



PAULIST CENTER

Attentive to the Holy Spirit, we are a Catholic community that welcomes all, liberates the voice of each, and goes forth to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

December 22, 2009

Dear Sisters in Christ,

Since the Second Vatican Council, women religious have engaged in a renewal of spirit and mission. Religious sisters have been peacefully, thoughtfully and faithfully announcing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and fostering the Reign of God in this world by their work and sacrifice. Powerfully defined as “ministerial religious” by Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM, Professor of New Testament Studies and Christian Spirituality at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, Sr. Schneiders recently wrote that today the sisters in the United States are “searching out the places, often on the margins of Church and society, where the need for the Gospel is greatest ... living in ways that are conducive to our ministry (and) preaching the Gospel freely as Jesus commissioned his itinerant, full time companions to do. Our community life and ministries are corporate but not ‘common life’ in the sense of everyone is in the same place at the same time doing the same thing.”

According to the Vatican, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life is conducting an ongoing apostolic visitation of the women's religious communities in the United States as a means to assess and constructively address concerns about the welfare of religious women and consecrated life in general. The Vatican is clearly most concerned with those that are affiliated with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). The conference represents ninety-five percent of the congregations of religious women in the United States and is itself the subject of a concurrent investigation by the Vatican.

For American women religious, honesty, openness, and transparency are paramount. This investigation from Rome has been shrouded in secrecy and marked by a mostly unknown and unexplained ‘agenda.’ It has sparked fear, worry, concern, anxiety and anger among women religious and many who love, respect and support them.

The Paulist Center community offers this statement of prayerful solidarity and support for all women religious. We are deeply concerned about the impact of this investigation upon women religious, about a limited understanding of religious life in the United States, and over the lack of consultation, collaboration and consensus involved in this investigation. We express our deep gratitude, respect and admiration for the women religious who call the American society to holiness and love.

Peace,

The Staff of the Paulist Center, Boston