

Catherine of Siena

A Woman for Our Times



Adrian Dominican Sister
Nancy Murray, OP
performs as
St. Catherine of Siena

A one-woman
performance inspiring
people of all ages.

Catherine of Siena

Contact information:

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For information about the Adrian Dominican Sisters, visit www.adriandominicans.org.

For a schedule of Sister Nancy's performances, visit www.nancymurrayop.org

Show Requirements

- \$1,500 stipend, plus housing and travel expenses (if driving, IRS allowable mileage)
- Please provide the following props for Catherine's visit:
 - Small writing table
 - Straight-back chair
 - Crucifix that can lay flat on the table
 - Small vase of flowers (a variety is preferred)
 - Large candle that can be seen by the audience and can be lifted without spilling wax
 - Matches
 - 2 Glasses of water
 - CD Player
 - Microphone
 - Bench



Marketing Materials

High-resolution jpg photos of Sister Nancy performing as St. Catherine will be emailed to you upon request. An 8" x 16" poster and 8 1/2" x 11" flyer in PDF format are also available with space to insert program information relevant to your presentation.

Suggested Program Introduction

Welcome to tonight's very special benefit performance of Catherine of Siena!

I'm (name).

We are so honored that Sister Nancy Murray has traveled here to (place of performance and city) to share her one-woman play with us.

First I must ask you to turn off your cell phones and other things that buzz audibly. There is no recording or photographing allowed during the performance tonight, and that includes camera phones. Thank you.

DVDs will be available for purchase after the show. There is a brief intermission, but the restrooms are small, so if you feel inclined, please visit them now while there's still time.

Nancy likes audience participation, so:

- Raise your hand if you are (a member of the parish(es) or organization).
- Raise your hand if you're Italian.
- Raise your hand if you attended a Catholic school.
- Raise your hand if you admire feisty, determined and care giving women who spread peace.

Nancy grew up in Wilmette, Illinois, one of nine children in the talented Murray family. After high school and a one-year stint at Rotary International, she joined the Adrian Dominican Sisters. She earned a Theater Degree and a Masters Degree in Pastoral Studies, and has worked tirelessly as a teacher of countless students at every age. Wouldn't you love to have had her for a teacher? She is most passionate about the inner city work she did for 15 years at a Latino and African American parish in Chicago.

Nancy's journey brought her here to us tonight when she started performing this play in 2000, in memorial to a friend. Requests poured in and she now travels the world sharing the story of Catherine of Siena in several languages. She hopes you will take the message of peace with you through (this holiday season) and beyond.

Now please make sure your cell phones are off, save your photo sessions for after the performance and prepare to take a journey.

Welcome! (Light candle)

Quotes

Nancy Murray:

"If you believe how much God loves you, you can change many things. Catherine's voice is needed more than ever today. The Church is in a time of struggle. The flock has been scattered and people are confused and in doubt. God is purifying us in a way that calls us to new life."

An important part of religious life was the call to love God and all of God's people. As I travel around, I see that people are hungry for a voice of truth, like Catherine's, something that makes their faith relevant. I feel that she has a voice that says, 'Don't give up on the Church. Believe in it, its struggles and pain, and be a part of making a difference.' "

The Catholic Standard and Times:

"Almost as fascinating as the life story of Catherine of Siena was the ease with which Sister Nancy stepped into that role."

The Catholic Leader:

"People of all ages have been enchanted and inspired by her presentation of the 14th century Italian saint."

St. Anthony Messenger:

"Sister Nancy uses minimal props, but somehow in the magic of theater, she conjures a believable Catherine who understood that love of God is love of neighbor ... Sister Nancy's one-woman, bravura performances enchant, inform and inspire adult parishioners and school children ... She has [performed] throughout the United States, as well as in Rome, Peru, Ecuador, Trinidad, the Philippines, Taiwan, East Timor, Santa Lucia in the Caribbean and Australia."

Audience comments:

St. John Student, Paris:

"People are still talking about St. Catherine! Your energy, insights and portrayal were inspiring and good information."

Anonymous:

"She is good. I felt I was actually there with the live St. Catherine of Siena."

"Kids are amazed when they see her. They think of saints being very pious, and always having a perfect way of speaking. They love her antics."

