CARMELITE INSTITUTE OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND

SAINT THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX'S LITTLE WAY OF LOVE IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF DOROTHY DAY

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DECLARATION

I, Noel Estrella Bordador, declare that this dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given in the bibliography.

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In loving memory of my mother, Lydia

For all Carmelites, and Catholic Workers

ABSTRACT

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux's Little Way of Love in the Spirituality of Dorothy Day

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Dorothy Day (1897-1980), co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, recognized that the doctrine of the Little Way of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1823-1897) provides a path for both inner spiritual transformation, as well as positive social change. Yet, very few studies have been done about this. This dissertation contributes to this scholarly gap, specifically addressing two questions.

(1) How did Day understand the Little Way of Thérèse as providing a path of spiritual transfiguration which she defined as growth in supernatural love?
(2) In what way did Day see the Little Way as socially transformative?

The dissertation shows that for Day, following the Little Way could transfigure one's interiority through (a) self-surrender (abandonment) to God, (b) a proper ordering of human affections, desires and loves, (c) an expansion of one's capacity to love universally, including loving one's enemies, and (d) the embrace of redemptive suffering as a means of loving union with God and others.

The dissertation also enumerates various principles of social transformation that Day claimed to be logical consequences of her study of the Little Way. Since love of God and neighbor is the key to Day's interpretation of the social implications of the Little Way, the dissertation describes how Day sought to express this through at least six socially transfiguring principles: (a) the inclusion of the spiritual in the social realm ("primacy of the spiritual"), (b) the love for *every* human being as a child of God, (c) counteracting social disorder through "little" works of mercy and love, (d) solidarity with others, especially the oppressed, (e) non-violence (pacifism), and (f) the cultivation of small units of social and spiritual organization where radical hospitality, equality, mutuality and love could be practiced ("primacy of the small unit").

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Introduction

> …[W]e are still trying to work out a theory of love, a study of the problem of love so that the revolution of love, instead of that of hate, may come about, and we will have a new heaven and a new earth.[1]

Dorothy Day (1897-1980), the co-founder[2] of the Catholic Worker Movement, penned these words in the aftermath of the Second World War when the world was faced with the possibility of total annihilation through nuclear warfare. Day found a teacher of this "theory of love" in the French Discalced Carmelite nun, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897). For Day, Thérèse's Little Way- which she described as "her way of love"[3] - is a distillation of the Gospel teaching of Christ's redeeming love that could save the world. In 1960, Day published her only biography of a saint, *Thérèse*, to provide the world an exemplar of an ordinary and unheroic life that, nevertheless, embodied transformative love.[4]

Day first heard of Thérèse just before her conversion to Roman Catholicism.[5] She later became more acquainted with Thérèse upon reading her *Story of a Soul.* An intellectual writer, Day was unimpressed. Besides, she found Thérèse uninspiring and lackluster a figure. Day, who had an extensive history of activism with the radical Left, wondered what a cloistered and sheltered young nun could contribute to a world convulsed with wars and injustices.[6] However, she progressively realized that Thérèse and her Little Way offered a path

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[1] Dorothy Day, *On Pilgrimage* (1948; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Company and Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1999), 240.

[2] The other co-founder is Peter Maurin (1877-1949). His teachings are distilled in what has come to be called *Easy Essays* (1961; repr.,Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1984). Dorothy Day wrote an unfinished biography of Maurin. It was later completed by Francis Sicius, and published as *Peter Maurin: Apostle to the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

[3] Dorothy Day, *House of Hospitality* (1948; repr., Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2015), 114.

[4] Dorothy Day, *Thérèse* (1960; repr., Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 2016). Her editors at Harpers refused publication because they found it lacking. It was finally published through Notre Dame University's Fides Publishers Association.

[5] Ibid., xi-xiii.

[6] ibid., xiv, xvi.

of transforming the world through the force of a nonviolent revolution of love, one that is closely consonant with her Catholic faith. Yet, Day also recognized that social transformation could not occur unless there is a corresponding inner spiritual transfiguration which she defined as growth in supernatural love.

For Day, "[l]ove and sanctity are the same."[7] Moreover, "…it takes a saint to love, to know what love means…"[8] and it is the saints who will change the world through love. Thus, the vocation of every human person (not just Christians) is to become a saint- a "holy man, the 'whole man,' the integrated man.'[9]

Not all forms of human love are good. Some are diluted by sin that bring about much evil and suffering in the personal and social order. Human love must be transfigured by Christ's grace. Thus, the chief revolution Day called for is a "revolution of the heart" that radically changes one's being so as to be possessed with "that burning love, that passion which led to the Cross…"[10]

Love requires a proper "science, a knowledge," yet "we lack it."[11] Day, however, found in Thérèse a teacher *par excellence* of this science of love.

While the influence of Thérèse on Day is widely acknowledged, there is little scholarly discussion of Day's appropriation of the Thérèsian Little Way of love. This dissertation seeks to fill in the gap by examining two questions.

First, how did Day understand Thérese's Little Way as providing a path that leads inner spiritual transformation which she defined as growth in supernatural charity? This comprises Part I, Transfigured Interiority (chapters one through four).

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[7] Benjamin T. Peters, *Called to be Saints: John Hugo, The Catholic Worker, and a Theology of Radical Christianity* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2016), 274-275. These words came from Day's retreat notes from the 1940s which are collected in Peters' book.

[8] Dorothy Day, "Death of an Apostle," *The Catholic Worker*, June 1949.

[9] Day, *Thérèse*, xiii.

[10] Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes: The Inspiring Story of the Catholic Worker Movement* (1963; repr., Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 215.

[11] Day, *Thérèse*, xiii.

Secondly, how did Day apply her understanding to her political vision? In what way did Day see the Little Way of love as socially transfiguring? This comprises Part II: A Transfigured World (chapter five).

Literature Review: Theoretical Perspectives

While many things have been written on either Thérèse or Day, such wide scholarship is not matched in regards to a deeper examination of the significance of Thérèse and her doctrine of the Little Way to the spirituality of Day. James Allaire, Brigid O'Shea Merriman, and Mark and Louise Zwicks provide useful broad overviews.[12] Some of the themes they identified as central to Day's discussion of the Little Way include: (a) self-abandonment to God, (b) the importance of expressing love in daily and ordinary ("little") acts, (c) the role of redemptive suffering in a life of love, (d) the Little Way as having a sociopolitical dimension, (e) and the Little Way as providing a path of holiness open to all, one which combines both mysticism and apostolicity.

Several in-depth discussions furnish useful concepts in understanding Day's appropriation of the Little Way.

Important to the discussion of Day's notion of transfigured interiority are two main ideas. Leon J. Hooper provides the concept of sublation,[13] which involves the reorientation of human desire from inordinate self-cherishing to the love of God and neighbor. Peter Casarella supplies the notion of mortification, the uprooting of egotistical self and its loves.[14] Mortification is rooted in "a self-emptying purely for the sake of others…an imitation of the divine kenosis."[15] Positively viewed, mortification frees one to love God and others purely.

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[12] James Allaire, "Dorothy Day and Thérèse of Lisieux," *Spiritual Life 43 (Winter 1997)*: 195-200; Brigid O'Shea Merriman, "Friends and Spiritual Guides" (Thérèse of Lisieux) in *Searching for Christ: The Spirituality of Dorothy Da*y (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1984), 191-197; Mark Zwick and Louise Zwick, "St. Thérèse: Dorothy Day and the Little Way," in *The Catholic Worker Movement: Intellectual and Spiritual Origins* (New York,/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 279-294.

[13] J. Leon Hooper, SJ, "Dorothy Day's Transposition of Thérèse's Little Way," *Theological Studies 62* (2002): 81, accessed January 31, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1177/004056390206300133.

[14] Peter Casarella, "Sisters in Doing the Truth: Dorothy Day and St. Thérèse of Lisieux," *Communio: International Catholic Review 24* (Fall 1997): 494.

[15] Ibid.

A. Terrance Wiley's study of Day's Christian anarchism is particularly helpful, specifically how he adeptly shows that for Day, the transformation of the social order requires inner spiritual and moral transfiguration. Claiming love as the basis of Day's political vision, Wiley grounds her politics in Christian ethics of "moral perfectionism."[16] Perfective ethics advances the view that "persons have a religious-ethical duty to cultivate a capacity to love and… promote [communities and] institutions that establish and maintain the conditions for the maximization of interpersonal loving kindness."[17] Moral perfectionism also believes in "the power of human action…mediated by divine grace…"[18] The dissertation argues that Day's politics of love founded on an ethic of moral perfection finds support from her reading of Thérèse.

Since the dissertation also focuses on Day's social application of Thérèse's Little Way, of particular importance is Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt's examination of Day's political reading of the Little Way. He claims that for Day, the Little Way offers an "alternative politics"[19] that counteracts the violence and injustices of various political systems through nonviolent love and solidarity with the suffering.

Methodology

The methodology used in the dissertation is qualitative. Specifically, it employs thematic and textual analyses of the writings of Day, focusing primarily on her biography of Thérèse. The biography was meant to present the nature of Christian character and ethics through the life narrative of Thérèse. It is (borrowing a phrase from James McClendon, Jr.) "biography as

[16] A. Terrance Wiley, "Love in action: Dorothy Day's Christian Anarchism" in *Angelic Troublemakers: Religion and Anarchism in America* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2014), 62, 72-76, 81.

[17] Ibid., 74.

[18] Ibid., 73.

