worker as an effort "to correlate the material with the spiritual."**

The central chapter of my book on luxury asks us to think more "sacramentally" about our economic life.

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

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

The point of sacramentality is that we encounter God not by escaping material life, but by using the material in particular ways that effectively mediate the spiritual. In Catholic social ethics, the “theology of the body” has been a way of developing such an approach in one facet of our lives. We need something similar when it comes to our economic lives. People often ask me, “Does that mean I should give away everything in excess?” No. That’s



not the core point. Certainly, **one** way that the material mediates the spiritual is by practicing the corporal works of mercy. But there are many others. For example, I’ve long been involved in local food systems that work to connect local farmers directly with consumers. Things like CSA’s and locally run food co-operatives build up relationships of solidarity. Sometimes the apparent “extra cost” of such food is a kind of gift transfer that “shows up” in the real world: in the quality of the life of the farm families, their animals, and the very soil they husband. Moreover, such economic linkages create what sociologists call “social capital,” a dense network of caring relationships that serve all kinds of social functions, binding communities together and providing ways for people to help one another. Think of the extra money for the food as an investment in solidarity, and recognize that maybe that’s a better investment than, say, cheap industrial food and the “luxury” of an expensive latte!

Dorothy’s overall vision of the world, developed in tandem with Peter Maurin’s essays, assumes not simply a society where we help those who are suffering, but a society where it is “easier to be good,” an economy where all our decisions are about people. Once we start thinking that way, hopefully, we can start to see all the various ways in which our lives as consumers can be quite different. Our spending decisions can include fostering a different kind of economic system.

### **So every economic decision has a moral consequence?**

Yes, and not just a consequence in terms of an “outcome.” What we are doing when we spend money (or invest it or give it away) is creating a flow or exchange that is ultimately a matter of human relationships. Every economic decision contributes to strengthening some “flow.” The question is always whether we are contributing to unjust, damaging flows, or whether we are directing our resources into streams that are more life-giving.

### **Dorothy wrote movingly of her desire for the “abundant” life. Can you reflect a bit, from the Christian perspective, on the seeming paradox between seeking “abundance” and practicing temperance?**

On the surface, many things about true Christianity seem paradoxical. But on further examination, they are less so. For example, we all have moments when we recognize that a life of hedonistic material excess is *not* the way to happiness; when we affirm that “the best things in life aren’t things.” But then we go on with our lives and forget our insight. And to be fair, there are constant forces insisting that we forget it. (I sometimes wonder what a world without advertising

would be like!) But more seriously, the “abundance” we seek as humans is not about things but about love. What matters in the end is loving God with our whole heart and loving our neighbor. This, of course, is easy to say but hard to execute, especially in a materialistic society where “economic growth” and abundance are encouraged, and somewhat easy to attain.

I first read Dorothy and Merton when I was in college. College may seem like an odd place to learn about temperance, but I went to a small school in a small town, on the edge of a large preserve of woodland that stretched out into farms. Life was simple. Most of us didn’t have much stuff; there were virtually no TV’s, no cars; winter was long. There was no Amazon to order from, just some small-town merchants. We went to dining halls at set times and ate the food offered on the cafeteria line. (No food courts dedicated to individual choice!) Sometimes I think God and neighbor had a lot more space in which to be encountered in that environment than in my life now, precisely because of the simplicity. It was an uncluttered place, and I don’t mean primarily in terms of stuff in closets. I mean something more like a minimizing of options, as if life was not all about maximizing choices. Instead, life ended up focusing on other, more abundant things.

Dorothy and Merton showed me (in different ways), that abundance was a matter of yearning for something far beyond the ordinary. And, not to ruffle any feathers, I think I have come to see how Dorothy’s approach to this issue is more challenging and stretching than Merton’s. Merton was searching for something like the “abundance” I would see in the vast night country sky, almost something mystical that would absorb you into

*(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](http://www.dorothydayguild.org)), asking that Dorothy Day be named a saint – and to hope they will be heard.**

*Dorothy Day was truly a saint as she served the poor and lived poverty.*

**Sr. Elizabeth Holler, Harrington Park, NJ**

*Dorothy always gave it her all without compromise, showing us how to love one another.*

**James and Marilyn McCorwick, Traverse City, MI**

*I met her only once back in 1970. It was like sitting at the feet of a master.*

**Glenn Cratty, Rupert, VT**

*Living with and caring for the desperate poor for 50 years should more than qualify Dorothy Day for sainthood.*

**Marjorie Irig, New York City**

*I'm always so inspired by Dorothy Day's spirit to live in such faith here in prison. And I often pray to her for her help to do so.*  
**Stephen S.**

*I volunteered at the house on Chrystie St. She changed my life. I became a Catholic, a pacifist, and worked in the South for 3 years in the civil rights movement.*

**Maya Barnes, Berkeley, CA**

## DISPATCHES!

Inquiry staff set a bold goal for 2020: completing the collection of all evidence for the Inquiry into the Life and Virtues of Dorothy Day by the end of December. Great strides continue to be made. The Historical Commission finalized a draft of the biographical sketch – a roughly 100-page biography of Dorothy Day. Eyewitness testimony is completed. Theological censors are working on the last two volumes of over 20,000 pages of readings. And Dorothy Day's 6,800-page diary has been fully transcribed.

