

Statement by Pluralism and Abortion Signers

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The Vatican action ordering religious who signed an advertisement on pluralism and abortion to retract or face expulsion from their orders “is a cause for scandal to Catholics everywhere,” said the statement by approximately 35 participants in a Dec. 19 meeting in Washington, D.C., most of whom were signers of the advertisement. “A consensus on any issue in the church cannot be imposed,” added the statement. Names of participants in the meeting were not made public. The text follows.

“The signers of the ‘Catholic Statement on Pluralism and Abortion’ that appeared in the New York Times Oct. 7, 1984, who met today at the St. Charles Hotel in Washington, D.C. are issuing the following statement:

We are Roman Catholic women and men united in the struggle to be a church that is just – where equality, pluralism and mutuality are esteemed values. We are appalled by the recent action of the Vatican against women who are members of religious orders. The action has threatened them with dismissal from their communities if they do not retract.

We believe that this Vatican action is a cause for scandal to Catholics everywhere. It seeks to stifle freedom of speech and public discussion in the Roman Catholic Church and create the appearance of a consensus where there is none.

This seems to be another attempt by the Vatican to silence public discussion in the church whether voiced by theologians of the first or third Worlds, bishops, clergy and religious holding public office, especially women in the church. The current Vatican action requires women to comply with the directives of a patriarchal system in which they have no real voice or power. This seems to us contrary to the spirit and teaching of Vatican II which says: ‘Let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is unsettled and charity in any case.’ (Constitution on the church in the Modern World, 92)

A consensus on any issue in the church cannot be imposed. Indeed, over the centuries there have been changes in matters once affirmed monolithically, e.g. slavery, usury, ecumenism and matters of war and peace. Furthermore, the Vatican action ignores the deep bonds of community among members of religious congregations and their years of dedicated service to the people of God.

We have received our season’s greetings from the Vatican. Today we call upon people of good will everywhere, especially Catholics: Send your Christmas cards to the Vatican Congregation for Religious stating your support for women and men who have been

threatened and stating your belief in diversity, pluralism, and honest discussion of church issues. Address card to SCRIS, Vatican City, Rome, Italy. pp. 515-516.”