[19] Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, "The Politics of the Little Way: Dorothy Day Reads Thérèse of Lisieux," in *American Catholic Traditions: Resources for Renewal*, ed. Sandra Yocum Mize and William Portier (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 87.

theology."[20] It is not a piece of scholarly work as Day herself conceded.[21] Rather, it is best treated as a "meditation manual" meant to develop and strengthen the core Christian character of a person. Since character determines ethical decisions and actions which impact the world, character formation is necessary for the transfiguration of the world. Furthermore, in the biography (and her other writings), Day proposed Thérèse's Little Way as "the method par excellence of the social transformation practiced by Catholic Workers."[22]

The dissertation also utilizes Day's other works that include references to Thérèse. Moreover, it uses writings with no mention of Thérèse, but are helpful in providing important contextual information. These include her autobiographies,[23] "histories" of the Catholic Worker Movement,[24] articles in *The Catholic Worker*,[25] and other publications,[26] her spontaneous written reflections and retreat notes,[27] and her diaries and letters.[28]

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[20] James W. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology* (1974; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002).

[21] In the preface to *Thérèse,* Day warned that "one must not look for scholarship" in her work because she "had not had the time to…check sources" given her busy life (xviii). For Day's sources, see *Thérèse*, xvi-xvii.

[22] Hooper, 68.

[23] Dorothy Day, *From Union Square to Rome* (1938; repr. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006 and Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*: *The Autobiography of Dorothy Day* (1952; repr., New York, NY: Harper, 1981).

[24] Day's historical accounts are her *House of Hospitality* and *Loaves and Fishes.*

[25] Many of Day's articles in *The Catholic Worker* are found in the www.catholicworker.org and https://merton.bellarmine.edu/s/cw/page/CWnews.

[26] See Dorothy Day, *Dorothy Day: Writings from* Commonweal, ed. Patrick Jordan (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002).

[27] Dorothy Day, *All is Grace: The Spirituality of Dorothy Day*, ed. William D. Miller (New York, NY: Doubleday and Co., Inc. 1987). See n. 7.

[28] For Day's published diaries, see *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (2008; repr., New York, NY: Image Books, 2011). For her published letters, see *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (New York, NY: Image Books, 2012).

Preliminary Considerations: The Architecture of Love in the Spiritual Life

This section discusses Day's views on the role of love in the spiritual life. Such discussion is necessary to understand Day's emphasis on the necessity of transfiguring human loves, as well as her views on Thérèse's Little Way as a path to transfigured interiority and positive social change.

For Day, "God is Love…"[29] Love is, first and foremost, Personal, not a philosophical abstract. Day was influenced by the personalist philosopher, Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950), who wrote that the personal God is not removed from the world and humanity. Rather, God

> has 'given himself' to take on and transfigure the condition of mankind, one who offers to each person a relation of unique intimacy, of participation in his divinity.[30]

By divinizing humanity, God gives it a "profound purpose," and noble mission "to introduce…and radiate over the world a transfigured Kingdom."[31] Day absorbed these ideas of inner and social transfiguration, and wove them in her reading of Thérèse. For Day, a person is a creature meant to participate in the divine life through love. Such participation leads a person to "radiate" the transfigured Kingdom of God through charity.

"God made us for himself," Day wrote.[32] Therefore, "the ultimate actualization of personhood is realized in relation to God."[33] God also imparts something of himself by implanting his love in every human person as its very essence and *telos* (purpose) in life:

> The whole purpose of our life is Love.
> Why did God create us? Because He loved us.
> Why do we love him? Because He first loved us.[34]

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[29] Dorothy Day, *On Pilgrimage: The Sixties*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021), 171.

[30] Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism*, tr. Philip Mairet (London: UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952), xiii.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 227.

[33] Wiley, 70.

[34] Day, *On Pilgrimage: The Sixties*, 171.

God made us creatures of love, and "it makes us happy to love."[35] The beatific fulfillment of love is best realized in community: "… the deepest desire of my heart is for love, for union, for communion, for community."[36] Such communion has two aspects: "We cannot love God unless we love each other…"[37]

Sin is defined either as a failure to love, or a refusal to love and be in community. To counteract sin, one must learn how to love. Love is learned only in communities that practice it.[38]

While love is a divine gift, it could become problematical in three ways. First, the objects of human love are only "samples of the love of God."[39] However, humans tend to seek ultimate happiness, and fulfillment of love in creaturely goods, not in God. Sin is "a turning from God and turning to creatures."[40] Secondly, because humans are infected with egotism, their search for love's fulfillment often minimizes or excludes the happiness of others. Thirdly, human love could become obsessive, inordinately acquisitive, and excessively pleasure- and self-seeking. The corruption of love brings pain and suffering to oneself, others and the world.

There are two kinds of human actions fueled by love: natural and supernatural. The ultimate object of natural loves and actions is the self and its happiness. The natural tends to self-love. Natural loves and actions are "imperfect"[41] because they become habitually focused on self-seeking and self-satisfaction.

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[35] Dorothy Day, *On Pilgrimage: The Seventies*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2022), 103.

[36] Day, *On Pilgrimage: The Seventies*, 210-211. Day considered the Catholic Worker houses as "school for love" (Ibid.,103).

[37] Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 285.

[38] Ibid., 286.

[39] Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 192.

[40] Day, *Dorothy Day: Writings from* Commonweal, 138.

[41] Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 193.

Supernatural love and actions (or "divine actions") have the glory and love of God as their object.[42]

Natural loves must be transfigured by grace so that their daily expressions become supernaturally oriented. The progressive transfiguration of natural loves begins at baptism in which "the seed of divine life has been planted in us."[43] This "seed" enables growth in supernatural charity.

When Day spoke of baptism, she sometimes used the language and imagery of divine-human espousal. In baptism, Christ progressively makes his human spouse "equal" to him, at least in the purity of love.[44] Natural but imperfect loves begin to be transformed by grace so that the baptized can begin to love as Christ loves. Initially, this begins through one's ascetical efforts of emptying oneself of impure loves. But it is God who brings this to complete fruition.

There is in all an "Adam life and Christ life… all tangled"[45] in a spiritual struggle. Adam is the self with its egocentric loves opposing grace. Thus, of necessity is "to take out of our lives all that is of self…"[46] Those who embark on the path of purification will find that "love is a cross, transfiguration, a necessity."[47]

In Thérèse, Day found such a sure teacher of transfigured love through her study of Thérése's doctrine of the Little Way. The first four chapters will flesh this out.

For Day, the Little Way requires the "de-centering" of the self in order to find one's center in God. It involves not so much "self-dissolution"[48] but "self-transcendence," a

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[42] Ibid.,191.

[43] Ibid., 234.

[44] Ibid., 235.

[45] Ibid., 194-195.

[46] Ibid., 195.

[47] Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," *The Catholic Worker*, October-November, 1978.

[48] In *Counterculture in America*, 1933-1962 (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of Carolina Press, 1989), James Terence Fisher says that Day "was proposing self-dissolution as the goal and essence of Catholicism" (47).

"movement beyond oneself toward the good of others."[49] The principles of self-decentralization and self-transcendence primarily comprise Day's hermeneutics of the Little Way.

Chapter one examines Day's interpretation of the Thérèsian Little Way as requiring self-surrender (abandonment) to God that diminishes egotism so as to allow the inflow of God who will act with love through the transfigured self.

Chapter two discusses Day's understanding of the Little Way as necessitating the transfiguration of human *eros*, especially the natural though self-centered loves. This involves a correct ordering of love: "the necessity of loving God first"[50] with everything else being secondary. Lesser loves must give way to a greater love- that of God:

> [Thérèse] was ready to stake her life in this renunciation
> of love. We must be ready to give up everything. We must
> have already given it up before God can give it back transfigured,
> supernaturalized…[51]

Chapter three considers Day's concept of love's universality as derived from her study of Thérèse. Loves based on natural preferences are to be transfigured by expanding one's capacity to love others with whom one does not have a natural liking, including one's enemies.

Chapter four takes up Day's appropriation of the Thérèsian concept of suffering as "part of love."[52] The natural human response is to ran away from suffering. Nonetheless, both Thérèse and Day believed that irremediable suffering *could* lead to a deeper loving union with God, and others. Moreover, there is also suffering that is redemptive. Thus, the natural preference for a totally pain-free life must be transfigured through an acceptance, and embrace

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[49] Joann Wolski Conn and Walter Conn, "Conversion as Self Transcendence as Exemplified in the Life of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, *Spirituality Today* 34, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 303-311, accessed September 7, 2023, http://www.domcentral.org/library/spir2day/823442conn.html. [The article is available only in archival form online.]

[50] Day, *Thérèse*, 94.

[51] Ibid., 94-95.

[52] Ibid., 176.

of suffering- not for suffering's sake but as a means of redeeming love, "the very means used by Jesus himself."[53]

[53] Ibid.

PART I: TRANSFIGURED INTERIORITY

Chapter One

The Little Way: Love as Surrender

1.1. The Thérèsian Little Way of Self-Abandonment: Summary and Its Evolution

Thérèse lived at a time when the spirituality of the French Church was influenced by two heterodox teachings: Jansenism and Pelagianism. Jansenism held a dim view of humanity as having been severely corrupted by the Fall, making human nature "irremediably perverse."[1] Since humanity cannot save itself, salvation is predestination, i.e., the wrathful God arbitrarily saves a tiny elect, while predestines the mass to perdition. Jansenism appealed to many devout French Catholics who saw themselves as the faithful remnant over and against those who supported the national apostasy of the French Republic since the 1789 Revolution. Pelagianism, which claimed that salvation and sanctification could be earned by a person's meritorious efforts, tempered Jansenism by teaching that people could have some control over their salvation.[2] Divine mercy and salvation could be obtained through reparative acts that could satisfy the wrathful justice of God. Through these two spiritual currents, Thérèse erroneously learned that the Gospel

> advocated perfectionism as the ideal, fostered human effort as the basis of hope, and represented Jesus' Father as a God of vengeance and wrath, limited patience and punitive justice.[3]

Thérèse felt she had to be spiritually unblemished before God. Relentless in her pursuit of holiness ("I don't want to be a *saint by halves*."[4]), she became some sort of a "spiritual

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[1] Thomas B. Nevin, *Thérèse of Lisieux: God's Gentle Warrior* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 118. Jansenism emphasized God's wrathful justice rather than divine compassion.

