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Bus tour rides the wave of LCWR news

Maureen Fiedler | Jun. 15, 2012 NCR Today

Nuns on the bus! This has to be one of the best ideas in the American church in the last decade. A group of nuns, organized by NETWORK (the Catholic social justice lobby), is organizing a bus tour through nine states from June 18 to July 2.

It is designed to visit and hold up for the world to see the work nuns do with the poor and vulnerable. At the same time, it will underscore the dreadful effects the budget of Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) would have on the lives of these people should it ever become law.

The whole project takes advantage of the fact that nuns are suddenly news (thanks to the Vatican's attack on LCWR) and uses that fact to publicize the needs of the folks at the bottom of the economic ladder.

As it happens, the U.S. bishops also oppose the Ryan budget and have criticized it publicly. But they don't emphasize that stand, or push it. They are too busy promoting their so-called "Fortnight of Freedom," claiming that their religious liberty is endangered because Catholic institutions would have to have insurance policies that cover contraception. (I was glad to see that the bishops, at their recent meeting, are hearing from Catholics in countries where religious freedom really *is* at stake, like Iraq.)

Of course, these works with the poor, or social justice and peace ministries, are exactly the kind of Gospel-based works that the Vatican has said nuns spend too much time doing, to the detriment of the causes the bishops champion.

But most nuns I know think exactly the reverse: The bishops could benefit by getting away from the bedroom issues and into the streets with the folks.

Better yet: They could take a bus ride!

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