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WILL THE SPIRIT OF VATICAN II SURVIVE IN THE CHURCH?

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Abstract

The 5th anniversary of the election of Pope Francis on March 13, 2018 showed quite a mixed assortment of both achievements and shortfalls of this pontificate that are very different to the previous ones. Despite very serious and long lasting problems in the Vatican and in many local churches Pope Francis has brought a change of mood into the Church that no one ever before had thought to be possible. From the perspective of the international reform movement "We Are Church," the author undertakes to take stock of the complex and highly dynamic processes within the church, which in times of world political unrest also have effects far beyond the inner-church space. What is needed on the different levels of the Church to take up the processes that are necessary for the Roman Catholic Church to find a new and more positive role in the rapidly changing global human community?

Keywords: *Amoris Laetitia*, Church Reform, *Humanae Vitae*, Leadership, Pope Francis, Second Vatican Council, Synodality

1. Post-Conciliar Experiences

Five years after the election of Pope Francis the Roman Catholic Church is facing a decisive change and hopefully a paradigm shift.

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Despite most serious and long lasting problems (sexual abuse, financial scandals, dysfunctional leadership, lack of personnel, and many more) in the Vatican and in many local churches Pope Francis brought a change of mood to the Church that no one had thought would be possible.¹ This could not have been achieved by any ingenious media strategy if it did not correspond to reality. However, will Francis, the Bishop “from the other end of the world,” succeed in making a real change in the course of the worldwide Church? How can he cope with the manifold resistance inside and outside the Vatican? Or is everything just an illusion of a new beginning of a 2000 years old religions institution that will never change?²

With the Second Vatican Council, it seemed that the Catholic Church was enthusiastically opening the windows, catching up with the present and ending the fundamental defence against the challenges of modernity. It was a time of departure, both internally and externally especially if one takes into account that this happened in a time when many military dictatorships still prevailed and dialogue and participation, as the Council sought it, were by no means common even in civil society. But the ambiguity of some of the final documents decelerated the reform process in the following decades.

After Second Vatican Council, Jorge Mario Bergoglio was the first cardinal to be elected pope who had not been present at the Second Vatican Council in Rome, but he comes from a continent where the vision of this reforming Council has been implemented most consistently.

The post-conciliar path of the Latin American Church is marked by several continental synods: Medellín 1968, Puebla 1979, Santo Domingo 1992, and Aparecida 2007. But it is also marked by continuous conflicts with the Vatican. Bergoglio himself repeatedly had conflicts with the Vatican and he himself experienced censorship by the Vatican when he coordinated the original final paper of the fifth *General Assembly of Latin American Bishops' Council* (CELAM) 2007 in Aparecida. This final document included a strong criticism of ecclesiastical structures, especially of clericalism; a criticism that was

¹Christian Weisner, “A new Era in Catholicism?” *Asian Horizons* 9, 3 (September 2015) 518-526.

²Christian Weisner: “Vom Kirchen Volks Begehren zur Kirchen Volks Bewegung. Wie lässt sich eine 2000 jährige Weltorganisation verändern?” in *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen* 10, 3 (1997) 74-77.

missing in the text approved by Rome.³ Bergoglio, now himself in Rome, in his role as Pope continues his critical positions about ecclesiastical structures and clericalism.

He is a representative of the “theology of the people,” the Argentine version of liberation theology, which Joseph Ratzinger, at that time prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) strictly criticised for decades.

Bergoglio and his theology teacher Lucio Gera who was influenced by Karl Rahner follow the principle: Pastoral work and theology cannot be separated.⁴ Bergoglio can be seen as “a terrific theologian, whose theology is coherent and cogent because it arises precisely out of his walking with the community. And he is a great pastor because his pastoral practice and teaching are informed by a careful and thoughtful theology that reaches back into our tradition and grounds itself in the Gospel.”⁵ However, some reviewers and especially Cardinal Gerhard Müller, the former head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) do not see Bergoglio as a “professional theologian” at all.⁶

The theology of Vatican II, which was developed further in Latin America and matured in often-painful practice, is what Francis brings back to the Vatican. In many respects, Francis took up the inner-church reform projects and socio-political positions of John XXIII and even more of Pope Paul VI. The Catacombs Pact of 16 November 1965, inspired by the idea of a ‘church of the poor’ by Pope John XXIII, won new relevance with Pope Francis. The claim that the church must be a church for the poor and the need for reform of church structures go hand in hand with Francis. This was the core of the intervention he made before the papal election during the

³Christoph Krauß, Gerhard Kruij, “In Selbstblockaden verstrickt: Römische Korrekturen am Schlussdokument von Aparecida,” in *Herder Korrespondenz* 9/2007, S. 450–453. www.herder-korrespondenz.de/heftarchiv/61-jahrgang-2007/heft-9-2007/roemische-korrekturen-am-schlussdokument-von-aparecida-in-selbstblockaden-verstrickt

⁴Margit Eckholt, “... bei mir erwächst die Theologie aus der Pastoral,” Lucio Gera - ein “Lehrer in Theologie” von Papst Franziskus, *Stimmen der Zeit* 3/2014, S. 157–172, www.herder.de/stz/hefte/archiv/139-2014/3-2014/bei-mir-erwaechst-die-theologie-aus-der-pastoral-lucio-gera-ein-lehrer-in-theologie-von-papst-franziskus

⁵Cecilia González-Andrieu: Pastoral work and theology cannot be separated, July 21, 2017, www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/07/21/pastoral-work-and-theology-cannot-be-separated

⁶Maike Hickson, “Vatican’s Doctrine Chief: Pope is not a ‘Professional Theologian’” Mar 14, 2016, www.lifesitenews.com/news/vaticans-doctrine-chief-pope-is-not-a-professional-theologian

consistory of cardinals March 9, 2013.⁷ In short: Church reform and social reform, ecumenism *ad intra* and ecumenism *ad extra* belong together.