[2] Joseph Schmidt, *Walking the Little Way of Thérèse of Lisieux, Discovering the Path of Love* (Frederick, MD: The Word Among Us Press, 2012), 135-136.

[3] Joseph Schmidt, *Everything is Grace: The Life and Way of Thérèse of Lisieux* (Frederick, MD: The Word Among Us Press, 2007), 24

[4] Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, 3rd edition, tr. John Clarke, OCD (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 27. The autobiography is referred hereafter as SS.

merchant," obsessively making reparative acts to earn the salvation of souls, hers included.[5] Conrad De Meester claims that Thérèse initially applied the term "Little Way" to her own vigorous and active efforts at sanctification rather than recognizing God's grace working in her.[6] But this understanding underwent a profound evolution.[7]

In Carmel, Thérèse soon realized that she could not attain her ideals of holiness despite her best efforts. According to Vilma Seelaus, Thérèse came to a point where "[p]ersistent experiences of her weakness put her in the position of either to despair or to abandon herself entirely to God."[8] Fortunately, she realized that God didn't want an already perfect Thérèse. She recognized that it was God who was working in her imperfect soul, bringing growth in holiness. In this new consciousness, Thérèse renounced her spiritual ambition to obtain her own sanctification. In weakness, she learned to surrender herself to the mercy of God, thus rediscovering the essence of the Gospel of mercy and grace.

According to De Meester, it was at the time of Thérèse's spiritual helplessness that she conceived and developed the image of a spiritual "elevator."[9] Thérèse wrote, "I wanted to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus for I am too small to climb the rough stair of perfection."[10] And she announced the discovery: "The elevator which must raise me to heaven is Your arms, O Jesus!"[11] To fit into this elevator, she must "remain *little*."[12] That is, she must

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[5] Conrad De Meester, *With Empty Hands: The Message of St. Thérèse,* New rev. ed., tr. Mary Seymour (Washington, DC: ICS Publications), 44.

[6] Ibid., 19.

[7] See Conrad De Meester, *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure of the Way of Spiritual Childhood" of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, tr. Susan Conroy (New York, NY: Alba House, 1998) for a comprehensive discussion of the evolution of the doctrine of the Little Way.

[8] Vilma Seelaus, "Thérèse: Spirituality of Imperfection*," Spiritual Life* 44, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 204.

[9] See De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 9-21.

[10] SS, 207. The imagery of an elevator is preferred over the "stair of perfection" because the latter involves arduous effort.

[11] Ibid., 208.

[12] Ibid.

renounce spiritual ambition, and embrace her weakness as that which would attract the mercy and grace of God.

Another image Saint Thérèse used is the loving condescension of Jesus towards her:

> …in order that Love be fully satisfied, it is necessary
> that It lowers Itself, and that It lowers Itself to
> nothingness and transform this nothingness into *fire.*[13]

The emphasis is no longer on her efforts of spiritual ascent to God, but on God's descent to her state of weakness so as to transform her into his likeness.

While the Little Way was initially Thérèse's tool of spiritual ambition, it evolved so that it became the means by which Thérèse died to her spiritual egotism. As Schmidt claims, the Little Way became Thérèse's participation in Christ's paschal mystery, dying to the old, and rising to a new self and life in God.[14] By emptying the self of egotism, God could now flow into her soul, transforming her nothingness into God's fire of love. Only then could she in her nothingness exclaim, "…I shall be *Love*."[15]

1.2. Day's Reading of the Little Way as a Path of Self-Surrender

Day did not trace the evolution of the doctrine of the Little Way. She simply emphasized the gracious love of God as the only source of salvation: "The total unimportance of anything in the world except God's love for us- this was the burden of [Thérèse's] teaching."[16] Because God is all loving and merciful, God always compensate for human weakness through grace. Thus, the proper posture before God is simply self-abandonment. The Little Way is but a "path of total abandonment and confidence,"[17] like that of a child abandoning itself to its father's love:

> [Thérèse] thought of God as her father, and went to him with the
> same simple trust… She was to point out later the need we all have

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[13] Ibid., 195.

[14] Schmidt, *Everything is Grace*, 223-224.

[15] SS, 194

[16] Day, *Thérèse*, 182.

[17] Ibid., 181. Day quoted Thérèse. See Thérèse of Lisieux, *St. Thérèse of Lisieux: The Last Conversations*, tr. John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1977), 257. The work is referred hereon as TLC.

> for this trust in God's goodness and love for us.[18]
>
> [Thérèse's] secret is generally called the little way… She called it little because it partakes of the simplicity of a child, in its attitude of abandonment, of acceptance.[19]

Though the image of the elevator so central to Thérèse was not explicitly discussed by Day, she echoed it. The mercy of the maternal God would carry us in our weakness, and bring us up to the divine bosom of love:

> [Thérèse] knows that God has said, 'to him that is little, mercy is promised. He will be carried at the breasts and upon the knees they shall caress you. As one whom the mother caresseth, so I will comfort you.'[20]

The Little Way annihilates spiritual ambition of taking credit for one's sanctification through one's virtuous accomplishments:[21] "Thérèse takes no credit to herself. It's all God's doing…"[22]

In her diaries, Day once wrote, "…I began to understand the greatness of the Little Flower. By doing nothing she did everything."[23] Thérèse's "doing nothing" is not passivity, but *active* pure receptivity to God through self-surrender that creates a space in her soul for divine inflow. As a result, "grace, which is defined as 'participation in the divine life,' grows in her, so she can say, 'now not I, but Christ in me.'[24] The Christ dwelling within "does everything"- acting, loving, and transfiguring the world.

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[18] Day, *Thérèse*., 131.

[19] Ibid., 168-169.

[20] Ibid., 169. Day quoted Théresè (SS, 208).

[21] Day, *Thérèse*, 182.

[22] Ibid., 94.

[23] Day, *The Duty of Delight*, 91.

[24] Day, *Thérèse*, 94.

Chapter Two

The Little Way: Transfigured Eros

The Byzantine Church Father, Maximus the Confessor (580-662), referred to God as the "originator and begetter of erotic force."[1] Through *eros*, God approaches us, relinquishing himself in love. God also gifts us with *eros* so that we may, in turn, surrender ourselves to him and one another in charity. *Eros* is necessary for love, communion and life in community.

Eros is also the inner life force that makes humans yearn to live, and thrive. It includes all the drives, desires, the loves, longings, and affections of the heart which seek fulfillment and happiness. Sexuality is part of *eros,* but *eros* is greater than sexuality. Human yearnings bring hope. Their fulfillment brings joy. Frustration brings suffering. According to Ronald Rolheiser, what we do with our *eros*- "both in terms of handling the pain and the hope they bring us," constitutes part of our spiritual life.[2] Spirituality is also about how we approach God and others through our *eros*.

Because *eros* is from God, Rolheiser says we must "respect and relate it precisely to its divine source..."[3] But somehow humanity has found a way to sever *eros* from its divine origin and intent- with catastrophic consequences. A great deal of life, including our spiritual life, consists of struggles with our *eros.*

Thérèse herself was not free from struggles around her drives, and desires. Some of these struggles were rooted in early traumatic losses.[4] Early on, much of her intrapsychic energy was spent in caring for her wounded self. As a child, Thérèse not only lacked emotional control, but was also emotionally needy.[5] To ward off fears of losses and abandonment, she

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[1] Maximus the Confessor, "Fifth Century [of Various Texts on Theology, the Divine Economy, and Virtue and Vice]," in *The Philokalia*, 1st paperback ed., comp. St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, tr. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (1981; repr., London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1990), 281.

[2] Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*, 15th anniv. ed. (1998; repr., New York, NY: Image, 2014), 5.

[3] Ibid., 31.

[4] Thérèse's mother died when she was four (SS, 33-34). Her sisters who were her mother figures left in succession for the conventual life (See SS, 57-67, 88-93).

[5] Ibid., 97.

became a people pleaser,[6] staking her sense of identity and worth on what others thought of her, or how they related to her. She sacrificed a great degree of self-authenticity,[7] and her relationships became tainted with egotism. All these prevented her from genuinely loving God, others, and herself. Aware of her imperfections, she "prayed to be relieved of her mental torture,"[8] asking God to put her onto "the path of personal authenticity, inner freedom, and integrity."[9]

Thérèse's prayers were answered by an inner transformation that occurred on Christmas Eve of 1886. The external grace was her father's hurtful comments about her childishness.[10] Her inner transfiguration was a result of grace: "[Jesus] transformed me in such a way that I no longer recognized myself."[11] As Day wrote, Thérèse "suddenly received the grace to 'snap out of it'…" and was "given strength and control which she had lacked…"[12] The inner change freed her from excessive self-preoccupation and the need to please people.[13] Thus, Thérèse's soul also became more focused on God. Fifteen months later, she entered God's service as a Carmelite nun, something she could not have done without the inner transfiguration: "Without this change I would have had to remain for years in the world ."[14]

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[6] Schmidt, *Walking the Little Way*, 58.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Day, *Thérèse*, 114.

[9] Schmidt, *Walking the Little Way*, 52.

