

Journey Films to premiere *Revolution of the Heart: The Dorothy Day Story*

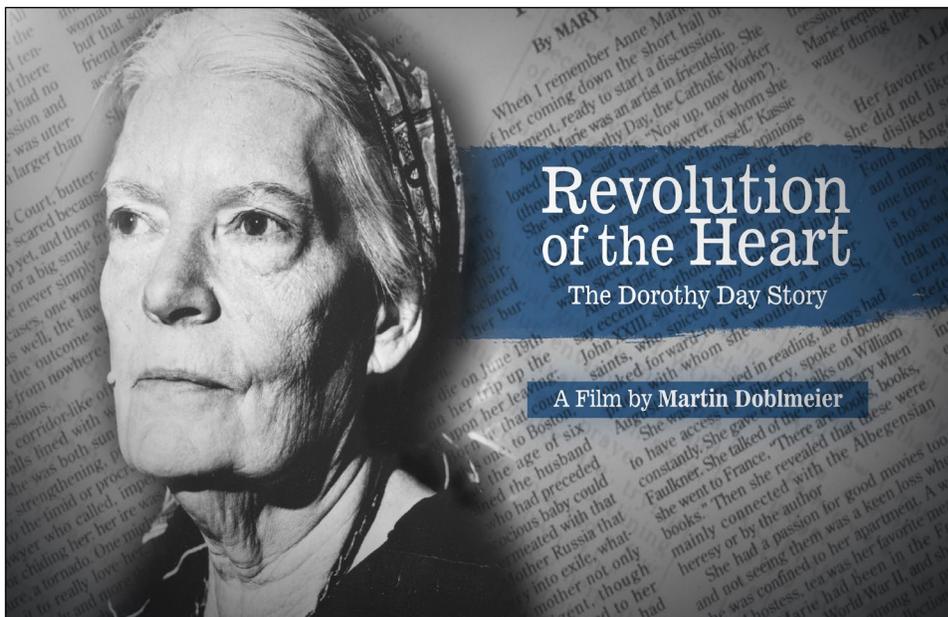
BY LISA KERN
WITH MARTIN DOBLMEIER

Journey Films, a television and film production company specializing in religion, faith, and spirituality, recently completed its latest documentary—Revolution of the Heart: The Dorothy Day Story—to begin airing on public television in March. Martin Doblmeier, award-winning filmmaker and founder of Journey Films, answered questions about the film in a recent interview with ATS.

Q: Why did you choose to do a film about Dorothy Day?

We are creating a new series of biographical documentary films for public television on major religious figures of the last century. The series is called "Prophetic Voices." To date, we have profiled Reinhold Niebuhr, Howard Thurman, and now Dorothy Day. I think Day is one of the great prophetic figures of the past century because she sets an incredible standard for many of us when it comes to living an authentic life of faith.

People today are looking for authenticity in those who claim to be religious, and I can't think of anyone who lived their life according to the example of the Gospels and the Beatitudes more than Dorothy Day. Most of us would admit we make compromises almost daily in how we live our faith. With Dorothy Day, there were no compromises.



As we tell the story for a wider television audience, we are also mindful that we are creating what I like to think of as "narrative theology." We use the vehicle of a person's life to raise deeper and more profound theological issues. In that way, the theology becomes not only memorable but personal.

Dorothy Day began her professional life as a journalist, and then turned her passions and writing skills into public advocacy for those in need, particularly the working poor. But when she was confronted with the harsh realities of the Great Depression, she realized that simply writing about peoples' needs was not enough. With her guide and mentor, Peter Maurin, she began opening houses of hospitality. She literally cared for hundreds of desperate, hungry people every day through those houses.

The Catholic Worker newspaper and the network of Catholic Worker houses she began in 1933 are still operating today. There were 30 Catholic Worker houses when Dorothy Day died in 1980. Today, there are nearly 250.

That alone is testimony to her courage and prophetic imagination.

Day's life brings us into her understanding of the immigrant because so many of the people who first sought help at the Catholic Worker House were recent immigrants. For Dorothy Day, every person who came for help was the face of God.

