

IN OUR TIME

Newsletter of the Dorothy Day Guild
Volume 1, Issue 1 Spring 2015

Dear Friends,

Greetings of peace from the office of the Dorothy Day Guild! Eastertide, this holy time of celebrating new life, is the perfect time to share with you news of the growing movement to forward Dorothy Day's canonization. We are so grateful you are a part of it.

As you know, Dorothy was always about "putting off the old man and putting on Christ." She flatly stated that "We are all called to be saints, St. Paul says, and we might as well get over our bourgeois fear of the name. We might also get used to recognizing the fact that there is some of the saint in all of us. Inasmuch as we are growing, putting off the old man and putting on Christ, there is some of the saint, the holy, the divine right there....We are all called to be saints."

Popular interest in Dorothy Day has grown since her death in 1980 and certainly since the Vatican's approval of the start of her "cause" in 2000 (the officially designated "Guild" was established five years later). It was Fr. Henry Fehren in the pages of *Salt* magazine who first made the case for her as "a saint for our time and place." His reasons ring out: she was an independent layperson "always loyal to the Church but always responsible to Christ." Then there was her stance of "thorough opposition to war and the means of war." Finally, she modeled a contemporary, realistic way to be a saint today by showing us "how to love."

Much has happened, but much remains for us to do. We hope you enjoy reading this revived newsletter, retitled for our shared hope: that Dorothy Day be canonized "in our time." (We also hope you will consider joining and/or renewing your membership in the Guild, please see the last page). Each issue of *In Our Time* will include an interview ("Good Talk") dealing with a specific gift of Dorothy's. Since peace was the first gift of the risen Lord, this issue's interview with Jim Forest focuses on Dorothy's unswerving pacifism.

In *Spiritual Guides for Today* Annice Callahan writes that Dorothy's "life, work, and writings call us to conversion." For us, as for Dorothy, conversion and conversation are vitally linked. As she wrote so beautifully, reflecting on the beginnings of the Catholic Worker movement, "It all happened while we sat there talking, and it is still going on." May her life and witness continue to carry on, from generation to generation.

WE NEED SAINTS - SAINTS FOR THE 21ST
CENTURY WITH A SPIRITUALITY APPROPRIATE
TO HELPING THE POOR AND TO MAKE THE
NEEDED CHANGE ... POPE FRANCIS

DO NOT RESIST ONE WHO IS EVIL. BUT
IF ANYONE STRIKES YOU ON THE RIGHT
CHEEK, TURN TO HIM THE OTHER ALSO;
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GOOD TALK

(The following are excerpts from a U.S. Catholic magazine interview with Jim Forest. A former Catholic Worker, Jim not only has written authoritative biographies of both Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton, two of the American Catholic Church's most famous converts, but also knew them personally.)

U.S. Catholic: The close friendship between Day and Merton [was] rooted in their common commitment to nonviolence and the works of mercy.... At heart, they shared a desire to restore to the church its early refusal of violence for any reason.

Jim Forest: If you were to be baptized in the early centuries, you had to make a commitment not to kill anybody, period, says Forest. How did we lose that? Merton and Dorothy were two of the people in the 20th century who helped to unpack those boxes that had been pushed up into the attic.

How did Merton and Day become friends?

It was a friendship of letters; they never actually met. Their oldest surviving letter is from December 1956, from Dorothy to Merton. She had received the news that he had offered Christmas Mass for her and the Catholic Worker and wanted him

to know that "this has made me very happy indeed."

The next letter that escaped the vicissitudes of time is also from Dorothy, from June 1959. It's a reply to a letter from Merton, and she apologizes for not having answered more quickly and also recalls with gratitude the copies of *The Seven Storey Mountain* he had sent to her way back in 1948. That might have been the beginning, just Merton sending her a box of books. So Merton's interest in Dorothy goes back at least to 1948.

Why do you think Merton was interested in Day and the Worker?

The big decision for Merton was whether to be part of Catherine Doherty's Friendship House in Harlem near Columbia, where he was studying, which was like the Catholic Worker, or to go to Gethsemani and become a monk.

