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Pope Leo delivers a pre-recorded video message to attendees at the LCWR assembly Aug. 12, 2026, in Orlando. (GSR/Dan Stockman)



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Pope Leo XIV, in a pre-recorded video message, told hundreds of Catholic sisters gathered for a leadership conference that the church needs them and that their witness can help wake up the world.

More than 1,300 leaders of U.S.-based congregations of sisters and their invited guests are attending the Leadership Conference of Women Religious annual assembly, which is marking the 70th anniversary of the conference's founding. LCWR represents about two-thirds of the nearly 35,000 sisters in the United States; the conference runs Aug. 11-14.

Leo told attendees on Aug. 12 that he was grateful for their work and witness.

"In a particular way, through the many charisms bestowed by the Holy Spirit throughout history, consecrated women and men have helped to make the mission and mystery of the church visible in our world," he said in the video. "In this regard, I express gratitude for the longstanding contributions of your institutes in the fields of evangelization, education, caring for the poor and the marginalized, to name but a few."

Women religious can be key in confronting indifference and powerlessness in the world, he said.

"The church needs you, and all the diversity and richness of the forms of consecration and ministry that you represent," Leo said. "For with your vitality, your witness of a life centered on Jesus, you can contribute to waking up the world."

The pope told attendees they can also address the spiritual hunger in the world, and in the process encourage vocations.

"In your interactions with the young people, therefore, try to seek ways to introduce them to your way of life. And help them to hear the voice of the Lord, who speaks to us in the depths of our hearts," Leo said. "Encourage them to be courageous when responding to Jesus, who is never outdone in generosity, so that they, too, can share the joy that comes from following his call."

Leo began his remarks by expressing his gratitude that the assembly is based on a synodal format, encouraging attendees to listen deeply to each other and to the Holy Spirit.

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"I therefore hope that through this format of fraternal and receptive dialogue, you will be able to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying about the present and the future of consecrated life and the nations and people you serve," he said. "In a special way, those in religious life are called to become experts in synodality and the opportunities afforded by community life to practice it, as well as the very way that your congregations are organized."

Attendees also heard a welcoming message from Consolata Missionary Sr. Simona Brambilla. Brambilla was appointed by Pope Francis in January 2025 as prefect of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, making her the first woman religious to oversee religious in the history of the Catholic Church; she gave an [in-person keynote address](#) at last year's assembly.

Later, attendees heard a keynote address by Xavière Missionary [Sr. Nathalie Becquart](#), undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican. Becquart spoke on the meanings and importance of synodality, which means walking together.

This story appears in the **LCWR 2026** feature series. [View the full series.](#)