

Dr. Lena Edwards: Advocated against abortion, sterilization

Dr. Lena Edwards was born into a devout Catholic family in Washington, D.C., in 1900. The mother of six children, Edwards pursued a medical career as a means to help people.

The Catholic obstetrician was vocal in her opposition to abortion and sterilization and advocated natural childbirth. In her day, she worked among the poor and immigrants and taught at the Howard University Medical School. A consummate and successful professional, Edwards was awarded the highest American civilian honor in 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson – the Presidential Medal of Freedom. A devout Catholic all her life, Edwards was a daily Mass attendee. Born on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Edwards was very much devoted to him and the virtue of poverty. She was a professed secular Franciscan and was awarded the Poverello Award in 1967, given to those who exemplify the ideals of the Franciscan founder. She died in 1986.

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