

Second Class University Essays



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CLASS OF NONVIOLENCE

Love Is the Measure

By Dorothy Day

We confess to being fools and wish that we were more so. In the face of the approaching atom bomb test (and discussion of widespread radioactivity is giving people more and more of an excuse to get away from the philosophy of personalism and the doctrine of free will); in the face of an approaching maritime strike; in the face of bread shortages and housing shortages; in the face of the passing of the draft extension, teenagers included, we face the situation that there is nothing we can do for people except to love them. If the maritime strike goes on there will be no shipping of food or medicine or clothes to Europe or the Far East, so there is nothing to do again but to love. We continue in our 14th year of feeding our brothers and sisters, clothing them and sheltering them, and the more we do it, the more we realize that the most important thing is to love. There are several families with us, destitute families, destitute to an unbelievable extent, and there, too, is nothing to do but to love. What I mean is that there is no chance of rehabilitation, no chance, so far as we see, of changing them; certainly no chance of adjusting them to this abominable world about them, ~ and who wants them adjusted, anyway?

What we would like to do is change the world-make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. And to a certain extent, by fighting for better

conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, and the poor, of the destitute-the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, in other words-we can to a certain extent change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever-widening circle will reach around the world.

We repeat, there is nothing that we can do but love, and dear God-please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as well as our friend.

Whenever I groan within myself and think how hard it is to keep writing about love in these times of tension and strife which may, at any moment, become for us all a time of terror, I think to myself: what else is the world interested in? What else do we all want, each one of us, except to love and be loved, in our families, in our work, in all our relationships? God is Love. Love casts out fear. Even the most ardent revolutionist, seeking to change the world, to overturn the tables of the money changers, is trying to make a world where it is easier for people to love, to stand in that relationship to each other. We want with all our hearts to love, to be loved. And not just in the family, but to look upon all as our mothers, sisters, brothers, children. It is when we love the most intensely and most humanly that we can recognize how tepid is our love for others. The keenness

and intensity of love brings with it suffering, of course, but joy, too, because it is a foretaste of heaven.

When you love people, you see all the good in them. There can never be enough thinking about it. St. John of the Cross said that where there was no love, put love and you would draw love out. The principle certainly works. I've seen my friend Sister Peter Claver with that warm friendliness of hers which is partly natural, but is intensified and made enduring by grace, come into a place which is cold with tension and conflict, and warm the house with her love.

And this is not easy. Everyone will try to kill that love in you, even your nearest and dearest; at least, they will try to prune it. "Don't you know this, that, and the other thing about this person? He or she did this. If you don't want to hear it, you must hear. It is for your good to hear it. It is my duty to tell you, and it is your duty to take recognition of it. You must stop loving, modify your loving, show your disapproval. You cannot possibly love-if you pretend you do, you are a hypocrite and the truth is not in you. You are contributing to the delinquency of that person by your sentimental blindness. It is such people as you who add to the sum total of confusion and wickedness and soft appeasement and compromise and the policy of expediency in this world. You are to blame for Communism, for industrial capitalism, and finally for hell on earth!"

To see only the good, the Christ, in others! Perhaps if we thought of how Karl Marx was called "Papa Marx" by all the children on the street, if we knew and remembered how he told fairy stories to

his children, how he suffered hunger and poverty and pain, how he sat by the body of his dead child and had no money for coffin or funeral, perhaps such thoughts as these would make us love him and his followers. Dear God, for the memory of that dead child, or that faithful wife, grant his stormy spirit "a place of refreshment, light, and peace."

And then there was Lenin. He hungered and thirsted and at times he had no fixed abode. Mme. Krupskaya, his widow, said that he loved to go into the peace of the pine woods and hunt mushrooms. He lived one time in the slums of Paris and ate horsemeat. He started schools for the poor and workers. "He went about doing good." Is this blasphemy? How many people are dying and going to God their Father and saying sadly, "We have not so much as heard that there is a Holy Spirit." And how will they hear if none preaches to them? And what kind of shepherds have many of them had? Ezekiel said in his day, "Woe to the shepherds that feed themselves and not their sheep!"

from *By Little and By Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*, Knopf, New York

Poverty and Precarity

by Dorothy Day

It is hard to write about poverty.

We live in a slum neighborhood.

It is becoming ever more crowded with Puerto Ricans, those who have the lowest wages in the city, who do the hardest work, who are small and undernourished from generations of privation and exploitation.

It is hard to write about poverty when the backyard at Chrystie Street still has the furniture piled to one side that was put out on the street in an eviction in a next-door tenement.

