

Catholic Courier

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

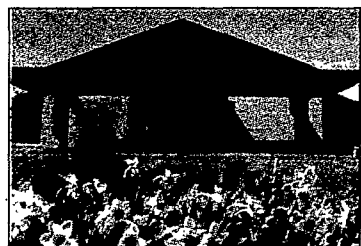
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Perseverance and faith

Catholics honor heroes, heroines in black history

Rather than talking about African-American Sister Thea Bowman, Jacquelyn Dobson simply becomes her.

"I don't need to be on the altar!" Dobson said during an interview, using the words of the late Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration. "I don't need to be on the pulpit! In the Laundromat or the grocery store, I got a right (to preach) that's ordained by God!"

Sister Bowman was a prominent Catholic evangelist and intercultural consultant from Mississippi, whose lively presentations combined singing, preaching, prayer and storytelling. Long before her death from cancer in 1990, she was widely hailed for breaking down racial barriers and bringing a joyous attitude about her faith to audiences everywhere.

Dobson, who directed the Diocese of Rochester's Office of Black Ministries from 1984-99, has portrayed Sister Bowman in presentations before church groups and other audiences, and has depicted other famed black women such as abolitionist Harriet Tubman and Anna Murray Douglass, wife of abolitionist Frederick Douglass. A school social worker, singer and actress, Dobson dedicates a portion of her time to telling the stories of prominent African-Americans, both Catholic and non-Catholic, before various audiences. Re-enacting their lives serves a valuable purpose, she said.

"My re-enactments are an

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Icon of Sister Thea Bowman by Sister Maryam Gossling, FSPA

Story by Rob Cullivan

