A nun's secret ministry brings hope to the transgender community

by Nathan Schneider (/profiles/s/nathan-schneider.html)
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Nathan Schneider explores the unresolved challenge of transgender identity for the Catholic Church and one woman’s courageous, life-saving response.


1. Loved by God

Maureen Osborne's mind started to wander. This was 2001, at a conference of the organization now called the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, which took place that year in Galveston, Texas. Several hundred people filled the room. Another panel, another question-and-answer period. Osborne is a Philadelphia-based psychologist, and at the time more and more of her therapy practice was focusing on patients struggling with gender identity. There was a lot to take in at these panels, not all of it useful. And then something caught her attention.

“I heard, without looking or seeing, a woman’s voice,” she remembers. “She was publicly apologizing to all the transgender people in the world for the damage done to them by the Catholic Church.” Though not trans, Osborne had grown up Catholic and
Osborne’s head turned. At the microphone where people were asking questions, there was a small woman with a determined posture, prominent cheekbones and close-cropped dark hair beginning to gray. Her intonation betrayed a drawl. She went on to say that she was a nun, and had begun ministering in the trans community and had come to the conference to learn how to be better at it. There was a standing ovation.

“I was speechless,” Osborne says.

Call this nun Sister Monica, though that’s not her real name. At the request of her congregation, her name can’t be used here. Nor can the congregation be named; U.S. women’s congregations have been under fresh scrutiny from the Vatican in recent years, in part because of the allegedly “radical feminist themes” in their theology. But more than any theology, it was encountering the lives of transgender people that turned this sister into a radical.

After the session, Osborne was one of the many who clustered around Monica to meet her. In the years since, she has sent more than a dozen of her clients the nun’s way. Osborne tries to help her clients reconcile with their loved ones during the transition process, which can be especially hard when old-time religion becomes an excuse for rejection and disownment. In those cases, a nun can do what secular therapy on its own cannot. At the very least, Osborne might ask Monica to pray — say, about her client’s upcoming coming-out to a Catholic spouse — and then forwards along Monica’s promise to do so.

“It’s a little unconventional, clearly,” Osborne admits.

Monica has welcomed trans people into her home for retreats, and helped them to pray, and taken them out to dinner dressed, for the first time in public, according to the gender they know themselves to be. She often stays in touch with them for years on end. “Her basic message,” Osborne says, “is to let them know that they are loved by God and that they are meant to embody exactly who they are.”

Word about Monica passes discreetly from person to person, through friends like Osborne and at conferences like the one in Galveston. Her presence has allowed Catholics long estranged from the church to start going to mass again, to regain their faith. For others, it has made faith seem possible for the first time.

Because of her, for instance a man who’d been raised as a girl in a non-religious household decided to keep his given name, Christiane, as a middle name: Christian. That word started to mean something good for him. “She opened the gate up so much for me,” he says.

Monica has healed souls and saved lives. Yet the leadership of the Catholic Church she serves acts as if her ministry doesn’t exist.
When she began working with the trans community in the late 1990s, Monica could confidently say, when asked about the official Catholic position, “Nothing, yet.” She counted that as a blessing. If the church did declare something, given its track record with lesbian and gay issues, it was not likely to make transgender lives any easier.

Then, one morning in January 2003, Monica turned on her computer to find frenetic emails appearing from trans Catholics she knew around the country. They linked to an article on the Catholic News Service website: “Vatican Says Sex Change Operation Does Not Change a Person’s Gender.” Her friends begged to know what this meant for them.

The article told of a document that had been produced in 2000 and sent “sub secretum” — secretly — to church leaders around the world about how to handle cases of sexual transition. The document reportedly counsels that the sex stated on baptismal records should not be changed for trans people, whether there is surgery involved or not. Transsexuals cannot validly enter into marriage. On the basis of mental instability, they shouldn’t be considered for religious orders. Their condition is to be treated as a species of psychosis, above all; the document did nevertheless allow that reassignment surgery might be morally licit if needed to treat an especially far-gone patient.

Monica set off in search of the document itself. She asked everyone she could think of and has yet to find it. Even a big-city bishop who quietly encourages her work didn’t have a copy. The best she could do was track down a Latin version of a canon law journal article upon which the document was based, which a friend of hers translated, painstakingly, into English. The author of the text was Urbano Navarrete, a Jesuit priest from Spain and former rector of the elite Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. When it appeared in 1997, he was 77 years old. Navarrete died in 2010, three years after Pope Benedict XVI made him a cardinal; the pope sent a telegram of condolences and preached at his funeral.