“Only if the reforms of the Second Vatican Council are continued can the church be saved,” Fr Hans Küng said in the fall of 2012 at a symposium marking the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council.⁸ The Swiss theologian, who had been an adviser to the Council, had watched through the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI as the reforms of the council were implemented slowly, relativized by the magisterium, and, in many cases, massively obstructed and opposed.

But the seeds of the Council have come to fruition, as shown by the countless international calls and actions of the past decades from the academic field as well as from the grassroots levels.⁹

2. New Pastoral Style of Leadership

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, although he held one of the highest positions in the Vatican for more than thirty years, did not succeed in leading the Vatican and, once he became pope, he could not solve problems in the church, some of which he had inherited from John Paul II.

From the first moment Pope Francis was introduced to the world on the balcony overlooking St Peter’s Square, he practised a fundamentally new pastoral style of leadership, one for which the faithful had so long desired.

He set the course of renewal for the church with stirring sermons and concrete signs, such as renouncing inherited symbols of power like titles, vesture, and the papal apartments. He made his priorities plain when he made the destination of his first visit outside Rome the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa, a refuge for people fleeing war and economic deprivation.

The Council has defined dialogue as a crucial feature of the church.¹⁰ Pope Francis relies on collegiality instead of papal

⁷Cardinal Bergoglio’s speech in the pre-conclave, “The Sweet and Comforting Joy of Evangelizing,” www.zenit.org/articles/havana-prelate-shares-notes-from-cardinal-bergoglio-s-pre-conclave-speech

⁸Hans Küng, “Für eine Kirchenreform von unten. Eröffnungsrede in der Frankfurter Paulskirche der Konziliaren Versammlung “Zeichen der Zeit - Hoffnung und Widerstand,” Oktober 18-21, 2012 in Frankfurt/Main. www.wir-sind-kirche.de/files/wsk/K%C3%9CNG_Paulskirche_20121018.pdf

⁹See: www.wir-sind-kirche.de/?id=125&id_entry=3155

absolutism. Instead of making decisions “from the top,” he seeks advice and tries to initiate processes. This change from the “veto mode” into the “dialogue mode” is unusual for many in the Catholic Church. In the notable speech on the 50th anniversary of the Bishops’ Synod implemented by Pope Paul VI, Francis has repeatedly and explicitly stated that “in a synodal Church, the Synod of Bishops is only the most evident manifestation of a dynamism of communion which inspires all ecclesial decisions.”¹¹ But until now these synodal processes are far from being practised at all ecclesiastical levels.

On June 29, 2013, Francis issued his first encyclical, *Lumen Fidei* (“The Light of Faith”), but his predecessor had written much of it. “This encyclical stands on two legs!” Vatican Radio reported.¹² It is a document of the difficult transition, a compromise between continuity and new beginnings that left the burning internal church issues still undecided. Much more attention was given three days later to Francis’ symbolic first visit to the refugees in Lampedusa.

In November that year, Francis released his first apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”), which was a much more programmatic doctrinal text and clearly showed the will to make concrete reforms, even in the church structure. The focus of *Evangelii Gaudium* is twofold: On the basis of the Vatican II dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*, *Evangelii Gaudium* contains a program of evangelization as well as proposals for a thorough and lasting reform of church structures and their pastoral, diaconal and political functions. This begins with the Vatican and ends at parishes around the world.

For the proposed church reform two sources are used: the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the Council and the Latin American Church with its tradition of liberation theology and the option for the poor. “Opción por los pobres” means: “Because there are poor people, we have to change our minds.”¹³ To see the world

¹⁰Shaji George Kochuthara, CMI, “A Theology of the Church for the Future: A Participatory Church of Equal Discipleship,” *Asian Horizons* 9, 3 (September 2015) 527-543.

¹¹Address of his Holiness Pope Francis, Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015 w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html

¹²Eberhard von Gemmingen SJ, “Enzyklika auf zwei Beinen,” *Stimmen der Zeit*, 7/2013, S. 433-434, www.herder.de/stz/hefte/archiv/138-2013/7-2013/enzyklika-auf-zwei-beinen/

¹³Norbert Arntz, *Pastorale Umkehr – Das Programm des Franziskus-Pontifikats*, 2013, www.wir-sind-kirche.de/files/2102_GR_Arntz_Pastorale_Umkehr.pdf

through the eyes of the poor, to read the Bible and to act is what Francis is all about – a fundamental change of perspective! However, Francis does not want to see the church as an NGO. Immediately after his election, he warned against losing sight of God and the religious dimension, otherwise “we will become a compassionate non-governmental organization.”¹⁴

Francis was the first Pope, who invited the leaders of social movements from all over the world to a meeting at the Vatican. His sensational speech on October 28, 2014¹⁵ was far more radical and more important than his programmatic encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*. Some have interpreted this speech even as a “spontaneous encyclical on poverty and the environment.”

The environmental and social encyclical *Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home*, has received a positive response worldwide since its release in May 2015. It is as if humanity longed for a strong voice that, with the authority of the ministry and the personal authenticity of this pope, denounced the inconsistencies of world development and called for people at various levels to act. For the first time ever, the expertise of recognized environmental experts was sought in order to present the worldwide context in a factually correct way. It is only on this basis that the encyclical then looks at reality in the light of the Gospel, finally deriving concrete options for responsible action. In terms of ecclesiastical and international politics, Francis has set decisive directions with such clarity that no one had expected.

In 2017 he gave a demanding and at the same time encouraging video address to the TED talks directly from the Vatican.¹⁶ In Wim Wender's movie “Pope Francis – A Man of his Word” (2018) Francis addresses very important issues such as ecological responsibility, immigration, consumer behaviour and social justice, as a well-accepted religious leader.¹⁷

3. Rediscovering Synodality

With two Synods of Bishops on family life, convened in 2014 and 2015, and with his post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (“The Joy

¹⁴Pope Francis, Morning Mass, June 11, 2013

¹⁵w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141028_incontro-mondiale-movimenti-popolari.html

¹⁶ “Why the only future worth building includes everyone” (April 2017) www.ted.com/talks/pope_francis_why_the_only_future_worth_building_includes_everyone

¹⁷ www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2018-03/wim-wenders-interview-pope-francis-a-man-of-his-word.html

of Love”) of March 19, 2016, released on April 8, 2016, Francis initiated the urgently needed development of Catholic sexual ethics and pastoral and family theology. It is about much more than internal reform requirements such as the admission of divorced and remarried couples to the sacraments, however important and indispensable these are.

