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## **DOROTHY DAY: STUDENT OF THE MORAL LIFE, EDUCATOR FOR THE MORAL LIFE**

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*Dorothy Day (1897-1980), convert to Catholicism and co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, exemplifies both the educator and student of the Christian moral life. Her own development highlights the extraordinary importance of the ordinary aspects of daily living in the formation of the morally committed Christian.*

**M**oral education often comes in the form of abstract, universal principles intended to guide students in making specific life choices. Personal experience as well as observation consistently demonstrate that familiarity with these basic moral principles frequently fails to translate into the corresponding behavior. Yet, given the difficulty in unraveling the complex connection between knowledge and ethical behavior, the pedagogical temptation is to continue trying to convey general moral principles deductively in the hope that each student will somehow make the application in his or her life. This approach commonly ignores what is known of human learning: that individuals learn best by encountering examples of the ideas under study and then engaging in the processes of interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of those ideas.

Catholic educators have long employed varied approaches to educating for a moral life. One of the important foci of these approaches has been the saints, whose lives not only provide models of sanctity and inspiration but serve as excellent resources in applying higher-level thinking processes in educating for the moral life. For many Catholics, of course, these holy ones are quite distinct from inspirational characters of fictional narratives because they are real persons with whom one can establish an ongoing relationship.

They can become friends, adopted members of the family, who even beyond death offer assistance to those who call upon them.

Every Christian who recites the creed announces belief in this “communion of saints” and admits his or her reliance upon a faith community to help grasp fully the meaning of the moral life. This community includes “those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith.” The lives of the saints translate the meaning of the call to follow Christ into a practical, particular setting of lives actually lived. Of course, the use of saints as guides in moral living does have its peculiar difficulties since these folks display faith-in-practice in ways so extraordinary as to seem irrelevant to the more mundane demands of daily life. Despite the shortcomings of hagiographical accounts of the saints, the use of lives well lived remains a powerful aid in moral education even at the end of the 20th century, a difficult and exciting period when challenges to living the moral life seem to multiply daily.

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) knew many of these challenges firsthand, and the study of her life has strong potential for promoting student reflection on what it means to live morally in our day. This socialist radical rejected religion as an “opiate” and lived the bohemian life from the age of 18 to 30. In 1927, she converted to Catholicism and integrated her radical commitments to justice and compassion with a deep Catholic piety through the Catholic Worker movement which she co-founded with Peter Maurin in 1933. Admittedly, the Roman Catholic Church has granted no official recognition of Day’s sainthood. In fact, many who have read her writings recognize a life far from the perfection of hagiography. Yet these flaws only accentuate what it means to live a moral life. Throughout her long life, she grappled simultaneously with the most abstract of concepts, especially justice and mercy, in tandem with the most practical, the particular actions of a Christian, a committed Catholic, whose existence ought to manifest the justice and mercy of Christ. She points to the possibilities of living within that Christian dialectic of action and contemplation, the basic dynamic of a fruitful and ever deepening life in Christ. The following will consider Dorothy Day as both a 20th century educator of those seeking guidance in living the Christian moral life and a student whose own life required an educative faith community in which she encountered the transformative power of God through lessons well taught in words and deeds.

Using Dorothy Day’s life as a resource for moral education has limits similar to those encountered in using the lives of other extraordinary Christians. Her dramatic conversion and radical commitment to the Gospel can too easily relegate her to the realm of the exceptional. She did, after all, accept voluntary poverty, reside in a house of hospitality with derelicts and outcasts, embrace absolute pacifism, and write and work against many forms of injustice even to the point of imprisonment. Dorothy Day seems to resemble the bold sinner turned prophet more than the moral educator. On the

whole, moral education concerns the mundane, the basic formation of the hearers of the prophetic message, rather than its bearer.

