

Activist nun Ardeth Platte dies at 84

by [Patrick O'Neill](#) in the [November 4, 2020](#) issue



(AP Photo / David Zalubowski)

Ardeth Platte, a Dominican sister who fought for nuclear disarmament, died in her sleep at the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House in Washington, DC, on September 30.

Platte, 84, spent years in prison for nonviolent civil disobedience in opposition to nuclear weapons and war. In recent years, the brunt of her work was speaking in support of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Platte was born in Lansing, Michigan, and began her work for the Dominicans as a teacher. In the 1960s and '70s, she served as principal and director of alternative education at the former St. Joseph's Educational Center in Saginaw, Michigan. Her work as an educator impressed many in the community, and Platte was urged to run for the Saginaw City Council. She won, serving as councilwoman from 1973 to 1985.

She also served as coordinator of Saginaw's Home for Peace and Justice for more than a decade. It was in Michigan that Platte began her antinuclear work. She later moved to Baltimore to join the Jonah House resistance community with Elizabeth McAlister and Philip Berrigan.

In 2002, Platte, along with fellow Dominican sisters Carol Gilbert and Jackie Hudson, gained international attention when they dressed as weapons inspectors, entered a Minuteman III nuclear missile site in Colorado, and were arrested. Convicted of federal felony charges, the three women were sentenced to prison.

At Danbury Federal Correctional Institution in Connecticut, Platte practiced yoga with Piper Kerman, who later wrote the book *Orange Is the New Black* about her experience there. A character in the Netflix adaptation is based on Platte.

In an email announcement of Platte's death, Catholic activist Paul Magno of Jonah House wrote: "Deep shock to hear this but grateful for all that Ardeth has given to making the peace of Christ radiate through our world." —Religion News Service