Catholicism is sometimes accused of forsaking the material for the spiritual, but not here. Navarrete accepts solely the most straightforward visible and genetic evidence at birth for determining a person’s sex — an “objective reality” compared to any mere
“perceived sense” of a conscious adult or child. For laypeople who perceive a gender identity different from that presumed when they’re born, the article draws harsh lines barring them from marriage or the priesthood; regarding clergy, at least, it is measurably gentler, advising a solution for them “which heals, as far as possible.” Monica doesn’t generally share this text with those whom she is trying to help.

A harder blow to the Catholic trans community came a few years later, just before Christmas in 2008. In the midst of a holiday reflection on the highlights of his year and the nature of the Holy Spirit, Pope Benedict denounced what he called the “manipulation” of human sexuality. He likened those who contradict a strict gender binary to those who burn down rain forests. Then in 2012, again at Christmas, Benedict took up the subject once more. “People dispute the idea that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity,” he said. Media headlines announced another attack on the trans community — even if it’s trans people who struggle more than anyone to live according to what they take as their given nature. Again Benedict compared his perception of the “new philosophy of sexuality” with environmental destruction.

At the time, Mateo Williamson had just arrived in Florida to undergo gender-confirming surgery. He is a college student (double-majoring in Spanish interpretation and microbiology) who transitioned two years ago, and he met Monica soon after that. Williamson grew up in a strenuously Catholic family, an altar server since he was 8. He loves his faith and wants to keep loving it, though his parents and priests haven’t always made that easy. They taught him to feel that wanting to pick up a football was not just unladylike, but a grave sin. The news of Benedict’s speech brought childhood horrors flooding back.

“It was heartbreaking for me,” Williamson recalls. He wondered, “Why now? Why right around Christmas?” Another of Monica’s trans friends, an electrical engineer in his 40s, marks Benedict’s words as the reason his Catholicism lapsed.

Pope Francis I has shifted the Vatican’s tone on sexual diversity somewhat; further Christmas condemnations seem unlikely to be coming from him. “Who am I to judge?” he famously asked with regard to good-willed gay people. The mother church of his Jesuit order in Rome held a much-publicized funeral in January for a murdered homeless trans woman, though he has yet to speak about living transgender people specifically.

There is a lot more to the Catholic Church than ponderings emanating from the Vatican. Williamson says, in his experience, “the Catholic Church is one of the most affirming groups toward LGBT people” — in the pews, he means, not the hierarchy. A study by the Public Religion Research Institute found that U.S. Catholics affirm a rather vague statement about transgender rights at a rate somewhat higher than the national average.

James Whitehead is a theologian who teaches at Loyola University in Chicago. In recent years he and his wife, Evelyn, a psychologist, have devoted themselves to understanding the transgender experience in Catholic terms. They had been studying lesbian and gay issues for years, and as they sought out trans people it struck them how familiar the arc of their lives seemed.

“This is the same old story,” he says. “The kind of transition that trans people are talking about is very similar to the journey of faith through darkness and desert that
Hints and echoes of what we now speak of as gender transition lie scattered throughout Christian tradition. An Ethiopian eunuch is the first person baptized in the Book of Acts, and the third-century theologian Origen castrated himself after reading Jesus’ remark about those “who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” Stories of ancient ascetics recall women “surpassing” their gender through spiritual advancement, or by simply disguising themselves as men. In the Middle Ages, St. Joan of Arc was executed for refusing to stop cross-dressing; legends circulated of a female pope, also named Joan, who was also killed for gender-bending. Medieval mystics sometimes referred to Jesus as a mother and saw visions of milk dripping from his breast. The Catholic Church as a whole, led by a hierarchy of costumed men, is traditionally referred to as She and as the Bride of Christ.

The resonance goes beyond appearances. “Catholic tradition is all about the dignity of the human person,” says Edward Poliandro, an advocate for LGBT Catholics and their families in New York City. “Transgender people have a particular prophetic mission just to live and to challenge society simply by saying, ‘I’m a person.’”

Still, as Father Navarrete put it in his article, transgender experience as conceived of today is something “not yet foreseen” in the church. Prominent Catholic voices tend to hold a hard line. The physician Paul McHugh, for instance, closed down the Johns Hopkins Hospital’s clinic for reassignment surgeries when he was psychiatrist in chief, a decision he has continued to defend. A 2009 article in the National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly denounced such surgery as a “category mistake.” But there has yet to be a statement from the hierarchy definitive and public enough to count as dogma.

