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Vatican doctrine czar on LCWR: We expect 'substantial fidelity'

John L. Allen Jr. | Oct. 13, 2012 NCR Today

In commenting on the Vatican?s standoff with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in the United States, the Vatican?s new doctrinal czar said today the right question is not who?s wrong, but ?who respects revelation and its essential elements?"

Archbishop Gerhard Müller, 64, said he ?looks with sympathy? on groups such as LCWR, but at the same time that ?no group can set itself up as the source of authentic interpretation? of church teaching.

That role, Müller insisted, belongs to ?the pope and the bishops in communion with him,? who expect ?substantial fidelity? from the rest of the church.

LCWR is the largest umbrella group for the leaders of women?s religious orders in the United States. Earlier this year, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a critical 18-page doctrinal assessment [1] of the group and appointed three American bishops to lead an overhaul. Müller, a German, took over from American Cardinal William Levada as head of the doctrinal office in July.

Müller?s comments came in an interview with journalist Paolo Rodari in the Italian daily *Il Foglio*. The exchange covered a wide range of topics, from the current Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization to Müller?s longtime friendship with Gustavo Gutierrez, widely considered the father of the liberation theology movement.

It?s Müller?s comments on the LCWR, that will likely be of greatest interest to American readers.

The following is an *NCR* translation of that section of the interview, which Rodari introduced by noting that the LCWR has been accused of ?radical feminism?, silence on abortion and gay marriage, and refusing to withdraw a 1977 declaration in favor of women priests.

> ***Rodari****: Who?s wrong, you or them?*
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> **Müller**: The revelation of God is entrusted to the church, which transmits it through scripture and tradition. At the same time, the church teaches that the definitive interpretation of revelation belongs to the magisterium, which is to say, to the pope and the bishops in communion with him. The church expects substantial fidelity from its members to what has been revealed by Christ and interpreted by it. Sometimes, it corrects those who err; if it didn?t, it wouldn?t live up to its mission as Mater et Magistra.
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> I have to say that I look upon every group in the church with sympathy. The church lives on the responsibility of its members who freely come together, and it?s nourished by the life of every one of its communities, from the smallest to the biggest, made up of laity, priests, and consecrated persons. At the same time it doesn?t seem to me that any group can set itself up as the source of authentic interpretation of revelation. Among other things, the themes you mentioned touch on dogmatic elements. The right

question isn?t ?who?s wrong??, but ?who respects revelation and its essential elements?'

In an interview last month with the *National Catholic Register*, Müller also warned that LCWR [2] should not "take an attitude against Rome" or be "anti-Rome."

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