The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of Dorothy Day Study Guide

The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of Dorothy Day by Dorothy Day

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

The Long Loneliness is the autobiography of Dorothy Day (1891-1980) who was a devout convert to Catholicism, anarchist, distributivist, social activist and American journalist. She is famous not only for her writing and social activism but for founding the newspaper The Catholic Worker with her friend Peter Maurin, which advocated nonviolence, simple living, and aid for the poor. The "long loneliness" is a state of loneliness Day often experienced as a child and young adult, which only her conversion to Roman Catholicism and experience in communities of the poor could cure. She also argues throughout the book that the "long loneliness" is universal in human experience and can only be cured by community life.

Day's autobiography is divided into three broad sections. Part One, "Searching," introduces her childhood and adolescence along with her interest in religion which began at a very early age. She spends time talking about her family and their religious practices, introducing neighbors and family life. Her family moved often and she grew up in San Francisco and Chicago. In 1914, Day went to university on her own, to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, but left after two years to return to New York City. While she was a talented writer and very intellectual, she had trouble focusing on her studies and was instead attracted to radical political philosophies like socialist, pacifism and anarchism. Consequently, she spent most of her time living on small amounts of money and working for a number of socialists.

Part Two, "Natural Happiness" describes her marriage, motherhood and conversion. In her early adult years, Day rejected religion as an opiate of the people but was nonetheless drawn to it. She lived a rather "bohemian" life at that time, engaging in two common-law marriages. Her second husband, Forster, was a quiet and radical anarchist who desired to live apart from society. Their daughter, Tamar Day, was a pivotal event in Day's life. She decided that she must become Catholic and that Tamar must be baptized and she knew that her husband may well leave her over it, leading her to feel that she must choose between God and family. She chose God and eventually Forster left. Thus, she started her spiritual awakening and converted in late 1927. She then started writing for Catholic publications like America and the Commonweal.

Part Three, "Love is the Measure," discusses meeting Peter Maurin when she arrived in New York City and their common philosophical and social ideas. Together they founded the Catholic Worker newspaper, which they used to promote Catholic social teaching, anti-statist communitarian and agrarian forms of life and pacifism. The newspaper was such a success that a "house of hospitality" grew out of it in the New York City area and also produced a number of communal farms. The movement spread all over the world and exists to this day.

Confession

Confession Summary and Analysis

Day begins with a description of going to confession in a Catholic Church. She notes that despite the holy atmosphere, confession is difficult whether one has seriously sinned or not. It is hard to confess, but also hard to figure out which venial sins merit mention when there are people in line behind you. So you simply list your "drab, monotonous" ones.

The book is a confession as well. She confesses her conversion, the power of God in her life, and how happy she is to be a member of the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. When you write a book, it is difficult, just as confession is. It is hard to talk about yourself when you care about being humble.

Day's life is divided into two parts, the first twenty-five years of floundering with no belief. All her days were haunted by God.

Part One, Searching, The Generations Before,

Part One, Searching, The Generations Before, Summary and Analysis

Day grew up in Cleveland, Tennessee where her grandmother, Mary Mee, was born. Day has always felt tied to tradition, if at first only in her family. She loved hearing stories about her family growing up. In her opinion, people lose that sense of tradition when they become American.

Day claims that she and her family didn't look for God as children, but took God for granted. Though early on, they had a sense of right and wrong, but ethics and religion were different, though they connected over the matter of sex. Day grew up modest but did not feel shame until she learned about sex. They understood later that part of the reason was because sex meant babies and sex out of wedlock meant babies without fathers. She also remembers little of her religious experiences in her early years, though she has many other fond memories.

Day realizes she spent a lot of time alone, despite having two brothers and a sister. She remembers reading a Bible one Sunday afternoon alone and feeling that she was holding something holy. At eight, she started going to Methodist church with a friend and became pious without known what she believed.

She once had a sense of God when she experienced the massive San Francisco earthquake in 1906. She felt a deep rumbling, and her family rushed to the front door. Their house was a shambles afterward. Her family and the neighbors served the homelessness.

After the earthquake, the Day family moved east to Chicago. Her mother was around thirty-five at the time, with four children. They lived in a small, six room place, and Day had to work washing clothes until her father found a job. Day and her sister helped her mother after they reached a certain age. Day took her work seriously and internalized a "philosophy of work." After work, she would meet with her friend Mary Harrington, who worked much harder than she did, and talk. Mary told her stories about the saints, which filled Day with enthusiasm. Day wanted to do penance for her sins and the sins of the world.

Because of Day's father, she was treated like a child until she graduated high school at sixteen. He was a newspaper man and wanted to protect her from the tragedy he saw. No news afflicted them in the house; they had only novels. They were not often allowed to have friends over because of Day's father's desire for privacy. The children did not know him well and looked at him in awe. He was impatient with them and the "radical movement" that Day and her sister were later involved in. Being from Tennessee, he

was also racist against "the Negro", "foreigners", and "agitators." He did not want the world to change.

When Day's father decided to write a novel, her mother picked up the slack and worked constantly. Despite having little money, Day's childhood was happiness. Her father protected her from a "busy existence." Long hours passed when Day could do as she liked. Often she was bored, though the Psalms became part of her childhood. Psalms and canticles "thrilled in my heart", she said Dorothy would thank God for creating her. In fact, when she felt how beautiful the world was, she wanted to cry for joy. When Day's family moved to the north side of Chicago, she joined the Episcopal Church of Our Savior and took catechism to be baptized and confirmed.