To identify moral education with the quotidian does not, however, divorce it from the prophetic. The roles are interrelated. The prophet's effectiveness depends upon a community formed in such a way as to be able to recognize the message of God's judgment and redemption. Catholic moral education, like all Christian moral education, ought to be a formation that opens the student to the ever-present possibility of God's transformative power manifesting itself in and through life's circumstances. To relegate the moral educator to the mundane, the ordinary, is not banishment to the uneventful or unimportant. The Christian moral educator who concerns herself or himself with the mundane is dealing precisely in that extraordinary realm of the in-breaking of God's Kingdom wherein justice dwells and mercy knows no bounds.

This extraordinary realm of the mundane becomes the arena in which the moral educator can come face to face with Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker. In his description of the world view of the Catholic Worker, Patrick Carey chooses a dramatic word, "eschatological," the extremities of Christian temporality. The term suggests the opposite of ordinary; it conjures images of the ultimate battle between good and evil involving events that would rival the most spectacular special effects of any summer blockbuster movie. Yet, reading Carey's discussion belies such dramatic extremes. Eschatological here refers to the *telos* [end] of life. For the Catholic Worker, "The true end and fulfillment of the Christian life is redeemed humanity. . . . The church's mission, thus, is to make the promise of redeemed humanity as practically present as possible, given the sinful condition of humanity" (Carey, 1987, p. 59). The key phrase here is "as practically present as possible." What Day conveys in her writings is the extraordinary quality of the mundane, and how the mundane constantly opens the participants to the possibility of redemption, a life practically present in all its dimensions to a relationship with God and neighbor marked by love.

Dorothy Day's own conversion, as she relates it in her 1952 autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, springs from the intense presence of the divine as encountered in the mundane. The account has proven fascinating to its many readers as she describes her pursuit of integrating her faith with an active life as a Catholic radical. A brief review explains the fascination. Born in 1897 in Brooklyn, Dorothy Day moved with her family to San Francisco in 1904. Shortly after the 1906 earthquake, the Day family relocated to Chicago to accommodate her father's journalist career. Not from a church-going family, Day self-initiated her religious involvement throughout childhood including baptism into the Episcopal church and frequent private recitation of the Psalms. This early formation in the common prayer of the church served as a fruitful resource for Dorothy Day in her later practices of prayer.

At the age of 16, she entered the University of Illinois, where she became enamored with socialist and communist political movements and rejected all organized religion. In 1915, Day arrived in New York City, where she began her career as a journalist writing for the socialist newspaper the *Call* and after its suppression, *The Masses*. Her life was that of the bohemian radical in New York City in the early 20th century, with such notable companions as radicals Max Eastman and Jack Reed as well as playwright Eugene O'Neill. Much of her childhood faith had been eclipsed by the ardor of political causes to which she contributed primarily through the written word.

After a brief hiatus in hospital work during the First World War, Day wrote cryptically: "I can not write too intimately of the next few years. . . ." Other sources indicate a disastrous love affair ending with an aborted pregnancy and a brief marriage. Finally to bring some order into her life, Day bought a small house on Staten Island. She soon shared this home with a man, Forster Battenham, who became her common law husband.

With this new relationship in a relatively ordered life comes what Day describes as an intense period of "natural happiness" (Day, 1952, p. 111). Early in this second section of the autobiography, she reports a joyful awakening to a divine, quasi-sacramental presence in the midst of the commonplace. "I found myself praying, praying with thanksgiving, praying with open eyes while I watched the workers on the beach and the sunset, and listened to the sound of the waves and the scream of snowy gulls" (p. 117). The quotidian evokes the wonder of gratitude.

Day explicitly identifies the love between herself and Forster as crucial in this spiritual transformation marked by joy: ". . . it was life with him that brought me natural happiness, that brought me to God" (1952, p. 134). Forster, ironically enough, was a committed atheist. His atheism did not prevent Day from discovering within that relationship the wonders of the ordinary that make up a life. Day makes very clear, though never with explicit details, that the sensual aspects of this relationship were key to her "natural happiness." The sensual included not only sexual relations but also Forster's "ardent love of creation" which he imparted to Dorothy through the simple pleasures of walks, "rowing in a calm bay," and gardening (p. 134).

