



Art by Marcy Hall



# WOMEN WITNESSES OF MERCY

CELEBRATING THE EXTRAORDINARY WITNESS  
OF WOMEN DURING THE YEAR OF MERCY



Art by Marcy Hall

**"I choose not to  
collaborate in my own  
oppression."**

Sister  
Jeannine Gramick

## Sister Jeannine Gramick

Jeannine Gramick was born in 1942 to a Polish Catholic family in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. According to Gramick, her family was Catholic in name only, rarely attending Church, but she attended both Catholic grade and high schools growing up. It was a grade school teacher -- Sister Angela -- who first inspired Gramick's desire to join a religious order herself.

After graduating from high school, Gramick moved to Baltimore in 1960 to join the School Sisters of Notre Dame -- the order of her favorite high school teacher. As a School Sister of Notre Dame, she taught mathematics in high school in the 1960's and was an Associate Professor of Mathematics at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland in the early 1970's.

In 1971, while engaged in study for her doctoral degree at the University of Pennsylvania, Gramick was invited to attend a monthly dance hosted by the campus's Episcopal church. The associate rector of the church had convinced her to come simply to sell soda and other concessions, but accepting the invitation would place Gramick's life and ministry on a new trajectory.

It was at that dance that Gramick first met Dominic Bash, a gay man. A few weeks later, the two met again at an interfaith service and Gramick came to learn more about the pain her new

acquaintance was carrying.

Bash had been raised Catholic. He even entered the Franciscans with the intention of becoming ordained. Yet, he left the order early because he was concerned that being gay would prohibit him from being ordained a priest. In time, Bash became a hairdresser and joined the Episcopal Church. "[He] had been thrown out of the confessional one too many times," Gramick says<sup>1</sup>. Bash told Gramick that that he had found a sense of fellowship in the Episcopal Church but that he also missed the faith and church of his upbringing and asked "what is the Catholic church doing for my gay brothers and sisters."<sup>2</sup>

Disturbed by the way Dominic and so many others had been treated and anxious to help heal their wounds, Gramick agreed to help organize weekly religious services for a small group of lesbian and gay Catholics who had left the church because of the prejudice they encountered. To bolster the group's numbers, Bash began taking Gramick to local bars and clubs where he knew men and women who -- like himself -- missed being a part of the Catholic church: "I felt like a missionary. We'd find the Catholics and I would have my Catholic conversation and tell them why they should come back to church: This is your church -- don't let other people screen you out."<sup>3</sup>



Sister Jeannine Gramick lights candles in memory of LGBT murdered in El Salvador during the country's first conference on LGBT rights in 2013.

(photo courtesy of New Ways Ministry)

Gramick found her new work life-giving: "There was this feeling of great exhilaration, great joy. We made them feel very loved."<sup>4</sup> After finishing her studies at the University of Pennsylvania, Gramick returned to Baltimore to teach math at Notre Dame of Maryland. There, she continued her ministry to lesbian and gay Catholics. In the late 70's she left teaching and moved to the Washington, D.C. area to work with Rev. Robert Nugent, SDS, who had written her a letter of support upon hearing about her work. The pair began offering workshops to Catholic pastoral workers and others interested in gay and lesbian issues entitled "new ways workshops." In 1977 they went on to co-found New Ways Ministries, "a gay-positive ministry of advocacy and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Catholics, and reconciliation within the larger Christian and civil communities."<sup>5</sup>

Primarily educational in mission, New Ways Ministry quickly established itself in the U.S. Catholic community as a national resource center and clearinghouse for information and materials on the topic of homosexuality as it impacts religious issues. In addition, they lobbied for civil rights and called the Church to reach out compassionately for the inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the community of the faithful.

Their new ministry, however, was not without its opponents. In 1981, as New Ways Ministry was planning its First National Symposium on Homosexuality in the Catholic Church, Archbishop James Hickey of Washington, D.C. called Gramick and Nugent to his office. When the two refused to cancel the event, the Archbishop responded by sending letters to bishops throughout the country informing them that he had not approved of the gathering and encouraged religious orders not to attend. Despite the Archbishop's efforts, the meeting went on as planned with over 200 participants in attendance (New Ways Ministry will hold its eighth Symposium in April 2017).

