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Ordination observations

Heidi Schlumpf | Apr. 12, 2010 NCR Today

On Saturday I attended the latest ordinations by the Womenpriests group in Chicago, which I also wrote about in the most recent issue of NCR [1]. Bishop Joan Clark Houk of Pittsburgh ordained Janine Denomme of Chicago and Marty Meyer-Gad of Minnesota as Roman Catholic priests.

Some observations:

* It was a beautiful spring day; Ebenezer Lutheran Church was packed; and the choir and music was spectacular.

* Attending were friends and family of the newly ordained, but also other supporters of women's ordination. Not everyone was comfortable being seen there. After I shook the hand of a familiar-looking woman at the Sign of Peace, I asked her if I knew her. She shook her head and said, "No, not going there." (Perhaps she recognized me as an NCR columnist/reporter?)

* Sadly, Denomme, who is being treated for Stage 4 colon and liver cancer, had to leave the ceremony during the Liturgy of the Word. But women bishops are flexible! Houk left the sanctuary to lay hands on and anoint Denomme, who was resting in an upstairs room. The entire congregation lifted their hands to pray for her.

* Obviously, not all Catholics believe these ordinations are legitimate; the Vatican automatically excommunicates the women. However, those attending definitely affirmed Denomme's and Meyer-Gad's callings. Many representatives of their respective faith communities spoke of how these already minister to so many.

* All in all, a moving and bittersweet day. I ask for prayers for Denomme as she continues to seek healing of the cancer and pain it causes her.

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[1] http://ncronline.org/news/women/women%E2%80%99s-ordination-old-news