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First, and apart from social roles, what can the female identity contribute to the life and organization of the Church?

Well, I think that women bring a new look. Even if it that were all, it would be different. Women have a different conception of the world because they are present in less conspicuous places: places that have to do with service. Places that have to do with the city of life, its support and its protection. These aspects do not normally appear in the media or social networks.

Seen from the perspective of democracy, now universally recognized, what do you think of the current vertical and patriarchal structuring of the Church?

The Church's structure is actually a pre-Conciliar structure. The Council wanted us to be more synodical, more democratic. This is why it is necessary to take the situation of our local communities into account because community organization is vital for structural change. Women are used to working together because that aspect is inherent in the type of work and tasks women are allotted. It is time to recognize that the Church's present structure needs to change; must change if we really want a Church ready for the twenty-first century. You cannot do without women because they make up half of society — and 80 per cent of the Church! The inclusion of women would mean planning a different kind of structure, with other priorities and relationships. Spanish theologians pressure us to offer a new perspective on Christian relations — among Christian men and women — and to suggest how a different ecclesial system could be set up. Language is important to us, because it can affect the visibility or invisibility of women. But besides the theological and ecclesial language, the way we are viewed is important, gender-wise; whether I am single or married is unimportant. When I look at a woman, what do I see: a mother, a caregiver, a danger; or a companion on the path of Jesus Christ...? That is the question.

Today, one of the most serious problems facing the Church is pedophilia. As a theologian, what is your assessment of this ancient norm and praxis of the Catholic Church, which could be related to 'the venerable tradition of priestly celibacy', now being seriously called into question?

As a theologian, I think that priestly celibacy is a norm that served, when it was imposed, in the Middle Ages. At that time it was necessary to organize and promote the formation of the clergy: then a very practical decision. Today things have changed a lot. Our culture is different and we understand life with other parameters. One should ask, whether all vocations really need to take the vow of celibacy? I think that the priestly vocation is not incompatible with the married vocation. They are different aspects of the person and different services. At present the vow of celibacy is linked to an established model of priesthood, conceived of as a priest, who stands alone, apart from the rest of the community. Perhaps through reviewing this understanding of the priesthood, suggestions might emerge that give priestly celibacy another understanding. However, I do not think that this question is related to pedophilia in the Church. The pedophile does not act because of forced celibacy, but because he has no respect for the life of the other person.

The Liturgy is important in the Church. Seen from the female viewpoint, what important changes do you think would have to be made in its form and content to make it inclusive?

The liturgy is one of the ecclesiastical offices that has been reformed the least. I think that it does not depend on women's perception to change it, but rather on how we, as women and men, are capable of adapting and transforming it to the culture of the 21st century. The liturgy is light years away from being understood as a symbol by believers, even by those who have some idea of what is being celebrated. In the liturgy there are fundamental elements that must be revised, in the first place, participation and the way the liturgical action unfolds. In addition, the form of language: a language that the faithful do not understand and is not understandable, does not promote a conscious and meaningful celebration. Lastly, the images — when the décor, music and rhythm of the celebration do not involve the person, the liturgy cannot be deeply felt. Christian women have long been asking for the liturgy to be revised/up-dated: a more participatory, more understandable liturgy that touches the spiritual sensitivity of each one.

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In the divided and diverse society in which we live, with growing masses of homeless and hungry poor, flows of immigrants and refugees, is charity and care enough, or should the Church do something more and different?

I think that the Church's social apostolate is essential in today's societies, and it shows that the Church's potential for social transformation is strong. For this reason, it is necessary to attend to the tasks that: promote the apostolate and the mission, take care of, and appropriately train, the people who choose to work in those ministries. Furthermore, make more areas where the Christian practice of accompaniment/assistance to those who suffer can be shared with various non-believers *and so* build up social sensitivity to justice and solidarity. Women have a lot to say in this field, because they have chosen to care for other people. If we had listened to the voice of solidarity and justice that work would probably be much richer and more creative. We would have reached new areas for mission. There are Christian women working in the front-line apostolates, in such fields as: prostitution, care for migrants.... These tasks are part of Jesus' inclusive *character*. We must take care of them and empower them, since our world is full of barriers. And the Christian must be a believer on the frontier.

