

Can the Catholic Church Free Itself from Clericalism?



The following is a transcript of the Symposium sponsored by Catholic Organization for Renewal (COR)

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Russ Petrus: Well, good evening, everyone. My name is Russ Petrus. I am Co-director of FutureChurch. And along with Marianne Duddy Burke, Executive Director of Dignity USA, I am also Co-coordinator of COR, *Catholic Organization for Renewal*, the group that is hosting and sponsoring this event tonight. On behalf of all of our member organizations and all of the representatives who had a hand in making this event happen tonight, welcome, and thank you for being here for this very important conversation.

We have a full evening planned. We do plan to go as late as eight-thirty if the question and answer takes us to that time. So we will get started soon and I'll turn things over to Linda Pinto of CORPUS, who is going to be the moderator of our conversation tonight.

Linda Pinto: Thank you, Russ, and a warm welcome to you all! If you have chosen to spend some time with us this evening, then it is not news that clericalism exists in our Roman Catholic Church.

This has been the case since the house church community model was dragged into the Roman-based hierarchical patriarchal system. Consideration, then, is that this disease become a malignant cancer which threatens the very viability of our church?

To consider the question *can the Catholic church free itself from clericalism*, we are honored to have three distinguished guests.

James Carroll served as a Catholic chaplain at Boston University from 1969 to 1974.

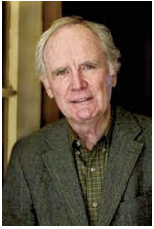
He left canonical ministry to become a writer, and for 23 years, he wrote a weekly op-ed column for the Boston Globe. He is the author of 12 novels and nine works of not of and nine works of non-fiction, one of which, *Constantine's Sword*, was a New York Times bestseller and a winner of the National Jewish Book Award. He is currently a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Andrea Johnson served for many years as a religious educator on the adult and secondary level. In the 1980s, she served for two years as a parish life director in a priestless parish of the military diocese. She also served as the executive director of Women's Ordination Conference and was ordained a priest and eventually a bishop for the Roman Catholic women priests community.

Richard Gaillardetz is the Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology at Boston College and serves as the chair of the Theology Department. He has published numerous articles and authored or edited 14 books, including most recently the *Cambridge Companion to Vatican II*.

We welcome you all as panelists to address the question, can the Catholic church free itself from clericalism.

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James Carroll: Thank you so much and warm greetings to all of you, my friends, in this gathering. Let me begin by acknowledging my debt to the folks who've pulled us together, especially Linda and Deb and Russ, Katie, the leaders of the various sponsoring groups.

I also want to acknowledge the pleasure, the honor it is, for me to be speaking on a panel with Andrea and Rick. I want to just quickly summarize where I think we are. And I'm not going to say anything you don't know. I know that we've gathered here this evening because we share versions of the same experience, perhaps of the same commitment, the same longing, the same hope for our own lives, for the lives of our broad culture and for the lives of our church.

Can clericalism be dismantled? That's our question. Briefly, I want to make three points regarding the contexts for our gathering. Where are we coming from? Over the years that this context has been taking shape, could things have gone differently? And finally, what now? What are we to do now?

The context, well, many people date the context to 20 years ago, when my own Boston Globe, through its spotlight team, brought to the fore in undeniable ways at last the grotesque dysfunction of the Catholic priesthood. Many people gathered tonight remember that epiphany had begun before that. I began as a Boston Globe columnist most of the decade before that and one of my earliest columns was about Father James Porter, the priest of the Fall River diocese who was exposed as a predator. The National Catholic Reporter for a decade before that, even going back into the 1980s and beyond, had been powerfully bringing to light stories of predator priests and the bishops who refused to reckon with them.

The spotlight series, which of course led to the award-winning movie of the same name, seemed to be a watershed moment. You all remember, I'm sure, the powerful, spontaneous rising up, a voice of the faithful, a massive grassroots movement of

mostly Catholic lay people who said no to this dysfunction in the Catholic priesthood and in the hierarchy of the church. That epiphany laid bare three obvious pillars of clericalism. I want to also draw attention to three deeper problems that it pointed to, three ideological issues that remain.

The three obvious pillars, we all know them, the requirement of celibacy for all Catholic priests; the all-male character of the Catholic priesthood; and the power structure that celibacy and male dominance protected, enshrined in Roman Catholic canon law and in the pyramid of the structure of authority with the Pope on top, bishops arrayed along the sides, and priests lower down with lay people at the very bottom, you might even say under the weight of this dysfunctional structure of power.



The three deeper problems that were laid bare that have yet to be reckoned with: Catholic attitudes towards sexuality; the profoundly anti-female character of Catholic attitudes toward sexuality; control of sexuality by males, which amounts to control of females by males, going back, second point, deeper problem, to the way we read scripture, beginning with our attachment to the myth of Genesis and the story of Adam and Eve—Eve as the progenitor of evil in the world.

Three deeper problems—attitudes towards sexuality, Catholic male supremacy, and the power structure of the church—embedded in a hierarchy that claims authority from God, which point to three ideological issues that have yet to be reckoned with:

Can the Catholic Church Free Itself from Clericalism?

1. Our theology: Who is the god who presides over this structure?
2. Our attitude towards scripture: Is scripture to be read literally, fundamentally? Jesus did not appoint any females among the twelve. Therefore women can't be priests. Why is that fundamentalist reading of Scripture standing apart from all critical historical readings of Scripture that the church has otherwise embraced?
3. And finally, the question of pluralism, not only toward the broader world. Can other people have other ways to God but within the Church itself? Do the principles of human rights extend to the members of the Church? Can the principle of freedom of conscience—the Church now regarding it broadly in the world beyond—apply to members of the Church itself?

So, three obvious pillars: celibacy, all-male priesthood, the power structure. Three deeper problems: sexuality, male supremacy, no lay participation in the order of the church. Three ideological issues: our theology, our attitude towards scripture, our question about pluralism.

These deep-seated problems in the way we think of ourselves as Catholic, could they have changed in 20 or 30 years since this dysfunction has been laid bare? The answer is, yes, of course. We know this because we're the generation of people who were brought into the idea of change as a mandatory requirement of the contemporary Church generated by the Second Vatican Council, which, recall, was the Church's attempt, finally, to reckon with the Enlightenment from which it had been in flight until the middle of the 20th century. The church's reckoning with the Holocaust and the reckoning of the Council with the Church's relationship to the Jewish people as the paradigm of what change is possible. Democracy as a fundamental problem and question for the Church, which was beginning to reckon with democracy, was also a key part of what was begun at the Second Vatican Council.

