



**The Synodal Way In
Germany:
“This is important for all
of us!”**

Guiding brochure of
We Are Church Germany

January 2020

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“New style of leadership” - Cartoon: Gerhard Mester

1. Synodal Way - what has this got to do with us?

Have you heard of the Synodal Way? What is it about? Who can and may even have a say? But above all: Who decides there? About whom, about what? With what effect?

And will this elaborate process solve the problems and tensions in our Church - at least to some extent? What can the Synodal Way do in Germany for our dioceses, for my parish, but also mean for the world church?

This brochure deals with these and many other questions:

- provides basic information about the Synodal Way, which is far too little known to the congregations and to the church base,
- encourages requests and opportunities to participate in the Synodal Way and
- campaigns for synodality at all levels, like Pope Francis did in his letter to the German Church.

The Synodal Way is, and this is quite intentional, not a synod in canon law terms. It means new territory and is a risk for everyone. But we see no alternative if the profound credibility crisis in our church is to be overcome. Also abroad there is great interest in the Synodal Way. So it's not a German special way, but maybe the last chance for reform and credibility of the universal church.

But it will not be enough for the two-year period Synodal Way only to have church leaders addressing the pressing reform questions employ. Synodality must be introduced at all levels, also in the diocesan bodies and the parishes.

This brochure wants to give you a variety of suggestions. Despite all scepticism, we bravely set off on the Way!

We Are Church Germany Bundesteam

2. Synodal Way - at a glance

"After the publication of the MHG study" Sexual abuse of minors by Catholic Priests, deacons and male religious in the regions of the German Bishops' Conference "and the related shocks it became clear:

The Church in Germany needs a way of conversion and renewal.

Because of this the German bishops in March 2019 decided on a Synodal Way, which serves the joint search for answers for the current situation and seeks steps to strengthen Christian witness. The Synodal Way is organised by the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK)."

Statutes

"The statute of the Synodal Way regulates the interaction of the organs of the Synodal Way. It comes into force after acceptance by the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics at the end of November 2019."

Synodal Assembly

"The Synodal Assembly is the highest organ of the Synodal Way and makes the decisions. To it belong the members of the German Bishops' Conference, 69 representatives of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) as well as other representatives of spiritual services and ecclesiastical offices, young people and individuals. All in all the Synodal Assembly comprises 230 people. "

Synodal Presidium

"The Synodal Presidium organises the Synodal Assemblies both before and after. To it belong the chairman and the deputy chairman of the German Bishops' Conference as well as the President and one Vice-President of the Central Committee of German Catholics."

Synodal Forums

The thematic work of the Synodal Way is carried out by members of the Synodal Assembly and other experts in a total of four Synodal Forums:

- "Power and sharing of powers in the church -
Joint participation and ownership in Mission"
- "Living in successful relationships -
Love living in sexuality and partnership "
- "Priestly existence today"
- "Women in the Services and Offices of the Church"

"The Synodal Path, which is set to run for two years, begins on the first Sunday of Advent (1 December) 2019. During this period, the Synodal Assembly will be invited to four large plenary sessions in St. Bartholomew's Cathedral and the Dominican Monastery in Frankfurt am Main. "

"The Synodal Way is accompanied by events at the diocesan level, that bring the perspective of evangelization to bear and to clarify the localisation of the Synodal Way. These offer the faithful a possibility to help shape the Synodal Way. "

Source: www.synodalerweg.de (January 16, 2020)



"Let us pray that the Lord in his boundless mercy may heal the wounds of our holy mother church...." [Pope Francis is pointing to the garage]

Cartoon: Gerhard Mester

3. The four preparatory Forums

Even before the official opening of the Synodal Way on December 1, 2019 there were four preparatory forums, each led jointly by a bishop and another person. These four preparatory forums have produced extensive and well worth reading working papers for the expanded joint conference on 13-14. September 2019 in Fulda.

Forum “Power, Participation, Power sharing”

Joint participation and ownership in Mission

Head: Bishop Dr. Karl-Heinz Wiesenmann (Speyer)
and Dr. Claudia Lücking-Michel (ZdK Vice President)

Working paper (PDF 19 pages)

[www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/bildmaterial/themen/Synodaler Weg/Arbeitspapier-Stand-10.-Sept.-2019 Forum-Macht.pdf](http://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/bildmaterial/themen/Synodaler_Weg/Arbeitspapier-Stand-10.-Sept.-2019_Forum-Macht.pdf)

Forum “Sexual Morality”

Head: Bishop Dr. Georg Bätzing (Limburg)
and Birgit Mock (Vice President of the KDDB)

Working paper (PDF 22 pages)

[www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/bildmaterial/themen/Synodaler Weg/Arbeitspapier-Stand-10.-Sept.-2019 Forum-Sexualmoral.pdf](http://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/bildmaterial/themen/Synodaler_Weg/Arbeitspapier-Stand-10.-Sept.-2019_Forum-Sexualmoral.pdf)

Forum “Priestly Life”

Head: Bishop Dr. Felix Genn (Munster)
and Stephan Buttgereit (Managing Director of the Catholic Association for Social Services in Germany, SKM)

Working paper (PDF 5 pages) Collection of topics and questions

[www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/bildmaterial/themen/Synodaler Weg/Arbeitspapier-Stand-10.-Sept.-2019 Forum-Priesterl.-Lebensform.pdf](http://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/bildmaterial/themen/Synodaler_Weg/Arbeitspapier-Stand-10.-Sept.-2019_Forum-Priesterl.-Lebensform.pdf)

Forum “Women in the Services and Offices of the Church”

Head: Bishop Dr. Franz-Josef Bode (Osnabruck) and Prof. Dr. Dorothea Sattler (University of Münster)

Working paper (PDF 18 pages)

[www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/bildmaterial/themen/Synodaler Weg/Arbeitspapier-Stand-10.-Sept.-2019 Forum-Frauen.pdf](http://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/bildmaterial/themen/Synodaler_Weg/Arbeitspapier-Stand-10.-Sept.-2019_Forum-Frauen.pdf)

Statements of the church-people movement on each of the working papers of the four Preparation forums can be found on the website:

www.wir-sind-kirche.de/synodalerweg

4. Questionnaire: "Your voice on the Synodal Way"

Until January 23, 2020, these questions can be answered on the website www.synodalerweg.de/ihre-stimme-zum-synodalen-weg and should flow in to the work of the Synodal Way. But even beyond this date, it may be worthwhile to look at these specific questions.

4.1. Power and Power Sharing in the church - joint participation and ownership in Mission

The question of power in the church must always be measured against the word of Jesus: "It shouldn't be like this for you, but for whoever wants to be great, should be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you should be your slave." (Mt 20: 26–27) Every abuse of power in the church darkens the gospel and hurts people.

Question 1: Which concrete experiences of power and powerlessness have you found in the church and what do you think needs to be changed in the church so that the handling of power is better controlled and abuse of power can be prevented?

