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In the Spirit: 'Rock star' nun proving a big draw in Madison

DOUG ERICKSON | Wisconsin State Journal | | 608-252-6149

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Sister Simone Campbell, perhaps the highest-profile nun in the country right now, will make two appearances in Madison next month, both open to the public but one requiring a reservation. Tickets are going fast.

Campbell, who heads Network, a Washington-based group that describes itself as a “Catholic social justice lobby,” rose to prominence last spring in the wake of the Vatican’s crackdown on U.S. nuns for allegedly being too socially progressive.

Her April **interview on National Public Radio** was startling for its forcefulness. She basically accused the hierarchy of the Catholic Church of being a good-ole-boys club detached from real-world suffering and unable to handle strong women.

From there, she led the attention-getting “Nuns on the Bus” tour, which crossed the country ripping on Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan’s federal budget proposal. “It’s couched in really nice words, but it would devastate the soul of our nation,” she told me in a **June interview**.

An appearance on Comedy Central’s “The Colbert Report” and a prominent speaking role at the Democratic National Convention upped her profile even more. Fans say she’s a rock star. Detractors have called her overly partisan and a heretic.

She is being brought to Madison Feb. 13 and 14 by the **Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice of South Central Wisconsin**.

“We’re extremely grateful that she’s coming here,” said Rabbi Renee Bauer, coalition director. “She’s one of the top people in the country working on economic justice issues from a faith perspective, and she’s doing the work in a really powerful way.”

Campbell is scheduled to provide a reflection at the Ash Wednesday liturgy at Holy Wisdom Monastery on Feb. 13 at 3:30 p.m. No RSVP is needed to attend the liturgy. The **monastery**, just outside of Madison, has Roman Catholic roots but is now home to an ecumenical monastic community of men and women who practice spirituality in the Benedictine tradition.

The next morning, Feb. 14, Campbell will be the keynote speaker at the interfaith coalition's 13th annual Faith Labor Breakfast, to be held at the monastery from 8 to 10 a.m. All 175 of the \$25 tickets for the breakfast have sold out. The coalition is now accepting reservations for \$10 tickets for seats to listen and enjoy coffee. The \$10 tickets do not include breakfast.

To purchase a \$10 ticket, email organizer@workerjustice.org or call 608-255-0376.

In the Spirit



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