Archbishop Hickey, however, continued to oppose New Ways Ministry and the work that Gramick and Nugent were doing in the LGBT Catholic community, writing letters to their superiors, trying to force them out of ministry. Gramick's order, however, stood by her side: "When we first began, my role was tenuous," Gramick remembers. "No one in the Catholic community had been assigned to gay ministry before. It wasn't even a thing. People were anxious about any sexual issues, much less homosexual ones. Those superiors were women of vision. They stood by me."<sup>6</sup>

The Vatican, however, was more responsive to the Archbishop's letters and, in 1984, ordered Gramick and Nugent to separate themselves completely and totally from New Ways Ministry. The two resigned as directors of New Ways Ministries and relocated temporarily before returning as co-founders. In 1988 the Vatican established a commission to investigate their work and writing for the LGBT Catholic community. The commission completed its work in 1994 and submitted their findings to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic life, which transferred the entire case to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which ultimately prohibited both Gramick and Nugent from engaging in ministry with LGBT Catholics in 1999.

Despite the ongoing investigation, Gramick, Nugent, and New Ways Ministry continued their work on behalf of LGBT Catholics, writing numerous publications and hosting numerous symposia, workshops, and retreats. New Ways Ministry also played an important role in the publication of the 1997 USCCB pastoral letter "Always Our Children." The organization had petitioned in 1993 for a document supportive of gay and lesbian people. And as the document was being written, members of New Ways Ministry served as readers of early drafts.

Following the 1999 order, citing his vow

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of obedience, Nugent left New Ways Ministry and returned to parish ministry. Fr. Nugent died in 2014.

Recalling the order from the Vatican, Gramick remembers, "I felt that what was being asked of me was unjust ... that lesbian and gay people are so marginalized in the Church that they need an advocate...They need someone connected to the Church institution to speak on their behalf, and I felt that God was telling me, 'There is still work that you need to do here.'" <sup>7</sup>Gramick eventually decided that she would continue her ministry on behalf of LGBT Catholics and issued a statement saying, in part, "I choose not to collaborate in my own oppression by restricting a basic human right."<sup>7</sup> Despite their support for her and her work, Gramick's superiors could not go against the wishes of the Vatican. And so, Gramick transferred to another order, the Sisters of Loretto, in 2001.

While some members of the hierarchy may see Gramick as being disobedient to the Vatican, she sees her continued work as obedience to God. "It's following the call of God," she says. "It's thinking, studying, praying, in order to come to a decision which may or not be what a moral authority teaches. It's a positive thing. It's obedience to the Spirit."<sup>8</sup>

Today, Gramick continues her work with New Ways Ministry on behalf of LGBT Catholics. She has conducted spiritual retreats and pilgrimages to holy places and shrines for lesbian and gay people, their parents, families, and friends. In 2015, the group she led on pilgrimage in Rome was given VIP seats to Pope Francis's weekly audience. After decades of being driven out of their home parishes by prejudice and prohibited from speaking on parish property in dioceses throughout the country, the invitation was a welcome change for Gramick and the LGBT Catholics she was with. "It was a great feeling of vindication, almost a euphoria that this is how the church should be," she said.<sup>9</sup> Gramick was also among those who welcomed Pope Francis to the United States at a White House reception in September of 2015.

She has traveled throughout the English-speaking world to address groups about sexual identity, advancing the judgment of the American Psychiatric Association that a homosexual identity is not a sickness

but an alternative sexual orientation. Consequently, she promotes dialogue, discussion, and education to eradicate myths and stereotypes about lesbian and gay people. She advocates the acceptance of gay and lesbian people as full and equal members of religious, civil, and social groups. She believes that only if all people are treated with dignity and respect will there be peace and harmony in the world.