The broad consultation process used to prepare for the synods on the family has been welcomed worldwide as a sign of a new culture of dialogue in the church. This included – despite some shortcomings in implementation, especially in the second survey – also the direct inclusion of the people in the pews by the two Vatican surveys, which should provide “unfiltered information.” For the first time, the Vatican was interested in what Catholics around the world think and how they live, and not just what bishops’ views on these issues are. What church doctrine has called “irregular or unacceptable situations” is a widespread reality of life in all parts of the world.¹⁸ It became clear that the church’s sexual doctrine as a whole is understood neither in content nor in form because it has lost contact with the reality of human beings. A more intelligible form of proclamation alone will not be enough, since the gap is founded in the doctrine itself.¹⁹

With the crucial statement in Paragraph 3 of *Amoris Laetitia* “that not all discussions of doctrinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium,” Francis restored to the church the freedoms of dialogue and development of doctrine that his predecessor popes had curtailed beyond measure.

Pope Francis deliberately made no obvious corrections to dogmatics. But their discrepancy to the Gospel message of mercy and to the pastoral approach of Pope Francis becomes ever clearer and shows just how necessary corrections and further developments in dogmatics and canon law will be in the future.²⁰ However, the

¹⁸Instrumentum laboris 2014, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20140626_instrumentum-laboris-familia_en.html

¹⁹“The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church.” An invitation to renewed pastoral care of marriage and of the family in the light of *Amoris laetitia*. Statement by the German Bishops adopted by the Permanent Council of the German Bishops’ Conference on 23 January 2017, www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/dossiers_2017/2017-ENG_Statement-by-the-German-Bishops-Amoris-laetitia.pdf

²⁰Eva-Maria Faber, Martin M. Lintner, “Begründeter Wandel in *Amoris Laetitia*: im Umgang mit nach Scheidung Wiederverheirateten,” May 2, 2016, www.feinschwarz.net/begrueндeter-wandel-in-amoris-laetitia-im-umgang-mit-nach-scheidung-wiederverheirateten

question is why, for example, *Amoris Laetitia* deals in a blanket and undifferentiated way with the concept of indissolubility of marriage²¹ and why the question of when a marriage is considered a sacrament is ignored.

The controversial reactions to *Amoris Laetitia* show that the discourse intended by Francis about the long-blocked issues has started.²² Yet Francis did nothing but adopt the principle of differentiation formulated by John Paul II's 1981 apostolic exhortation on marriage and family, *Familiaris Consortio*. But Francis also did open up ways – as John Paul did not do – for the church to deal with these difficult situations in a different way. Until now the reception of the teaching is far from being complete, neither in the theological faculties nor in the parishes. Not since *Humanae Vitae*, the 1968 encyclical that affirmed the church's ban on artificial birth control, has a papal writing caused so much unrest in the church as has *Amoris Laetitia*. This time, however, in reverse: Now it is cardinals, bishops and some theologians who refuse the pope's initiative.

Fifty years after the encyclical *Humanae vitae* by Pope Paul VI the Roman Catholic Church still suffers from the consequences of this document, one of the most controversial papal announcements of recent church history, in two aspects: the question of contraception and the question of ecclesiastical infallibility.²³ Dealing with the consequences of *Humanae vitae* the rereading and reformulation of the encyclical has to include the progress of the post-synodal letter *Amoris Laetitia* by Pope Francis. The focus should be on the question of conscience, on the relationship between tradition and teaching, and on the relationship between the Magisterium, theology and the faith of believers.²⁴ The continuing lack of approval for *Humanae vitae* from the majority of the faithful gives cause for rethinking the doctrine.²⁵

²¹ Hermann Häring and Norbert Scholl, *Anfragen an die Argumentation zur Unauflöslichkeit der Ehe. Schreiben an Kardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller*, 2014. www.wir-sind-kirche.de/files/2226_SCHOLL-HAERING%20an%20MUELLER.pdf

²² Hermann Häring, "Wer setzt sich durch? – Der Papst im Clinch mit den Hardlinern," April 10, 2016. www.hjhaering.de/wer-setzt-sich-durch-der-papst-im-clinch-mit-den-hardlinern-2/

²³ Charles E. Curran, "*Humanae Vitae* and the *sensus fidelium*," June 25, 2018, www.ncronline.org/news/people/humanae-vitae-and-sensus-fidelium

²⁴ Martin M. Lintner, *Von Humanae vitae bis Amoris laetitia. Die Geschichte einer umstrittenen Lehre*, Innsbruck: Tyrolia Verlag, 2018 (This book is also published in Italian language).

²⁵ In preparation for the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Humanae Vitae: On the Regulation of Birth*, the Wijngaards Institute gathered an interdisciplinary task

The process-related nature of the synods requires patience and is difficult for some to understand. Can this way succeed in initiating a fundamental renewal of pastoral work and, where necessary, a renewal of the teaching? Francis sees first and foremost the need for a change in the mentality of Catholics worldwide, but especially among the bishops: “The structural and organizational reforms are secondary – that is, they come afterward. The first reform must be the attitude... The people of God want pastors, not clergy acting like bureaucrats or government officials.”²⁶

With *Amoris Laetitia* and the decentralization intended by Francis, it is above all the bishops worldwide who now have the responsibility to “seek solutions better suited to [each country’s] culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs” (AL, 3). However, it takes some time for episcopal conferences to follow the pope’s invitation to develop appropriate pastoral responses that would be friendly to marriages and families for their respective cultural areas.

