

Sister Attracta Kelly, OP, an attorney and director of an immigrant law program for low-income immigrants in North Carolina, was elected the next Prioress of the Adrian Dominican Sisters during the Congregation's 2010 General Chapter.

"I'm profoundly grateful and moved and in awe of your trust in me," Sister Attracta told the delegation. "I am with you truly as we work together to bring about trust and confidence in each other, respect for every human being, and respect for our universe. I count on your prayers and your support."

Sister Attracta, a native of Ireland, has used her law degree to help people who might not otherwise have a voice in the justice system. For nearly 11 years, she has directed the immigrant law program in North Carolina. She also ministered for the Jesuit Refugee Service, an international organization founded in 1980 to accompany and advocate for refugees and those who have been displaced. As a law school intern, Sister Attracta did legal aid work in Washington, D.C. for a year.

From 1986 to 1992, Sister Attracta served the Adrian Dominican Sisters as a member of the General Council with Sister Nadine Foley, OP, Prioress. She has also served as a community organizer for a low-income, African-American community in Tennessee for eight years; served in a parish in St. Bernard, Louisiana, for two years; served as a principal in Montgomery, Alabama, for six years; and taught in Florida for 10 years.

Sister Attracta said she has been influenced by many people over the years, including her parents. Her mother reminded her that "often, often, often goes the Christ in the stranger's guise." Her father taught her to "look at history from the side of the oppressed, because he had experienced being there." In addition, she said she has been moved by the African-American community she worked with in Tennessee, "who had such faith in God and such courage to stand up against the power structure, even when they knew they would be targeted." The courage of the Guatemalans and Salvadorans who fled persecution in the 1980s prompted her to attend law school, she added. Today, she is influenced by the people she currently ministers with, "who tell me of being brutally beaten, abused, raped, tortured, trafficked, bought and sold and still have the courage to speak out against injustice."

She said she received a number of calls to leadership from sisters in the Adrian Dominican Congregation. "So, believing in the workings of the Spirit in my sisters, I took these 'calls' seriously," she said. Her hopes for the next six years are that the Adrian Dominican Sisters will "have the courage to do with less and place ourselves on the prophetic edge where our founders were, and that we have the courage...to give up even our reputation if called to do so in following the example of Jesus."