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Contact: Sister Annmarie Sanders, IHM – LCWR Director of Communications
301-588-4955 (office) -- asanders@lcwr.org
August 3, 2016

More than 5650 Catholic Sisters Urge Presidential Candidates to Engage in Civil Discourse

More than 5650 Catholic Sisters signed a letter asking the US presidential candidates “to engage in political dialogue that reflects the principles and values upon which this nation was founded.”

Written by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), the letter asks that the candidates refrain from rhetoric that stokes the fires of fear and engage in constructive dialogue during this campaign season. LCWR, an association of the leaders of congregations of Catholic women religious in the United States, has about 1350 members, who represent nearly 80 percent of the approximately 49,000 women religious in the United States. The 5671 signers of the letter are Catholic sisters from across the country who serve persons in need through education, healthcare, and other pastoral and social services.

Copies of the letter will be delivered to presidential candidates Secretary Hillary Clinton, Mr. Donald Trump, Governor Gary Johnson, Dr. Jill Stein, their running mates and party chairs on August 8.

“Unfortunately, it seems in this particular political season commitment to political discourse that preserves the dignity of the human person and promotes the common good is in short supply,” said Sister Joan Marie Steadman, CSJ, executive director of LCWR. “This is why LCWR is calling for civility in our discourse and decency in our political interaction.”

The letter to the presidential candidates reads as follows:

On behalf of the 5671 Catholic Sisters across the United States who have signed this letter, we ask you to join us in calling for civility in our discourse and decency in our political interaction that promotes the common good, reaches out to others, engages in constructive dialogue, and seeks together the way forward. We ask you to join us in promising to engage in political dialogue that reflects the principles and values upon which this nation was founded.

In his September 24, 2015 address to the U.S. Congress, Pope Francis reminded all who seek to serve that, “You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief aim of all politics.”

Unfortunately, we live in a time when our politics is too often marked by self-interest and demeaning rhetoric. We seem to be caught in a political system paralyzed by ideological extremism and hyper-partisanship. Those on all sides of the growing political divide too often appeal to our basest instincts and stoke the fires of fear that tear at the fabric of our nation. We cannot let the voices of hatred and fear carry the day.

We need courageous leaders willing to speak the truth. We simply ask that all who seek to lead refrain from language that disrespects, dehumanizes, or demonizes another. We pray that all who seek to influence public opinion will be mindful of the common good and respectful of the dignity of each and every person.

Citizens of this pluralistic nation form a diverse polity characterized by a wide variety of beliefs, experiences, and interests. Our differences have the potential to challenge all of us to abandon easy certainty and seek a fuller truth. The problem is not our differences. It is how those disagreements are handled that spells the difference between building the common good and destroying the bonds that bind us.

We urge you to join us in pledging to engage in careful listening and honest dialogue that honors the dignity of those with whom we disagree and treats all with the respect that is their God-given right. Please join us in promising to seek the common good, to desire only good for all others, and to offer our own truth with equal measures of conviction and humility.

We know that you offer yourself in service of the people of the United States at great cost to yourself and your family. We promise you our prayers in the weeks and months ahead.