

**Parish Lenten Retreat**

***“Deus ibi est” “God is There”***

*Where Charity and Love are, God is There.*

*Ubi Caritas et Amore, Deus ibi est.*

**Dorothy Day – Week 5**

**Selected Readings From *Praying With Dorothy Day***

Dorothy Day’s life and legacy is a radical movement, faithful to the Gospel and the Church, immersed in the social issues of the day, with the aim of transforming both individuals and society. In an age marked by widespread violence, impersonal government, shallow interpersonal commitments, and a quest for self-fulfillment, Dorothy Day’s spirit fosters nonviolence, personal responsibility of all people to the poorest ones among us and fidelity to community and to God.

The vision of Dorothy Day lives on in *The Catholic Worker* newspaper that has been continually published since 1933. Dorothy was a journalist all her adult life, and she lived through and commented on the central events of the twentieth century: wars, economic depression, class struggle, the nuclear threat and the civil rights movement. *The Catholic Worker* and her prodigious writings always focus the light of the Gospel on our conscience as we struggle with these issues. She wrote to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable.

In her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, Dorothy divides her life into three parts. She describes her first twenty-five years as a time of “Searching” for a center of meaning and focus for her energies. During the middle period, which she calls “Natural Happiness,” she lived in a common-law marriage, gave birth to a daughter, completed her conversion, embraced Catholicism and turned her life in a new direction. The last and longest period, “Love Is The Measure,” began when she met Peter Maurin and then cofounded the Catholic Worker Movement with him.

**Dorothy’s Spirituality**

Two broad spiritual streams came together in Dorothy Day’s character, and each stream contributed to her spirituality. As an American born into a Protestant family that valued education and literacy, she was a pragmatist, a worker and a woman of action. After her conversion, these traits united with the traditions of Roman Catholicism: the teachings of the papal social encyclicals, the sacramental and liturgical life and sense of sacramentality and the devotion to and imitation of the saints and mystics. Dorothy’s love of the Scriptures came from her Protestant roots and predated the widespread use of the Bible by lay Catholics.

**Love of Scripture:** Throughout her life, Dorothy received comfort and inspiration from the Bible, especially the Psalms, the Pauline writings and the Gospels. They were part of her daily meditation.

**Solidarity with the Poor:** In the Catholic Worker community, Dorothy shared her daily energies with and on behalf of poor people. Her writings, direct practice of the works of mercy and her own voluntary poverty, bound her to poor, homeless sick and desperate people.

**Personalism:** Dorothy loved doing works of mercy because they allowed her to take direct and immediate action for her brothers and sisters in Christ and against the ills of society that robbed them of their life, freedom and dignity.

**Prophetic Witness:** By her public words and work, Dorothy sought to imitate Christ’s witness against injustice, even when such witness seemed folly. Like Christ, she was critical of the powers and structures of injustice and endured ridicule and opposition for her witness.

**Peacemaking:** A steadfast pacifist, Dorothy opposed all wars and the use of force and violence to solve human problems. She practiced and promoted human dignity with the spiritual weapons of prayer, fasting, almsgiving and civil disobedience.

**A Sacramental Sense:** Dorothy looked to sacramental celebrations, especially the Eucharist, for daily spiritual sustenance, and she saw the world, its people and all of nature, to be full of God’s grandeur.

*(over)*

**Gratitude:** Dorothy had a keen sense of appreciation and learned to trust in the providence of God. Dorothy regularly expressed gratitude not only to God but to those around her and to *The Catholic Worker's* readers.

**Dorothy For Today:** Although Dorothy spurned the suggestion that she was a saint, she took seriously the importance of becoming one; saintly people could heal the ills of this world. God created the Mystical Body of Christ for holiness, wholeness and sanctity. Jesus took on humanity to show people how to be godly through acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly. The Holy Spirit continually invites all Christians to holiness. Dorothy Day provides a contemporary model of the qualities of holiness: solidarity with and service to God's poor, promoting and being willing to suffer for justice, acting in charity, living in community, integrating faith and action through prayer, sacred ritual and meditation. Dorothy Day may not always be a comfortable companion on the spiritual journey, but she will certainly be a wise, caring and challenging one.

**Stages of Canonization in the Catholic Church**  
**Servant of God → Venerable → Blessed → Saint**

### Quoting Dorothy Day

“This ward broke me, the work was so hard. Working on this ward was the hardest part of my hospital career. One afternoon when I had been cleaning up filth all day, and the perverse patient had again thrown her bedpan out on the floor dirtying my shoes and stockings, I left the ward in tears and sat in the washroom weeping uncontrollably at the ugliness and misery of life. I could not stop crying long enough to tell Miss Adams, so that my patients would not be left alone, but did the unforgivable thing and ran away, going to my room where I continued to cry. I shall always remember with what gentleness the assistant superintendent of nurses came and talked to me about the responsibilities of the nurse and the dignity of her profession and the “sacrament of duty.” She might not have used those words, but that was the tenor of her talk, and I have never forgotten it.”

- “As for ourselves, yes we must be meek, bear injustice, malice, rash judgment. We must turn the other cheek, give up our cloak, go a second mile.”
- “Don’t call me a saint. I don’t want to be dismissed so easily.”
- “Food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul.”
- “I have long since come to believe that people never mean half of what they say, and it is best to disregard their talk and judge only their actions.”
- “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.”

### Prayer For The Canonization of Servant of God Dorothy Day

God our Creator,  
Your servant Dorothy Day exemplified the  
Catholic Faith by her conversion,  
Life of prayer and voluntary poverty,  
Works of mercy and Witness to the  
justice and peace of the Gospel.

May her life inspire your people  
To turn to Christ as their savior,  
To see his face in the world’s poor, and  
To raise their voice for the justice of God’s kingdom.

We pray that you grant the favors we ask,  
and that the virtues of your servant, Dorothy,  
may be recognized so that the  
Church may one day proclaim her Saint.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.