And many of us, with the arrival of Pope Francis, thought that the spirit of the Second Vatican Council could be recovered, retrieved, and continued.

Alas one of the things that defines our context tonight is, Francis has disappointed the expectations of those who recall the powerful example of the bishops of the Second Vatican Council. What could Francis have done differently?

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Without going into these deeper issues, at the very least he could have embraced that small opening that was given to him by the bishops, the people of the Amazon region, when they asked for him to affirm explicitly and powerfully the possibility of the diaconate as an opening to marry clergy and to women in ministry, which he declined to do, a defining moment of his papacy—alas, preparing the way for the reaction, the reaction by the reactionaries, who will no doubt welcome the ways in which he left the door closed.

What now? Well, the answer, what now, is really given by this gathering tonight. The answer is, Catholic politics. We Catholics don't think of ourselves as politically engaged, but what is COR, CORPUS, Women's Ordination Conference, Roman Catholic Women Priests, Future Church, Dignity, Call to Action, Catholics for Choice, the Bristol Synod? What is all of that but politics?

We Catholics must organize ourselves politically. You gathered here tonight are the vanguard of that organization. When the Catholic people insist on the nature of the Church as belonging to the people and not to the hierarchy, change will come.

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The hierarchy itself is helping us by the slow motion but powerful collapse of its moral authority. Now we Catholics are here to assert that moral authority and that responsibility for our Church ourselves. And the gathering tonight is a powerful, powerful symbol of that, which is why I want to conclude by thanking you for being here and looking forward to our conversation.

Linda Pinto: Thank you, Jim. Thought provoking. Our next presenter is Andrea Johnson.



Andrea Johnson: Thank you, Linda. And it's just a great pleasure and an honor to be here tonight with Jim and with Rick, with all of my friends from COR, and with everyone who is here. Today's topic is a critical one for the future of the Roman Catholic Church and its witness to the Gospel. Clericalism is embedded in a system of Church governance, as we all know, that has its roots in the Roman Empire.

When the Church became the official religion of the Empire in the 4th century its bishops and presbyters became officials of the Empire, office holders, and keepers of order more than pastors and shepherds of the people who had chosen them to lead. This trend only grew worse with time as, gradually during the feudal period, and with the rise of national states, the role of bishops grew ever more politically defined.

From the 12th century on a code of canon law enshrined these developments as normative, and a two-class Church became a fixture. It got to the point at which when people thought about or spoke of "the Church," they really meant the clergy. Being a member of the clergy became synonymous with having a voice in the Church.

To this day that is how numberless Catholics experience "the Church" in spite of the documents of Vatican II, which clearly

speak of the Church as the people of God and of the clergy as members of the people of God.

So, why, in the aftermath of Vatican II, with all of the reform movements which have been active in the Roman Church for the past seven decades, has the Church not taken on the character of a priestly people who are called by baptism to participate in the life and ministry and decision making of the Church? And the answer, of course, is clericalism.

With Vatican II, the theology changed, but the structures remained the same. In effect, in many ways, Vatican II has had no legs. The continuing hold that clericalism has on our church depends on a canonically mandated two-class system, which has a pyramidal authority and accountability structure. Virtually all accountability is upward, and certainly remains within the clerical class. No significant alteration to this system has been made in the light of Vatican II, and at present only higher clergy can actually affect changes to canon law.

Vatican II seemed to offer so much promise in the development of a variety of models of Church which were not mutually exclusive. These were described by Jesuit theologian Avery Dulles in his book, *Models of the Church*. Especially interesting were the servant model and the herald model, which seemed to offer possibilities of opening up the Church's ministry to the people of God. But clericalism has always emphasized the dominance of the institutional governance model, and that has not changed.

I believe that clericalism has to a large extent obscured, even hampered, the Gospel mission of the church by allowing the governance obsession to choke the mission of furthering the reign of justice and peace. The canons trump everything. Even Cardinal Joseph Tobin, speaking recently in support of Pope Francis's synodality proposal has said that those most threatened by synodality or hearing the voices of the people are, quote, "those most finely attuned to the norms and canons."

Can the Catholic Church Free Itself from Clericalism?

If the question we are discussing today were phrased differently to place the onus of freeing the Church from clericalism on the priesthood as we know, it rather than on the whole Church as understood by Vatican II, I would have to say that the chances of that happening would be very small. While it is surely true that not all clericalists are priests and not all priests are clericalists, members of the priesthood, as it is currently defined canonically, are trapped in a legal vise which demands obedience to a higher authority in the clerical structure. There are canonical consequences for disobedience.

The movement I belong to, Roman Catholic Women Priests, does not structure itself in this way. In fact, the very act of disobeying Canon 1024 is considered by us as prophetic obedience to the Spirit. We have not left the Roman Catholic Church, but we are considered disobedient and we clearly are not accepted as clergy.

Given the state of the clerical system, we consider that a plus. It frees us to minister in a way that includes the whole community in ministry and allows us to witness in myriad new ways, and it allows us to witness to our membership in the people of God. We are members who have been called forth and who can model this way of being priest.

I also want to say something more about Pope Francis's synodal plan. The concept is wonderful. It calls for a true consultation of all of the Catholic people, including those who no longer participate institutionally. My question would be, does the canonical clerical structure we now have allow for a truly meaningful and consequential participation from the local church, the people of God?

I guess I would say that until the canons are changed to reflect that representation from across the spectrum of the Church has voice in decision making, synodality will not be a reality. The clerical priesthood despite all good intentions cannot free itself from clericalism. It is those who are not clergy who must understand what is at stake and take the lead in revisioning the universal church.

Retired Nottingham University theology professor Thomas O'Loughlin has spoken about how the people of God should adjust the way they think about the universal Church. Synodality starts not at the top but rather at the local level. The universal Church is built by the interfaces of local churches, communities of faith, followed by the interfaces of larger entities, dioceses and so forth.

National bishops groups and Vatican bureaucracies cannot build synodality from a universalist model, says O'Loughlin. The local and inclusive interfaces are critical. We build outwards by real local churches coming together in unity. Catholic means universal, says Professor O'Loughlin. It also means integrity. Each local church community having its own integrity, the smaller units come together to form a unity. Only then, together, is there an integrity in the whole Church's witness as herald and servant.

