



KirchenVolksBewegung

National contact address:
»Wir sind Kirche« c/o Christian Weisner
Postbox 65 01 15
D-81215 München
Tel.: +49 (0)8131-260 250
Fax: +49 (0)8131-260 249
E-Mail: info@wir-sind-kirche.de
Internet: www.wir-sind-kirche.de

»Wir sind Kirche e.V.«
Spendenkonto:
IBAN: DE07 4006 0265 0018 2220 00
BIC: GENODEM1DKM

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February 2022

A historical crisis of the Church – and turning point?

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends of the KirchenVolksBewegung,

"The worst mistakes are made with the intention of making amends for a mistake that has been made."
These words of the writer Jean Paul (1763-1825) applies to many cover-up attempts. The results of the second Munich abuse report and the inappropriate actions of Joseph Ratzinger, Munich archbishop from 1977 to 1982, are a historical turning point: **With his multiple attempts at correction and his refusal to make a personal admission of guilt, the resigned pope destroyed his own reputation as a theologian and moral authority.** The former Munich Cardinal Friedrich Wetter, on the other hand, has acknowledged his undelegable responsibility and returned the honorary citizenship of his hometown Landau.

Are you still allowed to stay in church?

The system held together by church law and fear has collapsed. The old rope lines have been cut. The Roman Catholic Church is in a historic turning point. Those who endured the long years under Karol Wojtyła and Joseph Ratzinger in the church should not leave just now. What seemed impossible in the past: **since the election of Francis, reform debates that had been un-suppressed for decades**

are finally possible again. The visionary reform course of the Second Vatican Council can be continued, as is happening on the Synodal Way in Germany. The theological foundations for a renewed church in the third millennium are on the table. We are all church and shape it. Each and every one of us is needed for a new beginning. The Synodal Way in Germany is an essential step. Others must follow. Let us tackle it together:

- ➔ Sign the Frankfurt Declaration: For a Synodal Church!
- ➔ Support the #OutInChurch initiative of queer church workers!
- ➔ Let us take responsibility as the baptized and confirmed!

Read more about this in the enclosed Spring Info. Please also inform others about our free information offers or give us the addresses of interested parties. Thank you for your cooperation!

Sigrid Grabmeier

Heinrich Mix

Christian Weisner



Cartoon: © Gerhard Mester



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A historical crisis of the Church – and turning point?

77 years after the end of the Second World War we are in a world-historical crisis – but the Roman-Catholic world church is above all occupied with its own internal system crisis. 27 years after the Vienna abuse case of Cardinal Groër, 21 years after the revelations in the USA, 12 years after the revelations at the Berlin Canisius College by Father Klaus Mertes SJ and almost four years after the MHG study, the second Munich report has shown that the Roman Catholic Church in Germany is still at the beginning of the reappraisal.

Without believers, it cannot exist. If the wake-up call is not heard, we will have to watch the system collapse: An institution that is choking on itself.

Bascha Mika; Frankfurter Rundschau, 26.2.2021

For many of the 27 German dioceses there are still no studies, some have not even commissioned one. This is one of the reasons why the state must now take action and help to uncover and process the problem. Beyond these expert opinions, however, dark field studies are also needed, as they have been done in France, for example.



Cartoon: © Gerhard Mester

More and more new revelations (e.g., recently in France and Spain), but also out-of-time instructions from Rome (e.g., the ban on blessing homosexual partnerships) and the Vatican's non-transparent actions toward those responsible for the Cologne archdiocese have intensified the loss of trust and shaken the faith life of many people.

Responsibility and admission of guilt?

It is shocking that some of those responsible have not yet understood how much their actions, even if they were correct according to canon law, contradict the moral demands of the church, both then and now. It is outrageous how difficult it is for those responsible, both then and now, to admit their inalienable personal responsibility and to be prepared to confess their guilt.

According to the Second Munich Report, this is especially true for Joseph Ratzinger, who was archbishop in Munich from 1977 to 1982. By refusing to take personal responsibility, the former pope has destroyed his own reputation as a theologian and moral authority.

To dismiss structural issues as unimportant is uncatholic!

Prof'in Dr. Sabine Demel

Resignations at the various management levels may be necessary. More important, however, is a fundamental change of perspective toward those affected. More important are concrete signs of conversion and renewal. More important is a fundamental change of direction, so that the original hopefulness of Christianity can once again come to the fore.

Turnaround through synodal ways and processes?

The third plenary assembly of the Synodal Way in Frankfurt at the beginning of February passed remarkable resolutions. All 14 proposals were adopted with the required two-thirds majority, including that of the bishops. For the dismantling of misguided clerical power structures, however, the self-integration of the bishops will be necessary within the current church law. Each individual bishop is now to be judged not by his words, but by his deeds.