The turning point came for Day, however, in that wondrously common event—the birth of a child, Tamar Therese. "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 a need to worship, to adore" (1952, p. 139). What Day described was a deeply personal joy and a deeply personal, private conversion.

Day made very clear that the personal transformation required a profoundly communal expression. She acknowledged in *The Long Loneliness* a quite conventional need for community, "a Church [that] would bring order to her [daughter's] life. . . ." (1952, p. 141). She also recognized her own need

“to associate myself with others, with the masses, in loving and praising God” (p. 139). Drawing from her past life among committed socialists and communists, she claimed it was her “very experience as a radical” that led her to this recognition, and she identified the Catholic Church, the church of immigrants and workers, as that church of the masses (p. 139). Hoping to salvage her marriage to Forster, whose atheist convictions remained, Day delayed her own entrance into the Church. Then, finding her desire to enter the Catholic Church stronger than her ties to Forster, she turned from the man that she loved to make a public declaration of her greater love for God by receiving conditional baptism.

Day’s conversion, despite the depth and cost, remained incomplete until Peter Maurin arrived at her doorstep five years later. Before that encounter, Day believed that her former political commitments had no place in her new-found faith. The itinerant French peasant-emigre had to show her how to create a synthesis between her deeply felt commitment to God expressed in her Catholic faith and her longing to act once more for the just cause.

Maurin educated Day through both a practical program that became the Catholic Worker movement and an intellectual framework for a decidedly Catholic radicalism. His eclectic body of teachings drew from papal encyclicals, the prophetic traditions of Scripture, and the heroic lives of many saints as well as contemporary discussions on the transformation of the social order. His plan had three basic components: 1) round-table discussions for clarification of thought; 2) the founding of Houses of Hospitality to practice the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy; and 3) the establishment of agronomic universities, self-sufficient farm communities where scholars and workers could come together for work and study. Of course, all of these practices were to be sustained through love of God expressed in daily private and communal prayer. Maurin knew, at least intuitively, the rudiments of pedagogy in his use of examples such as the saints, his comparing and contrasting Catholic radicalism with other forms of radical thought, his use of various models of practice, and his insistence on doing.

Peter Maurin viewed these various components within a grand vision of creating a “synthesis of ‘cult’ [worship], culture [round-table discussions], and cultivation [self-sufficient farming]” (Day, 1952, p. 171). What is striking about Day’s nearly half century of living this vision as a Catholic Worker, from 1933 to her death in 1980, at least from one vantage point, is the oddly prosaic quality of a Catholic radical’s life. As indicated in the three components of the plan, much of the eschatologically inspired efforts of the Catholic Worker concerned the most basic needs of the present life—food, clothing, and shelter. Discussions at table, often literally the kitchen table, and the common prayers of mid-20th century Catholics sustained this movement intellectually and spiritually.

The actual beginnings of the Catholic Worker movement were appropri-

ately commonplace. A small group gathered in Day's apartment to do what she knew best—publish a newspaper. The *Catholic Worker* would promulgate the message of Catholic radicalism to those burdened with society's cruelty and injustice. Both Maurin and Day saw the paper as necessary for competing with the atheistic socialists and communists for the hearts and minds of the workers.

The country, of course, was plunged into the deepest and darkest depression. Many found themselves without homes, unsure of the source of their next meal. Two of these many, "Dolan and Egan," had the good fortune of receiving an invitation from Peter Maurin to dine in Dorothy Day's apartment, much to her chagrin. As the story is told, these two guests' frequent visits so annoyed Day that her more mischievous friends would knock, followed by a familiar refrain: "Dolan and Egan here." Day and her companions who were producing the new radical newspaper, the *Catholic Worker*, gradually learned one of the first lessons which Maurin taught, even if unintentionally. What was written in their articles became concrete in their sharing a meal with these hungry men at the personal sacrifice of their privacy (Piehl, 1982).

