

Dorothy Day grew up in a house that didn't have much time for religion. "How much did I hear of religion as a child? Very little," she says. "And yet my heart leaped when I heard the name of God." In her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, she describes other ways that Christianity was woven through her life, from her brothers serving at the local Episcopal church, to singing hymns with next-door neighbours.

But there was another childhood encounter that would be much more powerful, and transformative. She had gone to a friend's house, only to find "no one on the porch or in the kitchen." Hoping to find her friend elsewhere in the house, she burst into the bedrooms. Instead of finding her friend, she found her friend's mum, praying. "Mrs. Barrett was on her knees, saying her prayers," says Day. "She turned to tell me that Kathryn and the children had all gone to the store and went on with her praying. And I felt a warm burst of love toward Mrs. Barrett that I have never forgotten, a feeling of gratitude and happiness that still warms my heart when I remember her."

Day would do a lot of living before she would come to call herself a Christian. In 1914, she would go university; two years later, she would drop out of university. She would write for socialist newspapers in New York. As a suffragette, she would be arrested at the White House and serve fifteen days in prison, 10 of them on hunger strike. She would have a daughter and become a single parent. Later yet, she would grow deeper into her life as a Catholic after the baptism of that daughter.

And most famously, she would co-found the Catholic Worker Movement, and spend the rest of her life serving the working poor, and living out the social teachings of the Gospel.

That encounter, with a woman at prayer, would stay with her. "And though I became oppressed with the problem of poverty and injustice," she would say, "though I groaned at the hideous sordidness of man's lot, though there were years when I clung to the philosophy of economic determination as an explanation of man's fate, still there were moments when in the midst of misery and class strife, life was shot through with glory. Mrs. Barrett in her sordid little tenement flat finished her breakfast dishes at ten o'clock in the morning and got down on her knees and prayed to God." "All through my life what she was doing remained with me."

In our gospel reading today we get a glimpse of a world shot through with glory. Or perhaps—we get a glimpse of others getting a glimpse of a world shot through with glory. We get to hear of four disciples seeing something in Jesus that would make them want to drop everything in order to be with him.

But Mark wants us to know something before we get to those disciples on that seaside leaving their nets and their boats and their fathers behind. Mark wants us to know something of the nearly-right-on-top-of-us of the Kingdom of God. Mark wants us to know that Jesus is “proclaiming the good news of God,” and saying that “the time is fulfilled,” that the time of the Kingdom is almost right right right now, and that “the Kingdom of God has come near,” that God’s Kingdom is at hand, that God’s Kingdom is almost right right right here, so “repent,” change your ways, change your mind, be different, “and believe in the good news.”

God’s world, God’s way, God’s life, and God’s hope is about to break through, and is so close to breaking through that it’s like it is right at the end of your fingertips, right on the tip of your tongue, right in the corner of your eye. And it is breathtaking, and it is shocking, and it is demanding, and it is all all all just about to happen, to break in and change everything.

And just when Mark has our hearts are racing with the inbreaking reality of the reign of God, just when we are ready for the world to be cleaved in two? Mark tells us that Jesus is taking a leisurely walk on the seaside. We have Jesus acting like he’s on some sort of beachside holiday.

We have Jesus in this world—a world where people are at work. Like Simon and Andrew, on the same Galilean seaside as Jesus, casting nets in the sea; and where James and John, too, are at work mending their nets, preparing for a day of fishing.

But the ordinariness of a day at work, the ordinariness of a walk by the seaside, the ordinariness of life in general doesn’t last long for Simon, Andrew, or for James and John. Because they see in a split moment, in Jesus, something so extraordinary that they are willing to drop what they are doing. They get a glimpse of something beautiful, of the world is shot through with glory, of the world shot through with the reign of God: they

have seen the one who will redeem the world, the one in whom the kingdom has come near.

Conversions takes form in different ways. For the disciples, it takes but a moment for them to decide to follow Jesus. For Dorothy Day, it took some time. As much as the world was shot through with God's glory in a moment, a moment seeing her friend's mother praying in a tenement, it took a number of years, and a number of other experiences of the world shot through with glory before Day would find herself as deeply committed to Jesus as she would. Some of us never have such an experience, and yet follow Jesus closely; others of us might have moments of ecstatic joy.

Some of us would be converted by beauty, too, the experience of beauty Day would defend herself when the Cathedral of the Archdiocese of San Francisco was rebuilt in 1962, and to considerable expense—an expense her fellow anti-poverty activist Cesar Chavez would criticize. Not Day. She would defend both sharing wealth with the poor and spending the church's resources on beauty. But that's a longer story for another sermon. Today we remember a Dorothy Day whose slow conversion would mean that she would follow Jesus into a life lived with and for the poor of this world.

But whether we experience the slow burn of the courage and conviction of Dorothy Day, or the instant conversion of those four first disciples on the Galilean seaside, little of this changes what our Lord came to preach, and what lies at the centre of the gospel of Jesus and the most important words you would hear from me this morning: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."