Our attention now turns to printing and collating those diaries and completing transcription of Dorothy Day's letters. Currently, 50 transcribers have completed almost half of roughly 500 historically significant letters. Ignatian and other volunteers, in an effort spearheaded by Dr. Joseph Sclafani and John Dowd, have done exemplary work in pulling these transcription projects together.



Most of the letters being transcribed appeared in edited form in Robert Ellsberg's *All the Way to Heaven*. But Ignatian Volunteer, Bill Woods, rediscovered an important “lost” letter to Fr. Joseph McSorley, CSP, the first spiritual director and archdiocesan liaison to the Catholic Worker, appointed by Cardinal Hayes. In a four-page letter, Dorothy responds to concerns raised by local clergy regarding her criticism of a prominent union leader for using “undemocratic methods” including “the use of force in maintaining power” and “paying himself too much salary.” Though the leader was known to be a staunch Catholic and a daily communicant, Dorothy writes, “It’s just another case of keeping religion out of business, out of politics, out of trade unionism. He is the product of his age, an age that is passing.”

An attorney, Bill Woods has also led our efforts to obtain Dorothy Day's arrest records. So far, we have turned up sheriff's records from her 1970's California arrest in solidarity with the United Farm Workers. But records of her early arrest in Washington have been destroyed, and Illinois law prohibits public disclosure of criminal records. Our requests for her New York City arrest records are still pending.



In the coming months, Cardinal Dolan's delegate, Fr. Richard Welch, CSSR, will be taking testimony from 20 expert witnesses, and the Historical Commission will be reviewing Dorothy Day's unpublished manuscripts. Guild Coordinator, Jeff Korgen, will be researching her reputation for holiness with the help of the Dorothy Day Archives at Marquette University. Readers are asked to search their own archives and to kindly send copies to Jeff's attention of any publication, acknowledging her sanctity.

*(“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

**O**f the many saints whose efforts to be faithful to the Gospel buoyed and inspired their own, Dorothy and Peter Maurin would likely cite the primacy of St. Francis of Assisi. And it's a safe bet (assuming no one has done an actual count!) that of the many saintly visages that animate the pages of *The Catholic Worker*, it's the bearded face, tonsured head, and piercing black eyes of this medieval monk (1182-1226) that appear the most.

In her September 1945 column in the paper, Dorothy wrote, "Peter is always getting back to St. Francis of Assisi, who was most truly the 'great personalist.' In his poverty, rich; in renouncing all, possessing all; generous, giving out of his heart, sowing generously and reaping generously, humble and asking when in need, possessing freedom and all joy."

Too, she saw Francis in Peter not only for Peter's poverty (he essentially owned only what he was wearing) but also for his dauntless enthusiasm for "building a new society within the shell of the old." Peter, like Francis, proclaimed the Gospel by trying to live it. Later, others, like Kenneth Woodward, former religion editor for *Newsweek* and author of *Making Saints*, compared Dorothy herself to St. Francis. "Dorothy Day did for her era what St. Francis of Assisi did for his: recall a complacent Christianity to its radical roots."

Years before he died, Francis was considered a saint. He came from the nouveau riche. At a time when the mercantile class was on the rise and clothes signaled status, his father was a successful cloth merchant whom the young Francis accompanied on business trips to France. Still in his teens, he became the spirited ringleader of other well-to-do Assisi youth who, of a night, would eat a fine dinner, get drunk, and, in the words of Francis's first biographer, commit "every kind of debauchery."

Violence abounded in Francis's world – between the Holy Roman Empire, between Assisi and other towns, and, in the town itself, between the merchant class and the local nobility. It wouldn't have been a rare day when he saw somebody being knifed. At the age of twenty-one, he welcomed the chance to go to war himself, in a battle between Assisi and Perugia, sporting fine clothes and an excellent horse. But Assisi was soon defeated, and Francis spent a year in a dank, rat-ridden prison before his father was able to ransom him out. His awaiting friends reported though that he had lost heart for his former indulgences.

Not long later, in 1206, he renounced all claims on his family's fortune. Francis said he married Lady Poverty. That same year in the words of his Testament, "God gave me brothers." Two young Assisians joined him; by 1208, the group numbered twelve. The Franciscan movement had begun. In Francis's view, property, by arousing envy and, therefore, conflict, was the one thing potentially most destructive to peace in the world. Thus the community lived, as completely as possible, without property. To be part of the group, a man had to sell all his goods, give the money to the poor, and live a life of voluntary poverty.

