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Kerry Alys Robinson, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA (CNS/Courtesy of Kerry Alys Robinson)



Christopher White

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The leader of the umbrella organization representing Catholic Charities agencies nationwide has expressed praise for Pope Francis' efforts to expand opportunities for women's leadership in the Catholic Church, calling it "a matter of managerial and moral urgency."

Kerry Alys Robinson, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, said she was grateful that the discussions at the pope's monthlong October summit on the future of the church included a call to allow women to better participate in the global faith's decision-making processes.

"It is so gratifying to know that this is a shared and universal concern," said Robinson, referring to the conversations at the Oct. 4-29 Synod of Bishops, in a Dec. 14 interview with National Catholic Reporter.

Robinson — the first laywoman to serve as the head of her organization, which represents some 170 Catholic Charities agencies across the U.S. — said she has advocated "for the role of women in positions of meaningful leadership and at the tables of decision-making all of my life."

"Particularly, when it comes to the church and church leadership and church decision-making, we are impoverished without the contribution of so many well-educated, theologically astute, [and] pastorally sensitive women," she said.

Robinson, a noted leader in Catholic leadership and philanthropy, took up her role at Catholic Charities this August. She was previously an executive partner at Leadership Roundtable, a nonprofit organization that promotes best practices in church management.

Robinson spoke to NCR as part of "The Vatican Briefing" podcast. She addressed the role of women in the church in response to a question about how the synod's final document said it was "urgent to ensure that women can participate in decision-making processes and assume roles of responsibility in pastoral care and ministry."

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The Catholic Charities leader said she thinks it is important that young women "are given opportunities to bring their full complement of skills and abilities to serve the church when they discern a vocation of service to that church."

Robinson also spoke movingly about the important work of charities agencies during the holiday season.

"What I have learned is that generosity is humankind's birthright, and that we are all called to be generous and to be catalysts to inspire generosity in others," she said. "And there's no better season than the season of Advent to exercise that generosity."

Robinson spoke for an episode of "The Vatican Briefing" podcast that also features a conversation between co-hosts Joshua McElwee and Christopher White about the Vatican's Dec. 18 decree making it possible for Catholic priests to bless same-sex unions, under certain conditions.

The episode of "The Vatican Briefing" featuring NCR's full interview with Robinson 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:

- Christopher White's coverage of the Vatican's Dec. 18 declaration allowing for Catholic blessings for gay couples: In major doctrinal shift, Vatican officially OKs Catholic blessings for gay couples
- Catholic News Service reporting on how Vatican officials framed the Dec. 18 declaration: Vatican note on blessings opens door to those seeking God, official says
- Catholic News Service reporting on Pope Francis' Dec. 17 condemnation of the Israeli military's alleged killing of two Christian women: Pope condemns targeting of unarmed civilians in Gaza
- The Associated Press reporting on the Vatican tribunal's Dec. 16 conviction of Italian Cardinal Angelo Becciu on charges of embezzlement: Cardinal Becciu convicted of embezzlement in Vatican financial trial, sentenced to prison
- OSV News' coverage in July of Kerry Robinson's appointment as president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA: Kerry Alys Robinson named as next Catholic Charities USA president and CEO

This story appears in the **The Vatican Briefing** and **Synod on Synodality** feature series.