

Concerned Catholics

Amazon Synod Forum : April 2020

Implications for women in the Church

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Amazonian Synod Statement

- ▶ Calls for ‘a more incisive female presence in the Church’
- ▶ Women to be ordained as permanent deacons, and women to be appointed to a ministry of ‘women community leadership’
- ▶ Women to receive ministries of ‘Lector and Acolyte’ and therefore to be trained in theology and canon law
- ▶ Women to be involved in Church’s governance

Responses to Amazonian Synod:

Optimistic Interpretation

- ▶ Affirms the leadership roles of women in the Church
 - women to be consulted and to participate in decision-making
- ▶ Endorses women in permanent diaconate
- ▶ Gives women a role in Church governance
- ▶ Calls for an instituted ministry of 'women community leadership' to recognise significant role of women in the Amazonian Church
- ▶ Places more emphasis on the role of the laity and therefore by implication the role of women

Responses to Amazonian Synod:

Pessimistic Interpretation

- ▶ Refers women's diaconate to the Pope's study commission of 2016
 - no current timeline for the study commission to reconvene
 - leaves women's ministry in limbo
- ▶ Leaves confusion about the meaning of 'Women Community Leadership'
- ▶ Retains clerical oversight by having the new role in the gift of the Bishop
- ▶ Women's contribution 'with their sensitivity' still distinguishes along gender lines
- ▶ Not specific about women's role 'in governance' of the Church

‘Beloved Amazonia’: The Pope’s response

- ▶ Sits beside the Synod statement, not meant to make decisions
- ▶ Does not respond to the specifics of the Amazonian Synod statement
- ▶ Wants to avoid ‘clericalizing’ women by ordaining them to the priesthood
- ▶ Refers to ‘inculturation’ - the Church to be imbedded in the local culture
- ▶ Re-affirms the role played by women in the Amazonian Church

Responses to 'Beloved Amazonia'

Optimistic Interpretation

- ▶ Affirms and endorses the Report of the Synod
- ▶ Defers to the discernment of the local church
- ▶ Does not rule out ordaining married men or having women deacons
- ▶ Sees the Report as the starting-place for an alternative vision of the Church

Responses to 'Beloved Amazonia'

Pessimistic Interpretation

- ▶ Perpetuates clericalism
 - by defining two clerical activities that cannot be delegated: celebrating the eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation
- ▶ Leaves confusion about the meaning of 'Women Community Leadership'
 - left in bishop's control
- ▶ Uses a gendered approach to humanity
 - Jesus the model for men; Mary the model for women (Chapter 4.101)
 - Sentimental view of women as mother and servant
- ▶ Limited view of 'Inculturation' of the Church
 - accepts indigenous culture, ignores modern, Western culture
 - Cultural customs endorsed as opposed to cultural organisational equality for men and women
 - ignores women's power in some indigenous cultures (e.g. Australian Aboriginal culture)

OUR CRITIQUE

- ▶ Women still 'defined by what they are not' rather than what they are (not men, not priests, 'sensitive' not assertive)
- ▶ 'Neither virgins nor martyrs' as the old Missal defined the very few women saints who did not fall into those categories
- ▶ The *Mary Model* -
is an automatic relegation to a lower level of ministry
- mother and servant not equal leader
- ▶ Woman's place is not argued with any Biblical basis
(apart from vague mentions of early church)

FINALLY

- ▶ ‘Beloved Amazonia’ may present a new vision of synodality but women are still not at the table
- ▶ Clericalism prevails even in this new vision, when priests are still above the laity by virtue of their unique ‘undelegable’ roles
- ▶ The Jesus/Mary dichotomy is dangerous, not founded in Biblical teaching and perpetuates a sentimental, and above all male view of women
- ▶ The prevailing attitude is paternalistic, women to be ‘allowed’ certain ministries but not equality
- ▶ Such formulations are at their core misogynistic and if this language continues to dominate the debate there is little chance of progress
- ▶ **In summary** - there is little to be optimistic about and a good deal that is depressingly familiar, and in some instances retrograde