NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

A call for a clemency sabbath

Mary Ann McGivern | Nov. 5, 2013 NCR Today

President Barack Obama and most governors today don't grant clemency to prisoners or pardon people carrying convictions. The president will pardon two turkeys a couple of days before Thanksgiving, but he only pardons about one in 50 of the requests submitted by men and women. President Ronald Reagan pardoned about one in three.

Maureen Fiedler [1], my Loretto sister and host of "Interfaith Voices," interviewed me on her program airing this week [2]. I'm calling for leaders of faith congregations to preach on clemency the weekend after Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving calls us to be grateful for the abundance we have been given. The day itself urges us to share our good fortune, to be merciful to those who have less.

But over the last 30 years, we have hardened our hearts, refusing second chances to men and women who have run afoul of the law, from murderers to marijuana users. I've set up a Facebook page [3] that details the racial bias of the presidential pardon process and tells the stories of some clemency seekers.

I'm hoping my interview with Maureen will be forwarded far and wide and that preachers will call us to open our hearts to mercy. The politicians will only begin to hear the cry of these very poor people if we change our own hearts and carry that cry forward.

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Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/authors/maureen-fiedler
[2] http://interfaithradio.org/Story_Details/A_Call_for_a___Clemency_Sabbath__
[3] https://www.facebook.com/pages/Clemency-Sabbath/463896947038956