The German bishops, for example, didn’t respond until February 1, 2017.²⁷ The long hesitation of the episcopal conferences is one of the reasons that in the fall of 2016, four cardinals publicly declared their doubts about *Amoris Laetitia* and tried to enshrine as irrevocable for all the future the marriage doctrine formulated by John Paul II and Benedict XVI.²⁸

4. Reform in Many Different Aspects

In addition to the ambitious project of the synods on the family, Francis has engaged in countless other activities, initiatives and decisions that, together, form a dynamic but well-considered transformation process based on the principles of the Second Vatican Council. While Francis is regarded as a conservative on values and he is not expected to make any quick dogmatic changes – for example, on the issues of sexual doctrines and of women’s role in the church – he has shown a great willingness to listen and learn.

Laity: From the beginning, Francis has emphasized the importance of the people of the church, the so-called laity. The laypeople are the

force of experts to reassess the ethics of using contraception from within the Catholic tradition. www.wijngaardsinstitute.com/statement-on-contraceptives

²⁶ w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/apa-francesco_20130921_intervista-spadaro.html

²⁷ See above: “The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church.”

²⁸ www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2016/11/14/full-text-cardinals-letter-to-pope-francis-on-amoris-laetitia

protagonists of the church and the world. The ecclesiastical hierarchy is called to serve them, not to use them. Here we see a completely different picture of the church than the monarchical and strictly hierarchical tradition: a picture of the church that finally corresponds to the communion theology of Vatican II.²⁹

Celibacy: In the beginning of his Pontificate, Francis seemed to be open to repealing mandatory celibacy for Roman Catholic priests. He has suggested he would consider ordaining “married men of proven quality” (*virī probati*). Although these statements are still vague, they are an important signal that an open debate is possible. Now it is up to the bishops, not to complain about the lack of priests to serve the pastoral needs of their diocese, but to send “brave and bold proposals” to Rome, as Francis told Bishop Erwin Kräutler in 2014.³⁰

Gay priests: Given his hopeful statement about gay persons, “Who am I to judge?,” which earned Francis a lot of praise, the unchallenged exclusion of homosexuals from priestly ordination has been disappointing. A December 2016 document from the Congregation for Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*³¹ reaffirmed a 2005 instruction banning gay men from entering the priesthood. It leaves old assessments unquestioned and continues an exaggeration of the role celibacy plays in the priesthood.

Women: The role of women is one of the most difficult and controversial matters within the Roman Catholic Church. Several times, Francis has emphasized that the church needs more women in all areas, especially in leadership positions, for its own sake. These comments were warmly received by many in the church, not just Catholic women’s associations. Francis has appointed five instead of two women to the *International Theological Commission* in December 2014.³²

But Francis has not yet sufficiently distanced himself from John Paul II’s 1994 apostolic letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, which claims that the ban on women to the priesthood is an unalterable ecclesiastical doctrine. Though prohibiting discussions about women’s ordination imposed at that time had the opposite effect, John Paul and Benedict left a problem for their successors that is hard to overcome. When

²⁹www.ncregister.com/daily-news/pope-francis-and-the-reform-of-the-laity

³⁰ www.thetablet.co.uk/news/659/pope-says-married-men-could-be-ordained-if-world-s-bishops-agree-

³¹ www.clerus.va/content/dam/clerus/Ratio%20Fundamentalis/The%20Gift%20of%20the%20Priestly%20Vocation.pdf

³²www.ncronline.org/news/theology/pope-tells-vatican-theological-commission-respect-diverse-views

asked, Francis has declared the door to the priesthood to be closed to women. But he does after all use the image of a door – and, for this door, may be a theological key can be found.

In the view of German Jesuit theologian Hans Waldenfels, Francis may have cracked open that door when in 2016 he recognized Mary Magdalene's role as the "true and authentic evangelizer." In the long run it will not go without a changed understanding of the office and probably not without women's ordination.³³ He also raised the July 22 memorial of Mary Magdalene to a feast on the church's liturgical calendar. Another theologian, Michael Seewald from Muenster, Germany, does not consider the previous arguments against the ordination of women to be valid and recommends a new debate on the priesthood for women.³⁴

Although in *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* the discussion about the ordination of women to diaconate and priestly ministries was declared to be finally over and the teaching was repeatedly confirmed in the following years by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), the discussion about the ordination of women did not abate. For years, scientific conferences have been held³⁵ while more and more theologians including even priests and bishops profess themselves to the demand for the admission of women to all ministerial offices. Some even propose a rebellion of all Catholic women.³⁶ There is no doubt that a large majority of the grassroots faithful not only can imagine women as deacons or priests in the Roman Catholic Church, but want to see their vision realised.

Sexual violence: Recent years have seen intensifying efforts to fight against the sexual abuse of minors and the crimes of clerics, and to reform church structures to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Reinforcing what Benedict XVI began Francis has pronounced a zero-tolerance policy toward all delinquent offenders,

³³ "Theologe: Papst hat 'Fenster' zur Weihe von Frauen aufgestoßen," *Katholische Nachrichtenagentur*, June 6, 2017; www.spiegel.de/spiegel/pfingsten-wie-sich-jeder-seinen-eigenen-gott-baut-a-1150542.html

³⁴ Michael Seewald, "Zoelibataere Frauen weihen," *Herder Korrespondenz* 6/2017, www.herder-korrespondenz.de/heftarchiv/71-jahrgang-2017/heft-6-2017/zur-debatte-um-die-zulassungsbedingungen-zum-priesteramt-zoelibataere-frauen-weihen

³⁵ Eg. "Women in Church Ministries. Reform Movements in Ecumenism," Osnabrück/Germany, December 6 to 9, 2017. This congress published seven Osnabrück Theses and four Self-Commitments. www.uni-muenster.de/FB2/aktuelles/Oekumenischer_Kongress_OS.html

³⁶ Christiane Florin, "Der Weiberaufstand" (Rebellion of women), 2017, Schondorf: Kösel-Verlag.

and he has called all bishops to greater accountability, including those who were involved in covering up abuse.

