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Men wearing black and clerical collars sit around green tables in a U shape with Pope Francis

Pope Francis meets with the members of his renewed Council of Cardinals at the Vatican April 24, 2023. Pictured, clockwise from the left, are: Cardinals Gérald C. Lacroix of Québec; Juan José Omella Omella of Barcelona; Seán P. O'Malley of Boston; Fridolin Ambongo Besungu of Kinshasa, Congo; and Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state. Continuing, to the right of the pope are: Bishop Marco Mellino, council secretary; and Cardinals Sérgio da Rocha of São Salvador da Bahia, Brazil; Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India; Fernando Vérgez Alzaga, president of the commission governing Vatican City State; and Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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Vatican City — December 6, 2023
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With the input of two women and a priest, Pope Francis and members of his international Council of Cardinals discussed the role of women in the Catholic Church.

"The council agreed on the need to listen, also and above all in individual Christian communities, to the feminine aspect of the church, so that the processes of reflection and decision-making can benefit from the irreplaceable contribution of women," the Vatican press office said at the end of the council's meeting Dec. 4-5.

The conversation about the role of women in the church included input from: Salesian Sr. Linda Pocher, a professor of Christology and Mariology at Rome's Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences "Auxilium"; Lucia Vantini, a professor of theology and philosophy at the Institute of Religious Sciences in Verona, Italy; and Fr. Luca Castiglioni, a professor of fundamental theology at the seminary of the Archdiocese of Milan, the press office said in a written communiqué Dec. 6.

Among the other items for discussion on the council's agenda were "the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the serious situation in the Holy Land," as well as the work of the COP28 convention on climate change underway in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

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U.S. Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley of Boston, a member of the Council of Cardinals and president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, presented a number of ideas for the organization of assemblies of bishops' conferences in 2024, "five years after the meeting on the prevention of abuse of minors and vulnerable people" at the Vatican in February 2019.

The members also discussed the first session of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, which was held in October, and they continued a discussion begun at their last meeting in June on how to "implement the spirit, principles and criteria of the apostolic constitution 'Praedicate Evangelium' ("Preach the Gospel") in the diocesan curias."

In addition to O'Malley, the members of the council are: Cardinals Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state; Sérgio da Rocha of São Salvador da Bahia, Brazil; Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India; Fernando Vérgez Alzaga, president of the commission governing Vatican City State; Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg; Gérald C. Lacroix of Québec; Juan José Omella Omella of Barcelona; and Fridolin Ambongo Besungu of Kinshasa, Congo. Bishop Marco Mellino serves as the council's secretary.

The Vatican press office said the next meeting was scheduled for February 2024.