“The interesting thing about the Catholic Church is that there isn’t an official policy about this,” says Elizabeth Bucar, a professor of religious studies at Northeastern University who has interviewed Vatican officials in Rome about their thinking on gender. They’re waiting and seeing.

Powerful religious institutions have risen to the defense of trans communities before. Ayatollah Khomeini, the founding father of theocratic Iran, was moved to issue a 1983 decree in favor of reassignment surgery after a trans woman burst into his study and revealed her breasts, testifying, “I’m a woman, I’m a woman!” Today, homosexual activity can be punishable by death, but transsexual surgeries are subsidized by the Iranian government. Bucar, however, advises trans advocates not to be so insistent in asking for clearer statements from the Catholic hierarchy: “If you push the issue you might end up with a decision that is problematic.”
Monica was a Louisiana beauty in high school, well attested to by her photo albums. Once a blind woman on a bus said she could tell how she looked just by how the driver talked to her. She was the only girl in her class whose post-graduation plan was a convent. Friends and family weren’t sure what to make of her choice. The boyfriend she went to prom with — not the handsomest in town, but the best dancer — waved goodbye as her parents drove her off to the rustic novitiate.

The congregation she joined was small and still fairly new, the invention of an eccentric woman who convinced her bishop to give her a car and a habit so she could serve the poor. These nuns’ specialty was venturing to far-off places to minister among those the rest of the church forgot, crossing bayous and deserts when necessary. Over the years Monica lived in several states and earned a master’s in liturgy at Notre Dame. She was trained as a spiritual director, a kind of mentor who guides people in nurturing their spiritual life. She was a good nun. “Swimming upstream, fighting authority — that’s not what comes naturally to me,” she says. “I’m more of a follower.”

Monica has a lesbian sister and a gay brother, but she’s rarely more emphatic than when asserting her own straightness: “I could pray 12 hours a day until I’m pink, purple and blue, and that ain’t gonna give me a single lesbian thought.” What helps her identify most closely with the LGBT community are the experiences of isolation she has known in her own past — such as when her mother didn’t understand her decision to enter religious life, or a period when her fellow sisters turned against her because she wasn’t Chicano like them.

She’d been a nun for decades before feeling a call to lesbian and gay ministry; that quickly led her to “a call within a call” to serve the trans people she started meeting. One by one, through retreats, emails, phone calls and visits, her ministry swelled to encompass hundreds of lives.

Among the first people Monica ministered to was Dawn Wright. When they met, Wright was in her 50s and had recently transitioned. Her wife had left, taking their daughter with her. In Wright’s youth she was a star athlete and flew F-4 fighter planes in the Vietnam War, but now she sees all that as compensating for the feeling she’d had since childhood of being in the wrong kind of body. Back in Catholic grade school, when she wanted to play on the girls’ playground, a priest told her she could go to hell for that.
He paddled her to make the lesson stick. Beginning with her stint in the Air Force, there were suicide attempts. You name it — plastic bags, slit wrists, pills. She'd go to doctors and they'd say not to tell anyone the real reason because the backlash would ruin her life; she'd go to priests and they'd tell her she'd go to hell if she tried to live as a woman. She stopped going to mass. "I felt that somehow if I went into a church there would be a flaming arrow over my head pointing me out as a sinner," Wright says.

A mutual friend introduced her to Monica. Soon, again feeling close to suicide, she stayed at Monica's house for a weekend retreat. The moment she remembers most is when Monica started to sing. Her singing voice is excellent, honed by a lifetime in church choirs, and she doesn't hesitate to use it around the kitchen table. The words were from a song by the singer Libby Roderick, but that night they seemed to be borrowed by God: How could anyone ever tell you you were anything less than beautiful?

"My heart opened up, and I felt there was a chance for me," Wright says. "Monica, I think, really saved my life." That's a testimony one hears a lot from Monica's trans friends. Studies suggest that around 40 percent of transgender people have attempted suicide.

First survival, then church. Monica took Wright to the African-American church she attended at the time, where the congregation knew not to bat an eye. They sat in the pew together through mass. "I felt safe in a Catholic church for the first time since I was 5 years old," Wright remembers. "It was a good feeling." She started going to mass back
in Alabama, where she lives, and found that the people there welcomed her too. She didn’t feel the revulsion or judgment that she’d expected. They didn’t hesitate to hold her hand during the Our Father.

