

Dorothy's Last Arrest

United Farm Workers
Fresno, CA 1973
Age 75



Dorothy is arrested and escorted away by a police officer.

Photo Credit: Religious News Source

In her own words...

July 30: We left Kennedy Airport at noon for San Francisco, Eileen Egan and I. She was attending, as I too was supposed to, the 50th Anniversary of the War Resisters' International. Joan Baez had invited me to be at her Institute for the Study of Non-Violence for the week with some members of Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers' Union. When we arrived in time for the Institute's Monday Night potluck supper in Palo Alto plans had changed because of the mass arrests of farm workers who were defying an injunction against mass picketing in Kern County. There was now a strike in the vineyards as well as in lettuce fields because the growers would not renew their contracts with the farm workers and were making new contracts with the Teamsters. The strike was widespread and mass arrests were continuing...I had come to picket where an injunction was prohibiting picketing, and I would spend my weeks in California in jail, not at conferences.

August 1: Up at 2 a.m., picketed all day, covering many vineyards. Impressive lines of police, all armed. We talked to them, pleaded with them to lay down their guns and clubs...I told the other police I would come back next day and read the Sermon on the Mount to them. I was glad I had my folding chair-cane so I could rest occasionally during picketing, and sit there before the police to talk to them.

August 2: Cesar came and spoke to us about the injunction and arrests (wonder when he sleeps) and we set out in cars to picket the area where big and small growers had united to get the injunction... We were warned by the police thru the bull horns that we were to disperse, and when we refused, were ushered into the buses and brought to this "industrial farm" (which they do not like us to call a jail or prison though we are under lock and key and our barracks surrounded by riot fencing topped with barbed wire).

August 8: Today Joan Baez, her mother and Daniel Ellsberg visited us. She sang to us and the other prisoners in the yard... Her voice, her complete control of it, is remarkable.

August 12: Union lawyers visiting us say we'll be free tomorrow...All our praying seemed to bring about some results. Mr. Fitzsimmons, president of Teamsters, canceled or disavowed the contracts signed by another Teamster leader in Delano. We really know little. We do know the power of prayer, however...

August 13: We packed our bags last night and a first bus load left our farm labor camp this morning...[We were] brought to Fresno where we, with a great crowd in the park in front of the courthouse, celebrated Mass. (As I am copying these notes from my diary here in the Los Angeles' Ammon Hennacy House someone comes in bringing a newspaper, The Times, carrying gigantic headlines, "Teamsters Give Up.")...I must mention a prayer I wrote in the front of my New Testament, and hope our readers, while they read, say this for the strikers:

Dear Pope John--please, yourself a campesino, watch over the United Farm Workers. Raise up more and more leader-servants throughout the country to stand with Cesar Chavez in this non-violent struggle with Mammon, in all the rural districts of North, and South, in the cotton fields, beet fields, potato fields, in our orchards and vineyards, our orange groves – wherever men, women and children work on the land. Help make a new order wherein justice flourishes, and, as Peter Maurin, himself a peasant, said so simply, "where it is easier to be good."