Over the course of her ministry, Gramick has written and edited numerous articles and books. Her books include *Homosexuality and the Catholic Church*, *Homosexuality in the Priesthood and Religious Life*, *The Vatican and Homosexuality*, *Building Bridges: Gay and Lesbian Reality and the Catholic Church*, and *Voices of Hope: A Collection of Positive Catholic Writings on Lesbian/Gay Issues*. *Building Bridges* was translated into Italian and published as *Anime Gay: Gli omosessuali e la Chiesa cattolica*.

She is the subject of a documentary film, entitled *In Good Conscience: Sister Jeannine Gramick's Journey of Faith*, by the Peabody and Emmy award-winning director, Barbara Rick.

Many groups have recognized her work in this pioneer ministry. Some of these groups include the National Coalition of American Nuns, the Loretto Community, the Paulist Community, Call to Action; Dignity USA, the University of Notre Dame and Saint Mary's College, Pridefest America, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, and the American Psychological Association. She received the 2005 Peace Prize from the Santa Claus Foundation in Turkey for her work with sexual minorities. She was named a 2006 Laureate of the International Mother Teresa Awards for her role as a human rights activist.

Sources:

<sup>1,3,9</sup> Feder, J. Lester. "Meet The Nun Who Battled One Pope Over LGBT Ministry And Now Welcomes Another." BuzzFeed. 22 Sept. 2015. Web.

<sup>2</sup> Editors. "EDITORIAL: Gramick, Nugent Story Is Not over." The National Catholic Reporter, 30 July 1999. <[http://www.natcath.org/NCR\\_Online/archives2/1999c/073099/073099u.htm](http://www.natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/1999c/073099/073099u.htm)>.

<sup>5</sup> [www.newwaysministry.org](http://www.newwaysministry.org)

<sup>4,6</sup> Piazza, Jo. "A Catholic Nun Spent Her Life Fighting for LGBT Rights, Even Against Vatican Wishes." The Huffington Post. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 2 Sept. 2014. Web.

<sup>7,8</sup> Manson, Jamie. "Decade after Defiance, Jeannine Gramick as Hopeful as Ever." National Catholic Reporter, 11 July 2011. Web.



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# Questions for Reflection & Discussion on the Witness of Sister Jeannine Gramick

Sister Jeannine's encounter with Dominic Bash and hearing his story changed the trajectory of her life and ministry. Can you name a time in your own life that your personal experience of someone changed the way you thought about something or perhaps even changed the course of your life's work? Is someone's story currently inviting you to make such a change? How will you respond?

Despite inordinate pressure from the some bishops in the US and officials at the Vatican to leave her ministry with LGBT Catholics, Sister Jeannine continues to work for reconciliation between the hierarchy and LGBT Catholics. After the 1999 notification from the Vatican prohibiting her from engaging in ministry she discerned "that lesbian and gay people are so marginalized in the Church that they need an advocate." What marginalized communities are you being called to be an advocate for? In society? in the Church? What risk are you willing to take for their cause?

Sister Jeannine is hopeful that Pope Francis' new tone toward LGBT people is a step on the church's path towards full inclusion of LGBT Catholics in the church, despite the fact that the change in tone isn't accompanied by any change in doctrine or teaching. What are your thoughts? Do you share the same hope? Why or why not?



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“One kind of violence not often recognized is the violence of silence. After the Orlando massacre, some in our church were guilty of this kind of violence.”

**Sister  
Jeannine Gramick**

## In Her Own Words:

Sister Jeannine Gramick writes about the violence of silence in the wake of the shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

“I have been thinking about you a lot lately ... first with the news about the Loretto sisters being called to Rome. And then, of course, since the shootings in Orlando. ... At morning prayer at home we prayed for the LGBT people and their families and for a strengthening of the message of nonviolence.”

I’ve received many phone and email messages like this one lately. You see, I’m a Sister of Loretto and I’ve been involved in ministry on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Catholics for 45 years.

On June 12 came the shocking news that the most lethal mass shooting in modern U.S. history had occurred inside Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla. -- 50 people dead, including the gunman, and 53 injured.

