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Dorothy Day stopped by NCR yesterday

by Pat Marrin

NCR Today



Dorothy Day stopped by *NCR* yesterday. We go way back with Dorothy. From its start in

1964, *NCR* has emulated Day's commitment to journalism in and about the church in the world. *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, started in 1933, is still in business, selling for a penny, still promoting a radical approach to living the gospel through houses of hospitality, the works of mercy and by opposing all war as an underlying cause of poverty and social injustice. We sometimes ponder who has gotten the most coverage ("ink") from *NCR* over the years, Dorothy Day or Oscar Romero. Probably about even. In 2010, we will celebrate again these amazing exemplars of holiness and service on the 30th anniversary of their deaths in 1980.

Yesterday, Dorothy met with the *NCR* staff in the company lunch room, and while sweeping up a bit around our feet, told us the familiar story of how she, Peter Maurin and others got started in the depths of the Great Depression on the path that became the Catholic Worker movement, first with one house in the Bowery section of New York, then in numerous houses across the country and in several attempts at farm communes ("agronomic universities," Peter insisted). Their goal was to change the world. They wanted to promote social and economic systems in which it was easy to be good and to show that the gospel could be lived simply and joyfully by ordinary people in communities that opened their doors to those in need. In such communities, they said, God would always come in, too, revealing love as the one thing we are all looking for, and when necessary, multiplying loaves and fishes to feed everyone.

Dorothy Day, who died at the age of 83 on Nov. 29, 1980, was, of course, with us yesterday only in spirit, but also powerfully embodied in the person of Lisa Wagner-Carollo, who has been touring the country since 1993 with her one-woman presentation on the life of Day, "Haunted by God," one of several plays offered by Still Point Theater Collective (www.stillpointcollective.org) out of Chicago.

Lisa reminds us that one person with passion and determination, can make a big difference. Like Day, she works small and personal, does not worry about success as much as being faithful. This is the story *NCR* has told and will continue to tell as long as there are readers who want it or need it.

The image of Dorothy Day that leads this article is by Julie Lonnemann and appears on the cover of the November 2009 issue of *Celebration*, the worship resource of the *National Catholic Reporter*. For a free online copy, visit CelebrationPublications.org/freeoffer.

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