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So, Catholics have a choice of either thinking of the Church from the top down or from the ground up. How do we understand the universality of the Church? Is it the Lloyds of London model, with local branches, as Professor O'Loughlin puts it, or is it the apostolic model from the New Testament church, where an apostle, he says, was a sinew stretching from one local church to another, a format if you think about, it that was anything but pyramidal

Today we are here to talk about next steps, and I look forward to the discussion. Thank you.

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Linda Pinto: Thank you, Andrea. And finally, we'll hear from Richard Gaillardetz



Richard Gaillardetz: Well, I, too, want to begin by saying how grateful I am to be part of the webinar and to be joined by Jim and Andrea. And frankly, I find myself agreeing with quite a bit of what they offer. I want to clarify, however, that my approach to our topic is probably more as

a theologian than as an activist, and that may limit my perspective and my contributions.

Let's get right to our topic. Where I perhaps disagree with my colleagues lies in our differing assessments of Pope Francis's leadership. And I think that will be clear here. Under his leadership, I believe the Church, can, over time, save itself from clericalism. But our current clerical culture has deep roots established over centuries, and purging the Church of this clerical culture will not be easy. Addressing clericalism will require that we pursue five basic paths.

First—and again, I suspect we would all agree with all of these things—any consideration of ministry, ordained and non-ordained, must in fact begin with baptism. Only a theology of the Church firmly grounded in the priority of baptism can challenge today's culture of clericalism, a culture sustained by structures that reinforce a cleric's privileged sacral identity.

Vatican II reminded us that our primary Christian identity was neither lay nor cleric, but to be what the Council referred to as *christifidelis*, Christian faithful. Ministerial identity follows upon baptismal identity. The Council, in fact, invoked Saint Augustine's own reflections on his ministry when he wrote, "When I am frightened by who I am for you, then I'm consoled by who I am with you. For you I am a bishop, but with you, I'm a Christian. The first is an office, the second of grace. The first is fraught with danger, but in the second lies my salvation."

Second, the ministerial priesthood must be placed within a wider framework, one that celebrates baptismal charisms and broadens our view of ministry beyond ordination. Ordained ministry need not compete with the exercise of the many gifts of the faithful. Each requires the other. The Council encouraged pastors to recognize and affirm the gifts of all God's people. And as even the catechism points out, the ministerial priesthood exists for the purpose of serving and empowering the exercise of the baptismal priesthood.

Third, the dominant theology of the priesthood being taught in most seminaries has to be thoroughly reconceived. We need to renounce reductive theologies of holy orders that are preoccupied within hyper-interiorized understanding of ontological change and the empowerment of individual clerics in favor of a theology that stresses being ordained into a new ecclesial relationship with God's people.

Fourth, we must pursue healthy structures of ecclesial accountability in our present situation. As Andrea noted, ecclesial accountability moves exclusively in an upward vector. Clerics are only accountable to their superiors. Our theology and canon law must dramatically strengthen the minister's accountability to the people they were ordained to serve.

And fifth, we must reconsider our entire system for recruiting and forming candidates for ordained ministry. Current doctrinal and theological understandings of sex and gender have artificially limited the pool of candidates for ordained ministry, overlooking many women's gifts for pastoral leadership, excluding those who have found mandatory celibacy untenable, and closeting those candidates who exhibit an enduring same-sex orientation.

Look, let's be honest, we have become accustomed to a system of recruitment and formation for the priesthood that is content to simply identify impediments to ordination.

Can the Catholic Church Free Itself from Clericalism?

And that means that a mediocre candidate for the priesthood, one who passes his courses, even if only barely, avoids heresy, and manifests no obvious psychosocial dysfunction, will be ordained every time. Instead of discerning impediments, we need a system that allows us to discern genuine gifts for pastoral leadership, including the gift of recognizing and empowering the gifts of others.

In many ways, these paths for reform have their origins in the teaching of Vatican II, yet many have now given up on the Council as an engine for needed reform. And I can understand why. For those of us of a certain age, Vatican II offered a beacon of hope. But in spite of undeniable advances, the comprehensive implementation of the Council was effectively hamstrung almost immediately upon its close.

As Jim noted in his book, the chilling effect of Pope Paul VI's encyclical and birth regulation, *Humana Vitae*, went far beyond the question of birth control. It marginalized council teaching on the primacy of conscience, the sense of the faithful, the pastorality of doctrine, the authority of Episcopal conferences, and the critical yet constructive role of theologians.

Post-conciliar liturgical reform was weakened when oversight of those reforms was transferred from what was originally an independent commission of liturgical experts to the Roman curia. The long-awaited revision of the code of canon law was similarly hamstrung by papal and curial interference.

Finally, the Council's reformist vision was severely constrained by two consecutive popes whose leadership spanned 35 years, and who, for all of their contributions, could not shake their own preoccupations with clerical identity.

Put simply, to riff on the famous line from G.K. Chesterton, it is not that Vatican II has been tried and found wanting, it is that it hasn't really been tried at all. I do think we are making progress on that score.

As Pope Francis declared just last week, the only true anecdote to clericalism is synodality. Why? Synodality calls us to travel together. It requires that we seek more than a church that is simply a projection of our own ideological preferences. Synodality calls all of us, ourselves as well as our opponents, to the work of conversion, to that painful dying to our need to always be right and righteous in order that we may cultivate a posture of humble listening to the impulse of the Spirit. Much of what bedevils our Church is about abuse of power and patriarchy, but some of it is a genuine disagreement among a Church that is 1.2 billion strong, and we have to honor that Catholicity as well.

*Each day, the church
gives birth to the church.*

Venerable Bede

Synodal processes are now underway throughout our global Church. We saw the spirit of synodality at work in the pan-Amazonian synod, and I would resist assessing that synod strictly in terms of its failure or the pope's failure to respond to several of its recommendations. Much more happened there. We see it in preparation for the Plenary Council in Australia, in the synodal process begun in Germany, and soon to begin in Mexico City in November.

Synodality calls us to a new and at the same time very ancient way of being Church. And, yes, we are still fumbling to develop structures appropriate to its demands. Pope Francis, I believe, is convinced that an appropriate, necessary institutional reform must happen, but only as the fruit of the work of synodality.

No, we have not yet seen the kind of concrete institutional changes necessary to rid our Church of the scourge of clericalism, but I remain convinced that in spite of his significant missteps and even blind spots, under Pope Francis seeds are being sown in the cultivation of a synodal church that will

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ultimately lead to lasting, substantive institutional reform. But this is why we must redouble our efforts and demand that our leaders take this call to synodality particularly here in the U.S. seriously at the national, at the diocesan, and at parochial levels.

