

Rally in Solidarity with Catholic Sisters

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We gather today in support and with gratitude for the many Sisters who have touched and transformed our lives.

I was most fortunate to have an exceptional aunt, Sr. Nora O'Brien, who was an Adrian Dominican Sister. Like so many Sisters, my aunt was an awesome role model of a strong and wise woman who defined what it meant to act with justice. From my aunt and her life-giving community of powerful women, I learned of a Church made alive through ministering to others. And I learned the importance of confronting injustices, working to end poverty, defeating sexism, and promoting quality education for all people.

Sr. Nora also taught me to dream, to not always choose safe solutions, and to persist despite obstacles, lessons that I apply to my relationship to our Church today. My aunt would quote Langston Hughes: "Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, Life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly." Today we dream a Church that marvels at the extraordinary works of the Sisters, that values the meaningful contributions of the Leadership Conference for Women Religious, and that welcomes full participation for all people. If my aunt was here, I think her poster would proclaim "FLY SISTERS!"

In addition to my aunt, I was educated and transformed by the Sisters of Mercy at Mother McAuley High School in Chicago. As a young woman, I admired and strove to emulate these strong Sisters; rooted in faith, caring for the marginalized, and challenging young women to contribute to (and change) our Church, our communities, and our world.

Today, we stand with the Sisters - we stand firmly and passionately with the Sisters - in support and with gratitude, as we pray the words spoken in 1977 by Avis Clendenen, a former Sister of Mercy, at a cathedral gathering to respond to the Vatican's declaration excluding women from the priesthood. This time, we pray these words for and with the Sisters.

We pray,

Only you, God, can change hearts of stone to flesh
can flow fresh water out of rock
can dream in us your Kingdom.

We ask your grace—the gracious gift of your presence
to heal our wounds,
bond us as one people.

We make this prayer with tender, wounded
passionately strong hearts
named in Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.