

Vatican Cracks Down on . . . Nuns?

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Why is the Vatican messing with American nuns? It's not like there are that many of them.

The Vatican is conducting two investigations, says [an article in The New York Times](#). "While some nuns say they are grateful that the Vatican is finally paying attention to their dwindling communities, many fear that the real motivation is to reel in American nuns who have reinterpreted their calling for the modern world," the story says.

Instead of sticking to traditional work in hospitals and schools, many are active in professions and live independently.

The Vatican is being vague, but one organization being studied, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, was warned decades ago about loose talk on the ordination of women.

Some nuns are urging their sister sisters not to cooperate. I'm sympathetic.

From kindergarten through 12th grade, I was taught by the nuns – the Oblate Sisters of Providence and the Daughters of Charity. Some were brutal. Many more were quite kind and encouraging. Sister Mary Augustine pulled me into the newspaper room at Seton High.

Over the years, I saw their habits change, literally and figuratively. Most of the nuns I know now are working in the community, as teachers and social workers. They speak up, too. It goes down a lot better than the deference to priests, which – even in first grade -- I found pretty creepy. Considering what some of the priests were doing, more backtalk would have been a good thing.

It's no surprise that such a patriarchal institution is keeping a close eye on convent life. But if the church wants to encourage vocations to fill the diminishing ranks of the religious, a crackdown isn't the best recruiting tool.

<http://www.politicsdaily.com/2009/07/02/vatican-cracks-down-on-nuns/>