

Rally in Solidarity with Catholic Sisters

P. O. Box 34
Ashton, MD 20861

May 29, 2012

His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI
c/o Most Reverend Carlo Maria Viganò, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States
Apostolic Nunciature of the Holy See
3339 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Most Holy Father:

On this Tuesday after Pentecost, we write to you in prayer and in fervent hope that you will create gracious space for the Spirit's action by withdrawing the mandate of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) that was issued on April 18, 2012 to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR).

On May 18, you highlighted "the urgent need in our own time for credible and attractive witnesses to the redemptive and transformative power of the Gospel." In the United States, no Gospel witnesses are more effective, credible, and attractive than Catholic Sisters. U.S. Sisters shine as beacons of God's love in schools, hospitals, among immigrants, among the poor and powerless. With the leadership and support of LCWR, they forge paths of faith, hope, and charity, sacrificing their own comfort and even their lives. The witness of the Sisters' daily work and prayer signifies far more than the CDF's concerns with particular words or the absence of words in LCWR materials.

We gather today in solidarity with the LCWR as Catholics and others whose lives have been profoundly touched by Catholic Sisters. We ask the Holy Spirit to guide LCWR and CDF, and to give them courage, strength, and wisdom to discern their journey in Christ. To clear the path, we ask Your Holiness to cast aside the stumbling block of the CDF mandate. And we pray that all will find the humility required for radical openness to the Holy Spirit.

In content and process, the CDF mandate is not consistent with the respect, collegiality, and mutuality that characterize relationships among people of mature faith. St. Paul reminds us that to live in Christ's Easter peace means to "live in a manner worthy of the call...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-4).

The CDF has questions and concerns about the LCWR. If Jesus tells his disciples that they are his friends, not his servants (John 15:9-17), then surely that is the appropriate relationship between the CDF and the LCWR. A conversation among people of good will from both CDF and LCWR could bear rich fruit for the Church as a whole, if it occurs in love, respect, mutuality, even solidarity. In this dialogue, the CDF mandate is both unwarranted and out of place.

In celebrating Pentecost, we find hope and courage in the presence among us of the Holy Spirit, “the Advocate, whom I will send you from the Father” (John 15:26). Mindful of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council this fall, we take to heart the sacred responsibility recognized in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* to fulfill our obligation “to express [our] opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church” (Chapter 4, Sec. 37). The Church needs breathing room where all of us can pause in prayer and where the mighty breath of the Spirit can enable us to be receptive to the gifts of the Spirit so we may bear fruit in Christ’s name. For the good of the Church, we ask you to withdraw the CDF mandate.

Sincerely,

Coordinating Committee
On behalf of the Rally in Solidarity with Catholic Sisters

Linda Donaldson

Arlene McGarrity

Lynn F. Bufka

James De Quattro

Susan De Quattro

Ann Dunne

James McGarrity

Richard McGinnis

Karen O’Brien

Mary D. Ott

Anne Regan

Frances Schueler

Judith Sholes

Joan Sklamm

Stuart Sklamm

Betty Thompson

cc:

His Eminence Cardinal William Levada, Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

His Eminence Cardinal Timothy Dolan, President, US Conference of Catholic Bishops

Most Reverend Carlo Maria Vigano, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States

Most Reverend J. Peter Sartain, Archbishop of Seattle

Most Reverend Leonard Blair, Bishop of Toledo

Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki, Bishop of Springfield

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Attached: List of 403 co-signers and their comments by means of Change.org, May 24- 28, 2012 (4:45 p.m). - <https://www.change.org/petitions/pope-benedict-xvi-withdraw-the-4-18-2012-mandate-to-lcwr-create-space-for-the-spirit-to-act>)