



NEWSLETTER

Inspiring Image

by Lourdes M. Ferrer

It's hard to imagine religion without art, for the two have always been intertwined in a rich history that makes it difficult to imagine one without the other.

Almost all religions, be it Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, or Hinduism, use various art forms to glorify, celebrate, teach, and inspire.

In the early years of Christianity, when most people were illiterate, artist representations (paintings, sculpture, stained glass, etc.) were used to help people better understand biblical messages by bringing the stories to life, stimulating the viewers' imagination, and bridging the gap between the mortal and the spiritual.

This tradition continues today as modern artists use their extraordinary talents to assist the rest of us in renewing our spirits and extending our vision beyond our own surroundings to a greater, more magnificent eternal world.

The holy card (or prayer card) is one of those art forms that has a rich and wonderful history within the Catholic faith. The first holy cards date back to the early 15th century. These cards were woodcut prints that provided those who could not afford custom artwork, a way to have their own image of their patron saint. Over the years, this tradition has evolved and changed, but it still remains an important part of our daily devotions.

Keeping all this in mind, imagine the daunting task of selecting the image for a prayer card, knowing the significance such images will carry for those who will use it for prayer and meditation. It's not until you're called to this task that one realizes that a picture is truly worth a thousand words.

As a consequence, designing the Dorothy Day, "Servant of God" prayer card took much time and consideration. But as we all know, divine intervention is an amazing thing. It was while contemplating various photographs of Dorothy, that



I received a postcard invitation to an art exhibit featuring paintings by artist Geoffrey Gneuchs. The painting featured on the front of the postcard was a beautiful portrait of Dorothy Day, bathed in soft shades of blues and wearing a peaceful expression that touched me deeply. It is this painting that will grace the front of our prayer card.

In 2008, at the request of His Eminence Edward Cardinal Egan, Mr. Gneuchs painted two copies of the original artwork, one of which was given to The Guild by His Eminence.

Mr. Gneuchs, who is a member of the Guild's Steering Committee, is a portrait and landscape painter as well as a writer. In the late 1970s he served as chaplain for the Catholic Worker in New York City and as an associate editor of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper from 1979 to 1986. He gave the eulogy at Dorothy Day's funeral. He is also a contributor to *A Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker* (Temple University Press). We are grateful that he has allowed us to use his beautiful painting for the prayer card.

The prayer card will be available by the end of February. If you would like copies, please contact me at lourdes.ferrer@archny.org.

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Postulator of the Cause for the Canonization of Dorothy Day

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Guild News

The Guild's membership has grown to 291. We are grateful for your dedication and enthusiasm for the Cause for Dorothy's canonization, and for your willingness to pray on behalf of the over 149 prayer requests The Guild has received.

Monthly Masses for the intentions of The Guild for Dorothy Day are held on the second Saturday of each month at 9:00 a.m. in The Lady's Chapel at St. Patrick's Cathedral (Fifth Avenue and 51st Street behind the main altar.) Please join us. Future dates are scheduled for February 14, March 14, April 18*,

May 16*, June 20*, July 11, August 8, September 12, October 10, November 14, and December 12. (* Please note: Due to a scheduling conflict, the indicated Masses will be held on the third Saturday of the month.)

For those who can not attend in person, please unite with us in prayer.

We're on the Web!
dorothydayguild.org

Dorothy's Diaries and Letters

by Robert Ellsberg

Dorothy Day's diaries and letters are part of the special Dorothy Day-Catholic Worker Collection housed at Marquette University. These personal writings were sealed for twenty-five years after her death in 1980. In 2005 I was invited to edit and prepare these papers for publication. In some ways this project has felt like a continuation of the assignment Dorothy gave me more than thirty years ago when she asked me to serve as managing editor of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper. I was 20 at the time, and had no evident experience or qualifications for the job. But Dorothy had a special ability to discern and encourage people's gifts and talents. Little could I have imagined, then, that she was pointing me in the direction of my life's work and vocation.

The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day was published last year by Marquette University Press. The title was suggested by a line that Dorothy often repeated to herself, sometimes following

a recital of sorrows and drudgery. I think it summed up her spirituality. It was a reminder to find God in all things—not just in what was pleasant or delightful, but also in hardship and suffering. She knew both in abundance. One is struck by the strain and worry that was part of her life among the very poor. And one is also struck by how much she was sus-

tained in this work by an extraordinary discipline of prayer.

Dorothy attended daily Mass, rising at dawn to begin the day with prayer and reflection on Scripture. Her diaries are filled with references to pilgrimage, fasting, retreats, novenas, and other devotions. This was the fabric of her spirituality. But the real exercise of her faith was not in church or on her knees. It was in her daily effort to be more forgiving, more charitable, more patient. This did not simply come naturally. The diaries are filled with self-reproach over her temper, her tendency to judgment and self-righteousness.

But it was also this exercise of faith through the little tasks and duties of daily life that prepared her courageous witness in response to the public challenges of her day—her response to war, her repeated jailing for acts of civil disobedience, and her public stands on matters of social justice.

It is hard to imagine anyone reading these diaries without concluding that this was a holy woman whose life was defined by extraordinary faith, hope, and active love. These diaries portray a woman who made her life a daily offering to God. And yet her writing also enlarges our understanding of holiness—especially the tendency to see saints as perfect or somehow other than fully human. These diaries confirm Thomas Merton's observation that sanctity is a matter of being more fully human, which implies "a greater capacity for concern, for suffering, for understanding, for sympathy, and also for humor, for joy, for appreciation for the good and beautiful things of life." That could well stand as a description of

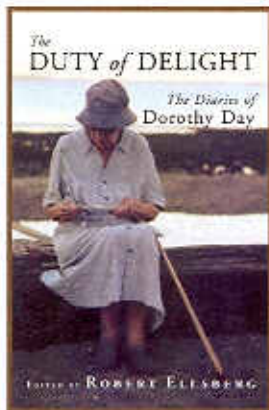
The Duty of Delight.

Now I am in the midst of editing Dorothy's letters, a project that presents its own challenges. Although there are many hundreds of her letters available in the archives, this is surely a small percentage of her total correspondence. She rarely kept carbons, and so the collection relies on the care of those correspondents who preserved her letters and were generous enough to make them available to the archives.

There are wonderful treasures in these letters, including her early letters to Forster Batterham, the father of her daughter Tamar, as well as to other family members, prominent church leaders, peace activists, and members of the extended Catholic Worker family. No doubt they greatly expand our knowledge of her personality, her faith, and her prophetic witness. I'm sure they will be read long into the future, not just as a window into the mind and heart of Dorothy Day, but as a spiritual document of enormous significance. As I work on transcribing these letters I continue to seek out and pursue other sources. Perhaps among those now reading these words there may be readers who possess such letters and are willing to share them.

Will you help? Please contact me c/o of The Guild, or contact Phil Runkel, Archivist, at Raynor Memorial Libraries, 1355 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee WI 53233.

Robert Ellsberg is the editor-in-chief of Orbis Books. His work on the diaries and letters of Dorothy Day has been partly funded by the Archdiocese of New York.



The Guild for Dorothy Day

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