

Aug. 7, 2012

Dear Sister Pat Farrell, OSF

For eight years in a row now, we have written to the LCWR and actively sought your help in combating childhood sexual abuse by clergy. For eight years in a row, you have rebuffed us.

We know that this year has been a hectic and upsetting year for the LCWR. We understand that the investigation into your organization launched by the Vatican in April must be distressing. We sympathize, because we have been subject to similar attacks.

We hope that you will take it upon yourselves to look into your own practices regarding sex abuse crimes. Despite a widely-professed concern for victims of trauma and oppression, your group has done little for victims of sexual and physical abuse or to prevent future victims.

We're here today desperately hoping the LCWR will reconsider this insensitive and destructive pattern.

Specifically, we are asking that you:

- allow members of our group to speak to your members, at this assembly, at future annual assemblies, at regional conferences, anywhere that groups of nuns gather
- take immediate, aggressive steps to reach out (via websites, newsletters, and personal visits and appeals) to anyone who may have been hurt by abusive nuns,
- urge victims to report the crimes directly to law enforcement officials, not church officials,
- urge your members to likewise stress the importance of disclosing child sex crimes to police and prosecutors,
- provide links to our support groups and our website on the websites of each member order of the LCWR, and
- stop requiring gag orders for settlements in cases brought about for abuse perpetrated by nuns

We can already hear the excuses: "This isn't the proper forum," "We aren't structured that way," "We need more lead time," "We can't control what our member religious orders do."

As we've pointed out in the past, we believe "where there's a will, there's a way." We believe that the LCWR can prod its members – if not insist that its members – take inexpensive, proven, common sense safety precautions. And we remind you again that these same excuses were repeatedly used by bishops to excuse inaction until, in 2002, enough victims had been devastated and enough scandal had been caused that bishops were finally forced to act.

Please don't let this awful pattern repeat itself.

Even now, at this late date, we are willing to make ourselves available to talk with the LCWR over the next few days. We've provided our cell phone numbers for your convenience. While we have repeatedly been shunned by the LCWR's leadership in the past, for the sake of those still at risk, we remain hopeful that your group will act now to prevent future sex crimes by nuns and ameliorate the pain already suffered by victims of earlier sex crimes by nuns.

Sincerely,

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