

**National Federation of Priests' Councils  
2009 Convention and House of Delegates  
San Antonio, Texas  
April 30, 2009**

**Remarks of Sr. Katarina Schuth, OSF on acceptance of the first NFPC Mandatum Award**

Thank you, Father Vega, and members of the Board of Directors of the NFPC for this splendid recognition. Especially I want to thank Vic Doucette and Alan Szafraniec for their kind attention to my every need before and since my arrival in San Antonio. I appreciate each and every one of you as well for the tremendous ministry that you provide for the people of God. It is a great joy to be honored this evening along with Fr. [Eugene] Hemrick, a long-time research colleague and friend. His work for the Church stands as a pillar of excellence in providing key information to church leaders.

It is with tremendous gratitude that I accept this recognition of my work on behalf of priests in the U.S. given by the NFPC – and I must add that the work is always accompanied by prayers and concern for your wellbeing. The words you used in announcing the Mandatum Award are particularly meaningful to me – being recognized “for one’s service in the Gospel of Jesus Christ which exemplifies the purpose and goals of the federation.” It is an honor to encourage you in bringing to reality the highly laudable purpose and goals of this organization:

- Promoting priestly fraternity by facilitating communication among priests and priests' councils,
- Providing a forum for priests to discuss pastoral matters and pastoral concerns;
- Fostering the continuing professional development of presbyteral councils;
- Developing written materials and resources, and, working with other national groups, to serve the needs of the entire church; and
- Providing a national voice for priests, that expresses a pastoral and prophetic message from the presbyterate of the United States.

These goals are essential to enhancing the life of priests in the country and the energy that goes into the effort is highly laudable.

Twenty years ago when my first book about seminaries was published, I lobbied for the title “Reason for the Hope,” a phrase taken from the 1 Peter 3:15, “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts and always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.” This occasion again inspires in me feelings of great hope and provides me the opportunity to voice my appreciation to all of you here present and to all priests both for the generous gift of your lives and for the love you communicate every day to the people of God.

Upon the announcement of the Award at the University of St. Thomas, I was asked to make a statement for the Daily Bulletin. What I said then also fits this occasion:

“I was completely taken by surprise and very honored to learn of the decision of the NFPC to make me the first recipient of Mandatum Award. Most of my professional life has been

dedicated to doing research and workshops on concerns related to priestly ministry, seminaries and other pastoral topics, so it is wonderful for that work to be recognized in such a thoughtful way by an important organization for priests.”

As a Franciscan, I was taught from early on great respect for priests, as was shown by St. Francis. With Francis, we recognize the most precious gift of all that you provide—the very presence of Christ in the Eucharist. How incredibly delighted I am to be here tonight to be recognized for assisting an organization with such a commendable record of achievement on behalf of priests – and therefore on behalf of the whole Church. Thank you to all who had a hand in making this such a wonderful occasion.