[10] SS, 98

[11] LT 201 (a letter from Thérèse to P. Roulland) in Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux* vol. 2, 1890-1897, tr. John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 1016. Letters will be identified hereon as LT (letters of Thérèse) or LC/LD (letters to Thérèse) and a corresponding number.

[12] Day, *Thérèse*, 110.

[13] SS, 99.

[14] LT 201, Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters*, vol. 2, 1016

Shortly after her conversion, Thérèse became "consumed with a *thirst for souls."*[15] She began her "apostolate of saving souls,"[16] by praying for the conversion of a condemned criminal.[17] For Day, this marked the beginning for Thérèse of a "'practice' of social concern."[18]

In discussing Thérèse's psychological maturity, Joanne Walski Conn mentions that a person's psychospiritual growth depends on "balancing the two basic human longings for independence and attachment."[19] A capacity for genuine love requires that a person develops a *differentiated* self that is to be offered in love.

In order for Thérèse to offer herself fully to God, Day showed that Thérèse successfully negotiated this psychological task of differentiation. Thérèse freed herself from an undifferentiated dependency on her much beloved father because "[h]er will was set on God, God alone."[20] Thérèse also "practiced detachment"[21] from her biological sisters in the convent whose infantilizing behavior interfered with her obedience to the Carmelite Rule. When her excessive attachments to the prioress[22] and a novice[23] endangered her vocation, Thérèse deliberately had to "quench this dangerous flame," doing "violence to herself in order to learn how to love."[24]

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[15] SS, 99.

[16] Day, *Thérèse*, 121.

[17] Henri [Enrico] Pranzini (1856-1887) was convicted and executed for multiple murders. See SS, 99-100 and Day, *Thérèse*, 120-121.

[18] Hooper, 79.

[19] Joan Walski Conn, "Thérèse of Lisieux: Far from Spiritual Childhood," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 6, no.1 (Spring 2006): 70, accessed February 5, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1353/scs.2006.0029.

[20] Day, *Thérèse*, 138. See SS, 107-108, 147-148.

[21] Day, "On Pilgrimage," *The Catholic Worker*, April 1955.

[22] Day, *Thérèse*, 143. See SS, 237.

[23] Day, *Thérèse*, 144-145. See SS, 235-236.

[24] Day, *Thérèse*, 144, 145.

All these revealed that Thérèse was a woman full of *eros*. Thérèse's "desire to love was boundless,"[25] and that "…her heart had a burning thirst for happiness."[26] Yet, Thérèse came to realize that "'no creature can slake its thirst.'"[27] Though it is natural that "[t]he heart filled with love searches for someone on whom to bestow it,"[28] Thérèse knew that love could be corrupted by preferring the love of creatures over God, or loving creatures with an "immoderate love."[29] Therefore, such a "delight must be stifled"[30] because all loves must be properly ordered to the love of God first.[31] All other earthly loves (including earthly relations) become secondary.[32] Indeed, "…all natural love is pruned in order that a supernatural love may grow…"[33]

Paradoxically, psychological maturity also requires that self-autonomy be balanced by interdependence. Humans are not meant to be alone and lonely (Gen 2:18). For Conn, Thérèse attained psychological maturity by realizing "*self-fulfillment precisely through self-donation*" that involves both "self-forgetfulness" and "self-surrender."[34] For Day, Thérèse established emotional differentiation from individual people she loved in order to surrender herself fully to God, and to the larger community of nuns she was called to love and serve.

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[25] Ibid., 141.

[26] Ibid., 143.

[27] Ibid. Day quoted from a letter of Thérèse to Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart dated July 6/7, 1889, (LT 75). See Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux* vol. 1, 1877-1890*,* tr. John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1982), 501.

[28] Day, *Thérèse*, 93.

[29] Ibid. Day quoted Thérèse. See SS, 83.

[30] Day, *Thérèse*, 144.

[31] See Introduction, n. 50.

[32] Day, *Thérèse*, 168: "Thérèse spoke of the readiness we should all have to do God's will, to suffer, to be parted from our nearest and dearest…"

[33] Ibid., 144.

[34] Conn, *Thérèse of Lisieux*, 78.

Interestingly, Day included some discussion of Thérèse's sexuality, stretching her materials since, as Nevin said, Thérèse was "an adolescent who had no idea of sexuality, including her own…"[35]

Day's biography of Thérèse was published when the so-called sexual revolution was just beginning. Her objection to the new sexual morality that advocated sexual freedom stemmed from what Rolheiser calls the "divorce" between "religion and eros," between "private morality and social justice."[36] Day presented Thérèse as a paragon of Christian sexual ethics.

Day claimed that Thérèse had sexual feelings as a child, adolescent and nun.[37] Aware of the temptation to misuse this divine gift, Thérèse sublated any desire that could corrupt it: "… [Thérèse] recognized in these temptations the 'delectation in temptation,' and was rigid in turning from it."[38]

In fashioning Thérèse's sexual life, Day reasoned that sexuality should not be severed from spirituality, unmoored from divine *eros*. If sexuality is a divine gift that should be used to draw near to another person –for mutual love, sanctification, joy giving and procreation- then sexuality should not be used recklessly apart from that *telos*. For those who are not called to sacred celibacy, a Christian expression of sexual behavior must occur only within a lifelong marital covenant of love "which is a sample of the love of God for man."[39]

Yet, personally, Day discerned that marriage wasn't meant for her. This decision unfolded as part of Day's spiritual journey that included her struggles with her own *eros*. In her youth, she had a few unsatisfactory relationships with men, including one which was disastrous, leading her to seek an abortion and attempting suicide twice.[40] Later, she had a common law

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[35] Nevin, *Thérèse of Lisieux*, 167.

[36] Rolheiser, 33-34, 36.

[37] Day, for example, noted Thérèse's childhood crushes on teachers and fellow classmates (*Thérèse*, 86-87). Day also wrote that Thérèse "knew…attraction to men," and that earlier latent same-sex desires resurfaced in the convent (*Thérèse*, 147).

[38] Ibid., 147.

[39] Ibid., 16.

[40] Day left out a discussion of this in her two autobiographies though she alluded to it in her semi-autobiographical novel, *The Eleventh Virgin*, recently reprinted (Houston, TX: Stoneman House Press, LLC, 2020).

husband with whom she bore a daughter. She described the relationship in a spiritual superlative: "…it was life with him that brought me natural happiness, that brought me to God."[41] However, they separated because her fiancé- an atheist- objected to her Catholicism, and did not believe in the Sacrament of Matrimony. Day soon recognized that God alone could satisfy the primal longings of her heart. Neither decrying sexuality[42] nor marriage, she concluded: "…it wasn't the love between a man and a woman that I was hungry to find, even though I enjoyed that love very much…[43] Aiming for "supernatural" happiness, she decided not to be distracted by the pursuit of marriage:

> My conversion was a way of saying to myself that I knew I was trying to go someplace and that I would spend the rest of my life trying to go there and try not to let myself go distracted by side trips, excursions that were not to the point.[44]

Day sublated her natural desire for an exclusive human companionship in order to live fully for God, the supreme love of her life. In this, she discovered a sister-companion/model in Thérèse. Day said of Thérèse, "…giving up [exclusive human] love, she found love and lived in love…"[45]

Interestingly, Day connected the misuse of sexuality with violence and war since both denigrate the divine gift of embodied *eros*.[46] Sexuality disconnected from its divinely-ordained purpose is violence, a "hatred…of the life force in man himself"[47] that could have social

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Her biographer, William D. Miller, reconstructed the events in *Dorothy Day: A Biography* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1982), 119-142.

[41] Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 134.

[42] See *The Long Loneliness*, 140, wherein Day provided a beautiful description of the divine gift of sexuality.

[43] Robert, Coles, *Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion,* Radcliffe Biography Series (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1987), 61-62.

[44] Ibid., 64.

[45] Day, *Thérèse*, 147.

[46] Day, *On Pilgrimage: The Sixties*, 58.

[47] Ibid.

consequences that bring suffering and pain. Therefore, sexuality must be transfigured, a conviction that found support in Day's reconstruction of Thérèse's life of *eros*.

Chapter Three

The Little Way: Universal and Forgiving Love

Christian love, as Day envisioned it, must be extended to all people, including those who are difficult to love, such as one's enemies. This love is enshrined in two non-negotiable practices of the Catholic Worker Movement- radical hospitality and pacifism. This chapter discusses how Day found in Thérèse's Little Way an ethic of a universal and forgiving love.

In her autobiography, Thérèse referred to the tension within her community: "…we don't have enemies in Carmel, but there are feelings."[1] Ida Frederike Görres describes the Lisieux community as one in which "sisterly love among the nuns was not all it should have been, that a petty spirit of mutual observation, sarcastic censoriousness and intense touchiness prevailed."[2] In such emotional atmosphere, enemies were unintentionally created.

One of the difficult nuns Thérèse had to live with was the prioress, Mother Marie de Gonzague. Though she had positive qualities, Day described her as "harsh," and "moody."[3] Favorably inclined at first towards Thérèse, the prioress became "VERY SEVERE"[4] so that under her authority, "[Thérèse's] vocation was indeed tried."[5]

Thérèse also spoke of difficult relationships with other nuns[6] that evoked in her "natural but unholy feelings of repulsion, hostility, and retaliation..."[7] She mostly related with the nuns on the basis of natural affinity, seeking the company of agreeable nuns while avoiding troublesome ones.[8]

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[1] SS, 225

[2] Ida Frederike Görres, *The Hidden Face: A Study of St. Thérèse of* Lisieux, tr. Richard and Clara Winston (1959; repr., San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2003), 206.

[3] Day, *Thérèse*, 122.

[4] SS, 150.