Over twelve centuries ago, the Venerable Bede reminded us that *Each day, the church gives birth to the church*. I am convinced the patient work of authentic synodality, our best hope for purging the church of clericalism, is painfully slow, and it is easy to become discouraged in a global church. But as we begin to pursue this synodal way, perhaps if we listen carefully, we may yet hear the quiet groans of a new church in the process of being born. Thank you.

Linda Pinto: Thank you, Rick. I believe the chat room is now open for you to contribute with your questions and possibly comments. While we're waiting for those to come in, each of your analyses has been short, sharp, and smart, and your enthusiasm infectious. But we are approaching the 60th anniversary of the opening of Vatican II, and the question that haunts my generation is, are we too late? Do we still have enough time? How do we excite the people of God to be responsible for the Church? Anyone?

Andrea Johnson: I think people would take notice if the structures at the local levels really listened and, as Mary McAleese said last week, expunge and sanitize what is said at the local level before it gets to the synod. That's where the cynicism comes in, in my experience. It's that people go to these synods. I know I've participated in synods and I'm not going to name a diocese, a very wonderful diocese for a long time, and they had a diocesan synod and they had a wonderful bishop, and they got nice kudos for it, and nothing ever came of it. So, it's very much dependent on voices really being heard and that carries through the whole system to the meeting.

James Carroll: And I'd like to pick up on Andrea and also Rick. I am deeply moved by both of your presentations, actually. And I appreciate the hopeful striking of notes that are so positive, both from your place on the margin, Andrea, which is prophetic

and crucial and speaks so powerfully to the center. And Rick, you know you gave as articulate and eloquent a statement of what the view from the center looks like as I've heard.

My most powerful response to what you said is, I wish it were true. The synodality you describe is still overwhelmingly the work of bishops. The participation of laypeople in the process of synodality is marginal and token at best. And when it was significant, as in Germany over the last couple of months, the Vatican powerfully sent signals disapproving and stopping it.

To trust the bishops at this point in the life of the Church to lead us into a declericalized Catholicism is a fool's errand.

Whatever Pope Francis represents, and I love the man as you do, it's very clear that he's a prisoner not only of his own history and his own background as a cleric, but he's a prisoner of reactionary forces in the Vatican that he has unsuccessfully countered. He's at the mercy of forces that are a bane on the future of the Church.

To trust the bishops at this point in the life of the Church to lead us into a declericalized Catholicism is a fool's errand, is all I could say, which is why I'm appealing to the people gathered here representing the movements that are so powerful and alive at the grassroots, number one, to claim our authority, and to see ourselves as key. Putting the bishops in charge of reform at this point after what they have shown us over the last forty years since the Council is like putting the mafia chieftains in charge of the crime commission. They will adopt the rhetoric. They will even pass the rules that seem to address the problems. But their overwhelming agenda is to protect their power.

Can the Catholic Church Free Itself from Clericalism?

I'm not calling for revolution, but I'm calling for an authentic grassroots reform that challenges the status quo.

Richard Gaillardetz: Well, I'm not sure I can rise to the rhetorical power of Jim. I'm going to do my best to give a modest, stuffy centrist viewpoint you know. I don't dispute any of what you're saying. First of all, I don't think we should be trusting in the bishops alone to do this; I think the whole church needs to be working on this. I'm not interested particularly in vilifying them; they're a diverse crowd. We have a particularly, in general, mediocre group.

I would say my response to much of what's happened here is for us to remember that this is not just a North American church; this is not just a church of enlightened progressives. This is a church that is truly global. And the assessment of bishops and shepherds and listening processes changes when you move from different parts of the world.



I would also say that when we indict the shortcomings of the synodal process as it exists now, that we not forget how much it has changed from just under the two previous pontificates, when the Curia carefully managed everything that was said, that there was no free debate, that topics were taken off the agenda, when lay people were not allowed to participate at all, when there was no real disagreement that could be voiced in synods.

I would contrast that with the dramatic change of rules that has happened under Francis, the robust disagreement that has taken place on synodal floors, the significant way in which indigenous peoples were brought into an extensive process in preparation for the pan-Amazonian synod, the way in which the two synods on the family allowed the global Church to debate, and brought a certain tension to the fore between priorities found in the church in Africa, for example, and the church in other parts of the world.

There has been significant movement in the process of synodality. Is it where I want it to be? Are the structures as I would design them right now? Of course not, and we've got to continue to work on that. But I also don't think it's helpful to minimize the fact that much has changed in these processes. And a consultative process that was unimaginable under Pope John Paul II is now enshrined in many of the rules that governs the nodal processes right now. I think we have to take that into account as well.

Linda Pinto: Thank you. We'll go to our first question.

Russ Petrus: Thanks, everyone, for sending in your questions. I've been reading them with a lot of interest. One theme that seems to be emerging in a lot of the questions is about this synodal process that Pope Francis has launched. How can we as lay Catholics—number one, are there enough of us left around who care to make a difference? How do we get involved? How do we make sure our bishops are actually going through with this? And then, how do we make sure that the voices of the disgusted and the dismayed are involved in that process, and not just the line toters?

So those are three sort of questions around the synodal process that I'd open up to anyone who would like to start us off. I'll just very briefly repeat the particulars. Will there be enough of us energized enough about this to make a difference? How do we make sure the voices of the dismayed and disgusted are included? How do we make sure that there's some ecclesial

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accountability that we actually do go through with these processes in our local dioceses?

Richard Gaillardetz: I just went on a rant a minute ago, so I'm reluctant to pick up where I left off, I would invite my colleagues to maybe chime in first. But I have a few brief comments I could make in a moment.

Linda Pinto: Andrea, would you like to address that?

Andrea Johnson: Well, at last week's synod in Bristol, England, Mary McAllese made the suggestion that people such as that group, which spent a year putting together their points that they wanted to take to their bishops, to the synod, they plan to publicize those. They're going to put them out publicly. They're not going to just be sent to the bishops.

As a group, *Root and Branch* is going to submit to the various dioceses that they belong to some things to take to the synod and they're going to put it in public forum for lots of people to see so that it can't be sanitized out. So, that's a thing that activists could do in many dioceses.

James Carroll: Well, yes, and let me just follow up on that also. I had the privilege to be part of the Bristol synod process, and the most important thing about it, in my view, is it's a living, existential, essential condemnation of the single largest moral problem that we're not talking about tonight, which is the Roman Catholic church's commitment to male supremacy.