The choice of voluntary poverty – one that characterized the Catholic Worker movement from its start – was inspired by the life of Jesus, the poor man of Nazareth. Dorothy wrote of the poverty of Jesus in her autobiography, *The Long*

*Loneliness*: "He was born in a stable, He did not come to be a temporal King, He worked with His hands, spent the first years of His life in exile, and the rest of His early manhood in a crude carpenter shop....He trod the roads in His public

## At Root...

**The true meaning of "riches" is an almost universal theme among the saints. As is the plight of the poor. Dorothy always placed her confidence in their wisdom, just a mere sliver here:**

*I no longer want a monastery which is too secure. I want a small monastery, like the house of a poor workman who is not sure if tomorrow he will find work and bread, who with all his being shares the suffering of the world.*

**Bl. Charles de Foucauld**

*This bread which you have set aside in the bread of the hungry, this garment you have locked away is the clothing of the naked; those shoes which you let rot are the shoes of him who is barefoot; those riches you hoarded are the riches of the poor.*

**St. Basil the Great**

*Each member of the Company should set all her good, her love, her delight, not in robes, nor in food...but in God alone and in his benign and ineffable Providence.*

**St. Angela Merici,  
Foundress of the Ursulines**

*A spiritual joy is the greatest sign of the divine grace dwelling in a soul.*

**St. Bonaventure**

*I am for God and the poor.*

**St. Vincent de Paul**

*He who says he has done enough has already perished.*

**St. Augustine**



St. Francis of Assisi

life and the first men He called were fishermen....”

For Francis and the Catholic Worker later, poverty carried a freedom to work creatively in service to the marginalized, uninhibited by preoccupation with appearances of success and security. Francis’s brothers did the kinds of work that Francis felt were sanctioned by the Gospel. They renovated churches, tended to lepers, performed manual labor for farmers and artisans, preached, and prayed. They could accept a payment of bread and fruit, but they were not allowed to have money. In turn, rather than taking salaries, Peter and Dorothy’s Workers spent their energies performing the works of mercy and working for justice and peace, placing themselves alongside the people they served by accepting the role of beggar.

Critically, the voluntary poverty encouraged was always distinguished from the involuntary poverty of the poor and the absolute destitution of the poorest among them. If voluntary poverty was seen as a kind of liberating sacrament, destitution was viewed as an obscene sacrilege.

In the April 1950 *Catholic Worker*, in an article evocatively titled, “Poverty without Tears,” Dorothy added a cautionary to those who would begin to embrace poverty, suggesting an incremental approach: “I learned about vocations to poverty, about presumption and pride in poverty, about the extremists who went to the depths in practicing poverty...and after a few years left work and settled down to bourgeois, and individualistic comfort. It is good to accept one’s limitations, not to race ahead farther than God wants us to go....” Temperance counseled even in poverty!

Though Francis had so clear a vision of a Christian life, on his deathbed, he said to his brothers, “I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach

you what is yours!” Dorothy herself prayed to grow in love and practice of his Lady Poverty. She recounts in the February 1953 paper that before beginning one of her many journeys, she visited a church, asking Francis, just a few days before his feast day, to help her: “When I left New York, October first, I put in the hands of the statue of St. Francis, in the courtyard of the church at 32nd St., a bright red rose, and begged that he teach me ever more about poverty....”

Now, decades after Dorothy’s death, amidst deepening divides between rich and poor, we might do well to echo her plea to this all too relevant saint – and sprinkle some fresh spring blossoms in both their directions.

– C.Z.

## Precarious

In 1962, a first book appeared by a man who would come to write many conscience-arousing volumes as America’s leading socialist. *The Other America* – a haunting tour of poverty throughout America – was credited with helping inspire John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson to launch the war on poverty just two years later. And its author, former Catholic Worker Michael Harrington, would become in the words of his biographer, Maurice Isserman, “a kind of secular St. Francis of Assisi.”

As a 23-year-old in the early 50’s, Harrington worked in New York’s Catholic Worker community where he edited the newspaper. In his dedication to *The Other America* he acknowledges that it was through “Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement that I first came into contact with the terrible reality of involuntary poverty and the magnificent ideal of voluntary poverty.” (One can only imagine how JFK’s reading this brought back to him his own visit to the Worker in the summer of 1940 along with his brother, Joe, and their talking long into the night with Dorothy).

Recalling his life at the Worker, Harrington, the son of a school teacher and an accountant, said that though he embraced voluntary poverty, his poverty wasn’t “precarious.” “I could always call my parents in St. Louis if I had to.” Dorothy, he explained, deeply appreciated the “precarity” of the poor, a word, in fact, she’s said to have coined to capture the psychological as well as the financial insecurity of the poor. If the Worker may have been broke from time to time – in part because of a reluctance to hold on to any surplus goods – Dorothy recognized it was still not truly precarious. As she would say more than once, “this business of poverty is not simple.”



President and Mrs. Obama wave good-bye to Pope Francis as he leaves in his modest sized travel car

it. There are moments like that in the Christian life. But Dorothy recognized that there was “more” to abundance, and the “more” was not so much a further soaring feeling but a full descent into the lives of others. The great Lord of the

Universe who made us in His image, at whose works we can marvel, is even more wondrously the Lord who enters our lives, encounters our darkness with His light and mercy. That “entering in” is the abundant life, and for sure, when we grasp

that, we are likely to want to travel light – and share with our fellow travelers.