During his pontificate several bishops and cardinals have already been made responsible for allegations of abuse or at least temporarily resigned their office, as the Australian Cardinal George Pell, member of C-9. The results of his efforts have been mixed, as we can see in the case of the Chilean Bishop Juan Barros, accused of a cover-up. The Vatican could not explain why, after Francis received a letter from a Chilean abuse survivor, the Vatican did not act as it should have. Finally Pope Francis apologized and accepted the resignation of some of the Chilean bishops.

The Catholic Church is being rocked – again – by high-level sexual abuse scandals, e.g. with allegations of harassment and abuse by five males against U.S. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, a once-super-popular cleric who now had to resign and lost his title as cardinal. Another very serious problem is the sexual abuse of nuns by clerics.³⁷

The Child Protection Commission set up by Pope Francis in spring 2014 has hit the headlines because it was not able to get into work due to delays and is currently working without abuse victims. Within the Catholic Church, there is still a lack of willingness to address systemic and structural issues related to abuse.³⁸ Partly, lacking in resoluteness by Rome, and in some cases by episcopal conferences who did not implement the instructions of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) from 2011 to the present day, Hans Zollner SJ, president of the *Centre for Child Protection* (CCP) at the Gregorian and one of the leading experts on sexual abuse working in the Catholic Church stated recently.³⁹ And he asks for a theological approach to sexual abuse.⁴⁰

³⁷Doris Reisinger, “#NunsToo: Sexueller Missbrauch an Ordensfrauen. Fakten und Fragen,” *Stimmen der Zeit* 6/2018, 374-384, www.herder.de/stz/hefte/archiv/143-2018/6-2018/nunstoo-sexueller-missbrauch-an-ordensfrauen-fakten-und-fragen/

³⁸Geoffrey Robinson, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007. (see: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoffrey_Robinson_\(bishop\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoffrey_Robinson_(bishop)))

³⁹Hans Zollner, SJ, “Kirche muss Missbrauch offensiver bekämpfen,” 2017. www.jesuiten.org/aktuelles/details/article/hans-zollner-sj-kirche-muss-missbrauch-offensiver-bekaempfen.html

⁴⁰“Jesuit (Hans Zollner SJ) fordert eine “Theologie im Angesicht von Missbrauch” www.kathpress.at/goto/meldung/1545615/jesuit-fordert-eine-theologie-im-angesicht-von-missbrauch

Ecumenism: At his visit in the Lutheran Church in Rome November 15, 2015 and on many occasions since Francis encouraged the faithful to take courageous steps towards a visible Ecumenism. Francis had an impressive visit to the Lutheran World Federation in Lund, Sweden October 31, 2016, which included a moving liturgy. The focus was on forgiving the sins of past centuries as well as celebrating progress made over the last 50 years. In contrast, Benedict's 2011 meeting with the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany in Erfurt brought no "gifts."

Germany, where the author lives, has the unique situation of an equal number of Catholic and Protestant Christians. At the 500th anniversary of the Reformation of Martin Luther in 2017 it was hoped that there could be some progress in the sharing of the Eucharistic meal at least for marriages between Protestant and Catholic partners. According to Cardinal Walter Kasper, who for many years was the Vatican's point man on ecumenical issues, the Vatican has signalled that it would accept an opening on this issue, but the first move must be made by the German bishops, who should first bring forward concrete proposals. But after a long discussion when a vast majority of the German Bishops' Conference agreed for the regulation of Holy Communion for couples in mixed marriages a minority of bishops appealed to Rome. After some confusion between the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and the German Church every bishop now acts on his own responsibility – not a good sign for collegiality and not a sign for a growing ecumenism.^{41, 42}

Liturgy: At the beginning of his pontificate, many thought that Francis was not particularly interested in liturgy. The appointment of Cardinal Robert Sarah as prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments reinforced this impression. However, after a speech in London in which Sarah urged priests to celebrate Mass *ad orientem* whenever possible and announced a revision of the liturgical reform of the council, Francis stopped him, saying, in effect, "No reform of the reform!"

With his apostolic letter *Magnum Principium*, issued *motu proprio* ("on his own initiative"), Francis once again highlighted the intentions of the Second Vatican Council and returned the

⁴¹ Website "Ecumenism" of the German Bishops' Conference www.dbk.de/themen/oekumene

⁴² "Walking with Christ - Tracing Unity Interdenominational marriages and sharing in the Eucharist" (Aid to Orientation), www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/dossiers_2018/Walking-with-Christ_Tracing_Unity_Arbeits%C3%BCbersetzung-der-Orientierungshilfe_ENG.pdf

responsibility for the translation of liturgical texts to the national bishops' conferences.

Beatification and canonization: The simultaneous canonizations of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II (April 27, 2014) can be seen as an attempt by Francis to reconcile two very different wings within the Roman Catholic Church. Francis' declaration of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, murdered at the altar during Mass on March 24, 1980, as a martyr for the Catholic faith, is a clear signal for a politically effective role model. The beatification took place on May 23, 2015 in San Salvador, which will be followed by his canonization in Rome on October 14, 2018.

Paul VI will canonized on October 14, 2018 because of his efforts in bringing the Second Vatican Council and his forward-looking encyclical *Populorum progressio*. But this canonization should not stop theologians being critical of certain aspects of his very controversial encyclical *Humanae vitae* (see above).

Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy (8 December 2015 to 20 November 2016): With the rediscovery of mercy as the "first attribute of God" and declaring a church-wide "Holy Year of Mercy," Francis took a step in transitioning from a regulative understanding of the church to a church built on the foundation of the Gospel and open to all people in the world. This is also a clear sign of interreligious dialogue, which – along with his choosing the name "Francis" – can also be understood as an outreach to Islam.

