



KirchenVolksBewegung

German contact address:

»We are Church« c/o Christian Weisner

Postfach 65 01 15

D-81215 München

Tel.: +49 (0)8131-260 250

Fax: +49 (0)8131-260 249

E-Mail: info@wir-sind-kirche.de

Internet: www.wir-sind-kirche.de

Press Release

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We are Church: The people in the Church are irritated and hurt, and this shows in the number of those leaving the church.

A response to the public announcement one year ago on 24 January 2009 that the excommunication of the Priestly Society of St. Pius X bishops has been rescinded

One year after the public announcement of this highly problematic decision of the Pope on 24 January 2009 (tellingly, exactly one day before the 50th anniversary of the day when Pope John XXIII proclaimed the reform Second Vatican Council on 25 January 1959) the international movement *We are Church* declares: The unconditional rescindment of the excommunication of the Priestly Society of St. Pius X. bishops was **an act that tore open deep wounds not only within the church but also with regard to the ecumenical and the interreligious dialogues which have not yet healed. But at the same time it led to a renewed broad interest in the Second Vatican Council.**

It is more than regrettable, says the Catholic reform movement, that the decision of Pope Benedict XVI intended to be a “step of mercy” without any preconditions, did not lead to any concessions on the part of the Society of St. Pius X. Instead their representatives boldly demand from the Pope that he “converts” to their position of rejection with regard to the documents of the Second Vatican Council and that he agrees to the documents’ “revision” in the sense of an ultra-traditionalist interpretation. Worldwide even Catholics who are loyal to the Pope cannot understand why Benedict XVI still talks about a “faithful adherence of these groups to the truth” and continues to advocate for a “full communion with the Church of the Society of St. Pius X” even though they have so far not shown any signs of willingness to back down.

It is not only the continuing disputes about the illicit ordinations of the Priestly Society that show how problematic the Pope’s decision was and still is. Even if we ignore the issue of the holocaust-denier Williamson, the solitary decision of the Pope still is a grave error and a serious violation of the principle of Episcopal collegiality, one of the most important principles for the unity within the church. Benedict XVI should not interpret the criticism that came from many parts of the world as a hostile personal attack but rather as an expression of a deep-seated worry about the well-being of the church as a whole and about the credibility of its message.

Many of the faithful have resigned in the face of the backward-looking course of the Roman-Catholic Church hierarchy and have abandoned all hope for positive change in the Church. **After the rescindment of the excommunication of the four Pius-bishops there was a big jump in the number of people turning their back on the Church, as shown by official statistics.**

The world-wide success of the **petition “For the full recognition of the decrees of the Second Vatican Council”** that was co-organized by *We are Church*, showed that the efforts for full implementation of the reforms started by the Council still has a wide backing. In the concluding declaration to the 47th anniversary of the opening of the Council (11 October 2009) the initiators of the petition warn against betraying the courage in faith of the Fathers of the Council. The reforms started in the areas of ecumenism, relations to non-Christian faiths, freedom of religion, and the Church in the modern world need the faith of all Christians into the chosen path, and not a centralist control. **www.petition-vaticanum2.org**

The **many worrying indications of a clear rejection of central post-conciliar reforms on the part of the Roman Church leadership** include the targeted promotion of the pre-conciliar tridentine rite (2007) as well as the re-formulated Good Friday intercessory prayer (2008) which was deemed offensive, and not only by Jewish communities. But despite all backward tendencies that run counter to the spirit of the Council it is today more important than ever to further develop the manifestation of our faith in today’s world because, to quote the words of the theologian **Hans Küng: “It is not the Council but the betrayal of the Council that led the church into crisis”.**