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CARDINAL O'CONNOR'S VIEWPOINT

Dorothy Day's Sainthood Cause Begins

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CARDINAL JOHN J. O'CONNOR

A man can be as truly a saint in a factory as in a monastery, and there is much need of him in the one as in the other. —Robert J. McCracken

It is with great joy that I announce the approval of the Holy See for the Archdiocese of New York to open the Cause for the Beatification and Canonization of Dorothy Day. With this approval comes the title Servant of God. What a gift to the Church in New York and to the Church Universal this is!

Permit me to quote from my letter of 7 February to the Holy See.

"I write to initiate the canonization process of Dorothy Day.

"Shortly after my installation as the Archbishop of New York, I raised the question of Dorothy Day's sanctity in my weekly column in Catholic New York. Numerous positive responses flooded my office with only relatively few detractors. Again, in 1997, on the centennial of her birth, I considered her Cause for Canonization by inviting 20 or so interested persons, among them a few persons who knew Dorothy Day very well and had worked very closely with her, to discuss the issue. All save one were in favor of putting forward her Cause, expressing reservation by recalling the famous words of Dorothy Day, 'Don't trivialize me by trying to make me a saint.'

"Prima facie, such words may seem damning. They are, in fact, paradigmatic of Dorothy Day's deep faith and commitment to the Church. Her personal humility was such that she never considered herself to be holier than any other Catholic, her understanding of the way in which so many of her day would have dismissed her Catholicism and her thirst for social justice as only fit for saints, and not for the everyday believer she considered herself and so many others to be, and her deep love for the saints of the Church all combined to make her renounce any notion of personal sanctity as a means to make her something other than what she had always striven to be: a simple woman living the Gospel.

"It has long been my contention that Dorothy Day is a saint--not a 'gingerbread' saint or a 'holy card' saint, but a modern-day devoted daughter of the Church, a daughter who shunned personal aggrandizement and wished that her work, and the work of those who labored at her side on behalf of the poor, might be the hallmark of her life rather than her own self.

"To be sure, her life is a model for all in the third millennium, but especially for women who have had or are considering abortions. It is a well-known fact that Dorothy Day procured an abortion before her conversion to the Faith. She regretted it every day of her life. After her conversion from a life akin to that of the pre-converted Augustine of Hippo, she proved a stout defender of human life. The conversion of mind and heart that she exemplified speaks volumes to all women today on two fronts. First, it demonstrates the mercy of God, mercy in that a woman who sinned so gravely could find such unity with God upon conversion. Second, it demonstrates that one may turn from the ultimate act of violence against innocent life in the womb to a position of total holiness and pacifism. In short, I contend that her abortion should not preclude her cause, but intensifies it.

"It has also been noted that Dorothy Day often seemed friendly to political groups hostile to the Church, for example, communists, socialists, and anarchists. It is necessary to divide her political stances in two spheres: preand post-

conversion. After her conversion, she was neither a member of such political groupings nor did she approve of their tactics or any denial of private property. Yet, it must be said, she often held opinions in common with them. What they held in common was a common respect for the poor and a desire for economic equity. In no sense did she approve of any form of atheism, agnosticism, or religious indifference. Moreover, her complete commitment to pacifism in imitation of Christ often separated her from these political ideologies. She rejected all military force; she rejected aid to force in any way in a most idealistic manner. So much were her 'politics' based on an ideology of nonviolence that they may be said to be apolitical.

"Like so many saints of days gone by, she was an idealist in a non-ideal world. It was her contention that men and women should begin to live on earth the life they would one day lead in heaven, a life of peace and harmony. Much of what she spoke of in terms of social justice anticipated the teachings of Pope John Paul II and lends support to her cause.

"I am also pleased by the continuing attraction of Dorothy Day's life and work by so many in the United States. Her books and books about her and the (Catholic Worker) Movement continue to be reprinted due to demand. The University of Marquette which holds her papers, letters, notes, etc., reports frequent visitors and researchers. A vast number of articles have been and are being written about Dorothy Day.

"So, too, I have been very much impressed by the attestations of holiness given by those who knew and worked with Dorothy Day. A move for the official recognition of Dorothy Day's holiness would fulfill the wishes of many Catholics and non-Catholics alike who recognize her sanctity and await official word from the Church.

"I have subjected Dorothy Day's post-conversion writings to the careful examination of a dogmatist, moralist, and canonist. All assure me that her writings are in complete fidelity to the Church. Moreover, I frequently quote from her writings in my own columns and homilies. Letters continue to come to my attention from those who were introduced to her by my own efforts and from those who know well of her and are happy to see my support for her. Many letters ask that I consider a proposition of her Cause to the Holy See.

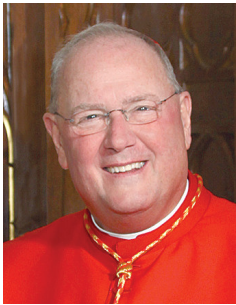
"Thus, in my position as Archbishop of New York, I believe it my responsibility to promote this Cause. In many ways, it is truly a 'grassroots' movement that calls for the recognition of Dorothy Day as a Saint of the Church. I assure Your Excellency (Pro-Perfect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints) that there is a substantial following of thousands who wait in the wings for the Holy See to consider this Cause. Therefore, I ask that you permit me to begin the necessary steps toward the consideration of the Cause of Dorothy Day."

Much work remains to be done in order to see Dorothy Day's Cause to its conclusion. For instance, we need to begin by establishing a Dorothy Day Guild to propagate her life and works. Such work is not restricted only to me as the archbishop or to my chancery. This is an effort for everyone of us in the archdiocese and beyond. As the details become available, I will make them known to you so that we can be together every step of the way in our efforts for Dorothy Day, Servant of God.

Keywords

Cardinal O'Connor's Viewpoint (/search_mode/keyword/browse.html?search_filter=Cardinal O), Cardinal O'Connor (/search_mode/keyword/browse.html?search_filter= Cardinal O)

CARDINAL DOLAN



([https://www.cny.org/stories/st-joseph-brings-to-mind-my-](https://www.cny.org/stories/st-joseph-brings-to-mind-my-own-dad,21737)

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"This Christmas, we ask God to bless them; we also gaze upon the manger, certainly loving Jesus and Mary, but not forgetting to look in the back, hidden among the sheep, cattle, and hay, and say thanks to St. Joseph." (<https://www.cny.org/stories/st-joseph-brings-to-mind-my-own-dad,21737>)

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