

## 2014 Woman of Faith

# She advocates with Christ-like compassion

It was 27 years ago that Meg Kissinger wrote her first article about mental illness. Her passion for the subject has deepened over the years, along with her compassion for people who cope with it every day. Meg's friend, Maureen Kolb, nominated her for our 2014 Woman of Faith Award, saying, "Meg's dedication to changing the world for people living with mental illness comes from her pursuit of truth in a Christ-like manner—with passion and kindness."

Meg's longtime investigative reporting for Milwaukee's *Journal Sentinel* newspaper is compelling. Her managing editor, George Stanley, says, "Meg has done her most high-impact work yet with 'Chronic Crisis,' a series that shows in heart-wrenching detail how Milwaukee's Mental Health Complex, like most of its patients, never gets better." George shares about his awakening to the plight of persons living with mental illness.

"Most of us try to avoid people who have obvious mental illness—crossing to the other side of the street, avoiding eye contact. We behave exactly as the people in Jesus' day treated people with leprosy. In editing Meg's stories over the

years, I have gradually come to realize that people suffering from mental illness are the lepers of our age. Meg does not avoid these people—she helps them and shows the rest of us what is going on."

In her investigative series, "Abandoning Our Mentally Ill," Meg reveals how Milwaukee County residents often ended up homeless when left to fend for themselves after release from mental hospitals. Her powerful reporting brought local political adversaries together to seek solutions. George Stanley credits Meg's reporting for the bipartisan support of legislation that transferred oversight of Milwaukee County's mental health care system from politicians into the hands of mental health professionals.

In recommending Meg for the Woman of Faith Award, George writes, "When I think of Meg's work, I think of Mark's Gospel when Jesus was confronted by a man with the exact symptoms we might see today in a person with severe mental illness."

*The man lived in the tombs and no one could secure him because he had often been secured with fetters and chains, but had snapped the*

*"This honor means the world to me—especially in these shaky times when the Pope has asked us to step it up*

*and evangelize our faith, which I find very difficult to do. I consider faith both a gift and a very private relationship with God, but I am thrilled to think I might make a difference with my work."*

— Meg Kissinger



*chains and broken the fetters, and no one had the strength to control him. All night and all day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he would howl and gash himself with stones. (Mark 5: 3-5)*

George concludes, "Jesus did not use his disciples as a shield from the man. He did not cross to the other side of the road. He looked him in the eye, asked him his name, listened to him, and then healed him, just as he healed the blind, the lame and the lepers. This is how Meg Kissinger has improved the lives of so many of our neighbors and their families—by looking even the least lovable among us in the eye, listening to them, telling their stories and seeking a better way to help them heal." ☩



## WOMAN OF Faith AWARD

Please join us to honor

### Meg Kissinger

*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* investigative reporter

Compassionate advocate for persons living with mental illness

**Thursday, September 18, 2014 • 7:00 p.m.**

SDS Community House • 4311 North 100th Street, Milwaukee

Reservations for this free event are requested by September 12.

Please reply to [missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org](mailto:missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org) or call 414-466-7414.



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