

## Father Dave's Homily

09/30/12 ..... 26 B

-- In the 1930's and 40's, Dorothy Day was certainly not part of the Church's "establishment." She had a checkered past, including having had an abortion as a young, unmarried woman. She was baptized in the Church as a single mother along with her six year old daughter.

-- Yet she turned out to be a prophet through her care for the poor and her opposition to war (even during WWII). In her later life, this woman who never held any formal position in the Church continued her work for justice, working for the rights of migrant workers and opposing the War in Vietnam. She saw the inside of numerous jails in the process.

-- Now the Archdiocese of New York is leading a cause for her canonization as a saint of the Church. It's the same Archdiocese whose bishop often fought with her over a number of issues.

-- I think we can say that Dorothy Day was a modern Eldad or Medad. She was not ordained, but she prophesied in the name of the Lord Jesus. Like that young man who was not of the company of the disciples, she cast out demons of injustice, hatred and violence in 20<sup>th</sup> century American society.

-- And, like Jesus, she did not tolerate scandal to the poor, weak and the young ones. In her older days during the 1960's she stood arm-and-arm with flower children who opposed the Vietnam War. But she had little tolerance for so-called "free love," and urged people to honor their commitments in life and avoid sexual immorality.

-- God's people have established a Church order under the influence of God's spirit. Generally, it serves us well in ordering the ministries of the Church and guiding our teaching.

-- But, like any structure, it can become stifling if it is given greater importance than the person of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit can, and often does, work outside of normal channels.

-- Our challenge is to be respectful of the structures of the Church while being open to the movement of the Holy Spirit outside the “normal channels,” so to speak.

-- And how do we know that someone is doing the work of the Holy Spirit? The best indication, as Jesus himself said, is this: *By their fruits, you shall know them.* Wherever justice, love and peace are fostered, God’s work is being done and the Spirit is present.

-- This past Wednesday, I concelebrated the funeral Mass for a man who exemplified this openness to the work of the Holy Spirit. Bishop Albert Ottenweller came through the “approved channels” of the Church, serving as a priest for 31 years before being consecrated a bishop and subsequently being named to head the Diocese of Steubenville.

-- Yet he empowered many people who would not have been a part of those official channels to use their gifts for the building up of the Church. He encouraged other pastors to do the same. And he ministered to people without regard to their status in society or even in official Church circles.

-- The opening song for that Wednesday funeral Mass was *All are Welcome*. It expresses very well the attitude Bishop Ottenweller had and the attitude we encounter in God’s word today.

-- This weekend we welcome many people to St. Caspar’s as we conduct our annual festival. May that welcoming attitude continue to influence all that we do in our life, our work, and our mission as a Church and parish community.