How can we say to these people, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven," when we are living comfortable in a warm house, sitting down to a good table, decently clothed? Maybe not so decently. I had occasion to visit the city shelter last month where homeless families are cared for. I sat there for a couple of hours, contemplating poverty and destitution - a family with two of the children asleep in the parents' arms and four others sprawled against them; another young couple, the mother pregnant. I made myself known to a young man in charge. (I did not want to appear to spring on them when all I wanted to know was the latest on the apartment situation for homeless families.) He apologized for making me wait, explaining that he had thought I was one of the clients.

We need always to be thinking and writing about poverty, for if we are not among its victims its reality fades from us. We must talk about poverty, because people insulated by their own comfort lose sight of it. So many decent people come in

to visit and tell us how their families were brought up in poverty, and how through hard work and cooperation, they managed to educate all the children-even raise up priests and nuns to the Church. They contend that healthful habits and a stable family situation enable people to escape from the poverty class, no matter how mean the slum they may once have been forced to live in. So why can't everybody do it? No, these people don't know about the poor. Their conception of poverty is not what poverty is.

And maybe no one can be told; maybe they will have to experience it. Or maybe it is a grace which they must pray for. We usually get what we pray for, and maybe we are afraid to pray for it. And yet I am convinced that it is the grace we most need in this age of crisis, this time when expenditures reach into the billions to defend "our American way of life." Maybe this defense itself will bring down upon us the poverty we are afraid to pray for.

I well remember our first efforts when we started publishing our paper. We had no office, no equipment but a typewriter which was pawned the first month. We wrote the paper on park benches and the kitchen table. In an effort to achieve a little of the destitution of our neighbors, we gave away our furniture and sat on boxes. But as fast as we gave things away people brought more. We gave blankets to needy families and when we started our first House of Hospitality people gathered together what blankets we needed. We gave away food and more

food came in—exotic food, some of it: 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.

No one working with The Catholic Worker gets a salary, so our readers feel called upon to give and help us keep the work going. And then we experience a poverty of another kind, a poverty of reputation. It is said often and with some scorn, “Why don’t they get jobs and help the poor that way? Why are they living off others, begging?”

I can only explain to such critics that it would complicate things to give a salary to Roger for his work of 14 hours a day in the kitchen, clothes room, and office; to pay Jane a salary for running the women’s house and Beth and Annabelle for giving out clothes, for making stencils all day and helping with the sick and the poor, and then have them all turn the money right back in to support the work. Or to make it more complicated, they might all go out and get jobs, and bring the money home to pay their board and room and the salaries of others to run the house. It is simpler just to be poor. It is simpler to beg. The main thing is not to hold on to anything.

But the tragedy is that we do, we all do hold on—to our books, our tools, such as typewriters, our clothes and instead of rejoicing when they are taken from us we lament. We protest when people take our time or privacy. We are holding on to these “goods” too.

Occasionally, as we start thinking of poverty—often after reading the life of such a saint as Benedict Joseph Labre—we dream of going out on our own, living with the destitute, sleeping on park benches or in the city shelter, living in churches, sitting before the Blessed Sacrament as we see so many doing from the Municipal Lodging House around the corner. And when such thoughts come on warm spring days when the children are playing in the park, and it is good to be out on the city streets, we are only dreaming of a form of luxury. What we want is the warm sun, and rest, and time to think and read, and freedom from the people who press in on us from early morning until late at night. No, it is not simple, this business of poverty.

“Precarity,” or precariousness, is an essential element in true voluntary poverty, a saintly priest from Martinique has written us. “True poverty is rare,” he writes. “Nowadays religious communities are good, I am sure, but they are mistaken about poverty. They accept, admit poverty on principle, but everything must be good and strong, buildings must be fireproof. Precarity is everywhere rejected and precarity is an essential element of poverty. This has been forgotten. Here in our monastery we want precarity in everything except the church. These last days our refectory was near collapsing. We have put several supplementary beams in place and thus it will last maybe two or three years more. Someday it will fall on our heads and that will be funny. Precarity enables us better to help the poor. When a community is always building, enlarging,

and embellishing, there is nothing left over for the poor. We have no right to do so as long as there are slums and breadlines somewhere.”

from *By Little and By Little, the Selected Writings of Dorothy Day*, Knopf, New York

Undeclared War to Declared War

By Dorothy Day

Dear Fellow Workers in Christ:

Lord God, merciful God, our Father, shall we keep silent, or shall we speak? And if we speak, what shall we say?

