NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Another group of priests voices support for LCWR

Joshua J. McElwee | Jun. 29, 2012 NCR Today

Another group of priests and brothers has joined those voicing supporting for U.S. sisters in the wake of a sharp Vatican rebuke, saying in a statement they ?give thanks to God for the many gifts? of women religious.

The statement, coming from one of the U.S. provinces of the international Order of Saint Augustine, represents the fifth such 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.

Similar statements came previously from seven orders of Franciscans, the Cincinnati province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, the international office of the Xaverian brothers, and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, LCWR?s counterpart for U.S. men religious. [1]

Sixty-two members of the U.S. House of Representatives have also cosponsored a proposed Congressional resolution [2] expressing the ?deepest appreciation? for the sisters? work.

Dated June 20 but first obtained by *NCR* Friday, the new letter comes from the St. Thomas of Villanova province of the Augustinian Friars, which represents the order on the U.S. East Coast and has international missions in Japan, Peru, and South Africa.

In the statement, the friars write that the LCWR matter was discussed during a June 11-15 assembly of the province, during which those gathered wanted to ?offer their support? of U.S. sisters ?in their dialogue with Vatican officials.?

Teddie Gallagher, the Augustinian province?s director of communications, said in a brief phone interview Friday that the statement wasn?t made on behalf of the province as a whole, but those who were present at the assembly. She estimated that between fifty to sixty percent of the province?s friars would have been present for the vote on the measure.

In their statement, the Augustinian friars refer to a previous statement of support for the sisters from Pax Christi International, a global organization which bills itself as the ?international Catholic peace movement.?

In that June 13 statement, Pax Christi said is members hold U.S. sisters ?in the highest regard? and ?believe that their experi¬ence of faithful discipleship has much to offer the institutional Catholic Church in terms of building right relationships, inclusive process, respectful dialogue, theological reflection and the ability to honor the gift of diversity.?

Quoting the Pax Christi statement, the Augustinian friars write that U.S. women religious are also ?tireless advocates for the dignity of human life and the protection of the whole earth community.?

?The Augustinian Friars of the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova give thanks to God for the many gifts of Religious Women and their willingness to share them with the people of God,? the friars conclude their

statement.

?We pledge our prayers, hope and collaboration in our joint effort to bring justice and peace to a world hungry for the healing touch of our God.?

In an April 18 order to the LCWR, the Vatican?s 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, the head of the Vatican congregation, Cardinal William Levada, warned of a possible ?dialogue of the deaf? between the group. [3]

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 [4] 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.

Following is the full statement from the Augustinian friars.

On June 15, 2012 the Mid-Chapter Assembly of the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova passed the following statement:

The Augustinian Friars of the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova gathered in Assembly, June 11-15, 2012 wish to offer their support of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in their dialogue with Vatican officials.

We identify with the sentiments expressed in the Pax Christi letter of support for LCWR issued June 13, 2012 and note in particular this paragraph from the letter:

?U.S. women religious are making peace inside and outside centers of power. Locally, nationally and internationally, they are tireless advocates for the dignity of human life and the protection of the whole earth community. Their commitment to accompany those who have been discarded and are forgotten; to listen with care to their stories; to act with compassion; and to address the roots of injustice and violence in the light of the Gospel, make the Sisters immensely credible in the public arena among people of faith and good will.?

The Augustinian Friars of the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova give thanks to God for the many gifts of Religious Women and their willingness to share them with the people of God. We pledge our prayers, hope and collaboration in our joint effort to bring justice and peace to a world hungry for the healing touch of our God.

[Joshua J. McElwee is an *NCR* staff writer. His email address is **jmcelwee@ncronline.org**.]

Source URL (retrieved on *12/13/2013 - 16:41*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/another-group-priests-voices-support-lcwr

Links:

[1] http://ncronline.org/node/30847
[2] http://ncronline.org/node/31018
[3] http://ncronline.org/node/30853
[4] http://ncronline.org/node/30903