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Pope's remarks on religious orders confirmed 'in a general sense'

Joshua J. McElwee | Jun. 12, 2013 NCR Today

Pope Francis' purported remarks to a group of nuns and priests from Latin America that they should not worry if they found themselves under doctrinal scrutiny were confirmed "in a general sense" by the group Tuesday.

The remarks, made during a June 6 meeting with top officials of the Latin American Conference of Religious (CLAR), have led some to speculate that the pope may be downplaying the role of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

They also came just weeks after doctrinal congregation officials said the pope "reaffirmed" the congregation's controversial takeover of the main representative group of some 57,000 U.S. sisters, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

During the meeting, Francis seemed to refer to the Vatican's move against the U.S. sisters while telling the Latin American delegates not to worry should they find themselves the target of a similar investigation.

"They will make mistakes, they will make a blunder, this will pass! Perhaps even a letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine [of the Faith] will arrive for you, telling you that you said such or such thing. ... But do not worry. Explain whatever you have to explain, but move forward."

A partial account of the meeting was published Sunday by the Chilean magazine *Reflexion y Liberacion* and later translated into English by the Rorate Coeli website.

CLAR officials said in a statement Tuesday they regretted the publication of the pope's supposed remarks to their group. What was published, they said, came from a synthesis "based on the memories of the participants."

"This synthesis ... was intended for personal memory of the same participants," CLAR's six leadership officials wrote on in a Spanish-language release on the group's website [1]. "It is clear that, based on this, one cannot attribute to the Holy Father, with certainty, the specific expressions contained in the text, but only the general sense."

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