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Dorothy Day's 'Pilgrimage' Was New York Encounter Topic

By BETH GRIFFIN



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Matt Schiller

Cardinal Dolan and other participants enjoy a light moment during a panel discussion about Dorothy Day's life, "On Pilgrimage Toward Unity," during the New York Encounter Jan. 14. From left, they are Paige Sanchez, the archdiocese's associate superintendent for mission effectiveness, who served as moderator; Margaret Laracy, a clinical psychologist; and Tom Cornell, associate editor of the Catholic Worker.



Dorothy Day's life embodied a sense of odyssey marked by constant conversion of heart, intimacy with Jesus Christ and a holistic approach to all things, Cardinal Dolan said during a discussion of her life Jan. 14. The Catholic Worker movement co-founder was a native New Yorker whose cause for sainthood is sponsored by the archdiocese.

Miss Day was born in Brooklyn Heights in 1897 and died in 1980 at Maryhouse, a Catholic Worker house on East 3rd Street in Manhattan.

Cardinal Dolan said Dorothy Day's faith journey was equal to that of well-known saints such as St. Augustine and St. Ignatius Loyola. He recounted her "rather promiscuous life" and her eventual embrace of the Catholic faith and said she was "always learning."

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, Miss Day's interior faith and piety were very important to her, although she would be the first to say she was not a saint, Cardinal Dolan said. Dorothy Day insisted on a coherent discipline of teaching and learning, practiced social justice and extended hospitality throughout her life, the cardinal said.

Cardinal Dolan and his fellow panelists spoke as part of the 10th annual New York Encounter. The January 12-14 public event was organized by the Catholic lay movement Communion and Liberation and held at the Metropolitan Pavilion in Manhattan.

The Dorothy Day presentation was titled, "On Pilgrimage Toward Unity." Another panelist, Deacon Tom Cornell, associate editor of the Catholic Worker newspaper and co-founder of the Catholic Peace Fellowship and Pax Christi USA, said he met Dorothy Day when he was a student at Fairfield University in 1952. "I was studying English literature and she was helping to make it," he observed.

Cornell recounted that Miss Day received a diamond ring as a donation to the Catholic Worker. Colleagues were surprised when she gave it to a difficult, ornery woman who was a frequent visitor at the Catholic Worker house, rather than sell it to cover mounting expenses. "Do you think God created diamonds just for rich people? Let her sell it or enjoy wearing it," Cornell said Miss Day replied.

Cornell worked alongside her to help dismantle structures of racial segregation, deter the Pentagon from

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and Protestants to the theory of non-violence, he said.

Margaret Laracy, a clinical psychologist, described coming to know Dorothy Day as a curator of an exhibit at the New York Encounter called "A Catholic Paradox: The Life and Words of Dorothy Day." She said she was moved by Miss Day's unlikely friendship with Catholic Worker co-founder Peter Maurin, her solidarity and unity with the poor, and her initial grudging affection for St. Thérèse of Lisieux. When she first read the Little Flower's works, she characterized them in her journal as "pious pap." Ms. Laracy said Miss Day's transition from that harsh assessment to becoming Thérèse's biographer reflected her own spiritual journey and evolving understanding of divine love.

The theme of the Jan. 12-14 New York Encounter was "An 'Impossible' Unity" expressed through panel discussions, artistic performances, special exhibits and interactive programs for children. Among the presenters were Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, sculptor Etsuro Sotoo and Domenic Aquila, provost of the University of St. Thomas in Houston. Topics were as varied as "The Human Brain: 'Unique and Relational'" and "The Father: Who is He?" One of the most well received was a presentation of the biography of Father Luigi Giussani, founder of Communion and Liberation, through eyewitness accounts of people who knew or were influenced by him.

Two grand prize winners of the third annual New York Encounter School Contest were awarded \$1,000 tuition scholarships to their Catholic elementary schools and \$50 Amazon gift cards for their personal use. Paige Sanchez, associate superintendent for mission effectiveness in the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, presented the awards. The winners were Emily Gotiangco, an eighth-grader at St. Christopher School in Staten Island and Alianna Vasquez, a fourth-grader at St. Peter School in Belleville, N.J., in the Archdiocese of Newark.

Holly Peterson, media director for the New York Encounter, said there were approximately 11,000 participants, including 350 volunteers, an increase of 400 from 2017.

Ms. Peterson said the robust turnout reflects "a hunger and thirst in New York for something beautiful that speaks to your heart."

Cardinal Dolan was one of several speakers who commented on the presence of families with young children. "I've never seen so many strollers in my life as here!" the cardinal said.



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