I am sitting here in the church on Mott Street writing this in your presence. Out on the streets it is quiet, but you are there too, in the Chinese, in the Italians, these neighbors we love. We love them because they are our brothers, as Christ is our Brother and God our Father.

But we have forgotten so much. We have all forgotten. And how can we know unless you tell us. For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then are they to call upon Him in whom they have not believed? But how are they to believe Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear, if no one preaches? And how are men to preach unless they be sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace." (Romans X)

Seventy-five thousand Catholic Workers go out every month. What shall we print? We can print still what the Holy Father is saying, when he speaks of total war, of mitigating the horrors of war, when he speaks of cities of refuge, of feeding Europe.

We will print the words of Christ who is with us always, even to the end of the world. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, who makes His sun to rise on the

good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and unjust."

We are at war, a declared war, with Japan, Germany, and Italy. But still we can repeat Christ's words, each day, holding them close in our hearts, each month printing them in the paper. In times past, Europe has been a battlefield. But let us remember St. Francis, who spoke of peace and we will remind our readers of him, too, so they will not forget.

In *The Catholic Worker* we will quote our Pope, our saints, our priests. We will go on printing the articles which remind us today that we are all called to be saints," that we are other Christs, reminding us of the priesthood of the laity.

We are still pacifists. Our manifest is the Sermon on the Mount, which means that we will try to be peacemakers. Speaking for many of our conscientious objectors, we will not participate in armed warfare or in making munitions, or by buying government bonds to prosecute the war, or in urging others to these efforts.

But neither will we be carping in our criticism. We love our country and we love our President. We have been the only country in the world where men of all nations have taken refuge from oppression. We recognize that while in the order of intention we have tried to stand for peace, for love of our brother, in the order of execution we have failed as Americans in living up to our principles.

We will try daily, hourly, to pray for an end to the war, such an end, to

quote Father Orchard, "as would manifest to all the world, that it was brought about by divine action, rather than by military might or diplomatic negotiation, which men and nations would then only attribute to their power or sagacity."

"Despite all calls to prayer," Father Orchard concludes, "there is at present all too little indication anywhere that the tragedy of humanity and the desperate need of the world have moved the faithful, still less stirred the thoughtless masses, to turn to prayer as the only hope for mankind this dreadful hour.

"We shall never pray until we feel more deeply. And we shall never feel deeply enough until we envisage what is actually happening in the world, and understand what is possible in the will of God; and that means until sufficient numbers realize that we have brought things to a pass which is beyond human power to help or save.

"Those who do feel and see, however inadequately, should not hesitate to begin to pray, or fail to persevere, however dark the prospects remain.

"Let them urge others to do likewise; and then, first small groups, and then the Church as a whole and at last the world, may turn and cry for forgiveness, mercy, and deliverance for all.

"Then we may be sure God will answer, and effectually; for the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear."

Let us add, that unless we combine this prayer with almsgiving, in giving to the least of God's children, and fasting in order that we may help feed the hungry,

and penance in recognition of our share in the guilt, our prayer may become empty words.

Our works of mercy may take us into the midst of war. As editor of *The Catholic Worker*, I would urge our friends and associates to care for the sick and the wounded, to the growing of food for the hungry, to the continuance of all our works of mercy in our houses and on our farms. We understand, of course, that there is and that there will be great differences of opinion even among our own groups as to how much collaboration we can have with the government in times like these. There are differences more profound and there will be many continuing to work with us from necessity, or from choice, who do not agree with us as to our position on war, conscientious objection, etc. But we beg that there will be mutual charity and forbearance among us all.

This letter, sent to all our Houses of Hospitality and to all our farms, and being printed in the January issue of the paper, is to state our position in this most difficult time.

Because of our refusal to assist in the prosecution of war and our insistence that our collaboration be one for peace, we may find ourselves in difficulties. But we trust in the generosity and understanding of our government and our friends, to permit us to continue, to use our paper to preach Christ crucified."

May the Blessed Mary, Mother of love, of faith, of knowledge and of hope, pray for us.

from *By Little and By Little*, the Selected Writings of Dorothy Day. Knopf, New York

This Money is Not Ours

By Dorothy Day

Editor's note:

A principle, Dorothy Day believed, remains abstract until it costs us something. In 1961, she welcomed the opportunity to see the value of one of her convictions in a gesture of disarming originality. The cost was \$3,579.39.

