

Prayer

“When I pray, I light a candle and look at Jesus on the cross and ask for the strength to carry the suffering of the people.” ~ Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN

Dear God,

Send Your strength to me to carry my challenges and difficulties this day.

Send Your Spirit to those around our world who suffer and struggle.

Amen.

Missionary Witness: Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN

Dorothy Mae Stang grew up in a large family on a farm in Dayton, Ohio. It’s where she was taught how to live from the land – and where she learned to have reverence for the precious natural resources given to us. They were lessons she would later share with people half a world away.



From the first moment she met the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur at Julianne High School, there was never a doubt in her mind. She knew she was called to religious life. And she felt the pull of the educational mission of Notre Dame and the commitment to the poor, especially women and children in the most abandoned places. Dorothy joined the Sisters of Notre Dame at the age of 17 years and one month – the absolute earliest the congregation would accept her. She headed to a community in the northeast of Brazil. She and the other Sisters set up a mission, working with more than 100,000 parishioners, preparing them for Sacraments, teaching religion in schools, helping the people with spiritual growth. On weekends, Sister Dorothy and the Sisters would head into rural villages to bring the people together – giving adults religious instructions and training lay catechists. It was during these visits when the reality of oppression and poverty struck Sister Dorothy, and she began teaching the people about their rights as human beings. Sister Dorothy taught the farmers how to work the land in sustainable ways, without depleting rich natural resources. And she helped the families live in peace and with dignity. Together they began opening schools in the hills and villages surrounding the farms. The men taught others how to grow sustainable crops, and the women began small businesses to help support their families. The wealthy landowners did not want subsistence farmers living on the land. They wanted the land for their own use – to harvest the trees and sell the wood for large profits. Sister Dorothy worked with the authorities and tried to stop the ranchers, but the attacks on the farmers continued.

The night before her death she brought food and clothing to a family whose home had been burned to the ground. The next morning it was raining. As she began walking down the muddy road to meet with some farmers, two hired gunmen stepped into Sister Dorothy's path and raised their guns. As they took aim, she reached into a simple cloth bag, pulled out her Bible and began reading, "Blessed are the peacemakers..." They fired six shots. The gunmen and the ranchers figured they'd finally stopped the tireless advocate for the poor, silenced that voice that always spoke of basic human rights for all and the goodness of God. They thought they had put an end to Sister Dorothy and her mission. But they were wrong.

- They had no idea how she would continue to inspire the people in the Brazilian rainforest, and how they would carry on the fight.
- They didn't expect there to be 1,200 families in 85 Base Christian Communities who would all live cooperatively and self-sufficiently a decade after her murder.
- And they didn't think the people would continue to build schools – more than 115 throughout the rainforest.
- They didn't know that her missionary heart would carry on through the hearts of others.

Biography of Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN from the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

Meet the Missionaries...

Founded in August 1968 in Uganda, the Apostles of Jesus is the first religious missionary order of priests and Brothers in Africa. Apostles of Jesus serve today in Uganda, as well as in Kenya, Tanzania, the Sudan, Europe, Australia, and 20 U.S. states. Their missionary work includes: reaching out with the Gospel worldwide; building seminaries, formation houses and schools; establishing health centers to continue the healing mission of Jesus (like Queen of the Apostles Medical Centre in Uganda); farming to feed the hungry, and caring for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS.



Missionary Help: Learning While You Eat



With this event during the Extraordinary Missionary Month, you can be the teachers...and help others learn about a mission country. First, reserve a meeting room at your local church or school for a Friday or Saturday night. Next, pick a mission country – maybe somewhere the Apostles of Jesus work; gather photos and facts to decorate the room. Your parents and

teachers can help prepare food – perhaps a dish typical to that country. Guests purchase tickets to attend this “mission dinner,” and you and your friends volunteer to serve food – and mission facts! *Bon appétit!*