

## **Facts about Dorothy Day**

- Born in 1897, she was raised in a nominally Protestant family and became a Roman Catholic in 1928.
- One of her early memories was the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and how her mother offered help to quake victims.
- Her father was a sportswriter who covered racetrack news.
- She loved reading novels from early childhood on, and her favorite author was Fyodor Dostoevsky.
- She rejected organized religion in college because she didn't see so-called "religious people" helping the poor.
- In the World War I period she was part of a circle of social radicals and literary types like Eugene O'Neill.
- She first went to jail with a group of suffragettes in 1917 who were demonstrating at the White House in favor of giving women voting rights.
- She had an abortion in a failed relationship when she was 22 years old.
- The birth of her daughter Tamar in 1927, within a common-law marriage, brought her great joy and happiness, and led to her final embrace of the Catholic faith.
- She was a single parent who supported herself as a free-lance journalist.
- She met Peter Maurin in 1932, in the midst of the Great Depression.
- The Catholic Worker newspaper appeared in May 1933 with 2,500 copies distributed by hand. Circulation grew to 190,000 by 1938, and dropped to 50,000 during World War II, largely because of the paper's pacifist stand. (Today's circulation is over 80,000.)
- The first House of Hospitality opened in 1933. Today over 130 Catholic Worker communities exist in thirty-two states and eight foreign countries.
- She maintained throughout her life that Peter Maurin, not she, started the Catholic Worker Movement. She called him a modern St. Francis who was responsible for completing her Catholic education.
- Her written work includes 8 books, 350 plus articles for journals and magazines, and over 1,000 articles for The Catholic Worker newspaper.
- A heavy smoker for years, she finally gave up the habit "cold turkey" after praying for several years for help in quitting.
- She went to daily Mass and weekly confession, and regularly went on religious retreats.
- She read the Bible at a time most Catholics didn't.
- She travelled long distances by bus. She carried a Bible, a missal, the Divine Office, and a jar of instant coffee on her hundreds of trips.
- She went to jail four times from 1955 to 1959 for acts of civil disobedience. She with others refused to take shelter during civil defense drills that simulated a nuclear attack on New York City.
- In 1955 she became a professed secular oblate of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Procopius.
- She and a group of women fasted for ten days in 1963 in Rome, at Vatican Council II, wanting the bishops to condemn all war. They did condemn nuclear war.

- She inspired Bob Gilliam of Winona in his conscientious objection. For which he went to prison. He later went to New York to work with Dorothy and The Catholic Worker paper.
- She was instrumental in founding Pax Christi USA.
- She was a prolific letter writer, including many years of correspondence with the monk Thomas Merton.
- She was a grandmother nine times, with one grandson going to Vietnam with the U.S. military during the war.
- She was a friend to bishops and cardinals, while being critical of the Church's wealth and support for war and war preparations.
- She went to India to speak to Mother Teresa's novices and received a cross from Mother Teresa worn by the Missionaries of Charity.
- Her last jailing was in 1969 at the age of 76 while protesting with Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers in California.
- She loved the beauty of the natural world and would seek out the quiet of a small beach cottage she owned on the shore of Staten Island.
- Her gravestone has engraved on it a design of loaves and fishes and the words "Deo Gratias" ("thanks be to God").

## VIDEO

Documentary: [Dorothy Day: Don't Call Me A Saint](#), directed by Claudia Laron; 2007 one lucky dog productions.

God Bless the Child; Hearst Entertainment, Inc.

Where God Left His Shoes; IFC Films.

## BOOKS

[Dorothy Day — A Biography](#) by William D. Miller; Harper & Row, 1982

[Love is the Measure — A Biography of Dorothy Day, Founder of the Catholic Worker](#) by Jim Forest; Orbis Books, 1986

[Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion](#) by Robert Coles; Addison-Wesley, 1987

[Dorothy Day and the Permanent Revolution](#) by Eileen Egan. Benet Press, 1983.

[A Harsh and Dreadful Love: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement](#) by William D. Miller; Liveright, 1973.

[Dorothy Day: With Love for the Poor](#) by Jim O'Grady; Ward Hill Press, 1993.

[Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker](#) by Nancy Roberts; State University of New York Press, 1984.

[Dorothy Day – Portraits by Those Who Knew Her](#) by Rosalie G. Riegler; Orbis Books, 2003.

[The Dorothy Day Book – A Selection From Her Writings & Readings](#) Edited by Margaret Quigley & Michael Garvey. Templegate Publishers, 1982.

[Dorothy Day – Writings From Commonweal](#) edited by Patrick Jordan; The Liturgical Press.

[Saved by Beauty: A Spiritual Journey with Dorothy Day](#) by Michael O'Neill McGrath

## BOOKS WRITTEN BY DOROTHY DAY...

[The Long Loneliness – The Autobiography of Dorothy Day](#) San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981, 1952

[Dorothy Day – In My Own Words](#) Edited and Compiled by Phyllis Zagano; Missouri: Liquori, 2003

From Union Square to Rome; New York: Arno Press, 1978, 1938

House of Hospitality; New York: Sheed & Ward, 1939.

Loaves and Fishes; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983, 1963.

On Pilgrimage; New York: Catholic Worker Books, 1948

On Pilgrimage – The Sixties; New York: Curtis Books, 1972.

Therese; Springfield, Illinois: Templegate, 1979.

### **OTHER HELPFUL BOOKS**

A Framework for Understanding Poverty, by Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.; Highlands, TX; Aha! Process, Inc.

I Beat the Odds — From Homelessness to the Blind Side and Beyond, by Michael Oher and Don Yaeger

Bridges Out of Poverty – Strategies for Professionals and Communities, by Ruby K. Payne, PhD, Philip E. DeVol & Terie Dreussi Smith; Highlands, TX; Aha! Process, Inc.

All You Really Need to Know About Prayer You Can Learn From the Poor, by Louise Perrotta; Ann Arbor, Michigan, Servant Publications.

### **HELPFUL LINKS**

[www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org)

[www.theurbanchildinstitute.org](http://www.theurbanchildinstitute.org)

[www.catholicworker.org](http://www.catholicworker.org)

[www.ccwtn.org](http://www.ccwtn.org) (Catholic Charities of West Tennessee)