[5] Day, Thérèse, 122.

[6] SS, 222; SS, 223-224; SS 247-50. Day did not include these stories in the biography, only conceding that Thérèse faced many difficulties of communal life *(Thérèse*, 139).

[7] Schmidt, *Walking the Little Way*, 93.

[8] SS, 245-246.

But before her death, Thérèse experienced "the grace to understand what perfect charity is."[9] Just as Jesus loved the disciples but not because of their "natural qualities" since "there was between Him and them an infinite distance," Thérèse learned that to love as Christ loved, she ought to transcend personal preferences based on natural feelings of rapport and like-mindedness.[10] She must love ''without distinction."[11] But this could only happen through the indwelling Christ doing the loving: "… it is Jesus alone who is acting in me, and the more united I am to Him, the more also do I love my sisters."[12]

From this new understanding, Thérèse forcibly sublimated her animosity towards her difficult sisters. She painfully compelled herself to be kind and loving[13] because "…charity must not consist in feelings but in works..."[14] She mortified whatever negative feelings she might have had towards the prioress by choosing to see God acting in her[15] in order to teach her humility- reminding her of "how little and weak she is…in God's eyes: A poor little thing, nothing at all."[16]

Day omitted the stories of Thérèse's ascetical efforts at love, simply hinting at them.[17] However, the Thérèsian concept of mortification of natural but hostile feelings is not entirely absent. Day noted that though Thérèse was challenged by community life, she considered it as

> something of which she was in need. She knew she had to 'die in order to live' and that every wound meant killing the ego. She was aiming for that perfection in which she could say with St. Paul, 'It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me.[18]

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[9] Ibid., 219.

[10] Ibid., 220.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 221.

[13] Ibid., 222, 224, 249-250.

[14] Ibid., 222.

[15] Ibid., 150, 206-207.

[16] Ibid., 206.

[17] Day, *Thérèse*, 138. See also Day, "On Pilgrimage," *The Catholic Worker*, October 1954, and "On Pilgrimage," *The Catholic Worker*, December 1965.

[18] Day, *Thérèse*, 139.

Since dislike of others and hatred of enemies are rooted in self-protective love, community life was the ascetical tool Thérèse used to prune her egotistical love. By "killing of the ego," Thérèse was able to love her sisters and prioress.[19] Thus, community life became the crucible for a new transfigured self with a deeper capacity for a universal and forgiving love.

Such ascetical attempts at love was not abstract for Day. Day wrote,

> The most significant thing [in the Movement] is community…
> We are not alone anymore.
>
> But the final word is love. At times it has been, in the
> words of Father Zosima, a harsh and dreadful thing,
> and our very faith in love has been tried through fire.[20]

Too often there is much conflict in Catholic Worker communities/houses of hospitality, and one often has to live with "enemies." However, if community life and the Movement were to survive and thrive, Day insisted on practicing the "harsh and dreadful" love of channeling one's hostility or anger/rage into nonviolent, and conciliatory ways. Thus, community becomes a school of nonviolent love where one learns the "disarmament of the heart."[21] Like Thérèse, Day believed that communal conflicts could be used as a means of inner transfiguration: "… love is pretty well pruned, time and again, by the little conflicts that come with daily living, with community."[22]

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[19] Ibid., 122, 155-56, 159.

[20] Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 285. Father Zosima, a character in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* (one of Day's favorite novels), said, "Love in action is harsh and dreadful compared to love in dreams."

[21] Dorothy Day, *The Folly of Force,* [Leaflet] 1, no. 4 (New York, NY: The Catholic Worker Press, 1938).

[22] Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," *The Catholic Worker*, March 1956.

Chapter Four

The Little Way of Suffering Love

This chapter examines Day's consideration of the Little Way that recognizes suffering as a potential means of loving union with God and others. However, to provide context to Day's discussion, the chapter begins with an examination of Thérèse's view of suffering.

5.1 Thérése and Suffering Love

De Meester[1] notes that it was only when Thérèse was dying that she announced her discovery of the "little way…that is very straight, very short and totally new."[2] The doctrine had a long gestation, reaching its development in her final days. At the end of her life, Thérèse confided to Mother Marie de la Gonzague:

> I have suffered very much since I was on earth, but if I suffered in my childhood I suffered with sadness, it is no longer in this way that I suffer. It is with joy and peace. I am truly happy to suffer.[3]

De Meester says that Thérèse's embrace of suffering was not due to "masochism and dolorism," but "born of her love for the person of Jesus himself."[4]

Thérèse's love for Jesus deepened as a result of her Christmas conversion. From that day forward, all she wanted to do was love Jesus "*with a passion*…"[5] Thérèse resolved that nothing, not even suffering, would become an obstacle to that passionate love.

Thérèse wanted to share in her Beloved's suffering thirst for the sanctification of souls.[6] She wanted to go to a place where she "can have a share with Him in the salvation of souls…"[7]

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[1] Conrad De Meester, "The Discovery of the 'Little Way,' in *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Life, Times, and Teaching*, ed. Conrad De Meester (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1997), 153.

[2] SS, 207.

[3] Ibid., 210.

[4] Conrad De Meester, *With Empty Hands*, 19.

[5] SS, 102.

[6] Ibid., 99-101.

[7] LT, 135 (Thérèse to Céline), Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters*, vol. 2, 753.

For her, "This place was Carmel."[8] When she experienced spiritual trials in Carmel, she lamented, but accepted them "with love,"[9] because she had become the "Spouse of Christ."[10] She also believed that her sufferings occurred within the bounds of God's love.

Falling ill with tuberculosis in 1896, she experienced the "thickest [spiritual] darkness…"[11] Tempted to give up hope in eternal life,[12] she, nevertheless, embraced her illness as God's will. While Thérèse held that God does not willingly afflict his children with suffering, she also believed that none of the things in life happen without God's permission: "…it's God who permits this," she said of her dying.[13] Thérèse ultimately regarded Jesus as the "agent" of her "dramaturgy of darkness."[14] Thus, as "natural satisfaction in [her] desire for heaven" vanished, Thérèse was left only with a desire to die with love for Jesus.[15] Day recounted the event when Thérèse's sister tried to comfort her with the thought of heavenly bliss, Thérèse exclaimed, "It is not that which attracts me. It is love. To love and be loved…"[16] Thus, as Conn says, in Thérèse's "dark night" of illness and death, the Little Way becomes "no way, no sure path, [but] only confidence and love."[17]

It no longer mattered to Thérèse whether her life was prolonged or not. She united her will with God's by sublating her natural preference: "The only happiness on earth is to apply

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[8] SS, 106.

[9] Ibid., 149.

[10] Day, *Thérèse*, 146.

[11] SS, 211.

[12] Ibid.

[13] TLC, 68.

[14] Thomas Nevin, *The Last Years of Saint Thérèse: Doubts and Darkness, 1895-1897* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), xvii.

[15] SS, 214.

[16] Day, *Thérèse*, 181. See TLC 217.

[17] Conn, *Thérèse of Lisieux*, 82.

oneself in always finding delightful the lot Jesus is giving us."[18]

Suffering deepened Thérèse's capacity for solidarity with others who are also suffering, particularly those outside the faith, taking her place at the "table filled with bitterness…"[19]

Because suffering became a means of loving union with God and others, it had become her heaven on earth. Heaven "without admixture of sadness" held no appeal to her.[20] She would go to heaven only to obey God's will.[21] Otherwise, she hoped that Jesus would allow her to traverse heaven and earth, traveling through the "Ocean of Love without shores"[22] so that she could continue her apostolic labor.

To sum up, the Little Way of suffering love includes the following characteristics.
(a) Thérèse's embrace of suffering is grounded in her loving union with Jesus. While doubt and faith coexisted in Thérèse, she accepted suffering as something that is not outside God's parameter of love and grace. Otherwise, she would have despaired.[23]
(b) Thérèse aspired to become like a "little grain of sand," "smaller" and "reduced to *nothing.*"[24] Prior to her illness, she made a self-annihilating offering to God as a "victim of holocaust" to Love.[25] In that surrender, she becomes "little" through self-emptying, allowing Christ to "overflow into [her] soul,"[26] thus effecting a fuller divine-human union.

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[18] LT 257 (Thérèse to Léonie), Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters*, vol. 2, 1148-1149.

[19] SS, 212.

[20] LT 254 (Thérèse to P. Roulland), Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters,* vol. 2, 1142.

[21] Jean-Francois Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months in the Life of* Lisieux, tr. John Bowden (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1998), 193.

[22] LT 254, Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters,* vol. 2, 1142.

[23] Bridget Edman, "St Thérèse and the Dark Night," *Spiritual Life*, (Fall 1997): 177.

[24] LT 49 (Thérèse to Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart), Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters,* vol. 1, 427. The image of the grain of sand was first proposed by Pauline in LC 76 (Sister Agnes of Jesus to Thérèse) prior to Thérèse's postulancy. Thérèse used it subsequently.

[25] Thérèse's Act of Oblation to Merciful Love is found in SS, 276-277.

[26] Ibid., 277.

In her last days, Thérèse used the suffering to become even more "little" and self-annihilated by sublating her self-preference in favor of God's will. Suffering became "a means to an end: union with the divine."[27] Her self-abandonment to God matured in her final suffering.[28]

(c) Thérèse's concept of suffering includes the notion of sharing in Christ's salvific suffering love for the world. Mary Frolich asserts that Thérèse's initial request to become a victim of love is "for enhanced capacity to hand herself over completely to participation in the action of divine love,"[29] thus becoming "totally an instrument of the divine on earth."[30]

By surrendering in faith to her irremediable suffering at the end of her life, Thérèse further deepened her compassionate love for the suffering people of God. By her solidarity with them, she became a channel by which God's love flowed into the world.

