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CNS documentary service

Presidential Address at LCWR Assembly

Sister Zinn, SSJ

Religious congregations must evolve to meet the needs of a changing society and church, Sister Carol Zinn, president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, told members of the organization during its annual assembly Aug. 12-15 in Nashville. "Religious life is a radical response to the Gospel lived in a particular historical and cultural context," Sister Carol, a Sister of St. Joseph, said in her presidential address Aug. 13, the first full day of the assembly. LCWR has about 1,400 members who are leaders of their orders in the United States. The members represent about 80 percent of the 51,600 women religious in the country. Many of the

"The melody of consecrated life through the evangelical counsels is to 'be' the presence of Christ in the world as Jesus was present in his world."

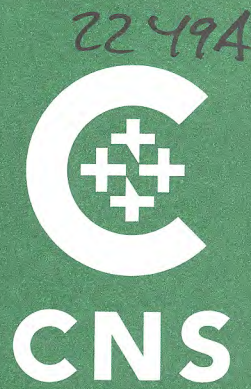
congregations of women religious among LCWR's membership are becoming smaller, Sister Carol noted. At the same time, the Catholic Church in the United States is changing along with the needs of the laity and people in society at large. "Perhaps our current experience of living into the smallness of religious life out of the large institutional reality of religious life these past years is the beginning of a dissonant harmony, a harmony that takes more attention, more asceticism and more letting go of the familiar in order to be more faithful to the music in God's heart," Sister Carol said. Religious congregations might have to change how they live their charisms, she said. LCWR's role is to help the leaders of congregations of women religious lead their communities during this time of change, Sister Carol said. Her presidential speech follows.

Welcome to Nashville, Tennessee, where country music surrounds us.

Welcome to an experience of the heart of God where mystery resides, is revealed and yearns to be received by those of us who put our ear to God's heart, listen carefully and follow freely no matter the cost.

Welcome to the melody, rhythm and silence that timbre us anew even as we embrace these contemporary times of uncertainty yet unimaginable desire to remain faithful to the vocation we so love, this religious life.

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