Even scandals can sometimes become signs that what has long been called for finally prevails.

Klaus Huber (klausvomdachsbeckel.de)

However, it will also be decisive whether the Synodal Way in Germany succeeds in joining forces with other countries. From our international networking we know that in the synodal processes already underway or planned in other countries, the "hot topics" of the Synodal Way will ultimately also come up. This will also have an impact on the worldwide synodal process in preparation for the World Synod 2023 in Rome. And as Bishop Bätzing so rightly said, "Rome is not the universal Church!"

Stepping up instead of stepping out!

Those who have endured the long years under Pope John Paul II and Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI in the Church should not leave just now, but support the reform forces that are well networked with each other.

We are Church federal team

Save the Date

September 23-25, 2022

KirchenVolksKonferenz in Cologne

together with all reform forces in Germany

More information in the summer info and at the address page 4



Solidarity action on January 19, 2022 on the Munich Marienplatz

"Balance sheet of horror"

The extensive second Munich abuse report exposes the pattern of cover-up practiced for decades, also because of the shortage of priests: Suppression, hiding, transfer and lack of control. The experts speak of a "balance of horror". Instead of showing empathy for the individual victims of abuse, the first priority was always to protect the clerical system. It must be assumed that the individual cases described in detail are only the tip of the iceberg, because a dark field study is still missing.

The second Munich report rightly deserves a great deal of attention because it presents in great detail the case of "Pastor X." and reveals the shady role of the then Munich Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger, which rightly receives worldwide attention. But it also shows the struggle for direction between the double pontificate of John Paul II/Benedict XVI and Francis.

The first Munich abuse report by the same law firm in 2010 had already revealed appalling structures of abuse and institutional cover-up. However, it was not published in order to protect the reputation of Pope Benedict XVI, who was still in office at the time. The concrete responsibility of Ratzinger as Archbishop of Munich could not or should not be clarified at that time.

"Catholic Spring" 2022 ?

January

- 19th Solidarity action on Munich's Marienplatz square
- 20th Publication of 2nd Munich abuse report
- 24th #OutInChurch of 125 Catholic employees
- 24th First correction by Joseph Ratzinger
- 24/25th Monthly meeting of German Bishops' Conference
- 27th Press conference by Cardinal Marx
- 27th DIE ZEIT: "We were Pope"+interview with former GV Beer
- 30th Abuse in the "ARD-Preseclub" and at "Anne Will

February

- 2nd Online press conference of the reform groups
- 3rd Interview with Cardinal Marx in Süddeutsche Zeitung
- 3rd-5th Plenary meeting of the Synodal Way in Frankfurt
- 8th Letter of the resigned pope and "fact check
- 10th Frankfurt Declaration: For a Synodal Church
- 10th DIE ZEIT: "An old man hopes for mercy".

March

- 2nd End of the "spiritual time-out" for Cardinal Woelki
- 7.-10th Spring Plenary Assembly of German bishops

It is right and necessary that the highly elaborate expert opinion of the Munich law firm Westphal Spilker Wastl (WSW) has made a moral evaluation of the events in addition to the canonical evaluation. The church misconduct that has come to light cannot be remedied only administratively, e.g. through consistent action and better controls, but requires a correction of the underlying theology and church structure, as is currently being intensively worked out on the Synodal Way in Germany.

Unresolved causa Ratzinger

With his multiple attempts to correct the current WSW report and his refusal to make a personal admission of guilt, the former pope has himself destroyed his reputation as a theologian and moral authority. Certainly Ratzinger has done more against sexualized violence than his predecessor John Paul II.

But as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, Ratzinger placed crimes in this area worldwide under the "pontifical secret" in 2001 and brought all cases to Rome. Neither perpetrators nor victims nor accomplices of clerical criminals were allowed to make their knowledge known. Only the Vatican was allowed to know. All cases were to be sent to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which was in no way suitable for this task, either in terms of content or organization. This was a fatal decision by Ratzinger, which was only overturned by Pope Francis.



Cartoon: © Gerhard Mester

Tasks for Cardinal Marx and the Archdiocese

We are Church expects Cardinal Reinhard Marx, after Pope Francis' rejection of his resignation on June 10, 2021, to be even more resolute in his commitment to reforms in the Synodal Way and in Rome. In an interview, he spoke out in favor of an end to compulsory celibacy. In the Munich archdiocese, together with the committees, he should immediately implement what is already possible under church law: for example, that pastoral employees receive permanent permission to preach, to baptize, to assist at marriages and for funeral ceremonies.