For years the Catholic Worker had repeated Peter Maurin's defense of the medieval ban on usury. The acceptance of the belief that value resides in the currency rather than labor, he believed, was a turning point in the transition from a functional to an acquisitive society. The Catholic Worker could not single-handedly reverse this process, but it could at least issue a solitary protest, and make what Peter would call a Point."

The Catholic Worker
39 Spring Street
New York 12, NY

July, 1960
Treasurer,
City of New York

Dear Sir:

We are returning to you a check for \$3,579.39 which represents interest on the \$68,700 which we were awarded by the city as a payment for the property at 223 Chrystie Street which we owned and lived for almost 10 years, and used as a community for the poor. We did not voluntarily give up the property - it was taken from us by the right of eminent domain for the extension of the subway

which the city deemed necessary. We had to wait almost a year and a half for the money owed us, although the city permitted us to receive two-thirds of the assessed valuation of the property in advance so that we could relocate. Property owning having been made impossible for us by city regulations, we are now renting and continuing our work.

We are returning the interest on the money we have recently received because we do not believe in "money lending" at interest. As Catholics we are acquainted with the early teaching of the Church. All the early councils forbade it, declaring it reprehensible to make money by lending it out at interest. Canon law of the Middle Ages forbade it and in various decrees ordered that profit so obtained was to be restored. In the Christian emphasis on the duty of charity, we are commanded to lend gratuitously, to give freely, even in the case of confiscation, as in our own case - not to resist but to accept cheerfully.

We do not believe in the profit system, and so we cannot take profit or interest on our money. People who take a materialistic view of human service wish to make a profit but we are trying to do our duty by our service without wages to our brothers as Jesus commended in the Gospel (Matthew 25.) Loaning money at interest is deemed by one Franciscan as the principle scourge of civilization. Eric Gill, the English artist and writer, calls usury and war the two great problems of our time.

Since we have dealt with these

problems in every issue of The Catholic Worker since 1933 – man’s freedom, war and peace, man and the state, man and his work – and since Scripture says that the love of money is the root of all evil, we are taking this opportunity to live in practice of this belief, and make a gesture of overcoming that love of money by returning to you the interest.

Insofar as our money paid for services for the common good, and aid to the poor, we should be very happy to allow you to use not only our money without interest, but also our work, the Works of Mercy which we all perform here at the headquarters of The Catholic Worker without other salary or recompense than our daily food and lodging, clothes and incidental expenses.

Insofar as the use of our money paid for the time being for salaries for judges who have condemned us and others to jail, and for the politicians who appointed them, and for prisons, and the execution chamber at Sing Sing, and for the executioner’s salary, we can only protest the use of our money and turn with utter horror from taking interest on it.

Please also be assured that we are not judging individuals, but are trying to make a judgment on the system under which we live and with which we admit that we ourselves compromise daily in many small ways, but which we try and wish to withdraw from as much as possible.

Sincerely yours,
Dorothy Day, Editor

It is not easy, having acted upon principle, to explain it in ways acceptable and understood by others. An instance is

our recent sending back of the interest on the money given us for St. Joseph’s House on Chrystie Street.

During the course of the month we have received a few letters, not very many, of criticism of our act. One letter, from a generous benefactor who had given us a large sum when her father died, pointed out that if her parent had not invested his money wisely she and her mother would not have had anything left to live on; also that we probably received many donations which came from dividends, interest, etc.

I only try to answer as best I can. But sometimes one confuses others the more by trying to answer objections. When we wrote our letter to the city, and published it in the paper, we also printed some excerpts for the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas on interest and money lending. We use some of Peter Maurin’s easy essays on the subject, and an article by Arthur Sheehan on credit unions which, however, ask for a small interest on their loans. How can this be reconciled with the “gesture” we made of returning to the city the large check which represented the interest for a year and a half on the money paid us for our property on Chrystie Street? First of all, we asked with Chesterton: Whose money is this interest which the city was paying us? Where did it come from? Money does not breed money; it is sterile.

To answer our correspondent: Of course we are involved, the same as everyone else, in living off interest. We are all caught up in this same money economy. Just as “God writes straight with crooked lines,” so we too waver, struggle on our devious path – always aiming at God, even

though we are conditioned by habits and ancestry, etc. We have free will, which is our greatest gift. We are free to choose, and as we see more clearly, our choice is more direct and easier to make. Be we all see through a glass darkly. It would be heaven to see Truth face to face.