### Anything you’d like to add, David?

The opportunity to reflect on Dorothy’s life and witness is always a challenge, and I’m reminded that I need to do it more often! More importantly, I am reminded that the rejection of luxury and excessive consumerism and the like is not an end in itself. It is something that should dispose us more and more to service, more and more to that “abundant life.” I’m humbled to consider my own shortcomings in this regard, but I pray we all continue to recognize how Dorothy’s example is a shining human lighthouse guiding us through all the passing waves and storms. **D**

Ed note: This interview was conducted prior to the Covid-19 crisis.

## LOAVES AND FISHES CAMPAIGN 2020

We all know the story: how as news of Jesus’ teachings and deeds spread, his followers grew in number. How without adequate provisions to feed them, Jesus gathers five loaves and two fishes from a young boy in this large company, and after giving thanks to God, distributes them, managing to feed all who are hungry.

The Guild needs to gather “loaves and fishes” – trusting to their multiplication – to insure we successfully complete by year’s end the first (“Diocesan”) phase of the Cause for Dorothy Day and start the second and final (“Roman”) phase. Loaves and fishes that will help defray the costs of our skeletal administrative staff here in

New York, of a canon lawyer in Rome who reviews all our work, and of our “spreading the word” via print and social media.

Loaves and Fishes Campaign 2020 – launched on December 8th, 2019, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the day Dorothy Day famously prayed that some way would open up for her as a Catholic to use her talents on behalf of the poor – will end on May 1st, 2020, the anniversary of the founding



ADE BETHUNE

of the Catholic Worker where she lived out her vocation. The goal is to raise \$25,000.

Please consider making a contribution. Unlike your annual Guild membership dues, Campaign contributions are tax deductible. (See membership form on p. 15. And you needn’t be a

Guild member to make a donation!). Most importantly, know that anything and everything is appreciated. No amount – just like those loaves and fishes – is ever too small. **D**



# CALLED TO COMMUNITY

*(Dorothy Day famously wrote, “Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship. We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.” Seemingly overnight, the movement she co-founded in 1933 became a community of shared faith and shared goods where resources and abilities were pooled — recalling the early Christians — so as to be able to take care of far more than just themselves.*

*Over the years, Dorothy shared their hopes and hardships, joys and sorrows. She had a keen eye for the poor people and neighborhoods around her and a rare capacity to see their saving beauty. Below are a few excerpts from her reflections made over a lifetime, loosely moving in time from earlier to later.)*

Actually, we here at the Catholic Worker did not start these soup lines ourselves. Years ago, John Griffin, one of the men from the Bowery who moved in with us was giving out clothes, and when they ran out he began sitting down the petitioners to a hot cup of coffee, or a bowl of soup — whatever we had. By word of mouth the news spread, and one after another they came, forming lines (during the Depression) which stretched around the block. The loaves and fishes had to be multiplied to take care of it, and everyone contributed food, money and space.

— — —  
The next month we carried a story about a woman who came in response to this letter and told of the plight of the homeless who were shunted from agency to agency and from “home” to “home.” Within the month we had started the first woman’s House of Hospitality. Already we had rented an old apartment in a condemned tenement on Fourth Street to put up three of the men who had joined with the work. Already three more were sleeping in the little store on Fifteenth Street which was also an office, a din-

ing room and here meals were being served.

The large apartment for women was down the street and could accommodate fifteen. It had steam and hot water: comforts we have never had since. The rent was paid by contributions from working girls in the parish of the Immaculate Conception.

— — —  
The little yard back of the office is cool and fresh because Mrs. Riedel hoses it first thing in the morning and mops down the back steps. The petunias and four o’clocks are in bloom — the gorgeous cerise color the Mexican Indians so love and which they use in their serapes and woven rugs and chairs and baskets. The fig tree has little figs on it and the wild cucumber vine in the 14th Street yard across the way is spilling over the fence. There is a breeze out here and it is pleasant to have early morning coffee and the paper outside.

It is one of the compensations of poverty to have such a garden. In the front the street is slummish. At night one walks warily to avoid the garbage that is hurled out of the windows in sacks. There are odors, foul odors

often, out in front. I will not be so realistic as to more than hint at them. But out behind the house there is the fresh green smell of growing things.



PHOTO: REBECCA LEPKOFF

— — —  
We have been living for fourteen years in a community on Mott Street. Every night as we said compline, we said “Visit, O Lord, this community!” And we meant the street, the neighborhood, the two parishes we lived between....

— — —  
So much with so little,” not “so little and so late.” This has been running through my head as I thought of writing this appeal. It never ceases to amaze us, how through all these eighteen years we can keep on serving

*(Called to Community, cont’d on p. 10)*

(Called to Community, cont'd from p. 9)

coffee, regardless of price, and soup and bread in so many of our farms throughout the land. In New York five hundred or so come to be fed. We don't actually count the servings. It's like having a family. You hold your breath and wonder how many God is going to send.