And we see how her understanding of Christ propelled her and the Catholic Worker Movement to be ardent pacifists. The audience will have to grapple with their own understanding of what it means to be a "peacemaker" and how far they are willing to go. So Dorothy Day is a compelling and dramatic story, but she is also a challenging companion on our own journey.

Q: Dorothy Day has often been compared to Mother Teresa. Does the film touch on this comparison or on the fact that the Catholic Church is considering Dorothy for sainthood?

Dorothy Day is often compared to Mother Teresa of Calcutta who was declared a saint in the Catholic Church in 2016. I often hear Day referred to as the "American Mother Teresa."

Certainly, both were extraordinary women and fervent Catholics who revered the saints, prayed the rosary, and attended daily Mass. Both would say their spiritual groundings gave them the strength and courage needed to do the difficult work of feeding the hungry and caring for the destitute.

But Dorothy Day had so many other dimensions. She began her professional life as a journalist and that would always be integral to her own identity and to the identity of the Catholic Worker Movement. Day was fearless when it came to confronting important social and political issues like labor unrest, unbridled capitalism, expanding militarism, and nuclear proliferation.

Dorothy Day was always willing to put her body on the line in public protest. She was arrested eight times during her lifetime. If she believed in a cause, her conscience

would not let her back down. During World War II—in what many believed was the last good war—Day held fast to her pacifist beliefs, convinced it was what God demanded. Support for the Catholic Worker was cut in half, yet she persisted.

Even in her late 70's, Dorothy Day traveled across the country to march in protest and was arrested with Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworkers. Day was a social justice warrior who fought to the very end. So while she and Mother Teresa share many things in common, in other ways they were very different characters.

Q: Of all the things you learned about Dorothy Day and her legacy when making this film, what surprised you the most and why?

When Dorothy Day was a young journalist, she traveled from New York City to Washington, DC, to march on behalf of the Women's Suffrage Movement. She was ar-



Martin Doblmeier interviews Joan Chittister—a Benedictine Sister of Erie, Pennsylvania, and one of the nation's most influential religious and social leaders—for the film.

rested and served several weeks in prison where guards beat her and the other women to near death. Yet, after she was released and throughout her life, Dorothy Day never voted. For me, that was a great surprise. No one seems to have a clear understanding of why she refused to vote, but I think the anarchist side of Dorothy Day would not let her participate in a political system she so often resisted.

Q: *In the past, you've taken your films on tour to ATS member schools. Are schools able to schedule a viewing of "Revolution of the Heart"?*

Yes. With each film, I get the opportunity to bring it into public venues to discuss the critical issues raised. I toured with our films on Reinhold Niebuhr and Howard Thurman, and now I will go on the road with the Dorothy Day story. For me, it is an exciting part of the overall process.

During the first months of 2020, I will do special screening events with the film nationwide. Many of these events will be at seminaries and on college campuses. I'm excited about sharing her story and engaging students who may be searching for models of faith as they shape a course for their own lives.

My hope is, after viewing the film, that everyone—students in particular—will appreciate how Dorothy Day used her own understanding of God's commandments to address the critical social and political issues of her day. She confronted questions about new immigrants, poverty and starvation, and what Christ meant when he challenged us all to be "peacemakers." In that way, Dorothy Day is an historical character yet she remains a valuable

resource for us today as we confront many of those same issues.

Q: *Are there educational resources available for follow-up discussions, readings, etc. for those who would like to use the film in their classrooms and congregations?*

We have created extensive educational resources to facilitate use across a wide array of settings to complement the film. The lead on this was one of our producers, Deryl Davis, and we worked in conjunction with a number of experts and education leaders. As a result, we have materials specifically for congregations, seminaries, high schools, colleges, retreats, and a variety of other settings. For us, the educational materials are always growing and adapting, meaning we continue to update as we get feedback and hopefully improve.

Q: *What has been the public response to the film so far?*

Public Television (PBS) is excited about offering *Revolution of the Heart: The Dorothy Day Story* as a special for Women's History Month in March. As a result, millions of viewers will have the opportunity to learn of this remarkable woman's life and legacy. And invitations for screenings are coming in, so hopefully the experience over these next months will live up to everyone's expectations. It was an honor to tell Dorothy Day's story and contribute in some small way to the legacy she leaves.

For more information, educational materials, or to see the film's trailer, please visit www.journeyfilms.com



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