

Vision Groups Synod Presentation: Continuing to Live the Vision

Journeys in Faith: Dorothy L. Sayers

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Read by Canon Christyn Perkons



I am Dorothy Sayers, and I have a vision. I long for the day when each of us acts intentionally to move closer to God in our acting and our thinking, and when we're able to share our faith with others we meet.

Maybe you're wondering why someone most famous for writing murder mysteries is speaking to you about this vision! After all, I'm better known for creating Lord Peter Wimsey these days than much else.

What you might not know is that I was born in a rectory: my father was then the headmaster of the Choir School at Christ Church in Oxford. While I remember the day he decided to start teaching me Latin, I do not remember a time when prayer, reading Scripture, and attending services was not an integral part of my life.

My attitudes to my faith shifted a great deal over the years, though! My parents sent me to the Godolphin boarding school in Salisbury, and I recall the mind-numbing tedium of preparing for confirmation! While the day itself was momentous—Wednesday in Holy Week, in the Cathedral—those classes on Tuesdays and Fridays dragged on for such a long time.

Then and later, it was music that I felt drawing me closer to God: singing in the Bach choir when I was up at Oxford, or at concerts, or hearing the beautiful organ music, I felt myself yearning for something I couldn't speak about well.

After taking my degree, I struggled to find meaningful work. It was after the first war, and I drifted away from the Church to a degree. I was working in advertising, and struggling to write the first of my Lord Peter novels. I fell in love with a novelist, and was dreadfully unhappy. Things rather fell apart after that. I was involved in an ill-advised relationship, and all I can say happily about that was learning to motorcycle; at the time, the arrival of my son was exceedingly difficult, what with needing to keep my position and being unmarried! I had to work rather hard to provide for him, as he lived with my cousin. I began to find solace in the beauty of worshipping in some of the Anglo-Catholic parishes in London, and the elegance with which they thought about theology and doctrine.

After publishing *Whose Body?* and beginning work on my next book, I managed to find a measure of financial stability. I also met the man who would become my husband, though we couldn't get married in the Church—he'd been divorced.

More and more, Lord Peter came to be loved both in Britain and abroad, and we had a measure of financial security. It was then that Canterbury Cathedral asked me to write a play for their festival on some religious theme. It was a bit intimidating to follow T.S. Eliot and Charles

Williams, but I had been working on another play, and I was excited for the challenge. It let me write a religious drama, and give to the character of the Archangel some of my reflections on the Trinity and creativity.

During the second war, I had the great privilege of writing some dramas from the New Testament for the BBC. Goodness, but there was such controversy about my trying to help people hear the stories with fresh ears—to imagine themselves there, for Jesus' life and to know the good news is for us and not confined to musty books! To think that hearing modern English should be shocking! I will admit that I was greatly relieved that they were broadcast, despite the hysteria in the press, and that they were so well received. I cherish my letter from the Archbishop of York speaking about how he had found my play about the Crucifixion so deeply moving.

Looking back, I have been at my happiest when at the work of integration: when I sought to bring my God-given gifts and abilities for creativity to share the joy of play, of discovery, of inquiring, and of rejoicing in the ways God continues to be made known in our lives. It's a journey that has been far from easy, but it has been about following Christ with passion and ever-renewed commitment. I pray that we all may know such joy in our own work of integration!

This work continues.