Linda Pinto: Jim could you briefly explain what the Bristol conference was for those people who are not aware?

James Carroll: Well, the Bristol synod process began more than a year ago when a group of women based in England, but also extending to Ireland and now across various places in Europe and Asia and the United States, a group of women explicitly claiming their identities as Catholic women said, we're not going to wait for the bishops to invite us.

They began a synod process of their own by inviting a range of people to be a part of it, including people who are marginal and formerly associated with the Church, understanding that basically anyone who is prepared to identify with the Catholic problem is welcome, including people who regard themselves as former Catholics. But the fact that it is being led by and structured by women is crucial.

With all the talk about theological and ecclesiastical processes, synodality and so forth, one can lose sight of the really urgent moral problem at the heart of the Catholic Church today, which is that it is profoundly committed institutionally theologically committed to a deeply, deeply wicked structure of human life, which is the inequality between males and females. And that has to be front and center in all of our responses, which it is for the people in this gathering this evening.

And of course, most Catholics, in principle, reject the idea of inequality between males and females. It's rooted in the UN declaration of human rights, which the Catholic church rejects—formally rejects.

The context of our concern for the synod is male supremacy. It's as if the Catholic Church held that African-Americans are not eligible to be ordained to the priesthood. There is no moral difference between a racist exclusion and a sexist exclusion. There is no moral difference. And the bishops must be confronted about that.

Richard Gaillardetz: No, I don't disagree. I am in favor of full inclusion of women in the life of the Church and full inclusion of women in ordination and ordained ministries. But look, I feel awkward being thrust in this role, because I am, in fact, in sympathy with almost everything that's on the agenda of the Bristol synod. But the fact of the matter was, it's a very selective synod. Now, that plays an important role. We need prophetic voices and prophetic institutions that can call for change with clarity.

Can the Catholic Church Free Itself from Clericalism?

But synodality is not the same thing as political action groups or advocacy groups. Those are different things. There's a value in calling like-minded people who are committed to change and furthering an agenda, and we should celebrate that. But I also believe that synodality is supposed to be an expression, a catalyst, of genuine difference in disagreement. That's a different kind of thing than my gathering all the groups and all the people who share my particular agenda and advocating for that.

We need that, but we also need to listen to the people who don't fall in one of the two groups—line toters and the disgusted. There are a lot of Catholics out there in other parts of the world who don't fall neatly into those two categories who also need to be listened to, who would recognize the reality of injustice but would chafe at this reduction of the Church to nothing but oppressive power, who find life and growth and spiritual fulfillment, and, yes, the saving grace of God in this broken Church, and who see the Church as a *corpus permixtum* of saints and sinners that will always need to be healed.

So, I suppose I'm just uncomfortable not with the sentiment for reform, but the sweeping generalizations that, frankly, perpetuate a kind of binary of good guys and bad gods, woke people—well, I don't like to use that word like that—but enlightened progressives and benighted everybody else. And a church of 1.2 billion people that's Catholic has to find a way to bring other voices along and have the humility to recognize that maybe in our enlightenment there are some things we're missing.

And so, it's not really refuting; it's just saying there's more than what can happen in a synod like at Bristol. That's all I want to say.

Richard Gaillardetz: I think the three of us are in complete agreement on the need for the kinds of robust institutional reforms that will genuinely invite that kind of participation. I think all of us agree on that. We may disagree on how far we've come and how far we have to go, but absolutely, I think for the church to have any real future—and Jim's right, in many ways it is on fire—for the Church to have any real future, we have to

find structural ways that allow people to be part of the conversation, as they have a right to by virtue of their baptism, as I point out.

And Jim, I appreciated you saying this; Andrea I think you did as well—the wounded folks, the folks who are either on the margins or the folks who find themselves in exile, sometimes voluntarily and sometimes involuntarily, we have to find ways to include them as well.

So, I don't think we disagree on any of that. And I appreciate the passion with which both of you have advocated for that.

James Carroll: Rick, I appreciate that. And I want to repeat what I said: You speak with great power and authenticity, closer to the center than I am, certainly, and I appreciate that. Again, I think we should acknowledge what divides us, and I think business as usual must stop.

Richard Gaillardetz: I agree.

James Carroll: And that's what I'm afraid of. I'm afraid that synodality has become another form of business as usual. I'd love to be proven wrong, and if I am I'll take you to your favorite pub and buy you a beer.

Richard Gaillardetz: I suspect that neither of us will be around by the time we would be in a position to assess whether it's worked or not. [Laughs.]

Andrea Johnson: I would like to return to what I said earlier regarding Professor O'Laughlin saying, the unity is not a negation of the diversity.

I think that's where we're uncomfortable, especially Western Christians are probably more uncomfortable because we want to be right, as you said earlier, Rick. People want to be right. They want to think they've done their homework and they're right. But the point is, Rome isn't okay with diversity. That's the problem. It isn't the Africans or the Indians or anybody else.

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They're okay with diversity. We've all probably had some experience with other rites and the Roman rite in the Catholic Church. They're fine with diversity. We are the ones—the Westerners have a problem with diversity. We need to get comfortable with it, because it's used as an excuse in Rome to make it uniform, and that's a problem.

Russ Petrus: Sure. Thank you for that conversation. Another topic that has emerged is particularly about the role of women in the Church, and this question I think is directly to you, Andrea. It's more about your experience as a Roman Catholic woman priest in terms of, are there signs of clericalism that you see in that movement? Are there things that the movement does to curtail clericalism? Are there any learnings the movement has that you think would be useful for the canonical Roman Catholic church?

Andrea Johnson: Well, we're twenty years old now. But we are on a path, is the way we look at it. We know what it is we don't want to be doing. So, what we can afford to do is get together, all of us every three years, and work on this stuff. This year we had a Zoom gathering, and we were a year late having it. We had the last one in 2017. It was phenomenal, because it was so impressive. The people who put the papers together, we went from one level of work on what amendments we might want—I was involved in that—and then another team. I said no, it has to be a different group of people who read the feedback from everybody out there, and then they can rework this.

We see ourselves as on a pilgrimage, we're on a path. And so that we're in that stage where we recognize, yes these things do creep in. And some of it is mindless because we're all programmed, aren't we, from the earliest years of our lives. And when people are under stress and there are conflicts, people tend to revert to those kinds of behaviors. It's human. And so we recognize that and we name it and we try to work with it. And that doesn't mean we don't have any disagreements; we certainly do have differences and so forth. But we have some accountability.