“My whole life I prayed that I would wake up and feel normal. I wore out more rosaries than I can count. Now, I wake up and feel normal.”

Since transition, Wright has earned a Ph.D. and teaches online courses in statistics and quantitative analysis. Her daughter has begun to communicate with her again. She had a heart attack; she kept a laptop by her hospital bed and emails from Monica kept her company.

Much is similar in the stories of people Monica has “companioned,” as she puts it. What she said and did turned their lives around. They improved; they could see glimpses of the love she insists God has for them. But others, whatever she says, never seem to hear. Her words and prayers aren’t enough. Maybe nothing could be — transgender existence has already taken too much of a toll. Others have been forced to cut her off by spouses who fear her affirmation. She has had to erect boundaries to protect herself, to focus on where she can be helpful, to keep from being awakened by the phone all through the night.

For years Monica attended trans support-group meetings wherever she was living, introducing herself at the start like everyone else but otherwise staying mostly quiet. The challenges of transgender life would be in evidence at the table; a lot of those seated around it probably couldn’t “pass” in everyday life as the gender they understood themselves to be. There was a heavy sadness that even the solidarity in those groups couldn’t entirely cut through. Monica listened intently as participants talked about their various legal and medical conundrums — problems that might never occur to cisgender people: which bathroom to use, what dosage of hormones to take, how to change ID cards, or apply for jobs and passports, or what to do when you were having a good-enough day until someone referred to you, with a sneer, by the wrong pronoun.

If one is new to the trans experience, a room like this might feel unsettling. It might leave one lying in bed that night asking uncomfortable questions for the first time about who or what one really is, things that might have always seemed certain and fixed and clear. Trans people represent a threat in a society anxious to keep its basic categories stable; they experience violence at rates far higher than the general population. But sit there a while, as in any room, and the stories become just stories. The people become people. For Monica, sitting at those tables in those support groups is being among family.

If asked for advice at a meeting, or in a one-on-one chat, she reflects all her listening back in the form of fluency. She speaks the language of dissonance and transition and the many varieties of experience that fall under the trans umbrella. She’ll speak without flinching about body parts and “plumbing,” but knows the etiquette of when those subjects are not exactly polite. And then theology comes back around. Along with the nitty-gritty, she talks with them about God — a God who doesn’t confuse being different with sin, who made the world big enough for everyone.

Driving through the desert with Monica one day, a trans friend of hers had a realization. As one cactus after another passed by in the windows, it struck him that in
this quiet, barren, scorching place, the cacti were actually in their element. The place seemed harsh, but it wasn't for a cactus. If creation can make a home for those that don't conform, maybe the church can, too.

In 2010, at her home in a city near the Mexican border, Monica held an afternoon session with seven priests, a deacon and four trans Catholics. At the time she had a one-story house in a poor neighborhood, with extra bedrooms for retreatants, a chapel and a Jewish mezuzah on the front door that she touched whenever she entered. “In the transgender world and in the Catholic world, we are making history today,” she said as the session began. “Never before, never, has there been a gathering like this.”

Over the course of an hour, two trans men and two trans women told their life stories in brief, and the priests had to listen. They talked about the process of discovering that their gender didn’t fit their body — some in childhood, others later in life. They talked about struggles with priests and longings to be reconciled with their faith. “When I heard this was going to be held, I almost cried,” one said. “What priests say really can be the difference between life and death for people like us.”

During the second hour, there was an open discussion. The priests didn’t ask questions so much as affirm, and express sympathy. “I commend you for the integrity that you have” — that kind of thing.

As the second hour ended, some of the priests began to slip out for other appointments. One of them began to speak, paused, and then said, “Your ministry is to us today, and your spirituality is very, very apparent. You’ve helped me personally a great deal.”

Another pause: “Because I’m a queer man.” After what he’d heard, somehow, his own secret didn’t seem so scary. “I’ve come out to a number of people — but not yet to my brothers here.”

“Well,” Monica pointed out to the priest, like a teacher to a student, “now you have.”
She wields the word “pastoral” as a compliment — a term Pope Francis also uses to describe his call for church renewal. A pastoral priest, says Monica, “recognizes that he doesn’t understand everything perfectly — he seeks to help people face their challenges, whatever they are.” Maybe there doesn’t need to be startling about-face like Ayatollah Khomeini’s; maybe the church doesn’t need to fold the latest gender theory into the catechism. It would be enough, perhaps, for leaders of the church to listen, to hear transgender voices out and to act as if there is some truth to be found in their experience.