Maurin's simple invitation marks the beginning of the first House of Hospitality, which became the institutional center for the Catholic Worker movement. By 1938, in a "double tenement on Mott Street," the St. Joseph House, founded only two years earlier, was serving a total of 1200 people and sheltering around 150 (Piehl, 1982, p. 96). Clothing soon became available for the endless stream of guests. The House of Hospitality also functioned as the site of ongoing round-table discussions for the clarification of thought punctuated by common prayer including at various times the rosary, the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, and Vespers.

The other Maurin-inspired experiment, the agronomic university, reflected a similar concern for providing the basics—food and shelter. The difference was that these agriculturally based Catholic Worker communities were to become self-sufficient. Maurin saw these rural communities as an alternative for the wage-dependent workers who lived on the edge of poverty and found themselves in soup kitchen lines as soon as they were laid off. He envisioned more than a working farm, hence the name, "agronomic universities, where the worker could become a scholar and the scholar a worker" (Day, 1952, p. 225). Integral to these universities, as to the Houses of Hospitality, were round-table discussions and prayer.

The Maurin-inspired program may appear somewhat whimsical, but it sprang from a clear, fundamental philosophical commitment identified as "Christian personalism" that was consciously embraced as an alternative to socialism. Personalism argued that every individual rather than the state had a personal obligation to take responsibility for the transformation of the social order. In a *Catholic Worker* article, "Unashamed Moralists in the Personalist Tradition," commemorating the centenary of Peter Maurin's birth

(May 1977), author and teacher Robert Coles describes personalism.

Personalism affirms the importance of each human being in God's (or the world's) scheme of things; and, thereby, denies the authority of anyone (an entrepreneur, an official of the state, and, yes, an intellectual) to take anyone else for granted. Personalism is not interested in the psychology of "adjustment," does not bow below the imperatives of the "practical." Personalism makes a strong case for transcendence—'the surpassing of the self . . . .' (Cornell, Ellsberg, & Forest, 1995, p. 237)

Maurin provided the basic instruction in this alternative way of thinking about the individual's relation to society, and he convinced his premier student, Dorothy Day, and many others of its veracity.

A philosophy of personal responsibility hardly necessitates the life lived among Catholic Workers. The personalism of the Catholic Worker as taught by Maurin was thoroughly Christian; the human person is ultimately defined in, through, and with Christ. In *The Long Loneliness*, Day described Maurin himself as someone who "aroused in you a sense of your own capacities for work, for accomplishment" (Day, 1952, p. 171). His strategy was to awaken one to the possibilities rather than to paralyze with the inevitability of injustice. More specifically, "it was seeing Christ in others, loving the Christ you saw in others. Greater than this, it was having faith in Christ in others without being able to see Him" (p. 171). One took personal responsibility for acting as Christ's body in the world and for recognizing Christ in those whom one served.

Christian personalism gained its theologically radical spirit from identifying faith in Christ with living the Sermon on the Mount, which demands placing God's Kingdom before all else. Hence Day along with other Catholic Workers including Maurin lived and preached "accepting voluntary poverty as a principle, so that they [Catholics committed to the Gospel] would not fear the risk of losing job, of losing life itself" (Day, 1952, p. 212). It meant "turning the other cheek," i.e., absolute pacifism, and the use of nonviolent means for changing the social order (Day, 1952, pp. 272-273).

While Christian personalism coupled with the Sermon on the Mount provides the philosophical and theological underpinnings of the Catholic Worker, and the Houses of Hospitality and agronomic universities provided the location, the Works of Mercy dictate the specific personal responsibilities of those who wished to express their love of Christ in others. As already mentioned, Peter Maurin intended that Catholic Workers would practice both the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. In a 1949 *Commonweal* article entitled "The Scandal of the Works of Mercy," Day reviewed for her readers what these works entail.



