



HEVELONE: The title of your book, *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty (An Intimate Portrait of My Grandmother)*, is based on a quote by Dostoevsky that your grandmother really loved at the end of her life. Why did Dorothy Day believe that the world will be saved by beauty? How does that title help us

and then also as an activist. And then we get to you.

In a way you've reclaimed both your mother and your grandmother in identifying with them. Your mother had to push herself away, but it seems like you are now bringing them back together and putting yourself in the mix by writing this book. Do you think that's true?

HENNESSY: Absolutely. Just as my mother had to push herself away and discover who she is, I've had to do the same with both of them, because they both are such strong influences in my life. They are the most important influences in my life. When you have that

So Peter comes to her and says, well, here are the teachings of the Church on social justice, and it was just explosive for her. Peter was also a writer. He wrote these

she certainly saw many of her behaviors as possibly autistic. In the last decade of my mother's life, she was able to start interpreting her life through this information. But when she was growing up we didn't know these things. We didn't talk about these things. My grandmother felt that my mother was labeled as a special child—that it would be better for her to be directed towards crafts rather than towards academics.

My mother did love crafts, so it's not a clear-cut thing. We are all very complex people, so it shouldn't have been one or the other. She really desired to test herself academically. Her family members on her father's side were academics, so she watched her cousins growing up and being highly educated while there she was, having battled with her mother and then marrying young.

HEVELONE: Can you talk more about your mother's young marriage to your father David Hennessy, the struggles that they had because of his alcoholism and abuse, and how that impacted your mother's choice to move away from Catholicism?

HENNESSY: My mother had a few issues with Catholicism. She would always say to her mother "I was raised a Catholic. You weren't. You don't understand these things." And I think to a certain extent she was right.

One of the things that my mother believed—and I think this is probably the greatest difficulty that my mother had and why she left the church—is that we are all children of God. This is something that she learned at the Catholic Worker. She did not believe in divisions, and both she and my grandmother were aware from early on that the Catholic Worker attracted a lot of men who were gay. Of course, back in the day, you didn't talk about it. It was kept quiet.

I never had a conversation with my mother about my father's sexuality and she would never have spoken of it. I can't say for sure whether she knew that he

it's my question to answer. I can only answer it for myself really. But my mother was always very clear that she did believe in God. How she saw God manifested, she didn't articulate. But that was her way. She didn't like to define things.

That was one way in which she was very different from my grandmother. My grandmother loved words. She loved describing and defining. She would say things like, "I'm a Christian anarchist." She loved those things, and my mother did not. I never heard her ever describe she d

in searching for her vocation. But up until that time, she thrived at the Catholic Worker. The difficulty was in the separations that they endured when my grandmother would go off speaking. I think that was the most difficult aspect. That was another Day family trait—they were all wanderers. My mother was not a wanderer, and my grandmother didn't recognize that.

HEVELONE: The end of your book talks about how there's this ongoing balance in life. You saw it in your grandmother, you saw it in your mother, and I'm sure you see it in yourself—a balance between meeting people's needs and yet not being eaten up by their needs. Could you speak to that ongoing struggle and what you