We are publishing a paper in which ideas are discussed and clarified, and illustrated by act. So we are not just a newspaper. We are a revolution, a movement, as Peter Maurin used to say. We are propagandists of the faith. We are the Church. We are members of the Mystical Body. We all must try to function healthily. We do not all have the same function, but we all have a vocation, a calling. Ours is a “prophetic” one, as many priests have said to us. Pope John recently cited the courage of John the Baptist as an example for today. Prophets made great gestures, did things to call attention to whatever they were talking about. That was what we did; we made a gesture, when we returned the money to the city. It was calling attention to a great unsolved problem in which we are all involved, Church, State, corporation, institution, individual.

There is no simple solution. Let the priests and the economists get to work on it. It is a moral and an ethical problem. We can work on the lowest level, the credit union in the parish, for instance. Through the credit union families have been taught to resist the skillful seductions of the advertising men and by doing without many things, to attain ownership, homes, workshops, tools, small factories, and so on. These things have happened in Nova Scotia, in missions throughout the world, and is one way to combat what the bishops

call the all-encroaching state. It is the beginning of the decentralist society.

So, primarily, our sending back the money was a gesture. It was the first time we had to do so with so large a sum of money. We were being reimbursed by the city – and generously, as far as money went – for the house and our improvements on it. (They had taken over the property by the right of eminent domain because a subway extension was going through.) One can argue that the value of the property went up, that the city had 18 months’ use of our money, that money purchases less now, and so on. The fact remains that the city was doing what it could to pay off each and every tenant in the two tenement houses from which they were being evicted, giving bonuses, trying to find other lodgings, though these were usually unacceptable, being in other neighborhoods or boroughs.

We agree that slums need to be eliminated, but that an entire neighborhood, which is like a village made up of many nationalities, should be scattered, displaced – this is wanton cruelty, and one of the causes of the juvenile delinquency of our cities. Also, it is terribly bad and ruthless management on the part of the city fathers.

Is Robert Moses responsible? He is the planner. But he deals recklessly with inanimate brick and cement at the expense of flesh and blood. He is walking ruthlessly over brokenhearted families to make a great outward show of a destroyed and rebuilt city. He has been doing what blockbusters and obliteration bombing did in European and British cities. Right now an entire neighborhood just south of Tomkins Square where some of our poor

friends live is being demolished and the widows and fatherless are crying to heaven. The city fathers try to recompense them, try to give them bonuses to get out quickly. But what good does the money do them when there is no place to go? They do not want to go to another neighborhood or even to another block. Actually, as piled-up furniture on the street testifies, many cling to their poor homes until the last moment, and probably forfeit the 200 or 300 dollars that they are offered, rather than be exiled. That money means as much to them as the 2,000 or 3,000 did to us.

There is talk about doing things economically, yet money is poured out like water in all directions and scandals are always being unearthed of cheating and graft in high places. This extends down to the smallest citizen, too, trying to get in on the big deal and get his – from the building inspector who expects to be tipped, to the little veteran around the corner who is speculating in the real estate by buying and improving and renting and then selling back his property to the city at exorbitant prices. “It doesn’t matter if it is going to be torn down in a year or so,” he assures us. “Rent out all the apartments and stores and then you can ask more from the city.” Big deal! Everyone is trying to get in on the Moses big deal.

So to put it on the natural but often most emotional plane of simple patriotism, love of country or city, this feeling too, prompted us to send back the interest. We do not want to participate in this big deal. “Why are there wars and contentions among you? Because each one seeketh his own.”

We considered this a gesture, too, toward peace, a spiritual weapon which is translated into action. We cannot talk about these ideas without trying to put them into practice, though we do it clumsily and are often misunderstood.

We are not trying to be superior, holier than thou. Of course we are involved in paying taxes, in living on money which comes from our industrial capitalist way of life. But we can try, by voluntary poverty and labor, to earn our living, and not to be any more involved than we can help. We, all of us, partake in a way in the sin of Sapphira and Ananias, by holding back our time, our love, our material resources even, after making great protestations of “absolutism.” May God and you, our readers, forgive us. We are, in spite of all we try to do, unprofitable servants.

From *By Little and By Little: the selected writings of Dorothy Day*, Knopf, New York.

Reflections in Jail

By Dorothy Day

One of the peculiar enjoyments I got out of jail was in being on the other side for a change. I was the one working in a laundry, ironing uniforms of jailers. I was the one sitting in the sewing room turning the collar and mending the uniform of an officer. It gave me a chance to tell the other prisoners about Tolstoy, and how he said the first move toward reform was to do one's own work. Everyone regarded the officers as members of the parasite class, though they would not use that word. How much more respect they would have had for the officers, and for the work they themselves had to do, if they had seen the officers sitting mending their own clothes. If they had seen them working to help their fellows. Perhaps it would have meant a beginning of the philosophy of work which Peter Maurin used to say was so sadly lacking today. If prisoners and officers had worked together to make the prison a happier place, what a change there might have been in the hearts of those confined.

