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**EMBARGO UNTIL THE MOMENT THE SPEECH IS DELIVERED**

**TESTIMONY**

**Introduction to section B2.3**

Mrs. Gloria Liliana FRANCO ECHEVERRI, O.D.N.

When thinking about the role of women in the Church, it is appropriate to look to Jesus and learn from Him. The Gospel recounts Jesus's willingness to see and feel women, to raise them, dignify them, and send them. True reform comes from an encounter with Jesus, echoing His Word, learning from His attitudes and criteria, and assimilating His style.

From this conviction, I want to start by sharing the experiences of some women: Doña Rosa, at seventy years old, visits the sick in her neighborhood every evening, ensuring they have food and a dignified life. Until six months ago, she also brought them communion. However, the new priest told her that this task was no longer for her. Now, male Eucharistic ministers, equipped with striking uniforms, will deliver communion. She continues visiting the sick. She can no longer bring the Eucharist due to protocols, but every night, after praying, she feels that God carries her, and through her, He offers genuine comfort to the most vulnerable.

Martha completed her doctorate in Theology with better grades than her male counterparts. The Pontifical University she graduated from decided not to give her a canonical degree because she's a woman. Instead, she received a civil title. Yet this is progress, as until recently, women in her country couldn't study theology, only Religious Sciences.

Many women have no place on parish or diocesan councils, despite being teachers, catechists, caregivers for the sick, attendants to migrants, guides for youth, and playmates for children. They nourish faith in paraliturgies and creatively sustain hope amidst violence. From the perspective of many Council members, women's roles are seen as maternal, basic, and pastoral, while they view the Council's objectives as more administrative and strategic.

On September 28, upon arriving in Rome, I attended Mass. Behind me was a mother with her two children. During communion, she asked her eldest child if he would take part. Immediately, the younger girl, six-year-old María Antonia, asked, "Mom, what is communion?" This question has echoed powerfully throughout the days of the Synodal Assembly.

The journey of women in the Church is filled with scars, moments of pain and redemption. The love of God has always been evident and unyielding. Some may try to obscure the presence and contributions of women in building the Church, but the Church has a female face. The assemblies, parish groups, liturgical celebrations, apostolic ministries, the quality of reflection, and the warmth of the Church's dedication often and predominantly originate from women's hearts. This is evident in all contexts.

The Church, as a mother and teacher, is also a sister and disciple. It is feminine. This doesn't exclude men because the power of the feminine – wisdom, kindness, tenderness, strength, creativity, courage, and the capacity to give life and face situations boldly – resides in everyone, both men and women. We are all called to be nurturing, embracing, comforting, and supportive. A feminine Church has the power of fertility, a gift from the RUAH.

In the synodal process in our continent, we see that a missionary Church pulsating with feminine energy has these perspectives:

1. Jesus and the Gospel are the ones who convene us. The encounter is for remembering and renewing our commitment, aware of being sent as missionary disciples. Faith is read in deeds, and discernment underlies every action or process.
2. Inclusion and participation in decision-making arise from recognizing our identity as God's people and the dignity baptism bestows on us.
3. Opting to care for all forms of life is a choice for the Kingdom. There's a push to build communities that naturally uplift the downtrodden, heal the wounded, welcome the marginalized, uphold human dignity, and promote the common good and rights of individuals and the Earth.
4. A new way of establishing relationships fosters a renewed identity: more circular, fraternal, and sororal. With new ministries that weave bonds of solidarity and proximity, connections are made beyond hierarchical and functional roles.
5. There is belief in the value of processes, prioritizing listening, and recognizing that fecundity is the fruit of grace, from the action of the Spirit, the only one capable of making all things new.

At the heart of the desire and the imperative for a greater presence and participation of women in the Church, there is no ambition for power or a feeling of inferiority, nor a self-centered pursuit of recognition. There is a cry for living in fidelity to God's project, who wishes for the people with whom He made a covenant, to recognize each other as brothers and sisters. This is about a right to participation and equal co-responsibility in discernment and decision-making, but fundamentally, it's a longing to live with awareness and coherence, with the common dignity given to all by baptism. A desire to serve.

Hopefully, at the conclusion of this synodal process, we can all look straight into the eyes of little María Antonieta and say to her that to take communion is to walk as brothers and sisters, with our gaze fixed on Jesus, to renew that feast where there's a place for everyone, where love translates into deeds, and the truth that shelters us all is simply and plainly the Gospel.