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## **Pope Francis: Querida Amazonia, only the priest can “preside at the Eucharist”**

Only the priest can say: “This is my body”. So he alone can preside at the Eucharist. In the fourth and last chapter of his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Querida Amazonia”, dedicated to ministry, the Pope dispelled all doubts about the ordination of married deacons as priests to address a scarcity of clergy, a proposal that was put forward at the Amazon Synod last October. “What cannot be delegated” in the priestly ministry is indeed “what is most specific” to Holy Orders, which “configures” the priest “to Christ the priest”. “The exclusive character received in Holy Orders qualifies the priest alone to preside at the Eucharist. That is his particular, principal and non-delegable function”. There are other words, Pope Francis recalled, that he alone can speak: ‘I absolve you from your sins’”. “Because sacramental forgiveness is at the service of a worthy celebration of the Eucharist”, the Pope highlighted: “These two sacraments lie at the heart of the priest’s exclusive identity”.

Valentina Bombelli