Question 2: How can more people be active in church tasks and be involved in decision making in the church?

Question 3: How can we in the sense of Pope Francis as church in Germany be more convincing as a serving church?

4.2. Living in Successful Relationships – Love Living in Sexuality and Partnership

The sexual morality of the church must be measured by the love of God that Jesus Christ has shown us. For many people, devotion and loyalty are also very high values for their lives today. Nevertheless, the church's sexual teaching is in great crisis. Many of their instructions have lost out on massive acceptance. They don't seem to be useful to many people today and do not give them orientation.

Question 1: What experiences have you had in this regard, what knowledge or convictions have you made personally?

Question 2: How do you think the Church can make the gospel declaration of God's love more convincingly in our time?

Question 3: What is important to you in the sexual teaching of the Church and what urgently needs to be changed?

4.3. Priestly existence today

As a shepherd and pastor, the priest is also in the secular world of today very much appreciated. At the same time, his identity and credibility - not least because of the background of the cases of abuse that have come to light - is questioned many times. This applies in particular to his life of celibacy, which is based on the celibacy of Jesus, its charisma is largely no longer unfolding. The extensive lack of priests and the changed framework conditions of our time urgently raise the question for a renewed, future-oriented profile of the spiritual offices in interaction with the diverse pastoral ministries and offices and the different charisms of the faithful.

Question 1: What do you think marks an authentic priest and what characteristics and skills should he have today?

Question 2: How can an authentic priest live in the middle of today's world as a disciple of Jesus, what ways of life do you think is appropriate for a priest today?

Question 3: What do we have to do or change in the church so that there are more vocations and the priest's role is more attractive to young people?

4.4. Women in ministry and office in the Church

Women carry and shape an extremely large part of life in our Church. They are involved in a variety of services and ministries in the Church. Nevertheless, they are still underrepresented in management positions today. Quite a few suffer from the fact that women are excluded from many services and offices in the church, especially ordination

Question 1: How do you see the role of women in the church?

Question 2: What would have to change for more women (be allowed) to take up managerial positions in the church?

Question 3: How should the coexistence of women and men in the church be designed so that in our time we can credibly proclaim the gospel?

Source: www.synodalerweg.de/ihre-stimme-zum-synodalen-weg
(January 16, 2020)

5. Timeline of the Synodal Way

End of September 2018

MHG study commissioned by the Bishops' Conference is published

Conclusion: Sexualized violence by clergy is systemically favoured

11th-14th March 2019

General assembly of the German bishops in Lingen

German bishops invite ZdK to the synodal path

from March 2019

Preparatory forums: (1) Power, participation and power sharing; (2) Sexual morality; (3) Priestly life forms

May 2019

ZdK agrees to take part in preparation of a Synodal Way

June 29, 2019

Letter from Pope Francis addresses the Synodal Way

June July 2019

Decision for 4th forum: women access to offices and services

September / November 2019

Bishops and ZdK members decide on procedures of the Synodal Way

First Advent / December 1, 2019

The Synodal Way begins / website "synodalerweg.de" goes online

January 30 to February 1, 2020

First Synodal Assembly in Frankfurt

March 2nd to 5th, 2020

Spring general assembly of the German Bishops (DBK) in Mainz

May 15-16, 2020

General assembly of the ZdK Munich

3 to 5 September 2020

Second Synodal Assembly in Frankfurt

February 4 to 6, 2021

Third Synodal Assembly in Frankfurt

September 30 to October 2, 2021

Fourth Synodal Assembly in Frankfurt

Source including: www.bdkj.de/themen/synodaler-weg (January 16, 2020)

On the Synodal Way you must bravely persevere on this route and stay true to it and you can not again and again divert to parking and rest areas to discuss again and again that which has long been known. Otherwise even the most willing fellow travellers will say goodbye, and the shepherds will arrive without their flock.
Klaus Huber

6. Synod or Synodal Way?

The media spoke of a "turning point" for the Roman Catholic Church and of a historical speech when Pope Francis in October 2015 sought a "beneficial decentralization" and more synodality. At the ceremony on 17 October 2015 on the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops Pope Francis spoke out for an upgrade of the synodal structures on all levels, for strengthening the episcopal conferences and even for rethinking the Pope's primacy. The third millennium required a synodal Church, which must urgently be deepened. The Second Vatican Council placed the common priesthood of all the baptized ahead of the special Priesthood. The church leadership only acts legitimately if it includes all the people of God in their decisions.

The Würzburg Synod (1971-1975) had implemented this principle in many ways. Through cooperation between church leadership and church people it produced good fruits, but it was mostly ignored by the Vatican at that time. Only by adopting that common way of working as then in Würzburg would give theological justification for the "people of God on the move." And only with broad participation can the conversion (conversion pastoral) desired by Pope Francis succeed.

If it is not currently possible under the church law of 1983 to carry out a synod based on this model, then the bishops should at least already be practicing concrete forms of synodality, in line with the aims of the Council and the Pope, as well as in line with the intent of "Together Being Church" from 1 August 2015, to which the German bishops have committed themselves. So that synodality can be effectively practised at all levels a correction of Canon Law is required, for which the bishops must work in Rome. The issue of synodality must remain at the very top of the agenda in the Vatican.

Basic information on the topic "Synodal Church" can be found on the website www.wir-sind-kirche.de/?id=691 as well as in the booklet "Synode" of the Yellow Series of KirchenVolksBewegung with contributions by Prof. Hanspeter Heinz and Prof. Michael Böhnke (see page 39).

7. Pope Francis: Synodality in a double perspective

Extract from the letter of Pope Francis of 29 June 2019 to the pilgrim People of God in Germany (emphasis by We are Church):

"On the occasion of the last assembly of Italian bishops I took the opportunity to make this point about a central part of the life of the Church, to recall again the double perspective that she follows: **"Synodality from the bottom up**, that means the duty and caring for the existence and the proper functioning of the dioceses, councils, parishes, for the participation of the laity... (see Cann. 469–494 CIC), starting with the diocese. So it is not possible to hold a large synod without taking the base into consideration.... Only then comes the **synodality from top downwards**, which allows the collegial dimension in a specific and special way of episcopal service and of being a church. Only in this way only way will we get to mature decisions on issues that are essential to the faith and life of the Church. This will be possible under the condition that we are on our way, armed with patience and humble and healthy belief that we will never succeed to be able to solve all questions and problems at the same time."

See Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogm. Const. about the church Lumen Gentium, 23; Council decree on the Service of the Bishops Christ Dominus, 3. With a quote from the International Theological Commission whose most recent document, Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church, I told the Italian bishops: "Collegiality is therefore the specific form in which the church's synodality is expressed; it is realized through the service of the bishops at the level of the communio among the sub-churches in a region and through the communio among all sub-churches in the World Church. Every authentic expression of synodality essentially requires the collegial Service of the Bishops", cf. Speech to the Italian Bishops' Conference (20 May 2019).

