



Art by Marcy Hall



WOMEN WITNESSES OF MERCY

CELEBRATING THE EXTRAORDINARY WITNESS
OF WOMEN DURING THE YEAR OF MERCY



Art by Marcy Hall

“The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us? When we begin to take the lowest place, to wash the feet of others, to love our brothers with that burning love, that passion, which led to the cross, then we can truly say, ‘Now I have begun.’”

Dorothy Day

Dorothy Day Conscience of American Catholicism by Stephen Krupa, SJ

On May Day 1933 Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin co-founded the Catholic Worker movement and newspaper in New York City. Since then 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 both Christians and 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.

Popular interest in Dorothy Day has grown since her death in 1980. Such interest only increased when the Vatican announced on March 17, 2000, that it had approved starting the process for Day's canonization as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church. Scholars, too, have taken an interest in Dorothy Day. In addition to her own writings (eight books and several hundred articles), there are numerous critical studies of her life and of the Catholic Worker movement. (See references) These studies all point to a conspicuous entwined thread in

the tapestry of Day's life, the unique combination of social activism and deep religious feeling. The dual passion of social justice and intimacy with God was present in Day's life from her early years.

Early Years and Young Woman

Dorothy Day was born in Brooklyn Heights, New York, on November 8, 1897 to Christian parents who did not practice their faith. The most religious of the seven member Day family (one sister and three brothers), young Dorothy typically went to church by herself. Day's religious involvement did not last beyond her Episcopalian baptism at age twelve, however. The teen-aged Day, an inveterate reader, turned her attention away from religion to the social writings of anarchists and revolutionaries like Pytor Kropotkin and Pierre Proudon, and the socially conscious novels of Charles Dickens, Jack London, and Upton Sinclair. While at the University of Illinois at Urbana, the young leftist rejected religion outright and joined the Socialist Party.

Returning to New York City after just two years of college, Day joined



Dorothy Day in 1934.
New York World-Telegram & Sun
Collection.
via Wikimedia Commons

**“[Dorothy Day’s]
social activism, her
passion for justice
and for the cause of
the oppressed, were
inspired by the Gospel,
her faith and the
example of the saints.”**

**Pope Francis
before the U.S. Congress,
September 24, 2015**

the profession of her father and brothers. She wrote for the socialist publications the *Call* and the *Masses* and enjoyed the bohemian nightlife of Greenwich Village with journalist friends. In 1917 Day journeyed to Washington, D.C., with a group of women to picket the White House with the suffragists. Enduring her first arrest for civil disobedience, she survived the indignities of Occoquan prison in Virginia and a 10-day hunger strike. Though as a radical and lifelong anarchist she never voted, and so was not a suffragist herself, Day joined the demonstration “to uphold the rights of political prisoners” (LL 72).

With the suppression of the *Masses* by the government in 1917, Day began work as a nurses’ aid during World War I. After an obsessive love affair with a womanizing newspaperman, Lionel Moise, and the abortion of their child, Day married literary promoter, Berkeley Tobey, “on the rebound” (Miller, 143). The mature love of Day’s life was Forster Batterham, a biologist and anarchist with whom Day entered into a common-law marriage in 1924 after her divorce from Tobey.

On Staten Island, where they shared life in an ocean cottage, Batterham opened up the beauties of nature to Day. He also fathered their child, Tamar Teresa, who was born in March 1926. Unlike many people, including many saints who experience a conversion to God out of a sense of guilt or sorrow, Day turned to God in joy. “No human creature could receive or contain so vast a flood of love and joy as I often felt after the birth of my child. With this came the need to worship, to adore.... It was because through a whole love, both physical and spiritual, I came to know God” (LL 139 and 140). During these happy years Day began to pray daily and to attend Mass. Day’s decision to have Tamar baptized, and her own

entrance into the Catholic Church in December 1927, led to the demise of her relationship with Batterham, a confirmed atheist.

A Catholic Radical

The next five years of Day’s life represent a transition and preparation for the work she would begin with Peter Maurin at the end of 1932. On her own as a single mother, Day worked at various jobs all the while living with the poor. On assignment in Washington, D.C., in December 1932 for the Catholic publications *Commonweal* and *America*, Day ached to join the Communist-organized Hunger March and Farmer’s Convention, not just to report on them. The dual passion of her life, social concern and deep love for God, could not, it seemed, be reconciled through Catholicism. Only the Communists and Socialists, atheists though they were, were doing anything about the plight of the poor.