5.2 *Day and The Little Way of Suffering Love*

According to the Zwicks, Day found tremendous spiritual meaning in Thérèse's concept of sharing in the redemptive suffering of Christ.[31] Day remarked that Thérèse's Carmelite vocation was her "co-suffering with Christ,"[32] for the salvation of souls: "… [Thérèse] knew, too, that to love is to suffer, and… she offered herself to the suffering that would result from her desire for souls."[33] Day considered the implications of this for the life and vocation of a Catholic Worker:

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[27] Patricia Ranft, "The Logotheology of Therese of Lisieux: 'A Way That is Very Straight, Very Short, and Totally New," *Heythrop Journal* 58, no. 3 (2017): 381, accessed January 31, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2265.2012.00760.x.

[28] Guy Gaucher, *The Passion of Thérèse of Lisieux*, tr. Anne-Marie Brennan (1989; repr., The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 175-178.

[29] Mary Frolich, RCSJ, "Abandonment and Apostolic Charity in Thérèse of Lisieux, Daughter of the 'French School,'" in *Surrender to Christ for Mission: French Spiritual Traditions*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (MN: Liturgical Press), 170.

[30] Ibid., 171.

[31] Zwick and Zwick, 294.

[32] Day, *Thérèse*, 151.

[33] Ibid., 147.

"…we can fill up the sufferings of Christ, that we must share in the suffering of the world to lessen them, to show our love for our brothers."[34]

The vocation of co-suffering for the Catholic Worker involves becoming "little" like Thérèse.[35] It means a life of obscurity, downward mobility, of "sacrificing of one's comforts, and cravings"[36] for a happy life. It demands voluntary poverty: "…we must stay as close to the poor, as close to the bottom as we can, to walk the little way, as St. Therese has it."[37] Catholic Workers are to be "victim souls," giving themselves up as an oblation for the work of love.[38] In sum, a Catholic Worker embraces suffering as a tool of material and spiritual liberation.

While Day dedicated her life in trying to eliminate suffering born of human injustice, she knew that some suffering are simply incurable. In discussing Thérèse's suffering, Day found inspiration in her Little Way of complete abandonment.[39] Since Thérèse proclaimed that "All is grace,"[40] suffering ultimately contains "God's mercy! God's justice! His devouring love!"[41] Therefore, irreversible suffering must be embraced in "blind faith"[42] because it contains God's will, and grace. As the human will aligns with God's, the self becomes more centered in God.

In her biography of Thérèse, Day gave a few examples to illustrate this.[43] However, it is best exemplified in Thérèse's embrace of suffering in her dying. For example, Day quoted

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[34] Ibid., 193.

[35] See n. 24.

[36] Day, *All the Way to Heaven*, 470.

[37] Ibid., 481.

[38] Some of the Catholic Workers Day referred to as victims of love include Peter Maurin (*On Pilgrimage*, 159), Mary Frecons ("Harrisburg Story," *The Catholic Worker*, October 1948), and Roger LaPorte ("Suicide or Sacrifice," *The Catholic Worker*, November 1965).

[39] Day, *Thérèse,* 181.

[40] Ibid., 192. See TLC, 57, 293.

[41] Day spoke these words as she contemplated the sufferings of a Catholic Worker, Mary Frecons, who died a harrowing death, likening her to Thérèse. See no. 38.

[42] Day, "Harrisburg Story."

[43] See Day, *Thérèse*, 6, 11, 25, 43, 60. Day recounted how Thérèse's parents, for instance, accepted rejection, illness, and death with faith.

Thérèse's desire to fulfill God's will in her suffering: "I am perfectly content to go on suffering in body and soul for years if it pleases God."[44] Thérèse taught Day that unrectifiable suffering even in death could become a vehicle of loving union with God.

This was not an abstract idea for Day. She pointed to this truth in the life of the Catholic Worker co-founder, Peter Maurin, who was responsible in deepening her knowledge of Thérèse.[45] Day described how in Maurin's later years God "stripped" him, "took from him" his bodily and mental health.[46] Yet, "his will [was] fixed on God,"[47] uniting and offering himself to God as a "victim" soul.[48]

Day also emphasized Thérèse's teaching of suffering as a means of loving solidarity with others. Day commented on the universal co-suffering love of Thérèse for all humanity:

> I realize…and see more clearly, too, her great love and great desire for *all* men. She prays for all men… She too cries out for mercy for all…[49]

Day noted that Thérèse "offered" her pain and spiritual trials for others who were suffering,[50] thus becoming a "victim of Love..."[51] Vowing that even in death she would not "take any rest… as long as there are souls to be saved,"[52] Thérèse promised to "raise up a mighty host of little

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[44] Ibid., 177. See SS, 214-215.

[45] Day, *On Pilgrimage: The Seventies*, 184.

[46] Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 274-275.

[47] Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 159.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Day, *Thérèse*, 174-175.

[50] Ibid., 183

[51] Ibid., 186.

[52] Ibid., 181. Day quoted Thérèse. See TLC, 102

saints" to continue her labor of suffering love for others.[53] For Day, Catholic Workers are some of "these 'little' saints whom St. Therese promised…"[54]

[53] Day, *Thérèse*, 192. Popularly attributed to Thérèse, the authenticity of this quote is in question. It is not found in Clarke's translation of SS, LT, or TLC.

[54] Dorothy Day, "The Death of Mother Weider," *The Catholic Worker*, September 1952. See also Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," *The Catholic Worker*, January 1975, wherein Day referred to recently deceased Catholic Workers as spiritual heirs of Thérèse's labors.

PART II: A TRANSFIGURED WORLD

Chapter Five

The Little Way: Love That Births Justice

This chapter examines the sociopolitical implications of the Thérèsian Little Way of love as proposed by Day. The discussion will not cover Day's entire political philosophy, but only summarizes her application of the Little Way to politics.[1]

5.1 Love, Politics and Revolution.

For Day, human beatitude is found in the fulfillment of love. Love, in turn, finds fulfillment within a community where charity could blossom. Compassion and justice are foundations of love (and community). Politics is but an ordering of social communion so that love, righteousness and mercy could thrive. Hence, the concept of love is the very principle that gives "shape to [Day's] religious-ethical commitments and normative political vision."[2]

Sin- defined as lack of love, refusal to love, or disordered love- destroys the capacity for communion and community. Sin is, thus, not only personal but also social.

Social sin and social disorder could be healed when citizens are imbued with supernatural charity that is properly ordered to the love of God and neighbor. Social alienation caused by sin could be counteracted by living in an intimate and loving community where one is schooled in divine love.[3]

The transformation of the earth will ultimately be brought about by God. If Day's "passion was God"[4] and her primal "longing was for eternity…"[5] then her politics is deeply

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[1] In *The Catholic Worker After Dorothy: Practicing the Works of Mercy in a New Generation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), Dan McKanan says that the "Catholic Worker has never been exclusively Catholic in its inspiration…" (14). Day's sources of her political views are both religious and secular. For a recent overview of her political philosophy and its sources, see Wiley, 55-106. An older excellent survey is that of Mel Piehl, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 286.

[4] Miller, *Dorothy Day*, x.

[5] Ibid.

eschatological.[6] Her ultimate allegiance was to the Reign of God. Yet, it is *realized* eschatology: "Eternal life begins now."[7] While God will complete the world's transformation in the future, it has already begun, and is happening now especially through the lives of people with transfigured love. Since in realized eschatology eternity flows into human history, the saints below are joined by the saints above, like Thérèse who said "… I will spend my heaven doing good upon earth."[8] They are truly the revolutionaries to change the social order.

Day's revolution is not a catastrophic social disruption through violent means that the radical Left proposes.[9] Central to Day's revolution is nonviolent love. As Wiley says, "…Day issues a Christian-inspired prophetic call: 'Love God and your neighbor. Do it now. That's the beginning and the end of the revolution.'"[10] Bauerschmidt says that Day's revolution of love, which found support from her reading of Thérèse's Little Way, does not advocate "displacing" the State violently, but operates within it without using its "logic" of social oppression, and violence.[11] Such revolution builds a "new society within the shell of the old."[12] Since it will be completed only in God's time, it is- in earthly and human terms- a "permanent revolution," requiring deep faith, patience, and an eternal perspective.[13]

In her early days as a young radical struggling with deep spiritual questions, Day asked, "Where were the saints to change the social order…?[14] Shortly after her conversion, Day found

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[6] See D. Izuzquiza, *Kenotic Revolution, Revolutionary Descent: The Spiritual Politics of Dorothy Day* (Barcelona: Cristianisme I Justícia, 2009), 18-20; and Wiley, 102.

[7] Dorothy Day, "Articles on Distributism-2," *The Catholic Worker*, July-August 1948.

[8] Day, *Thérèse*, 181. Here, Day was quoting Thérèse. See TLC, 102.

[9] Wiley says Day, in consonance with her contemporary anarchists, reshaped the meaning of revolutionary aims and means in terms of non-violence (103-104).

[10] Ibid., 75.

[11] Bauerschmidt, 89.

[12] Maurin, 109.

[13] Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 186. See Bauerschmidt, 91; Wiley, 102-105.