Source: Letter from Pope Francis to the pilgrim people of God in Germany:
www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/presse_2019/2019-108a-BriefPapst-Franziskus-an-das-pilgernde-Volk-Gottes-in-Deutschland-29.06.2019.pdf

8. The long way to the Synodal Way

This article by Christian Weisner of We Are Church Germany gives an overview of the genesis of the Synodal Way and the different developments in advance of the Synodal Way.

The German Bishops have announced a "binding synodal path" which will address (1) "Power, participation and power sharing", (2) "Sexual morality" and (3) "Priestly life form". Pressure from Maria 2.0 and WAC Germany made the bishops add a 4th point: (4) "Women in the offices and ministries of the Church"

Synodal route in Germany: Third attempt

In response to the shocking results of the so-called abuse study published at the end of September 2018 ("MHG study"), the German bishops announced at their spring meeting in March 2018 a "binding synodal way" (see April issue CHURCH IN). Christian Weisner analyzes the opportunities and possibilities.

One must know the prehistory: After the Second Vatican Council there was in the late 1970s, the "Würzburg Synod" for the former West Germany and the "Pastoral Synod of the Catholic Church in the GDR", both of which presented church life in Germany in a very positive way. Thus, the statute of the Würzburg synod provided for equal rights between the bishops and the "laity", and even the bishops at that time advocated the introduction of the women's diaconate. However, these decisions were not even accepted by Rome, let alone answered.

However, according to the revised version of the Church Law of 1983, a statute such as the Würzburg Synod is no longer possible. Topics that contradict the teaching of the church must not be presented. Rome refuses to be bothered with such discussions and decisions. All this may have played a role when the German bishops at their spring meeting in March 2019 in Lingen in northern Germany offered the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) a "binding synodal approach". It sounds a bit like a synod, but it is not subject to the current church law restrictions.

"The question following the crisis"

After the shocking results of the MHG study commissioned by the German Bishops' Conference ("Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests, Deacons and Male Religious Members in the DBK") and the continuing high numbers of people leaving the church, something had to happen. Outside the meeting place of the

bishops in Lingen several hundred faithful had illuminated the bishops with candles. The episcopal study day was under the theme: "The question of the crisis - overarching questions facing us now". However, the agreement on a "synodical path" only succeeded in the last half hour of the conference. And even then there were four bishops who did not support it.

In Lingen Marx declared that they had decided "to take a binding synodal path as a church in Germany, which enables a structured debate and takes place in an agreed period, together with the Central Committee of German Catholics. We will create formats for open debate and engage in procedures that will enable the responsible participation of women and men from our dioceses. We want to be a listening church. We need the advice of people outside the church. "

Cardinal Marx: "Dodging the issues is no longer possible"

The research team of the MHG study very clearly named concrete "risk factors" of sexual violence in the church. Based on this, the future "synodal way" should take place in four forums. The bishops had already agreed on three forums in Lingen: "Power, participation and separation of powers", "Sexual morality" and "Priestly life form". However, the question of women's participation in church ministries was not to be an issue in its own right. But the more than 1,000 actions of "Maria 2.0" in Germany and the base of the Central Committee protested loudly. The Church Movement We Are Church sent an express letter to the bishops. Only under this pressure did the "Permanent Council" of bishops accept the fourth forum, "Women in the offices and ministries of the Church". Otherwise, the "synodal way" would probably have ended even before it had started.

"We always wanted to avoid topics such as sexual morality, selection of the clergy, celibacy and the practice and abuse of power, even in the dialogue and discussion process of the German bishops from 2011 to 2015, but this did not work", said Cardinal Marx, chairman of the Bishops' Conference. It was "an important step to consider a development of the teaching of the church to be possible". It is about making a certain pressure and will to change visible, "otherwise nothing will ever change".

That touches old wounds. Even before 2010, the "Joint Conference" of DBK and ZdK had planned a "future forum" for the Catholic Church in Germany, but some bishops had vetoed it. Only the detection of the abuse scandal in the Berlin Canisius Kolleg in early 2010 led to the readiness of the bishops to engage in a "dialogue process", but they had this process from the beginning fully under their control. The remarkable opening speech of then DBK chairman Robert Zollitsch showed the willingness to look beyond the abuse crisis to take a closer look at

the much deeper church crisis. But this "dialogue process" was very quickly downgraded to a non-binding "discussion process" and eventually ended in failure. The occasion, the exposure of sexual violence that had been hushed up for years, was quickly lost sight of. Now this is the third attempt, and this third attempt must succeed!

Cardinal Woelki: "Do not accept changes in teaching"

But before the cautious "path to the synodal path" could begin, the fronts were already building up. The Cologne Cardinal Rainer Woelki, opponent of Marx, does not oppose the "synodal way" in principle, but the church can not "accept changes in its teaching ... if they contradict the spirit of the Gospel." The German retired cardinals Walter Brandmüller and Paul Cordes cling to a transfiguring image of the celibate priest. Brandmüller diagnosed in this context "a failure of the Council on a broad front". By contrast, the church historian Hubert Wolf in his latest book "Celibacy. 16 theses" that celibacy has been regarded as irrefutable only for 100 years.

Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, former Prefect of the Vatican Congregation of the Faith and now without a fixed task, accuses the Catholic Church under Pope Francis of working on its own dissolution in his latest book, with the harmless-sounding title "Roman Encounters". At the same time, Cardinal Müller forgets that in his five-year tenure as a prefect of faith, his inaction against sexual violence and his denial of systemic causes have contributed significantly to the escalation of the institutional crisis of the Church. Bishop Rudolf Voderholzer, his successor in Regensburg, considers it a waste of time and energy to discuss topics such as "power" and "participation". Augsburg's Bishop Konrad Zdarsa referred in his last interview before his retirement, to the "synodal way", with which he did not agree, as misleading labels - which in the worst case, he might possibly be right in the end.

Pope Francis' letter "To the pilgrim people of God"

The unexpected letter from Pope Francis "To the pilgrim People of God in Germany", which triggered a very different echo, landed unexpectedly in this church-political concoction. The Regensburg Vicar General wrote immediately: "The synodal process can not take place as planned. Neither in content nor in form." But the 19-page Pope's letter does not say that. Although the words "abuse", "celibacy" and "sexual morality" are not mentioned, the letter does not limit topics. Rather, Francis speaks of a "turning point in history", "which raises new and old questions in the face of which a dispute is justified and necessary". He encourages an "outspoken response to the present situation" and praises the

fact that the Church in Germany "has given to the universal Church great sacred men and women, great theologians and religious shepherds and lay people". Francis speaks of a "synodality from the bottom up"; only then come the "synodality from top to bottom".