Message for World Peace Day: With the message "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace"⁴³ marking the 50th anniversary of World Peace Day January 1, 2017, Francis appealed for peace through active nonviolence. This message, initiated by *Pax Christi International* and the *Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace*, is in many ways a paradigm shift in the understanding of the church's magisterium.

5. Question of Infallibility More Relevant than Ever

Shortly after *Humanae vitae* Hans Küng was the first to publish the urgent question of the legitimacy of the claim of the infallibility of generally binding papal doctrinal statements.⁴⁴ After long disputes on 18 December 1979 with Pope John Paul II, his ecclesiastical teaching

⁴³ w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20161208_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html

⁴⁴Hans Küng, *Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage*, 1970 (Infallible? An Inquiry), Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1970.

permission (“*missio canonica*”) was withdrawn. But Küng did not reverse or withdraw his theologically substantiated critique of the dogma of infallibility that had arisen in 1870 at the First Vatican Council under external pressure (loss of the Papal States) and highly problematic circumstances (massive papal pressure, over 30 per cent refused clear consent). Chief author of the Infallibility Bull of Pope Pius IX was the morally questionable Jesuit Joseph Kleutgen (1811-1883).⁴⁵

In the meantime, there has been a tendency for a “creeping infallibilization” of some papal doctrines and ecclesiastical dogmas. It refers to the Council Constitution (No. 25), which binds the infallibility no longer to an official papal or conciliar declaration, but to the common conviction of the spatially separated bishops. This development is extremely problematic because it excludes any change in dogma understanding.

Some bishops, such as Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, the former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), argued in March 2018 that the current Pope does not have the power to lift or relax the ecclesiastical ban on artificial contraceptives, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI’s *Humanae Vitae*.

Even the recent attempts to classify the ordination of women as infallible,⁴⁶ shows with alarming clarity that the question of the infallibility of the Pope is more topical than ever. This dogma prevents any fundamental church reform. This criticism should become the *ceterum censeo* of all church reform efforts.⁴⁷

Ordinatio Sacerdotalis and the opinion of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) can be considered as not in agreement with the Second Vatican Council and the doctrine of

⁴⁵See Hubert Wolf, *The Nuns of Sant’Ambrogio: The True Story of a Convent in Scandal*, London: Vintage, 2016; Book review: www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/29/the-nuns-of-santambrogio-the-true-story-of-a-convent-in-scandal-hubert-wolf-review January 12, 2016

⁴⁶www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=11879

⁴⁷Hans Waldenfels, SJ, “Vision of the Church of the Future,” *Asian Horizons* 9, 3 (September 2015) 439-453; Norbert Scholl, “Die Päpstliche Unfehlbarkeit,” *Stimmen der Zeit* 7/2018, www.herder.de/stz/hefte/archiv/143-2018/7-2018/die-paepstliche-unfehlbarkeit-warum-eine-kritische-revision-jetzt-notwendig-ist; Hermann Häring, “Eine toedliche Bedrohung? Zur Diskussion um vermeintlich unfehlbare Aussagen,” June 3, 2018, www.hjhaering.de/eine-toedliche-bedrohung-zur-diskussion-um-vermeintlich-unfehlbare-aussagen/; Peter Knauer SJ, “Was bedeutet “Unfehlbarkeit?” *Theologie und Glaube* 3 (2015) 216-227, peter-knauer.de/Unfehlbarkeit_ThGl_216-227_2015.pdf

the Council Constitution *Lumen Gentium* (LG, 12) that all believers in faith cannot err.⁴⁸

The ban on any discussion of this issue prohibits any progress and any development of the Church's teaching.⁴⁹ The recognition of a false tradition stubbornly continues with outlandish arguments against today's scientific findings. Thus, the Church risks losing another generation of women and men, and sins against all female vocations.

6. Structural Reforms

Shortly after his election, Francis announced a reform of the Roman Curia. To aid him in this, he appointed a Council of Cardinals of eight (later nine) members, led by Honduran Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa and with representatives from Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa and North America. The list of men Francis has been appointing as new cardinals around the world shows that cultural diversity is being promoted. At the fifth consistory of Pope Francis on June 28, 2018, 14 new cardinals from 11 countries were created. At the moment 125 cardinals from 66 different countries (the highest number of countries ever) are under the age of 80 and could elect the next Pope. With Pope Francis the number of cardinals working in the Roman Curia decreased to 32 elective cardinals, while he created many new cardinals from Asia, Oceania and Africa.⁵⁰ His opponents accuse him of rebuilding the College of Cardinals, which will choose his successor in the future. The possibility that the next Pope could make a return to the past, is becoming more and more unlikely.

Already in February 2014, the Vatican's financial administration, which had come under fire, was restructured and a Communications Secretariat was set up. Several post-conciliar Pontifical Councils have been merged into new major authorities, such as the "Dicastery for Lay, Family and Life" or the "Dicastery for the Service of the Integral Development of Man." Almost finalized is the future structure and organization of the congregations.⁵¹ The reformulation of a

⁴⁸See Address of his Holiness Pope Francis, Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015, w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html

⁴⁹Michael Seewald, *Dogma im Wandel: Wie Glaubenslehren sich entwickeln*, Freiburg: Herder-Verlag, 2018.

⁵⁰ www.katholisch.de/aktuelles/aktuelle-artikel/reif-fur-die-insel-die-kardinale-von-franziskus

⁵¹ www.ncregister.com/daily-news/draft-of-vaticans-new-curial-constitution-would-reform-lines-of-authority

Fundamental Law of Vatican City State, which is to replace the previously valid Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, is under discussion.⁵²

The circle of Cardinals around Pope Francis has argued in favour of a larger proportion of women and young people at curia posts, it is said. Also, according to the recommendations of the C-9 Council, the staff should become more international, less clerical and more feminine. This would be a pleasing change of perspective for the role of the church headquarters in the proclamation of the faith and the support (not control!) of the local churches.⁵³

For outsiders, however, it is difficult to see how far this has all been achieved or can really succeed. However, the list of newly appointed Cardinals around the world shows that cultural diversity is being promoted.