Day remembers encountering some of John Wesley's sermons when she was thirteen and being attracted to his "evangelical piety". Day's family's poverty didn't last long; her father found a job as a sports editor. Eventually they all had rooms and privacy. A new baby was born then too. Day also fell in love the first time, for a musician boy down the street. Day had a profound love for her baby brother. She often took care of him, doing her homework in her spare time.

Day then reprints a letter of hers written when she was fifteen, which mostly concerns God. In her later view, her letter was full of pomp and vanity, but she spoke of what interested her most. All those days she believed and had faith. She felt the authority of conscience and creation.

In high school, Day's brother Donald starting working for a paper called The Day Book. It spoke of labor movements, particularly in Chicago. Carl Sanburg was one of the writers and inspired her brother. Day also learned of Eugene Debs and the leaders of the IWW. She read Upton Sinclair's The Jungle. She even studied the life of one of the Haymarket anarchists and the work of Peter Kropotkin. Kropotkin especially helped her think about the plight of the poor and the workers. But the Jungle made Day feel that her life was connected to the poor forever. In her early years, the poor were seen as worthless and without talent; their poverty was their fault.

Day worried that Jesus was only concerned about wealth in the spiritual kingdom and didn't want people to get help in the world. She was worried that the people she went to church with were too comfortable and that they didn't care that workers were exploited. She saw no one giving to the poor, and the Salvation Army folks did not appeal to her. She wanted an abundant life for others; she wanted everyone to be kind, as they were after the San Francisco earthquake. This led her to join the Socialist party when she went to the University of Illinois the next year.

Day was able to secure a scholarship and left home at sixteen. She was excited to be on her own and stayed busy. She was still interested in religion, but rejected it for political reasons. She was radical, and her radicalism filled her with joy. But youth was meant to be at war, not peace. She was tearing away from religion and her home and she found the Marxist slogans inspiring. Her work kept her from mingling much with

other students; she worked hard and read often. Sometimes she wrote for a paper on matters of social justice; sometimes her columns got her in trouble.

Day wanted to know why effort was spent on cleaning up suffering rather than preventing it from coming about. She was upset when Paul told slaves to serve their masters and when Jesus said that the meek were blessed. She wanted a God that whipped the moneychangers out of the temple. She fell in love with the masses. At that time she also made friends with Rayna Prohme, a rare and beautiful person. Rayna was in love with a young Jew from New York, Samson Raphaelson, who they called Raph. Rayna's parents opposed their marriage. Day had her first encounter with anti-semitism through her friendship with them.

Eventually Day graduated and the Day family moved to New York when Day's father started to work for the Morning Telegraph. She went to work for herself.

Part One, Searching, The East Side, Journalism, The Masses, Jail, Free Lance, King's County, A Time of Searching

Part One, Searching, The East Side, Journalism, The Masses, Jail, Free Lance, King's County, A Time of Searching Summary and Analysis

The first job Day held was for the New York Call, a daily Socialist paper in New York City. She spent five lonely months aware from her family and had no friends or work. Day found the poverty of New York different than Chicago, and it jarred her senses. Despite this, she was attracted to spend time there and felt that her loneliness would not be cured until she did. Eventually Day found an apartment, which she always loved, despite its discomforts.

While the Call was socialist, the men who ran it were in the midst of an internal political struggle between different social ideologies. Day was attracted by the small anarchist groups, who often, like the IWW wanted a free society of decentralized and federated groups, not state Marxism. She wanted free exchange, but not wages and collective ownership of the means of production. Day admired Kropotkin, Godwin, Proudhon and Tolstoi. She found them to be peaceful men and opponents of Marxism. It is similar to the philosophy of distributism of many Catholics, though both sides would deny this. However, despite working for the Call, Day had no time to go to meetings.

Day was surprised at how cheaply should could live, particularly on food. She often satirized the police diet squad that she lived off us. Day often wrote of slum living and her writings took her to many socialist organizations and events. Despite radical leanings, Day was fairly conventional about dress. She had conflicts which she believes results from focusing on being right about earthly justice rather than heavenly justice which always demands sacrifice. Day was always revolted by the free love of the socialists like Emma Goldman. She also notes that men are more pure of heart in justice movements because women tend to think more of home. Day wonders if she still knows the person she was then and whether she really loved the poor.

Day was impressed that constant agitation often got results, stopping evictions, bringing about relies, tearing down slum houses, and so on. Day was torn between socialism, syndicalism and anarchism. Her work and the work of others rarely attacked religion because many were simply indifferent. Day then recounts a number of brief political incidents in that time and the figures she knew. She met Trotsky in New York before he went back to Russia. He despised parliamentary socialism so the Call only printed one

interview with him. On March 21st, 1917, Day joined with others to celebrate the Russian Revolution.

In April 1917, Day left her job with the Call and worked for students at a newspaper called The Masses. But many of those at the newspaper were older trade unionists whose early radical times had passed. The leaders were now suffering for their beliefs. She worked with students against the war also and they had few political beliefs. In that time, Raph and Rayna were married but their interests were opposed. Rayna pursued intellectual issues at the University of Chicago and they saw little of each other. Day read of her death many years later agitating for justice in China. Rayna had a "red" funeral and had never met a Christian.

When the draft law went into effect, some of her friends were imprisoned. A brother of a friend was killed in prison and Day was horrified by the brutality of it.

The Masses was eventually suppressed. So Day went to the White House to protest with the suffragists. The women's party had gone to jail for their picketing. Day then describes a march she attended. Day and many others were arrested and had to sleep in inadequately small facilities. Day and some others received thirty days and they started a hunger strike. Day and a few of the other women were taken to a waiting train in November and sent to a workhouse. When they threatened a hunger strike, they were violently taken away and imprisoned.