This was by no means the first such attack. More than 40 years ago, an arson fire at a gay club in New Orleans snuffed out the lives of 32 LGBT people. Every day, LGBT people around the world are at risk because of verbal threats, intimidation and bullying, and even imprisonment, torture and death.

Often we don’t even recognize the homophobia and transphobia in unacceptable jokes or casual

comments. But subconscious, intolerant attitudes toward LGBT people fuel the kind of bizarre violence that happened in Orlando.

One kind of violence not often recognized is the violence of silence. After the Orlando massacre, some in our church were guilty of this kind of violence. Headlines the world over noted that the shooting took place in a gay club, but statements released by the Vatican press office, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Orlando’s bishop conspicuously passed over references that the people targeted were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Some bishops issued no statement at all.

Silence is violence when, as in this instance, it denies the existence of a whole category of people, people who have been targeted with physical violence because of who they are. If I don’t acknowledge your existence, I do not need to recognize your rights; I do not see that you need added protections. Furthermore, I am unable to know you or to relate to you in a meaningful way.

“Silence=Death,” the slogan of AIDS activists in the 1980s, not only questioned President Ronald Reagan’s silence about the disease, it also boldly declared that, as a matter

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of survival, silence about the repression of LGBT people must end. The violence of silence kills.

I thought again about the email from my friend who wrote to me also because the Sisters of Loretto were called to the Vatican. Fifteen U.S. communities of women religious have been contacted by the Vatican's congregation for religious life to continue conversations begun during the 2008-2014 apostolic visitation of women's orders. Four of those 15 have been identified. Three have spoken publicly about the Vatican's latest summons: the Loretto sisters, the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.

These three communities represent for me a victory of speech over silence. Church investigations of individuals or groups have usually been shrouded in secrecy, which has had disastrous consequences for the life of the church. Secrecy instills fear and enables authorities to exercise control of mind or action. When significant matters are kept secret from the faithful, church leaders cannot be held accountable for their actions, nor can the faithful engage in informed conversations about important issues.

Of course, confidentiality may be needed for certain considerations, but confidentiality is more respected if used sparingly. To the average Catholic, what church leaders choose to keep confidential seems arbitrary. Perhaps the church needs a Freedom of Information Act?

Silence can destroy any family, not only a family with LGBT persons. It can destroy a family that is not accepted at a church because of a divorced parent, or is ignored by neighbors because of a special needs child, or cannot talk about some dysfunction within it. Silence can even destroy the spiritual family we call church.

To the three religious communities we know of, the Vatican congregation has expressed concern about public dissent from church teaching. Apparently, the congregation prefers that individuals and groups keep silent if they dissent.

Rather than be alarmed, the congregation should view accusations of dissent as possible signs of vitality. How has our church been able to change over the centuries, if not by dissent? Modifications in the church's position on slavery, usury, and salvation outside the church are

the usual examples of doctrinal change all affected by public dissent.

Public dissent can stimulate in people the courage to speak honestly about their experiences. In the search for truth, there will be much diversity of opinion, many ambiguities and even confusion. Only the test of time will show what is authentic.

Pope Francis seems to encourage dissenting views. He tells youth to "make a mess" and exhorted the bishops at the Synod on the Family to speak their minds, even if they disagreed with him. I believe that Francis is depending upon the people of God to hasten needed reforms in our church, but these reforms depend upon free speech and access to information from church sources.

If our church were a democracy and this a campaign year, my yard signs and buttons would read, "Down with the violence of silence and up with a victory for speech!"



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## Questions for Reflection & Discussion

What are your initial reactions to Sister Jeannine's words? What words stand out? What words heal you? What words challenge you? What words give you hope?

Sister Jeannine names silence as one of the forms of violence that victimizes LGBT people in the church. What other forms of violence have you witnessed against LGBT people in the church?

What other persons or populations have been victim to the violence of silence?

