

Vatican to investigate nuns' doctrinal fidelity: Ecumenism, homosexuality, all-male priesthood

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The Vatican plans to investigate leaders of women's religious congregations in the U.S. to ensure their fidelity to Catholic teaching on controversial questions having to do with ecumenism, homosexuality and the all-male priesthood.

Cardinal William Levada, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, informed officials at the Leadership Conference of Women Religious of the investigation in a letter on February 20, LCWR officials said.

The LCWR, a Maryland-based umbrella group that claims some 1,500 leaders from U.S. women's communities, represents about 95 percent of the 68,000 women religious in the U.S. LCWR officers wrote to members April 2 telling them of the investigation.

Levada, a former archbishop of San Francisco, said the new "doctrinal assessment" is a response to a 2001 meeting between LCWR leaders and officials at his congregation, the church's highest doctrinal body. At that time, the congregation was headed by then-cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI.

In that meeting, Vatican officials asked the American sisters to "report on the initiatives taken or planned" to promote church teaching on the exclusively male character of the priesthood, the primacy of the Catholic Church over other Christian denominations, and the "problem of homosexuality."

Levada wrote that the "tenor and the doctrinal content" of speeches at LCWR meetings since 2001 had led his office to "conclude that the problems which had motivated its request in 2001 continue to be present." *-Religion News Service*