Soon after assuming his office Pope Francis relativized the importance of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) when he spoke with a delegation from the Latin American and Caribbean Conference of Religious (CLAR) in June 2013.⁵⁴

However, many people did not understand why Pope Francis left Cardinal Müller in office for so long as the prefect, despite all the differences in content and atmosphere. No Pope before Francis has probably tolerated such a wide range of views among his staff. But the non-renewal of the five-year term of Cardinal Müller as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) was then a clear sign. This personal decision was procedurally compliant, was foreseeable and also consistent.

The appointment of Archbishop Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer SJ, who was already appointed by Pope Benedict as secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in 2008, is both a sign of continuity and a new beginning. In the consistory of June 28, 2018 Ladaria was promoted to a Cardinal.

⁵² www.chicagocatholic.com/vatican/-/article/2019/04/24/pope-francis-to-restructure-roman-curia-with-major-office-for-evangelization

⁵³ www.katholisch.de/aktuelles/aktuelle-artikel/kardinalsrat-kurie-soll-weniger-klerikal-werden; www.ncronline.org/news/accountability/cardinal-marx-church-must-have-serious-debate-celibacy-role-women

⁵⁴Pope Francis and CLAR. June 6, 2013, iglesiadescalza.blogspot.com/2013/06/pope-francis-and-clar.html. "Maybe you'll even get a letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith saying that you said such and such... But don't worry. Explain what you have to explain, but keep going forward. Open doors, do something wherever life demands it."

7. Patience and Impatience in a Process of Change

Change is a laborious process that takes time to achieve and always generates resistance. The strength of the resistance to any kind of reform within the Vatican is evidenced by the sharp criticism Francis has delivered at annual Christmas receptions for the Roman Curia in which he has castigated them for “curial diseases,”⁵⁵ explained twelve steps to reform,⁵⁶ and clearly named their tasks to serve the universal church.⁵⁷

These alarming wake-up calls of the Pope, however, are not only meant for the leading curials, but for all cardinals and bishops of the universal Church, who still do not support the course of Francis.

After the shock over the resignation of Pope Benedict and the election of Pope Francis had been overcome, strong opposing forces against any reform soon returned to the floor. It is striking how strongly some conservatives, who among the former popes demanded from the progressives “obedience to the pope,” now themselves have difficulty following Francis.

In September 2016, four cardinals openly rebelled against any opening in the Catholic sexual teaching, as suggested by the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*. Francis scares his opponents. From their perspective, the supposed unity of the church is also at stake. Can the old traditionalist cliques acting in front of and behind the scenes be able to stop the process of reform? Many authors are very critical about Pope Francis. Marco Politi sees Francis as a Pope among the wolves and perceives a power struggle between reformers and conservatives in the Roman Curia and the Catholic Church worldwide.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/pa-pa-francesco_20141222_curia-romana.html

⁵⁶ w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/december/documents/pa-pa-francesco_20161222_curia-romana.html

⁵⁷ w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/december/documents/pa-pa-francesco_20171221_curia-romana.html

⁵⁸ Marco Politi, *Pope Francis Among the Wolves, The Inside Story of a Revolution*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2017; Andrew Brown, “The War against Pope Francis,” October 27, 2017, www.theguardian.com/news/2017/oct/27/the-war-against-pope-francis; Catherine Pepinster, “Five Years on, Pope Francis Has Failed to Deliver on his Promises,” www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/12/pope-francis-catholic-church-child; Philip F. Lawler, *Lost Shepherd. How Pope Francis is Misleading his Flock*, Washington: Gateway Editions, 2018; Marcantonio Colonna, *The Dictator Pope. The Inside Story of the Francis Papacy*, Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2018; Ross Douthat, *To Change the Church. Pope Francis and the Future of Catholicism*, New York: März Simon & Schuster, 2018.

Last Testament: In His Own Words,⁵⁹ the 2016 book-length interview by journalist Peter Seewald with Benedict, who had promised not to speak publicly as the pope emeritus, is an indication of how much the struggle for the church's path continues. But the Jesuit Francis, with his decades of leadership experience even in the extremely difficult times of the Argentine military junta, seems to have already taken these reactions into account. Instead of quick decisions and fighting votes, Francis wants to initiate processes that should lead to consensus-based results.

The very many positive signals and decisions that have come from Pope Francis cannot be overestimated.⁶⁰ From the beginning, Francis has had the support of the people of the church on a large scale, but we should be on guard against "pope euphoria." Francis' example and his "spiritual leadership style" alone will not be enough to break up the encrusted structures of the Roman church. "Absolutist systems cannot be resolved by continuous reforms; dramatic corrections and breaks are inevitable," says German theologian Hermann Häring.⁶¹ Therefore, a criticism of church leadership that is developed from the memory of Jesus and the issues of the present is indispensable.

On the one hand, many who have hitherto been extremely critical of the Roman Catholic Church suddenly see positive changes in it. On the other hand, many Catholics are still in a more distant position towards their own church and even more so towards the papacy. Despite the new signals from Rome, they are still sceptical of the words, programs and gestures of this Pope.

But even a Pope like Francis cannot achieve spiritual and structural renewal alone. "If this Pope wants to bring about an immediate reform of the Church, it certainly will not be a single effort... He urgently needs the support of many on his reform course, not only from reform groups..., but above all from bishops and priests."⁶²

In light of the ongoing attacks on Francis and on *Amoris Laetitia*, the Viennese pastoral theologian Paul Zulehner and the Czech sociologist and religious philosopher Tomas Halik started the international

⁵⁹Pope Benedict and Peter Seewald, *Last Testament: In His Own Words*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2017.

⁶⁰Erich Garhammer, *Und er bewegt sie doch. Wie Papst Franziskus Kirche und Welt verändert*, Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2017; Hans Waldenfels, SJ, *Wann, wenn nicht jetzt? Papst Franziskus: Weckrufe an die Kirche*, Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 2017.

