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Pope Francis on women in his interview with 'America' magazine

Maureen Fiedler | Sep. 19, 2013 The Francis Chronicles

There's a lot to love in this interview in *America* magazine [1]. You can feel a refreshing breath of fresh air with Pope Francis' emphasis on the church as the People of God and in statements like, "We should not even think ... that 'thinking with the church' means only thinking with the hierarchy of the church." Whoa! That opens a lot of freedom of thought in one sentence.

I'm really growing to like this pope. He seems open, human, even holy. But I think he sorely needs a course in feminist theology. When asked about the role of women in the church in this interview, he seems to be searching for a role other than equality, the obvious role articulated by *Gaudium et Spes* *[2]* No. 29: "Every type of discrimination based on sex ... is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent."

Pope Francis says in the interview, "I am wary of a solution [to the role of women] that can be reduced to a kind of 'female *machismo*,' because a woman has a different make-up than a man." Female machismo? What is that, I wonder? Is he talking about feminism? Hard to say. Then, "a different make-up than a man"? In what way? Bodily organs? Psychological proclivities? But how would anything like that affect the ability of women to be, say, a priest? A bishop? A member of the Curia?

Then he advocates working harder "to develop a profound theology of women." Breaking news, Pope Francis: There is already a profound theology of women. There are libraries of feminist theology just waiting for you, and others, to dive in.

He says he wants to think about what he called "the specific place of women in those places where the authority of the church is exercised for various areas of the church." This is profoundly -- maybe purposely -- unclear. The "place" of women in the church ought to be the same as the "place" of men in the church: in equal roles, whether they be lay roles, priestly roles or leadership roles.

The optimist in me says that maybe Francis is biding his time on issues involving women. And given the magnitude of his task in reforming the Curia, changing the emphasis of the church to social justice and peace, etc., I'm willing to cut him a little slack.

Then I'd really like to be part of a delegation of women worldwide who would go and dialogue with him about women in the church. If this should ever come to pass, we'll give *NCR* the exclusive interview.

Editors note: We can send you an biweekly email alert with content from The Francis Chronicles. Follow the directions on our email alert sign up page [3].

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