For the first several days, Day was bored out of her mind and was filled with depression and desolation. She lost her own identity and instead focused on poverty, sickness and sin. She would never be free as long as others suffered. Her workhouse was a modern prison and it was awful; others were so much worse. Day asked for a Bible on the second day and started reading it when it was brought to her on the fourth day. She enjoyed reading the Psalms and found much comfort in the Bible. Day did not want to depend on God.

The hunger strike lasted for ten days though the strike was partially broken after eight days. Eventually the women were allowed to spend time together and Day thought no more of religion; they were transferred to the City Jail for sentencing. She was ashamed for going to religion in her darkest hour.

When Day returned from Washington she worked when the opportunity presented itself and moved around town. She worked for the Liberator for a time. Sometimes Day would go to Mass and knelt in the back of church, not knowing what was going on. She had a need to reverence that she believes all humans had. Her need to go to church came back to her often and wondered if the divisions of each person's body, mind and soul could be knit together as the Catholic Church taught. She also wondered at how there could be such evil in the world.

Day describes the early excitement concerning Lenin and the later disillusionment when he constructed a pure dictatorship. She notes that her friends and she had no real political philosophy; they just had a love of the poor. After the trial for leaders of the

Masses, Day decided that despite her pacifism she would join the Red Cross in the armed services to aid the wounded.

Day enjoyed her work as a nurse in 1918. The work was simple and there was a strict etiquette. Day describes some of her first patients. The suffering in the ward broke her, as the work was so hard. But she had to pass over all the suffering to survive mentally. Each Sunday Day and a fellow nurse went to Mass together; Day began to believe that man was most himself in the act of worship.

Day worked at the hospital for a year and wanted to write. There is little to say about the next few years of her life; she prefers not to talk about those with whom she was closely associated. She travelled to Europe in that time. Day makes brief remarks about some of her associates; she often went to workers meetings in that time in Chicago. She also saw grew poverty in Chicago and was arrested again under different circumstances. Her experience was awful as it was the result of the red hysteria of the day. Day felt great shame and self-contempt. Being strip-searched for drugs was particularly bad; she felt the dreariness of sin. While her case was eventually dismissed, she felt tied to those who continued to suffer there.

Afterwards, Day continued to wonder about Catholicism, seeing it as something rich and fascinating from the outside. She was still a non-believer. She was treated well by a Catholic family she stayed with and she wondered if it was tied to their Catholicism. She read books that made her feel that she could be at home in Catholicism. The fact that so many poor ethnicities were Catholics also drew her to the Church. She also fell in love with the New Testament and received a rosary from a friend.

Eventually Day tired of living in Chicago and left to New Orleans. She finished a book that was accepted by a publisher. She easily found a job at the New Orleans Item. She has her friend Mary with her. She would often go to the Cathedral at that time. She then went to Staten Island to settle down, study and write.

Part Two, Natural Happiness, Man Is Meant for Happiness, Having a Baby, Love Overflows, Jobs and Journeys

Part Two, Natural Happiness, Man Is Meant for Happiness, Having a Baby, Love Overflows, Jobs and Journeys Summary and Analysis

The man Dorothy Day loved and married, Forster, was an English anarchist and a biologist. He was closest to what today might be called a Southern agrarian. She also had a number of intellectual friends associated with her writing community. Day read constantly and read the Bible again, along with the Imitation of Christ. Her radicalism at the time was confined to conversations with her Communist friends. Day was happy but she knew from being happy that there was a happiness beyond it. Day then describes various brief interactions with friends and relatives that lived near them. Bootleggers lived in her community, as did a number of ethnic minorities. The community was tolerant.

Forster was fairly inarticulate and was never angry, save when he realized that she was obsessed with the supernatural rather than the natural. Forster hated social life and thought that family was a tyranny. Forster had lived a comfortable childhood, and while identifying with the suffering of others, he had faced little of it himself and closed himself off from everyone else. She then discusses her friends Sasha and Freda and how Day would often quarrel with Sasha.

One day Sasha recounted a discussion he had with a Christian man who spoke with him on a train. He then recounted how he brought Freda's grandfather to live with them to study how he handled death; at the end, the man turned to God. Their child, Dickie, would often talk to Day about religion; he was fascinated by it. She gave him religious instruction.

Eventually Day found herself praying daily. She wondered who she was praying to, but she knew she was praying not because she was unhappy, but because she was happy. She continued to delight in prayer and started to go to Mass regularly on Sunday and spent much of her week alone. But she could not talk about religion or faith to Forster; her love of nature brought her to faith, his pushed him away. He thought loving God interfered with them loving each other; she believed the opposite.

Day's longing for a child was growing on her. She eventually became pregnant and was mostly happy, though Forster was uneasy about bringing children into the world they live in. He was obsessed by the war. Their child was born in March; Day had taken an

apartment in town to get help. She was to have her child baptized. She thought of becoming a Catholic but she feared she would lose Forster, so she waited.

When her child was born, Day was so happy that she wrote an article for the New Masses to comfort the women who suffered from unemployment and war and poverty. The article made her Marxist friends so happy that they had it reprinted all over the world, including in Soviet newspapers. Despite Day's happiness, she still felt that she would have to struggle for her soul. Her child, Tamar, had to be baptized.

How does one love God, Day queries. Loving God is not just a feeling but an activity. She also knew that she could not simply worship God alone, but her whole make-up made her want to associate with others. Day saw the Catholic Church as the one true Church; it held the allegiance of the masses she loved. But the Catholic Church required raising her child Catholic, which meant giving up Forster. A choice between Forster and God was placed upon her.

