

# PeaceMaking

## NEWS BRIEFS

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### **Sr. Maria Goretti Beckman to be honored with PCM's 2010 Purple Ribbon for Peace Award** *by Pat Valaer, PCM St. Council Member*

Sister Maria Goretti Beckman, or "Goretti" as she is affectionately known, was born during the Great Depression. When their parish priest asked what her mother had, Goretti's father jokingly replied, "We got a dishwasher!" With these words, a true servant of God entered the world and began life with a smile and a helping hand.

Coming from a large family, Goretti learned valuable peacemaking skills early in life from her parents. Besides raising their nine children, the Beckmans cared for needy children throughout the Depression and assisted many neighbors in their small, rural community. Service for Goretti became a way of life.

Sixty years ago Goretti joined the Grand Rapids Dominicans and served the Church as a teacher, principal, director of religious education, pastoral associate and pastor. Bishop Kenneth Untener personally asked Goretti to serve as administrator of St. Joseph's Church in Bay City during the absence of their pastor.

It was during these years that Goretti met our beloved Helen Casey. Helen invited her to serve on the PCM State Council which she did with enthusiasm, creative energy and the ability to keep council members in high spirits with her keen wit and incomparable sense of humor.

Goretti's passion for peace led her to join the resistance opposing the nuclear arms race. She participated in many actions at Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Oscoda, MI and served time in Bay County jail as a result. Ironically, several of the jail guards were her former students.

Goretti's nonviolent peacemaking efforts have taken her to many parts of the country. In Nevada, she stood in the desert with the Shoshone Indian Nation as they called for the return of their sacred land from the United States government, which had seized and desecrated it with the testing of nuclear weapons.

Demonstrations calling for the end of nuclear proliferation have found her at the gates of Williams International in Walled Lake, MI and at the U.S. Naval Base in Kingsbury, Georgia. She has joined hands and prayed with members of the "Women's Encampment Against the War" in Seneca, NY, and marched through the streets of Washington, D.C. to protest the institutions and ideologies that oppress our world. She has been arrested in front of the White House, only to be released and arrested again for continued acts of nonviolent resistance.

Today Goretti serves on the Boards of the Women's Center in Bay City and an inner city charter school in Saginaw where she is working with the teachers on developing nonviolent environments at school and at home for every student. She is involved with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious who are presently dealing with issues related to Afghanistan, Immigration and Nuclear Disarmament.

Goretti has strived throughout her life to "keep the spirit of her parents alive in all that she said and did." You, oh, good and faithful servant, have done that and so much more! It is with love and gratitude that we honor Sr. Maria Goretti Beckman with the Pax Christi Michigan 2010 Purple Ribbon for Peace Award at the PCM St. Conference on March 27 at Mercy High School (See details, registration info and brochure at: [http://www.paxchristimi.org/state\\_conference.htm](http://www.paxchristimi.org/state_conference.htm) ).