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. (as cited in Ellsberg, 1984, p. 98)

One of the principal means for performing the Spiritual Works was the newspaper. It allowed the *Catholic Worker* contributors, especially the editor, Dorothy Day, to admonish those who sinned against justice and mercy, to instruct those ignorant of the radical demands of Catholic faith, to counsel those who doubted God's efficacy in the world, and to comfort those sorrowing over the state of the world. The positions taken often evoked harsh criticism. The pacifist stand, for example, taken during the Spanish Civil War and then World War II resulted in a nearly 75% drop in subscriptions from 190,000 in 1938 to 50,500 by 1943 (Roberts, 1984). Of course, Day and others committed to the radical Gospel message of non-violence could interpret the criticism as an opportunity to bear wrongs patiently and to forgive all injuries.

In *The Long Loneliness*, Day specifically reflects on bearing wrongs. "We were ready to endure wrongs patiently (this is another of the spiritual works of mercy) but we were not going to be meek for others, enduring *their* [sic] wrongs patiently" (1952, p. 181). So, despite the call for personal patience and forgiveness, Day did not shirk from using "the weapons of journalism!" (p. 181). While the *Catholic Worker* was committed to pacifism, it rejected passivity. The Works of Mercy aided in the active struggle to bring about a just social order.

As the principal tool for instructing the ignorant, the newspaper with its national distribution kept before its readers the aims and purposes of the Catholic Worker movement. It became an instrument of "indoctrination," a term Maurin and then Day used unapologetically to describe spreading their message. In a 1940 *Catholic Worker* article entitled "Aims and Purposes," Day bluntly stated that "If we do not keep indoctrinating, we lose the vision. And if we lose the vision, we become mere philanthropists, doling out palliatives" (as cited in Ellsberg, 1984, p. 91). While such language might raise the specter of intolerance or lack of critical reflection, the term reflected Day's clear understanding that she stood for a distinctive cause that required ongoing articulation. She had learned well as reporter for *The Call* and *The Masses* that radical commitments required a public voice unwilling to evade duty even in the face of opposition. Coupled with the pragmatic stood the demands of mercy which reiterated the obligation to keep admonishing, instructing, counseling, and comforting.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy as expressed through the *Catholic Worker* brought one face to face with those other prescriptions of mercy, the care for

the corporal, the bodily. The practices of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, as well as the others have been at least implicitly discussed in describing the Houses of Hospitality. Day recognized in the ongoing practice of the Works of Mercy “. . . a wonderful stimulus to our growth in faith as well as love. . . . It [faith] is pruned again and again, and springs up bearing much fruit” (as cited in Ellsberg, 1984, p. 99). Day’s very first experience of pruning occurred when she grudgingly gave up privacy to dine with Dolan and Egan. From that reluctant work of mercy sprang the first House of Hospitality which in turn inspired others across the country to found similar houses. The number of houses in existence ranged from 32 in the thirties to 10 in the forties, to eight in the fifties to a dozen in the sixties (Piehl, 1982). Houses such as the Brother Andre House in Phoenix, Arizona, continue to be founded.

The practice of the Works of Mercy at a House of Hospitality literally put flesh on the philosophy of Christian personalism. Guests at St. Joseph’s house came as “ambassadors of God” (Piehl, 1982, p. 103) who deserved to be treated as Christ. Day admits:

If we hadn’t got Christ’s own words for it, it would seem raving lunacy to believe that if I offer a bed and food and hospitality to some man or woman or child, I am replaying the part of Lazarus or Martha or Mary, and that my guest is Christ. (as cited in Ellsberg, 1984, p. 95)

Despite such noble words, no romantic notion of poverty or of those caught in its grip inspired Day’s own faithfulness to voluntary poverty. She wrote of the struggles of those overwhelmed by the poverty and suffering encountered in the soup lines. “Many left the work because they could see no use in the gesture of feeding the poor, and because of their own shame.” Day continued with the remark, “But enduring this shame is part of our penance” (Day, 1952, p. 216). Her words highlight the difficulty in sustaining the simple act of feeding, clothing, sheltering another when faced with the mundane reality of poverty. The faces may change but the conditions seem to remain. The Houses of Hospitality bring one face to face with the impoverished, the suffering Christ.

