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Twin Cities sent no money to investigate women religious

by Dennis Coday

NCR Today

When we asked (See Few dioceses admit willingness to pay for visitation), the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis, declined to answer, but Archbishop John C. Nienstedt has come clean to Catholics in his jurisdiction.

The question was: Did you send a contribution to the Vatican to help pay for its investigation of U.S. women religious?

"I gave not a penny of archdiocesan monies to this project," Nienstedt wrote in his newspaper, *The Catholic Spirit*, Dec. 3. (HT to reader Charles_MN).

Not that he's got anything against the apostolic visitation. It is not punitive, judgmental or demeaning. It is not an interrogation, not even an investigation, the archbishop writes. It is, he says, only an evaluation.

Every objective observer knows that religious life has changed dramatically in the past 50 years. New ministries have been founded and good works have flourished in areas of education, social services and health care, not to mention many others.

At the same time, the number of women entering consecrated religious life has fallen dramatically. In order to ensure that the invaluable witness of consecrated women religious continues into the future, some evaluation of the situation at this time seems logical, if not overdue.

Then why didn't he pony up the cash to support it? "Primarily because we don't have it to give. Believe me, if there were a million dollars lying around, I would put it toward reducing our own indebtedness! Of that, you can be sure!"

One footnote: Nienstedt says he was writing the Dec. 3 column about the visitation of women religious, because "a few persons have written to me expressing a concern." You see, a few can make a difference.

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