Her fellow sisters had her back from the start. This kind of ministry was what their congregation was all about, and they bragged about the first nun to conduct a national transgender ministry. But in recent years the community she joined and spent most of her life with has ceased to exist; like so many other women’s congregations around the country, it had grown too small and too elderly to continue on its own. It merged with other groups of sisters from different places, with different backgrounds, who tend to be more cautious. They don’t talk about what she does in their newsletters, and they’re not always sure how to handle her trans guests.

Bishops have confronted her outright. In their offices and on their stationery she has endured lectures about everything from doctrine to identity politics from men who insist that “homosexual” is the only acceptable word to use for lesbians and gays. They have warned each other about her. At times she has had to let them believe she’s doing “just” lesbian and gay ministry, which at least they have some concept of. Her superiors have required her to pass up chances to write articles or be quoted by reporters because they’re afraid of what the hierarchy would do if she went public.

But her trans community doesn’t necessarily demand more of her. They mostly tell her to protect herself, to do what she must to make sure she’ll be able to keep on being available to them. “One of the things that makes her even more significant,” Mateo Williamson says, “is that she has faced persecution just for reaching out to people like me.” Yet, for her, that’s not enough. In the inability to speak out, she feels traces of the dysphoria, the deep incongruence, that trans people feel about their assigned gender. It’s not just a frustration or annoyance; it’s a kind of death.

Silence has a strange way of working in Catholicism. Maybe it does everywhere. After Pope Benedict’s 2008 Christmas speech, Monica was so infuriated that she broke all the rules and sent a letter straight to her bishop telling him why the pope was wrong and what her ministry had taught her. He answered with silence. She came to realize that was the kindest option he had; to have affirmed her might put them both in danger, and put her ministry in the reactionaries’ cross hairs. He could have shut her operation down then and there, but he didn’t.

The Vatican’s silence, meanwhile, gives trans Catholics time to have their stories
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heard. Monica can't publish an article about her ministry under her own name, but
James and Evelyn Whitehead have been writing about trans people she knows in the
Catholic press. She can't talk openly with her own bishop, but Mateo Williamson once
visited his bishop to explain the crisis of homeless LGBT youth.

Retirement came sooner for Monica than it might have. She's young for 70. But she has
a case of degenerative arthritis in her jaw, and it has been growing worse. It hurts
when she talks, making it harder for her to carry on conversations for extended
periods. She can't lead the retreats anymore that were the center of her ministry. She
has had to withdraw from the more than 200 trans people around the country she has
worked with. It's a chance, she'll say, to devote herself more to prayer, to silence, to
contemplation. She says she wants to melt into God. But she never seems able to pull
back as much as she claims she wants to. And no younger disciple — no nun, in
particular — has volunteered to take her place.

The pain in her jaw taunts Monica as a not-so-subtle metaphor for the scandal that has
haunted her life for more than a decade — that of knowing so intimately the suffering
of transgender people, yet being unable to speak out about God's love for them in
public. “I have cried a river and prayed a lifetime about finding the balance of when to
be silent and when to speak,” she says, with tears welling up again. Her jaw hurts.

“I often have said to God: It’s clear to me — eminently, absolutely clear to me — that
you have called me to this ministry. But there must be a reason why I can’t talk.”

5. A million voices

The first-ever Catholic trans conference in the United States took place one Saturday
last November at a suburban convent in Towson, Md. About 35 people attended,
mostly older women, sitting together in a room with a crucifix on one wall facing
another wall of stained glass. The morning's presentation was by a psychiatrist who
works with gender-variant patients at Children's Hospital. In the afternoon there was a
talk by Hilary Howes, a middle-aged businesswoman who converted to Catholicism
after her transition at age 40, almost two decades ago.

The conference was organized by New Ways Ministry. The organization began in 1977
to advocate for LGBT Catholics, but it had begun to turn its attention to the T only recently. Over the course of the day there were hints of how transgender experience might be poised to deepen even something as old and venerable as the Catholic faith.

The biblical story Pope Benedict liked to bring up in his Christmas sermons was that of God creating the sexes in Genesis — “male and female He created them.” For Benedict, these are two forever separate states of being, each inaccessible to the other and rightly so. But trans Christians tend to offer a different interpretation, one that claims a more expansive sense of what God was up to and of who God is. In his testimony before the room of priests at Monica’s house, one speaker, an embalmer by profession, described how he’d come to see Genesis differently: “OK, male and female,” he allowed — “and some of them are male and female!” Trans people have seen creation from both sides, and then some. Howes said during the conference in Towson, “The idea that God is beyond gender is quite clearly there.”