The scandal of clerical violence against children, adolescents, women and even women religious exists worldwide. Because the entire Roman Catholic world church is in an existential crisis, which is not triggered by the abuse scandal, but finds its focus in it. Many countries have already experienced their great awakening, other countries will follow. If it were possible not only to uncover the basic structures of abuse, but also to tackle them, then the church in Germany could even take on a pioneering role for the universal Church. The self-image of the church is in question. In order to address the basic question of what relevance Christianity (still) has, a fundamental change in doctrine and structure, in theology and pastoral care is urgently needed. By the way, one year ago, the Pontifical Latin American Commission recommended to the Pope to call a Women's Synod after the Amazon Synod.

The exchanges at the Pan-Amazonia Synod "New Paths for the Church and a Holistic Ecology" could be fruitful in the Vatican this October. The external conditions are very different, but in both cases, it is about whether local churches can decide for themselves what concerns them directly or not. So this addresses the basic question between decentralization and Roman centralization.

Fundamental change needed

The "binding synodal way" is probably the only and perhaps last chance to overcome the current existential church crisis in Germany. For this, however, it will be necessary for the bishops to engage in a transparent dialogue without preconditions and on equal terms with the Central Committee, other members of the church folk, theologians and the reform groups. However, it is important to warn against placing too many hopes on this "synodical way" unless it is clear who will be involved in the manner in which the decisions will be taken and what their binding nature will be. According to current church law, no bishop is bound to the results of such a process.

But time is short. The window of time in which the church can regain its credibility is closing. If, according to the KirchenVolksBegehren 1995 in Austria, the reform points of We Are Church were also taken seriously and addressed by the church leadership, then many victims would have been spared great harm and the church would have avoided suffering immense damage, at least during the past 24 years.



“First the good news: The German Catholic Bishops have unanimously decided, to bring about profound reforms in our church...!” [The ball attached to his ankle reads” Vatican: “Never!”]

Cartoon: Gerhard Mester

9. The Pan-Amazon Synod 2019 in Rome

From 6 – 27 October 2019, the Pan-Amazon Synod “New Ways for the Church and a holistic ecology” took place in the Vatican. The external frameworks are very different, but in both cases it is about whether local churches can decide for themselves what directly affects them or not. So the basic question is between decentralization and Roman centralization.

We Are Church Germany sees the Pan-Amazon Synod ended on 27 October 2020 in Rome "New ways for the church and a holistic ecology" as an important step of the Roman Catholic Church, a contribution to tackle global human problems, even if especially in the women's question the synod fell below justified expectations. Ultimately, it will depend on which impulses Pope Francis will include in his post-synodal letter.

Departure from a Eurocentric Roman church

This synod attracted worldwide attention to the ecological and social problems of the Amazon region, a region of great importance for the global climate and whose inhabitants are very threatened. For the first time, the indigenous peoples were not considered pastoral objects of a colonizing mission, but heard and recognized as subjects who live in an ecological tradition and spirituality, which will enrich the global Catholic Church.

The synod marks the departure from a Eurocentric Roman Church towards a church that defines itself “from the edges”.

The spirituality of the indigenous peoples experienced and practiced this.

The synod was influenced by liberation theology’s pastoral mood brought to the Vatican and it was made very clear that fundamental changed structures in the church and in pastoral care needed that are adapted to the respective culture. As with the previous synods in the pontificate of Pope Francis also this synod has initiated a renewal processes started that can no longer stopped, even if some anti-reformers repeatedly try to do so.

Key messages of the final document:

Ecology: "All synod participants were aware of the dramatic destruction taking place in the Amazon. It means the disappearance of the area and its inhabitants, especially the indigenous peoples. The Amazon rainforest, a 'biological heart' for the earth, is always endangered."

New lifestyle: "We hear the cry of the earth, the cry of the poor and the peoples of the Amazon. It calls us to turn around, to a simple and sober life, nourished by a mystical Spirituality in the style of St. Francis of Assisi."

Ecclesiastical offices: "It is urgent for the church in the Amazon, that men and women have equal access to ministerial offices... "

Gender equality continues

It is a step forward that at this synod there was open discussion about the diaconate for women and the Pope was asked to share the experiences from the Amazon again with to a renewed study commission on women's diaconate. The previous study commission set up by the Pope had not come to a clear judgment about the diaconate in ancient Church and what that means for the future.

An implementation of the proposal to the Pope, in the Amazon region to ordain married men ("viri probati"), as priests would allow the widely dispersed small communities to celebrate the Eucharist more often. In this way, the Catholic Church strengthens its presence towards the evangelical Pentecostal churches that are very popular. By restricting ordination to men and not to "personae probatae" (experienced people or married people) means however that the subordination of women persist, which is also the cause of many violent crimes, especially in Latin America.

With the request of the synod to the Pope, to create a new office of church leader for women, the "Synod Fathers" stick to the convention to keep ministries gender specific. As with the youth synod in 2018 - and now also demanded by religious

women and bishops - a right to vote for female synod participants was also regrettably not granted this time.

Hope also for the Synodal Way in Germany

The external framework is very different, but as with the Pan-Amazon Synod also the Synodal Way in Germany the central question is whether according to the Catholic subsidiarity principle local churches can take responsibility for themselves for what directly affects them and what corresponds to their respective culture. The Synodal Way initiated by the German bishops together with the Central Committee of German Catholics The Central Committee of German Catholics is therefore not a special German route, on the contrary, if it succeeds and brings results, it could be quite the opposite and be very helpful for the global church. And also for Germany what Cardinal Cláudio Hummes OFM, the general relator of the Pan-Amazon Synod in Rome, said should apply in advance: "We will not go up to the synod to repeat what has already been said, never mind how important, beautiful and theologically deep it may be."

The Viennese pastoral theologian Paul-M. Zulehner has started an online petition which calls on the German-speaking episcopal conferences to make bold suggestions to the Pope to alleviate the lack of priests and a commitment to a sustainable lifestyle:

www.amazonien-auch-bei-uns.com



Cartoon: Gerhard Mester

10. Basic thoughts on the Synodal Way and the four themes

We Are Church Germany published and sent these basic ideas to the participants of the Synodal Way of the Church in Germany on 6 November 2019.

1. Guidelines to be followed:

Fidelity to the Gospel

It is not acceptable to say: "Everything that is in the church today, Jesus wanted it so." Or even worse: "The tradition of the church has the same rank as the gospel." No! "Tradition is to guard the fire and not preserve the ashes", says the Council Pope John XXIII. The Church must always be reminded of the liberating message of the Kingdom of God and ask how the first Christians lived this message and how the church can today bring this message into the here and now and live it in an exemplary manner. In doing so, it must take into account the proven findings of modern exegesis. New questions also require new answers, which must be guided by the basic idea of Jesus' message.

No one can claim to know that the current shape of the Church and its concrete behaviour is what Jesus wanted. Also the 2nd Vatican Council in the Constitution on Divine Revelation, made it clear that the tradition of the Church is not equal in rank to the Gospel.

