

“A Living Gospel: Reading God’s Story in Holy Lives”

Featuring **Robert Ellsberg**



A Week of Reflection | Session 2: Dorothy Day

Day 1:

Dorothy Day renounced Christianity in her youth. Her friends were anarchists, communists, and assorted literary bohemians. In the aftermath of an unhappy love affair she had an abortion. And yet there was always in Dorothy some yearning for the transcendent. She observed, **“All my life I have been haunted by God.”**

When you reflect on this idea of ‘being haunted by God,’ what memories from your own life come to mind? Why do you think Dorothy chose the word ‘haunted’?

Day 2:

After choosing God over the man she loved, Dorothy Day experienced a lonely time in the desert. It lasted five years, as she raised her daughter on her own, grew in the practice of her Catholic faith, and tried to figure out what she was supposed to do with her life.

Have you experienced such a desert time? What prompted your entry into a desert experience? How did you emerge from it? What has stuck with you about that time?

Day 3:

Speaking of the saints, Robert Ellsberg says, ***“Once they discover their true vocation their whole personality is transformed; they find a vitality and focus that had previously been lacking.”*** Dorothy Day said, ***“You will know your vocation by the joy it brings you.”***

How have you understood your vocation? In what ways do you feel connected to the kind of vocational joy that Dorothy Day speaks of? How will you bring this matter to God in prayer?

Day 4:

Dorothy Day’s life was shaped by an experience of hopelessness and surrender in her decision to relinquish the love of her life and embrace the vocation God offered.

In what ways have experiences of sacrifice and surrender been pivotal in your spiritual journey? How have experiences of surrender released a deeper connection to your vocation? Are there things that you are still struggling to release? How will you bring that into your prayers today?



Day 5:

Ellsberg says, ***“Dorothy combined charity with justice. It was not enough just to bind up the wounds of the slaves; she wanted to do away with slavery, with injustice, with racism, with war and violence. And in that sense she invented a new model of holiness for our time.”***

How have you understood the connection between the ministry of Jesus and the desire to address systemic injustice? In what ways does this longing for holiness permeate your daily decisions and choices? How are you participating with God to work to change the social order?

Day 6:

“Dorothy Day was a great believer in what Jean-Pierre de Caussade called “the sacrament of the present moment.” In each situation, in each encounter, in each task before us, she believed, there is a path to God.” - Robert Ellsberg

What have you found to be most helpful in the practice of staying attentive to ‘the present moment’? When you are most aware, what are some of the paths to God that you have experienced in the ordinary realities of your daily life? What are the things that most distract you from recognizing the connections to God? How will you offer these distractions to God?

