

Review of All God's Children

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Summary: Depicts the loving work of Dorothy and Bill Gauchat with "the saddest, most hopeless, most incurable of crippled children. Says she couldn't put their book down until she finished the last page." "The story is a picture of what could be done." (DDLW #915).

ALL GOD'S CHILDREN. By Dorothy Gauchat. New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1976. 180 pp., \$6.05. This review is from the foreword to the book, by Dorothy Day.

What can I say about this book—the product of joint efforts by my friends William and Dorothy Gauchat? First of all, I can say that it kept me in on a beautiful spring day, utterly absorbed, so that I could not put it down until I had finished the last page. It was a beautiful view I had from my room at the farm at Tivoli, buds red on the maple tree outside, sun glistening on dancing waves of the river; the beauty of the book I was engrossed in matched the beauty outside. It is a story of a family who, in addition to their own children, take in one by one the saddest, most hopeless, most incurable of crippled children—spastics, brain-damaged, some victims of what courts call child abuse. The Gauchats make the picture one of strange beauty because of their faith, hope and love.

During World War II, I visited conscientious objectors in a hospital for exceptional children. They served for four years, twelve hours a day, six days a week. The cutting off of government funds meant that tiny children were starving, filthy, and naked for want of the basic care a more adequate staff could provide. Millions of people have since seen the terrible sights of the wards in vast hospitals for the retarded.

This story is a picture of what could be done. It is a story of the courage, the cheerfulness, even the delight (one calls to mind Ruskin's phrase "the duty of delight") which can be a part of a life of dedicated service, such as the Gauchats.

I have visited Dorothy and Bill many times and in many seasons and have seen Christmas celebrated around the tree, with everyone participating. I've seen the beauty of the sunny little lake, where the healthy Gauchat children shared in the care of the little ones, but I did not know of the annual visit to the amusement park with its Ferris wheels, roller coasters, and carnival atmosphere, which is described so delightfully, or of the ball game they went to. There is the exciting story of the flood which disrupts their small home. Also included are tragic accounts of the visits to state schools and institutions; those are heartrending. Such glimpses of the neglect and unbearable suffering of little children forced Ivan Karamazov to reject the harmony Christ died to bring.

One of the rules of Mother Theresa of India is that the sisters pick up the children and hug them as they pass through the wards of their foundling home in Calcutta. Dorothy Gauchat, as she was showing me through the new home for thirty-five children, was doing the same act instinctively. Love must be incarnate.

“Unless you become as little children . . .” There is the same savor of all this in the Gauchat book—the warmth of caresses, the emphasis on the comforts of food, warmth, and color, the thrill of children’s games and excursions. How important this poor flesh of ours is; doomed for all of us to decay and suffer, and yet the source of delight!

The Gauchats know every facet of human suffering. I have often remembered, when I think of their own brain-damaged child and Bill’s terminal illness, what Bill said to me once; “I have understood what Bernanos was getting at in his terrible book **Joy**.” And as St. Augustine in his final conversation with Monica, at Ostia, pointed out—such understanding is a glimpse of heaven—the Beatific Vision.