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More than 30 vigils planned nationwide in support of LCWR

by Alice Popovici

Vigils in support of Catholic sisters are planned in more than 30 cities as the Leadership Conference of Women Religious prepares for its annual meeting in St. Louis, Mo. Individual locations are listed here.

Here's a statement about the vigils, released today by the Nun Justice Project, a group of organizations that support the LCWR:

Nuns gather to prepare response to Vatican; Catholics across country prepare 'Sister City' vigils in support

Washington, DC ? While the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) is meeting August 7-11 in St. Louis, MO to discern a response to the Vatican mandate, Catholics will be holding 'Sister City' vigils across the country to demonstrate their support with the sisters.

The Catholic Action Network in St. Louis will be welcoming the sisters as they arrive at the airport, dubbing St. Louis a 'Sister City', and then holding two vigils in honor of the sisters while they are in town. In solidarity, Catholics will host 'Sister City' vigils in their own cities from Anchorage, Alaska to Ft. Myers, Fla., during the same week to demonstrate the widespread support of the sisters.

'This is a historic moment in the lives of Catholics,' said Jim FitzGerald, executive director of Call To Action. 'As faithful people we have been called to work for justice'a message that Catholic sisters in this country have taught us for decades but are now being criticized for doing so by the Vatican.'

?The Vatican and bishops involved in the mandate against the sisters and their mission of social justice are not only attempting to diminish the good work of sisters, but are threatening to diminish the importance of the gospel message itself that calls us to work for justice,? said FitzGerald.

Catholic nuns created the country?s largest private school system and, in 2005, approximately one in six hospital patients in the United States were treated in a Catholic facility, many of which were begun by sisters (Source: <http://womenandspirit.org/>).

?This is an example of how the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church misuses its power to diminish the voices and contributions of women in the church,? said Erin Hanna, executive director of Women?s Ordination Conference. ?Gratefully, the voices of the sisters and Catholics across the country cannot be silenced.

?The nationwide vigils are testimony to the support the sisters have from Catholics far and wide. Clearly, the sisters and their mission speak to the hearts of Catholics more than any mandate from the Vatican,? said Hanna.

For a list of cities that will hold a ?Sister City? vigil next week, please see the updated list at: <http://nunjustice.tumblr.com/vigil>

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The Nun Justice Project is a grassroots movement supported by the following organizations: American Catholic Council, Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church , Call To Action, Catholics for Choice, CORPUS, DignityUSA, Federation of Christian Ministries, FutureChurch, New Ways Ministry, Quixote Center, RAPPORT, Voice of the Faithful, WATER: Women?s Alliance for Theology Ethics and Ritual, and Women?s Ordination Conference.

For more information, visit www.nunjustice.org.

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