Spencer, my husband, is reminding me that we elect our bishops. Our bishops are not bishops in the same administrative mode. We have leadership teams, and everybody who's on those teams are elected. We make those decisions together. The bishop is the bishop, but the bishop does not have veto power over the rest of the people.

Linda Pinto: I'd like to shout out for married priesthood, as Spencer is poking Andrea for the answers. [Laughter.]

Richard Gaillardetz: I'm so grateful for what Andrea just said, and frankly, for the witness of people like those communities that you're a part of. I think it's offering a different way—interestingly, a way that we lost in our own tradition. In the early centuries, the norm was that bishop should be elected. But also, and somewhat more provocatively, though the notion of a mono-episcopate becomes universal by the end of the second century, I think there's some sound historical evidence to suggest that it was exercised collegially by a group in some churches for at least the first half of the second century.

So, there's a lot you're witnessing to that can that can hold up for us, not just something new and innovative, but things we lost in our tradition that we can go back and recover.

Andrea Johnson: Yes. Another thing O'Loughlin said was that worship communities, communities that do the work of the Gospel together, he believes that if you get beyond 150 people, you lose a certain intimacy and knowing one another and working together as a body.

He said that larger groups tend to then break into cliques or smaller groups within. And it's recovering that house church thing—collegial bishops in Rome for a long time, because you had a bishop for every house church, I think, probably, at one point.

Can the Catholic Church Free Itself from Clericalism?

James Carroll: Yes, and this is happening; it's happening all over the church, in the Latin American church-based communities, people gathering for the word and the bread even though there are no ordained clergy available to them. The Church, in all of this diversity, a billion-plus people, as Rick properly insists, this sort of adjustment to the new reality is happening. Rome is apart from it, but it's happening. And this gathering this evening, I want to emphasize again, is an instance of the happening.

The priests in the Catholic church, with some noble and heroic exceptions, are bystanders to the present moral crisis of misogyny, predator priests, and cover-up bishops.

Richard Gaillardetz: I don't know if there's a rush to another question, but again, I just want to say how much I appreciate both of these perspectives. So, Jim, one of the things that you're highlighting, and Andrea, with your mentioning the significance of size of grassroots communities in the house church, this is that bottom-up movement that I think is fundamental to the Church. But there is also the commitment to unity and that commitment to unity and Catholicity and apostolicity over 2,000 years gradually took the form of some supra-local leadership structures that could hold that together.

Now, the problem is, ultimately it devolved into incredibly unhealthy, patriarchal, universalist conceptions that were deeply problematic, and I don't want to dispute that. But the answer isn't to blow all of that up and just say, well, we really don't need Rome, we really don't need bishops, we can just have

locally based communities that will gather around the table and proclaim the word and break the bread. Yes, to a certain extent we can do that, but there are limits to that kind of congregational polity.

So, I still want to insist that however much it needs to be reformed, we also need offices or ministries that bring together and hold together the Church's unity and Catholicity. Now, it has to be done in a way that's not overbearing and dominating and confuses uniformity for unity, but we still need those structures.

Andrea Johnson: It has to be accountable.

Richard Gaillardetz: Absolutely it has to be accountable. Absolutely. And one way to do that, of course, as you pointed out, is to make sure the local church elects them. Another way to do that is to stop the process of transferring them from diocese to another diocese. So, there are things that we can do. It's going to require a new code of canon law. But it's to introduce those structures.

Russ Petrus: All right. If everyone's open to a little bit of shift here, another question that I'm seeing is about the survival of the priesthood. Jim, there seems to be some curiosity about your Atlantic article from a couple years ago now—in pandemic time, it moves so slowly, but so quickly—but where you know your column had essentially called for an abolishment of the priesthood as one way of dealing with clericalism in the Church. And the question is noting that your position seems to perhaps soften some. If you wanted to address that a little bit.

Then another question that was more directed towards you, Richard, is what happens if the Church, in terms of both quality and quantity, finds no more priests and we continue to refuse to ordain women priests? Can we be a Catholic church without a ministerial priesthood?

So, I guess we'll hand it over to James first and then Richard.

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James Carroll: Well, my position on the priesthood hasn't softened, actually. I did and do call for the abolition of the priesthood as we know it. And that's the point as we know it. The priesthood as we know it, in my view—and forgive me for the edge—but in my view, the priesthood has been co-opted by the structure, that hierarchical structure of power to the point where it is incapable of being part of a reform of the ordered ministry of the Church.

The priests in the Catholic church, with some noble and heroic exceptions, are bystanders to the present moral crisis of misogyny, predator priests, and cover-up bishops. Remember the generating point of pain: the rape of children. Martin Luther launched a reformation in response to the selling of indulgences. On the scale of hurt, where is the selling of indulgences compared to the rape of children? Massive. Across cultures, still denied, still unaddressed.

The vast population of Catholic priests, of course, are men of integrity and heroic virtue. I know many of them and love them myself. But they have been cooperating with the bishops who refuse to deal with this to this day. They have made themselves bystanders to this process.

I think it was you, Andrea, who pointed out that they're trapped, canonically trapped. Rick pointed out the actual fact on the ground right now—the dysfunction continues in the way priests are being recruited and trained. The priesthood has disqualified itself as an engine of reform. So, those Catholics who are moving away from it, claiming their own authority as believers as baptized Catholics, as Rick emphasized, are the source of hope for us, and they will be the people who bring the priests themselves around. That's what happens.

In Chicago last weekend, a woman who was hired as the lacrosse coach at Bennett Academy, a Catholic high school, was fired when authorities found out that she was married to a woman. Within days, 4,000 people signed a petition demanding her reinstatement and they began to picket outside the

school. And within a week, the woman was reinstated. Why? Because a mass of people said no to this injustice.

I'm waiting for the priests of the Catholic church to take similar acts of resistance the way the 52 or 53 senior priests in the Archdiocese of Boston did over twenty years ago in demanding the resignation of Cardinal Law. If it weren't for those priests, the Vatican would never have removed Cardinal Law from his position in Boston. Where are those priests today?

So, yes, I call for the abolition of the priesthood as we know it. Andrea is a good example of the prophetic alternative to the priesthood as we know it.