Tamar Teresa made her so happy that she made a definite decision, a decision which her unhappy prayers could not bring her to. But Day knew no Catholic to speak to and eventually saw a nun walking on the street, named Sister Aloysia. She gave Day articles about Church teaching; she studied the catechism, learned the Rosary and read constantly. Aloysia also gave her literature on the lives of the saints. Aloysia also taught her Catholic theology, which Day struggled with. She decided to simply accept what she did not understand and hope that insight came later.

One day Tamar was baptized. Forster helped catch lobsters for the feast Day had with friends, but he left for several days in protest. Eventually his jealous led Forster to leave several times, particularly as Day became more involved in the church. Day was convinced that she would become a Catholic, but felt that she was betraying the workers she was loyal to. Forster became depressed in 1927 when two anarchists were executed on false charges. He didn't eat for days and only the baby kept him happy. Day knew that her conversion would deal him a severe blow.

Their love ended when Day became ill in the summer of 1928. She was weak, and when they separated another time, she did not let him in the house. She was conditionally baptized the day after, since she was already baptized in the Episcopal Church. She then confessed right afterward and received communion the next day. She took little joy in receiving these three sacraments.

Day not only had left Forster but had to leave the radical movement as well. And so she was unemployed. She was still opposed to capitalism and imperialism, but the Church was allied with property, wealth, state and capitalism. But Day wanted to be poor, chaste and obedient, to die in order to live. She loved the Church Christ made visible. She saw too much charity in the Church and not enough justice, however. Soon thereafter, a priest asked Day to write about her conversion and the connection between its social teaching and her conversion. This called her to learn about the social teaching of the church. She came to wanted to synthesize Catholicism with the teachings of Kropotkin and Gallitzin.

Day was happy to become Catholic but she suffered for it. She has some help from a priest, however, named Father Zachary. Day enjoyed her confirmation and Day took the name Mother Teresa. The next summer on Staten Island, Day was less lonely. She worked for Sasha and Freda's new restaurant in town. In this time she was happy to be around her growing daughter and other children; she also became sick.

On August 15th, 1929, Day got a phone call from California, from Pathe; they said they wanted her to write dialogue for the play she submitted. She was happy to leave New York for a job and move across the country. Day had a lot of time to read but had trouble studying, due to a hectic environment. She was lonely in her new home. A child was not enough, nor was a family. Eventually she decided to live in Mexico with the poor. She and Tamar stayed there six months.

The Depression had just begun when they returned to New York. Radicalism thrived save among Catholics. But Day's spiritual life was deepening and she was very happy. She had many companions. Day started writing a novel, which was one of her dreams. The novel would be a social novel about religion and otherworldliness on the one hand and communism and this worldliness on the other. But work was slow. And her Catholicism was putting distance between her and her friends. She then moved to Washington to be a reporter for The Commonweal, a Catholic publication. By that December in Washington, Day was back in the midst of social struggle. Red hysteria reared its head again. The newspapers misrepresented things and tied Communist atrocities to all socialists.

During the struggle, Day realized that her early Catholicism was selfishly solitary and that she must learn to love people by serving them in a fight for justice. The marches she was involved in was for social legislation, unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, and so on. Most of that law is on the books now and Day sees Jesus in them. At a mass at the Catholic University national shrine, Day prayed that God would give her a way to served her fellow workers, the poor. She knew no mere Catholic Layman.

Part Three, Love is the Measure, Peasant of the Pavements, Paper, People and Work, Labor, Community

Part Three, Love is the Measure, Peasant of the Pavements, Paper, People and Work, Labor, Community Summary and Analysis

When Day entered her new apartment, she met a rough working man named Peter Maurin. Maurin was French and very much "alive". He compelled one's attention by his presence and focused on ideas, rather than people. Maurin told Day that her education lacked a Catholic background and told her about the history of the Church and the Thomistic doctrine of the common good. He wanted to build a new society through the IWW constitution and had great ambition. Peter liked to see others do great things and have big dreams. He was a man on a mission. As time progressed, he taught her more about Catholicism and was very enthused by her writing talent.

Maurin and Day decided to start a magazine which they decided to call The Catholic Worker. It took some time for the two to communicate well, given their distinct backgrounds. Day then recounts some of his; Maurin had a complex past working with many communities and hated the wage system. He was also very forward and no respecter of persons and opposed the state and forced charity. Both opposed World War II.

May of 1933 saw the first issue of The Catholic Worker go to press. Circulation started at 2,500 and went to 2,500 within four months. Year's end saw 100,000 issues and by 1936 there were 150,000 copies. Many young people gave them out for free on the streets. They were spread all over the world and Day and Maurin were invited to speak all over the world. At the start it was only Maurin, Day and Day's brother, though their staff grew and evolved. Day then explains the mechanisms of delivery, printing and the like. They also set up hospitality houses to prevent the state from absorbing all communal enterprises.

World War II led to closing many of the hospitality houses, though many remained open. Many associated with the paper lived in voluntary poverty. This made them look communist, as did the phrase "worker" in the paper title. Many Catholics were suspicious at first. Many did not want to give to the poor and others hated the idea of worker-ownership and the right of private property, ideas that were in the Catholic Encyclicals.

Great people worked for them; Day discusses them in some detail, including illustrators. Maurin and a German carpenter named Steve Hergenhan became friends. Both men

agreed on a work philosophy and disliked the machine, preferring the Southern agrarians and the distributivists of England. Day covers some of their exploits and she regrets that Maurin was never theoretically careful to tie together his "noble thought[s]". He was a "personalist" and a "communitarian". Steve eventually got cancer and was hospitalized; his biting demeanor eventually melted into happiness. Before his death, he converted to Catholicism. Ritual helped their spirits during the time. Suddenly one morning he died.

