

Open Letter

Catholic Associations and Reform Groups

to the participants of the 3rd Synodal Assembly from February 3 to 5, 2022 in Frankfurt, Germany

The Synodal Way must turn the tide – concretely and now!

With great personal commitment and with high moral, theological and pastoral responsibility, **decisive texts have been developed**. For this we as reform groups and associations express our gratitude. Now we expect the participants of the 3rd Synodal Assembly **to adopt these groundbreaking proposals with clear majorities**, so that they will also be acknowledged and accepted by the Vatican.

The 2nd Assembly took place after the surprising decision of the Vatican regarding the Archdiocese of Cologne and its responsible officers nevertheless, the 2nd Assembly did a good job. **The 3rd Plenary Assembly is taking place during the ecclesial tremor caused by the #OutInChurch campaign and especially the publication of the second Munich Abuse Report on January 20, 2022**. With his statement on this report, his correction of an obvious false statement and his denial of personal responsibility, Joseph Ratzinger, Munich archbishop from 1977 to 1982, destroyed his reputation as a shepherd and as a "collaborator of truth" and caused serious damage to the office.

As a result of the multiple and worldwide cases of abuse, their cover-up and disregard for the suffering of those affected, **the institutional Roman Catholic Church is facing moral bankruptcy and shambles**. If the expected next wave of departures is still to be stopped, but also for those Catholics who consciously want to remain in the Church, the Synodal path must not come to nothing, like the "dialogue or conversation process" 2011 to 2015 and many other reform processes. **You as synodal members of the 3rd Assembly should be aware of your great responsibility**, but also of the great visions that are needed in this situation.

It is high time for a **fundamental reorientation on all levels**, a goal set by Pope Francis for the worldwide synodal process when he opened the process at Pentecost 2021. In this context, it must always be remembered: **The triggers for the Synodal Way in Germany were the systemic causes of sexualized violence**, which were identified by the MHG study published in 2018: Abuse of power, compulsory celibacy, outdated sexual morality and a disregard for women! Only these factors favored the sexualized and spiritual violence and its cover-up. Only truly convincing steps to come to terms with these crimes in our church make it possible for a new "evangelization" and a structural reform.

In this dramatic situation, the 3rd Assembly of the Synodal Way can and must bring the turning point, concretely and now! Internationally, too, the hopes and expectations regarding the Synodal Way in Germany are great.

- We appeal to the **Vatican** to finally give a **clear and unambiguous sign of acknowledgement to the Synodal Way**, which is not a German special way, but a constructive service to the universal Church.
- We call upon the **bishops and auxiliary bishops to take a reliable position on the individual draft resolutions**. As long as there is no separation of powers and no effective control of power under canon law, **it is essential for the bishops to commit themselves**.
- Options for action that are **already possible under canon law** must be addressed without delay in the individual dioceses and implemented in **"immediate programs"**.
- Above all, the **parishes**, which are currently bleeding to death on a massive scale, also because of compulsory celibacy and the exclusion of women and other people from ordained ministry, are **urgently waiting for concrete reforms**.
- In addition to the **theologically sound elaborations** of the Synodal Way are for long-term changes, as important is at the same time a **broad information campaign** about the progress of the Synodal Way for Catholics and communities in Germany is necessary.

- There is an urgent need for **international networking and up-to-date information in foreign languages** about the synodal path in Germany, in order to counteract the disruptive manoeuvres from abroad.
- First and foremost, the **survivors of sexualized and spiritual violence** must be considered. For them, the acknowledgement of personal guilt and the personal acceptance of responsibility by church officials, even if they have acted correctly according to the letter of church law, are of great importance.
- For more and more Catholics throughout Germany, it is inconceivable that **Cardinal Woelki**, despite his misconduct, would simply resume his official duties on Ash Wednesday as if nothing had happened. Here the Vatican should revise its questionable decision of autumn 2021.
- - But it must be clear to all of us: In the long term and in a sustainable way, we will only make progress if our efforts for renewal are **supported by more comprehensive Christian, ecumenical, and perhaps interreligious visions**. No church can be an end in itself.

Be brave, now! Make sure that at least the minimum goals discussed now are achieved. The people of the church finally want to see the first deeds of reform, and no longer want to hear any more announcements that put them off. Set the course for a church that is with the people - so that we as a community of followers of Jesus can continue to give credible and joyful witness to the visionary power of the Christian message!

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Translation: Colm Holmes, We are Church, Ireland

List of first signatories:

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Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend BDKJ
Freckenhorster Kreis
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Institut für Theologie und Politik
Katholisches LSBT+ Komitee
Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund e.V. (KDFB)
Katholische Frauengemeinschaft Deutschlands (kfd) – Bundesverband e.V.
KirchenVolksBewegung *Wir sind Kirche*
Laienverantwortung Regensburg e.V., eine Vereinigung von Gläubigen nach CIC c. 215
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OrdensFrauen für MenschenWürde
OutInChurch
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Priester im Dialog
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Vereinigung katholischer Priester und ihrer Frauen

These concerned initiatives support the appeal:

Eckiger Tisch e.V.
Initiative Sauerteig Garching a.d.Alz
MoJoRed e. V. Missbrauchsopfer- Josephinum-Redemptoristen e. V.