

## Sisters of mercy, devotion -- and dismay

Thomas C. Fox | Apr. 21, 2012 NCR Today

The *Los Angeles Times* [1] has chimed in, adding another incredulous voice to many more certain to come, as reasonable observers consider the Vatican's destructive attack on U.S. women religious last week.

Columnist Steve Lopez writes that when he first heard of the Vatican doctrinal assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the umbrella group of 80 percent of U.S. women religious now under attack by Rome, he thought it was some kind of satire, "a parody of the out-of-touch Vatican patriarchy."

No, Steve, the men in Rome seem to think that without ever entering into serious conversation with LCWR they can order these women into some kind of straight jacket Vatican think. Get on the band wagon, they command the women. Condemn same sex liaisons; stand up for our failed anti-abortion political campaign; step away from the programs which have an actual track record of reducing abortions while assisting women raise children.

So very strange. The men in gowns don't speak to the women in pants.

Oh, and this message to the bishops: forget those young spirit seeking women who might have given a sliver of a thought to entering religious life. Those vocations are now dead.

Bishops, listen: Any man who lives with a woman or is close to one, close enough to really listen and try to understand a woman, knows you cannot force her to think as you do. You'll learn to thank God for that.

Maybe, just maybe, on the other hand, in listening to her you might learn something that could possibly influence the way you look at the world.

Meanwhile, Lopez makes the point -- you will read it again and again as word of the this stupid episcopal action spreads --- that it is almost unfathomable that it is the men in red who have given Catholics the clergy sex abuse scandal and cover up now have the audacity to judge the commitments and manners of tens of thousands of women religious, women who have given their lives to selfless service, most often of the poor and marginalized.

Bottom line: the women cannot be other than who they are. Nor will they try.

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### Links:

[1] <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-lopez-nuns-20120422,0,7617042.column>