A number of young people came to live with Maurin and Day at their Catholic community. Many left other radical movements due to their social radicalism. They all helped the community and gave out literature.

While the Catholic Worker was directed to the worker, they were concerned with the poor, dispossessed and exploited. Those attracted to the poor had a sense of guilt and responsibility. Christ had set an example for them of how to live for the poor and with them. In the paper, they tried to point out exploitation of all sorts. They often participated in mass picketing. Day covers a number of events and agitations, along with the people they were associated with at the time of those events. When asked why The Catholic Worker focused on workers, Maurin and Day would answer that Catholics included the poor and most were poor in the United States.

Day then reports many of her travels around the country to report on pro-labor events. Over one event, Day telegraphed Eleanor Roosevelt, who immediately helped her. Over the years, Day would live with the poor, workers, and the sick all over the world, the unemployed and the handicapped. They helped those who were stripped of their sense of human dignity.

Day extols the value of going to the poor and exploited directly in order to help them. They often talked to Communists about their agreements and disagreements about helping the poor. Day includes a discussion of the role of bishops and Archbishops in their fights for justice. Many resisted radical ideas and did the works of mercy without ideology. Many wanted to organize Catholic workers in existence unions and opposed the Communists and separate gangster elements. The paper often published on the matters of capital and labor and the evils of industrialism. Many have claimed that The Catholic Worker's focus on exploitation encouraged priests to start labor schools, help strikers and introduce sociology into seminaries. They also opposed the expansion of the modern state, particularly the Welfare State and promoting servility. Instead, they wanted common ownership of the means of production.

Day next emphasizes the importance of liturgy for the generation of community. Without community, the leader and dictator become divine. Day often felt that Maurin's emphasis was too much on the land and not enough on work in the cities. He loved collective farms. Community was the social answer to the long loneliness. The Catholic Workers rejected planned economies and supported organic growth. Maurin emphasized the creation of mutual-aid credit unions. Many criticized the Catholic Worker for being too optimistic about aid and they emphasized how they would be taken advantage of. This

was why Maurin promoted the philosophy of work. The Fall laid the curse on men of having to work.

But Maurin also promoted study and discussion for its own sake, which conflicted somewhat with constant work. Many in their growing community wanted private property and community on the land. They rejected unnecessary luxuries and pushed detachment; they promoted saving and donation, though often savings went to medical expenses. Farm ventures often ran into difficulties due to a lack of skill, money, leadership and equipment.

Part Three, Love is the Measure, Family, Retreat,

Part Three, Love is the Measure, Family, Retreat, Summary and Analysis

Day often regretted not having a husband and missed family life. But her family was the price she paid for her faith. Tamar was everything to her, but Day often ended up ignoring her, due to how busy she was, though Tamar had friends and stayed busy. She grew up wanting to make things and read often. She started high school and received a marriage proposal at fifteen. At sixteen, she was in love and serious. That year she spent time learning crafts and how to be a wife; they had a wonderful wedding three weeks after Tamar turned eighteen. Peter was at the wedding and Tamar was afraid he'd give an ideological speech. The wedding was beautiful and simple, and while Peter made a speech, it was appropriate. All the Catholic Worker community expected it.

Unfortunately, it was the last speech Peter made because he grew ill in a few months and lost his memory, left unable to "think". Tamar's family lives near Day today and has five children.

As the Catholic Worker was growing in popularity, Day attended a Catholic retreat which she did not enjoy, but she did enjoy the community, as it was like the community of the poor growing up around the Catholic Worker. The community understood the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and many came to adopt Peter's philosophy of poverty. But the idea of retreat was raised again when Father Pacifique Roy explained to them that the works of mercy are best when done from a supernaturalist motive, not out of pride or a sense of power. Father Roy impressed them after that and they started to interact with him often. Roy emphasized in particular that everything given away in love would be returned to one by God.

Father Roy started to talk about "the retreat" after awhile, recommending a Father Hugo who was a master of "applied Christianity". Day's first retreat involved five days of total silence; they would have conferences of an hour each and then they would go to the chapel to pray. Father Hugh emphasized that the just man lived by faith, and that without faith, God cannot be pleased. Faith working through love, indicated that one is living a supernatural life. These retreats were repeated and everyone made it as often as they could. And many visited around the country to see them. Some visitors took advantage of their hospitality. Day ends the chapter on the retreat noting that she attends retreats not only to serve others but to nourish her own spirit.

Many of those who wrote in to the Catholic Worker criticized their pacifist stance. They had been pacifists for years and years, but only near the end of the war was anyone paying attention. Many of those writing in had jobs tied up with the war effort and were worried that they would not be able to find work. Day then reviews various members of

the Catholic Worker community who were involved in pacifist activism. She also discusses some of those who took advantage of this pacifism.

In "Peter's Death," Day notes that practicing philosophy has been said by some to be a practicing for death. This was Peter Maurin's life. He was a St. Francis of modern times and a great teacher. But one day his brain failed and he became silent; this was the last five years of his life. He probably had a stroke in his sleep. Thankfully for Peter, he had written all he wanted to before his mind failed and wanted to let younger men take over. While Day was visiting one of their charitable farms, Maurin died in his sleep. Day recounts the events of his last day. When he died, people came from all over the neighborhood, city and country for his funeral. Day claims that Peter was a modern St. John, that he had great insights, though he was often misunderstood; he was both sincere and peaceful.

The Catholic Worker community believed that Peter would stay active after he died, though the community quickly lost many of its properties. Day and others had to move. They had to find a house and started a novena for this reason. The community prayed, coming and going, night and day, sleeping and walking. For nearly three months they prayed, and eventually they found a new house with more rooms than before. Readers supplied the funds, and so their work continues.

