

Spiritans fathers, brothers express support for LCWR

Joshua J. McElwee | Jul. 2, 2012 NCR Today

The U.S. province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit has joined the ranks of priests and brothers expressing support for the main umbrella organization of U.S. sisters after a sharp Vatican rebuke, saying its members "offer our prayers and support" to the sisters as they "journey to discern a faithful, prophetic response" to the Vatican move.

The statement, which comes after the province's June 4-9 general chapter meeting, represents the sixth known sign of support from men religious following the Vatican's April criticism of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), which represents some 80 percent of sisters in the U.S.

News of the statement also comes on the same day the Vatican announced the new head of its Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the powerful Vatican orthodoxy watchdog which ordered the LCWR's revision.

Previously led by U.S. Cardinal William Levada, [the congregation is now under the direction of German Bishop Gerhard Ludwig Müller](#). [1]

Sent in a press release to *NCR* this morning, the statement from the Spiritans' U.S. province, which its website says represents some 100 priests, also says its members believe that an approach of dialogue between LCWR and the Vatican "is more in keeping with our faith both in respecting the value and dignity of the human person while furthering the solidarity all agencies of the Catholic Church are called to live."

"We urge that the dialogue be pursued according to the Spirit of the Gospel in an atmosphere of mutual charity and respect for persons to reach a conclusion which furthers the unity of the Church," the statement concludes.

Similar statements of support for LCWR came previously from seven orders of Franciscans, the Cincinnati province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, one of the U.S. provinces of the international Order of Saint Augustine, the international office of the Xaverian brothers, [and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, LCWR's counterpart for U.S. men religious](#). [2]

A resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives expressing the "deepest appreciation" for the sisters' work [has also gained 174 cosponsors](#). [3]

In an April 18 order to the LCWR, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ordered that the group revise its statues and programs and place itself under the authority of three bishops.

Statements from LCWR and Vatican officials since have seemed to indicate the two groups are at a standstill of sorts regarding the order. In a June 12 interview with *NCR* following a meeting in Rome on the matter, Levada [warned of a possible "dialogue of the deaf" between the group](#). [4]

Days later, LCWR's president, Franciscan Sr. Pat Farrell, [told *NCR* June 18 she's "not sure" of the best way for her group to continue its conversations with Vatican officials](#) [5] as they both "need to get beneath the

polarizations out of which we're speaking to one another.?

Members of LCWR are expected to address the matter more deeply in their upcoming annual assembly, to be held in St. Louis in August.

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Following is the full statement from the U.S. province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.

[SpiritianLCWRStatement](#) [6]

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