**Spirit of Giving Celebration**

**Catholic Charities**

**November 3, 2017**

Thank you so much: Bernie; Catholic Charities;

 To my family (no matter on what side of time)

 To the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet; and also to Peg Dolan

Almost 37 years ago, four North American church women were murdered in El Salvador for accompanying those who were living in poverty and organizing to change the injustices that impacted their daily lives.

This event challenged many of us to examine how we were living our lives.

Shortly after, sitting on the shore of Lake Michigan in Chicago, long time Catholic activist Marjorie Tuite –a mentor to so many of us in the movement—asked this question:

***Judy, do you want to be liberal or radical?***

I think for many of us who are part of the Christian tradition and take Jesus’ words and actions seriously, there could only be one answer. It would have to be “radical”. I want to be radical.

But the fact is, there is no way I could do this; there is no way I would even understand what “radical” truly means (and there is no way I would be here tonight) . . . without a lot of help.

I have been extremely blessed in my life to have had so many incredible experiences;

to be part of communities and movements that teach me every day how to live my life –

 who teach me what it means to be compassionate, generous and faithful to the struggle for justice.

In honoring me tonight you are, in fact, honoring the ones who have taught me courage and kindness (as well as what it means to be radical.)

Thank you to: the people of Nicaragua, the communities of population living in hiding in Guatemala; Women of Conscience in Los Angeles, families at the House of Ruth and for the last 21 years . . . the ***Alexandria House*** community.

Today we are living in dangerous times. It is as urgent as ever that we decide how we are going to carry out the commitment to be radical.

Although this is serious work in many ways, I deeply respect the writings of Greg Boyle, a past recipient of this award, who suggests that we look for the magic and the miracles along the way.

 One of my miracles is that I am a proud mom of a 19 year old daughter who has been in my life since she was four days old.

(One of the things I am convinced of is that if you want to be truly humble interact with teenagers).

There have been many revelatory moments, but I would like to end my sharing with just one.

About four or five years ago, I was asking Ray to do something that she really didn’t want to do. I made this comment:

“I understand what you are feeling because I used to be a teenager like you.”

She stopped short and looked at me with no disrespect but with an intensity I remember to this day,

She said “Really mom. Really! You know what I am feeling. You know what it feels like to be Black? To be adopted? To grow up in a shelter where so many of my friends and their families are struggling so hard to make it.”

She caught me up short . . . because of course she was right.

I’m white; I grew up in my teen years in in Hancock Park and had, and still have thanks to the CSJs a financial stability that so many people in the community to which we belong do not have.

She reminded me then (and often) that there is so much I have to learn. I live at ***Alexandria House*** for my own salvation and it is there I find magic and miracles!

My daughter, along with so many other people, have been patient and caring even while they have challenged me, encouraged me to listen more so that I know better

when to stand up, but when to sit down, or when to kneel/take a knee in solidarity . . .

when to speak out and when to give others room to speak.

This “being in solidarity in the work for justice” is a life-long learning process.

And it is not only deep, with heartbreaks and sometimes such sadness . . . but also with moments of incredible joy and celebration.

If the words of liberation theologians are accurate (and I believe they are), that

***to know God is to do justice***

then may this evening be a time to recommit ourselves to being radical and strengthen our quest for the Divine always believing in the possibility of the Beloved Community.

Thank you so much.

For ***Alexandria House.***