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Pope: There won't be women cardinals

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NCR Today

Pope Francis has denied rumors he intends to name women as cardinals in the Catholic church, telling a prominent Italian newspaper he was unsure where the idea, which has circulated in recent weeks, had come from.

"I don't know where any such an idea came from," the pope told the Italian daily *La Stampa* in an interview published online Saturday. "Women in the Church must be valued, not 'clericalised.' "

Cardinals, sometimes known as the "princes of the church" and for their wearing of red vestments, are the only people who vote to elect the pope. Following a pope's death or resignation of the papal office, they meet in a secret conclave to cast ballots until a new pope -- usually from among their ranks -- is chosen.

Cardinals are usually senior Catholic prelates who serve either as archbishops in the world's largest dioceses or in the Vatican's central bureaucracy.

Speculation of a woman being named a cardinal by Pope Francis was rampant in November, after *NCR* reported that a prominent U.S. Jesuit priest had asked his friends and associates to propose names of women around the world who should be considered as possible cardinal candidates.

In his interview with the Italian daily, the pope also responds to criticisms made by conservative radio and television personalities in the U.S. that his recent apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* ("The Joy of the Gospel") was Marxist in its critique of the global economic system.

"Marxist ideology is wrong," the paper quotes the pope as saying. "But I have met many Marxists in my life who are good people, so I don't feel offended."

In the apostolic exhortation, Francis said there is an imbalance between the majority of people and a minority whose earnings are "growing exponentially."

That imbalance, the pope said, "is the result of ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation" and gives rise to a "new tyranny" in the world.

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