[14] Day, *From Union Square to Rome*, 50. She repeats this in *The Long Loneliness*, 45.

in Thérèse a teacher of spirituality that would transfigure not only the interior spiritual landscape- the moral core of a person- but also the world. The Little Way of love could save the world from hatred that could bring about utter annihilation through nuclear might: "In these days of fear and trembling of what man has wrought on earth in destructiveness and hate, Thérèse is the saint we need."[15] So Day proceeded to write about "the social implications of her teachings..."[16] She proposed Thérèse's Little Way not "as an evasion of the political but… an alternative politics"[17] that could transfigure the world through graced love. The Little Way overcomes the "antinomy" between mysticism and politics that plagues much of the history of Christian spirituality.[18]

In order to discuss the sociopolitical dimension of the Little Way, Day had to present Thérèse as someone who was not socially indifferent, or politically naïve even if Thérèse did not express sociopolitical views, nor engaged in political activism as Day conceded.[19] According to Day, Thérèse was aware of the suffering of the world, and was "determined to do something about it" even if she was "imprisoned" in a convent, "unknown to all the world."[20]

Though Thérèse had no political theory of social change, her doctrine of the Little Way is open to a socially liberative reading that could "transform the lives of modern people and allow them to address these problems with peace, creativity, compassion, and justice."[21] Such socially

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[15] Day, *Thérèse*, xviii.

[16] Dorothy Day, "No Party Line," *The Catholic Worker*, April 1952.

[17] Bauerschmidt, 87.

[18] Ibid., 79.

[19] Day, "No Party Line."

[20] Ibid. According to Day, the formation of Thérèse's social conscience occurred within her family life. Because the Martins belonged to a social class that was detested by the wealthy of society and the Church, Thérèse was taught to love the poor (*Thérèse*, 30, 126). Not content in "doling out advice and pious admonitions," the Martins welcomed the poor in their home *(Thérèse*, 30, 126). Thérèse's father allegedly had some exposure to radical political thought and social teachings of the Church (*Thérèse*, 6-7, 30). These, in turn, influenced Thérèse so that she combined mysticism with apostolic activity in order "…to increase the sum total of the love of God..." in the world (*No Party Line*).

[21] Schmidt, *Everything is Grace*, 22.

transformative reading of Thérèse is precisely what Day tried to do. However, it would be incorrect to attribute every political view of Day to Thérèse. Day's "politicized" reading is simply her creative and expansive interpretation.

6.2 Revolutionary Principles of the Little Way

Bernard Bro speaks of Thérèse's Little Way as having a "political dimension."[22] It is "Thérèse's revolution" chiefly carried out through the "practice [of…] victorious charity in everyday life."[23] If Day were to speak of a Thérèsian revolution, nonviolent love would be the guiding tenet as expressed in six socially transfigurative principles.

Primacy of the Spiritual

One of the social implications of the Little Way is what Day called the "primacy of the spiritual." If disordered loves are at the root of social disorder, and if graced love could rectify it, then spirituality cannot be divorced from the political. Redeeming love is of the spiritual order. Social problems may require socioeconomic and political solutions, but ultimately, they also require a spiritual solution. Day's critique of unbridled American capitalism, for example, is that it is rooted in excessive pleasure seeking,[24] a disorder of human love that needs a spiritual cure.

Day believed that Thérèse's ultimate "aim was to make God loved."[25] This reinforces her critique of the atheism of both American/Western and Marxist/Communist political systems. In American democracy, individualism has replaced the ancient Christian view of the "transcendent grounding for existence and a recognition that the human being is not

[22] Bernard Bro, OP, *The Little Way: The Spirituality of Thérèse of Lisieux,* tr. Alan Neame (1979: repr., New York: St. Pauls, 2014), 31.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Wiley, 91.

[25] Dorothy Day, "Beyond Politics," *The Catholic Worker*, November 1949. Day paraphrased Thérèse. See TLC, 102.

autonomous but relational."[26] Because individualism leads to competing self-interests,[27] the State arbitrates using principles "that [are] no longer based on objective truth grounded in ultimate reality, the transcendent..."[28] Rather, the moral good is defined as that which brings the maximum pleasure to the maximum number. In Marxist/Communist societies, the proletariat has replaced God as "the Messiah, the deliverer…"[29] Furthermore, in both systems, the spiritual is ignored in favor of the material.

Though not advocating a theocracy, Day's alternative social vision is one in which politics is not disconnected from life's mystical and transcendent moorings. What transpires in the political order should be related ultimately to the divine Source of all life:

> This work of ours toward a new heaven and a new earth shows
> a correlation between the material and the spiritual, and…recognizes
> the primacy of the spiritual. Food for the body is not enough.
> There must be food for the soul.[30]

While Day lived in "a state of permanent dissatisfaction and impatience with the Church,"[31] she was convinced that the Church *could* change the world through supernatural love. She believed, like Thérèse, [32] that the Church is about radiating love. In the words of Wiley, for Day, the Church

> provides persons with spiritual resources and practices to
> make God's grace operative. This grace in turn gives persons
> the strength to love in the particular way that is necessary for

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[26] Geoffrey Gneuhs, "Radical Orthodoxy: Dorothy Day's Challenge to Liberal America," in *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement: Centenary Essays,* ed. William J. Thom, Philip Runkel and Susan Mountin (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001), 207.

[27] Ibid

[28] Ibid.

[29] Day, *From Union Square to Rome*, 12

[30] Dorothy Day, "Aims and Purposes," *The Catholic Worker*, February 1940.

[31] Dorothy Day, "The Case of Father Duffy," *The Catholic Worker*, December 1949.

[32] SS, 194: "I understood that it was love alone that made the Church members act…LOVE COMPRISED ALL VOCATIONS…"

communion between or among individuated persons and God.
So God's grace saves- through love and the sacraments- the faithful
from the hopeless abyss.[33]

Love and Reverence for Every Human Person

For Day, of "supreme importance" for Thérèse is the doctrine of the "Fatherhood of God."[34] Thérèse proclaimed the very identity and dignity of every human being as a beloved child of the "compassionate" God the Father; and this, in turn, forms the basis of the "brotherhood of man."[35] Therefore, every human person is worthy of reverence and love. Every human being is a brother or sister who must be *equally* loved. This principle should be paramount in sociopolitical affairs.

Day saw a coherence between Thérèse's doctrine and the philosophy of personalism that she and Maurin adopted for the Catholic Worker Movement. Personalism advances the "idea that a spark of God dwells in every human being and thus provides them with intrinsic worth and dignity…"[36]

Both Thérèsian "politics" and personalism would support a doctrine of equality and justice in society since all are equally children of God. They also provide a critique of any sociopolitical system that reduces the human to the mere material and economic.

The Revolution of Love through the "Little" Works of Mercy

Love can only save the world when there are people who are willing to grow in and practice love. Thus, "Day [regarded] the task of becoming a loving person as the most important aspect of the ethical quest for perfection."[37] Taking personal responsibility for growth in love is also at the heart of personalism, and for Day, this, too, coheres, with the

[33] Wiley, 67.

[34] Day, "No Party Line."

[35] Ibid.

[36] Vaneesa Cook, "The Unaffiliated Revolution of Dorothy Day," *Raritan* 37, no. 4 (2018): 86. See also Introduction, no. 30.

[37] Wiley, 72.

Thérèsian Little Way.[38] Day proclaimed Thérèse as the "Saint of the responsible"[39] because she embodied personal responsibility in the daily cultivation of love so as to transfigure the world around her. Since every act has the capacity to build up or hurt community, Day encouraged people to reflect with seriousness on the implications of their choices, decisions and actions, including remaining indolent, neutral or indifferent in the face of suffering.[40]

The nonviolent revolution is to be carried out through "spiritual weapons."[41] These include prayer, fasting, spiritual detachment, voluntary poverty, and doing "little" acts of corporal and spiritual works of mercy, which are acts of love since "mercy is only another name for love, love under the aspect of need."[42] Day would have agreed with Hans Ur von Balthasar's insistence that the Little Way involves "demolishing the structure of 'great deeds.'"[43] Doing "little" acts of love counters the insidious "fatalistic sense" that people have about their perceived lack of power to change the social order.[44] Such "little" acts can be likened to a small pebble thrown in a pond, creating ripples of love, and "its ever widening circle will reach around the world."[45]

Through these "little" acts, the revolution "operates in the level of the micropolitics of everyday life" so that the small changes the Little Way effect "escape the observation and repression of the dominant political system."[46] These acts possess power to increase justice in the social order and could tilt the balance of the world's moral scale towards love.

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[38] Zwick and Zwick, 277.

[39] Day, "No Party Line."

[40] Ibid.

[41] See Day, "No Party Line" where Day claimed that Thérèse "used the spiritual weapons everyone of us have at our disposal."

[42] Eileen Egan, *Dorothy Day and the Permanent Revolution* (Erie, PA: Benet Press, 1983), 12.

[43] Hans Ur von Balthasar. *Two Sisters in the Spirit: Thérèse of Lisieux and Elizabeth of the Trinity*, tr. Anne Elizabeth England, Dennis Martin and Donald Nichols (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1992), 270.

[44] Day, "No Party Line."

[45] Dorothy Day, "Love is the Measure," *The Catholic Worker*, June 1946.

[46] Bauerschmidt, 89.

Since everyone is capable of performing "little" acts of mercy, everyone can participate in the nonviolent revolution of love: "It is the little way. It is within the power of all. Everybody can begin here and now… We have the greatest weapons…greater than any hydrogen or atom bomb…"[47] Thus, Day's interpretation of the Little Way is a "'democratization' of holiness,"[48] putting holiness "on the roads [streets] of the world."[49]

Solidarity

Thérèse wanted to share in the redemptive suffering love of Jesus for the salvation of embodied souls. From Thérèse, Day also found inner conviction that the world could be transformed by people who are willing to live a cruciformed life of love by taking on the crosses of others.[50]

Much of the suffering Day saw was material poverty, and she wanted to share in the poverty of the poor. For Maurin, the poor are the "Ambassadors of God."[51] But, for Day, "…they are Jesus."[52] According to Frolich, Day was "one of the first to recognize [the] connection between Thérèse's way and a committed life among the poor."[53] Day emphasized that Thérèse shared in the poverty and the "littleness" of the poor. Not only of humble origins who loved the poor,[54] Thérèse also chose to live a materially poor life in an impoverished convent, desiring to be "little" or "nothing" in the eyes of the world. For Day, solidarity by sharing in the poverty and littleness of the *anawim*- as modeled by Thérèse- has huge social implications. If everyone

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[47] Dorothy Day, "Poverty Without Tears," *The Catholic Worker*, April 1950.