Sister Jeannine writes, "Silence can destroy any family, not only a family with LGBT persons. It can destroy a family that is not accepted at a church because of a divorced parent, or is ignored by neighbors because of a special needs child, or cannot talk about some dysfunction within it. Silence can even destroy the spiritual family we call church." When have you personally experienced or witnessed silence as violence either against yourself or someone else? What damage did that silence cause to you, to a family, to a community, to the church?

What steps can you take to become a person and/or community that rejects silence -- especially the silence that, "denies the existence of a whole category of people?"

"I believe that Francis is depending upon the people of God to hasten needed reforms in our church, but these reforms depend upon free speech and access to information from church sources." What reforms do you believe are needed in our church? Why? How might your voice and the voice of those who are silenced help to hasten those reforms?



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“Four years on, Jeannine and I now teach one another. It is not quite equal – I help her navigate Facebook and she helps me navigate the complexities of being a disciple of Christ – but it is a friendship I cherish.”

**Bob Shine, New Ways Ministry**

## Finding our way in the troubled church we love

Lessons We Can Learn from the Witness of Sr. Jeannine Gramick, by Bob Shine

After fifty-plus years in religious life, Sr. Jeannine Gramick, SL has encountered numerous people and touched many lives in her ministry of justice and reconciliation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in the Catholic Church. I first met Jeannine a few months after college and in this reflection, I share a little of how she has impacted my own life and what I know younger Catholics can learn from this holy and humble person.

I began at New Ways Ministry during a service year with the Loretto Volunteers. The first evening at the Volunteers’ opening retreat, held at the Sisters of Loretto’s motherhouse in Kentucky, we watched a documentary about Jeannine’s life and ministry. I lay in bed that evening and, quite overwhelmed, questioned myself on how I had jumped into such deep waters. Sisters had shared their stories with us over meals and in side conversations. Theirs were stories of integrating schools and accompanying communities, of artistry and feminist witnesses, of poetry and anti-war protests. Theirs was a mission, to paraphrase their famed former superior Sr. Mary Luke Tobin, of going out to the ends of

the branches of our world because that is where the fruit resides. And I had committed to wandering out an ecclesial branch with a sister who was taking on the Catholic Church.

Events that fall would not, at first, quiet the questions from that opening retreat. Within a few weeks, I had spent a Saturday witnessing at various sites in Washington, D.C. to celebrate the Loretto Community’s 200th anniversary and helped organize Catholic events for the marriage equality campaign in Maryland. I had discovered that even the enthusiasm and energy I had at 22 could not keep pace with Jeannine and the other sisters.

With time, working alongside Jeannine and Francis DeBernardo, the executive director of New Ways Ministry, I have learned much. Four years on, Jeannine and I now teach one another. It is not quite equal – I help her navigate Facebook and she helps me navigate the complexities of being a disciple of Christ – but it is a friendship I cherish. The following are four lessons Jeannine has taught me, lessons which can aid younger Catholics like myself as we find our way in the troubled church we love.

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**“What is the Catholic Church doing for gays and lesbians?”** A young gay man named Dominic posed this question to Jeannine in 1971, and it would be this question that radically transformed her life. Jeannine began organizing home liturgies for gay people in the Philadelphia area, educating herself on homosexuality, offering some workshops, and, in just a few years, launched New Ways Ministry with Fr. Robert Nugent. Being open to Dominic’s question and tender to the pain of gay people excluded from the church led Jeannine down a path she never expected, but which came to define her life. I was not there, but I believe it was the Spirit speaking through Dominic when he asked that question. This story is a reminder that we, as Christians, must be ever present to the people around us, ever listening to voices at the margins, and ever willing to let the Other make claims on our life that may have profound consequences.

**Don’t say the church when you mean the hierarchy.** Jeannine lives committed to Vatican II’s teaching that the church is fundamentally the People of God, and that community is essential for Christian life. Before I knew Jeannine well, I thought she was a rogue figure who alone had challenged the Vatican, yet this narrative is not accurate. Her decades of ministry would not be possible without the people and communities that support her and work with her – the congregations to which she has belonged, other women religious, LGBT Catholics and their families, supporters of New Ways Ministry, theologians and scholars, and more. And Jeannine is not only supported by, but actively contributes to the communities she is in. For younger Catholics in the United States, we cannot forget how essential community will be for our journeys even if parish pews are thinning out and the hair of fellow believers’ greys. Enacting the church’s evangelical mission is not possible unless we live as the People of God: baptized as priests, called to holiness, and supporting one another whatever may come.

