

## **STATEMENT OF LCWR NATIONAL BOARD CONCERNING SEXUAL ABUSE**

We continue to hear with profound sorrow of the sexual abuse of children and adolescents perpetrated by those who were called to minister faithfully to them.

As the National Board of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), representing 76,000 sisters in the United States, we are determined to be agents of healing and reconciliation in our church and society.

“ We are outraged by the harm done to anyone, especially children, abused by Catholic clergy, brothers, or sisters. We ask the members of LCWR to do all within their power to assure that such harm will never recur.

“ We grieve with victims and their families and ask our members to listen and respond compassionately to them.

“ We abhor the behaviors of perpetrators and we desire to see them prevented from doing further harm. Yet we cannot affirm any policy, which makes no distinction among offenses committed or possibilities of rehabilitation.

“ We pledge to respect appropriate confidentiality while also dealing with these matters openly and honestly, and we call our members to do likewise.

“ We stand in solidarity with those who have been falsely accused and support their search for truth and justice. We support the countless Catholic clergy, brothers, and sisters who continue in faithful service.

“ We call upon religious leaders, ourselves included, to screen candidates for priesthood and religious life with great care, to provide appropriate formation in human sexuality, and to apply standards of conduct with great vigilance.

“ We are convinced that the current crisis calls for systemic change, particularly in the exercise of ecclesial power. We call for the inclusion of laity, Catholic clergy, brothers and sisters in the formation of policies and in decision-making which will allow for collaborative renewal of our church.

Our Christian commitment calls us to justice, mercy, and that form of love which is forgiveness. Thus, we call upon our members to join our pledge to continue working from a contemplative stance for reconciliation and for a more inclusive and open church.

August 24, 2002