Monastic life tilted heavily toward prayer, and ultimately Merton realized there was just something mysterious in him that pulled him toward that vocation. He didn't feel it was necessarily as high a vocation as the works of mercy, but it

We will be pacifists -- I hope and pray -- nonviolent resisters of aggression, from whomever it comes; resisters to repression, coercion, from whomever it comes; resisters to repression, coercion, from whatever side it comes; and our activity will be the Works of Mercy. Our arms will be the love of God and our brother.

— Dorothy Day



Even before her conversion, Day was a pacifist, swaying, as she wrote, to the “mystic gripping melody of struggle, a cry for world peace and human brotherhood.” She maintained the Catholic Worker’s pacifism throughout the wars of the twentieth century. Her pacifist response to the Spanish Civil War drew opposition from both the left and the right, and her stand during WW II resulted in a steep drop of support. But she would not be moved from the unshakable conviction that the followers of Christ could not kill their brothers and sisters.

Merton wrote her, “Don’t worry about whether or not in every point you are perfectly right according to everybody’s books: you are right before God as far as you can go and you are fighting for a truth that is clear enough and important enough. What more can anybody do?”

was the one that God was calling him to. But that tension was always there, and he had a sense of gratitude that the Catholic Worker existed. Having a relationship with Dorothy allowed him to be a part of the work he hadn’t been led to do. As he wrote to Dorothy in December 1963, “If there were no Catholic Worker and such forms of witness, I would never have joined the Catholic Church.”

How did they influence each other?

I think Merton probably had less influence on Dorothy than she had on him, actually. Merton was trying very hard to write through the church censors – the abbot-general of his order blocked some of his writings about war and peace, for example. But Merton mainly wanted to reach Catholics who were bewildered by the idea of nonviolent, disarmed life, with works of mercy as a core of Christian life. I think he tried harder than Dorothy to communicate with people who didn’t completely share a pacifist view, and she was impatient with him for doing so.

Dorothy was very outspoken: no footnotes, no commentaries, just bang, there it is. Merton would make a great effort to meet people midway, which I think was one of his talents.

Did he influence her in terms of prayer?

Dorothy was there already. She wouldn’t have lasted five years at the Catholic Worker if she didn’t pray. Of all the people I’ve known

in my life, including Thomas Merton, I haven’t known anybody with a more disciplined spiritual life: Mass every day, rosary every day, confession every week. A community of Benedictine monks sent us prayer booklets for use during the day at the Worker – lauds, vespers, compline. We used them until they were worn out and then they’d send us more.

How was Day’s approach to war and peace different from Merton’s?

I can remember going with Dorothy one night when she was speaking at New York University on Washington Square....I was impressed by how much hostility there was from some of the students because of her antiwar stance. The Cold War was very cold, and anybody who was seen as a little short on the patriotic side – which meant an uncritical, enthusiastic support of the military activities of the United States government – came under suspicion.

One of the students said, “Well, Ms. Day, you talk about loving enemies, but just what would you do if the Russians were to invade?” Dorothy said, “I would love them the same as I love anybody else that comes here. Jesus has said to love your enemies; that’s what I try to do. I would open my arms and do my best to make them feel welcome.”

It was an absolutely scandalous answer, but it was straight out of the New Testament. It was like a lightning bolt, this shocking



simplicity of the Gospel. Dorothy knew enough by that time to be able to speak that way without apology or embarrassment.

....It wasn’t just words. Dorothy

was in situations time and time again when she was confronted with people who were dangerous, and she did exactly what she hoped to do. She responded to them in a caring, motherly way.

Despite their differences, how are Day and Merton most similar?

....I think they both represent a radical search for a deeply rooted spiritual life that is not separate from the world. We always hear the commandment, “Love God, and love your neighbor,” but one or the other usually takes priority. Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day were both remarkably successful in finding that balance point in terms of their own unique identities. The balance is slightly different, but the scales are very similar, which makes them convincing to us today, each in their own way.

