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Ministry



Adrian Dominican Sr. Jamie Phelps died Nov. 22 at age 84. Courtesy of the Adrian Dominicans)



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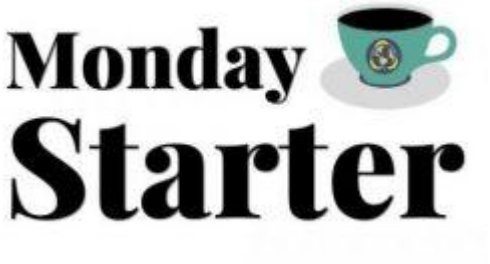
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Editor's note: *Global Sisters Report's Monday Starter is a feature from GSR staff writers that rounds up news from or about women religious that you may otherwise have missed.*



Adrian Dominican Sr. Jamie Phelps, a revered theologian, advocate for social and racial justice, and passionate promoter of Black Catholic studies died Nov. 22. She was 84.

Phelps was a founding member of the National Black Sisters Conference, one of the founders of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana, a longtime member of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and served as a consultor to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as they wrote their pastoral letter on racism.

"The significance of Sr. Jamie Phelps' pioneering scholarship and strategic administrative ability cannot be overstated," said M. Shawn Copeland, professor emerita of Boston College's theology department, in the Adrian Dominicans' obituary of Phelps. "She has made a substantive, radical, and creative difference in how we Black Catholics think of ourselves, think of God, think of Church, and think of Black theology."

Copeland collaborated with Phelps at the Institute for Black Catholic Studies and in the Black Catholic Theological Symposium for more than 45 years.

"Sister Jamie's theological work is intellectually imaginative, demanding, passionate, and uncompromising; moreover, it is grounded in rigorous historical research, balanced in exposition and analysis, nuanced in judgment," Copeland said in the obituary. "She will remain a major force in the thematization of Black Catholic theology."

Related: Q & A with Jamie Phelps, sharing the gift of preaching

Phelps entered the Adrian Dominican Congregation in 1959, taking the religious name of Sr. Martin Thomas. She took her final vows in 1966, becoming the first Black sister in the congregation.

She earned a bachelor's degree in sociology, a master's degree in social work, a master's degree in theology and a doctorate in systematic theology. She was given an honorary doctorate from the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis in 2016, and in 2022 the Adrian Dominicans endowed the Sr. Jamie T. Phelps Scholarship Fund at the Institute for Black Catholic Studies.

She was given the Harriet Tubman Award by the National Black Sisters Conference in 1999, the Ann O'Hara Graf Memorial Award by the Women's Consultation in Constructive Theology of the Catholic Theological Society of America in 2010, the How Beautiful Are Their Feet Award by the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference in 2016, and in 2023 was recognized as "Mother of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies."

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"Sister Jamie is one of our giants — a mother, a teacher, a scholar, and a faithful daughter of the Black Catholic Church," said Fr. Kareem Smith, president of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, in her obituary. "Through her witness, her voice, and her decades of service, she has helped shape our theological imagination and has strengthened our commitment to serve our people with courage and love. Many of us stand on her shoulders."

Sr. Elise García, prioress of the Adrian Dominicans, said Phelps will be dearly missed.

"The Adrian Dominican Sisters have been deeply blessed by Sr. Jamie's joyful, challenging, and transformative presence among us, calling us to fully live Gospel

imperatives in our Dominican sisterhood," García said in the obituary. "She was a Dominican preacher through and through who played an indelible national leadership role in raising up Black Catholic Studies as an essential field of study for all Catholics. Her love and passion for the common good of all God's people are an enduring legacy — calling us all to keep carrying on."

Plans call for a vigil service at 7 p.m. Eastern on Dec. 2 and a funeral Mass at 10:30 a.m. Dec. 3; both will be livestreamed.

Pilgrimage to remember sisters, laywoman martyred in 1980

About 30 pilgrims are traveling to El Salvador to mark the 45th anniversary of the four U.S. churchwomen martyred on Dec. 2, 1980.



Springfield Dominican Sr. Anita Cleary is among 30 pilgrims who will travel to El Salvador to mark the 45th anniversary of the four U.S. churchwomen martyred on Dec. 2, 1980. (Courtesy of Dominican Sisters of Springfield)

The trip is scheduled for Nov. 28 to Dec. 6, with a smaller group traveling on to Honduras Dec. 6-10. Maryknoll Srs. Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline Sr. Dorothy

Kazel, and Maryknoll lay missioner Jean Donovan were kidnapped, raped and murdered by government soldiers. The government targeted religious for their work with people living in poverty, work they saw as in league with the rebels they labeled as communists.

Pilgrims will visit the site of the assassination of the church women, as well as the sites where St. Oscar Romero and six Jesuits were killed. Romero was assassinated while saying Mass in San Salvador in March 1980. The Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter were gunned down by a Salvadoran military squad in 1989. Pilgrims will also visit El Mozote, the site of a horrific massacre in 1981 of more than 1,000 women and children.

The United States government was providing military aid, training, and political support to the Salvadoran military and right-wing death squads who carried out the atrocities.

The pilgrimage is cosponsored by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the SHARE Foundation, a U.S.-based organization that strengthens mutual accompaniment with Salvadoran people in the U.S., El Salvador, and Honduras.

One of the purposes of the pilgrimage is to accompany the women and families served by SHARE who have been deported from the United States after decades of living here. In collaboration with the Houston-based Sisters of the Incarnate Word, SHARE serves deportees with programs including health care, psychological care, job training and organizational skills.



Salesian Sr. Seena Joseph stands with the Derozio Award at Chandigarh, northern India. The national award recognizes her excellence as an educator. (Courtesy of Seena Joseph)

Salesian nun among winners of top national education awards in India

Salesian Sr. Seena Joseph from Kerala was among four school principals in India honored with top national awards for education and human enrichment this year.

The Derozio Awards were conferred Nov. 21 in Kozhikode, India, by the Council for Indian School Certificate Examination.

Joseph, the principal of Auxilium Nava Jyoti School at Kunnamangalam on the outskirts of Kerala's Kozhikode town, has served in education for 25 years.

The award committee described the awardees as educators who exemplified "extraordinary dedication, bold innovation, and deep human impact."

Joseph, 53, said she felt happy and honored to receive such a prestigious award, a recognition of her school's service to the needy youth and children.

"I am representing all the Catholic religious who contribute to the education of children and the youth of today," she told Global Sisters Report by phone after receiving the award.

Joseph's career has been focused on creativity, skill development, moral formation and academic formation in her school, as well as various youth centers she is associated with, leading to the advancement of hundreds of young people in rural and semi-rural areas.