Opinion
Vatican



by NCR Staff

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Last month, Pope Francis appointed three women to the Vatican's Dicastery for Bishops, fulfilling an earlier pledge that for the first time in the office's history, women would be granted a voice in the department tasked with advising the pontiff on which priests to appoint as bishops. The "historic" appointment, says NCR political columnist Michael Sean Winters, is an enormous change in the life of the Roman Curia and in the life of the universal church. While NCR executive editor Heidi Schlumpf argues it will take a lot more to undo centuries of misogynistic oppression

than the naming of three women to a Vatican office. Following are NCR reader letters responding to the appointment that have been edited for length and clarity.



I found Michael Sean Winters' article to be encouraging. That encouragement is much needed at the present.

My prayer is that Pope Francis is not just rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. This is an old boys' network and here in the U.S. needs much attention. Our bishops are at odds on many issues and in some cases, their overextension of power and control is divisive. Hopefully, these women will be heard when it comes to appointing good, humble shepherds for our wounded church.

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina

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I am so happy that the Holy Father is recognizing women this way. Indeed, it is long overdue as is the need for women deacons to help with the clergy shortage.

If only women could help the Holy Father reassign some of the bishops in America who fight him at every turn either overtly or covertly.

PHILIP WRIGHT

Boston, Massachusetts

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I appreciated Michael Sean Winters' report on Pope Francis' opening of the dicastery to women.

However, his assertion that lay people might somehow "too easily forget that obedience, like prayer and suffering, are the true sources of power in the Christian faith" is problematic on every level. His claim is certainly inconsistent with the faithful laity I have served with in church ministry for 30 years. I am not sure I can say the same for the ordained that I have worked with during that same time. I was genuinely disappointed to read his assessment of the laity.

JAMES EVERITT

Portland, Oregon

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I am glad Pope Francis is allowing women to participate in the selection of bishops. However, women are not in the group from which they may select. Still a long way to go.

MARY CORRISTON

Colorado Springs, Colorado

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I continue to be impressed by Pope Francis and his valiant attempts to make the church make sense in the 21st century. I certainly admire his involving women in the Vatican as something other than caretakers.

There may even come a day when a pope appoints women who lead normal family lives in addition to their professional accomplishments, as the secular world already does. That will really rattle the stuffy, naïve, ordained "celibates" who run the church at all levels.

PATRICK NAGLE

Olympia, Washington

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I do not believe that the appointment of women to the Dicastery for Bishops is "too late." Does not our Catholic faith tell us that, short of damnation, it is never too late for positive transformation? Unless the writer means to imply that the church is damned, I don't see how any positive change in the church can ever be dismissed as coming "too late."

Now, "too little" on the other hand is a fair characterization. The institutional church remains awash in sexism. Miters and misogyny often go hand in hand in the Catholic Church. How shall we combat this? Women in countries where the church is not dying will lead the charge! We should center their voices and look to them for guidance.

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York

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I find I do not agree completely with the contentions of Heidi Schlumpf nor the quote from Kathleen Sprows Cummings concerning the appointment of women to the Dicastery for Bishops. In her essay, Schlumpf alludes to the idea that every journey must begin with a small step. Although this is seemingly a small step, it resonates loud and clear that the Catholic Church is turning a corner.

Rather than argue that these appointments are too little and too late, one can argue that it is high time that women were given a central role in church governance. This step will add to those roles, possibly even opening of the deaconate to women and eventually to the priesthood itself.

As was stated in Schlumpf's essay, the church thinks in centuries. It took 500 years from Trent to reach the Second Vatican Council in order to make the church what we see today. Revolution may cause sudden change but evolution takes time. I have no doubt this is a continuation of an evolutionary trend which will make the church

more reflective of the aspirations of the faithful.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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