

Dorothy Day May Well Be Saint

By John Dash

Dorothy Day "saw herself (she once said) as a revolutionary, and the Catholic Worker movement was the example of living out of the Christian philosophical position that the person came first," her official biographer said. And therefore the operating principle for any Catholic charitable organization is the primacy of the person over the organization, he said.

The speaker was William D. Miller, professor of history at Marquette University and the author of "Dorothy Day, a Biography." The occasion for his remarks, and his presence in Rochester, was the 65th anniversary banquet of diocesan Catholic Charities last Friday.

Interviewed earlier in the day, Miller developed his assigned topic, "Dorothy Day ... Her Relevance to the Catholic Charities Movement," and reminisced about the woman who has been characterized as a saint and as the leading figure in contemporary American Catholic history.

That she was a saint, he has no question. "Is she a saint? I think so, though I never said that in the book. Anyone who

knew her affirms this. One could not be around her without feeling something powerful, a presence, radiation about her.

"And there was nothing of the Dale Carnegie to it — but years of the spiritual journey, the difficult daily process of putting one foot ahead of another.

"After she became a Catholic in 1927," he said, "she never ceased to work on her development in the spiritual life."

Miller said that even on her holidays, Miss Day would spend from her rising hour (about 6 a.m.) until after 10 a.m. in prayer and in spiritual reading, every day. "That continual honing," he said, "produced that particular kind of brilliance."

Miller's biography came about through his own involvement with the Catholic Worker movement which led to a 15-year friendship between Miss Day and Miller and his wife Rhea, the eminent professor of literature, also at Marquette.

That friendship developed during Dorothy Day's final years, the closing of a remarkable life which began in 1897 in Brooklyn and

careered through socialism, and bohemianism, a common-law marriage and a child, a profound conversion experience, and above all, a passion for peace, the dignity of the human person, and social justice.

Throughout her life, he said, Miss Day mistrusted organization (though she was arrested for the right of workers to unionize), and feared the rise of the mechanical in contemporary culture.

She saw the latter, he said, as reducing the person to a datum. "When you do that you nullify a person," he said.

In the face of computer science, of technological advance, of the atomic bomb, Miller said, "Dorothy's position was a profound synthesis of Christian affirmations about the person. The person was first."

"Organization (she felt) annuls the person. She resisted that tide all the way."

Yet, "she saw a cultural turn-around as the most difficult challenge," to a

society in which "the A-Bomb is the technological ultimate."

Will the Church ever canonize her? Miller was asked. Would Miller promote her cause?

"Well, I tried to write a truthful biography," he answered; and as to the requirement of miracles before the Church processes canonizations, "Her whole life was a miracle."

Miller said he saw her last in 1979, not long before she died. She reminisced about her bohemian days, she was very frail.

Her funeral was very stark, Miller said, and grew very silent. He described thin, aged flesh in a plain pine box. "Her whole life was given down to this idea. When she died there was nothing left."

"She used it all."

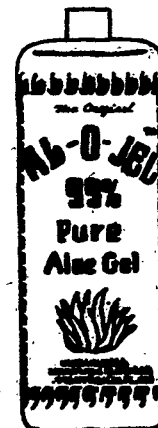
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Garage Sale

Canandaigua — The annual garage sale for St. Mary's Home-School Association will be 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Friday, Oct. 29, and 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Oct. 30, in the church basement. In addition, Saturday has been designated as "bag day," during which all the clothing that can be stuffed into a grocery bag may be purchased for \$2.

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Mr. M.G. Percher of Rock Hill, S.C. said, "My wife and I are both taking AL-O-JEL. We have found that this has helped us more than most other products that we have been taking for arthritis. It helps the pain in my back and legs better than anything else that I've taken."

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Child



All in the Family

The Elegies Of a Country Churchyard

Our daughter warns that if I'm not careful I'll be labeled an eccentric before my time — whenever that is.

She says that walking a large black dog in the cemetery daily, especially under rain-darkened, wind-swept skies, has already attracted unfavorable attention. (Translated, that means some of her friends have spotted us.)

I began taking our mutt there several years ago because we were less likely to run into other dogs and I could walk and daydream at will. Now it is habit, our feet taking us there without conscious volition.

We have made some friends to whom we nod and sometimes pause and visit if one of us isn't straining at the leash to get back home.

There are Araminta and Artemesia, the twins, born 150 years ago who lived to ripe old ages dying within six months of each other.

And there are "Old Ma," and "Little Sweetheart" and "Darling Boy" among hundreds of others.

It was a couple of summers ago that I spotted a handwritten note on lined school paper folded and stuck into the frame of a picture mounted on one of the headstones. On top of

the grave was a battered stuffed animal.

"Dear Coachie," said the childish scrawl, "We miss you so and we love you." It was signed with three names I recognized as belonging to neighborhood youngsters.

This particular graveyard has an old section. The names of the men buried here are straight out of an ante-bellum novel: Noble, Abijah, Lebbeus; their women Letitia, Jerusha and Freeloove.

In the newer sections there is a melding of cultures, a fine place to find names for characters. My current project has a lawyer by the name of Barnickel, a heroine christened Jordan, the hero Linc. All mined from this lode.

It is a well-cared-for cemetery but in the older part some of the stones have toppled over and one very small one now lays flat, embedded in the ground. Now and then we stop and pull the grass and weeds which threaten to obscure the old English lettering with s's written like f's.

Its words which grow more blurred with each passing year tell a poignant story:

Julia,
daughter of Augustus and
Julia Tansy Hurd,
died Sept. 20, 1817,
in the 2nd year of her age.

Sleep on my Babe
And take your rest
Thou art early called
God knows best

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