Possibilities for Women in the Catholic Church

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The 2024 Final Report of the Synod on Synodality writes in n. 60: "This Assembly asks for full implementation of all the opportunities already provided for in Canon Law with regard to the role of women, particularly in those places where they remain underutilised. There is no reason or impediment that should prevent women from carrying out leadership roles in the Church: what comes from the Holy Spirit cannot be stopped."

According to the needs and discernment of the challenges of mission in local Churches, women, as lay person, can be appointed to the following positions, for which canon law already provides. The challenge with the implementation does not lie necessarily with canon law, but rather with the disposition of those in ecclesial leadership who grant these offices / tasks to women as well as the lack of formation accessible to women to get qualified. Bishops, in particular, have the responsibility to provide for such opportunities by setting up programs as well as providing the necessary financial means.

It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive, also because local churches might have developed ministries or tasks that are not known world wide.

A. Domaine of Evangelisation / Education / Spirituality and Liturgy

1. administer of the Word which allows for preaching - but not giving a homily (c. 766-767)
2. obtain a "*missio canonica*" to preach and teach
3. extraordinary minister of baptism (c. 861 §2);
4. assist at weddings (c. 1112)
5. acolyte (instituted ministry)
6. lector (instituted ministry)
7. minister of Holy Communion
8. preside over liturgical celebrations including funeral services
9. catechist (instituted ministry) (different from catechism preparing to sacraments)
10. theologian / canon lawyer
11. full professor in all theological disciplines (including canon law)
12. Director of a catholic school, a hospital, other health care facility; president of the boards of these institution or of other public juridic persons in the domain of healthcare, schools etc. that operate as Catholic institutions
13. Dean in a faculty granting ecclesiastical degree in philosophy/ theology / canon law
14. Rector of a catholic or ecclesiastical university (c. 810-812)
15. Executive head of the Theological -or other - Commission of a continental episcopal body (e.g. FABC)
16. Diocesan or National director of Spirituality / education / vocations / religious life, Justitia et pax, relief organisations, ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, Caritas, Mission, health etc.
17. Spiritual Director (also of seminarians / religious)
18. Prison / hospital / police / youth pastoral minister
19. Lay pastoral worker in a parish

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B. Domain of administration of church's institutions

20. member of the finance council of a parish (c. 537) and a diocese (c. 492)
21. finance officer of a diocese (c. 494 § 1) or a religious institute (c. 636)
22. Chancellor of a diocese
23. Episcopal delegate for religious, education, ecumenism, personnel, etc.
24. Expert or consultor either for matters within the church or as delegates on behalf of the church e.g. in ecumenical or interreligious dialogues or on other subjects and to organizations or bodies for which task they hold a specific expertise (c. 218).
25. President Conference of Major Superiors of Religious (UISG as well as national bodies)
26. General Superior of an institute of consecrated life or of Society of Apostolic life (they place juridic acts)
27. President of a lay association (national / international)

C. The ecclesiastic tribunal

28. Canonical advisor
29. judge in a diocesan tribunal or appeal court (1421 §2) (Two women with one cleric);
30. judge (c. 1425) in marriage cases as well as e.g. penal cases, including reserved cases
31. judge in- penal - trails for Vatican City State
32. assessor (c. 1424)
33. auditor (c. 1428)
34. *Ponens* or *relator* who presents a case in a collegial tribunal and writes the sentence (c. 1429)
35. defender of the bond and promotor of justice (1435)
36. procurator and / or advocate (c. 1483)
37. guardian and curator (c. 1478)
38. conducting a preliminary penal investigation also of accused clerics (c. 1717)
39. censor (c. 830)
40. chancellor or notary (c. 483 § 2)
41. postulator in causes for canonization and beatification

D. Domain of the governance of the Church

42. Leader of a parish appointed by the bishop (c. 517 §2)
43. Member of diocesan and parish pastoral councils (c. 512 and 536)
44. Staff member of the different commissions of the episcopal conference
45. Secretary general of an episcopal conference
46. Secretary general of a continental episcopal structure such as FABC / CELAM / CCEE etc.
47. Member of particular councils, for an ecclesiastical province or for the territory of an episcopal conference with consultative vote(c. 443§ 5-6)
48. Member of a Roman synods of bishops
49. Prefect of a Roman Dicastery, secretary or undersecretary of a Dicastery, under-secretary at Synod of Bishops; director or vice director of the Vatican press office, etc.
50. Consultor, Member, senior administrator or official at the offices of the Roman Curia.

This list is not exhaustive.

Literature: Myriam Wijlens, "Laypersons Participating in Leadership and Governance in a Synodal Church: Canonical Developments Calling for Theological Reflections and a Paradigm Shift," *Studia canonica* 58 (2024) 53-77.