

THE BISHOPS SPEAK FOR THE CHURCH

Most Catholics identify with their parish, not their diocese; they have even less interest in Church matters beyond the diocesan level. This explains why they are non-plussed by Vatican efforts to reform the Leadership Conference of Women Religions (LCWR). Some liberal Catholics, as well as liberal non-Catholics, are predictably unhappy with the proceedings, and more than a few show clear signs of a nervous breakdown. What is most perplexing is the way non-Catholics have shoved their way into this internal matter.

Jim Wallis is perhaps the most prominent non-Catholic to stick his nose where it doesn't belong. The former Marxist-turned-Protestant activist runs an organization and a magazine that is heavily funded by atheist billionaire George Soros. His reaction to the Vatican initiative was striking in one respect: he claimed that the bishops do not speak for the Catholic Church. "Quite honestly," he writes, "do most of us believe, or even most Catholics believe, that the bishops are the only 'authentic teachers of faith and morals?'"

"In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent." This is not a statement from the first millennium—it is from a Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*. Now Mr. Wallis, not being a Catholic, is free to disagree with this proclamation. But he looks positively foolish when he suggests that some authority other than the bishops may actually speak for the Catholic Church. More important, it is none of his business how the Church crafts its strictures.

If writers for *Sojourners* insisted that they, not Jim Wallis, speak for the magazine he founded and edits, they would

quickly be set straight by the editor himself. Accordingly, the Catholic League was quite delighted to take the opportunity to set him straight.