Before leaving the capital, Day went to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception at The Catholic University of America and implored God that some way might open up for her to use what talents she possessed for her fellow workers and for the poor. Returning to her New York apartment, she was greeted by Peter Maurin, a wandering and learned French peasant, who had learned about her from the editor of *Commonweal*. Day always believed that Maurin had come to her in the last month of 1932 as an answer to her anguished prayer.

Maurin immediately proceeded to indoctrinate Day in the history and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. He also shared with her his ideas for a radical form of Catholic life based on a “three-point program:” houses of hospitality where the works of mercy could be practiced daily; roundtable discussions for

the clarification of thought; and, farming communes, where workers and scholars would live and work together on the land (LF, 21-22). Maurin also encouraged Day to publish a newspaper that would instruct readers in Roman Catholic social teaching and the rights of workers. Maurin's ideas provided Day with a model for radical Christian living and direct action. A synthesis of social justice and intimacy with God from within Catholicism now seemed possible.

Day's Absolute Nonviolence and Pacifism

Almost immediately Day and the writers of the *Catholic Worker* began to live in voluntary poverty and to take in the hungry and homeless. The charity, voluntary poverty, and communal life of the Catholic Worker community soon became admired by the wide readership of the Newspaper. When Day declared in 1936 that she and the Catholic Worker were "pacifist" in response to the Spanish Civil War, however, she drew opposition from a majority of Catholics.

Her pacifist stand during World War II resulted in a steep drop in subscriptions to the *Catholic Worker*. But Day would not be moved from the unshakable conviction that the followers of Christ could not kill their brothers and sisters.

Day's uncompromising stand on pacifism ("anti-warism") and absolute nonviolence (opposition to any use of force) through the wars of the twentieth century represents a modern Catholic corollary to the absolute nonviolence and pacifism of Mahatma Gandhi and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Her stand is stunning in its Roman Catholic context. Remarkably, Day followed neither the just war teaching of her recently chosen Church, nor the Marxist view she held during her pre-conversion

leftist years supporting a violent overthrow of the capitalist owners of industry (FUSR, 144). Day's absolute nonviolence was grounded in her personal relationship with Jesus. "It is better to obey God than men," Day asserted, quoting St. Peter (Acts 5:29; OPS, 289). The origin and strength of Day's deep conviction about nonviolence ultimately came from her spirituality; that is, from her own lived experience of Jesus Christ.

When thousands of Roman Catholics demonstrated against the war in Vietnam in the 1960's and 70's, they stood on the shoulders of Dorothy Day, who had begun using nonviolent tactics in the 1930's. Out of her leftist past, Day brought into modern Catholicism such tactics of nonviolent resistance and direct action like the strike, the picket, the boycott, the nonpayment of federal taxes that support war, refusal to register for the draft, civil disobedience and giving witness to Christ's commands from jail (the last of Day's six or seven jail terms was in 1973 with Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers). Her mature adult Roman Catholic spirituality, thus, was shaped in important ways by the convictions and commitments of her early years as a leftist radical.

Day as Woman

Day's strong sense of herself as a woman and mother begs the question of Day's relation to contemporary feminist concerns. Day never became a public advocate of the women's movements of the twentieth century. There are affinities with feminist perspectives in her life work and actions, however. In her written words, Day often maintained the conventional gender roles of a patriarchal social order. Her rhetoric, though, did not match her actual work and life choices.

Certain references in her writings indicate that Day's language

"The Works of Mercy are a wonderful stimulus to our growth in faith as well as in love. Our faith is taxed to the utmost and so grows through this strain put upon it. It is pruned again and again, and springs up bearing much fruit."

Dorothy Day

about women often conformed to the conventional patriarchal outlook of early 20th century America which assumed that women are different from and inferior to men. Day's actions and life work, however, suggest a movement beyond this standard gender ideology. She was, after all, a professional woman, a journalist and editor, author, single working mother and grandmother, social critic and dissenter, and the leader of a religious movement in a male-led Church.

Still, Day did not join the feminist movement, nor did she see herself as a feminist. To the extent that the women's movement was initially the project of educated, middle-class, mostly white women, its calls for social reform would have been insufficiently radical for her. By the time the feminist critique significantly expanded the women's movement beyond its limited class and racial origins, Day was already in the last years of her life.

Nevertheless, there are affinities with feminist perspectives in Day's life and praxis. Six pro-feminist concerns reflected in Day's life are:

- the active participation of women in the work force and in the professions;
- support for working mothers;
- the importance of community;
- the intimate connection between diverse social problems like work, gender, class, race, poverty and capitalism and war, as well as the deep connection between the physical and the spiritual;
- the attention to human experience as an essential component in the search for truth;
- and, finally, the disregard, in practice, for assigned gender roles in work.

