

Catholic nuns urge candidates to stop hateful rhetoric

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, an organization of Catholic women, sent the following letter to the 2016 presidential candidates, asking them to insert civil discourse in an election cycle where it has been notably absent. LCWR's executive director penned this introduction for Street Roots, and the letter that follows was mailed to the presidential hopefuls.

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CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

We live in a world increasingly marked by inequity, brutality and violence of every sort. We see our own nation threatened by increasing disparities in economic, political and social power. At the same time we are reminded daily of the beauty of God's creation and the goodness of those with whom we share this country and our planet home.

As people of faith and women religious we take seriously the gospel call to love and care for each and every person. We are committed to the precepts of Catholic social teaching that remind us that the dignity of the human person is at the core of our moral vision of society. We believe that we have a personal and social responsibility to serve the common good.

Catholic sisters came to this country as immigrants almost 300 years ago to minister to those in most need. They claimed this country as their own. They became citizens and helped to build this nation as they established schools, hospitals and social service agencies. We continue to serve and to accept our own responsibility to participate in the political processes that shape our nation and impact our world.

In his address to the U.S. Congress last September, Pope Francis invited members of Congress to promote respect for the dignity of every human person and to renew their commitment to a spirit of cooperation. He also addressed each of us when he said: "Each son or daughter of a given country

has a mission, a personal and social responsibility ... You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief aim of all politics. A political society endures when it seeks, as a vocation, to satisfy common needs by stimulating the growth of all its members, especially those in situations of greater vulnerability or risk ... Building a future of freedom requires love of the common good and cooperation in a spirit of subsidiarity and solidarity."

It is that desire to serve the common good that prompted us to challenge ourselves, our fellow Americans and all who seek to lead this nation to reject the politics of fear and division and to choose instead, "to seek the common good, to desire only good for all others, and to offer our own truth with equal measures of conviction and humility."

The future of the nation depends on it!

The letter to the presidential candidates

On behalf of the 5,671 Catholic Sisters across the United States who have signed this letter, we ask you to join us in calling for civility in our discourse and decency in our political interaction that promotes the common good, reaches out to others, engages in constructive dialogue and seeks together the way forward. We ask you to join us in promising to engage in political dialogue that reflects the principles and values upon which this nation was founded.

In his Sept. 24, 2015 address to the U.S. Congress, Pope Francis reminded all who seek to serve that, "You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief aim of all politics."

Unfortunately, we live in a time when our

politics is too often marked by self-interest and demeaning rhetoric. We seem to be caught in a political system paralyzed by ideological extremism and hyper-partisanship. Those on all sides of the growing political divide too often appeal to our basest instincts and stoke the fires of fear that tear at the fabric of our nation. We cannot let the voices of hatred and fear carry the day.

We need courageous leaders willing to speak the truth. We simply ask that all who seek to lead refrain from language that disrespects, dehumanizes, or demonizes another. We pray that all who seek to influence public opinion will be mindful of the common good and respectful of the dignity of each and every person.

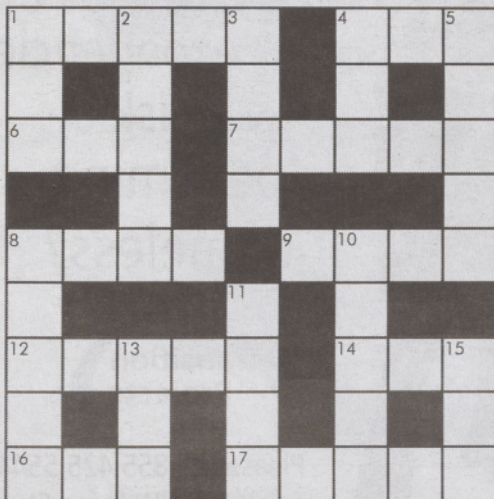
Citizens of this pluralistic nation form a diverse polity characterized by a wide variety of beliefs, experiences and interests. Our differences have the potential to challenge all of us to abandon easy certainty and seek a fuller truth. The problem is not our differences. It is how those disagreements are handled that spells the difference between building the common good and destroying the bonds that bind us.

We urge you to join us in pledging to engage in careful listening and honest dialogue that honors the dignity of those with whom we disagree and treats all with the respect that is their God-given right. Please join us in promising to seek the common good, to desire only good for all others, and to offer our own truth with equal measures of conviction and humility.

We know that you offer yourself in service of the people of the United States at great cost to yourself and your family. We promise you our prayers in the weeks and months ahead.

Sister Joan Marie Steadman, CSJ is the Executive Director of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious

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ACROSS

1. Fermentation agent
4. Have a bite
6. Tree fluid
7. Cake ingredient
8. Three-ply cookie
9. Hook's henchman
12. Ground grain
14. The gift of ____
16. Tease or ridicule
17. Francis or Kevin?

DOWN

1. Affirmative!
2. Type of fritter
3. Analyze or try
4. Cake ingredient
5. Tres
8. Deal
10. Potter's practice
11. Nosh!
13. Late rapper; abbr.
15. ____ appétit

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