News



Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, pictured in an undated photo (CNS/Courtesy of the Milwaukee Journal)



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Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, pictured in an undated photo (CNS/Courtesy of the Milwaukee Journal)

Dorothy Day already bears the title servant of God and she may one day be named a saint. Along with such heavenly rewards, the late Catholic social activist and founder of the Catholic Worker movement received an earthly accolade March 26, when one of the Staten Island Ferry boats was named in her honor.

"Dorothy Day lived a life of tremendous selflessness and service," said New York Mayor Bill de Blasio in a statement. "I can think of no greater way to honor her beloved legacy than by having her name on this new ferry boat connecting Manhattan and Staten Island."

Like the iconic orange ferry boats that travel back and forth from Staten Island to Manhattan 24 hours a day, Day was indefatigable in her social commitments and activism.

Throughout the 20th century, Day became widely known as an intrepid champion of the poor, workers' rights and opposition to war. While those positions often put her at odds with the church hierarchy of the day, they would later put her on the path to sainthood and would lead to her being singled out as one of four exemplary Americans by Pope Francis in a speech to the U.S. Congress in 2015.

Day lived on Staten Island from 1925 to 1929 in a cottage along the beach that she originally purchased to serve as a retreat house for writing. In 1927, she was baptized at Our Lady Help of Christians Roman Catholic Church on the island. Although her activism took her around the country and the world, she lived on Staten Island for the final years of her life and when she died in 1980, Day was buried at the Church of the Resurrection cemetery near her onetime Staten Island home.

"How providential that the ferry from lower Manhattan to Staten Island should be named after a brave, loving woman who cherished both those areas of our city and the people who live there," New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan said in a statement. "How appropriate that a ferry transporting people would honor a believing apostle of peace, justice, and charity who devoted her life to moving people from war to peace, from emptiness to fullness, from isolation to belonging."

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Day's granddaughter, Kate Hennessy, author of *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty* also welcomed the news.

"My grandmother loved Staten Island and treasured her trips on the Staten Island Ferry, the rare time when she could relax and be free of her many responsibilities," said Hennessy in a statement. "While we in her family may find it difficult to line up her selfless work with honors such as this, we nevertheless thank Mayor de Blasio and Staten Islanders for this generous consideration."

The naming of the Staten Island ferry boat in Day's honor marks the second occasion in recent months that New York has paid tribute to a hero of the Catholic Church. Last fall, the city unveiled a monument to Francesca Xavier Cabrini, more commonly known as Mother Cabrini, who, like Day, was known for her solidarity with the city's immigrants.