At the *Catholic Worker*, both men and women shared in the work of caring for the needy and publishing a newspaper.

What We Can Learn From Dorothy Day

As with any great figure, Dorothy Day has much to teach us. First, like the faithful women who both stood beneath the cross of Christ and carried his message into the world, Day is a model of faithful, courageous and prophetic discipleship. Never one to retreat, she forcefully engaged in and responded to the tough issues in the twentieth-century church and society. Second, Day's life demonstrates that there is no opposition in the Catholicism between a passionate commitment to social justice and intimacy with God. Third, Day's life represents some important concerns of women (see above). Fourth, Day trusted in her own spirituality. Had she not been deeply convinced of her own experience of Christ, she would never have challenged the just war teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Finally, completely trusted God's love for her and did not wallow in guilt over the mistakes of the past. She never disparaged her pre-conversion life experiences. Day's "non-Catholic," indeed non-Christian, early life experiences were a vital part of her mature adult spirituality. After her conversion to Catholicism, Day often commented on the ongoing influence of her leftist past by quoting St. Augustine: "The bottle always smells of the liquor it once held" (LF, 20). Thanks to Dorothy Day many Roman Catholics now know the power and, indeed, the religious use of tactics of nonviolent resistance and direct action in opposing injustice.

Dorothy Day References:

The *Catholic Worker* still appears nine times a year and sells for a penny a copy.

Among Day's eight books are: *From Union Square to Rome*, 1938 (FUSR in text); *Loaves and Fishes*, 1963 (LF in text); *On Pilgrimage: The Sixties*, 1972 (OPS in text); and the modern spiritual classic, *The Long Loneliness*, 1952 (LL in text).

On Day's life and work, see William Miller's biography, *Dorothy Day*, 1982; Nancy L. Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*, 1984; June O'Connor, *The Moral Vision of Dorothy Day: A Feminist Perspective*; and Robert Ellsberg, ed., *The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*, 1983.

On the *Catholic Worker* movement, see Mel Piehl, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America*, 1982; and Patrick G. Coy, ed., *A Revolution of the Heart*, 1988.



FutureChurch

www.futurechurch.org
216.228.0869

3909 Rocky River Drive
Cleveland, OH 44111

Questions for Reflection & Discussion on the Witness of Dorothy Day

What did you learn about Dorothy Day? What was most striking or surprising to you?

Before meeting Peter Maurin, Dorothy Day struggled to reconcile her social concern and deep love for God. Have you ever shared that struggle? How so? Do you suppose young Catholics today share that struggle? Why or why not?

Knowing what you know now about Dorothy Day, what do you think her opinion of the Year of Mercy would be?

What do you think Dorothy Day would make of or add to the recent conference in the Vatican on Just War Theory? (see article included in this resource)

The author, Stephen Krupa SJ, names five lessons we can all learn from Dorothy Day in the final paragraphs. Which lesson do you most need to learn?



FutureChurch

www.futurechurch.org
216.228.0869

3909 Rocky River Drive
Cleveland, OH 44111

Landmark Vatican conference rejects just war theory, asks for encyclical on nonviolence

Joshua J. McElwee | Apr. 14, 2016
Vatican City

The participants of a first-of-its-kind Vatican conference have bluntly rejected the Catholic church's long-held teachings on just war theory, saying they have too often been used to justify violent conflicts and the global church must reconsider Jesus' teachings on nonviolence.

Members of a three-day event co-hosted by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the international Catholic peace organization Pax Christi have also strongly called on Pope Francis to consider writing an encyclical letter, or some other "major teaching document," reorienting the church's teachings on violence.

"There is no 'just war,'" the some 80 participants of the conference state in an appeal they released Thursday morning.

"Too often the 'just war theory' has been used to endorse rather than prevent or limit war," they continue. "Suggesting that a 'just war' is possible also undermines the moral imperative to develop tools and capacities for nonviolent transformation of conflict."

"We need a new framework that is consistent with Gospel nonviolence," say the participants, noting that Francis and his four predecessors have all spoken out against war often. "We propose that the Catholic Church develop and consider shifting to a Just Peace approach based on Gospel nonviolence."

Just war theory is a tradition that uses a series of criteria to evaluate whether use of violence can be considered morally justifiable. First referred to by fourth-century bishop St. Augustine of Hippo, it was later articulated in depth by 13th-century theologian St. Thomas Aquinas and is today outlined by four conditions in the formal [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#).^[1]

The Rome conference, held Monday through Wednesday, brought experts engaged in global nonviolent struggles to reconsider the theory for the first time under the aegis of the Vatican.