— — —



PHOTO: REBECCA LEPKOFF

I can remember our first efforts nineteen years ago. (With this issue we start our twentieth year.) We had no office, no equipment but a typewriter which was pawned the first month. We wrote the paper on park benches and at the kitchen table. In an effort to achieve a little of the destitution of our neighbors we gave away even our furniture and sat on boxes. But as fast as we gave things away people brought more. We gave away blankets to needy families, started our first house of hospitality and people gathered together what blankets we needed. We gave away food and more food came in. I can remember a haunch of venison from the Canadian Northwest, a can of oysters from Maryland, a container of honey from Illinois. Even now it comes in, a salmon from Seattle, flown across the continent; nothing is too good for the poor.

— — —

We pay for our beans, peas, lentils which thicken our soup, into which goes meat stock and all the fresh vegetables we can beg. We even are given hundreds of little cups of yogurt each week to feed the soup-line, which is growing longer and longer — usually there are about 300 meals served daily. A community means more than a houseful now; it also means neighbors and guests and wanderers from coast to coast.

— — —

At the Worker, we're living as families in the neighborhood and we live from a sense of day to day and from our superfluity going on out and being spread around the neighborhood. We haven't got room for all the furniture we have and so we just put it out — let the neighbors come and help themselves to it. In turn, when we need an extra bed, we hunt around the neighborhood to find where some bed has been discarded. Down on the East Side you see people walking home with a mattress on their shoulders, you clean it up and there you supply yourself with the furniture you need.

— — —

Over here at 223 Chrystie, we are closer to the Bowery than ever. There was an interruption of only two days



*Drawing by Hugo Gellert, radical artist friend of Dorothy's*



PHOTO: REBECCA LEPKOFF

in the serving of the 500 or so who come to get soup and coffee and bread, and that was due to the taking up and reconnecting of stoves. We are nearer the women's lodging house here. The Salvation Army Hotel on Rivington street is a spotless place, and women can get a bed for thirty-five cents a night. We are a few blocks from the men's municipal lodging house on Third Street. There are already Puerto Rican families coming in every day for clothes, there are neighbors coming in for books. Some Jewish friends from the tenement next door wanted to know if they could use the quiet of our library last Sunday.

— — —

I think of the old hymn, "We are pilgrims, we are strangers, we can tarry, we can tarry but an hour." But in the sitting room, which used to be the television room, which used to be the library, and which is still a bedroom for the hardy souls, the overflow, who can sleep on the floor, our household is gathered, listening to Margaret's little radio which rests on a chair in front of her. On other days she is usually making braided rugs out of the lovely ties that come in to us. But today is Sunday so she rests in her rocking chair. She has a puppy,

very fat with a pink bare belly, always visible since it is always rolling over to be scratched. There is also a kitten which is sick and somnolent, perched sedately in the middle of a cushion, paws tucked under, eyes closed. Larry even has a little white mouse which he carries around in his shirt pocket and takes out now and again to enchant the little ones among us.

With these pets, with this music, with conversation and newspapers and books, and an occasional game, and the rosary at noon every day, and crowds of mothers and children coming in every morning for clothing from Veronica, it is a cheerful room. Every now and then an old lady from the neighborhood who comes from some cheerless bed in a lodging, falls asleep in her chair and all but topples out. She is caught by one of the others,

and if people are feeling courteous she is given a rocking chair, with arms, so that she is in less danger of falling when she nods.

— — —

It was a bright day in May, and across the street, in the little Spring Street playground, old men sat at chess-boards painted on the tables and the children ran screaming around at their games, which always involved jumping, dancing and whirling. Little ginkgo trees, with their fan-shaped leaves and upstanding branches, were bright green and shimmering. Mike was happy, standing over his garbage cans, waiting for the trash collector, surveying his clean-swept sidewalk. Mike fetches the bread each day from Poppilardo's bakery, ten dollars' worth, and on Friday gets the free

swordfish tails which a big wholesale house at the Fulton Fish Market saves for us. They make good chowder. Every Friday he calls out to Larry the cook, "What kind of fish?" and Larry makes the stock answer, "Dead fish!" which never fails to get a burst of laughter.

— — —

Often I am tempted to depression, thinking that I have scarcely begun to live a spiritual life, even to live the way we all profess to, that of voluntary poverty and manual labor. It is a great cleanser of conscience, this living in community, with so many poor and suffering. That harsh saying, "You love God as much as the one you love the least," often comes to mind. But, just to say over and over again that one prayer, the Our Father, is to revive, to return to a sense of joy. **D**

## Revolution of the Heart

Acclaimed religious biographical filmmaker, Martin Doblmeier, the maker of a compelling new documentary, **Revolution of the Heart: the Dorothy Day Story**, sat down recently with *America* producer and Guild advisory committee member, Colleen Dulle. Just a little eavesdrop here, courtesy of *America Media*:

**Colleen:** Why make a film about Dorothy now in 2020?

**Martin:** Dorothy Day probably is the most fascinating, challenging and courageous American figure of the 20th

century, not just a Catholic figure or a woman...just across the Board....

**You were interested in her for a long time....**

I waited 35 years to

finally get around to making a film about her, but she certainly was worth the wait...I'm interested in how God is alive and well and working in the world through the people that we engage with every time.