Furthermore, since the 1960s, exegesis, historical and systematic-theological studies have shown discrepancies between the message of Jesus and the current religious consciousness. The key guideline for church renewal must be Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God. All institutional regulations, however important they may be, are subordinate to his message.

There should be an independent panel of scientifically recognized Catholic and Protestant New Testament members, which would critically accompany the "Synodal Way" in all its forums. Otherwise the work is in danger to repeat many accustomed, but exegetically unacceptable catholic prejudices and routines.

Basic willingness to renew

According to all experience, the majority of the current ecclesiastical teaching and management bodies are neither able nor willing to be self-critical about the classical standards of the Catholic rules of competence and truth to reflect in the light of Scripture, history and current contexts.

The consequence of this inability is a formal repetition of old rules of activity, apparently dogmatic sentences and high ranking teaching decisions. In addition,

there is an authoritarian mentality which does not take seriously the concerned community of faith.

In view of the current crisis, there must no longer be any taboos of thought. The Church is constituted by sacrament *and* word. The essential difference between clergy and "laity" (cf. LG 10), is to be regarded as contrary to Scripture and discarded. Jesus founded neither a priesthood nor a new cult; the word "hierarchy" (holy dominion) is not found in the bible.

Transparent and unconditional participation

The Synodal Way is not an event for bishops alone, the "laity". are not participants by the bishop's grace. No! According to ancient conviction all must decide, what concerns all. The Council speaks in chapter 2 of Lumen Gentium of the "People of God on the move". The "sensus fidelium" - the "sense of faith of the believers" must be restored to the lead of all the faithful, the "loyal", the homeless and even those "resigned" ones, who are not all unbelievers because of that.

Under the guidance of the holy spirit's power, the people of God will find the right way and get to the Finish line. The frequent abuse of power is to be halted together with the veto of any criticism of church institutions and ecclesiastical officials.

2. Thematic areas:

2.1 Power and sharing of power - Joint participation/ownership in Mission

Infallibility

The doctrine of ordinary and extraordinary infallibility has for a long time been seen as a result of an untenable absolutist church system for biblical, historical and dogmatic reasons and is untenable. All the questions at hand will not find a satisfactory solution, as long as the ideology of "infallibility" is considered the highest maxim. It is not for humans to take the place of God and thus to justify decisions which are in contradiction with the liberating message of Jesus towards the dawning of the kingdom of God.

Truth

Truth is only with God, who is an infinite mystery. We humans can only ever approach this divine truth with our limited means. We are not God-owners, but

God-seekers. So there are no supertemporal truths independent of the experiences that people have made in their history, not objective truths; because we are part of the world we live in, we are not separate from it. Moreover, biblical faith does not draw its truth primarily from definitions, but from stories, parables and a symbolic language. That is why the recourse to former ecclesiastical decisions does not bring us closer to the truth. Dogmas, which from the beginning have been transformed into legal frames are made by humans, from God comes love and mercy.

Clericalism

Over the centuries, the clergy have taken all the power in the Church to themselves.

"Clerics", i.e. those chosen by God, in the New Testament are all those who believe in Jesus, the Christ; we are all religious, for our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit; all are priests, for we are a holy people, a royal Priesthood. A two-class church is not biblical. Those who has power, must submit to the control of those for whom they are appointed. It is the duty of the people of God as a whole to spread the good news to the world. Leadership is service, not domination. "One is your master, you are all brothers and sisters." According to the principles of the early church, the one, who presides over all, should be elected by all.

2.2 Priestly existence today

After the Council it was a common saying: "Pastors must come down off their pedestals." For as church leaders they are not above the community, but in the middle of the community, their task is to provide services to the people. The "common priesthood" of all in Lumen Gentium is placed ahead of the particular priesthood; therefore it must be interpreted from there. To live as priests means: to bring the Good News to the world and to share joy and suffering with people. This task comes to all Christians. A consecration that elevates people above others and endows them with sacred powers, is not in the spirit of Jesus, who opposed the claims of the priests of his time. It is therefore advisable, to bring the task of church leadership back into focus. This also means that the unbiblical taboo on the ordination of women is no longer applicable.

That is why a "priestly way of life", which gives power over believers through the unique proposition of celibacy, is outdated; for there were married priests, bishops and popes in the church for a long time. A gift of God's grace cannot be forced by law. The coupling of priestly ministry to celibacy was deemed by the Council as not necessary.

Celebration of the Eucharist

Thus it is obvious that the congregations are the subject of pastoral care, not the object; that they look around in their world and seek to help shape it from their sense of Christian responsibility; that they assign men and women to lead the congregation, to proclaim the Good News and to preside at the Eucharist. It makes sense to acknowledge a person's calling to church leadership in consultation with the regional church leadership. There is also nothing to be said against a bishop installing such community leaders for this specific office, i.e. "ordaining them". The community should have a say in finding candidates. In fact, this way is a reality in many places in the world already. We interpret this development as the work of the Holy Spirit, which has never been dependent on the will of the church leaders.

2.3 Women in Church Services and Offices

That women should not be able to be ordained, we consider as an ideology that persists because it is based on the established rules of truth of the Catholic Church (cf. problem of infallibility) and is therefore regarded as a dogmatic unchangeable truth. But once this questionable construction is broken, the tremendous weight of more than 50 years of women's ordination's theological (Catholic and Protestant) comes into force. However, we do not need an extension of the presently practised ordination to women. That's because we are not dealing with ordained ministries, but with leadership services. Women can run entire states, why should they be denied the leadership of Christian communities!?

... In his letters, especially in his teaching on charisms, Paul avoids every sacral connotation (cf. 1 Cor 12f). In particular it is not in the spirit of Jesus, to deny women participation in all services of the church.

Well-known, widely discussed and widely received is the list of women who, in New Testament times, most likely to have held leadership positions.

If the bishops have decided that they are the successors of the apostles, it is worth asking whether women are not successors of Mary of Magdala, the "Apostle of the Apostles", and thus can claim not only the same dignity, but also the same rights as men.

2.4 Sexual morals - Living love in sexuality and partnership

The Roman Catholic Church needs a new, fearless, loving and people friendly view of sexuality as a life-giving force of human created and affirmed by God. Reparation is required for deep-seated hostility to the body and to women in the Christian tradition.

Christian sexual ethics is based on the image of God in the human being; which implies mutual respect and appreciation for the dignity of each and everyone. New scientific evidence concerning human sexuality including homosexuality must be included in a Christian sexual ethic. An approach based on a static natural law, is unreasonable. The exciting developmental dynamics of young people must be observed.

A human-oriented ethic is needed to address the changing situation of women, men and families due to social, political, technical and global developments. The church has the task to also accompany unsuccessful relationships with pastoral care. Stumbling and failure can be part of the relationship processes. Special attention must be expected for children affected by separation and divorce.