While Urbano Navarrete’s canon law article accepts only the body’s testimony to a person’s sex, trans people, whether religious or otherwise, often talk about what they go through as a spiritual journey. One hears it again and again.

Yet Howes cautioned, “It’s a beautiful spiritual journey, but if you don’t have to go through it, please don’t.”

As she addressed the conference with a microphone in hand, Howes wore a red jacket and blouse with a silver cross dangling from her neck. Her wheat-blond hair fell neatly across her forehead and framed her face. She deployed at intervals a girlish, dimpled smile. Monica sat at the very front. This was her first time meeting Howes in person, though both were well known in the small world of transgender Catholics.

Howes told the story of her life as a parable, a tale of a girl born with a penis and expected to live like a boy. “She died a little each day.” The girl grew up into a man, married a woman and became a father. Yet the dying continued. She decided to reveal herself, at last. Her wife and daughter stuck with her through it all. With the help of hormone treatments, father and daughter went through puberty together.

As the parable caught up with the present, Howes turned to a discussion of the hierarchy’s official position, or lack thereof, and the basic comfort she feels in her church, and in her faith, day to day. “I make a good spokesperson because I’m disarmingly normal,” she said.

She’d observed over the years that liberal Catholics — the kind likely to be friendly toward LGBT rights, the kind likely to be in the room — often feel uncomfortable with the masculine language Catholic tradition tends to use for God: Him, Father, Lord. Some prefer to discard those words altogether. But Howes had noticed that the old-fashioned words have never really bothered her.

With her dimples hinting at a sly smile, she said, “I suppose it’s because I know that a father can also be a woman.”

The day was full of epiphanies. A white-haired woman declared that she’d never again ask, upon meeting a baby, “Is it a boy or a girl?” — one might need to wait and find out. Some who were already familiar with transgender terms and categories were trying to wrap their heads around the genderqueer label that increasingly resonates with young...
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people — not one gender or the other so much as somewhere in between, or both, or neither. A grandmother at Monica’s table heard that some people have used the neutral pronoun “sie” rather than “he” or “she,” and announced that that’s how she’d be referring to God from then on.

“The trans issue is in the Catholic community now where the lesbian and gay issue was in the late ’70s,” estimates Sister Jeannine Grammick, one of the founders of New Ways Ministry. Although bishops continue fighting the rising tide of gay marriage across the United States, she feels that the sympathies of lay Catholics have for the most part been won over to the side of lesbian and gay rights. Now, supporters of New Ways Ministry want to learn more, and they’ve asked for programs on trans issues.

For decades Grammick has spoken boldly on behalf of the queer community and has been censured mightily for it; where Monica agonizes about whether or not to speak, Grammick simply does so and then deals with whatever blowback comes from the hierarchy. Where Grammick has advocated, Monica has internalized.

There is a passage in the constitution of the congregation Monica joined as a teenager that she especially identifies with: “Our desire is to be available and receptive servants, alert to God’s voice and the needs of God’s people, willing to have our very lives shaped by responding to these needs.” Our very lives shaped. Perhaps debilitatingly so — to the point that a metaphor turns into a jaw condition.

And this eats at her. “I am silent while trans people are being killed,” she says, clenching her shoulders as if holding an invisible weight. “They’re being murdered and committing suicide, and I’m silent!” When she’s worked up like this Monica can flash a gaze that makes her eyes seem steely and certain, until they fill with tears. And then a saying from St. Catherine of Siena comes to mind, turning her anger to a duller sadness. She recites it: “Preach the truth as if you had a million voices — it is silence that kills the world.”
CBS News correspondent Bob Simon speaks on the detainment of Al Jazeera journalists in Egypt (/watch/shows/live-news/2014/3/john-seigenthalerinterviewsobbsimon.html)

"It's important to be politically incorrect so you can make your point." (/watch/shows/the-stream/2014/2/film-director-melbroksonwhybeingpoliticallyincorrectisnecessary.html)

Prof. Stephen F. Cohen and Katrina vanden Heuvel weigh in on how the US and the EU reacted to the uprising in Ukraine (/watch/shows/consider-this/2014/2/did-the-us-want-toseeyanukovichremovedaspresidentofukraine.html)