**And what have you learned?**

After having made the film on Dorothy, I'm much more intentional now about my prayer life. I'm much more thoughtful about what God is calling me to do....She embodies so much of what we need now, which is genuine empathy for others. Her life was instinctual. She saw someone fall, she'd help him up. She saw someone hungry, she'd feed them. She leaves us with a model on how to be authentic, how to have integrity, how to live as if your life really means something.

(Check your local public television station for airings. Recently ranked its best-selling documentary, DVD is available from Amazon. To learn more, see [journeyfilms.com](http://journeyfilms.com). Entire interview, "Dorothy Day as Saint and Revolutionary," on YouTube.)







**by Kathleen DeSutter Jordan**

*(Kathleen DeSutter Jordan lived and worked with Dorothy Day as a member of the Catholic Worker community in New York City for years during the Viet Nam era and later. She was an editor of the newspaper and remains a frequent contributor. For decades, with her husband Patrick, she maintained Dorothy's beach cottage on Staten Island where they raised their two children. This reflection is based on a talk Kathleen gave at Maryknoll, New York, on November 26, 2019.)*

I had the privilege to go to El Salvador in 1990. It was during the civil war. We visited a church in San Salvador, St. Francis of Assisi, which had been the home parish of Father Octavio Ortiz. He had been the first priest to be ordained by then Archbishop, now Saint, Oscar Romero. Etched in the stone of the church's floor, on either side of the altar, were these two questions (in Spanish, of course):

*What does it mean to be salt for the earth? What does it mean to be light for the world?*

These two phrases had been the opening questions that Father Ortiz had prepared for a weekend leadership retreat for young Salvadorans in early 1979. On the morning of January 20, he and four of the youths attending the retreat were brutally murdered by Salvadoran security forces at a retreat center in San Salvador.

And so it is, these very questions are addressed to us, this day, every day:

What does it mean to be salt for the earth? What does it mean to be light for the world?

Such weighty, demanding questions, images!



Sometimes when asked to share my memories and impressions of Dorothy Day when I lived and worked with her (1968-1975, 1977-1980), and to reflect on how these might

challenge and lead us today, I've found it helpful to ask myself: "What are a few things about Dorothy I might not have understood had I not known, loved, and worked with her?" I was struck by a similar view in a memoir I recently read by a young woman, Helen Caldwell Day (later, Helen Caldwell Riley), written in the early 1950s. She had come to New York City from the South to study nursing. A priest she confided in, concerning her own intense search for faith and crippling self-doubts, had suggested she visit the Catholic Worker in lower Manhattan. It didn't take long for Helen to feel right at home. As she wrote in her book, *Color Ebony*: "Soon they [the Catholic Workers] let me do odd jobs around the Worker, things that everybody else was too busy to do or which freed someone for something more important which I could not do." A bit later, Helen reflects on how inspiring it was "...simply living with Dorothy, hearing her speak and seeing how she put what she said into action. (That's something you don't quite get, usually, from just hearing her lecture or reading what she says.) There was a warmth about her, a tenderness – woman, mother..."



So I hope to share briefly a glimpse of what I experienced of "the dailiness of grace" in the years I was graced to know Dorothy:

How beautiful Dorothy was, even as an older woman (which she was when I first came to the Catholic Worker, fifty years ago). And she appreciated beauty in all its forms:

– A simple wheat design on a dinner plate; the Queen Anne's lace and blue sailors, or chicory, lining Staten Island roadsides; rocks and seashells along the beach.

– Every time I wore a simple blouse my mother had given me, with a patchwork quilt-like pattern, Dorothy never failed to compliment it.

– While she did wear clothes donated to the clothing room, Dorothy also greatly appreciated dresses and skirts made for her by her friend Mary Humphries, and undergarments sent faithfully by her sister Della.

– A good book – whether Austen, Bellow or Tolstoy, Chekhov or a good Dorothy Sayers mystery – and opera – couldn't be beat. Only recently, well-aware of Dorothy's love for both the Psalms and opera, I found myself coming across lines in the Psalms replete with the passion, sorrow, and ecstasy of opera. Can't you hear strains of *Tosca* in: "I am wretched, close to death from my youth. I have borne your trials; I am numb." (Ps. 88) Or perhaps a melody from *La Boheme* or *Traviata* in lines such as: "My heart says to

you, 'Your face, Lord, do I seek.' Hide not your face from me." (Ps.27) Or, "In you do our hearts find joy..." (Ps. 33)



Dorothy was firm but sweet.

– One night at supper, the carrots looked particularly scraggly. The person who had prepared them argued they were more nutritious unpeeled. While that may or may not be true, Dorothy recognized the real reason they hadn't been peeled: laziness – which was acknowledged; and it didn't happen soon again.

– Several of us were in Dorothy's room as she was opening the morning mail. A note and check came in, addressed to her personally, and insisting she "enjoy some wine and roses!" In but a matter of seconds, she looked at us and announced, so cheerfully, "I know just what I'm going to do with this – take you to see *Fiddler on the Roof*! And so she did, treating us on the way at a Chock full o' Nuts to coffee and a cream cheese sandwich.

