

Eight Women Who Made A Difference:

WITH MINDS OF THEIR OWN

The dramatic stories of eight women who changed their worlds — Dorothy Day, Catherine de Hueck Doherty, Elizabeth of the Trinity, Pauline Jaricot, Jeanne Jugan, Satoko Kitahara, Elizabeth Seton and Teresa of Avila. With illustrations and photographs.

Boniface Hanley, O.F.M.



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About the Author

WITH MINDS OF THEIR OWN is Father Hanley's third book of biographies of heroic Christians. The others are TEN CHRISTIANS and NO STRANGERS TO VIOLENCE, NO STRANGERS TO LOVE (Ave Maria Press). Hanley, a Franciscan priest, has served in a wide variety of pastoral positions, including assignments in education and the missions. Most recently Father Hanley has served as Rector of St. Francis Church in Manhattan and pastor of St. Joseph's, a 250-year-old parish in West Milford, NJ.

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Foreword

Throughout the centuries and around the world, women have shaped the life of the church by bringing Christ's presence to the poor in the streets, to children in the schools, and to members of religious communities searching for a deeper spirituality. From sixteenth-century Spain's Teresa of Avila to twentieth-century America's Dorothy Day, the eight women profiled in this book made this kind of a difference, often at great personal sacrifice.

These women differed from each other in many ways — nationality, social class, lifestyle, vocation, and the religions in which they were born and raised — but all were committed to living the gospel of Jesus without compromise. They were mothers, single women, and nuns. Some were born Roman Catholics, others made an adult decision to join the Catholic church. Some worked within the institutional church to deepen its spirituality through the founding and reformation of religious orders and the organization of schools and charitable organizations. Others, while maintaining a link with the institutional church, worked directly with the poor and the outcasts, fulfilling Christ's mandate to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, and free the oppressed.

Often they had to overcome great obstacles and bewildering circumstances. Church authorities and even their own families and religious communities

opposed their efforts at times. While some were never recognized in their lifetimes for the contributions they made, all persevered in following God's call in their lives, regardless of setbacks and seeming defeats.

The stories of these women can inspire, challenge, and encourage us. In their struggle to find meaning for their lives, they help us discover meaning for our own.

* * * * *

Catherine Doherty remembered saying of St. Francis, "I knew I would be like him some day." The Franciscans of St. Anthony's Guild, striving to be like him too, are happy to share these stories and wish the readers "peace and good" as Francis did.

We offer special acknowledgment to those who originally brought these portraits to the Guild's magazine, *The Anthonian*: To Fr. Salvator Fink, O.F.M., who selected these subjects and captured their stories in photos; Fr. Boniface Hanley, O.F.M., who wrote the texts; Fr. John Manning, O.F.M., who researched their lives. Also to Fr. Felician Foy, O.F.M., Fr. Cassian Miles, O.F.M., Rose Avato, and Janet Gianopoulos; and Mr. James Conniff of Megadot for his efforts in making this book a reality.

May the stories of these women inspire us all to make a difference.

Fr. Kevin E. Mackin, O.F.M.
Director of St. Anthony's Guild
Paterson, New Jersey



Satoko Kitahara

Rising majestically from beneath the horizon's purple rim, the morning sun released a glistening stream of roseate light across the gray, chilly waters of Tokyo Bay. Sailors on watch aboard vessels rising at anchor in Yokohama Harbor squinted into the dawn. Stevedores and dock workers, ministering to huge merchant ships snuggled against long, gray piers, felt the sun's first warmth. In a shantytown section of the marshlands bordering the bay, ragpickers emerged from their packing-crate huts, picked up large, empty wicker baskets and trotted silently toward Tokyo's back alleys and refuse heaps to harvest the day's junk.

As the day began, that morning in July, 1951, the sun's rays could hardly have fallen on a sight more tender than that in the Tokyo marshes. A group of Japanese children, clad in rags and holding hands, stood in a circle around a huge, untidy pyramid of large milk cans. The children, like miniature Shinto priests worshipping around a gnarled and ancient tree, circled slowly from left to right around the metal tower. A young woman, herself part of the circle, led them in song. Tiny voices, sweet and light, rose up to greet the morning sun. "Oh, happy is the little child," they sang. The sun's rays bounced off the milk cans, imprinting little rainbows of color on the dull metal. Warm, pink light washed across the cheerful faces of the children.

These were the Ant Children, the despised offspring of Tokyo's outcasts, contemptuously called the Ant People. The homeless Ant People of Tokyo's grubby underside ranked lowest on the social scale of the Japanese people. On this July morning, the scorned and spurned children danced in the sun.

A man suddenly appeared and summoned the young woman, Satoko Kitahara, from the circle. Dressed in the ragpicker's uniform of a battered peak cap, loose gray shirt, and serge trousers tucked into black rubber knee boots, the man bowed graciously to the young lady. Ant Town's moral leader, he was called The Professor. He ruled a population of orphans, vagrants, dispossessed, panhandlers, welfare cases, black marketeers, alcoholics, and ex-jailbirds that squatted illegally in tin and cardboard huts on a site city planners had chosen for a municipal park. The Ant Towners, however, had successfully fended off every official attempt to drive them from their spongy turf.

Ant Town had its monuments, towers of debris strewn about the muddy paths and puddled streets. Piles of rusted tin cans, broken buckets, cast-off toys,

Ant Town children adored Satoko. No matter how much fatigue she experienced, she saw to it that the little ones did not escape their daily schoolwork, singing, and hot baths.



scorched sheets of galvanized iron, straw ropes, and rubber shoes decorated the landscape. Mounds of damp newspapers, cement bags, rusted oil drums, broken panes of glass, and automobile springs festooned the marsh grass. A World War II Quonset hut was Ant Town's major architectural feature. Some forty feet long, the building lay like a fat, exhausted dog in the morning sun. Its tin roof, jagged and battered, raised rusted iron teeth in defiance into the sky.

Before the hut's entrance stretched a small cement plaza that served as a town square. On the square's broken cement, children sang and danced around their milk-can tower on that morning of joy.

After Satoko and The Professor exchanged the requisite bows and appropriate small talk, The Professor inquired about the celebration occurring before him. "I told you, Professor," the young woman said, "the Lady would not let us down."

"I don't understand you, Satoko," he responded; "I don't know whether you are an angel or a devil."

Satoko chats with Matsui Sensei, the Ant Town guru whose wisdom and courage won him the title The Professor.

