

# *My Faith Sustains Me*

words and reflections of  
**Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN**  
**Martyr for Justice**





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**Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN**

1931-2005

A disciple of Jesus and daughter of Julie:  
Martyred for the sake of justice

## *Introduction*

For 31 years, Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, was a missionary, living with and working for the poor in the Amazon Forest of Brazil. Her great desire was to live out the Gospel message beside her people. On February 12, 2005, she was assassinated on a lonely country road in the small village of Boa Esperança in Para, Brazil.

The night before her death, Sister Dorothy brought food and clothing to a family whose home had been burned to the ground. The next morning she was shot dead by two gunmen hired to stop her work on behalf of the poor farming families.

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur believe deeply that the life and death of our Sister Dorothy Stang can touch our lives today. Sister Dorothy was first and foremost a woman of the Gospel. She grounded her life and work in the Gospel, along with and for her beloved people in Brazil.

As Sister Dorothy continued her ministry in Brazil, she shared in her letters what she was learning. Her wise and prayer-filled responses to what she witnessed and experienced can be a deep and yet gentle inspiration to all of us.

# *On Living the Gospel*

*I have to fill myself up with Scripture and the spiritual life so I have the grace to continue in the struggle.*

*The Gospel asks of us the grace of conversion. It will come. No time to waste—the poor are being crushed while we debate the issue.*

*Our Gospel response calls us to take risks among our people. They don't have this privilege, or they would be killed if they resist openly. Indeed, they are killed.*

*If we strip ourselves of all the extras that consume so much of our time and thoughts on how to care for them, our leftover time is no longer colored, and it is no longer hard to give a Gospel response.*

*[There are] so many challenges for us as we try to discover what it means to live the Gospel in the midst of the people in our world.*

*I have learned that Faith sustains me. I have also learned that three things are difficult: As a woman to be taken seriously in the struggle for land reform; to stay faithful to believing that these small groups of poor farmers will prevail in organizing and carrying their own agenda forward; and to have the courage to give your life in the struggle for change.*

# *On Being with the Poor*

*We can't talk about the poor. We must be poor with the poor and then there is no doubt how to act.*

*Thank God, St. Julie left us a strong heritage to be with the poor in their struggle for a more just existence.*

*We, as Sisters of Notre Dame, dedicate ourselves to the poor in the most abandoned places. Living, eating, drinking, sharing daily with our people at our mission, constantly challenges us to do all we can to help bring about change.*

*My heart screams joy, but I'm needing patience as reform can't happen overnight. How to keep hope alive has been our challenge.*



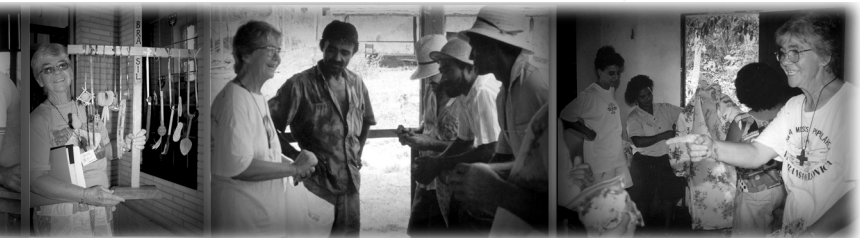
# *On the Goodness of God*

*Together we can make a difference bringing peace, joy, caring, love to our world that is losing sight of our guiding star – the goodness of the real God.*

*Thank you, my good God, for life filled with friends and wonderful adventure – sharing, caring, laughing and crying.*

*God's gift to us is to live more fully as part of our cosmic creation.*

*Pray for our struggling diocese. Our situation here in Brazil is worse each day as the wealthy make their plans to exterminate by hunger the needy. But God is good with His people.*



# *On Peace and Justice*

*Did we make our lives so comfortable and withdrawn from reality that we cannot see the social sins that our silence is supporting?*

*War is no way to peace. It breeds hate and leaves deep wounds.*

*Justice, when it is in relation to the poor, doesn't move.*

*May God give you the wisdom and disposition to help build a world where all have a place with dignity.*

*Pray for all of us and for a world where all can live – plants, animals and human life – in peace and harmony.*

*I pray daily that some day our world can hear the appeal that Christ our true liberator makes to each of us to live a more self-sacrificing life and create a world of fraternal people.*

*Only a profound change in our way of living – our values and attitudes – can bring new life to our world.*



# *On Caring for our World*

*Our fast changing world makes many demands, and it is only a deep faith that makes it all worthwhile.*

*I work with people who are living on the margin. They help me in renewing the earth in the way we take care of it. All of us are part of a great Oneness.*

*We are only here on the land for a few decades. Use every day to bring joy and not greed to our tired land so full of anguish.*

*We have to learn to have the necessary things of life. We have to ask ourselves, what do I need, not what do I want.*

*Just as plants die and are reborn, we too each day lay to rest what we did that day and awake to a new sunrise.*

*Let's all conserve so we can have a healthy planet.*

*We must help the people recapture a relationship with Mother Earth that is tender and kind.*

*We must make great efforts to save our planet. Earth is not able to provide anymore. Her water and air are poisoned and her soil is dying of exaggerated use of chemicals.*

# *Thoughts for the Day*

*You know it isn't always easy to blend our lives. Each of us is raised with a set of values and at times, the differences make life difficult.*

*Humanity is like a fruit bowl, with all different fruit; black, white and yellow. So different and yet all part of it.*

*I realize that all of you live in a world full of contradictions, and try to bring your contributions so that new life is constantly being born. If I've helped, thank God. If at times I've been a stone in your shoe, forgive me.*

*In the midst of all this violence, there are many small communities that have learned the secret of life—sharing, solidarity, confidence, equality, pardon, working together. It doesn't matter what religious belief they have as long as human values guide them.*

*No one can really figure out these great times, or know with certainty where they are taking us, except eventually to God.*

*I'm trying daily to fill my lungs with the beauty of our cosmos – her energy – so all that is to be woman can be felt in me.*

*Each day brings challenges. You can help others love nature, and help people be aware of their great task to love and care for our forest.*

*Conflict without the presence of God never finds a solution.*

*If we keep working, helping our people to grow through education, they will have the ability to speak up, organize, and create within themselves a spirit guided by The Spirit and a new people. I might not see this day, but with the help of all of you, our people will grow in their understanding and caring for others.*

## *Acknowledgements*

These quotations were taken from the letters of Sister Dorothy Stang to her Sisters, family and friends. While her letters covered a range of topics, they always ended with the same line: *Big hug and kiss to each of you.*

This collection of quotes was lovingly compiled by Sister Louanna Orth, SNDdeN.



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