– I had walked home with Dorothy from evening Mass at Nativity parish. It happened to be the 40th anniversary of the CW, and a festive supper had been prepared. However, it was the first of the month when some would receive whatever checks were coming to them and go right out to celebrate with a beer (or two, or six...). Thus it was that, on entering the dining room, we were met with a scene of absolute chaos.

Dorothy somewhat slumped against me – she walked with a cane then – and uttered quietly, desperately, "What have I done?" She was unable to enter any further into the dining room, and instead went upstairs to her bedroom for the night.

– With a keen eye and low tolerance for sentimentality, Dorothy could be brusque. It was clear, as I walked with her up to her room one evening, that she was feeling sad because two trusted co-workers would soon be leaving St. Joseph House. As I reached out to comfort her, she turned quickly, looked me right in the eye, and said quite firmly, "Don't pity me!"

– She took utter delight in watching our daughter, Hannah,

climb all over her kitchen table and chairs as a toddler; and later, in holding our son, Justin, as an infant. "I'll take care of the child, so just call me," she'd say with her good-night each evening as the term of my pregnancy drew near.

On the other hand, Dorothy was flesh and blood. She could be impatient and judgmental. She seemed, generally, to catch herself quickly and to apologize, if needed.

– We were talking on the phone – she in her room at Maryhouse, I at home in Spanish Camp on Staten Island – and I must have asked how she was doing: "Well, Stanley's here [Stanley had been at the CW just about as long as Dorothy] and he's taking up all the oxygen!"



Fortunately, Dorothy had a pretty good sense of humor and irony – subtle, not uproarious.

– Shortly before her final illness, she was attending a Friday night meeting at Maryhouse, where several people in the community were discussing civil disobedience at a planned sit-in the next day at the UN. Dorothy turned and said quietly to those nearby, "I'd like to go, but I'm afraid when an officer would come and ask why I was refusing to stand, I might have forgotten the reason!"

– One evening, a particularly challenging and verbose member of the household made it clear he wanted to sit next to Dorothy for supper. "Put him on my right side," Dorothy instructed; her hearing was worse in her right ear.

– I was sitting next to her in the soup kitchen one morning as she was opening the day's mail. One letter brought an announcement from a

university that they were bestowing on her, at graduation, their most prestigious award. Without missing a beat, she lowered her head and said quietly and sincerely, "What are we doing wrong?"



In one of the "Prefaces of Saints," we pray:

"By their way of life You offer us an example, by communion with them You give us companionship."

A few weeks after my husband Pat and I had left New York

(*Breaking Bread, cont'd on p. 14*)



*Paradise, Giovanni di Paolo*

*(Breaking Bread, cont'd from p. 13)*

and the Worker in the winter of 1975, with an unknown path ahead of us, we were bolstered by a letter from Dorothy. She acknowledged the weariness we must have experienced from our time at the Worker, and she recommended as we traversed the country via Greyhound that we “Rest your eyes from reading too – look off into distances and wait for the Lord. You see I am very much with you. We all love you so much! Miss you so much, but feel you are with us just the same. Such friendships the Lord has sent us in this life. God is good. We can’t thank Him enough. Thank you, thank you, Lord, for everything but friendships especially. We are not alone.”



In conclusion I’d like to share three personal experiences, revelations as it were, that I hope will convey something of the grace of Dorothy’s life, of her friendship, and of her “undivided heart” (Psalm 86).

One evening, again after having walked with Dorothy up to her room, she turned to me, looked me right in the eye again, and said, “I never looked back.” Though unable to recall now what had preceded that, I knew on the spot what she meant had to do with her own vocation.

Second, one evening I’d been especially upset by the emphasis in a letter from the Cardinal, read that day from the pulpit, condemning anyone who had anything to do with an abortion (this was pre-Roe v. Wade, but post abortion having been legalized in N.Y. State). I’d gone up to Dorothy’s room to talk with her about it – more like vent – as I was quite critical of the tone of the Cardinal’s letter. Dorothy listened quietly and attentively, and then responded, “These are not the worst times in the history of the Church...

We have to have the long view, like our Communist brothers and sisters.” An hour or two later, I returned to her room, and found her seated next to her bed, in her nightgown, with her Bible open on her lap. “I was just thinking of you when I came across this,” she said, and continued, reading from Deuteronomy 6: “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart...”

I am still chagrined, if not downright embarrassed, to admit that, while knowing that familiar and great text, I found myself thinking, as I said good night and started walking downstairs, “I wonder why she read that? What does that have to do with abortion, or my agitation?” And then Oh, very literally like a ton of bricks, it hit me that what Dorothy had read to me, the great “Shema,” is the very heart of the matter! (Thank God, eventually the penny drops!)

Third, a year or two later, Pat and I were living away from the N.Y. CW, working with long-time Catholic Workers, with whom we had experienced some real conflict and painful disappointment. That evening we called Dorothy, to ask for her prayers. The next morning when the phone rang, we were quite surprised and very happy to hear her voice: “I was doing my morning reading just now,” she said, “and thought of you when I came across this passage:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things

to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8. 35-39) And then Dorothy added, “Think of Julian of Norwich. All will work out.” Consoling then, consoling still.