Values and valuations

There is a ladder of tenderness and a wide range of sexual relationships of different intensity and forms of expression. The (conscious) development young people must be accompanied sensitively. A flat rate condemnation of existing illegitimate and premarital sexual relationships does not do justice to the people concerning their behaviour. Spouses realize responsibility and mutual love and loyalty in a special way. Family planning lies in the conscience of the married couple.

Homosexuality, like heterosexuality, is naturally found in humans. Prejudices and discrimination against gays, lesbians, bisexuals and intersexuals do not correspond to the Christian commandment of love. People who live their sexual identity openly should neither be excluded nor condemned in the Roman Catholic Church. The church must not be stingy with its blessings.

3. A church that does not serve serves nothing

For decades We Are Church Germany and other reform oriented Church groups have urged the conciliar program of aggiornamento to be adopted. They do not simply follow a blind zeitgeist, but work on a gospel- and at the same time

contemporary and ecumenical Christ- and Church-being that takes the needs of the world seriously. The church leadership must at last acknowledge the deep Christian seriousness of these people. If the Synodal Way fails, the current crisis of credibility will increase and will primarily affect the church leadership. In this case many reform groups will also no longer be willing to engage in consensual cooperation. We seriously warn against this Catastrophe of creeping schism. It is a matter for the church leadership, to avert this in cooperation with the reform movements.

The call for a poor and serving church is directed at us today. Modesty looks good on us. It's the only way we can regain the lost credibility: to stand in the middle of the world for humanity in the spirit of Jesus.



“Do not be afraid of dialogue, you bishops”

Cartoon: Annelie Huerter

**11. Twenty reform groups at the beginning of the Synodal Way:
"Synodal Way needs fundamental change and perspectives"**

With this statement of 22 November 2019 twenty church reform groups have once again publicly expressed their expectations shortly before the official start on 1 December 2019.

Catholic reform groups renewed their demands shortly before the official start on the first Sunday in Advent, December 1, 2019, that the Synodal Way is to be designed in a participatory, open-ended and transparent manner and must lead to concrete and binding decisions.

According to the MHG study, which the German bishops called a caesura **a fundamental change is needed at all levels**. In doing so, there must be no taboos, to think the unusual and decide what is necessary. The **common responsibility of all believers** for the direction of our church at this time must be in the foreground. The Synodal Way should be a process for the whole church, right into the parishes and also seek to talk to those who stand far away. That the current church law, e.g. with a reservation of the bishops' decision sets a narrow legal framework, must not prevent **the overdue debates now in all freedom** in a synodal culture of debate; this is in the awareness that canon law is made by people and therefore can be changed.

But the Synodal Way **also needs new perspectives** to show: Another church is possible. It is about the encouragement that the baptized and confirmed Christians can live their Christian lives in a reformed church. The **letter from Pope Francis** to the pilgrim people of God in Germany of 29 June 2019 speaks of a turning point in time, "which raises new and old questions in the light of which a dispute is justified and is necessary". This letter neither limits nor excludes topics.

Beyond the four planned forums, the **decisive key points of the current crisis of Church and faith** (ecclesial hierarchy, the question of God; Christology, ...) should be addressed. The new "evangelisation" expected by Pope Francis from the Synodal Way requires translating the message of Jesus into the patterns of language and thought of today's world so that people can understand and embrace it.

There must also be the conversion of those themes so existentially treated by Francis such as flight and migration, economic form and climate change. Thus the Synodal Way is **not a solo effort by the Church in Germany**, but can at best - just like the PanAmazonian Synod - be a guiding light for the universal church. Therefore it is important that the essential steps and working methods of this process are also communicated internationally.

It is important to remember: The starting point for the Synodal Way is the necessary examination of the systemic risks identified by the MHG study and the failure to protect children and youths in the church. Therefore also those directly involved must be included. **The themes of the four forums** of the Synodal Way also correspond exactly to the points of the ZdK paper "Dialog instead of refusing dialogue" (1994) and the petition by We Are Church in 1995 on the occasion of the abuse scandal of the Vienna Cardinal Groër.

Under the aspect of a Go-To-Church and the question what people need today and what is in accordance with the Gospel, it will be of great importance **for the work of the Synodal Way that the following points are considered central:**

- The **unity** of the Church will not be damaged by contemporary progress and theological doctrinal development, but above all by those who resist all change.
- The question of how **power** is handled in the church cannot be answered without a critical examination of clericalism nor without tackling the question of the role of women in the church.
- Insisting on **compulsory celibacy** must no longer lead to more and more congregations are denied the Eucharistic celebration.
- For the future of the Church, it will be necessary to allow access for **women** to all church offices, because the exclusion of ordination cannot be justified theologically.
- With regard to the topic of **sexuality** affecting all human beings the Synodal Way start from a positive, appreciative attitude to the different ways of life and a consensual sexuality.

The reform groups support the petition "#Amazonia also with us!" to the German-speaking church leaders and see the binding Synodal Way as a compelling opportunity to overcome the existential crisis of the Roman Catholic Church, which exists is not only in Germany.

To the participants of the Synodal Assembly the reform groups address once again this appeal: Be courageous, now, so that we as a faith community can continue to bear witness to Jesus in the future with credibility and joy! The people of God want to see reform acts at last, and to hear no more wait-and-see announcements.

Signatory reform groups:

- KirchenVolksBewegung We Are Church with the project groups Action" Lila Stola" and Women's Dignity
- Action "Maria 2.0"
- AGR Rottenburg-Stuttgart (Action group of 160 pastors and deacons in the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart)
- Freckenhorster District
- Community Initiative.org
- Initiative group of women affected by celibacy
- Institute for Theology and politics
- Lay responsibility Regensburg e.V.
- Reader's Initiative Public Forum e.V.
- Münchner Kreis - Initiative of pastoral workers in the archdiocese of Munich-Freising
- Münnerstädter Kreis
- Ökumenische Working Group Homosexuals and Church (HuK) e.V.
- Religious Women for Human Dignity
- Pfarrer-Initiative Germany
- Priests in dialogue
- Pro concilio, editorial imprimatur
- Association of catholic priests and their Wives

The "Eckiger Tisch" initiative for supports this call.

Web addresses of the signatory reform groups:

www.wir-sind-kirche.de/?id=128&id_entry=7985#REFORMGRUPPEN

12. Invited - To what?

Based on the experiences in his home town Herzogenaurach, Günther Doliwa, member of the We are Church federal team, describes his concrete expectations and experiences regarding participation in the Synodal Way.

This is the core question of the "Synodybus" (Christiane Florin). Cardinal Reinhard Marx as Chairman of the German Bishops' Conference and Prof. Thomas Sternberg, President of the Central Committee of German Catholics, literally at the last second issued a call to the "sisters and brothers": "We invite you to follow this synodal journey in freedom and diversity. In doing so, we rely on the commitment of all who are committed to a living faith in our church." Next: "We ask you to support the Synodal Way through your testimony and prayer. Join this path in your local communities and accompany the work of the Synodal Assembly and Synodal Forums." This invitation came without thinking about HOW "accompanying" is actually going to be done. Via Internet? In short, we are to go along, help shape, pray, take positions, question, discuss. And the voting is then left to the "responsible church leaders"? Voting, yes! Deciding, no?