It comes after a number of theologians have criticized continued use of the theory in modern times, saying that both the powerful capabilities of modern weapons and evidence of the effectiveness of nonviolent campaigns make it outdated.

At a press event launching the conference's final appeal document -- given the title "An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence" -- several of the event's participants said the church should simply no longer teach the just war theory.

"I came a long distance for this conference, with a very clear mind that violence is outlived," said Archbishop John Baptist Odama of Gulu, Uganda. "It is out of date for our world of today."

"We have to sound this with a strong voice," said the archbishop. "Any war is a destruction. There is no justice in destruction. ? It is outdated."

The *Catechism* currently outlines as one criteria for moral justification of war that "the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated" and notes that "the power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition."

Odama, who also leads Uganda's bishops' conference, said the conditions in the *Catechism* "are only given to say in reality there should be no war."

"This is where the group was very strong," he said, referring to the conference. "We should not give now, at this moment, reasons for war. Let us block them and promote relationships of harmony, of brother and sisterhood, rather than going for war."

Marie Dennis, an American who serves as a co-president of [Pax Christi International](#), [2] said she and the conference group "believe that it is time for the church to speak another word into the global reality."

"When we look at the reality of war, when we look at the teachings of Jesus, we're asking what is the responsibility of the church," she said. "And it is, we believe, a responsibility to promote nonviolence."

Dennis also said she understands that people may raise concerns in rejecting the just war theory over needing to stop unjust aggressors. Her group, she said, agrees that violent aggressors have to be stopped.

"The question is how," said Dennis. "Our belief would be that as long as we keep saying we can do it with military force, we will not invest the creative energy, the deep thinking, the financial and human resources in creating or identifying the alternatives that actually could make a difference."

"As long as we say that dropping bombs will solve the problem we won't find other solutions and I think that's feeling more and more clear to us," she said.

The April conference on just war theory [had been discussed for months](#) [3] and was the first cohosted by the Vatican's pontifical council and Pax Christi, an international Catholic coalition akin to Amnesty International that maintains separate national groups in many countries.

The conference was organized around four sessions allowing participants to dialogue and share experiences with one another. The only scheduled talk at the event was given by Cardinal Peter Turkson, the head of the pontifical council, who also [read a letter sent to the participants by Francis](#). [4]

Among other participants were bishops from Nigeria and Japan, and leaders of the Rome-based umbrella groups for men and women religious around the world. Also taking part were a senior policy fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace, several noted theologians, and Irish Nobel Peace Prize winner Mairead Maguire.

The group's final appeal states succinctly: "The time has come for our Church to be a living witness and to invest far greater human and financial resources in promoting a spirituality and practice of active nonviolence."

"In all of this, Jesus is our inspiration and model," they state. "Neither passive nor weak, Jesus' nonviolence was the power of love in action."

Odama said Jesus "always asked his followers not to resort to violence in solving problems, including in his last stage of life."

"On the cross, [Jesus] said, 'Father forgive them because they don't know what they're doing,'" said the archbishop. "In this statement, he united the whole of humanity under one father."

"He does not take violent words and violent actions," said Odama. "That is the greatest act of teaching as to how we should handle our situations. Not violence."

Dennis said that part of the goal in organizing the conference "was to ultimately lead to an encyclical or a process that would produce major Catholic teaching on nonviolence."

"We haven't run into a roadblock yet," she said. "There are no promises."

"What we really hope will happen is a process that will engage the Vatican and the Catholic communities around the world in exactly these questions," said Dennis. "What can we know better about the role that nonviolence can play in shifting our world to a better place?"

Ken Butigan, a lecturer at DePaul University in Chicago and executive director of the non-profit group [Pace e Bene](http://paceebene.org), [5] said: "We have gotten a green light for months that this is something that Pope Francis is excited about moving forward on."

"We are determined to support that momentum at this historical moment," he said. "We know Pope Francis has a vision and we're here to support that vision."

[Joshua J. McElwee is *NCR* Vatican correspondent. His email address is jmcelwee@ncronline.org. Follow him on Twitter: [@joshjmac](https://twitter.com/joshjmac) [6].]

Like what you're reading? Sign up for *NCR* email alerts!

