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## A surprisingly civil discourse on the LCWR crackdown

by Maureen Fiedler

NCR Today

This week on "Interfaith Voices," we cover -- what else? -- the Vatican crackdown on LCWR, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. It begins with Laurie Goodstein, the veteran national religion correspondent for *The New York Times*, who lays out the facts of the case.

Then we host a debate. One side is represented by Ann Carey, a conservative Catholic laywoman who supports the Vatican. Back in 1997, she published a book called *Sisters in Crisis: the Tragic Unraveling of Women's Religious Communities*.

Supporting the nuns is Mary Hunt, a feminist theologian and a co-founder and co-director of WATER, the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual.

Two things struck me as the debate moved along. First, unlike much of our public "discourse" in the political arena, this debate was civil, respectful and even humorous at times.

Second, underneath the two viewpoints are two radically different visions of church, of Catholicism, of contemporary religious life. Ann uses a "corporate model" to describe what CEOs in business -- or church -- need to do when dissent is afoot, for example, move in to stop it. Mary uses a "co-op" model where dialogue is the norm and says this LCWR "moment" may be a tipping point toward a "lay-led" church.

And yes, as you can imagine, I had a hard time remaining the "neutral" interviewer. But I tried my best. This is public radio, after all.

So, if this story grabs you, tune in at [interfaithradio.org](http://interfaithradio.org).

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