

A Response from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious to These Times

Over the course of the last several years, we have watched with grave concern a global and national shift in values and priorities that is negatively impacting the health of the planet and the lives of millions of its most vulnerable inhabitants. Policies enacted by many governments, including our own in the United States, as well as choices being made by citizens, point to a rapid dismantling of values that we consider bedrock for the future of the global community.



During these years, we have continuously discerned how we, as women religious, can most effectively respond to these shifts. Recent changes in this nation point to a need for us to consider this question with great seriousness and to live our vocational call as women religious with a depth that may have never been required of us previously. The public proclamation each of us made at our profession of vows reminds us of our responsibility to be women of God living amid the deep challenges of the world – fearless of embracing and embodying the priorities of the Gospel.

What we are witnessing in society today goes against the principles that we, as Catholic sisters, have labored for centuries to nurture and protect. Recalling these beliefs is an important exercise for us as we are confronted with rhetoric that urges us to change course and actions that oppose our principles. These values, around which we have spoken publicly and that have guided our lives, include:

- The belief in the inherent right to life of all human beings and the dignity of each life
- The commitment to the Gospel demands of love, welcome, and care for all people, especially those who are most vulnerable
- The duty to welcome immigrants and provide care and aid to all in our land, while insisting on comprehensive immigration reform
- The responsibility to stand against violence in all its forms
- The commitment to dismantle systemic racism
- The belief that care of our planet Earth requires our attention and action
- Respect for the journey of all persons into the wholeness of their humanness
- The work to alleviate poverty in all forms

Staying steadfast to these principles in the face of powerful forces working towards contrary purposes may be one of the hardest challenges we will encounter – collectively and individually. The efforts to be the face of compassion and hope amid actions that create chaos and fear will not be easy. This is a time when we will need one another, and a time when we can lend our voices and our support to many of the organizations and people of faith who are laboring to bear witness to the dignity of each person.

We are now facing a time that differs in many significant ways from any previous period in which most of us have lived. Lives all around us are at stake. All evidence shows that we will be seeing an increase in moral violations.

In the time ahead, we will need to be women who stay informed, listen carefully to all voices and perspectives, and engage in serious and deep discernment to make wise choices so that we do not contribute hatred, fear, division, or violence to the world. Our decisions should lead us to become even more fully who we are called to be – bearers of love who refuse to relinquish our moral authority nor languish in despair. May we wholeheartedly embrace the call of the church to be people of hope and live this call with all our being for the sake of the world and its future.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) is an association of the leaders of congregations of Catholic women religious in the United States. The conference has nearly 1270 members, who represent approximately 66 percent of the 35,000 women religious in the United States. Founded in 1956, the conference assists its members to collaboratively carry out their service of leadership to further the mission of the Gospel in today's world.