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LCWR wins award for freedom in the church

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The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, which represents thousands of American nuns, has been awarded the Herbert Haag Prize for 2013 for Freedom in the Church.

The Catholic-based Herbert Haag Foundation honored LCWR "for their candid stance in this crisis, for their persistent loyalty to the Christian message and for the spiritual energy with which they carry the conflict," according to a recent press release.

The award honors "people and institutions that engage themselves in the spirit of the apostle Paul for freedom in the church and in doing so give witness to the world," the press release said.

"The good name of US women religious has been known for a long time, far beyond the United States and stands in contrast to the scandals of clergy sexual abuse and financial mismanagement within other sectors of the Church," the press release continued.

The award consists of a medal and a monetary amount to further the activities of the award-winner.

Herbert Haag, professor for Old Testament at the University of Tübingen, Germany, endowed the prize for Freedom in the Church and established the Herbert Haag Foundation in 1985.

Franciscan Sr. Pat Farrell, president of the leadership organization, will accept the award April 14 in Lucerne, Switzerland.

In April 2012, the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith criticized LCWR for its positions regarding abortion, the ordination of women, feminism and homosexuality, positions the congregation said deviate from Catholic teachings.

LCWR said the Vatican's criticism was unfounded.

In June, LCWR representatives Franciscan Sr. Pat Farrell and St. Joseph Sr. Janet Mock, executive director of LCWR, met in Rome to present their case "openly and honestly" with then-prefect of the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal William J. Levada, and Seattle Archbishop J. Peter Sartain.

Various Catholic organizations and members of the general public have demonstrated their solidarity with American women religious during this time.

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