News



A Catholic nun accompanies a family of asylum seekers inside immigration court on Aug. 1, 2025, in New York. (AP/Olga Fedorova)



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As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, member congregations of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious are issuing a renewed call to live out the values Catholic sisters have championed since their earliest days in America.

On June 25, LCWR — which represents roughly 80% of U.S. Catholic sisters — delivered to Capitol Hill its Declaration of Commitment, a list of the principles sisters believe and stand for. It is signed by 191 congregations, as well as 343 individual sisters in leadership.

LCWR executive director Sr. Carol Zinn said that as they considered how to mark the nation's semiquincentennial, they reflected on the role Catholic sisters have had in building and sustaining this country.

"It's that context we wanted to live inside of because we're not doing anything different now than when we first came here," Zinn, a Sister of St. Joseph, told Global Sisters Report. "We make statements all the time and they are always, always political, but not partisan. And the political aspect of the 250th anniversary made it important to us to restate again why we came here in the first place."

By the time the Founding Fathers got around to signing the Declaration of Independence, Catholic sisters had been ministering here for 49 years. And those first 14 Ursuline sisters arriving in New Orleans were latecomers: Other Ursulines had been serving in Quebec since 1639.

The declaration says LCWR affirms its commitment to:

- "Upholding the inherent right to life of every human being and the dignity of each person
- Embracing the gospel call to love, welcome, and care for all people, especially those who are most vulnerable
- Welcoming immigrants and providing care and assistance to all who reside in our nation, while advocating for comprehensive immigration reform
- Standing against violence in all its forms
- Dismantling racism in all its manifestations
- Caring for our common home, Earth, through attentive stewardship and decisive action
- Respecting and supporting every person's journey toward the fullness of their humanity

- Working to alleviate poverty in all its forms
- Exercising the responsibility to vote and advocating for the protection of this opportunity for others
- Promoting dialogue, negotiation, and mutual understanding as the path to lasting peace, rather than the use of force and the destruction of life."

It goes on to say that as bearers of hope:

- "We commit ourselves to living compassion, communion, and nonviolence as members of one global community.
- We remain steadfast in our belief in the inherent right to life of every human being and the dignity of each person.
- We proclaim the urgent necessity of nonviolence in both word and action.
- We embrace our responsibility to make choices that support the good of all life on this planet.
- We pledge to live our call to be courageous witnesses of love — refusing to surrender our moral authority or succumb to despair."

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Sacred Heart Sr. Bridget Bearss, LCWR's associate director for transformative justice, said the ideas within the declaration are nothing new, but it is important at this moment to say "this is where we stand."

LCWR also asked its member congregations to join in a June 25 prayer service, which included a reading of the Declaration of Commitment. And the organization is preparing for its next "100 Days of Prayer, Fasting & Advocacy" leading up to the midterm elections Nov. 3.

Zinn said many congregations have said they may also issue the Declaration in their own name and issue it to local media, and several have said they may take it to their state legislature.

"We're praying that God might anchor us again in what is really the democratic and moral fabric of the country," she said. "It's an effort on our part to speak and act with one voice both as members of the church and as citizens of the country."

This story appears in the **USA 250** feature series. View the full series.