

Oct. 31 & Nov. 1, 2015
Feasts of All Saints & All Souls

All Saints Parish, Syracuse
Fr. Fred Daley

“Don’t Call Me a Saint!”

Dorothy Day, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, used to say “Don’t call me a saint – I don’t want to be dismissed that easily!”

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What did she mean by that statement?

Here was a woman who dedicated her life to the poorest of the poor, opening a House of Hospitality on Skid Row in the Bowery of NYC; along with Peter Maurin, forming a movement of creating Houses of Hospitality for the poor around the country during the time of the Great Depression – a movement that continues to flourish today ... even right here in Syracuse: our Michael DeSalvo and Nick Orth’s “Friends of Dorothy House,” offering loving, home-based, hospice and recuperative care and emergency assistance to persons with HIV-AIDS – is a Catholic Worker House.

“Unity Acres,” a home for homeless men, just outside of Pulaski – founded by the late Fr. Ray McVey and Kate Stanton – is a Catholic Worker House.

“Unity Kitchen” – overseen for years by Peter King and the late Anne O’Connor, on East Onondaga Street – is a Catholic Worker House.

Pope Francis, in his address to the United States Congress in September, mentioned Dorothy Day (along with Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Thomas Merton) as an American icon of light and hope.

“Don’t call me a saint – I don’t want to be dismissed that easily...” ?? What is Dorothy Day getting at?

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When speaking of “*saints*,” Dorothy Day was referring to the official list of dead Catholics chosen by the Vatican through a lengthy investigation (at significant expense), who are often portrayed as a super-human: almost perfect; *almost sinless*, few; who have been officially canonized and put on pedestals – imaged as so superior to the average Catholic – that Dorothy Day, along with the rest of us – in the midst of our brokenness and sinfulness and humanness – couldn’t imagine being anything like...

Sisters and brothers, the emphasis of this elite canonical 'Communion of Saints' overshadowed for centuries a much more profound understanding on the Communion of Saints, rooted in the community of our Hebrew ancestors, revealed and revived in the New Testament and early Church: That we are all saints! God calls the whole church – the whole community – to (w)holiness. Through our Baptism, we are joined to God in Christ, receiving the Holy Spirit. We are really made Holy... "in God's image and likeness"! We are THE "Communion of Saints"! This Holiness is essentially the same for everyone. There is not one kind of holiness for priests and bishops and canonized individuals and another kind for lay persons.

It's interesting: the official Canonical list of saints shows a very limited understanding of the "Communion of Saints:" three-fourths of all canonized saints are male; the vast majority of these were celibate clerics who didn't rock the boat.... A pretty limited vision of the community of God's people ...!

The Vatican II document Lumen Gentium states (¶ 4): "One and the same holiness is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit." Enlivened by grace, every woman, man, and child – in whatever diverse circumstances, and whatever race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other socially-devised marker that divides human beings – all participate in God's Holy Life: the vocation to be a friend of God, shapes the life of everyone in the community!

Moving a bit closer to home, we at All Saints – as our name proclaims – are part of the Communion of Saints, joined with the Communion of Saints throughout the world: propelled by the water of Baptism and the shared Eucharistic meal – little-by-little becoming more and more aware that the power of the Spirit is forming us, all of us, into a company of disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus; with responsibility to bear Good News to the world – bearing witness!

How? God's Spirit calls us to seek truth and to live lovingly and justly with others... in the midst of our humanness and limitations and sins...

And, how do we do this? As individual saints: we seek the truth, live lovingly and justly in our primary commitments – with our spouses, partners, friends. In our primary vocation and our work or profession; and, together, as a community of saints: we seek truth and live lovingly and justly in our ministries as Jesus did – within our community locally and reaching out globally.

On this Anniversary weekend, we join with the St. Lucy's Community of saints and those from the former St. Andrew's Community of saints and our sisters and brothers in Villanueva – in our extended Community of saints... to support the Health Care Cooperative founded there which promotes healing and wholeness within that rural area of Nicaragua. Our second collection, along with proceeds from our Anniversary Pancake Breakfast (following Mass!), Peg Barnett's Craft Sale & the sale of specially designed Christmas Cards, as well as the Christmas Wreath sale, all will help to fund our sustaining commitment to this mission.

Finally, on this All Saints, All Souls, Parish Anniversary weekend, we celebrate also that not even death “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:39). Early on, the community of the church concluded that the Communion of Saints was not restricted to people who live and breathe at the present moment, but includes those who have died – going forth to dwell in the mystery of the living God, as the beginning of the new heaven and new earth!

While some few are remembered by name, the Communion of Saints includes millions upon anonymous millions of others who made their personal contribution to the good of the world.

Among these saints are the untimely dead, killed in god-forsaken incidents of terror, war and mass death. Having drunk so deeply of the cup of suffering, they call forth special mention in anguish and lament. Among the Saints, are those we know personally – whose number increases we grow older – grandparents, mother and father, sisters and brothers, beloved spouses and life-partners, children, teachers, friends and colleagues; relatives and neighbors and the list goes on. We remember those who have arrived home in the unimaginable life within the embrace of God!

At this time, let us remember those from our All Saints Parish community who have transition to eternal life in the last year. If you are able, I invite you to stand for our annual Rite of Remembrance.