Fr. Gome:

"Thank you very much for bringing Catherine, her family and friends to life right before our eyes. Every transformation you did in characters, I could actually envision them and not the actor in the OP habit."

Children's responses to the show:

"It made my day."

"The performance was very very cool. I really got into the story."

"You're really good and funny."

"I really enjoyed it. It was really informative."

Press

From the Chicago Catholic

Adrian Dominican Sister Nancy Murray

Personal: To live out the mission statement of my Adrian Dominican community: Seek truth - Make peace - Reverence Life.

World: That we may individually and communally bring forth compassion, healing and new life to our world. That is our Gospel mission!

Sister Nancy Murray, a native of Wilmette IL, brings to life the Dominican Saint Catherine of Siena in live performances and on DVD.

Nancy Murray performs as Catherine of Siena

Assumption College for Sisters News • December 2006

St. Catherine Alive

Sister Nancy Murray, a talented Dominican Sister, brought Saint Catherine of Siena to our Chapel of Mary Immaculate. The audience was thoroughly engaged from the moment she entered in her ancient Dominican habit. Saint Catherine addressed the hundreds of people present and dialogued with several individuals, particularly children. An excellent transmitter of imagination, she had everyone enveloped in her time travel back to 14th Century Siena. The reenactment of her childhood culminated with a delightful Tarantella danced with the children of the audience.

As Catherine evolved in her

religious life, she brought to reality walking the road of Life with one step for Service to God and the other step for Service to Others. Catherine and her followers traveled on foot for many months to convince the Pope to leave France and return to his beloved Italy to help ease the burdens of his people from the ongoing wars. Catherine played a major role in history by her efforts to re-unify the Papacy in Rome.

Catherine of Siena died at the age of 33; her body was buried in Rome. Her head was returned to Siena where many miracles were attributed to it; it reposes still at the Church of Saint Dominic.

Sister Nancy Murray has the ability to capture the audience from the moment she enters. With her audience interaction, everyone is readily immersed into every aspect of Catherine's life. As Sister Nancy is gifted in bringing us back seven centuries, she is equally diligent in bringing the lessons of Catherine's life to us in bringing the lessons of Catherine's life to us in the present: service to God is nothing without service to others; injustice must be addressed by each of us. How fitting that so many new friends of ACS seated in the audience heard the same message our students, staff and Sisters live everyday.

Posted from the Daily Record newsroom

Performing is a family habit

Nun's portrayal of St. Catherine has a fan in brother Bill Murray

BY ELLEN S. WILKOWE
DAILY RECORD

While Oscar contender Bill Murray has made his mark on the big screen (and golf), his sister Nancy – wait, make that Sister Nancy Murray – has been engaged in some whirlwind performances of her own.

Come Sunday, she will add the Assumption College for Sisters in Mendham to her growing list of audiences who welcome her portrayal of St. Catherine of Siena.

"I've been on tour for quite a few years now," Sister Murray said in a phone interview from the Convent of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Chicago. "I just spent seven weeks in Australia, which was absolutely phenomenal. There's 108 countries with Dominican ministries. And you stay with a Dominican family when you go."

Such is the life less ordinary of a Dominican nun, one that she hopes to bring home through her role of St. Catherine.

Born in 1347 to a large Italian family, Catherine Benincasa took a vow of virginity at age 7 and was relegated to the role of domestic servant, a punishment instilled by her mother during her early and rebellious adolescent years. Catherine embraced solitude and prayer, and employed a fasting and sleep deprivation regimen.

At age 16 she became a lay member of the Dominican order and devoted herself to charitable work for the poor and sick and to counseling prisoners. She is most remembered for her writings and for her diplomatic effort that helped bring an end to the Avignon papacy.

Based on a script written by Sister Murray's late friend and former teacher Sister Kathleen Harkins, the two-hour play is based on recent translations of 400 letters authored by St. Catherine in which she boldly chastises popes, cardinals and princes with whom she differed on political and church issues.

"When I got the book of interpretations, I saw a personality there," Sister Murray said. "She had spunk, humor and feistiness and was much more alive than the false pious image of a saint."

Through the play, Sister Murray hopes to depict more of Catherine's outspoken personality and draw parallels between the wars, scandals and politics of the 14th century and the realities of the 21st century.

"St. Catherine is one of my personal favorites," said Sister Mary Joseph, president of Assumption College for Sisters. "She is one of the few women doctors of the church. She is renowned for her work that reformed the church and being feisty with the popes."

Sister Mary Joseph learned about Sister Murray's performance through the web site for her community, the Adrian Dominican Sisters, and invited her to New Jersey. No stranger to the Murray clan, sister Mary Joseph praised Bill Murray, whom she met two years ago, for his generous donation to the school.

"We are delighted to have Sister Nancy Murray with us since her family has a long-standing relationship with the Sisters of Christian Charity," she said. "We look forward to this performance because Sister Nancy travels worldwide with it and it's very widely acclaimed."

With two Illinois performances on her schedule, including one today, Murray was anticipating Saturday's journey to New Jersey.

"I've been there before at Caldwell College and St. Peter's in Jersey City," she said. "I'm sorry I missed the Bears' return to the



Sister Nancy Murray portrays St. Catherine of Siena in a one-woman show.

Meadowlands (Sunday) with the Giants. And then there's the Jets. Do I have the teams right?"

Born in 1947 and raised in the Chicago suburb of Wilmette, ILL., Sister Murray is one of nine children born to Edward and Lucille Murray. Aside from actor Bill Murray, her other siblings are Brian Doyle-Murray, Edward, Andy, John, Joel, Peggy and Laura.

Her heart set on nursing, Sister Murray changed course when a guidance counselor chastised her math and science grades..

"My mother was always saint, 'You want to be a nurse, go change your brothers,'" she said. "I'd put this white towel on my head and pretend I was Clara Barton or Florence Nightingale. And when I read 'Farewell to Arms,' I thought I wanted to be an Army nurse."

As she explored career options, the seeds of drama had already taken root.

"About 95 percent of our community were teachers," she said. "I knew I didn't want to correct papers for the rest of my life."

Attempting to quell rumors that the Peace Corps rejected her application, Sister Murray said that she deliberately never mailed in the completed version.

"I wanted to try the Peace Corps out but wasn't sure if I would get too homesick," she said. "Being the oldest daughter and being involved in raising my siblings, I thought I'd get too lonely – wit ha two-year commitment."

Instead she made a lifetime commitment to the sisterhood, which has afforded her the same travel opportunities as the Peace Corps.

In 1966, Sister Murray entered the Dominican Order in Adrian, where she majored in drama.

"When they asked me to pick a major I thought, 'Major? don't I have to be a nun first?'" she said.

"They asked me what I was good at and I said, 'I don't know. Drama.' And they said, 'OK, you'll be a drama major.' This saved my vocation."

She completed her degree in drama at Barry University in Miami and fondly recalls her first time "out of habit," and experimenting with liturgical dance.

"Everyone had on leotard and tights. I, too, had on leotards, tights and a house coat and veil," she said. "But I didn't care. I loved being there. I was the only sister in class."

Sister Murray also earned a master's degree in pastoral studies from Loyola University in Chicago.

She came full circle, having returned for 13 years to teach drama, dance and theology at her former high school, Regina Dominican High School in Wilmette, also serving as its campus minister.

"The girls went there – me, Peggy and Laura," she said. "And the five brothers went to Loyola (Academy), except Andy. When he was 14 years old, he told my mom he wanted to go to public school because he wanted to be a chef and they didn't have those courses at college prep."

It is immediate family, in addition to her 960-member sisterhood, that keeps Sister Murray grounded.

"We try to see each other as much as we can," she said. "When my mother died in 1988 and they closed the casket. I thought, 'Are we closing you guys out too?' We were scared we would never see our brothers because they would call mom, not their sisters."

After her Mendham performance, Sister Murray will go east to Saddle river for a show at St. Gabriel's church; then to Endwell, N.Y., at Our Lady of Angels church, and to The Prout School in Wakefield, R.I.

She plans on spending Thanksgiving in Saddle River with her brother, she said.

Most of her siblings have attended her performance repeatedly and plan on catching her again on the road.

"Billy and his wife and five kids have seen it the most," she said.

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Local News

Bill Murray's sister making a name for herself on stage

Sr. Nancy Murray stars in one-woman show on life of St. Catherine

By Susan Oxley

Special to the Catholic Herald

RACINE — Dominican Sr. Nancy Murray has made a career out of performing. Unlike her famous sibling, comedian and actor Bill Murray, it's not something that has yet brought her worldwide celebrity, but she's getting there.

Sr. Murray portrays St. Catherine of Siena, patroness of the Dominican Order, in more than 200 one-woman presentations she's given to date. St. Catherine lived in the 14th century, a time with parallels to the present day, said Sr. Murray in a telephone interview with the Catholic Herald after a performance she gave in April in Racine. There were wars and scandals in the church. There was a fearsome disease with no cure, the bubonic plague — the AIDS of yesteryear.

"Catherine had the courage to speak out," said Sr. Murray. "She was able to influence so many political and church leaders by her wisdom, love and truth."

Sr. Murray described her portrayal of Catherine as a "new form of preaching." her visit to Racine included a performance at St. Catherine High School as part of the school's 140th anniversary celebration. Sr. Murray's appearance was a gift to the school from Sr. Carol Wester, president of the Racine Dominicans.

Sr. Murray's journey to the role of St. Catherine began with dominican Sr. Kathy Harkins, a friend and mentor. Sr. harkins, Sr. Murray's drama teacher in college, began the ministry of portraying strong religious women, said Sr. Murray. After Sr. Harkins' death, Sr. Murray took her place as St. Catherine of Siena on a panel during the Dominican Leadership Conference in 2000. "At the time, I was working in inner city Chicago with the poor," said Sr. Murray. "My General Council said that I should carry on (Sr. Harkins') legacy."

Sr. Murray didn't expect performing to become a full time ministry. In April this year, she performed in Ohio, Wisconsin, New York and New Jersey.

Last year, she performed at the first Symposium of Catherine of Siena in Rome. Later this summer, she will take the show overseas, to the Philippines, Peru, Pakistan and Taiwan, some of the 102 countries where Dominican sisters minister. She performs in English and Spanish.

Sr. Murray grew up in Wilmette, Ill., the oldest of nine children, with six brothers and two sisters. In addition to Bill, known for his film work in "Groundhog Day," "Ghostbusters," and "Lost in Translation," to name a few, another brother, Brian Doyle-Murray, is an actor/writer who began his professional performing career at Chicago's Second City comedy troupe, and co-wrote the 1980 comedy hit, "Caddyshack." He appeared in several films including "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation" and "Groundhog Day."

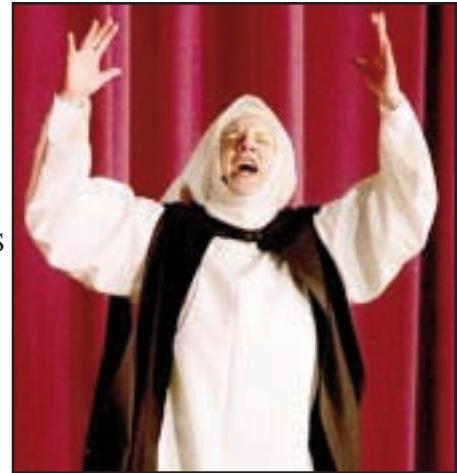
"My own family life allowed me to relate very much to Catherine of Siena," Sr. Murray said. In her performance, she strives to capture Catherine's personality, describing her as a "feminine role model" and a "restorer of unity to the church."

Sr. Murray also has connections to Milwaukee. She was taught at St. Joseph in Wilmette by the School Sisters of St. Francis whose motherhouse is in Milwaukee. Following her graduation from Regina Dominican High School in Wilmette, she worked at Roatry International headquarters in Evanston, Illinois. "The work encouraged my love for mission," she said.

She entered the Adrian Dominicans in 1966, and earned a bachelor's degree in theater from Barry University in Miami. she also holds a master's degree in pastoral studies from Loyola University in Chicago.

Sr. Murray previously served a vocations director for her congregation. She also taught drama. She says she learned Spanish "on the streets of Chicago," when she served as a youth minister and pastoral associate at St. Sylvester's in Humboldt Park, Ill. "Each ministry prepares you for the next," she said.

"Now, I'm traveling all over the world, performing in habit," she said.



Sr. Nancy Murray performs a one-woman skit on the life of St. Catherine of Siena, during a celebration of the 140th anniversary of St. Catherine High School, in April in Racine. Murray is the sister of actor Bill Murray. (Catholic Herald photo by Ron Kuenstler)