The officers sat all day at their desks, watching, directing, always expecting the worst, always looking for some small infraction, always seeing the women as criminals. They did not see that which is of God in every person, as the Friends put it. St. John of the Cross said, "Where there is no love, put love, and you will find love."

The officers looked for the criminal and found the criminal.

The women got away with what they could. They fought, they lied, they stole when they could. While working in

the laundry, I saw a girl put a folded dress, which she wanted for herself, up between her legs, under her skirt. When she spoke of it afterward to some of the other prisoners on our corridor, they jeered. "That's nothing," one said, "I've seen girls who worked in the kitchen get away with a turkey or a ham." Judith made us all hilarious by immediately getting up and trying to impersonate a girl walking out of the kitchen with a turkey or ham held thus.

Looking back on these last paragraphs, I see that I have gone from the sublime to the ridiculous, even to the vulgar and, for some, the revolting. But beauty and joy often spring from the dung heap.

I have said that I enjoyed being on the other side for a time. People come into the Catholic Worker in 'such numbers: 800 a day for food; hundreds of men, women and children coming in for clothes. When all the beds in the house are full, we often give out "flop" money—the fifty cents a night it costs to sleep on the Bowery. All that we give is given to us to give. Nothing is ours. All we have to give is our time and our patience, our love. In the movie, Monsieur Vincent, the saint tells a young nun that she has to love the poor very much for them to forgive her the bread she gives them. How often we have failed in love, how often we have been brusque, cold and indifferent. "Roger takes care of the clothes; you'll have to come back at ten o'clock." Or "Just sit in

the library and wait.” “Wait your turn, I’m busy.” So it often goes. And now I was getting pushed here and there, told what I could do or could not do, hemmed in by rules and regulations and red tape and bureaucracy. It made me see my faults but it also made me see how much more we accomplish at the Catholic Worker in our own direct way, by not asking questions or doing any investigating, but by cultivating a spirit of trust. The whole experience of jail was good for my soul. I realized again how much ordinary kindness can do. Graciousness is an old-fashioned word but it has a beautiful religious tradition. “Grace is participation in the divine life,” according to St. Peter.

Most of the time we were treated like dumb beasts—worse, because it was with indifference and contempt. “You’ll be back” was the common farewell to the prisoner. It was, in effect, wishing her not to fare well. There was no goodbye, “God be with you,” because there was not enough faith or hope or charity to conceive of a forgiving and loving God being with anyone so lost in vice and crime as prostitutes, drug addicts and other criminals are supposed to be.

One great indignity is the examination given all women for drugs. There is certainly no recognition of the fact of political imprisonment. All of us were stripped and searched in the crudest way—even to the tearing of tissues so that bleeding resulted. Then there is the matter of clothing—the scanty garments, the crude wrappers which scarcely wrap around one, the floppy cloth slippers which are impossible to keep on! In Russia, in Germany, and even in our own country,

to strip the prisoner, to humiliate him, is a definite part and purpose of a jail experience. Even in the Army, making a man stand naked before his examiners is to treat him like a dumb beast or a slave. A great courtesy accorded us was a visit from the warden himself. Never had anything like that happened before, one of the girls assured us. He wanted to know about our demonstration, why we had done it. He was a Hungarian Catholic so perhaps it was easy to understand his confusion about our pacifism. What man does not wish to resist a foreign aggressor, to defend his home and family? But the problem of the means to an end had never occurred to him. Nowadays, it is pretty generally accepted that the end justifies the means. To his mind, one just could not be a pacifist today. It was an “impossible” position.

As to our attitude toward the prison and the prisoners, he could not understand our love for them, our not judging them. The idea of hating the sin and loving the sinner seemed foreign to him. Of course, he did not hate the sinner but he had to look upon them as evil; otherwise his job would be meaningless. When we talked of the good we found there, in spite of perversion, prostitution, and drugs, he looked at us strangely and wanted to know if we were Christian Scientists. At least he did not call us communists. He was too intelligent for that. But we seemed to him to be denying the reality of evil, because we were upholding the prisoner. The evil was there, all right, frank and unabashed. It was inside and also outside the jail.