⁶¹www.lifepr.de/pressemitteilung/guetersloher-verlagshaus-in-der-verlagsgruppe-random-house-gmbh/Habemus-papam-Und-jetzt/boxid/393550

⁶²Hans Küng, *Sieben Päpste. Wie ich sie erlebt habe*, München: Piper-Verlag, 2015, 367.

initiative “Pro Pope Francis”⁶³ to support Francis’ pastoral course. In Spanish-speaking regions, there is the initiative “Pro Papa Francisco.”⁶⁴

Instead of asking only for reforms to Pope Francis, demands should be addressed to the cardinals and bishops in particular to follow the new course of greater transparency, decentralization⁶⁵ and dialogue with the faithful much more clearly and decisively than they have done so far. More and more clerics are calling for reforms. But as long as the existing dogma building is not critically reflected upon, no fundamental reforms are to be expected. Therefore, a criticism of church leadership, which is developed from the memory of Jesus and the issues of the present, is indispensable.

8. Pastoral Conversion

The Roman Catholic Church is facing a decisive change now. After decades of refusing to accept the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, we must relearn how to dialogue within the church and how to conduct theological discourse. This won’t be easy. New communication and leadership structures must be developed that meet the demands of the message of the Gospel as well as the requirements of a global religious community in the most diverse cultural areas. In addition, the church leaders must definitively address clerical sexual violence and must urgently reassess the role of women in the church.

Francis desires a pastoral conversion, which is much more than just a pastoral reorientation. For this to happen, however, the people of the church and the theological sciences must again be much more actively involved and must also call for their own participation. Only in this way can Francis’ pastoral conversion succeed.

The deep crises in church leadership are far from over; but there are at least reasonable hopes that a return to the core of the Christian message and the Second Vatican Council as well as a renewal of the ecclesiastical structures will become possible.

- The “Principle of Subsidiarity” formulated by the Church in the 16th century⁶⁶ should be applied at all levels within the Roman Catholic Church. Subsidiarity is a principle of decentralisation, which allows

⁶³pro-pope-francis.com

⁶⁴propapafrancisco.com

⁶⁵Bernd Jochen Hilberath, *Dezentralisierung – eine notwendige Relativierung der Kurie*, 2016, www.thq-online.de/inhalte.php?jahrgang=2016&ausgabe=1&artikel=4

⁶⁶de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subsidiarität

higher-level regulations only for those areas that a local unit cannot regulate itself.

- If the Catholic Church wants to be a universal Church, this must also be reflected in the decision-making processes and staffing. Why cannot individual congregations be outsourced to other continents, as Leonardo Boff, who works in Brazil, suggests?
- The equal status of women must be realized at all levels. Pope Francis himself has shown considerable need for action in this area. Why can't, for example, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), be led by a woman theologian?
- Instead of reserving all decision-making powers to the Pope as an absolute monarch, the decisions should be discussed and prepared beforehand in a "Cabinet" meeting regularly and frequently – and this alone depends on the size and complexity of the worldwide faith community.
- The whole church leadership will require more teamwork in the future because of globalization and the very different forms of Catholicism in the world. The Synod of Bishops could be developed in the sense of the Second Vatican Council into a kind of "parliament" with decision-making power. The synodal principle and decision-making authority for all involved must become standard on all levels.
- For the urgent need to rebuild the credibility of the church leaders, a code of conduct must be formulated, which must also include an accountability of the bishops to the parishioners.

9. Universal Responsibility

We have to be realistic though: The Roman Catholic Church as a worldwide powerful institution with its 1,600 years' experience of undemocratic, centralistic and dogmatic structures after the Constantinian shift will not change because of some petitions⁶⁷ or because of some vigils in front of St Peter's. It rather needs a long-term process of consciousness building and education.

As witnesses and "messengers" of the inspiring Second Vatican Council it is our task to keep the tradition of plurality and openness within the Roman Catholic Church alive. With the election of Pope Francis in 2013 hope has grown again that our Church does have the ability to return to the Council's course of reform. But it takes

⁶⁷ Eg. of the *We are Church* referendum in 1995, www.we-are-church.org/413/index.php/aboutus/history

patience to overcome all the obstacles and the resistance of the hierarchy. So our focus should be to encourage the people in the pews to follow their own conscience to live a Christian life – and to make the voices of the people of God heard in Rome before and during the next conclave.

Already in 1998 and 2003 on the occasion of the pontificate anniversaries of John Paul II, more than 140 Catholic groups from all continents had sent a statement about the style of leadership in the Roman Catholic Church to Cardinals around the world⁶⁸ that, until now, is only partly realized by Pope Francis. Pope Francis was successful in opening again the windows and doors of the Church in many aspects in line with the Second Vatican Council. Freedom of speech without fear has developed. Francis – as Moses who showed the path to the Promised Land – started a process of fundamental reforms that hopefully can't be stopped anymore. But it will be the task of his successors to implement the necessary changes also in church doctrine.

This fundamental process of transformation must now be further strengthened theologically and made irreversible canonically against all opposition inside and outside the Vatican. Even stronger support is urgently needed from all reformist cardinals, bishops and theologians but also from people in the church throughout the world. It will be good to evaluate the concept of infallibility so as to enable the Church to make the Church more open to theological concerns of today.

The Roman Catholic Church still is the largest “global player” ever. It has a great responsibility far beyond its own religious community and its own religious terms. The global community is watching whether and how the largest individual church body intervenes in the survival questions of humanity, and which ethical standards it proclaims and practices. Church reform and the survival issues of humanity are closely intertwined.

The crucial question for the future of all religions is what they can do to help solve the immense global, social and economic problems, and, above all, whether they find among themselves a peaceful coexistence. It is to be hoped that the Roman Catholic Church will now be able to take up the course of reform set out by the Second Vatican Council and initiate the processes necessary for the Roman Catholic Church to take on a new and more positive role in the rapidly changing global human community.

⁶⁸ www.we-are-church.org/413/index.php/activities/conclave-2013/72-presentation-7-march-2013