

HOPE IN HARD TIMES: A NOVENA WITH DOROTHY DAY



Photo: Bob Fitch. Day and Peggy Baird, Tivoli Farm, 1968.

Let Us Pray!

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to sweep through our nation, laying bare harsh inequities, seemingly overwhelming, we find ourselves tempted to despair -- struggling to keep faith. It is not an easy task to hold onto hope. But we find in Dorothy Day's life of solidarity with suffering people a renewed strength. She is a source of hope, reminding us that no matter our circumstances, we can always love. We can always pray.

The Dorothy Day Guild, charged with forwarding her canonization, invites everyone to join us in praying, "Hope in Hard Times: A Novena with Dorothy Day." Over the course of its traditional nine days, we will "spiritually gather" (in the words of Pope Francis), invoking Dorothy's presence and example.

Those who have read **The Long Loneliness** may recall that 102 years ago, during the horrific influenza epidemic of 1918, Dorothy worked for a year as a nurse in Brooklyn. She experienced first-hand what healthcare workers today are facing. She wrote:

"This was the time of the 'flu' epidemic and the wards were filled and the halls too. Many of the nurses became ill and we were very short-handed. Every night before going off duty there were bodies to be wrapped in sheets and wheeled away to the morgue. When we came on duty in the morning, the night nurse was performing the same grim task.(...) It was hard not to be careless at this time when every day ten or twelve new patients were carried in or

walked staggeringly only to fall unconscious as soon as their clothes were taken from them.”

The pandemic calls solidarity to the fore. It moves us to pray for and care for the sick and dying. We also pray for those who — like Dorothy — practice the Works of Mercy, such as medical personnel and first responders.

Dorothy believed with her whole being in the Mystical Body of Christ. Because we are all connected, we are all vulnerable, whatever our differences and divisions. Social distancing is necessary — but this crisis also makes us reflect on the common good, and on our shared human plight (in Pope Francis’ words) in our “common home.”

Dorothy’s unflinching witness to justice demands that we consider how the most vulnerable among us fare in this crisis. How does it affect the destitute, homeless people, detained immigrants, prison inmates, low wage and unemployed workers, children left home alone, uninsured patients? The ravages of the Coronavirus will continue after the contagion is brought under control. It is normal to fear death, but we are also threatened by death of the spirit: indifference, individualism, despair.

So, plan to join us as we pray together, for these nine days, for healing for all who suffer. Collectively, we will raise our voices in seeking the largeness of heart, the capacity for solidarity that Dorothy exemplified. And we will ask, confident in the faith she never doubted, that we will find the strength – and the hope – to build together that kingdom we profess “on earth as it is in heaven.”