Andrea Johnson Well, as we know it, they are prisoners, but canonically, they have to be obedient. Obedient to what? What does the bishop represent? We have all sorts of things that we do to take that imagery away. Like at an ordination, as bishop, I don't sit front and center when people are prostrated on the floor; we're off to the side. We're not God's representative there. Those people are directly committing themselves, not through us. We're instruments; we're there. We do what we do. We lay hands. But we are not monarchs. That's all there is to it.

This is a monarchy that Pope Francis, bless him, has inherited, a monarchy. He is, as Mary McAllese said last week, the chief legislator of the Church, as well as the chief judge—everything. It's a monarchy in the absolute monarchy style, with a court, the Curia.

Linda Pinto: Rick, do you want to pick up on the question regarding the future of priestly ministry?

Richard Gaillardetz: When Jim qualifies by saying he's in favor of the evolution of the priesthood as it as it exists now, sure, I understand that; we don't disagree. I think the priesthood needs to be reformed in very important and fundamental ways.

Can the Catholic Church Free Itself from Clericalism?

The fact of the matter is, from the very beginning, I think early Christianity, there has been some sense of formal public leadership in the Church, and it was more often than not ritualized in the presiding over the liturgy. I don't want to get into the particulars of that.

But it's also true that structure has changed dramatically and that significant elements of it today are deeply problematic and dysfunctional. I think this is probably a style thing more than substance. I'm just reluctant to throw all of the priests out there into language of being trapped and so on. I think they chafe against structures that make doing the right thing sometimes more difficult, but exercising their own pastoral freedom in ministry is never just a matter of being trapped. It's constantly, for all of us, we live in the midst of structures that are always more or less just and freeing and liberating, and we're constantly having to make prudential judgments within structures that are less than ideal.

So, I suppose I'm just chafing at sweeping indictments that are dismissing a lot of, not just—and Jim and Andrea, you're not denying this. I know that. You're not denying that there are good priests out there. But I don't want to over-determine the problems of structure and law in ways that deny the fact that there is also still a lot of freedom for people to exercise God's work and they've been exercising God's work in ways that are important.

And so I suppose maybe it's just that I'm by nature a pretty crappy revolutionary and tend to believe in moving towards reform in incremental ways. And that's just it. But I think the priesthood has gone through so many different changes over two millennia and it needs to go through more, and it does need a significant reformation.

So I wouldn't disagree with a lot of the proposals that Jim and Andrea have floated. I just don't feel the need to make such a sweeping indictment. Jim, even when you talk about the scandal, the genuine scandal of clerical sexual abuse and the rape of children, none of us is going to want to diminish that.

But when you say it's still denied, it's still unaddressed, I want to go, really? You really don't think there's been any effort to address this?

Now, I would be the first to admit there's a lot more work to be done, but I would also say there have been a lot of significant changes, and statistically the numbers have gone down. And since the Dallas charter even in the U.S., undeniably it seems to me the numbers have decreased—in fact, to the point where, while I don't want to deny that clerical sexual abuse still happens, it certainly does, we rightly now in some ways have to shift our attention to the other problem, which is episcopal malfeasance and coverup. So, I think we've made some progress in one area and not nearly enough in another.

So, it's rhetorically powerful to make these kinds of sweeping dismissals, but I don't think it does justice to the complex reality on the ground well.



James Carroll: Maybe the difference between us, Rick, is our assessment of how urgent the problem is. In my view, the people in charge of the Church want us to look another way and not see the flames. I want to insist, the Church is burning, and it's up to us. Francis gave us the opening that we desperately were seeking. Francis's commitment to dealing with this problem has been almost entirely rhetorical. With heartfelt power, he expresses shame and sorrow, as so many bishops do.

But I began my remarks by pointing to the pillars of clericalism and then the deeper causes that lie behind them. Those pillars

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are intact and being protected and the deeper causes are not being addressed. The Church is on fire, Rick.

Andrea Johnson: I want to mention one other thing that makes me profoundly sad. I have known many priests and some bishops whose health was really ruined by the struggle, not that other people—you're right, Rick, that there are plenty of people in other walks of life who go through all this kind of stuff, too, and the ethic ethical decisions that they have to make and so forth.

But it just makes me very sad to see these people dying in their 60s and 70s. And it just is not a healthy place to be right now.

Richard Gaillardetz: I think frequently it isn't. And I hope I'm not heard as being unsympathetic to those concerns

Andrea Johnson: I agree with Jim that it's urgent.

Russ Petrus: Thank you, Andrea. Thank you, everyone. Another theme is emerging in some of these questions that I'm working through, and that's about the lay powers sometimes undergirding the bishops, things like EWTN, the Napa Institute, other sources of dark money in the church that really are power brokers. And what can middle of the road, middle-income low-income Catholics do to have some kind of influence that might counteract some of the money that is flowing into the Church and the political sides the Church is taking due to that?

I saw everyone was nodding their head. We're all very familiar with it increasingly, so, some really great work. But does anyone know what to do about it?

Richard Gaillardetz: The only thing I would say, and this is the Catch-22 here, as Jim pointed out, in many ways the bishops have lacked credibility. But there's a there's a circular problem here. Why do they lack credibility? Well, partly because they don't stand up to Bush and FOX and EWTN and folks like that and denounce the Napa Institute and \$5,000 tickets to get to hear certain prominent conservative bishops pontificate and so

on and so forth. If the bishops would like to restore their credibility, they could denounce this kind of thing, even if it meant hurting them financially. I think they'd gain a lot of credibility for doing that kind of thing.

Unfortunately, very few of our bishops are showing the willingness to do that. And it's a scandal.

James Carroll: I would like to also point out the forces of right-wing reaction. We see it everywhere. Their enemy number one is democracy. One point two billion people, as Rick properly insists upon, reminds us that the future of the human species depends on whether the Roman Catholic Church aligns itself with the forces of liberation, enlightenment, liberalism, pluralism, respect for the other, or whether it aligns itself with the forces of neo-fascist rejection of people who are different, monarchical authoritarian structures, economic structures that favor the rich over the poor. The soul of the church is a terrain in which this very struggle is being fought out. And the Steve Bannons of the Roman Catholic Church and the many right-wing figures that we can that we could all name see the Church as a crucial lever of power in the global future.

Let's remember what the central issue is: it's democracy. Will democracy survive? Even in the United States that's a question now. Andrea just put her finger on it. The Church is committed to a monarchical imperialist structure of power rejecting democracy. The opposite of patriarchy is not matriarchy, it's democracy. And if the Catholic Church, which began a reform in the Vatican Council for democracy, began to move toward democracy, that's the meaning of the Church as the people of God. That's the meaning of the affirmation that the Holy Spirit moves through the people, not through the power structure.