**The envelopes need stuffing.** On Tuesday evenings, you will find Jeannine with the New Ways Ministry volunteers who prepare the organization’s bulk mailings and then gather for pizza and camaraderie. Jeannine models what it means to be a leader who serves. Even though she is quite busy, she attends to people with kind notes and small loving acts. She willingly does the tedious but necessary tasks with everyone else. She works long hours to ensure every detail is correct, and exhibits a persistence in ministry possessed by few (and the teacher in her never wastes an opportunity to teach me a grammar lesson).

Jeannine teaches younger Catholics that seeking ecclesial reform and renewal means hard work that is hardly glamorous. We must resolve each morning to seeking a just church, steadily running the race Christ has set before us that is not even a marathon but an ultramarathon.

**“I choose not to collaborate in my own oppression.”** These words, with which Jeannine responded to the Vatican’s attempt at silencing her, are a haunting reminder to me of what being Christian entails. Being part of the church means calling the church to live more fully the Gospel that we proclaim, but people will resist this threatening call. Jeannine endured two decades of degrading investigations and punitive sanctions by church leaders because she refused to believe LGBT people are anything less than wonderfully made by God. She challenges even today the church she loves and the communities to which she belongs, exercising the prophetic office which we all share through baptism as she invites all people to be reconciled. To be Christian is to prioritize Christ against all else, and there will be times when following the decisions we make in conscience leaves us isolated, rejected, and deeply pained. But we should never collaborate in our own oppression or the oppression of others, especially when it is the church for which we are responsible that is inflicting wounds.

The widespread acceptance of LGBT people among Catholics in the United States and growing acceptance internationally can largely be attributed to Jeannine’s tireless labors. She is an incarnation of these words from Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, words which Jeannine introduced me to (they hang in a frame over her desk) and which are so powerful for Catholics who seek a reformed and renewed church:

**“All the works of God proceed slowly and in pain; but then their roots are the sturdier and their flowering the lovelier.”** Holy people are holy not because of their greatest flowering acts, but because of their quietest habits which create sturdy and deep roots. Jeannine Gramick has acted greatly in listening to Dominic’s voice and being faithful to her response even when the Vatican bore down. Yet, the person I know Jeannine to be is a person whose quietest habits in daily life are what have most catalyzed the reception of Vatican II and renewal of the Catholic Church on matters of gender and sexuality. Honored to know Jeannine as a colleague and as a friend, I conclude with this prayer:

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Radiant colors stretched across the sky,  
the rainbow is your sign of loving covenant,  
after flood waters bathed the earth, O Divine Creator.

From You, creation is breathed into being,  
from chaotic waters, infinite diversity rises,  
every person reflecting You, wonderfully made,  
every creature beloved by You, wonderfully made.

Arms stretched to the ends of the Cross' beam,  
Jesus is your sign of lasting covenant,  
after we forget how to love, O Divine Redeemer.

Slowly, creation seeks Your embrace by  
our daily labors and our bread broken,  
yet imperfect lives keep restrained the love  
You poured into our beings, love to pour out.

With lives stretched outward from within,  
we are your sign of liberating covenant,  
after we encounter the Other, O Divine Healer.

Pierced by the Other's inquiry of "Will you love?"  
our reconciling hopes foundations for new bridges,  
creating a church where God's queer people  
from margins to center come, radiant people,  
lives echoing Jesus' prayer to be One.