Day’s own ability to sustain her efforts depended upon her absolute conviction in the reality of Christ as God Incarnate. She believed in the reality of Christ’s Mystical Body and the Communion of Saints because she believed that God has become human in Jesus the Christ. In his birth and his cross and resurrection, and every event in between these two events, the relationship among human beings and their relationship to God had irrevocably changed. “[Christ] made heaven hinge on the way we act toward Him in His disguise of commonplace, frail, ordinary humanity” (as cited in Ellsberg, 1984, p. 97). Day’s own explanation of her actions continually reiterated this simple but demanding conviction that acknowledges the joyous birth of the baby Jesus

and the apparent failure of the Cross. More often, what confronted her in the Houses of Hospitality was the challenge of the Cross.

Day's ability to sustain her conviction that beyond the Cross lay a new life was intimately tied to her life of private and communal prayer. Her private piety probably comes as no surprise, but equally and possibly even more important for contemporary instruction were those communal rites of her Catholic faith, especially, but not exclusively, the Mass. *The Long Loneliness*, in fact, opens with the account of that common ritual of the 1950s, Saturday night confession. She recalls "the quiet movement of the people from pew to confession to altar rail . . ." (1952, p. 9). Evoking this ritual setting allowed Day to confess to her readers the ongoing patterns of sinfulness in her own life that made her not separate from, but one with every other Catholic in that confessional line.

Day did not romanticize the church's rituals even as she defended their absolute necessity. This lengthy quote indicates her view.

Ritual, how could we do without it! Though it may seem to be gibberish and irreverence, though the Mass is offered up in such haste that the sacred sentence, 'hoc est corpus meus' was abbreviated into 'hocus-pocus' by the bitter protestor and has come down into our language meaning trickery, nevertheless there is a sureness and a conviction there. And just as a husband may embrace his wife casually as he leaves for work in the morning, and kiss her absent-mindedly in his comings and goings, still that kiss on occasion turns to rapture, a burning fire of tenderness and love. And with this to stay her she demands the 'ritual' of affection shown. The little altar boy kissing the cruet of water as he hands it to the priest is performing a rite. We have too little ritual in our lives. (Day, 1952, pp. 199-200)

Day's writings usually mention the rituals of prayer matter-of-factly, in passing, as if she assumed them to be a natural part of the rhythm of life in the Catholic Worker community. Ritual punctuates the humdrum of everyday communal life with the in-breaking of the sacred.

One example must suffice to illustrate this point. When Day heard the news of Peter's death, she was not even at the more familiar St. Joseph's house in New York but at a Catholic Worker farm in Avon, Ohio. She recalled, "When I hung up the receiver, Bill [Gaucet] suggested that we say Vespers of the Office of the Dead for Peter, so we knelt there in that farm living room and prayed those beautiful Psalms that are a balm to a sore heart" (Day, 1952, p. 277). This prescribed rite had provided a means for them to express as a community their sorrow and hope in Peter's passing, to perform together a Spiritual Work of Mercy—prayer for the dead—while remaining in the most mundane of settings, "that farm living room."

The classroom in a Catholic school may be a long way from that farm living room or a House of Hospitality, but certain lessons of moral formation

taught in the Catholic Worker setting, in the life of Dorothy Day, are transferrable. Dorothy Day's life illustrates on the one hand the necessity of personal transformation, an ongoing process that confirms the deeply private nature of religious faith and the moral life. On the other hand, her life illustrates the deeply communal and public aspects of religious formation, the need for an ongoing moral education.

