

## **STORMING HEAVEN FOR CATHY HENDERSON**

An Appeal from Helen Prejean, csj

Dear Sisters,

Cathy Henderson is on death row in Texas, a very bad place to be on death row. Texas has the busiest killing chamber in the U.S. and has already executed three women. Now it looks like the state of Texas is going to kill Cathy, unless a miracle happens. And that's what brings me to you, my Sisters. I've been Cathy's spiritual advisor for three years. I had met her in 1998 with the other women on death row in Texas when I visited Karla Faye Tucker and her friend, Pam Perillo. Three years ago I got a letter from Cathy, in which she said, "I need to prepare myself for the worst. If I am executed, will you be with me? I think you could help me be calm."

It's looking bad for her in the courts. The Fifth Circuit Court, last court of appeal before the Supreme Court, just turned down her appeal. And it is rare – very rare – that the Supreme Court considers death case appeals. Cathy could be dead in a couple of months.

She made her appeal for your help in her letter to me last week: "Texas courts follow their own rules, their own laws, like it's God. They don't care about justice. But God is God, not Texas. Please ask Sisters across America to pray for me. I know that if thousands of nuns across this country raised their voices to God for me, God will hear them."

So, my Sisters, I ask you to pray mightily for Cathy. Spread the word and ask others to pray for her, too. If you are so moved, write to her and let her know you are praying for her. Letters to condemned prisoners mean a lot. Letters give dignity. Letters say: "You are a human being. I respect you."

Cathy Henderson  
DR #999148  
Mountain View Unit  
2305 Ransom Road  
Gatesville, TX 76528

There's not much time. Act quickly. "God hears the cry of the poor."

Soon as we can organize the information, I'll come to you with a second request for Cathy, asking you to write letters to the editor, the governor, and to members of the Texas Board of Pardons and Parole.

### **Synopsis of Cathy's case**

Cathy was condemned to death for murdering a baby. That's what the Texas prosecutor claimed. But I believe Cathy's version of what happened. Cathy was babysitting with little Brandon and, to stop him from crying, was swinging him around when, barefooted, she stepped on a sharp toy, lost her balance, and the baby flew out of her arms, hit the wall [in fact, the floor], and died. It was an accident, but at trial there was miserable defense for Cathy to tell her story and examine forensic evidence to show that the baby could have died as a result of such an accident. The plight of the poor: no defense for Cathy, who sits on death row, and a venal prosecutor, who presented her as a monster and now sits in the legislature.