(This article appeared in the November 2010 Issue of U.S. Catholic, Vol. 76, No. 11.)

They create a new style, they prove that a certain form of life and activity is really a genuine possibility....their living on means that the example they have given remains in the Church as a permanent form.

– Karl Rahner

SAINTLY MATTERS

In all the many studies and inquiries in recent years into Dorothy Day's life, no one has ever described her as suffering from an excess of abstraction. Doubtless, no one ever will. Her "manifesto" was the Sermon on the Mount; her daily practice, the works of mercy. "If anyone comes to you hungry," she said, "you don't say, 'go thou be filled,' you go about getting them what they need."

Concreteness seems to be one of the major attributes of saintliness. In his enlightening book, *The Meaning of Saints*, Lawrence Cunningham talks about our tendency to think of certain religious values in very abstract terms, faith, love, poverty, hope, and so on. In the very concrete world of the Gospels, however, these ideals live in specific persons (and, preeminently, in a Person) who exemplify the values.

The saint, Cunningham suggests, enfleashes Christian ideals in concrete historical situations. “The witness of their lives permits us to see how a value can be lived in a specific and appropriate manner.” In sum, that’s why they matter to us and why, in turn, Dorothy herself turned to them and their lives for guidance and direction.

The great Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner, whose vast scholarship included studies of

sanctity, observed that often in the lives of the saints, their style of life or their manifestations of holiness were not recognized by their own contemporaries. Cunningham cites St. Ignatius Loyola's problems with the Spanish Inquisition, the proscription for a time of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas by the theological faculty of Paris, and the "doing of time" by St. John of the Cross in a monastic prison because of his ideas and beliefs. Others, however, like St. Francis of Assisi, with his insistence on living the simplicity of the Gospel, fared better than some other medieval Church reformers like the Lollards or the Waldensians.

Regardless of when they lived, saints share, explains Cunningham, the same critical task. "...the saints are at the very cutting edge of the Church; they are the harbingers and the prophets of what the Church needs to be and needs to do in a given historical moment. They are the avant-garde who testify to the needs of the time. At the same time, they testify to the possibility of sanctity in a given epoch, a sanctity germane to their time and an example that stands historically as an enriching paradigm for the future."

No wonder Dorothy Day loved them so.

At Root..

Dorothy Day represents a modern Catholic corollary to the absolute nonviolence and pacifism of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. The Jesuit magazine, *America*, reported that “her uncompromising stand on pacifism (anti-warism) and absolute nonviolence (opposition to any use of force) in all cases resonates with the dominant position of Christians in the first three centuries of Christianity and with the beliefs of Christian groups like the Quakers and the Mennonites.”

If Dorothy is to be canonized, she will hardly be the first saint who preached the Gospel of peace. Her distinctly American voice will join a long litany of others, including Catherine of Siena whose insight that “all the way to heaven is heaven” was often quoted by Dorothy. Here are other saints on the primacy of peacemaking:

Nothing is so characteristically Christian as being a peacemaker.

St. Basil the Great

What are we to do then, my friends? We must bestow our love on our brothers and sisters. We must not allow any malice at all to remain in our hearts. Remember what He taught us. "Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

St. Gregory the Great

"But I say to you," the Lord says, "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you." Why did he command these things? So that he might free you from hatred, sadness, anger and grudges, and might grant you the greatest possession of all, perfect love, which is impossible to possess except by the one who loves all equally in imitation of God.

St. Maximus the Confessor

In peace, not war, we are trained.

St. Clement of Alexandria



VOX POP

"The voice of the people is the voice of God." So says an old proverb going back to the Middle Ages. The Church's process of naming or "canonizing" saints goes back even further but reflects a similar wisdom. In fact, the root of the word "canonize" is the same as for the word "recognize." The Church names a saint in part because "the people" first recognize someone's holiness.

