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U.S. Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, arrives for a working session of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican Oct. 16. (CNS/Lola Gomez)



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The bishops taking part in Pope Francis' recent major Vatican summit on the future of the Catholic Church wanted to express "a certain amount of sorrow" over how women have been treated by the global faith institution, said one of the American prelates who took part in the gathering.

In an exclusive interview with National Catholic Reporter, Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, said the delegates at the Oct. 4-29 Synod of Bishops wanted to show recognition of "how the church has not, in her leadership or in the way it works ... appreciated the sacrifice and [that] in so many parts of the world [what] continues to make the church viable is the work of women."

Flores, who was one of 12 U.S. bishops taking part in the October assembly, said the synod wanted to consider how to make the church "a more perfect communion where we do work more cohesively in a mutual recognition of gifts."

One of the synod's hopes, he said, "is that we can model to the world, imperfect as we are, that there is a way to relate to each other that's not all about power and all about control."

Flores, who is also the lead coordinator of the U.S. bishops' national consultation process for the synod, spoke to NCR as part of "The Vatican Briefing" podcast. The bishop addressed the role of women in the church in response to a question about the synod's decision in its final document to postpone action on the possibility of ordaining women as deacons.

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Flores said the members of the 2023 synod assembly considered their final text "an interim document."

"We need some time to kind of go more deeply into what's marked there," he said in an interview on Nov. 13, during the U.S. bishops' annual fall assembly in Baltimore. He said that in the time between now and an expected second synod assembly in October 2024, "we need to think more about this [text], but we need to kind of think about it together and also think about it in context of our local communities."

"I think there's some theological thinking that has to go on, at least initially, during this year, to kind of help us sort of frame the questions," he said.

Flores spoke for an episode of "The Vatican Briefing" podcast that also features a conversation between co-hosts Joshua McElwee and Christopher White about Francis' recent health issues, which led the pontiff to cancel his previously planned trip to Dubai for the U.N. Climate Change Conference.

The episode of "The Vatican Briefing" featuring NCR's full interview with Flores is available below. You can also subscribe to the podcast on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or however you listen to podcasts.

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Relevant links for this episode:

- White's coverage of Pope Francis canceling his planned trip to Dubai: Pope Francis cancels trip to Dubai for UN climate conference
- Brian Roewe's report on the opening of the U.N. climate summit: Catholics at COP28 vow to carry ill pope's call for action on climate change
- The Associated Press' reporting on the pope's Nov. 29 weekly general audience: Ailing Pope Francis holds weekly audience, but aide reads his remarks
- Brian Fraga's reporting on how the U.S. bishops discussed the Synod of Bishops during their November plenary meeting in Baltimore: Vatican ambassador urges US bishops to embrace synod on synodality
- White and McElwee's reporting on the synod's final document: Pope's major Vatican summit ends without action on women deacons, mention of LGBTQ Catholics
- White and McElwee's coverage of Dominican Fr. Timothy Radcliffe's reflections at the retreat ahead of the opening of the synod: 'Orthodoxy is spacious': At retreat, synod members hear about women's hopes, LGBTQ issues

This story appears in the **Synod on Synodality** and **The Vatican Briefing** feature series.
A version of this story appeared in the **Dec 22, 2023-Jan 4, 2024** print issue under the headline: Exclusive: Synod felt ‘sorrow’ over church’s treatment of women, says Bishop Flores.