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LCWR initiatives have global reach

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Dallas

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious says it has received letters of support from religious sisters around the world since the Vatican opened two investigations on U.S. women religious 18 months ago.

In response, the 1500 member organization of elected religious leaders at its annual assembly here unanimously approved a resolution to actively seek to strengthen bonds with women religious globally.

In what some say is a related action, the women chose Sister Patricia Farrell of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Dubuque, Iowa, as the conference's next president-elect, meaning she will assume leadership in one year, following the presidency of Sister Mary Hughes of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Amityville, New York who became president at the close of the Aug. 10 - 13th gathering.

Farrell has extensive experience working as a missionary in both Chile and El Salvador and is viewed as bringing a larger global perspective to the LCWR leadership.

The new LCWR resolution reads: "The Leadership Conference of Women Religious will actively seek to strengthen bonds with women religious throughout the world. By listening to their stories and learning from them about the issues which have priority in their lives, we hope to increase our understanding of the

circumstances in which they are living out their gospel call so we can strengthen our mutual support of one another in our shared gospel mission.?

An LCWR statement offers a number of reasons for the global initiative:

- LCWR and its members are grateful for and humbled by recent expressions of encouragement and support from other conferences and groups of women and men religious in our time of vulnerability.
- These messages remind us of previous calls from members gathered in assembly for greater global interconnectedness.
- Rather than focus only on our own situation as U.S. women religious, we see this time as an opportunity to learn more about the struggles of religious, particularly women religious, in other countries, in circumstances both different from and similar to our own.
- While some LCWR member congregations are international in scope, others have only a few members, or none, serving outside the United States, yet we realize with heightened awareness that we are all part of a global church.
- This awareness leads us to acknowledge our need to listen more attentively to the stories of our sisters worldwide, to learn from their experiences, and to broaden our vision as U.S. women religious.

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- A deepened understanding of global realities will call us to new ways of conversion in our living of the gospel as women religious.

In light of the statement, LCWR has called upon its members to take the following steps to increase global bonds:

- As individuals, congregations, LCWR regions, board and staff, keep in grateful prayer all religious throughout the world during a time of struggle and vulnerability.
- Challenge each other to see ourselves as part of a global community and to claim the struggles of others as our own in order to offer support in ways that are possible and appropriate.
- In region meetings, identify ways that members will invite sisters in other countries to share their stories, especially experiences of struggle, the realities they face in their cultures and church, and what gives them hope in the midst of darkness.?
- Commission the national board and staff to facilitate the collection and sharing of these stories with LCWR members and to explore ways of enhancing connections between LCWR and other conferences and groups of women religious around the world.

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