

**2015 Assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious
LCWR Outstanding Leadership Award Acceptance Address
Janet Mock, CSJ**

AUGUST 14, 2015

Thank you so much for the privilege of being in your midst once again and for the immeasurable and humbling honor of receiving the LCWR award. I have been one of you as a member, as an associate member, and as executive director for a total of 23 years – so I have no illusions about the fact that I receive this as one who has learned about leadership through you and your predecessors. Thank you for stretching my imagination, affirming and challenging my ideas and walking in solidarity with me as sisters through the years.

As I thank you, I also thank my family and my religious congregation, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, as well as the Sisters of St. Joseph worldwide, particularly in the US Federation. My family and my community have provided every opportunity for growth. Both have loved me through the good times and the more difficult periods of life and have kept me grounded as a child of God, called to great love. Although my parents and siblings have died, my brothers and sister and their spouses had the good grace to leave me with nieces and nephews who have become cherished friends. Their children and grandchildren and now great-grandchildren are a source of immense pride and joy to me.

My community, small as it is, has always had a heart for mission that is extraordinary – from China, to the First Nations, from Brazil to Liberia, from Jamaica to Nicaragua – stretching us always to see beyond ourselves. And yet these women will sit for hours and chat and play cards or scrabble, talk politics, laugh and cry and share the state of their hearts. They are truly wonderful and it is among them that I am most at home.

And then there are the women and men with whom I have had the privilege to serve within the Cameron Street building: our brothers in CMSM, brothers and sisters in RCRI and for a long while, RFC, as well as those serving in national offices, many of whom are represented here. I am especially grateful to have served with the extraordinary staff of LCWR. Their competency is peerless and on a day to day basis, they are remarkable, refreshing companions on the journey.

In addition to the staff, I want to thank in a special way, the extraordinary present and former LCWR Presidents, Executive Directors, Board, and Members. All of you share this award. The past three years have been some of the most challenging and blessed years of our lives. Included are the faithful and wise lay women and men who stood in solidarity with us these years.

Earlier this evening, this body acknowledged the outstanding leadership of Archbishop J. Peter Sartain. I simply want to add my deep appreciation for his unique gifts. When I think of people of integrity, Archbishop Sartain will always come immediately to mind. I heard a presentation recently on leadership where the person speaking named three qualities indispensable for good leadership: vision, a sense of humor, and prayer. Archbishop Sartain's vision is rooted in Jesus and the life of Jesus; he is a man of deep prayer and openness; and thankfully, he has a terrific, saving sense of humor. He and his staff are in our debt.

This year, LCWR's Outstanding Leadership Award is collective because what we have done, we have done together. This award belongs to you – all of you - and I am honored to be its steward. It is in your name, then and with deep gratitude, I accept the 2015 Outstanding Leadership Award.

In closing, I share a poem that was sent to me by a Sister of St. Joseph from Philadelphia, Mary Catherine Walton. She said that she began by writing it for me but it wrote itself for all of us.

Some experiences have a way of marking our lives
as touchstone moments.

Perhaps meeting Pope Francis is one of them!

Perhaps all that went before his blessing that day
left stepping stones
of reclaimed graces
that showed us how steadfast a charism really is.

Perhaps some of the stepping stones form circles of unity
on which we stand together.

We stand in gratitude
for courageous actions of commitment to truth.

We stand in fidelity to the steadfast love of the One who speaks our names as chosen leaders.

We stand, like women (and men) after childbirth,
holding life for the future.
Pain ebbs . . .

It is a new experience that marks our lives
with
ALLELUIA!