Several masterpieces by the fifteenth century Italian painter Giovanni di Paolo are included in the holdings of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. There’s something both timely yet futuristic in his brilliantly colorful, dynamic panel – “The Creation of the World and the Expulsion from Paradise” – as if he had consulted not only Dante but Teilhard de Chardin. In another gallery one finds di Paolo’s “Paradise.” It originally formed part of the base of an altarpiece that included the “Creation and Expulsion” panel. I never tire of the joy of seeing its groups of angels and saints, greeting and embracing one another – almost dancing! – in an exquisitely beautiful and “redeemed” garden.

In memory of Dorothy, and with gratitude for her “salt” and “light,” I’d like to conclude with a short poem by Samuel Menashe:

#### **PARADISE - AFTER GIOVANNI DI PAOLO**

**Paradise is a grove  
Where flower and fruit tree  
Form oval petals and pears  
And apples only fair...  
Among these saunter saints  
Who uphold one another  
In sacred conversations  
Shaping hands that come close  
As the lilies at their knees  
While seraphim burn  
With the moment’s breeze**



## 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!

### 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!

#### Documenting Favors

Catholics profess that saints throughout history exert an influence on our lives today, beyond the power of their witness. This underlies the belief that when God chooses "to raise up" an individual for sainthood, He will grant "favors" through that individual's intercession. Such favors act as further evidence of a candidate's worthiness. With gratitude, we welcome your sharing any experience of healing or help you attribute to Dorothy's intercession, via snail mail or e-mail to: [george.horton@archny.org](mailto:george.horton@archny.org).



#### In Our Time

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Just clip out and mail to the Guild address above. You may also submit online at [www.dorothydayguild.org](http://www.dorothydayguild.org).

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

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Thank you!

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## 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](http://www.dorothydayguild.org). Thank you!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

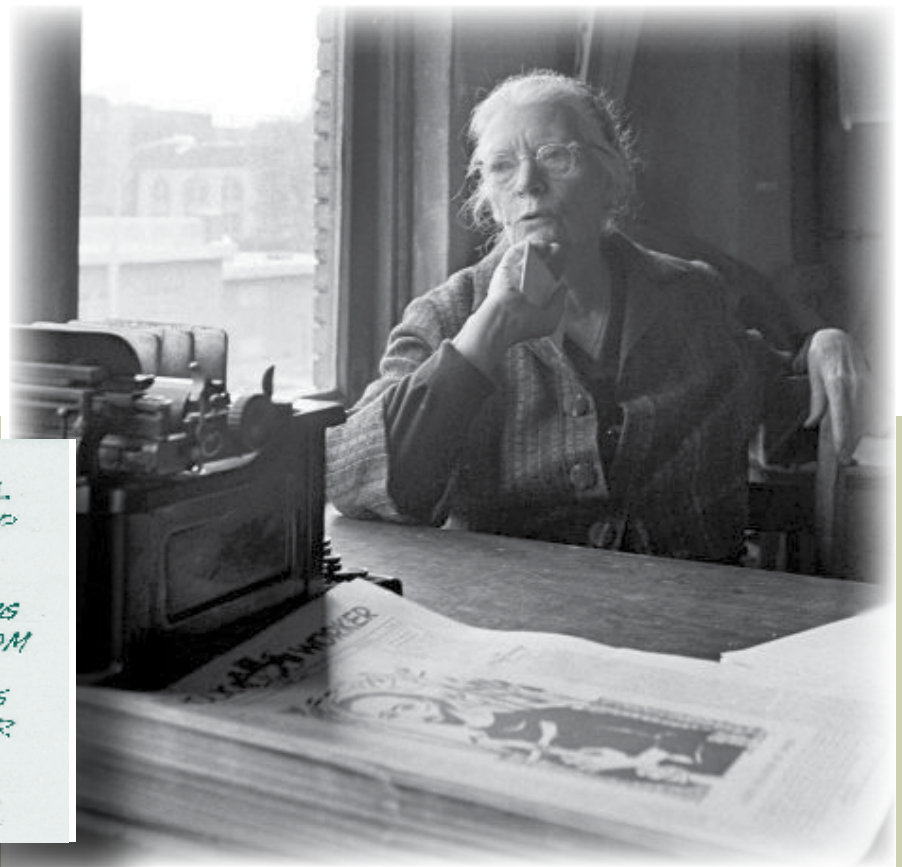
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THE HOUSES OF HOSPITALITY HAVE  
LONG KNOWN THE COMPANIONSHIP  
OF THE WOLF, WHO IS NOT AT THE  
DOOR, BUT IN OUR MIDST. WE ARE  
STRIPPED BARE. THERE IS NOTHING  
IN THE BANK TO GIVE. WE LIVE FROM  
DAY TO DAY, AND BY THE LITTLE  
MIRACLES GOD PERFORMS IN HIS  
BOUNTY. "IF WE ASK OUR FATHER  
FOR BREAD, WILL HE GIVE US  
A STONE?"

DOROTHY DAY