

Dorothy Stang Prayer Service
February 12, 2008

Today is the third anniversary of the martyrdom of Dorothy Mae Stang, missionary to Brazil. Dorothy loved the poor among whom she worked; she lived with them, and like them. She became a great environmentalist, working to protect the rainforest from short-sighted loggers. And for this, they shot her.

Dorothy was an activist and a public person. Through the years she received many death threats. This worried her large extended family, but as one niece said, "*Who would hurt her? She's a little old lady.*"

People who knew her called her Dot. Dot Stang—A Sister of Notre Dame. We feel a great sense of pride and also an acute sense of loss and vulnerability.

And for this, they shot her.

◆ Dorothy refused to let one of the ranchers be godfather to one of our children. She told him he wasn't behaving in a Christian way. So of course she began to make enemies. (*Marga, from Belém*)

◆◆ *Dot, don't do that. You're going to get into trouble.*

◆ She got jobs for people. She helped them over the land issue. She set up a fruit processing factory. And she worked hard for the women. They were considered inferior. And if they were black or Indian, worse still. She really had compassion for them – she helped them realize their worth. That was one of the great things that she did. (*Dom Erwin, Bishop of Xingu*)

◆◆ *Dot, don't do that. You're going to get into trouble.*

◆ ...It was all thanks to Sister Dorothy. She fought for us tooth and nail – went on a hunger strike, slept on the sidewalk in Brasília, never gave up. If it hadn't been for her, we'd have nothing here. She was always looking out for us. And what she left us was the heritage of knowing how to work together and share things. (*Isa, from Transamazonica*)

◆◆ *Dot, don't do that. You're going to get into trouble.*

◆ At the women's next meeting Dorothy asked, 'Does everyone here keep chickens?' They said, 'Of course!' So she said, 'OK, next week I want each of you to bring your best chicken.' And they sold the chickens to buy a pig. It was the skinniest pig you ever saw, but the women arranged to send it to live in every household, one after another, for a month. It grew extremely fat. Then they bred it and it had nine piglets, and that's how they raised the money to get started. I just wanted to tell you that to show you how amazingly creative Dorothy was!" (*Padre Lucas, from Mazaré*)

◆◆ *Dot, don't do that. You're going to get into trouble.*

More than a Prophet

◆ Dorothy felt compelled to move on once again. She settled in a community called Arabia completely on her own. Of all the contradictory things to do! It would have been one thing if she had gone with Becky or a *padre*, But that's Dorothy for you. Pigheaded. She had her ideas and she wouldn't budge. (*Padre Nello*)

◆ I don't deny she was a bit of a Samaritan, but deep down she was more of a Prophet. (*Dom Erwin, bishop of the Xingu*)

◆ She was a visionary, you know. (*Carlos Mendez, journalist*)

♦ She was not by any means a sweetly pious nun who had retreated to a life of prayer and contemplation. She was tough, smart, and intensely political. It was precisely her fervent work on behalf of the poor that got her killed. None of this little nun bit. She was like a Mack truck.
(Dorothy's brother, David)

Gospel: Matthew 25, 35 – 41

Reflection

Go gently my sister

Almighty and Eternal God...

Dorothy Stang first pronounced her vows in an Ohio Chapel in 1951 and they were fulfilled in the Amazon Rainforest February 12, 2005.
Let us pray to the Lord...*Lord hear our prayer.*

Go gently my sister.

Know this: every blade of grass
Every drop in the sea
Every cry of the quetzal
Every groan of the mahogany
Accompanies you to your eternal rest.
There is only one river. Let us pray to the Lord.
Lord hear our prayer.

Go gently my sister.

Know this: We will not close our eyes to pray.
We will not close our eyes to pray, Dorothy.
We will continue your work of love.
Let us pray to the Lord.
Lord hear our prayer.

Go gently my sister.

Know this: we pray for your people.
We write the names of the poorest of the poor on the palms of our hands. AMEN.

(All the stories and comments about Dot are from the newly released book (February 5, 2008), **The Greatest Gift** by Brinka Le Breton. It is available from www.Amazon.com and is published by Random House.)