Source URL (retrieved on 04/26/2016 - 12:17): <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/landmark-vatican-conference-rejects-just-war-theory-asks-encyclical-nonviolence>

Links:

[1] http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM

[2] <http://www.paxchristi.net/>

[3] <http://ncronline.org/news/global/vatican-host-first-ever-conference-reevaluate-just-war-theory-justifications-violence>

[4] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/francis-encourages-vatican-just-war-conference-revitalize-tools-non-violence>

[5] <http://www.paceebene.org/>

[6] <http://twitter.com/joshjmac>

Reprinted by permission of National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company, 115 E Armour Blvd, Kansas City, MO 64111 NCRonline.org.



WOMEN WITNESSES OF MERCY

CELEBRATING THE EXTRAORDINARY WITNESS
OF WOMEN DURING THE YEAR OF MERCY



Art by Marcy Hall

Dorothy Day In Her Own Words

The Works of Mercy were at the heart of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin's words, actions, and vision. Thus, they are an abiding norm for the Catholic Worker movement. "Our rule is the works of mercy," said Dorothy Day. "It is the way of sacrifice, worship, a sense of reverence."

*In November 1949, Dorothy Day wrote a column, "The Scandal of the Works of Mercy," which appeared in *Commonweal Magazine*. The reading below is excerpted from that column:*

The Scandal of the Works of Mercy

The spiritual works of mercy are: to admonish the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive all injuries, and to pray for the living and the dead.

The corporal works are to feed the hungry to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked: to ransom the captive, to harbor the harborless to visit the sick, and to bury the dead.

When Peter Maurin talked about the necessity of practicing the works of mercy, he meant all of them...

The works of mercy are a wonderful stimulus to our growth in faith as well as in love. Our faith is taxed to the utmost and so grows through this strain put upon it. It is pruned again and again, and springs up bearing much fruit.

"Our faith, more precious than gold, must be tried as though by fire."

Here is a letter we received today. "I took a gentlemen seemingly in need of spiritual and temporal guidance into my home on a Sunday afternoon. Let him have a nap on my bed, went through the wantads with him, made coffee and sandwiches for him, and when he left, I found my wallet had gone also."

But these things happen for our discouragement, for our testing. We are sowing the seeds of love, and we are not living in the harvest time so that we can expect a crop.

We must love to the point of folly, and we are indeed fools, as our Lord Himself was who died for such a one as this. We lay down our lives too when we have performed so painfully thankless an act, because this correspondent of ours is poor in this world's goods...

...they are the destitute in every way, destitute of this world's goods, destitute of honor, of gratitude, of love, and they need so much, that we cannot take the works of mercy apart, and say I will do this one, or that one work of Mercy. We find they all go together.

It is by the works of mercy that we shall be judged.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. The Works of Mercy (Spiritual and Corporal) were at the heart of Dorothy Day's words and actions. Where would you place them in your spirituality?
2. Day writes, "When Peter Maurin talked about the necessity of practicing the works of mercy, he meant all of them..." Which Works of Mercy do you find easiest to practice in your daily life? Which ones are more challenging? Why is this so? What can you do to practice the Works of Mercy more fully in your life?
3. Day shares the story of a Catholic Worker who took in a gentleman in need: "Let him have a nap on my bed, went through the want ads with him, made coffee and sandwiches for him" only to find that when he "my wallet had gone also." For Day, these sorts of experiences "are a wonderful stimulus to our growth in faith as well as in love. Our faith is taxed to the utmost and so grows through this strain put upon it." Have you ever had the experience of disappointment after practicing a Work of Mercy? What happened? How did it tax your faith? How did your faith grow because of it?
4. Being able to see immediate results wasn't a primary objective for Day, who writes, "We are sowing the seeds of love, and we are not living in the harvest time so that we can expect a crop." How do you feel when you sow a seed of love in your life, ministry or work that doesn't immediately bear fruit? How do you reconcile yourself to the fact that "we are not living in the harvest time"?
5. Day was convinced of the truth of Matthew 25:31-46: "Those who cannot see the face of Christ in the poor," she used to say, "are atheists indeed." Can you name a particular time or experience in which you saw the face of Christ in the poor? How did that experience shape your faith, ministry, spirituality, work, or worldview?
6. Day insists that "we must love to the point of folly." Can you remember a time that you loved to the point of folly? What happened?



WOMEN WITNESSES OF MERCY

CELEBRATING THE EXTRAORDINARY WITNESS
OF WOMEN DURING THE YEAR OF MERCY



Art by Marcy Hall

The Dignity of Work

The first issue of *The Catholic Worker*, the newspaper of the the Catholic Worker Movement was published in May of 1933. In that first issue, Dorothy Day wrote an introduction of the paper to the reader:

"For those who are sitting on park benches in the warm spring sunlight.