In a recent article on the withdrawal of the teaching license of Prof. Hans Küng 40 years ago, Prof. Hermann Häring, in view of the existing infallibility claim: "Under these circumstances, there is no hope for the success of the Synodal Way." And we must then ask the question what is the point of all this mobilisation of the most willing is meant to achieve if the current church law (as the canon law expert Prof. Thomas Schüller suggests) leaves little prospect of real structural change.

Example Herzogenaurach

Nevertheless, the discussion in the communities has already begun. Triggered by an impulse group, the large parish in Herzogenaurach, for example, takes educational work theme evenings into the 2020 programme. There is much discussion about how to get concretely involved. The following was decided: The Synodal Way shall be the subject of all meetings of the Pastoral Area Council for the next two years. The topics of the four forums shall be brought to the people through booths in front of the old city hall while dispensing coffee and "Questionnaires" or suggestions for speaking about the concerns with the Catholic Church. Critical statements will then be pinned to notice boards, summarized in content and forwarded to the central office of the S(ynodal) W(ay) via Internet. Subject of the sermons at the masses should be SW; afterwards rounds of talks will take place at the church doors as in street surveys, also with feedback to the SW. All actions should be announced in the newspapers, as well as on the homepage of the parish. They will try to get into the regional television, and to send the results to the SW. The reform issues are willingly taken up.

Since "evangelization" is the main theme of the Synodal Way, fundamental questions about a sustainable future cannot be ignored.

Based on the message of the Kingdom of God one must consider a correction of Christian teaching and practice. From the poor and those at the margins edges will come thinking and actions, which will revolutionise "care of the common house" (Francis). For how, without looking at the principal injustices in the world, could the Church be renewed!? Approaches to a larger perspective are expected.

In the historical, economically critical encyclical of Pope Francis *Laudato Si* (June 2015) with a holistic approach says: "But in a special way, we should be angered by the injustices that are among us, for we continue to tolerate that some consider themselves more worthy than others. We no longer notice that some people find themselves living in humiliating misery without any real chance of overcoming it, while others do not even know what they should do with their possessions, full of vanity, to display an ostensible superiority and leave behind a level of waste that is impossible to achieve that could not be shared by all without destroying the planet." (90) "Peace, justice and the integrity of creation are three absolute related topics that can not be separated and dealt with separately... Everything is interrelated, and all human beings are brothers and sisters together on a wonderful pilgrimage, intertwined with each other through the love that God has for each of his creatures and who cherishes us and unites us in tender love with 'Brother Sun', 'Sister Moon', Brother River and Mother Earth united." (92) "The environment is a collective good, a heritage of all humanity and a responsibility for all.....Therefore the bishops of New Zealand have asked themselves what the commandment 'thou shalt not kill' means when "twenty percent of the world's population use resources to such an extent that they steal from the poor nations and the coming generations what they need to be able to survive." (95) "The consumerist view of people, which is driven by the wheels of the current globalised economy tends to make cultures uniform and the great cultural diversity which is a treasure for mankind is weakened." (144) "Environmental conversion is also a community conversion". (219)

The invitation to a common path therefore goes far beyond the parishes.



Francis trying to get the church to jump through the Reform hoop
Cartoon: Gerhard Mester

Some church snails creep laboriously and arduously with the question: How much longer do I have to crawl like this? And yet its house that it carries, is actually light if you handle it right. It would progress faster if it took it happily under its wing.

But it keeps on crawling because it has got used to this way.

Klaus Huber

13. Invitation to inform and engage

We ask you to follow the Synodal Way with attention and commitment and to accompany them. Because it will not be enough that in the two year Synodal Way, only the church leaders concern themselves with the most urgent and urgent reform issues. Synodality, that means joint responsibility. Synodality requires a broad participation of all, to which the organisers of the Synodal Way are inviting everyone. Furthermore, Synodality should be introduced at all ecclesial levels, also in the diocesan committees and the communities.

Therefore we invite and encourage you:

- Inform yourself / your community / your association about the Synodal Way and its reform topics!
- Formulate from your point of view, which reform topics are particularly urgent!
- Take advantage of the participation opportunities offered by the organizers of the Synodal Way!
- Contact the members of the Synodal Assembly; the names can be found on the website www.synodalerweg.de
- Visit or organise events yourself for the reform topics of the Synodal Way!
- Invite to "Round Tables", which will continuously accompany the Synodal Way!
- Create an information wall on the synodal path in your rooms or on your website!
- Let people affected by spiritual and sexualised violence and the excluded have their say!
- Design a synodal candle for your church and formulate concrete intercessions for the Synodal Way!
- Stand in solidarity with the reform groups that support the Synodal Way critically!
- Consider where you can practice synodality in your environment!
- Join in, if there are opportunities in your community, in your diocese to discuss "Church Development"!

Find continuously updated information and action possibilities for you amongst others on these two websites:

www.wir-sind-kirche.de/synodalerweg

(We Are Church Germany)

www.synodalerweg.de

(Bishops' Conference and Central Committee)

14. Bible passage on Conversion

A word from the Holy Scriptures (Mt 3:1-12), suitable for reflection or for re-enactment in the form of bibliodrama...

In those days John the Baptist appeared. He preached in the Judean Desert and shouted: Repent! The kingdom of God is about to begin!

John But it was John of whom Isaiah the prophet had spoken.

"I hear a voice crying in the wilderness:

"Make way for the Lord.

Level all the paths he treads. «

But John was clothed in camel's hair and wore a leather girdle around the body. His food was locusts and wild honey. And the people came to him out of Jerusalem, out of all Judea and out of the countries on either side of the Jordan. They confessed all their sins and were baptized by him in Jordan.

Now when John now heard many of the Pharisees (from the particularly strict brotherhood of the pious) and also many of the Sadducees (the modern and educated, but above all those interested in power and influence) were coming to him to be baptised, he called out to them: Brood of vipers! Who has persuaded you that you would be exempted when God in his wrath holds court? First of all, give tangible evidence that will show that when you repent, something right will come of it!

I don't think you can soothe yourselves saying in your heart: Abraham is our father! I say to you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones! The axe is already at the root of the trees, and no tree remains standing that bears no good fruit. It will be cut down and thrown into the fire!

I will baptise you with water, that you may be clean and have a new beginning, but the one who comes after me is more powerful than I am. I'm not worthy to untie the strap of his shoes. He will immerse you in the Holy Spirit and into the fire. He already has the shovel in his hand, and will sort the husks from the wheat on his threshing floor (by cleaning the mixture of wheat and husks like a farmer in what was then Palestine with a shovel throwing it into the wind: the grain is heavier and falls onto a pile, the chaff flies away). He will put the wheat in his barn, but the chaff burns in an unquenchable fire.

