



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Catholic Employee Fired over Thesis; Meeting with Bishop Set for Friday**

After nine years of volunteering and 26 years of employment at a Catholic Church, Ruth Kolpack was fired two weeks ago by Bishop Morlino of the Madison Diocese over her 2003 masters' thesis on the use of inclusive language.

Morlino, who admitted to having read only "bits and pieces" of the thesis, has agreed to meet with parishioners on Friday, April 3rd at 6:30pm at St. Thomas Catholic Church in Beloit, Wisconsin.

There are more than 30,000 lay employees, like Ruth, in the U.S. Catholic Church. The number of lay employees now exceeds that of active diocesan priests, but lay workers have no job protection and often no recourse under civil law because the First Amendment prohibits government interference in matters of church administration.

Local parishioner and campaign coordinator, Jim Andrews, says "Catholic social teaching promotes a vision of worker justice, but the church fails to live up to that vision for its own workers. On Friday we want to let the bishop know that there is no reason to have fired Ruth. We will be requesting that Ruth be reinstated."

"I worry not only for myself, but for the thousands of other women and men lay employees across the country who, like me, can be fired at will over something written in their thesis at an accredited Catholic seminary and passed by academic staff," said Ruth Kolpack.

In her 2003 thesis, Ruth wrote that Vatican II opened the way for women to study theology. Because of that opening, Ruth wrote, "These women and others are exposing the incongruity between what the church says and what it does, and challenging it to take the next step to embrace the full dignity of all people. All will then be set free, including God--no longer bound by the limits of exclusive language."

Parishioners have set up a website [www.StandwithRuth.com](http://www.StandwithRuth.com) and have begun an online petition and letter writing campaign. The website includes links to media coverage and a copy of her thesis.

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