Speaking of social care, areas mainly assumed by women, the question of the diaconate comes up. Concerning the priesthood/ordination of women, has anything been proposed in this line in the Catholic Church?

I think it is gradually moving forward. The fact that during this pontificate the dioceses are being exhorted to include women on the governing and decision-making Board is new. However, I think it is not enough. I think that it is necessary to pursue the dialogue and submit proposals as well as ensure that they are actually put into practice. Just setting up commissions is not enough. The Christian community is expecting an answer on the issue of the participation of women, which is generally seen to be obvious. The role of women cannot always be that of service, since they have different talents and many of them have good leadership qualities. Probably, if women were fully integrated into the organization of the Church, not only at the sacramental level but also at the executive level, the organization would be different. The latest historical studies of the first centuries confirm that there is no justification for the prevention of the female diaconate. We are all hoping that Francis will address this matter. It would open the door to dialogue about another type of ecclesial community. As for priestly ordination, perhaps that is more complicated. A prior review of the Sacrament and the way the priestly vocation is currently assumed is necessary. On many occasions we have met women who felt they had a vocation to the priesthood. However, they would not wish to exercise the priesthood in its present form, alone, without reference to the community, taking unilateral decisions apart

from the rest of the faithful. Therefore, the revision of the Church and the presence of women go hand in hand.

Keeping in mind Pope Francis' Gospel gestures, his attitude to women, the collective LGTBI and priestly celibacy, what image is this pontificate creating?

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I am enjoying Pope Francis' ministry and his proposals. I think that his time is propitious; one in which we can speak out and be heard. Although, I think there could be rapid changes, I know it is a very complicated structure with a long tradition, besides it involves very many people and so it is difficult to make radical changes. Thus firm determination and courage are necessary, besides more room for taking decisions: decisions, that do not depend directly on Pope Francis nor on the Bishops, by intermediary agents to shape the Local Church. In this area it is essential that the men and women faithful engage in dialogue; discuss freely in an untrammelled atmosphere — not merely to express complaints — that is conducive to new suggestions and ideas for the good of the whole community. Crises are always the beginning of something new. At present we are experiencing a profound crisis in the Church; let us live it, or at least I am experiencing it, as a propitious period. Besides, not everything depends on Francis as it also depends on our ability to influence and prepare the little ones in order that the big ones feel obliged to attend to their situation. We must learn to make ecclesiastical policy. What I mean is that Francis needs interlocutors who request it and place him in the breach. For example the Superiors of Religious Congregations in the United States are constantly pressuring Francis to take a firm stand on certain themes that affect the Christian community. It is a matter of engaging in dialogue and taking action, not of confrontation.

If it were up to you, how would you transformation the Church in Spain today, to bring it closer to the people, who Jesus dreamed would continue the Kingdom?

I think the first thing would be to simplify the ecclesial structure of the dioceses. There are a lot of structures, councils or commissions that are not actually needed now. Then, reorganize the territory of the dioceses, reduce the number of parishes and concentrate on entities with a different approach; focus more on belonging and less on the territory. This would favour the networking of parishes much more than at present in the Vicariates. It would also offer people, not as volunteers, stable jobs aimed at enlivening the Christian community. I think that this work should be carried out not only by priests but also by lay people who would be incorporated in the structure: obviously, with the inclusion of women. Set up a diocesan council with men and women members on equal terms, who will not only participate but act, with equal decision-making rights. In addition, draw up a joint, practical formation programme for priests, laity and religious. This would enable the clergy and religious institutions to experience first-hand through empathy what life is like in communities. I could think of many more things: for example, to hold diocesan assemblies from time to time organized by lay people or plan special formation courses for adults and young people, depending not on the clergy alone, but rather on the commitment and co-operation of religious and lay men and women. It would create a balance between the clergy, religious, and laity in diocesan bodies, which could benefit from the projects and proposals made by many Orders of religious women, no one heeds, who are tremendously bold. In short, I would go to the *cilio*/council, because we have many experts in this Church of many centuries.

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