Opinion
Vatican



by NCR Staff

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The Synod of Bishops for the Amazon is winding down this weekend, but what decisions come out in the final documents could lead to some big changes for the Catholic Church. Discussions have been swirling around two topics in particular: married priests and women deacons. Below is a sampling of letters from NCR readers and their thoughts on the Amazon synod. Letters have been edited for length and clarity.

Why do you keep referring to celibacy as a church practice? It's a practice of the Western rite, which does happen to be the largest, but several other rites have permitted the ordination of married men since the founding of the church.



The canon seems to have been written as if the others did not exist.

BILL MURPHY

Rochester, New York

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I cannot understand why there are those who find it difficult to accept married priests in the Catholic Church.

In the Amazon synod, for instance, a number of participants are really struggling accepting the emergence and presence of married priests in the Catholic Church in the Amazon area. Others outside of the Amazon synod are also struggling in their acceptance.

The real issue is not the emergence and presence of married priests. Scriptures have already established it in I Timothy 3:1, an account of Paul the Apostle that sets up the qualifications of an overseer/bishop/priest/deacon of which one qualification says that an overseer or a bishop must be a "husband of one wife" and "must manage his own household well" for how can he manage the church if he cannot manage his own household. The priest who shares in the fullness of the priesthood that resides in the bishop would do likewise.

What, then, is the issue and where lies the issue itself?

The emergence and presence of married priests in the church and in the world should no longer be made an issue. Let sacred scriptures speak and let us listen to what they say, instead. The further task of the hierarchy of the church is to think, initiate, execute and sustain whatever ways could best serve married priests in the church and how they could best serve God and his church in proclaiming the gospel to the world.

CELES AMORIN GIANAN

Manila, Philippines

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If the synod does not approve married priests, women as deacons and other important reforms, it will prove it was just another debating club, incapable of seeing and facing the loss of more than half of the members of the Catholic Church in Latin America to materialism and to other religions in the last 50 years.

Conservatives want no change and prefer to see an inactive church only of old people, like in Europe. Pope Francis has to fight the devil. We have to pray for him every day.

JOSE H. GUZMAN

Quito, Ecuador

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I am always very much surprised by the fact that when the question of celibacy and priesthood is raised, a very significant element of church tradition is completely ignored: the fact that there are and always have been married priests in the churches of Oriental rites, which are in complete communion with Rome.

Some of these married priests have led such exemplary lives that they have been raised to the altars: Blessed Gomidas Kermurdjian, Armenian priest and martyr (1656-1707), the Ukrainian priests and martyrs Roman Lysko (1914-1949), Emilian Kovch (1884-1944) and Mykola Tsehelskyij (1896-1951). They were martyrs, but I don't think the Catholic Church ever had to apologize for raising them to the altars in

spite of the fact that they were married priests!

Wouldn't it be great if Pope Francis would designate these martyrs as patron saints of all married priests?

PAUL CADRIN

Montreal, Quebec

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My thoughts and prayers have been with those at the synod. As I read about the Amazon, I remember the Inuit in Alaska where I was a Jesuit volunteer in the 1960s. The unraveling of a culture even if not international is tragic. Hopefully the synod gets it right.

ADELAIDE LOGES

Bothell, Washington

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The Vatican Synod of Bishops for the Amazon is certainly familiar with a Pontifical Biblical Study requested in the 1960s by the pope and directed by Jesuit Fr. David Stanley with 17 biblical scholars.

The study concluded "There are no obstacles to ordination of women in the bible." Stanley learned of Vatican rejection upon receiving a scholarly conclusion which clearly challenged illegal gender discrimination in the Catholic Church.

Stanley returned to his native Canada and held a press conference in the Montreal airport. He announced retirement from the Pontifical Biblical Study after Rome's intransigence on the subject or ordaining women.

Could it be possible the Anglican church used Stanley's biblical study as their foundation for ordination of women?

During my 30 years as a Catholic priest, I became disenchanted by the decline in compassionate pastoral service due to the absence of women.

It is basic theology 101 to state "Jesus is the compassion of YHWH/God/Allah incarnate." If this premise is agreeable, each one who follows Jesus the Christ could daily manifest divine compassion to all human and nonhuman beings.

After three decades as a Catholic priest, refusal to ordain women brought me to resignation Oct. 4, 1990, on the feast of St. Francis. Francis was not ordained and was complemented by St. Clare.

Will Pope Francis ever review findings of his Jesuit brother Stanley and the Pontifical Biblical Study who found no obstacles to female priests?

VIC HUMMERT

Lafayette, Louisiana

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If a woman receives guidance from God then the Catholic clergy would say that was bogus. They would be putting themselves above God, and most certainly above any woman.

MADELINE A. BRUCE

Nanaimo, British Columbia

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If the statue is of Our Lady, and was taken because people hate indigenous Amazonians, your editorial would be justified. But if it was a pagan idol to which people were genuflecting, it should be treated in the same way that Moses treated the golden calf. Your editorial walks a fine line by avoiding having to decide what it was, thus allowing you to call those who disagree with you "racists" and ending the inquiry there.

I expect that if I hung a picture of Our Lady in a mosque, or a synagogue, or a Buddhist temple, it would be taken and disposed of, and I find it hard to see how anyone could object to that.

FRANK SNYDER

Fort Worth, Texas

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This is truly disgusting, as are comments about people wearing feathered headdresses to the synod, to which Pope Francis gave a very appropriate response.

Where are we as a church, and as a culture, when it becomes acceptable to destroy and defame symbols which are precious to any people. I would love to have a copy of one of these lovely mother statues in my home.

LYNNE MILLER

Oakland, California

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This is so painful and pathetic. Yet, because it isn't a pelvic issue, we won't be hearing from our American bishops. No courageous statements to come.

(Fr.) WILLIAM MURPHY

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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