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

The idea of regulating 'prophecy'

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This past Sunday, I was privileged to give a talk at Epiphany Parish in Louisville, Ky. This is a lively, progressive parish with social justice at the center of its life.

As luck would have it, the topic on which I had been invited to speak on some months ago was "faith-filled dissent." I began by thanking the Vatican for providing me with so much rich material just before the talk. I was referring, of course, to the ultimatum from the Vatican that, if implemented, would destroy the Leadership Conference of Women Religious as we know it.

The Epiphany folks roared. Their sentiments, like those of the vast majority of Catholic (and other) commentators ranged from "What are these guys thinking? Do they really think they can win?" to "Hey, nuns are the best thing going in the church" to "You go, girl!"

But one person in the parish who had read the document from Rome pointed out a phrase I had missed. It purports to deal with "prophecy." I quote from the document: "Some speakers [at LCWR conferences] claim that dissent from the doctrine of the Church is justified as an exercise of the prophetic office. But this is based on a misunderstanding of the dynamic of prophecy in the Church ..." Then it goes on to say, "... true prophecy is a grace which accompanies the exercise of the responsibilities of the Christian life and ministries within the Church, *regulated and verified* by the Church's teaching office" (emphasis mine).

Prophecy, regulated? Really? Prophecy, by definition, is NOT regulated. Can you imagine anyone "regulating and verifying" the message of Isaiah, Jeremiah or Jesus?

What this ridiculous statement does show is the overwhelming desire of these men to "regulate" women and to put a stamp of approval on everything we say. This is "patriarchy" in its worst form. (By the way, in the document, they also object to LCWR speakers using "patriarchy" to describe them). But these guys really need a dictionary and maybe a few nuns to teach them the basics of language. This very document is nothing more than an exercise in patriarchy of the worst kind.

Prophetic resistance, as the term is understood biblically, is the order of the day.

Source URL (retrieved on *10/28/2016 - 15:42*): https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/idea-regulating-prophecy