While some say the most significant thing about The Catholic Worker is poverty and others say that it is community, the final word is love. We cannot love God until we learn to love one another. The only solution to the long loneliness we all feel is love and community.

Characters

Dorothy Day

Dorothy Day was born in 1897 and died in 1980. She was a famous Catholic convert and social activist. She was also a well-known American journalist who early on wrote for socialist magazines and newspapers and then transitioned to Catholic media outlines. Day was also a distributist, a third-way economic philosophy that is part of Catholic Social Teaching, anarchism, arguing that social relations were healthiest when maintained outside of the state and that the state should be abolished, and in pacifism. She also was a co-founder, with Peter Maurin, of The Catholic Worker, a magazine that helped to establish the Catholic Worker movement that sought a nonviolent defense of aid to the poor and advocacy in defense of them.

Day is the main character of The Long Loneliness, which is her autobiography. Day was born in Brooklyn, though her family moved around the country as her father looked for work. She was raised in both San Francisco and Chicago. While her parents were Episcopal, Day was always fascinated with religion, and Catholicism in particular. She first attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1914 where she quickly became involved in radical socialist politics, abandoning her faith for her political views. But her attraction to traditional Catholicism returned as she grew older and eventually tore her and her daughter Tamar from her husband, Forster, an atheist anarchist.

After splitting with her husband, Day grew in her Catholic faith and decided that the Catholic conception of the social order provided the most spiritually fulfilling form of community life. When she met Peter Maurin and formed the Catholic Worker, she rose to national prominence, particularly among Catholics.

Peter Maurin

Peter Maurin was born in 1877 and died in 1949. He is introduced late in Day's biography, but is undoubtedly its second-most important figure. He was a radical Catholic social activist who started the Catholic Worker with Day in 1933 and helped create the Catholic Worker movement along with her. Day first describes meeting Peter as something of an overwhelming experience. He was extremely passionate and very abstract and intellectual. He was a passionate distributist and defender of farming communes. He advocated simple living, resisting technology and communitarianism. He was also an anti-statist, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist.

Maurin was born in France, one of twenty-four children, and spent time with the Christian Brothers there. He then moved to Saskatchewan to pursue farming life but left after his partner died. When he moved to New York, he taught French, and became influenced by St. Francis of Assisi. Maurin was sometimes hard to tolerate, given how ideological he was and how intent on indoctrinating anyone he came in contact with.

Often Day tempered his radicalism with practical considerations, and the two initially had a hard time communicating.

Nonetheless, Day writes with great admiration for Maurin and believes that there would be no Catholic Worker Movement without him. He was responsible for setting up Catholic Worker collective farms and Houses of Hospitality, many of which still exist. Maurin had a stroke in 1944 and lost much of his memory and could no longer "think" as he put it. He died in 1949.

Tamar Day

Day's child with her husband Forster. Tamar accompanied Day wherever she moved, though Day's activities often took her from taking care of Tamar.

Forster

Day's second husband. A quiet man quick to anger, he was an anarchist and atheist who was in love with nature. He resisted Day's attraction to religion, and her devotion to Catholicism eventually split them up.

Rayna Prohme

A Jewish friend of Day's in college who, after spending time studying at the University of Chicago, became a radical communist advocate. Day and Rayna were very close for a time.

Day's Family

Much of the early book is occupied with Day's discussion of her father, mother, aunts, grandparents and brothers and sisters, most of whom she regarded as warm and caring.

The Catholic Worker Staff

Day often describes the varied characters that helped with the production, illustration and writing of the Catholic Worker.

The Poor

From an early age, Day was attracted not only to aiding the poor but to living with them. The Catholic Worker movement was focused on aiding them.

The Socialist Movement

In her early days as a political activist, Day was involved in the various socialists movements in the 1910s and celebrated the Bolshevik Revolution.

The Catholic Church

Day was gradually more and more attracted to Catholicism and Catholic Social teaching until she converted in 1927.

Novelists and Theologians

The Long Loneliness is full of descriptions of the varied novelists and theologians that Day read.

The Wobblies

A nickname for the International Workers of the World (I.W.W.), whose decentralist, anarchist approach to labor organization was attractive to Day, who was a member.

Objects/Places

The Lone Loneliness

A state of natural loneliness that Day believes all humans face unless they have a relationship with God and a community of neighbors.

Catholicism

One of the oldest and orthodox forms of Christianity, Day was a prominent Catholic and has been made a "Servant of God" since her death, which puts her in the line for potential canonization.

New York City

Day spent much of her life in New York City living among the poor and running the Catholic Worker.

The Catholic Worker Office

The Catholic Worker had an office where it was produced; Day and Maurin spent a lot of time there.

Houses of Hospitality

Maurin founded a number of Houses of Hospitality and many continue to exist to this day. The Houses serve the poor and house them in many cases.

Communal Farms

Maurin was also an advocate of working the land and set up a number of communal farms throughout the United States.

University

Day spent time to University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign but eventually dropped out to pursue journalism and radical politics.

Staten Island

Day and Forster lived in a fairly isolated location on Staten Island when they were married.

Anarchism

The political philosophy that rejects the authority of the nation-state and advocates its abolition. Day and Maurin were anarchists.

Communitarianism

An anti-individualist philosophy that argues that human well-being is inevitably tied to community life.

Socialism

The political philosophy which holds that workers should own the means of production, or capital. Day and Maurin were anti-statist socialists, rejecting state ownership of the means of production and defending community and worker ownership instead.

Prayer

Day prayed constantly and found herself praying when she was happy.