One of the greatest evils of the day is the sense of futility. Young people say, "What can one person do? What is the sense of our small effort?" They cannot see that we can only lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible only for the one action of the present moment. But we can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that will vitalize and transform these actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes.

Next year, perhaps, God willing, we will again go to jail and, perhaps, conditions will be the same. To be charitable we can only say that the prison officials do the best they can, according to their understanding. In a public institution, they are not paid to love the inmates; they are paid to guard them. They admit that the quarters are totally inadequate, that what was built for a House of Detention for women awaiting trial is now being used for a workhouse and penitentiary.

Dorothy Day (1890-1980)

by Colman McCarthy

NEW YORK – The funeral procession of Dorothy Day, her body in a pinewood coffin, moved out of Maryhouse on Third Street on the way to a requiem mass at Nativity Catholic Church, a half-block away. Someone wondered aloud why more of the poor were not present. The street, as mean as any in this cloister of harshness on the edge of the Bowery, was certainly not overflowing with homeless souls come to mourn the woman who had served them in a personal ministry for half a century. A few men and even fewer women – blank-eyed, dressed in tatters – stood in clusters, while others wandered down the street from the city shelter for derelicts, one of Manhattan’s unseen hellholes. But that was all. Most of the 800 people following the coffin were either old friends of Miss Day who lived outside the neighborhood or members of the Catholic Worker community who run St. Joseph’s and Maryhouse, the two local shelters for the homeless.

Large numbers of the poor did not come, for a reason as obvious as the open sores on the face of a wino opposite Maryhouse; they were too busy trying to fight death themselves. To mark the passing of someone who loved them – accepted them totally by living here, raising money for them through her newspaper, *The Catholic Worker* – would, of course, make sense in the rational world of the comfortable, where public tribute to the deceased great and the seemingly great is the proper way of dealing with grief. But here on this street that is full of

the homeless and jobless, death was not needed for grief. Hope gets buried every day.

If the turnout of the poor was not strong, there was an almost total absence of Catholic officialdom. This was the genuine affront. Few of the faithful in this century were more committed than Dorothy Day to the church’s teachings, both in its social encyclicals – on the distribution of wealth, the evils of the arms race – and its call to private spirituality. She was a daily communicant at mass, rising early to read the Bible and pray the rosary.

Dorothy Day used her faith as a buffer against burnout and despair. Fittingly, it will have to be taken on faith that her life of service made a difference. She issued no progress reports on neighborhood improvement, summoned no task forces on how to achieve greater efficiency on the daily soup line.

Nor did she ever run “follow-up studies” on whether the derelicts of the Bowery renounced their drunken and quarrelsome ways. As her favorite saint, Theresa of Lisieux, taught, results don’t matter to the prayerful.

On the subject of results, Dorothy Day had a philosophy of divine patience: “We continue feeding our neighbors and clothing and sheltering them, and the more we do it the more we realize that the most important thing is to love. There are several families with us, destitute to an unbelievable extent, and there, too, is nothing to do but love. What I mean is that there is no chance of rehabilitation

- no chance, so far as we see, of changing them, certainly no chance of adjusting them to this abominable world about them, and who wants them adjusted, anyway?"

That was from the June, 1946 issue of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, a monthly that has been a voice of pacifism and justice since 1933. The jobless and homeless are so thick in the streets that "Holy Mother City," as Miss Day called it, makes no pretense of even counting them.

It may be just as well. Counters get in the way when there is soup to be made. Even worse, getting too close to the government means a trade-off that Miss Day resisted in words and action. "The state believes in war," she said, "and, as pacifists and philosophical anarchists, we don't"

Because she served the poor for so long and with such tireless intensity, Dorothy Day had a national constituency of remarkable breadth. She was more than merely the conscience of the Left. Whether it was a young millionaire named John F. Kennedy who came to see her (in 1943) or one of the starving, she exuded authenticity.

It was so well-known that she lived among the poor - shared their table, stood in their lines, endured the daily insecurity - that the *Catholic Worker* became known as the one charity in which contributions truly did reach the poor. It is at St. Joseph's House, 36 E. 1st, New York, 10003.

"It is a strange vocation to love the destitute and dissolute," Miss Day wrote a few years ago. But it is one that keeps attracting the young who come to *Catholic Worker* as a place to brew the soup and

clean the toilets, which is also the work of peacemakers. They are against military wars for sure, but their pacifism resists the violence of the economic wars. "We refuse to fight for a materialistic system that cripples so many of its citizens," the *Catholic worker* has been saying for half a century.