For those who are huddling in shelters trying to escape the rain.

For those who are walking the streets in the all but futile search for work.

For those who think that there is no hope for the future, no recognition of their plight - this little paper is addressed.

It is printed to call their attention to the fact that the Catholic Church has a social program - to let them know that there are men of God who are working not only for their spiritual, but for their material welfare."

She went on to write,

"It's time there was a Catholic paper printed for the unemployed..."

*In an attempt to popularize and make known the encyclicals of the Popes in regard to social justice and the program put forth by the Church for the 'reconstruction of the social order,' this news sheet, *The Catholic Worker*, is started."*

Day served as the editor of the paper from from its beginnings in 1933 until her death in 1980.

The paper continues to be published today. You can visit www.catholicworker.org to find out more about subscribing.

Among the many issues of social justice and Catholic Social Teaching the paper has addressed over the years is the Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers as expressed in Catholic thought.

According to Catholic social teaching, work was made for human beings -- not the other way around. Rather than simply a means to make a living, work is part of human participation in God's creation. As such, the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

The following pages contain excerpts from Scripture as well as Catholic Social Teaching on the Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers as well as a guide to facilitate conversation and/or personal reflection.

"What we would like to do is change the world

By crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, of the poor, of the destitute...

We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening circle will reach around the world."

– Dorothy Day,
The Catholic Worker,
June, 1946

Dignity of Work in Scripture

“Observe the sabbath day—keep it holy, as YHWH, your God, commanded you. Six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to YHWH, your God. You shall not do any work, either you, your son or your daughter, your workers -- women or men --, your ox or donkey or any work animal, or the foreigners within your gates. Thus your workers -- women and men -- may rest as you do. Remember that you too were once slaves in the land of Egypt, YHWH, your God, brought you out from there with a strong hand and outstretched arm. That is why the YHWH, your God, has commanded you to observe the sabbath day.” *Deuteronomy 5:12-15*

“To take away a neighbor’s living is to commit murder; to deny a laborer wages is to shed blood.”

Sirach 34: 26-27

“Woe to the ruler who builds a house without integrity and its upper rooms with injustice, enslaving the citizenry, not paying for their labor!”
Jeremiah 22:13

***All workers should be paid a just and fair wage.**
See the parable of the workers in the vineyard
Matthew 20:1-16

Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries. Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become moth-eaten, your gold and silver have corroded, and that corrosion will be a testimony against you; it will devour your flesh like a fire. You have stored up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of God Most High. You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter. You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous ones; they offered you no resistance.
James 5:1-6

Dignity of Work in Tradition

The obligation to earn one’s bread by the sweat of one’s brow also presumes the right to do so. A society in which this right is systematically denied, in which economic policies do not allow workers to reach satisfactory levels of employment, cannot be justified from an ethical point of view, nor can that society attain social peace.

The Hundredth Year (Centessimus Annus), #43

In many cases, poverty results from a violation of the dignity of human work, either because work opportunities are limited (through unemployment or underemployment), or “because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family.”

Charity in Truth (Caritas in Veritate), #63

All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions, as well as to organize and join unions or other associations.

A Catholic Framework for economic Life, #5

As the Church solemnly reaffirmed in the recent Council, “the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person.” All people have the right to work, to a chance to develop their qualities and their personalities in the exercise of their professions, to equitable remuneration which will enable them and their families “to lead a worthy life on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level” and to assistance in case of need arising from sickness or age.

A Call to Action (Octogesima Adveniens), #14

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

Does the Catholic vision of work as a participation in God's creation influence the way you understand and go about your work? If so, how? If not, how might it?

How can/does the Catholic vision of the Dignity of Work and the Rights of workers impact how you relate to others in your place of employment?

How does the present reality of work and working conditions measure up to the Catholic vision? What can be done to reconcile the two?

What commitment can you make to help lift up the Dignity of Work and the Rights of workers?



FutureChurch

www.futurechurch.org 3909 Rocky River Drive
216.228.0869 Cleveland, OH 44111



WOMEN WITNESSES OF MERCY

CELEBRATING THE EXTRAORDINARY WITNESS
OF WOMEN DURING THE YEAR OF MERCY

PRAYER Resource

Prayer Service Honoring Dorothy Day

By Christine Schenk, CSJ

Opening Song: God of Day and God of Darkness (Text by Marty Haugen)

Call to Prayer by Leader

(This would be an appropriate time for a female pastoral minister to preside, or perhaps one male and one female presider.)

