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NY bishop 'nuanced' on visitation of women religious

Dennis Coday | Nov. 6, 2009 NCR Today

Long Island bishop 'nuanced' on visitation of women religious

Bishop William Murphy of Rockville Centre, N.Y., (that's Long Island) is the latest U.S. bishop to make a statement about the Vatican's apostolic visitation of U.S. women religious.

Murphy makes a number of interesting points in his column in his diocesan newspaper [1], which is dated Nov. 4.

- "The first I knew of such a visitation was when the announcement was made last spring ?"
- "? while we bishops will be asked our opinion at some point in the process, the whole project was outside the hands of the U.S. bishops."
- "? 'visitations' are a normal part of the life of the Church."
- "? the key to understanding this visitation is respect. These sisters deserve and must always have our respect, the respect of the Holy See and the Visitation Committee, the respect of the entire Church. Their dignity must never be compromised and their commitment to a vowed life of consecration to God always honored. None of them should have to be afraid of a visitation."

Bart Jones (who sometimes writes for us about Latin America) wrote about Murphy's column in his Newsday column [2] yesterday. He notes that New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan wrote on his own blogthat the visitation "is well worth discussing, and hardly exempt from legitimate questioning."

Jones asked Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, co-director of the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture, she thought of these comments.

Steinfels said "it's fine-tuned. On the one hand expressing gratitude" to the sisters, but "none of them really raise, on the face of it, an objection to having the visitation go on." She compared it to the California bishops' statement.

Still, she said it "a very unusual fact" that Murphy wrote that "the whole project was outside the hands of the U.S. bishops."

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Links:
[1] http://www.licatholic.org/2009/11/110409/columns/faith_and_new_works.html
[2] http://www.newsday.com/long-island/nassau/murphy-s-column-on-vatican-s-visitation-creates-stir-1.1569787