Newspapers

Day spent much of her time writing for newspapers. Early on she wrote for socialist magazines like The Masses and moved to writing for Catholic magazines like The Commonweal and America. Eventually she founded The Catholic Worker.

Pacifism

Day was an advocate of this philosophy of total non-violence.

Protest

Day participated in a number of protests defending the poor and hungry and demanding economic rights for them. She also traveled the country to report on them.

Themes

The Long Loneliness

Day began her childhood spending much of her time alone. Her father worked long hours as a writer and journalist, and due to his low income, Day's mother had to work constantly as well. Thus, while she sometimes played with her brothers and sisters, she spent a lot of time alone and outside. It was here that she developed a deep love of nature and that her natural disposition towards religiosity grew. When Day left to go to the University of Illinois, she left her family for the first time, and when she left Illinois, she was alone in New York. During this time, Day developed a conception of loneliness that she calls The Long Loneliness.

Being lonely is fairly routine for human beings. When a human is alone too long, he often desires to be close to others. However, Day believes that even ordinary human community cannot satisfy a deep sort of loneliness that not only hungers for a relationship with God, but a relationship with a community of persons in contact with God. The Long Loneliness is the loneliness that is only cured by a supernatural contact with a deeper personal reality.

Day's own solution to her bout of the Long Loneliness was converting to Catholicism and living among the poor. She also found deep fulfillment in being a mother and advocate for the poor, along with a founder of and writer for The Catholic Worker.

Roman Catholicism

The title of Day's autobiography is The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of the Legendary Catholic Social Activist. Thus, Catholicism undoubtedly played a foundational role in Day's worldview and day-to-day activities. Early in life, her family were Protestants but were not deeply religious. Day was always drawn to faith but had little understanding of God and theological doctrine. When she became more socially active and interested in radicalism, she rejected Christianity as offering only a palliative to social ills and not a revolutionary reduction of elimination of them. She saw religion as oppressive and an opiate of the people, though she still maintained an attraction to the Catholic Church.

Day's conversion to Catholicism, however, did not come until long after her interest in it began. She found that many of the poor and dispossessed were Catholics, which attracted her to the Church; she was also inspired by Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic communitarianism. The materialism of the larger socialist movement, along with its free love aspect, repelled her and led her to embrace Catholicism as well.

But an important barrier to her conversion was her anarchist and atheist husband Forster. Forster was adamantly anti-religious and Day knew that if she converted, their marriage would probably end. That said, Day eventually converted and, as she feared,

lost her husband. Forster had forced her to choose between him and God and she chose God. Afterwards, she fell head-first into Catholic practice, spirituality, culture and politics. She later founded The Catholic Worker and the Catholic Worker Movement and is now being considered for canonization by the Catholic Church.

Social Activism

Day was not merely a famous Catholic, but also a famous Catholic Social Activist. Her social activism was always on behalf of the working classes, the poor and dispossessed, the exploited, the sick and the handicapped. However, her philosophy of fighting poverty altered over time. Initially, Day had only vague inclinations towards helping the poor and living with them. When she went to college, she discovered radical social activism and socialist political thought. Day initially wanted to help the poor and to be kind to them. But she realized that she wanted everyone to be kind to one another and advocated a social revolution on behalf of this goal. She also sought not mere palliative approaches to poverty, but revolutionary approaches that would strike the root of poverty and end it before it started.

One reason Day became critical of Christianity in early adulthood was because she saw it as only advocating fixing poverty once it came about, not of stopping it before it got started. She also did not understand Christianity's radical attitude towards living with and loving the poor (as she later came to see it). As time progressed, however, Day became disenchanted with the socialist movement broadly, not only because of the free love aspect of the movement, but because of its excessive focus on material goods and its "worldliness."

Thus, when Day converted to Catholicism, she embraced its supernaturalist and spiritual approach to social activism and got her message out through her writing in The Catholic Worker. Along with Peter Maurin, she also founded a number of hospitality houses and communal farms.

Style

Perspective

Dorothy Day was an early twentieth century traditional Catholic. She was also deeply attracted to radical social activism. Her religious leanings began in early childhood and her discussion of religion and Catholicism in particular pervade the book. She also indirectly makes arguments for her faith, such as discussing the value of liturgy, the attractiveness of a supernaturalist approach to human suffering and vice, and a strong theological foundation for loving the poor and avoiding excessive materialism. She is never anti-Protestant, but speaks as if it is clear that the Roman Catholic Church is the one true church.

As a young woman, Day was deeply attracted to radical socialist doctrines; she not only wanted to aid the poor and improve their lives, but to fight against the unjust social conditions that made them poor in the first place. Thus, she advocated picketing on behalf of legal reforms for the poor, not merely charitable aid. Later in life, after her conversion, Day realized that the socialists embraced a principle of free love that she rejected and that their philosophy was too materialistic.

Interestingly, it would be false to consider Day a leftist. While she was a socialist of sorts, she also strongly resisted attempts by the state to absorb the voluntary civil organizations that provided welfare for the poor. She also wanted to abolish the nation-state and defend a society that was entirely composed of voluntary unions. Thus, her philosophy has deep libertarian affinities despite its hostility to capitalism. Her distributism prefers for private property to be held in a decentralized fashion, however, not according to freedom of contract.

Tone

Day's tone is influenced by her extensive experience as a journalist. Her prose flows smoothly and clearly and she moves in and out of particular topics with ease. In some chapters, she jumps through multiple character sketches without the reader realizing that her descriptions may not fit well into a broader whole. Day also has a meeker tone than one might expect from a social radical. Many may imagine a radical socialist and anarchist of Day's variety as voracious and rabidly ideological, but Day's writing conveys the personality of a woman who is humble despite her confidence in her vision of social justice.

