

When my brother and I were very young and until we were old enough to make this embarrassing, we played at being a knight and a princess. He was the princess. I was the knight. I was a girl with a shield and sword, and by that I mean — I was a girl with a trash lid and shovel. My brother would scream and yell up in a tree, and I would fight imaginary enemies all around. For every dragon I encountered, I knew I could fight it. Whether the battle involved my sword or my word, I could always convince the dragons to become more respectable members of society. I had hope — no matter how grim the fight, I would win.

But then we grew up, and I realized that not every dragon is scared by swords or soothed by speeches. I grew up and realized that there were bigger problems in the world than the imaginary dragons in my backyard. I grew up, and didn't know how to fight anymore.

Poverty. Violence. Trafficking. Abuse. These dragons are far more real than the ones I fought as a child, but so much more difficult to grapple with. How do you stay hopeful in that fight? How do you stick it out, even against horrible odds?

This is where I look to Dorothy Day. She dealt with the big dragons. The ones with fire and spikes. She rallied her warriors, and her weapon of choice was wide, wild, willful love. If there is one art of hers I wish to mimic, it is how she wielded her love with wonder and delight, cutting through injustice and freeing her fellow travelers. How did she become so joyful?

I think it was her choice of weapon. By choosing love — “love that will light that fire in the hearts of others...love that will burn out the sins and hatreds...love that will make us want to do great things for each other”(87-88), Dorothy could remain in love with the

world, even as she fought to improve it. In fact, love was not an activity in spite of the trouble in the world, but the only reaction proper to making it better (*Love is the Measure*).

If I take her writing seriously — which, given the life it represents, I think I must — then I can't keep fighting if I don't love the world I'm fighting for. I can't only love the ideals of justice and peace, but I have to love the people who unjust and unpeaceful. Dorothy Day took the time to really see the world. She saw it, not for its reality, and not for its possibility, but the way God sees God's good creation — a place where reality and possibility meet, and the only response is a fierce love and hope.

This means lethargy and despair are not options. The many and mighty dragons of the world are devastating, yes. Battles will be lost, yes. But the only response is a dogged hope and expansive love, built between friends and strangers, stretching as far as creation goes. Dorothy Day was not tireless. But it was in her moments of exhaustion and lowness that she looked to her community and creation for a glimpse of the reality she was fighting for. She sought beauty, love, and justice, and found them all in the world that God loves and Jesus did not want to leave.