The only catholic bishop of the church on hand was Terence Cardinal Cooke of New York. As the procession rounded the corner from Maryhouse and went onto the sidewalk leading to the church, the scarlet vestments of the cardinal came into view. The contrast was powerful. In a neighborhood of drab colors, where even the faces of the poor seem to be grayed with depression, the scarlet robes of the cardinal, his scarlet skullcap, had a touch of mock comedy to them; the vestments seemed almost the costume of a clown - a clown who was lost in the saddest of landscapes.

A *Catholic Worker* priest, a young Dominican who works at Maryhouse and was to celebrate the mass, made the best of the situation. At the head of the procession, he shook hands with Cardinal Cooke. The cardinal took over and prayed aloud, commending the soul of "Dear Dorothy" to the mercy of the Lord. While cameramen of the Associated Press, *The Daily News*, and the *Religious News Service* clicked away - getting the coffin in the foreground - the cardinal finished praying in two minutes.

It was just enough time for many in the procession to think beyond the cardinal's brilliantly hued presence at the church door. Some recalled the pacifists from the *Catholic Worker* who have

been standing for the past few months outside Cardinal Cooke's offices uptown and in front of the splendid St. Patrick's Cathedral. They have been leafleting the churchgoers on the immorality of the arms race and pleading with the unseen cardinal to issue a statement in favor of nuclear disarmament. In the most recent issue of *The Catholic Worker*, one of Dorothy Day's writers said sharply about the vigil at St. Patrick's last August: "We want to remember the victims of the [Hiroshima and Nagasaki] bombings, and to mourn the fact that the hierarchy of our archdiocese is so silent about nuclear disarmament, when statements from the Vatican Council, recent popes, and the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference have been so clear in their condemnation of the arms race."

Six grandchildren of Miss Day, carrying her coffin, nodded their thanks to the cardinal and proceeded into the church. A moment later, John Shiel went up to Cardinal Cooke. Shiel, a short, half-toothless man who has been repeatedly jailed in peace protests, is something of a lay theologian who can quote every pope back to Boniface I on the subject of war and peace. A friend of Miss Day, he left Washington at 4 a.m. to be here for the mass.

"Hello John," said His Eminence, who knew Shiel from his persistent lobbying for peace at the annual meetings of the hierarchy.

"Hello there, Cardinal," said Sheil. "When are you going to come out against nuclear weapons?"

His Eminence gave no answer, and shortly he was driven off in his limousine

to "a previous commitment." The day before, according to a *Catholic Worker* staff member, Cardinal Cooke's secretary had phoned to request that the mass be held at 10 a.m., because it would then fit into the cardinal's schedule and he could preside. But Miss Day's daughter had already decided on 11 a.m. because that was when the soup kitchen was closed for the morning break between cleaning up after breakfast and getting ready for lunch. The cardinal's presence would be missed, the secretary was told, but with all due respect, feeding the poor came first.

Inside the church, with its unpainted cement-block walls and water-marked ceiling, the breadth of Dorothy Day's friendships was on view. In the pews were Cesar Chavez, Frank Sheed, Michael Harrington, Ed and Kathleen Guinan, Paul Moore, and Father Horace McKenna, the Jesuit who for decades has been serving the poor at his own soup kitchen in Washington.

In the back of the church, after the sermon, the undertaker, a friendly man, tall and properly somber-looking, was asked about the arrangements. "She was a lovely lady," he said. "We're doing this way below cost. The *Worker* gives us a lot of business, and besides, Miss Day is part of the community."

The undertaker said that the archdiocese was picking up the tab of \$380 for opening the grave at the cemetery. If the patron saint of irony were listening in, he or she would call out to the heavenly choir, "Stop the music." During the archdiocese cemetery workers' strike in the mid-1950s, Dorothy Day was personally

denounced by Cardinal Spellman for siding with the underpaid gravediggers.

After mass, a young Catholic Worker staff member, who was the candle-bearer at the head of the funeral procession, told the story of the candle – a thick white one, almost three feet tall. “We went around to neighborhood churches. We asked the sacristans for their old candle stubs that would be thrown out anyway. Then we melted them into one large candle.” Another form of brightness was present – a thought from one of Dorothy Day’s books, printed on the bottom of the mass card: “We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.”

At about 12:30, some of the crowd drifted back to Maryhouse where lunch was being served. Pea soup was ladled from a 10-gallon kettle. Brown bread was on the table with milk, tea and oranges: enough food for all.

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