

Obama picks outspoken sister for advisory council



Sister Marlene Weisenbeck (National Catholic Reporter Photo)

Sister Marlene Weisenbeck, a critic of the Vatican's apostolic visitation of American religious sisters, has been picked by President Barack Obama to serve on the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. The appointment was announced today.

According to a Feb. 4 White House release, the advisory council "brings together religious and secular leaders as well as scholars and experts in fields related to the work of faith-based and neighborhood organizations in order to make recommendations to the government on how to improve partnerships."

Sister Marlene, past president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, made waves in September when she appeared on CNN and raised concerns about the apostolic visitation, which was announced in 2009 to look at the quality of life of U.S. congregations of women religious.

"We weren't quite expecting to walk into this kind of process that would test our authenticity and our integrity," she told CNN of the visitation.

Concerned that Rome may expect American sisters to return to a more traditional form of religious life, the Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration said "there is no turning back."

"I don't think that happens in any living organism," she said. "God doesn't turn the creation in opposite directions."

Here's a blurb on Sister Marlene's appointment from the White House release:

?Sister Marlene Weisenbeck, Appointee for Member, President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships Sister Marlene

Weisenbeck is a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Sister Weisenbeck is an officer and past president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, a canonically approved membership organization which exists as a support system and corporate voice for leaders of religious institutes of Catholic Sisters in the United States. She also serves as Chairperson of the Catholic Health Association's Sponsorship/Canon Law Committee and is a consultant in religious law. Sister Weisenbeck was president of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration from 2002-2010. She is also past president of the National Conference of Vicars for Religious and Chancellor for the Diocese of La Crosse. Sister Weisenbeck holds a B.M. Ed. degree from Viterbo University, an M.M. from George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, a J.C.L. in Canon Law from Saint Paul University-Ottawa, and a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Click [here](#) for bios of the other appointees.