

Sister Jeannine Gramick honored as Mother Teresa laureate

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (CNS) — Loretto Sister Jeannine Gramick has been honored as a laureate of the 2006 Mother Teresa Awards, sponsored by the St. Bernadette Institute of Sacred Art in Albuquerque.

The award, presented in November in Los Angeles, acknowledges Sister Jeannine's "role as American human rights activist, ministering to Catholic gays and lesbians," according to a news release.

"Years ago, Mother Teresa and her nuns showed great compassion and courage in opening homes for individuals who were dying with AIDS," said Dan Paulos, director of the awards, in a statement. "In the same spirit Jeannine Gramick exercises compassion to gays and lesbians who are full of life — offering them hope in a world where they are too often discriminated against."

In 1999, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ended the gay-lesbian ministry of Sister Jeannine, then a School Sister of Notre Dame, and Salvatorian Father Robert Nugent after determining that they furthered "doctrinally unacceptable" assertions "regarding the intrinsic evil of homosexual acts and the objective disorder of the homosexual inclination."

After the School Sisters of Notre Dame threatened to expel her for defying the Vatican's ban on her ministry to homosexuals, Sister Jeannine joined the Sisters of Loretto in 2001 and said her transfer to a new religious community made the Vatican's silencing no longer valid.

An announcement on the award said the Mother Teresa Awards were founded to recognize the achievements of those "who beautify the world," especially in the fields of religion, philanthropy, social action and the arts. Awards are presented to up to 33 laureates each year.

Other 2006 laureates include poet Maya Angelou; Jesuit Father Daniel Berrigan; Braille Without Borders, an organization aiding blind children in Tibet; the Dalai

Lama; former Czech President Vaclav Havel; actress Olivia Hussey, who recently portrayed Blessed Mother Teresa on film; former South African President Nelson Mandela; the Missionaries of Charity, the religious community founded by Mother Teresa; the Mormon Tabernacle Choir; Bishop Donald E. Pelotte of Gallup, N.M.; and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel.

Laureates in 2005, the first year the honors were presented, included Pope John Paul II; Mother Angelica, founder of the Eternal Word Television Network; British art critic and contemplative nun Sister Wendy Beckett; former U.S. President Jimmy Carter; actor Mel Gibson; the Little Sisters of the Poor; Catholic publisher Our Sunday Visitor; and Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu.