

The Spirit of Sr. Dorothy Stang Award



Dorothy Mae Stang, a native of Dayton and a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur, was murdered in Anapu, in the state of Pará, in the Amazon Basin of Brazil in February 2005. She was outspoken in her efforts on behalf of the poor and the environment.



Sister Dorothy was sent to Brazil nearly 40 years ago along with four other Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. In 1966 the Sisters established a new convent at Coroatá in the state of Maranhão. As the Sisters learned about the oppression of the farmers at the hands of landowners, they began to teach the people about their rights as human beings.

In the early 1970s, the Brazilian government offered land in the Amazon region to farmers who wished to move there. They were given land if they could develop it in a sustainable way. It was the beginning of a new life that the poor farmers embraced. As they moved into the interior, Sister Dorothy followed, teaching them ways to live from the land while recycling the resources of the forest. Her ultimate dream was to have a certain area of the land designated as a federal reserve where the poor farmers would always be safe; where they could till the soil and establish their own income-producing businesses through sound, sustainable development; and where the farmers and their families could always live in peace and with dignity. It was a simple dream with opposing consequences: while she was recognized globally for her work in defending the human rights of the poor, she became a target for those who wanted her work stopped. As threats to her life became more frequent and brazenly open, some suggested that it might be time for Sister Dorothy to leave Brazil. She disagreed. "I am grateful to Notre Dame for not asking me to leave," she once wrote. "This shows we are aware of the needs of the poor. The Sisters have said they are worried about my safety. It is not my safety, but that of the people which matters."

For Sister Dorothy it was always about the people. In a letter home Dorothy stated, "I don't want to flee, nor do I want to abandon the battle of these farmers who live without any protection in the forest. They have the sacrosanct right to aspire to a better life on land where they can live and work with dignity while respecting the environment"

On the morning of February 12, 2005, Dorothy and her friend, Cicero, woke up early to walk to a community meeting to speak about the rights for the Amazon. Cicero was delayed and was walking a bit behind Dot. As Dot walked, she was blocked by two armed men. They asked if she had any weapons, and she told them that the only weapon she had was her bible. She then read a passage from the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit..." Dot was murdered that day in that forest by those men, while she read to them from the Holy Gospel.

Dot, as she was called by her family, friends and most locals in Brazil, is often pictured wearing a t-shirt with the slogan, "*A Morte da floresta é o fim da nossa vida*" which is Portuguese for "*The death of the forest is the end of our life.*"



Through the people, her spirit and hope will forever live on.

At her memorial Mass, Archbishop Pilarczyk said, "We celebrate often Masses for martyrs from the past. But today, we are celebrating Mass for a martyr whose blood is still warm. Today, her spirit continues to inspire the poor and vulnerable of Brazil to fight for their own dignity and to safeguard God's creation. Sr. Dot's life is an example for all of us of Christ's good news proclaimed in the 21st century."



The Spirit of Sister Dorothy Stang Award Parish Nomination Form 2018

Awarded to a parish staff member or youth/adult parishioners active in social justice ministry

Granted by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Offices for Mission, Catholic Social Action, Youth Evangelization & Discipleship, Young Adult Evangelization & Discipleship, and Evangelization & Discipleship



Purposes of the award:

- To keep alive the ministry and memory of Sister Dorothy Stang that included her Christ-like solidarity with the poor, her care for the earth and her love for Jesus and His mission;
- To encourage members of our archdiocese to study/teach about Sister Dorothy and encourage others to follow in her footsteps by promoting environmental consciousness, solidarity and cross-cultural mission and ministry;
- To honor parish ministers and parishioners who exemplify the values of Sister Dorothy through their social justice ministry and teaching.

Criteria for the Award:

Nominees may be a parish minister or youth or adult parishioners

- The person must have demonstrated Christ-like solidarity with the poor
- Care for the Earth
- Have applied Catholic Social Teaching in cross-cultural service or their teaching ministry.

Nominator:

Your Name

Your Parish.....

Email address.....

Phone Number.....

Nominator should be in a direct working relationship with the nominee and be able to help arrange for the time and place of the presentation.

Please submit this form and the Nomination Form to the Archdiocesan Mission Office by April 7, 2018.

Mail: Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Mission Office, 100 E. 8th St., Cincinnati, OH 45202

OR Email: mission@catholiccincinnati.org.

Award Presentation: A representative from the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur or one of the sponsoring Archdiocesan Offices will present this special award at an appropriate time as decided by the parish.

For questions/comments: Contact the Mission Office at mission@catholiccincinnati.org or call 513-421-3131 X 2632.



