

# An Ecclesial Dream Too Small



Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, FutureChurch seeks changes that will provide all Roman Catholics the opportunity to participate fully in Church life and leadership. It is a national coalition of parish centered Catholics striving to educate fellow Catholics about the seriousness of the priest shortage, the centrality of the Eucharist (the Mass), and the systemic inequality of women in the Catholic Church. FutureChurch is a nonprofit organization that makes presentations throughout the country, distributes education, advocacy and prayer resources and recruits activists who work on behalf of its mission.

An Ecclesial Dream Too Small: Pope Francis Undermines Synodal Process, Upholds Eucharistic Famine, and Sidelines Women

For Immediate Release

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Since the beginning moments of his pontificate, Pope Francis has endeavored to forge a Church that is more synodal and a hierarchy that is more collegial. But *Querida Amazonia* (Dear Amazonia), Pope Francis' highly anticipated apostolic exhortation in response to the October 2019 Synod on the Amazon, significantly undercut any progress the Church has made in that direction.

“Pope Francis sidelined the specific, good-faith proposals from Synod bishops for ordaining older married men to the priesthood and relaunching the commission on women deacons,” said Deborah Rose-Milavec, co-director of FutureChurch who also covered the synod from Rome. “He effectively weakened the promise of a Church that is synodal, one that he has been developing for the last eight years,” she added.

Unveiling the papal document at a press conference on February 12, Vatican and synod officials further underscored that *Querida Amazonia* carries the weight of the Church's magisterium but the final document does not. Still, they suggested that the proposals would remain on the table for future discussion and discernment.

“During the press conference, Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ suggested that these proposals need to ‘mature’, but FutureChurch, who has advocated for a married priesthood and women deacons for decades, believes these proposals are ripe for action, especially since the bishops and women ministers in the Amazon are crying out for new models that will aid them in strengthening the vitality of their work for the Gospel there,” Rose-Milavec stated.

While highlighting the central role of the Eucharist in Catholic life and lamenting the infrequent celebration of and access to the Sacraments – and especially the Eucharist – Pope Francis proposed praying for vocations and sending priests from outside the Amazon to the region.

“These are the same ‘solutions’ that have already failed the People of God,” said FutureChurch co-director Russ Petrus. “The problem isn't a shortage of vocations, but an entrenched resistance to the movement of the Holy Spirit in recognizing and lifting up the vocations of women and married men that are already present.”

“We know the situation is dire, and the Church needs bold and prophetic action in addition to prayers,” Petrus concluded.

On the topic of women in the Church, Pope Francis praises the unparalleled role they have played in building and sustaining communities of faith in the Amazon region but returns to a theology of complementarity to bar women from ordained ministry, saying,

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“women make their contribution to the Church in a way that is properly theirs.”

“Separate is not equal,” responded Rose-Milavec, who has spearheaded FutureChurch’s efforts to expose the failings of complementarian theology. “We are proud of Pope Francis’ leadership in promoting social, economic, and environmental justice on the world stage and in this document, but the longer the hierarchy fails to turn that critical eye inward, the less effective our calls for justice will be,” she said.

Pope Francis has opened us to bold new dreams for a world where justice and mercy prevail. In areas where that dream still needs to expand – namely where justice is still lacking within the institutional Church – FutureChurch will continue its efforts

to educate, advocate, and witness so that the Church will grow in credibility as a faithful servant bearing witness to the justice, love and mercy we all hunger for.

FutureChurch is an organizational member of Catholic Women's Council and has signed onto their statement, which can be read at: <https://voicesoffaith.org/conversations-1/2020/2/13/u6cwl-d-wpcc441f5n8j0pockjqpa326>

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CORPUS, the National Association for an Inclusive Priesthood, regrets Pope Francis’ decision to place power over the needs of the People of God.

Today is a “déjà vu” moment recalling the disastrous decision in 1968 to reaffirm the prohibition on birth control. Again, an inner circle of clerics has retreated in fear ignoring their own Bishops’ requests during the Synod on the Amazon, the overwhelming support for a married priesthood among catholics at large, and most disturbing, the dire needs of the people for the sacraments.

As before, catholics who call themselves “CORPUS” will follow their conscience, respond to the spiritual and sacramental needs as they arise, and continue to seek out community and holiness far beyond the rigid walls of the Vatican.

Nick De Los Reyes, Linda Pinto Andrea and William Johnson, Phil and Linda Marcin  
Executive Council on behalf of the members of CORPUS