The tone also contains a clear supernaturalist preference. She speaks lovingly of the lives of Catholic Saints and the power of Catholic Theology. She praises Catholic Social Teaching to the skies, and admires those who practice it. She constantly lauds those priests and Catholic laypeople who aided her in her spiritual growth and her fight for justice for the exploited and dispossessed.

Day also has a positive tone when writing about community and family life. She is always positive about her friendships, even in days when she had a very different set of values. She lovingly speaks of retreats with friends, times spent together with The Catholic Worker communities eating, and her love for the poor and strong desire to live among them. Thus, overall her tone is wistful, clam, meek yet passionate and committed to justice.

Structure

The Lone Loneliness has a brief preface by Robert Coles and an introduction entitled "Confession" from Day that introduces the major themes of the book. Afterwards, the book is divided into three large parts with numerous sub-chapters and a two-page postscript. Part One, Searching, ranges from Day's birth to her increasing aimlessness in her early to middle adulthood. It contains thirteen sub-chapters that range from three to fifteen pages in length. By and large, the chapters proceed in chronological order, though they masterfully bring out clear, coherent themes and subject matters despite being arranged in temporal sequence.

In Part One, Day focuses largely on her childhood attraction to religion and the spiritual and her gradually awakening social consciousness. She was always attracted to Christianity, even when she hardly understood it, and acquired a strong desire to aid and live with the poor while she was at college, leading her to join various radical social movements and write for socialist newspaper.

Part Two, Natural Happiness, contains four longer chapters that focus on Day's conception of the happiness men are made for, her family life and her conversion to Catholicism and early education in the faith. It covers her split with her husband Forster over her conversion as well. It ends by describing her search to find work as a journalist and her journeys across the country.

Part Three, Love is the Measure, shows Day coming into her own. It has nine chapters, which explain how Day met Peter Maurin, the founding of The Catholic Worker and its near immediate success, the way that the paper approached labor, community and family, and the spiritual and charitable practices it promoted. It also discusses Peter's death. The postscript outlines again the importance of community for completing the human person's need for happiness.

Quotes

"Dorothy was never a communist. She was too religious."
Confession, p. 12

"Tradition! We scarcely know the word any more."
Part One, Searching, The Generations Before, p. 16

"All beauty, all joy, all music thrilled my heart and my flesh, so that they cried out for fulfillment, for union."
Part One, Searching, Adolescence, p. 35

"I did not want just the few ... to be kind to the poor, as the poor. I wanted everyone to be kind. I wanted every home to be open to the lame, the halt and the blind, the way it had been after the San Francisco earthquake. Only then did people really live, really love their brothers. In such love was the abundant life and I did not have the slightest idea how to find it."
Part One, Searching, University, p. 39

"Perhaps people were looking for leaders; during the years ahead there would be Lenin and Trotsky, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Churchill, Roosevelt, men so dominated by ideas that they sacrificed to them countless millions of human beings."
Part One, Searching, Journalism, p. 67

"People have so great a need to reverence, to worship, to adore; it is a psychological necessity of human nature that must be taken into account."
Part One, Searching, Freelance, p. 84

"If there is a God, I must be friends with Him!"
Part Two, Natural Happiness, Man Is Meant for Happiness, p. 130

"I had become convinced that I would become a Catholic; yet I felt I was betraying the class to which I belonged, the workers, the poor of the world, with whom Christ spent his life."
Part Two, Natural Happiness, Love Overflows, p. 144

"The next day I went to Tottenville alone, leaving Tamar with my sister, and there with Sister Aloysia as my godparent, I too was baptized conditionally, since I had already been baptized in the Episcopal Church."
Part Two, Natural Happiness, Love Overflows, p. 148

"It is a permanent revolution, this Catholic Worker Movement."
Part Three, Love is the Measure, Paper, People and Work, p. 186

"To build a new society within the shell of the old!"
Part Three, Love is the Measure, Paper, People and Work, p. 196

"Going to the people is the purest and best act in Christian tradition and revolutionary tradition and is the beginning of world brotherhood."
Part Three, Love is the Measure, Labor, p. 216

"Community—that was the social answer to the long loneliness."
Part Three, Love is the Measure, Community, p. 224

"The only answer in this life, to the loneliness we are all bound to feel, is community. The living together, working together, sharing together, loving God and loving our brother, and living close to him in community so we can show our love for Him."
Part Three, Love is the Measure, Family, p. 243

"Love is the measure by which we shall be judged."
Part Three, Love is the Measure, Retreat, p. 249

"War is the Health of the State."
Part Three, Love is the Measure, "War is the Health of the State," p. 263

"'We need to make the king of society,' Peter had said, 'where it is easier for people to do good.'"
Part Three, Love is the Measure, Peter's Death, p. 280

"The most significant thing about The Catholic Worker is poverty, some say. The most significant thing is community, others say. We are not alone anymore. But the final word is love."
Postscript, p. 285

"We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."
Postscript, p. 286

Topics for Discussion

What is "the long loneliness"? How did Day respond to it? How does Day think others should respond to it?

What is the point of community for Day? Explain in detail.

Why was Day so attracted to helping the poor and the exploited?

What was unique about Peter Maurin? Why do you think he and Day worked so well together?

Why do you think Day converted to Catholicism? Why was she attracted to Catholicism rather than some other religion?

How would you describe Day's political leanings? Explain the different facets of her political views. How do you see them developing from her non-Catholic period to her Catholic period?

What was the philosophy of the Catholic Worker? Why do you think it was so popular?

Do you think Day's social philosophy is practicable? Why or why not? If not, what could make it practicable?