Readings from Dorothy Day with Sung Response (from "Blest are They" by David Haas)

READER 1: "We emphasize always the necessity of smallness. The ideal of course, would be that each Christian... should take in one of the homeless as an honored guest, remembering Christ's words: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these ye have done it unto me.' The poor are more conscious of this obligation than those who are comfortably off. I know of any number of cases where families already overburdened and crowded, have taken in orphaned children, homeless aged, poor who were not members of their families but who were akin to them because they were fellow sufferers in this disordered world." (p.36. Meditations by Dorothy Day, Paulist Press, 1970)

READER 2: "A long day full of difficulties. A priest called up and said he was sending over a young woman who had threatened to kill herself. She had already made one attempt, he said ...She was without work and without shelter, having been put out of her room early that morning. We talked to her, gave her breakfast, some clothes and sent her up to the House of Hospitality." (Meditations p. 24 All quotations from Meditations used with permission of Tamar Hennessey, daughter of Dorothy Day)

Response: *Blest are they the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of God. Blest are they full of sorrow, they shall be consoled.*

Refrain: *Rejoice and be glad, blessed are you, holy are you. Rejoice and be glad, yours is the kingdom of God.*

READER 1: "One day last summer, I saw a man sitting down by one of the piers, all alone. He sat on a log, and before him was a wooden box on which he had spread out on a paper his meager supper. He sat there and ate with some pretense of human dignity, and it was one of the saddest sights I have ever seen." (Meditations. p. 21)

READER 2: "And speaking of food, Peter Maurin arrived in from the country after an absence of four weeks. Discussing economics, he displayed his grocery and newspaper bills for the month -- \$9.00. Peter is in favor of a big pot on the stove and a continual supply of vegetable soup, constantly renewed from day to day -- an idea shared by both Don Bosco and the I.W.W.'s. After supper we went out to pushcart market and bought a large pot for 79 cents, a ten quart one, and while the workers school is in session, we shall dine on soup." (Meditations p.25)

Response: Blest are they the lowly ones, they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst, they shall have their fill.

Refrain

READER 1: "Within the Catholic worker, there has always been such emphasis placed on the works of mercy, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the harborless, that it has seemed to many of our intellectuals a top-heavy performance. There was early criticism that we were taking on 'rotten lumber that would sink the ship.' 'Derelict' was the term used most often. As though Jesus did not come to live with the lost, to save the lost, to show them the way. His love was always shown most tenderly to the poor, the derelict, the prodigal son, so that he would leave the ninety-nine just ones to go after the one." (Meditations p. 68)

READER 2: "No human creature could receive or contain so vast a flood of love and joy as I often felt after the birth of my child. With this came the need to worship...to adore....It was because through a whole love, both physical and spiritual, I came to know God. (The Long Loneliness Harper San Francisco 1952, pp. 139, 140)

Response: Blest are they who show mercy, mercy shall be theirs. Blest are they the pure of heart, they shall see God.

Refrain

READER 1: "All our talks about peace and the weapons of the spirit are meaningless unless we try in every way to embrace voluntary poverty and not work in any position, any job, that contributes to war, not to take any job whose pay comes from the fear of war, of the atom bomb. We must give up our place in this world, sacrifice children, family, wife, mother, and embrace poverty, and then we will be laying down life itself." (Meditations p. 53)

READER 2: "A German woman doctor, who spent a year in a concentration camp for refusing to sterilize epileptics said that one form of torture inflicted was to turn blinding lights into the cells so that the women could not sleep. This is to be keeping vigil with Christ. To keep vigil voluntarily is to be sharing his pain of the world, this agony of the Mystical Body. Insomnia may be keeping vigil." (Meditations p.91)

Response: Blessed are they who seek peace they are the children of God. Blessed are they who suffer in faith, the Glory of God is theirs.

