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Pastor's Column

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Statement of Appreciation for Women Religious in California by the Bishops of California

Recently the Catholic Bishops of California met and issued a joint statement of appreciation for Women Religious in California. The statement was prompted by the Vatican's Apostolic Visitation of Institutes of Women Religious in the United States.

It is a statement that deserves to be read, appreciated, and shared with others:

During the month of October we honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, the faith-filled woman of the Gospel. As we, the Bishops of California, reflect on her generous response to God, we call to mind other faith-filled women—the thousands of Women Religious whose presence and ministry have helped to shape the face of the Catholic Church in California. We find it appropriate to acknowledge with profound gratitude the contributions of these women of the Gospel who have lived and served in the Catholic Dioceses and Archdioceses of California.

Throughout the history of the Church in California, Women Religious, faithful to their founding charisms, have served a population characterized by ethnic diversity and challenged by the societal, economic, and political conditions of changing times. For nearly two hundred years they have been faithful disciples and co-workers in bringing the message of the Gospel to the western regions of our country.

By virtue of their vowed consecration, religious are indeed “signs of contradiction” to our world as they foster a personal

relationship with the Lord Jesus, a communal relationship with those with whom they share charism and spirit in their religious institutes, and an ecclesial relationship manifested in generous service to all members of the Body of Christ. Women Religious bear witness to the unique value of lives given totally to God in love and expressed in generous service to God's people.

Deeply rooted in prayer and impelled by God's Holy Spirit, Women Religious further the Reign of God as they participate in the mission of Jesus through their ministries of education, health care, pastoral services, and social outreach. Despite challenges and sacrifices of every kind, they have served in a spirit of untiring selflessness, generosity, and charity and continue to do so to this day.

We, the Bishops of California, join our people in thanking Women Religious for being our “sisters,” for their presence among us, for their witness to the richness and varied gifts of the Spirit, and for the difference they have made in our lives. They have blessed us. We assure them of our sincere support and of our grateful prayers. May our Women Religious, like Mary, continue to witness hope in our Church and in our world.

The Bishops of California
October 29, 2009

F. In. Mike