Source: The New Testament. Transcribed by Jörg Zink

15. Prayer for the Synodal Way in a language suitable for Women

The "Prayer for the Synodal Way", revised in a language suitable for women, by Angelika Fromm, Aktion Lila Stola of We Are Church Germany.

Prayer for the Synodal Way

God, our Mother and our Father,
You are close to those who seek You.
To You we come with the questions of our days,
with our failures and our guilt,
with our longing and our hope.

We thank you for Jesus Christ,
our Brother, our Friend and our Helper.
Jesus Christ is in our midst,
wherever we gather in his name.
He walks with us on our paths.
He shows himself to us in the poor, the oppressed,
the victims of violence, the persecuted and marginalized.

We beg You,
send us Your Holy Spirit, who creates new life.
She stands with our church in Germany
and let us recognize the signs of the times.
She opens our hearts so that we listen to Your word and accept it
faithfully.
She drives us on to seek the truth together.
She strengthens our loyalty to You and
keep us in unity with our Pope and the whole Church.
She helps us to make Your justice and mercy tangible.
She gives us strength and courage to stand up and do Your will.
For You alone are the light that illuminates our darkness
You are the life that overcomes violence, suffering and death.
We praise You, now and forever, AMEN.

Original:

www.synodalerweg.de/fileadmin/Synodalerweg/Materialien/Gebet.pdf

16. Sources for further work

Find continuously updated information and action possibilities amongst others on these websites:

"Synodal Way" of the Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee

www.synodalerweg.de

on Facebook: www.facebook.com/DerSynodaleWeg

Twitter account: @dersynodaleweg

Websites of the (arch)dioceses on the Synodal Way, e.g. in Munich

www.erzbistum-muenchen.de/im-blick/synodaler-weg

We Are Church Germany

www.wir-sind-kirche.de/synodalerweg

on Facebook: www.facebook.com/wirsindkirche/

Web addresses of church reform groups

www.wir-sind-kirche.de/?id=128&id_entry=7985#REFORMGRUPPEN

Fine Black - Theological Feuilleton

www.feinschwarz.net

Federation of German Catholic Youth

www.bdkj.de/themen/synodaler-weg

Catholic German Women's Federation on the Synodal Way

www.frauenbund.de/nc/startseite/aktionen/aktionen-detail/article/begleitung-synodaler-weg

kfd-Bundesverband on the Synodal Way

www.kfd-bundesverband.de/synodaler-weg/

Petition "Amazonia also with us"

www.amazonien-auch-bei-uns.com

Public Forum Dossier: The Synodal Way. Now courage is needed

www.shop.publik-forum.de

17. Some other Initiatives and Actions

- **Priests collect signatures for reform call**

Würzburg (KNA) Four Catholic priests and book authors have made a call for support of their appeal for critical monitoring of the reform debate. Since the publication of the declaration at the end of November in 2019, 100 priests had already spoken out for the cause, said a co-initiator, the Würzburg university pastor Burkhard Hose, on Thursday when asked. Now they want to start a big petition on the Internet to all pastoral workers, priests, deacons and religious for the reform cause. This includes bishops as well.

www.wegwort.de/synodalerweg

- **Ten Vicar Generals call for reform of the church in letter**

Ten Vicars Generals, in a joint letter, have expressly supported the reform process in the Catholic Church. "In the 'More-of-same-mode' we will no longer be able to fulfil our mission." This is what they wrote in a letter published on 5 November 2019 to the President of the German Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, and the President of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK), Thomas Sternberg. They consider a fundamental reform of the church "urgently necessary, essential". For this purpose they want to give the Synodal Way, which begins in the first Sunday of Advent 2019 "with emphasis" and rely on binding decisions.

www.domradio.de/themen/bist%C3%BCmer/2019-11-05/werbung-fuer-den-synodalen-weg-zehn-generalvikare-fordern-brief-reform-der-kirche

- **"Reform now - Council from below"**

The initiative pro concilio e.V. has worked with the Aktionsgemeinschaft Rottenburg (AGR), the BDKJ and the KDFB in the diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart to start a "Council from below".

www.konzil-von-unten.de

18. About We Are Church Germany

25 long years have passed since the church petition of We Are Church until after the shocking MHG study, a majority of the German bishops is ready to deal with the deeper causes of the credibility crisis. As a reform movement within the Roman Catholic Church We Are Church Germany, since the church referendum in 1995, for the following goals and demands and for ecumenism:

- Building a fraternal church
- Full equality for women in all ecclesiastical offices
- No binding of the priesthood to celibacy
- Positive evaluation of sexuality and recognition of the responsible primacy of conscience
- Good news instead of threatening news

The basis for these is found in the Council Constitution "Lumen Gentium" and Canon 212 § 3 of the Canon Law.

You too can join in!

Inform yourself! Commit yourself! Support us!

Donation account:

"We are church e.V." Darlehnskasse Münster e.G.

IBAN: DE07 4006 0265 0018 2220 00

BIC: GENODEM1DKM

Wir sind Kirche e.V. is registered with the Ettlingen tax office under the number 31199 / 44490 recognised as a tax-privileged church association.

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(08131) 260 250 Fax : (08131) 260 249

E-mail: info@wir-sind-kirche.de Internet: www.wir-sind-kirche.de

"If the Church does not have the courage
to reform its own structures,
it will never have the moral strength to criticise
the structures of society."

Dom Helder Camara (1909-1999)
Archbishop of Olinda and Recife, Brazil

20. Current issues of the "Gelbe Reihe"

"Crisis as opportunity. Community development in your own hands – Orientations and Action steps"

Edited by Klaus Luig and Magnus Lux, November 2019, 36 pages, 3.00 Euro

"Turning point for the Roman Church"

on the 5th anniversary of the election of Pope Francis (13 March 2018)

Offprint of the article by Christian Weisner in ET-Studies 1/2018, Journal of the European Society for Catholic Theology, page 3-26, 3,00 Euro

"Synod"

"The lasting topicality of the Würzburg Synod" by Prof. Hanspeter

Heinz: (Reprint from the Herder Correspondence 2005), **"Why Synodality and subsidiarity ecclesologically go hand in hand"** by Prof. Michael Böhnke as well as further texts on the topic of the synod, 2016, 28 pages, 3,00 Euro

"Laity"

"Structures of Participation in the Roman Catholic Church" (Prof. Dr. Georg Bier at the We are Church Federal Assembly on 28 March 2015 in Freiburg) +

"People of God Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council" (PD Dr. Stefan Silber), 44 pages, 3,00 Euro

"On the art of shaping the future of the church. 20 Years Church People's Movement" Prof. Dr. Hermann Häring on 19 September 2015 at Wir sind Kirche-Augsburg, 32 pages, 2,50 Euro

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In this way We are Church wants to contribute to ensuring that the process of the Vatican II Council and the synodal process called for by Pope Francis action is taken up at all levels of the church.