The archdiocese must offer advisory support for the parishes affected and often divided by abuse, as has now been done for the Sauerteig initiative in Garching an der Alz, the place of abuse for many years of pastor X.

> www.wir-sind-kirche.de/muenchengutachten

■ Open Letter to the 3rd Synodal Assembly

"The Synodal Way must bring the turnaround – concretely and now!" is the title of the open letter with which Catholic associations and reform groups as well as affected groups have addressed the participants before the beginning of the 3rd Plenary Assembly of the Synodal Way.

Photo: KOMMWIRT/Christian Schnaubelt



Handing over of the Open Letter initiated by We are Church from meanwhile 40 associations and groups to the Synodal Presidium on February 3, 2022, directly before the beginning of the 3rd Synodal Assembly in Frankfurt

■ 3rd Synodal Assembly – a turning point?

The 3rd Synodal Assembly has decisively advanced the Synodal Way in all four thematic areas. It is encouraging that all 14 proposals were approved with very clear votes far above the two-thirds majority required in each case and can be further processed in the synodal forums. Even more than the percentage figures, however, the theological justifications developed show that an important step has been taken. This is also necessary if the votes adopted here are to be successfully introduced into the worldwide discussion. It became clear in Frankfurt that there must be further development of official doctrine in many areas.

This meeting has shown: The time of fear and exclusion as well as the fixation on an over-grasping sexual morality is finally over. But it also made clear the resistance that still exists in parts of the German Bishops' Conference.

We are Church calls on the bishops to start implementing concrete reforms very quickly: For example, to declare bindingly that no discrimination under labor law will be made against people on the basis of their personal lifestyle. For as long as there is no separation of powers and no effective control of power under church law, the bishops must commit themselves. At their spring plenary meeting from March 7 to 10, 2022, in Vierzehnheiligen, the bishops must show that they accept their responsibility and that the caesura they spoke of after the shocking MHG study finally becomes visible.

Petitions related to the Synodical Way that We Are Church supports and recommends:

▶ #OutInChurch – For a church without fear

> outinchurch.de/

▶ Frankfurt Declaration: For a Synodal Church

> <https://chng.it/yjJHJnQLHg>

Editorial deadline of this *We Are Church* Info: February 13, 2022

The statement of the French observer Jérôme Vignon made very clear how good and exemplary this process is. The formulaic warnings of the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Dr. Nikola Eterović, on the other hand, were very irritating. In this way he does not do justice to his great responsibility in this dramatic church crisis.

For the success of the Synodal Way it will be important that the communication with the Vatican is fundamentally improved. Therefore it is good that the Synodal Presidium will from now on regularly work together with Cardinal Grech and the Synodal Office for the preparation of the World Synod 2023 in Rome. From the international networking of the reform groups we know that in many countries the same topics are on the agenda.

> www.wir-sind-kirche.de/synodalerweg

> www.synodalerweg.de/dokumente-reden-und-beitraege#c6472

■ Worldwide Synodal Process

In Germany, the focus is currently on the Synodal Way. Some dioceses are also engaged in their own renewal processes. However, there are indications that the worldwide process is also gaining momentum.

Take advantage of the opportunities for participation in your diocese. Demand them where they are still insufficiently available!

> www.wir-sind-kirche.de/vorbereitung2023

■ On Human Rights Day 2021

A statement by Catholic women's rights organizations, co-sponsored by *We Are Church*, has called on the Holy See to join the Council of Europe and sign the European Convention on Human Rights.

> www.wir-sind-kirche.de/?id=129&id_entry=9070

■ Financial Conduct in the Archdiocese of Cologne

We are Church demands full clarification from the Archdiocese of Cologne and from the Church in Rome about the financial practices in Cologne. The disproportion of the expenditures for recognition services for victims of a total of only 1.5 million in the past ten years compared to 2.8 million euros, among other things, for expert opinions and, in particular, Woelki's personal counseling purposes is blatant. It is incomprehensible that the Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops in the Vatican, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, has stopped the investigation until the planned return of Cardinal Woelki on March 2, 2022.

> www.wir-sind-kirche.de/koelngutachten

■ Open letter to Pope because of Cardinal Müller

We are Church appeals to Pope Francis to stop the irresponsible actions of Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, who spreads conspiracy myths and uses anti-Semitic ciphers.

> www.wir-sind-kirche.de/briefpapstmueller

■ Proclamation of a "Decade of Reconciliation"

We Are Church is one of the first signatories of the memorandum that insists on concrete steps toward the unity of the Christian churches for the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in Karlsruhe from August 31 to September 8, 2022.

> www.wir-sind-kirche.de/oekumene