Resource for reflection on the doctrinal assessment of LCWR

A collaborative work of A Nun's Life Ministry, Regina Siegfried, ASC, and Amy Hereford, CSJ

April 24, 2012

After the Vatican made its announcement about the Leadership Council of Women Religious (LCWR) last week, many Catholics expressed a desire to learn more about the doctrinal assessment and reflect on its meaning in light of theology, which Saint Anselm described as "faith seeking understanding."

To assist in this, we highlighted a few areas for consideration, based on a study guide that Sister Regina Siegfried, ASC, developed for the novices with whom she works. Sister Regina is a Catholic sister in the congregation of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ. She has taught at Saint Louis University and Aquinas Institute of Theology and works with new members of religious communities and with people who are in RCIA in her parish. The study guide also includes questions from Sister Amy Hereford, CSJ, a Sister of Saint Joseph and an attorney canonist.

The Bigger Picture

1. What are the various centers of authority in the Catholic Church?
2. Name some of the many theologies that are operative in the Catholic Church today. How would you describe the theology at work in your life? in the Church? in LCWR?
3. What do you see as the place of religious life in today's Church? In today's world? How might others in the Church see the place of religious?
4. Discuss the notion of human dignity and human rights in this process.

The Assessment Itself

(pp. 1-2) The Introduction situates the assessment in the background of *Vita Consecrata*, an expression of gratitude for years of service to the Church and for the charism of religious life. It also mentions that the investigation of LCWR does not mean judgment on the life and faith of individual women religious.

- What do you sense is the overarching concern of the assessment?

(pp. 2-3) This section outlines the chronological setting for the assessment including the three major areas of concern that surfaced in the April 8, 2008, meeting with LCWR and Cardinal Levada: LCWR assembly addresses, policies of corporate dissent, and radical feminism.

- Familiarize yourself with the work of NETWORK (www.networklobby.org) and the Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI) (www.trcri.org)

continued on the next page …

© 2012 aNunsLife.org

(pp. 3-4) Documentation presented to the ordinary session of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF)

- What are the issues at stake here?
- Where do these issues intersect in your own life?

(p. 5) Principal Findings of the Doctrinal Assessment

- What is one of the conclusions about LCWR assembly addresses?
- What issue from 1977 is still open?
- How do you make sense of the jump in the conclusion that since no clarification was offered, it therefore is seen as an endorsement of the positions presented in talks?
- Note the discussion on prophetic office in the last paragraph. How does this paragraph agree or disagree with discussions on prophetic office by the following theologians?

    - Walter Brueggeman – www.anunslife.org/brueggeman
    - Michael Crosby – www.anunslife.org/Crosby
    - Sandra Schneiders – www.anunslife.org/schneiders

(p. 6) The Role of the LCWR in the Doctrinal Formation of Religious Superiors and Formators

- What's the difference between "doctrinal content" and "theological education"?

(p. 7) The Mandate for Implementation of the Doctrinal Assessment

- Read Canons 708 and 709 (www.anunslife.org/canons708-709) in light of the broader context of religious life mentioned in Canon Law and lived through the centuries.
- What are the five points of the mandate of the Delegate? Do any of them strike you in particular?

(p. 8) Conclusion

- This is a five-year process. Any thoughts on where you will be personally in five years? Any thoughts on where you imagine religious life will be? The Catholic Church in the United States?
- The assessment calls for the formation of an advisory team. If you were on the team, what would you bring to the table?

© 2012 aNunsLife.org