Recently, the Guild initiated a petition asking people to voice their recognition of Dorothy Day's holiness. We hope it makes its way across the country, like Dorothy's innumerable Greyhound bus trips. (Available on line at www.dorothydayguild.org: please sign, return, and share with others!) Here is what some folk have already said:

Dorothy's...Christ-like love for people who are poor was exemplary. Her passion for justice has been left as a legacy for many to emulate. She is already a saint in my eyes. **Sr. Claire Regan, S.C., New Orleans**

Dorothy Day is one of my heroes. Her life of seeking God and truth is inspiring to many. I believe it is important for (please turn to last page...)

DISPATCHES !

The cause for canonization gained new momentum with the hiring of a part-time coordinator to oversee the completion of the local Diocesan phase (preceding the second and final "Roman" phase). Jeff Korgen, long involved in Catholic social justice ministry at Catholic Charities and elsewhere, came on board at the end of October. Since then he has focused on identifying eyewitnesses from across the country who can attest to Dorothy Day's "heroic" virtue in interviews to be transcribed and compiled as part of the requisite "evidence" of her holiness. The cause continues to be ably directed by the Postulator, Msgr. Gregory Mustaciulo who is also the Vicar General for Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York.

The status of the local phase was the major agenda item at a Fall meeting of the Guild's Steering Committee. Other items included the role of the Guild as a means of measuring popular support for Dorothy's cause. The hope is to steadily increase not only the number of Guild members (**to learn more about how to invite others to join or how to renew your own membership, please see the last page**) but also to encourage more direct "hands-on" involvement by Guild members in Dorothy's cause.

One new initiative is to invite members to serve as the Guild's representative in their local parish. This might include a range of activities: everything from insuring a steady supply of Guild brochures, petitions, and prayer cards at the parish, to organizing educational events and prayer services. The Guild website (www.dorothydayguild.org) enumerates other suggestions and welcomes new ones.

American Catholic historian David O'Brien, in a special paper prepared for the Steering Committee, raised the idea of seeing the canonization process as a unique opportunity to engage people in a widespread conversation about "the science of love," a phrase Dorothy used in her biography of Thérèse of Lisieux. "Love is a science, a knowledge, and we lack it." Thoughtfully, he asked "how can we support 'the cause' without reducing the seriousness of the challenges posed by Day's life and work...the issues of poverty and peace which were at the heart of Dorothy Day's faith, not just her ministry?"

Suggesting the more formal, ecclesial process be complemented by a more populist process to explore Day's love in action, he cited the pope. "Pope Francis says that 'We need to come out of ourselves and head for the periphery.' Surely Dorothy Day, before and after her conversion, lived her life at the periphery of society and in many ways at the edge of the Church. Sainthood may move her to the center of the Church, raising many questions for Catholics. That, I take it, is the sainthood project.... Might we move beyond stale, divisive debates and discover new ways to imagine centers and edges, use the 'Dorothy Day for Saint' process to open our historic imagination to embrace discipleship and citizenship in new and creative ways?"

How to do any of this, David acknowledged, is the next and larger question. Just one of many ideas he proposed was the designation of a "Peace Sunday" each year for consideration of peacemaking (a verb!). It might include well-publicized national reflective events to spark local projects. We want to ask for your suggestions. Think on, pray on, and let us hear from you so that together we can continue to forward this aspect of the "sainthood project."



I CAN WRITE NO OTHER THAN THIS :

UNLESS WE USE THE WEAPONS OF THE SPIRIT, DENYING OURSELVES AND TAKING UP OUR CROSS AND FOLLOWING JESUS, DYING WITH HIM AND RISING WITH HIM, MEN WILL GO ON FIGHTING, AND OFTEN FROM THE HIGHEST MOTIVES, BELIEVING THAT THEY ARE FIGHTING DEFENSIVE WARS FOR JUSTICE AND IN SELF-DEFENCE AGAINST PRESENT OR FUTURE AGGRESSION.



WE ARE ALL ONE BODY,

AND HE HAS COMMANDED US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. IF ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE MEMBERS OF ONE BODY – IF AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL – THEN WAR COULD RESULT ONLY IN INJURY TO ALL, NEVER IN GOOD.