The personal dimension of faith receives the larger share of attention in contemporary discussions of spirituality. Following from this, moral responsibility is often based upon a self-determined *telos* of an autonomous individual. Day's ultimate convictions concerning the self do not mesh well with the contemporary preoccupation to create one's own moral code *ex nihilo*. In a 1944 article, she wrote,

We are all called to be saints, St. Paul says, and we might as well get over our bourgeois fear of the name. We might also get used to recognizing the fact that there is some of the saint in all of us. Inasmuch as we are growing, putting off the old man and putting on Christ, there is some of the saint, the holy, the divine right there. (as cited in Ellsberg, 1984, pp. 102-103)

Of course, Day believed that the Christ was the ultimate expression of human fulfillment. For Day, personal *telos*—life in, with, and through Christ—complements the communal one, making God's kingdom "as practically present as possible."

Day's commitments to the communal and public dimensions of a lived faith also prove instructive in light of the seemingly endless search for the new and supposedly better approach to moral education within a Catholic setting. Dorothy Day, first of all, felt no burden of creating her own faith. Her radicalness was rooted in Scripture and the traditions of her chosen Catholic faith. As already noted, she took inspiration from the Sermon on the Mount as well as certain lessons easily accessed through the *Baltimore Catechism*, in particular, the Works of Mercy. She looked to saints as varied as Augustine, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Therese of Lisieux. She used papal social encyclicals to support her positions. She prayed the ready-made prayers of Catholics including daily Mass, novenas, the rosary, and the Liturgy of the Hours, especially Vespers.

Her love of all the Church had to offer did not blind her to its shortcomings.

I loved the Church for Christ made visible. Not for itself, because it was so often a scandal to me. Romano Guardini said the Church is the Cross on which Christ was crucified; one could not separate Christ from His Cross, and one must live in a state of permanent dissatisfaction with the Church. (Day, 1952, pp. 149-150)

Day thus suggests not only in her words but in her life that the Catholic traditions offer rich resources for moral formation. These resources not only guide and sustain her commitment to faith in action but also shape her critique of the social order which includes the Church, the same institution which sustains her radical Catholicism through its long-professed beliefs, its common prayers, and daily rituals. The point here is not that moral educators should mimic Day or simply restore Catholic practices from the past, but rather that Catholic moral educators can reclaim some of the rich resources of their tradition and like Day bring them to life in the circumstances of the present.

Dorothy Day also illustrates the complex relationship between theory and praxis in the moral life. One cannot ignore the formative influence of Peter Maurin, who provided Day with an eclectic education that exposed her to the radical dimensions of Catholicism based upon Scripture, papal social teachings, and the lives of the saints. The educative influence of Maurin is obvious, but one ought not ignore other influences, both intellectual and practical. Her early spiritual formation through the beauty of the Psalms had a deep and lasting effect on her prayer life. Her association with atheist radicals deeply committed to transforming the social order awakened her to the causes of social justice and practical strategies for effecting change. Her second spiritual awakening came through Forster's love for her and for nature and through Day's overwhelming love for their child.

Maurin's vision gave coherence to Day's more inchoate aspirations formed through these varied experiences; on the other hand, Day's practical abilities gained through her work as a journalist and her involvement in social activism helped her make concrete this grand vision. The coherence of the vision is as important as her commitment and her ability to act. The radical theology of the Sermon on the Mount had its philosophical complement in Christian personalism. Grounded in this self-conscious articulation of the necessity of taking personal responsibility for living the Sermon on the Mount, Catholic Workers sought to effect eschatological change in the social order—"To make the promise of redeemed humanity as practically present as possible" (Carey, 1987, p. 59). The Worker then used the familiar Works of Mercy to delineate the specific practices that promoted their ". . . working for a new heaven and a new *earth*, wherein justice dwelleth." As Day explained, "We are trying to say with action, Thy will be done on *earth* as it is in heaven" (as cited in Ellsberg, 1984, p. 91). The commonplace rituals of Catholicism remained a key part of "working for a new heaven and a new earth . . ." because they provided private but more importantly communal expressions that kept the Workers mindful of their ultimate end, life with God here as well as in the hereafter.