Refrain

READER 1: "The demands of the marchers were for social legislation, for unemployment insurance, for old-age pensions, for relief for mothers and children, for work. I remember seeing one banner having to do with man's dignity, his ownership of and responsibility for the means of production. The years have passed and most of the legislation called for by those workers is on the books now. I wonder how many realize just how much they owe the hunger marchers, who endured fast and cold, who were like the Son of Man when he said, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (LL p. 166)

READER 2: " When the demonstration was over and I had finished writing my story, I went to the national shrine at the Catholic University on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. There I offered up a special prayer, a prayer which came with tears and with anguish, that some way would open up for me to use what talents I possessed for my fellow workers, for the poor." (LL p. 166)

Response: *Blest are you who suffer hate all because of me. Rejoice and be glad, yours is the kingdom; shine for all to see.*

Refrain

GOSPEL: Matthew 25: 31-46

Shared Reflection: *(The leader may give very brief reflection as a prelude to sharing. Suggested discussion starter: "What does it mean in our city, country, world economy to practice justice so that workers receive a just wage, the hungry are fed and the poor are clothed? Allow 15 minutes for discussion. If it is a large group ask people to break into smaller groups of 5-6. At the end of the discussion invite each person to commit to one action on behalf of justice for the poor of our city or our world and write it down on papers you have provided.)*

Prayers of Intercession: *(A sung response known to the group would be appropriate here.)*

Offering: *While the basket is being passed sing Prayer of St. Francis (by Sebastian Temple). A collection for the local hunger center or peace and justice group may be taken or you may see if there is a local Catholic Worker House in your area. As the basket comes around, participants include their commitment papers.*

Anointing for Mission *(have available oil or lotion for anointing on the forehead or hands)*

LEADER: "Spirit of power, time and again throughout history you have anointed your servants, such as Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, sending them on mission: to speak your word to the poor, to heal the sick, to free captives -- always renewing the face of the earth. (LEADER extends hands over oil)

Come Spirit of the Living One. Bless this oil of anointing. Make it an oil of gladness and of healing, a lotion of strength and tenderness. We pray that by this anointing our hands and hearts might be strengthened for the work that lies ahead, that we might be compassionate to human need, tender and strong in our care for one another, genuine in our friendship, and faithful to the commitments we have made.

ALL: We pray that through the power of this compelling Spirit we might know the unity that is ours: sisters and brothers of a common family, sharing a single home on this, our earth, as children of one God. We ask your blessing as we anoint one another for the work of the gospel.

LEADER: Begins the anointing. Participants anoint each other while saying: "Be strengthened in the work of the Gospel" (Ritual adapted from More than Words by Janet Schaffran CDP and Pat Kozak CSJ)

Commitment of Gathered Community *(All stand and respond)*

LEADER: Women and men, what will we bring to birth in the world of the new creation?

ALL: Wisdom and justice, peace and compassion, concern for all God's little ones, for the homeless and the destitute, the hungry, and all who bear the brunt of indifference and oppression.

LEADER: Men and Women, what will we bring to birth on the earth of the new creation?

ALL: A deep respect for our planet, its wind song and its water, its topsoil and its forests, and a oneness with the wilderness that is image of our soul.

LEADER: Women and Men, what will we bring to birth in the church of the new creation?

ALL: A total disdain for power that diminishes or destroys, divestment of wealth and status, a sharing of human resources based on mutuality and the sudden surprise of grace.

LEADER: Men and Women, what will we bring to birth in the hearts of the new creation?

ALL: An unbreakable bond in the Spirit that binds as one all sisters and brothers, transcending class, color, culture, religion, race, and gender, that treats no personal preference, no physical or spiritual difference as aberration or handicap.

LEADER: One has been born among us Who heralds such liberation, Human liberation, Women and men's liberation, have taken flesh among us and in Spirit dwell with us.

ALL: Holy the woman who helped this happen. Blessed are we when we give birth to the Word made flesh in us. Amen.

(MT Winter WomanWord, Crossroad, 1990 used with permission)

Closing Song: Anthem by Tim Conry or **God Has Chosen Me** by Bernadette Farrell



FutureChurch

www.futurechurch.org
216.228.0869

3909 Rocky River Drive
Cleveland, OH 44111



WOMEN WITNESSES OF MERCY

CELEBRATING THE EXTRAORDINARY WITNESS
OF WOMEN DURING THE YEAR OF MERCY



Art by Marcy Hall

Be A Witness of Mercy

resources for learning & doing

Learn More about the Catholic Worker Movement
www.catholicworker.org

Read *The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of the Legendary Catholic Social Activist*

Subscribe to *The Catholic Worker*

Subscription or copy requests must be sent by regular mail to The Catholic Worker, 36 East First Street, New York, NY 10003, United States. Phone: 212-777-9617. The price has been and will remain a penny a copy, excluding mailing costs. It is issued seven times per year and a year's subscription is available for 25 cents (30 cents for foreign subscriptions), though all donations in excess of that amount go to the hospitality houses associated with the paper, Maryhouse and St. Joseph House.

Support Dorothy Day's cause for canonization

<http://dorothydayasaint.org>

or

<http://dorothydayguild.org>

