

Denomme had a few weeks as a priest, a lifetime of service

Heidi Schlumpf | May. 25, 2010

Janine Denomme only lived five weeks as a priest, but her entire life was one of ministry and service, say those who knew her. Denomme, 45, died May 17 in Chicago of cancer. She had been ordained April 10 by the Roman Catholic Womenpriests organization, which claims apostolic succession and has ordained more than 100 women worldwide.

A former Jesuit Volunteer, social justice activist, social service provider, Catholic high school and university teacher, lay preacher, church musician, parish council member, author and spiritual director, Denomme had been active in the church throughout her life and had always felt called to priesthood, according to her mother, Mary Joan Denomme of Detroit.

"Her example of ministry taught me that there was a place not only for women -- but for gay women -- within the church," said Tina Coppens of Chicago, who joined the church with Denomme as her RCIA sponsor.

Although saddened to see her priesthood cut short, Bishop Joan Houk of the Womenpriests organization says Denomme continues to inspire. "She has made such an impression on people and was always bringing people together," she said. "I think she's doing that even in death."

Before her illness, Denomme was the director of youth programs at a center for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in Chicago. After her diagnosis with cancer, she wrote about her experiences on a blog that attracted hundreds of readers.

Denomme is survived by her partner, Cook County Circuit Court Judge Nancy Katz; her parents; her grandfather; two brothers and their families. The Chicago archdiocese refused to allow her funeral to be held at her Catholic parish, citing the automatic excommunication of women who are ordained, so she was to be buried from a United Methodist church May 22.

"It's sad, because the church is following the law very narrowly instead of being pastoral about this," said Houk, who will preside at the funeral.

K.C. Conway, who will give the homily, said she learned many things from her friend. "One big one is that the sacraments aren't the exclusive perks of a private club," she said. "Part of Janine's vocation was to deliver these gifts, already bought and paid for, at great price, to those for whom they were intended -- everybody."

Support independent reporting on important issues.



Source URL (retrieved on 07/24/2017 - 19:59): <https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/denomme-had-few-weeks-priest-lifetime-service>

Links:

[1] <https://www.ncronline.org/donate?clickSource=article-end>