While moral principles do not always translate into the corresponding behavior, actions on behalf of others do not always reflect a moral formation

able to sustain and guide such actions. Day demonstrates the necessity of an ongoing dialectic between theory and practice, or in more traditional terms, contemplation and action. Day never ceased the practice of “indoctrination,” the ongoing articulation of why the Catholic Worker engaged in particular works and not others. Peter Maurin’s death marked a difficult loss for Day, but it did not bring to an end her own moral education. She continued to struggle with the particulars of life at the Catholic Worker, and those particulars of feeding, clothing, instructing, and so on contributed to her clarification of thought in the ongoing process of indoctrination.

Clarification, however, came not only through these actions but also through reading, studying, and praying. Throughout her life, Day was a voracious reader of a wide range of literature from Dostoevsky’s novels to Gandhi’s writings. She did not fear disagreement with those she read or those with whom she discussed. Conflict aided clarification of thought. More importantly, Day remained rooted in the interpretive framework shaped by Scripture and the prayer life of her Catholic faith.

Despite such faith in the love of God and neighbor, living in a community committed to Christ remains difficult, demanding, sometimes frustrating, and often disappointing. Day never hid this fact in her writings. She made very clear that the Christian moral life is about the demanding task of “making love.”

The strangeness of the phrase “to make love” strikes me now and reminds me of that aphorism of St. John of the Cross, “Where there is no love, put love and you will find love.” I’ve thought of it and followed it many times these eighteen years of community life. (Day, 1952, p. 225)

To “make love” involves clear choices, acts of a will formed in the love manifest in Christ, whose love becomes most starkly manifest in the Cross.

Day also made clear that life in the Catholic Worker always exceeded all personal effort. In the postscript to *The Long Loneliness*, Day reflected on what had transpired in the 18 years of the Catholic Worker movement and wondered how such an improbable community could feed the hungry, run a newspaper, establish a farm. “We were just sitting there talking . . . It was as casual as all that, I often think. It just came about. It just happened” (Day, 1952, p. 285). Yet in reflecting on what constitutes the essence of the Catholic Worker, one must admit that more than serendipity explains its existence.

How does one explain Day’s desire to convert and then to live as a Catholic Worker for nearly 50 years? Herein lies the mystery of a Christian moral education. It requires sound teaching, effort, struggle, and even conflict, but always something more. That something more, to put it bluntly, is grace, the gift of the love of God. Dorothy Day constantly reminded her read-

ers of what this particular love entails by quoting a pivotal character of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. "But the final world is love. At times it has been, in the words of Father Zossima, a harsh and dreadful thing, and our very faith in love has been tried through fire." Love in practice is not for the faint of heart or the sentimental. It demands thought, courage, effort, and faith in the grace of God, the gift of love, even in the face of the failure of the Cross.

Dorothy Day ended her autobiography with a reflection on what she identified as "the long loneliness"—an attempt to live only with reliance on the self. For her, the moral life was always life in a community.

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of the bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship. (1952, p. 285)

This description suggests that it is not just any community but one formed in such a way that its members are able to recognize the ever-present possibility of God's transformative power manifesting itself in and through the mundane—a crust of bread shared with companions.

If Dorothy Day is right about heaven and life, to relegate the moral educator to the mundane, the ordinary is not banishment to the uneventful or unimportant. By her example, she invites those who encounter her, especially Christians, to compare and contrast their own lives with hers and to consider her voluntary poverty and pacifism as a possible model for living. Day's life also highlights the inevitability of doing. As she demonstrates, eating, drinking, finding shelter, wearing clothes, reading, thinking, discussing, writing, and all those other tasks of every ordinary life are absolutely crucial because they are the components of a life well lived. The Catholic moral educator who concerns herself or himself with the mundane is dealing precisely in that extraordinary realm of the in-breaking of God's Kingdom wherein justice can dwell and mercy knows no bounds.

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