Opinion
Guest Voices
Martha Hennessy at protest

Martha Hennessy, granddaughter of Catholic Worker co-founder Dorothy Day, participates in a New York City march to abolish nuclear weapons Nov. 28, 2023. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)



by John Dear

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"We are experiencing the thrashing of empire and the death throes of capitalism," Martha Hennessy, Dorothy Day's granddaughter, told John Dear in this week's episode of "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast."

Day was a legendary activist, author, anarchist and co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement. Hennessy, also a longtime peace activist, lives on her family farm in Vermont and has volunteered part time for the last 15 years at Maryhouse Catholic Worker in New York City, which was Dorothy's home.

Hennessy speaks regularly on the issues of war, poverty, the works of mercy and nuclear weapons. She has traveled to Russia, Iraq, Iran, Palestine/Israel, Egypt, Afghanistan and Korea to witness for peace.

Like her grandmother, Hennessy said that "good solutions never come from the state. ... We need to find one's niche ... to create a new world from the shell of the

old world, to create a society where it's easy to be good."

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Dear and Hennessy discuss Day's brilliant — and shocking — statement right after the attack on Pearl Harbor which she ran as the headline of the Catholic Worker: "Our manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount." Even if everyone else runs off to war, we will obey the teachings of Jesus and not support war, Day insisted. Hennessy also talked about Day's witness over the course of her long life and how she said "No" to every single war.

"The U.S. church desperately needs Dorothy as a saint, a saint who was a laywoman, a mother, and a grandmother," Hennessy said. "Pope Francis recognizes her as a saint. She was a mystic, she was touched by God. And she was an extraordinary grandmother."

Hennessy also spoke about her recent arrest on Ash Wednesday outside the U.S. Mission to the United Nations calling upon the U.S. to sign the U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; her work at Maryhouse; her imprisonment for the King's Bay Plowshares disarmament action; and her grandmother's impending canonization.

Listen to the episode here.

This story appears in the **The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast** feature series. View the full series.