We are the People of God, invoking your creative breath,  
as a sacrament in the world, as an outstretched rainbow  
proclaiming anew in our renewing witness,  
Your loving, lasting, liberating covenant.  
May this be so, may we be one. **Amen.**



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PRAYER Resource

## PRAYING PSALM 139

*We are grateful to New Ways Ministry for contributing this prayer for this resource. New Ways Ministry uses this prayer in many of their retreats and workshops. The words of Psalm 139 are in boldface. Pray these words together. After a period of meditation, a reader will then speak the italicized section, and then all are invited to offer the names of people for whom they would like to pray.*

**O God, you have probed me, you know me:  
you know when I sit and stand;  
you understand my thoughts from afar.  
My travels and my rest you mark;  
with all my ways you are familiar.  
Even before a word is on my tongue, Yahweh, you know it all.**

*We pray for those seeking the gift of self-knowledge and self-realization.  
We pray for those who seek wisdom in discerning God's call.  
We pray for the ability to trust that God is leading us.*

*(all are invited to offer names of those for whom they wish to pray)*

**Behind and before you encircle me and rest your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is beyond me, far too lofty for me to reach.  
Where can I hide from your spirit? From your presence, where can I flee?  
If I ascend to the heavens, you are there; if I lie down in Sheol, you are there too.  
If I fly with the wings of dawn and alight beyond the sea,  
Even there your hand will guide me, your right hand hold me fast.**

*We pray for those who try to hide from God's presence.  
We pray for the times when we are those people.  
We pray that we and others may have the courage to live in the right hand of God.*

*(all are invited to offer names of those for whom they wish to pray)*

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**If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me, and night shall be my light" --  
Darkness is not dark for you, and night shines as the day.  
Darkness and light are but one.**

**You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb.**

*In thanksgiving for the times when we felt God's presence in our happiest times and in our saddest times.*

*In thanksgiving for our parents and families, for our teachers and mentors, for all who formed us in our lives and in our faith.*

*(all are invited to offer names of those for whom they wish to pray)*

**I praise you, so wonderfully you made me; wonderful are your works!  
My very self you knew; my bones were not hidden from you,  
When I was being made in secret, fashioned as in the depths of the earth.**

*In thanksgiving for our bodies, for our spirits, for our minds, for our emotions.*

*In thanksgiving for the unique way in which God has made us.*

*In thanksgiving for the unique people God has placed in our lives.*

*In thanksgiving for the unique experiences that God has given us.*

*(all are invited to offer names of those for whom they wish to pray)*

**How precious to me are your designs, O God; how vast the sum of them!  
Were I to count, they would outnumber the sands; to finish, I would need eternity.  
Probe me, God, know my heart; try me, know my concerns.  
See if my way is crooked, then lead me in the ancient paths.**

*Let us pray for our church and its leaders.*

*Let us pray for all whose ways are crooked and who seek paths, ancient and new.*

*Let us pray that we who are gathered here will trust that God will lead us in the way that is holy for the Church.*

Gathering together all these names and prayers, spoken and silent, let us pray as Jesus has taught us. "Our Father/Mother. . . ."



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## Be A Witness of Mercy

resources for learning & doing

### Host a Film Screening

*In Good Conscience: Sister Jeannine Gramick's Journey of Faith* visit [www.ingoodconscience.com](http://www.ingoodconscience.com) for details.

Alternately, screen Sister Jeannine's TedTalk: "Walk in Your God Shoes" and follow up with a conversation. The talk can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/KxccwisEPxo>

### Visit New Ways Ministry Online for Resources, Programs and Commentary

New Ways Ministry's home page is [www.newwaysministry.org](http://www.newwaysministry.org). Here you can learn more about New Ways Ministry and the programs and resources they offer.

New Ways Ministry also maintains a blog: Bondings 2.0 with insightful commentary on news as it relates to LGBT Catholics: <https://newwaysministryblog.wordpress.com>

### Visit the Equally Blessed Coalition

Equally Blessed is a coalition of four Catholic organizations that have spent more than 120 years working on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their families.

They seek to educate, to inspire and to prompt Catholics to take action in the church and in the wider culture on behalf of LGBT people, their families and friends. Their work as organizations and as a collective encompasses the pastoral, the political and the theological.

Visit <http://www.equally-blessed.org> to learn more.