

LORETTO COMMUNITY

Sisters of Loretto/Co-Members of Loretto

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For Immediate Release

Loretto Community, Standing in Solidarity with Indigenous, Joins Their Request to Ask Pope Francis to Rescind Papal Bulls that Form Basis for Doctrine of Discovery

Denver – The Loretto Community today announced its request to Pope Francis to formally rescind the 15th century papal bulls that provide the basis for the Doctrine of Discovery.* This request stands in solidarity with indigenous peoples' persistent request. Columbus' arrival in the Western Hemisphere began an era of horrific violence based on religious intolerance. The Doctrine of Discovery justified this violence in addition to the seizure of any land not owned by Christians. The Loretto Community calls on Pope Francis to start a new era of justice with an updated papal bull that formally rejects the past and promotes ethical norms more in harmony with Gospel values.

Other Catholics have raised their voices in solidarity with this indigenous request, notably Pax Christi International and the Religious at the United Nations, signing a letter originated by the Passionists International. It is likely that other Catholics have similarly stood as allies, and more are expected to experience the call to do so. All voices in solidarity are welcome.

The requested actions would be a moral victory for indigenous people, and one long overdue. Recent popes have made gestures of apology and reconciliation, moving the Catholic Church and the world at large forward to this important moment. Indigenous groups stand firm in their requests for rescission and repudiation of the official bulls, seeking the same formality with which they were issued. The Loretto Community stands in solidarity with these requests of our indigenous neighbors, far and near.

The Loretto Community draws inspiration from its Catholic heritage and Gospel values of peace and justice. With its main offices in Denver, Loretto maintains nongovernmental status at the United Nations. Community members considered for many months what actions to take regarding the papal bulls before adopting a resolution at its General Assembly in St. Louis in July 2012 to stand in solidarity with indigenous people and to call for the Pope to publicly rescind these decrees that led to the Discovery Doctrine. Many members were shocked to learn of the doctrine, saddened at the delay experienced by indigenous and eager to show solidarity with the justice-based effort. The past year for Loretto has been one of slowly coming to terms with something that indigenous peoples have experienced for centuries.

The Loretto Community joins with other denominations that have made similar announcements, including the World Council of Churches, the Episcopal House of Bishops, the Philadelphia and New York Yearly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends and the Boulder Friends Meeting, the United Methodist Church, Unitarian Universalists and many others. The Loretto Community formally has supported the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples since 2009.

Joining with the Loretto Community to endorse its letter, or providing their own letter to Pope Francis, are the Dominican Sisters Conference, Sisters of St Francis (Rochester, MN), Sisters of St Joseph (Concordia, KS), Sisters of St Joseph (Philadelphia, PA), Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, the Congregation of Sisters of St Agnes (Fond du Lac, WI), and the 8th Day Center for Justice.

Please note: Sally Dunne, Loretto Co-Member and UN-NGO Representative, Loretto Community at the United Nations, is available for comment on Loretto's action as described above. She may be reached at sdunne@lorettocommunity.org or at (212) 687-1634.

For additional background information, see also: <http://lorettoattheun.org/?p=2669> and <http://lorettoattheun.org/?p=2663>.

**Today's relationships between governments and traditional people in the Americas, Africa and Oceania have as their foundation the "Doctrine of Discovery." It is a principle of international law with roots dating back to 15th century papal bulls. These decrees justified Spain and Portugal's dominion over lands occupied for thousands of years by indigenous peoples. They made possible the European age of "discovery," sanctioning and promoting the conquest, colonization and exploitation of non-Christian lands and peoples.*

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