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Ruler of Engagement

At the Eisemann Center, "Late Nite Catechism 3" offers a habit-forming marriage school. Don't be late.

by Cathy O'Neal

Published Saturday, February 13, 2010

Those wacky Catholics! They get all the good comedy material. Pagan babies, confession, penance, ruler-wielding teachers and of course, venial sin (lying to your grandmother) vs. mortal sin (killing her).

'Til Death Do Us Part, *Late Nite Catechism 3*, running this weekend and Monday night (a recently added performance) at the Eisemann Center in Richardson, is the latest in the *Late Nite Catechism* interactive shows created in 1993 by Maripat Donovan and Vickie Quade, based on their experiences growing up Catholic in Chicago. The original *Late Night Catechism* earned Donovan an Outer Critics Circle nomination in New York for Outstanding Solo Performance. She went on to win a Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Solo Performance in Los Angeles. The original show inspired two previous sequels, *Sister Strikes Again! Late Night Catechism 2* and *Sister's Christmas Catechism*.

The latest sequel has Sister conducting St. Bruno's Adult Catechism Class focused on two of the seven sacraments: Holy matrimony and the blessing of the sick, formerly known as Last Rites (same sacrament, new marketing plan, according to Sister). The "class" faces Sister's classroom. The only hints that it is the present and not the 1960s are the portrait of President Obama alongside framed pictures of JFK and Abraham Lincoln and a laptop on Sister's desk. The Sister herself enters from the back of the house, admonishing her students to sit up straight and keep their hands to themselves as she makes her way to the front of the classroom.



Maripat Donovan as the original Sister in "Late Nite Catechism." Photo courtesy of the Eisemann Center.



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'Til Death Do Us Part: Late Nite Catechism 3

by Vicki Quade and Maripat Donovan

Presented by **Eisemann Center for the Performing Arts**

February 13 - 15

at **Bank of America Theatre**

Eisemann Center for the Performing Arts
2351 Performance Drive

Reviews

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Before the evening's topics of marriage and death, the class is treated to Sister's musings on a range of topics from Pope Benedict XVI's astronomer to Tiger Woods and the *National Enquirer* to Virgin Mother sightings.

Sister is played by Second City Theatre-trained Nonie Newton-Breen, who is beginning her ninth year in the role. This Sister is an old school nun. Her diminutive size is deceiving—she is strict and no-nonsense, but with a wicked sense of humor about her chosen religion. Just as her classroom set is a throw back to the past, so is her clothing. No skirt and blouse or cardigan for this Sister. She is dressed habit to brogan in the traditional, black and white penguin nun's habit.

The *Late Nite Catechism* format is truly interactive. It's not a typical evening of observing a performance or a stand-up comedy routine, Sister is conducting a class. The house lights stay up the entire time so Sister can ask questions, take questions and chastise when necessary. It's hard to believe Newton-Breen has been anything but a Catholic school nun. She handles her classroom and their questions about the hows and whys of Catholicism with quick-thinking, improvisational finesse.

After reviewing Catholicism basics and zinging one-liners, Act I includes Sister's explanation of marriage as a timeline, beginning with finding The One and ending with Death. It seems that in Sister's view, most of marriage is fighting about money and dealing with family events, while the time between retirement and death is mostly Sudoku, cruises, colonoscopies and TV.

After the "unsupervised bathroom break," the highlight of Act II is Sister's Compatibility Game loosely based on *The Newlywed Game*. Two couples are chosen from the audience to be tested on how compatible they are. The game would have been a whole lot funnier if the two couples hadn't fibbed so much to suck up to Sister. Come on, Jonathan, you would choose a Catholic retreat over Club Med? Really? Friday night's audience probably got cheated out of a lot of Sister's witty comebacks thanks to dull contestants who played it safe.

You don't have to be part of a married couple to find plenty to laugh about in *'Til Death Do Us Part*. You may even be glad you're *not* part of a married couple by the time Sister is finished explaining the marriage timeline. You don't have to be Catholic to enjoy the show or appreciate it either. Sister is more than happy to clear up any confusion. Just don't be chewing gum if you ask a question. It'll cost you.

You've been warned.

Richardson, TX 75082
972-744-4650
\$36-\$39

2 & 8pm Saturday; 2 & 7pm Sunday; 8pm Monday
Runtime: Two hours with a 15-minute "unsupervised bathroom break"

HELP WANTED

Must be good with your hands, into reptiles, willing to work long hours for low pay, and must not be squeamish. Insurance sales experience is helpful. Inquire Within.

Feb 18 - Mar 7



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