EVERY ONE OF US IS UNDOUBTEDLY RESPONSIBLE ...

WE CANNOT EVER BE TOO COMPLACENT ABOUT OUR OWN UNCOMPROMISING POSITIONS BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT IN OUR OWN WAY WE, TOO, MAKE COMPROMISES....WE MUST ALL ADMIT OUR GUILT IN THE SOCIAL ORDER WHICH HAS RESULTED IN THIS MONSTROUS CRIME OF WAR.

BREAKING BREAD



There is much interest today in the relationship between faith and the telling of stories. The lives of the saints tell the story of people who grappled with the question of what it means to be a disciple, a follower of Jesus. Their answer was their lived experience. Part of the gift of the saints lies in each one's unique charism and how his or her life might inspire us to answer Christ's call in our own unique way.

Certainly Dorothy Day has inspired many both within and also outside the Catholic Worker movement. Celebrating her 75th birthday in 1972, *America* magazine declared that "Day's life of voluntary poverty, direct action on behalf of the worker and the poor and absolute nonviolence and pacifism has been a constant inspiration for Christians of all denominations, and even for non-Christians. Without dismissing the importance of other leaders in the history of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, it is fair to say that Dorothy Day remains, at the dawn of the new millennium, the radical conscience of American Catholicism."

Dorothy would be quick to counsel, however, that serving as the "radical conscience" is not to be confused with being in agreement with every point of the Catholic Worker's own "program" While for some, the Catholic Worker is an expression of their living out the Gospel, it is not everyone's vocation.

Dorothy always understood that "we are all on the way," an insight reflected in the name of her long-running column, "On Pilgrimage." Like the two disciples talking together on the road to Emmaus, Dorothy shared with us the bread of her stories: all that she had witnessed and given witness to: her doubts, convictions, successes, and failures. Often, she would remind us, "not to be discouraged at our own lapses...but [to] continue. If we are discouraged, it shows vanity and pride. Trusting too much to ourselves. It takes a lifetime of endurance, of patience, of learning through mistakes."

It is as companions together "on the road" that we invite you, dear readers, to share for possible publication, either in the Guild newsletter or website, your own story. How has the life and witness of Dorothy Day impacted your own journey? (For more information, please contact Carolyn Zablotny c/o the Guild office. Thank you!).

VOX POP, cont'd

...the young people of today to know the difficulty and challenge of living the Catholic way. **Zoe Brenner, Navaho, NM**

*I read **The Long Loneliness** as a college student....Dorothy Day's witness showed me that it is in fact possible to give one's life over to Christ and live the Gospel. She gave me hope.* **Carmina Chapp, Harveys Lake, PA**

Dorothy's life and work is a powerful inspiration today. Her sacrifice, humility, and total dedication to Christian justice calls us to follow. **Jean Anthony, Brewster, NY**

The fact that her work endures and has captured the hearts of so many is testimony enough. **E.D., Newark, NJ**

AMEN !

In Our Time

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DOROTHY DAY GUILD MEMBERSHIP FORM

(Just clip out and mail. 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 _____

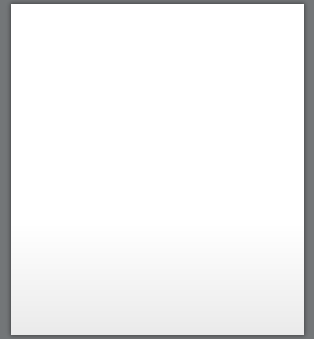
Address _____

E-mail _____ **Phone** _____

\$ _____ **Annual Offering:** (suggested offering: student, \$15; individual, \$25; family: \$40; organization, \$100)

Circle other ways you might like to help: serving as a Guild representative, office volunteer, arranging educational events.

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THE DAY IS: HOW TO BRING
ABOUT A REVOLUTION OF THE
HEART, A REVOLUTION
WHICH HAS TO START WITH
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DOROTHY DAY

