

Bishop against gay marriage tapped to reform LCWR

Jamie Manson | Apr. 18, 2012 NCR Today

The Vatican investigation into U.S. women religious, which began in 2009, is finally bearing its first toxic fruit.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops announced Wednesday it has named Seattle Archbishop Peter Sartain to lead a five-year reform of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). The reforms include a revision of the LCWR's statutes, a review of its programs (including, in all likelihood, Vatican approval of topics and speakers at their annual general assembly) and reviews of their liturgical norms and relationship with NETWORK, a Catholic social justice lobby.

Sartain has made headlines in recent months for his recommendation that parishes in his diocese collect signatures for petitions supporting Washington state's referendum against same-sex marriage.

This "doctrinal assessment" has been initiated by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Their greatest concern about LCWR's programming? You guessed it: They're not explicitly anti-gay and anti-women's ordination. [The USCCB's press release](#) [1] states:

"CDF said that the documentation 'reveals that, while there has been a great deal of work on the part of LCWR promoting issues of social justice in harmony with the Church's social doctrine, it is silent on the right to life from conception to natural death, a question that is part of the lively public debate about abortion and euthanasia in the United States. Further, issues of crucial importance in the life of the Church and society, such as the Church's Biblical view of family life and human sexuality, are not part of the LCWR agenda in a way that promotes Church teaching. Moreover, occasional public statements by the LCWR that disagree with or challenge positions taken by the Bishops, who are the Church's authentic teachers of faith and morals, are not compatible with its purpose.'"

LCWR representatives have not yet commented publicly on what is undoubtedly an unprecedented moment of crisis for the conference.

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[1] <http://www.usccb.org/news/2012/12-062e.cfm>