It's in a profound democratic impulse that the Catholic church began and it's been struggling with itself ever since. That struggle isn't finished. That's why we're still with it. Many of us would be readily at home in the Episcopal Church. I would be. But the Catholic church waits to move in the scale of justice and

Can the Catholic Church Free Itself from Clericalism?

peace and democracy across the planet, which is why it's worth fighting for.

So, those right wingers who are wrecking such havoc in front of us have the upper hand right now, in my view, and they have they have outfoxed Pope Francis, whose instincts on these questions are exactly what we would want, exactly what we would want, with one exception. The clerical culture itself is anti-democratic and he won't take it on.

Andrea Johnson: It's hard to do and. And we don't mean by democracy American democracy; we mean synodality.

Richard Gaillardetz: Yes, real synodality.

Andrea Johnson: The people who support this are not just American moguls; it's all over the world. And it's been part of us since we became, as we all know, part of the Roman Empire. We've just continued in that vein. And kings have always tried to control popes and vice-versa. It's just gone on and on and on. And as you say, our bishops are particularly mediocre, Rick, and they really love flattery and they love being with the big boys. And it's really demoralizing.

We aren't going anywhere, I don't think, with synodality in this country right now. We need some better examples in other places where people are really listened to and we can pick that up and say, look, this is what needs to happen. You're right, we don't just want the enlightened progressives' voices heard. We want all the voices heard. Even if everybody can't be completely happy with whatever decisions are made, at least they know they're heard. Their voice hasn't been lost and it will be heard again.

Russ Petrus: There's one question that's very near and dear to my heart, because I left a position for my own good where I had some influence, but we do have someone who works with high school students. They work in a Catholic high school. And their question is, how can they encourage young people to explore different ways and models of being Church, and differ-

ent ways of being Catholic, living that out, without losing their job in today's climate? So, if anyone has any suggestions on that, I'm sure our teacher would love to hear that.

James Carroll: I wouldn't presume to offer advice, but what occurs to me to say, to the extent that I can identify with that person, whom I love for doing that work, is, return to the one who we haven't mentioned this evening, or we have only in passing, who is Jesus Christ and his witness. The Jesuits are wonderful about this. Rick sees it at BC all the time. I'm sure you can speak to this better than I can, Rick, but young people are so drawn to the clear and unmediated image of Jesus Christ and discovering, he did that? He was like that? He what? What was his attitude toward women and toward people in the margin and people who were not accepted, and how did he choose to spend his time, and what did he say, again, and what do you think he meant by that?

The image of Jesus Christ...listen, forgive me for referring to my own life and experience, but a hundred years ago, I was Catholic chaplain at Boston University. The students weren't so different from students now. They were hurting and disillusioned by the war in Vietnam, they were more anti-authoritarian than young people are now. The last person they wanted to hear from was a figure of the Catholic Church, the most reactionary organization on the planet, as far as they were concerned. They absolutely were compelled by the figure of Jesus Christ.

It's the Protestant principle, of course. Catholic substance is, we pay attention to the tradition. The Protestant principle is, we measure everything in the tradition against the memory we have of Jesus Christ. Who are we as Catholics? We're the ones, in the phrase of Josephus, who couldn't let go of our affection for him, but actually, we're the ones who understand that he doesn't let go of his affection for us. Young people are open to that image. Would it be presumptuous of me to say to that teacher, whoever you are, reacquaint yourself with the Gospel of Mark? That's presumptuous of me, I know. Read it through the lens of the words themselves.

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Imagine the people who were being addressed in the Gospel of Mark in the year 70 destroyed by Rome, terrified of surviving, and convinced that they had betrayed each other and themselves and the Lord. And that's the community that Mark puts the memory of Jesus in front of.

And as for the Church, who's the figure that Mark uses as the main teacher? Peter. And what was it about Peter, the first pope? What was it about him? His authority, his infallibility? No, he was the one who again and again and again betrayed the Lord. And that is the image of the Church—the people who betray the Lord and find a way to be forgiven.

Linda Pinto: Well, on behalf of COR, as well as all of the participants on this call, a heartfelt thank you for this discussion. It is so reassuring to know that we are all Catholics. This evening was, of course, the epitome of what is so precious about being Catholic. So, thank you very much.

Russ Petrus: One last final thank you to all of you for being with us tonight for this really important conversation. I can sense through the chat that there's a lot of energy and a lot of enthusiasm. So, we will find ways to continue this conversation, to keep it moving forward, and also to take action along the way. So, thank you. Good night, everyone. It was so wonderful to be with all of you, and please have a safe rest of your week and a beautiful evening.



Credit: We Are Church Ireland

A Litany of Belonging

At many of the Richard Rohr's Center for Contemplation conferences, we read the following call and response with those gathered, both in person and online. We invite you to read it aloud to yourself and feel truly welcomed—all parts of you, especially those that culture or church have denigrated.

We would like to let you know that you belong:

People on all parts of the continuum of gender identity and expression, including those who are gay, bisexual, heterosexual, transgender, cisgender, queer folks, the sexually active, the celibate, and everyone for whom those labels don't apply.

Response: I belong.

People of African descent, of Asian descent, of European descent, of First Nations descent in this land and abroad, and people of mixed and multiple descents and of all the languages spoken here.

Response: I belong.

Bodies with all abilities and challenges. Those living with any chronic medical condition, visible or invisible, mental or physical.

Response: I belong.

People who identify as activists and those who don't. Mystics, believers, seekers of all kinds. People of all ages. Those who support you to be here. Response: I belong.

Your emotions: joy, fear, grief, contentment, disappointment, surprise, and all else that flows through you.

Response: I belong.

Your families, genetic and otherwise. Those dear to us who have died. Our ancestors and the future ones. The ancestors who lived in this land, in this place, where these buildings are now . . . we honor you through this work that we are undertaking..

Response: I belong.

People who feel broken, lost, struggling; who suffer from self-doubt and self-judgment.

Response: I belong.

All beings that inhabit this earth: the two-legged, the four-legged, winged and finned, those that walk, fly, and crawl, above the ground and below, in air and water.

Response: I belong.



May the raindrops
fall lightly on your brow.

May the soft winds
freshen your spirit.

May the sunshine
brighten your heart

May the burdens
of the day rest
lightly upon you.

And may God enfold you
in the mantle of His love.

OLD GAELIC BLESSING