



The Guild for Dorothy Day

A Woman of The Gospel, Prayer, The Church, Works of Mercy, Justice, and Peace

NEWSLETTER

Message from the Postulator

Don't Call Me a Saint.

Controversial and celebrated, these are contrasting terms that have often been used to describe one extraordinary woman: Dorothy Day. As we embark on the arduous journey to canonization, we must stop and reflect on who Dorothy was and why we believe she would be a good candidate for sainthood.

Those of us who know of Dorothy's life and work can bear witness to her strength of character, deep-rooted love of the Gospel, and devotion to the poor. This is not to say that her journey was an easy one or that the choices she made, especially prior to her conversion, were without reproach. What we can attest to is that her love of the Gospel and for the poor led her to an exemplary life of Christian virtue.

As Catholics, we are given guidelines, such as the Ten Commandments and the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, to help us along our journey. Still, we stumble and fall, often taking hold of things outside our faith, in an attempt to regain our footing. Dorothy too stumbled and fell, but each time chose to cling to her Catholic faith, each fall bringing her closer to Jesus and to a deeper understanding of His Gospel message.

There are those who will argue that Dorothy herself did not want to be a saint, quoting her famous words "Don't call me a saint. I don't want to be dismissed so easily." But what saint would advocate for her own canonization?

Dorothy's own devotion

to the saints was prominent in her life. She read their lives and was inspired by their works and spirituality. Dorothy's canonization will insure that her life and work will be



Dorothy Day with her grandchildren in 1956.

remembered and act as inspiration for countless generations to come.

As we stumble along on our own faith journey, wouldn't it be a blessing to have a companion such as Dorothy Day to inspire us along our way?

Guild News

Over the past year, The Guild for Dorothy Day has seen steady growth. Currently, the Guild has over 165 members. We are grateful for your dedication and enthusiasm for the Cause for Dorothy's canonization, and for your willingness to pray for her intercession on behalf of the over 75 prayer requests received.

On November 4, 2006, a conference entitled "Dorothy Day: A Saint for Staten Island? Living Our Catholic Faith Through Catholic Social Teaching and Action", was

held to commemorate Dorothy Day's life, faith and work, and to educate young people on the social teachings of the Church. The event, which was co-sponsored by Catholic Charities' Department of Social and Community Development, the Vicariate of Staten Island, and Pax Christi Staten Island, was held at Blessed Sacrament parish. In total, 80 people participated in the conference. Speakers included former Catholic Worker Joe McKenzie-Hamilton; Rosemarie Pace, Director of Pax Christi Metro New York; and Terry Troia, Executive Director of Project Hospitality.

Robert Ellsberg, editor-in-chief of Orbis Books, is transcribing and editing Dorothy's letters and journals for Marquette University. So far, Mr. Ellsberg has completed transcribing Dorothy's journals, which she wrote over forty-five years of her life, and soon will begin transcribing her letters. Mr. Ellsberg has asked, that if anyone has letters from Dorothy Day, please contact The Guild.

For more information regarding the Dorothy Day Collection at Marquette University, go to www.marquette.edu/library/ and click on Special Collections/ Archives

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Postulator of the Cause for the Canonization of Dorothy Day

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A Saint? Dorothy Day? By Deacon Thomas Cornell

On December 7, 1932, Dorothy Day took a bus from New York City to Washington, D.C. to cover the Hunger March. Thousands of people converged upon the nation's capital to demand relief from the Depression. Dorothy stood on the steps of a public building, as a reporter, to watch the marchers pass by. Her heart swelled with pride for them. It was a brave thing to do, march on the Capitol and the White House, and their cause was just. Federal troops stood by with machine guns and tear gas. Dorothy stood on the steps but her heart pulled her toward the street. She felt she could not join the marchers, and how she wanted to! But they were led by Communists, she knew, her old friends. She knew them well, enemies of religion and of the Church, and she was now a Catholic.

The next day, December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the crypt church -- the basilica itself had not been completed -- Dorothy Day prayed a special prayer, a prayer that came "with tears and with anguish." She begged God that a door be opened

for her to use her talents for the poor and her fellow workers, as she had done before when she was a secular radical, but now, as a Catholic Christian.

On her return to New York City and the apartment she shared with her brother and his wife, she found waiting for her Peter Maurin. Dorothy did not at first recognize in the stocky, heavily accented French peasant-scholar who looked as if he had slept in his suit (he had), the answer to her prayer. Peter Maurin presented his analysis of the ills of modernity, the root causes that had led to the Depression: the privatization of religion, over-dependence and trust in technology and bureaucracy.

And his program: a newspaper to clarify the issues of the day in the light of Christian tradition, houses of hospitality in the cities where those who have the means might supply for the needs of the have-nots, and farming communes on the land. A newspaper? Dorothy was from a newspaper family. Her craft was writing. In months the circulation of *The Catholic Worker* sky-rocketed, with a radical answer to the Depression, a Chris-

tian radical answer, and Dorothy found her vocation.

Dorothy went to the fundamental causes of poverty and war. To many people *radical* means *far out*, but Dorothy knew that *radix* means *root*. To Dorothy Day it meant *deep down*. The problems of our age are fundamentally spiritual, she would say, and they must be addressed with the weapons of the spirit: prayer and fasting, the sacraments and the corporal and spiritual works of mercy integrated into the life of Christians, all Christians, not just monks and nuns and the ordained, in the ordinary rhythm of life.

The spiritual works of mercy include instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, forgiving injuries and correcting the sinner. These took Dorothy to the streets, and to jail many times, in protest against exploitation of workers and against war. Many found these acts controversial. But they are at the heart of Dorothy's discipleship and the very reasons why she is to be held up as an exemplar of authentic Christian discipleship for our time and place.

Pray, pray first, last and always! But get up too and take your place in the struggle for peace and justice for Christ's sake, she would say. For Christ, to show the world the loving face of Jesus.



Dorothy Day in the 1930's.



The Guild for Dorothy Day

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