[48] Schmidt, *Everything is Grace*, 15.

[49] Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, *Liturgy and Contemplation*, tr. Joseph Evans. (New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1960), 74-76.

[50] I owe this to Casarella's term, "cruciform physiognomy" (477).

[51] Maurin, 8.

[52] Dorothy Day, "The Mystery of the Poor," *The Catholic Worker*, April 1964.

[53] Frolich, 176.

[54] See n. 20.

shares in poverty, this might just solve the social imbalance of access to the world's resources.[55] If everyone becomes "little," or a "nothing," this might just solve the problem of violence.

Absolute Pacifism

Because Thérèse held that each human being is a child of God, Day believed that the only proper attitude towards a human person should be one of respect for individual freedom (which prohibits coercion) and love (which proscribes hate and violence).[56] This underpins the Catholic Worker Movement's "unshaken commitment to absolute pacifism, a complete and total rejection of the use of violence."[57] Day's critique of Western democratic and Marxist political systems is that they are propped up by "violent coercive means."[58] Instead, Day proposed "cooperation and persuasion."[59]

Pacifism becomes the political expression of the Little Way of universal and forgiving love. Though Day shared with the radical Left the belief that "our social order must be changed,"[60] she objected to their view that "… there is no other way for achieving this except by violent means…"[61] Rather, she argued: "I believe that we can overcome [violent] revolution

[55] Dorothy Day, "Peter's Program," *The Catholic Worker*, May 1955. Day quoted Maurin: "If every man became poor, there would not be any destitute…

[56] Day's pacifism is really rooted in her interpretation of the doctrine of Mystical Body of Christ. Day believed that in the incarnation, the entire human race is incorporated in Jesus Christ and his salvific love. In Christ, all are brothers and sisters of one another. (See, for example, Day's "Liturgy and Sociology" in *The Catholic Worker*, January 1936, wherein she considered *all* people to be members of the Mystical Body.) Her subsequent encounter with Thérèse strengthened this.

[57] John L. LeBrun, "The Way of Love: Pacifism and the Catholic Worker Movement, 1933-1939," in *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement: Centenary Essays,* ed. William J. Thom, Philip Runkel and Susan Mountin (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001), 445.

[58] Wiley, 89.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Day, *From Union Square to Rome*, 149.

[61] Ibid., 148.

by a Christian revolution of our own, without the use of force."[62] "Our arms will be the love of God and our brother."[63] The true revolutionary is really Christ's new re-creation. In the words of Day's friend, Eileen Egan: "The new creature of the Gospel would strive through a pacifist revolution of love to give a glimpse of the reign of God."[64]

Pacifism also rules out militarism and imperialism.[65] It prohibits war as a means of settling conflicts between nations. Pacifism also renounces the limited use of war (Just War Theory[66]), or the concept of nuclear deterrence which allows nuclear arms build-up to deter enemies from launching war. In this, Day recognized the importance of Thérèse's pacifist message of love in the Nuclear Age.[67]

Primacy of the Small Unit

Day believed that love could bloom well when people live in small webs of caring communities. Thus, Day developed her principle of the "primacy of small unit"[68] which involves the establishment of small intimate communities where the practice of radical love and hospitality is central.[69]

With big government and its bureaucracies, a person is lost in a large impersonal cesspool, causing social alienation: "With government becoming stronger and more centralized,

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[62] Ibid., 150.

[63] Day, "Beyond Politics."

[64] Egan, 12.

[65] Stephen T. Krupa's "American Myth and the Gospel: Manifest Destiny and Dorothy Day's Nonviolence" in *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement: Centenary Essays*, 184-200.

[66] A contemporary formulation of the Just War Theory is found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003), paragraph 2309. The *Catechism* is found online: https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM.

[67] Day, *Thérèse*, 192.

[68] Ashley Beck, "Making the Encyclicals Click: Catholic Social Teaching and Radical Traditions." *New Blackfriars* 93, no. 1044 (March 2012): 216, accessed February 5, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2011.01477.x

[69] Wiley, 70.

the common man feels his ineffectiveness."[70] To combat this, Day advocated the anarchist principle of decentralization of government into "little" units of socioeconomic organization: "…anarchists that we are, we want to decentralize everything and delegate to smaller bodies and groups what can be done far more humanly and responsibly through mutual aid…"[71] Day cleverly interpreted the Little Way to mean anarchism (even if Thérèse was no anarchist!): "We emphasize always the necessity of smallness," Day asserted.[72] The Little Way *qua* decentralization is "the only alternative to the mass approach of the State."[73]

Day also espoused distributism[74] as a consequence of her social reading of Thérèse.[75] While through decentralization "[all] men will have a voice,"[76] distributism entails equitable ownership and management of economic and material resources. All of God's children, including the "little" people of God, will benefit from God's creation through egalitarian participation in the administration of resources.

Day's anarchist Catholic Worker houses of hospitality are but a concrete expression of her vision of decentralized and distributist communities of love which, she believed, find consonance with the spirituality of the Thérèsian Little Way.

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[70] Day, *Thérèse*, 192.

[71] Dorothy Day, "The Scandals of the Works of Mercy," in *Dorothy Day: Writings from* Commonweal, 104. Day's anarchism is Christian anarchism based on love, and does not advocate social disorder (Day, *The Duty of Delight*, 179-181). Because love-based anarchism advances personalist decentralization through consensus (non-hierarchical leadership), it is said to be anti-statist.

[72] Day, *House of Hospitality*, 251.

[73] Day, *On Pilgrimage: The Sixties*, 191.

[74] See Wiley for an overview of Day's (anarcho-)decentralist/distributist philosophy (55-106). From a Catholic perspective, see Zwick and Zwick, chapter 9, "Economics Worthy of the Human Person" (156-176).

[75] Dorothy Day, "The Servile State," *The Catholic Worker*, July-August 1945.

[76] Day, *All the Way to Heaven*, 457.

Conclusion

6.1 Recapitulation

Day considered Thérèse a great teacher of divine love. For Day, Thérèse's Little Way provided a path for both inner spiritual growth in supernatural love, as well as social transformation. Yet, very few studies have been done about this. This dissertation sought to contribute to this scholarly gap, specifically addressing two questions.

1. How did Day understand the Little Way of Thérèse as providing a path of spiritual transfiguration which she defined as growth in supernatural love?
2. In what way did Day see the Little Way as socially transformative?

The dissertation has shown that for the Day, following the Little Way could transfigure one's interiority through (a) self-surrender (abandonment) to God, (b) a proper ordering of human affections, desires and loves, (c) an expansion of one's capacity to love universally, including loving one's enemies, and (d) the embrace of redemptive suffering as a means of loving union with God and others.

In regards to the second question, the dissertation enumerated six principles of social transformation that Day claimed to be logical consequences of her reading of the Little Way. Since nonviolent love of God and neighbor is the key to Day's interpretation of the social implications of the Little Way, the dissertation described how Day sought to express this through the following principles: (a) the inclusion of the spiritual in the social realm ("primacy of the spiritual"), (b) the love for every human being as a child of God, especially the least of God's children, (c) counteracting social disorder through "little" works of mercy and love, (d) solidarity with ("suffering with"[1]) others, especially the oppressed, (e) non-violence (pacifism), and (f) the cultivation of small units of social and spiritual organization where radical hospitality, equality, mutuality and love could be practiced ("primacy of the small unit").

6.2 Limits and Recommendations for Future Studies.

The dissertation raises at least two issues which deserve further study.

[1] Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," *The Catholic Worker*, March 1948.

First, because Day found support for her sociopolitical vision in Thérèsian spirituality, her politics could not be understood apart from her Christian (Roman Catholic) spirituality and commitments. However, as Marc Ellis asks, "Is a movement that speaks in the language of Roman Catholic faith able to communicate to a religiously pluralistic, even secular, nation and world?"[2]

If, as Day claimed, people with a transfigured interiority ("saints") are the ones to change the world for the better, what did Day make of people who shared her commitment to social justice but not her faith, nor the specific spiritual practices, qualities and character she envisioned as necessarily transformative?

Day, however, did believe that those outside her faith could also be harbingers of peace and justice, and so sought concordances with them. Here, one can detect a tension between her Catholic exceptionalism and openness to pluralism. How Day attempted to reconcile such polarity is worth investigating.

Secondly, a thorough examination of Day's inferences concerning the sociopolitical implications of Thérèse is also warranted.

In conclusion, Day found profound hope in the message of Thérèse amidst a world broken by injustice and violence. Day creatively appropriated Thérèse's Little Way in support of her nonviolent "revolution of love," believing that ordinary people whose hearts, minds and souls have been transfigured by grace could positively transform the world through the little acts of love they could do daily. Love is Thérèse's and Day's revolution. And in her words, Day invites us, "…let us begin our revolt now."[3]

[2] Marc Ellis, "Peter Maurin: To Bring the Social Order to Christ," In *A Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker* Patrick McCoy (ed), Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1988, 15.

[3] Dorothy Day, "Reflections on Work," *The Catholic Worker*, March 1947.

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