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AUSCP honors grandmother for lifetime ministry in parish and community, pastor who welcomes immigrants and LGBTQ Catholics, and the co-founder of New Ways Ministries

The Association of U.S. Catholic Priests will honor three individuals with the St. John XXIII Award, to be presented at the AUSCP Assembly in Baltimore, June 20-23. Named in honor of Pope John who called Vatican II into session, the highest award of the AUSCP will be presented at the Assembly banquet, Wednesday, June 22.

The three were selected from nominees submitted by AUSCP members: Cathy McClain, a mother and grandmother who was instrumental in establishing the Safe Streets program in an area of Baltimore; Father Joe Muth, a Baltimore pastor whose parish created the Immigration Outreach Service Center to assist people with political asylum and other services; and Sister Jeannine Gramick, co-founder of New Ways Ministries.

Cathy McClain has been a part of St. Veronica Parish since she became a convert at age 10. Now as a mother of a blended family of four children and five grandchildren, she is a certified Catechist and a certified Youth Minister; she has also served as a Parish Council member, Principal of the Sunday School, RCIA Coordinator, Founder of the Gospel Choir, Cantor, Eucharistic Minister, and parish secretary. All of these jobs were performed as a volunteer.

Cathy managed a nonprofit for 26 years and focused on reducing violent crime in the Cherry Hill community. She has organized a summer camp for the past 32 years to combat learning loss during the summer as well as an annual prayer walk to consecrate the grounds where murders have taken place. She wrote a grant to establish the Safe Streets program in Cherry Hill and managed the program for its first five years. Violent crime in the community has been reduced by 68 percent.

More about Cathy McClain:

<https://uscatholicpriests.ourpowerbase.net/civicrm/ mailing/view?id=1821>

Fr. Joseph Muth was ordained in 1974 and recently retired as the long-time pastor of St. Matthew's Parish, welcoming folks of different ethnic communities from 45 different countries,

mostly immigrants and refugees. The church has a folk group, a gospel choir, and a Kenyan choir.

Fr. Joe's parish created the Immigration Outreach Service Center (IOSC) in 2000 to assist people with political asylum, status adjustment and family reunification; his parish also has an outreach to the Muslim community; and he invited LGBTQ Catholics in a group called "LEAD" to join his community. He is also active in the All Are Welcome community and his mantra for ministry is, "Come on in, we can figure it out together."

More about Father Muth:

<https://uscatholicpriests.ourpowerbase.net/civCRM/mailling/view?id=1828>

Sister Jeannine Gramick was a doctoral student in mathematics education in 1971 at the University of Pennsylvania where Dominic Bash, an alienated gay Catholic, asked her, "What is the Catholic Church doing for my lesbian and gay sisters and brothers?" The answer: Nothing.

In 1977, along with Father Robert Nugent, she established New Ways Ministry, an international Catholic ministry of justice and reconciliation for LGBT Catholics and the wider Church. Through this organization, Sr. Jeannine engages in educational and pastoral work and public advocacy. She has authored or edited hundreds of articles and books, and received many awards.

A Vatican investigation of her ministry resulted in a 1999 order from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to cease her work. Sr. Jeannine transferred from the School Sisters of Notre Dame to the Sisters of Loretto, who continued to receive letters from the Vatican to cease her LGBT ministry or be dismissed from religious life. With the election of Pope Francis, the Vatican letters ceased.

Her outreach was the subject an award-winning documentary.

https://www.imdb.com/video/vi178849561/?ref=tt_vi_t_1

In 2021, Jeannine celebrated 50 years in a ministry for LGBT people that has transformed the Catholic Church in the United States and beyond. Last December, she received a handwritten letter in Spanish from Pope Francis. Noting her anniversary as the reason for his letter, the pope congratulated her on "50 years of closeness, compassion and tenderness" in a ministry that he described as being in "the style" of God.

More about Sister Jeannine:

<https://uscatholicpriests.ourpowerbase.net/civCRM/mailling/view?id=1844>