Opinion
Letters to the Editor



by NCR Staff

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On Monday, Nicole Winfield reported for The Associated Press that five conservative cardinals from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas had challenged Pope Francis to affirm current Catholic teaching on homosexuality and women's ordination ahead of the start of the Synod on Synodality in Rome on Oct. 4. Later that morning, NCR news editor Joshua J. McElwee and NCR Vatican correspondent Christopher White reported that Francis had issued a response, expressing openness to Catholic blessings for same-sex couples, under the condition they are not confused with

marriage ceremonies for men and women. Following are NCR reader responses to this coverage with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

It seems that, in the popular media at least, the key issues for discussion at the synod will be women's ordination, same sex marriage and the church's treatment of LGBTQ Catholics who wish to worship in good faith. Some of the more reactionary conservative cardinals and bishops are behaving as though these are the only issues. Dealing with each of these topics deserves lengthy attention, but to mention only a few starting points, keep these in mind.

(1) Long before there was an ordained clergy, wealthy widows were opening their homes to St. Paul and other Christian apostles, and, as hostesses, were presiding at the Eucharistic celebrations.

(2) Marriage has always been primarily about inheritance. It only had a consistent Catholic ceremony following the Council of Trent. Blessing a marriage is a way of involving the Christian community in wishing well and caring about the success of the union.

(3) To treat others of whatever age or personal lifestyle as sinners who are unequal to the rest of the community is an affront to God's creation. We cannot let gender and sexual difference frighten us as a church community. We also cannot promote a pro-life stance at the same time as we preach against contraception.

In the end, we should be, as a church, directing our efforts toward the good of all the faithful, and not just the cultural comfort of a few.

DAVID GALUSHA.
Waxhaw, North Carolina



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Dear Pope Francis: Don't even think of leaving us any time soon. Like aged Malbec from Argentina, you get better over time. From the chair of Peter, let your light shine for many years to come. As you told the youth, "Shake things up." As good Pope John — of illustrious memory — said, "Open the windows of the church," so we can breathe in the Spirit in this 21st century. And as the Good Shepherd — Christ, ever-ancient, ever-new — tells us, "Don't be afraid." El rebaño (the flock) is with you on the path you forge. Bravo, Francisco! Viva, el sinodo! Ándale!

JOHN CUNNINGHAM
County Mayo, Ireland

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Unmentioned in this article, but also of great interest, are the Holy Father's remarks on slavery. Millions of us who still suffer from the effects of slavery on our ancestors need the Holy Father or the DDF (it's going to take forever for me to remember that's what it's called now) to delve into the issue in detail with the weight of magisterial authority. That is something owed by the hierarchical church to all Black people, to global Africa.

JEFFREY JONES
Hamburg, New York

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Our pope's response to the dubia of five reactionary cardinals who threaten schism over a more inclusive church gives many of us some hope that our church is actually listening to the sensus fidei. These two evolutionary changes which further open the tent of the church to all can not be seen, as in the views of some reactionaries, as a refutation of the church's doctrine let alone its tradition.

St. Paul enlarged the early church by inviting gentiles into its company. He did not insist upon adherence to Jewish tradition as a necessary foundation for inclusion. He recognized the gentiles were also children of God. Similarly, we can not be resolute about the traditions or social teachings of the church if those teaching are understood to be exclusionary.

Far too many individuals in our population, according to some statistics ten percent, are self described as former Catholics. That attrition is caused in large part by clerics who do not understand or appreciate the lived experiences of the faithful. In order to keep the tent open and welcome more members, the clerics need to understand the lived experiences of the faithful and not look down on their reactions to teachings which separate them from the church.

CHARLES A. LEGUERN
Granger, Indiana

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This is a nice overview article. Mentioning the German Synodal Path and the renegade priests who blessed same sex marriage in defiance of their conservative bishop shows there's movement toward this end in parts of the church. In question are the words used in the blessing and their source. Of course, because the blessings were not recognized by the official church they are meaningless - or are they? Vatican II mentions the 'priesthood of the people.' I've long held we are all priests with unused powers because the church hasn't given its official stamp of approval.

Catholic Church members have a voice in their church that has long been silenced. Not being discussed at the synod is the election of bishops. People should have a voice in choosing their bishop. There were serious problems in South America and

Africa where the people refused to accept an episcopal appointment. In both cases Pope Francis was forced to withdraw the candidate though not without a long fight. Catholics should also have control over every aspect of their church except those set aside for ministerial functions. Pastors are not trained to be administrators nor is their vocation, or "calling" to be anything other than to perform priestly duties. As more churches close, the empire-building era of men who found the lure of power and perks more appealing than obtaining the smell of the sheep is coming to an end. Pope Francis sees and is responding to the writing on the wall with a vision of a future church. So too do his adversaries yet they lack vision and courage to chart a new course.

Viva il Papa! May prophetic reformer Pope Francis live one hundred years and make a major reform in each of them.

MICHAEL J. MCDERMOTT
North Brookfield, Massachusetts

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Pope Francis is under no obligation to respond to the queries of the five conservative cardinals on matters that are anyway going to be deliberated at great length at the Synod, and that too in an atmosphere of prayerful discernment. The five cardinals should not presume to preempt the Spirit in guiding the Populus Dei in all matters of faith and morals. Pope Francis is showing remarkable restraint and humility in allowing even dissenting voices to be heard within the Church. The Spirit blows where He wills, and there is no way of knowing whence and whither!

LIONEL FERNANDES
Ontario, Canada

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Marriage is between one man and one woman who are open to children — end of discussion. Please pray and accept Pope Francis’ leadership and stop fighting him.

HUGH DENNING
Denver, Colorado