



Statement by the National Board of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious on the Apostolic Visitation

February 20, 2009

The members of the national board of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, along with the conference's members, await further information from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on the recently announced visitation of US women religious. The planned visitation comes as a surprise to the conference and its purpose and implications for the lives of US women religious remain unclear. With additional information leaders can better determine how their participation in the visitation can be beneficial to US religious life, the church and the world.

The board also seeks understanding of how the visitation will augment the significant discernment and study processes already inherent in religious life. Serious commitment to intense prayer and reflection, as well as to processes of corporate learning and analysis, have long served to make women religious keenly aware of their individual, communal and ecclesial strengths and challenges.

"As women religious well know, any opportunity that calls for greater reflection on our lives can be an occasion for the celebration of achievements and an examination of areas for growth," the board stated in a February 20 letter to all LCWR members and associates. "We hope that the visitation can offer that type of experience."

The LCWR board noted that the unanticipated news of the visitation has evoked a variety of responses in women religious, has generated many questions on what the visitation might involve and has prompted deliberations on how best to proceed with it. In addition to offering resources to members in preparation for the visitation, the board encouraged leaders to reflect on the stories of heroic service and creative fidelity of their own members. The board encouraged as well continued study of the questions and challenges before US religious as they seek to live religious life with depth and meaning in a pluralistic and rapidly changing culture.

Noting that preparation for the apostolic visitation deserves time and careful thought, they suggested leaders invite their members to bring the visitation to their prayer and contemplation.

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