



Synod of Bishops in Rome

Statement by the President of the German Bishops' Conference

Cardinal Reinhard Marx

At the Synod of Bishops in Rome, Cardinal Reinhard Marx spoke on the Instrumentum laboris. We document his statement before the Synod:

1. The *Instrumentum laboris* criticizes: “The rage of young people in the face of rampant corruption, growing structural inequality, contempt for human dignity, human rights violations, discrimination against women [also in the Church] and minorities, organized violence, and injustice does not seem to be taken into due account, if we look at the responses given by the BC [Bishops' Conferences].” (*IL* 128)
2. In a declaration the German Bishops committed themselves in 2013,
 - to significantly increase the proportion of women in church leadership positions accessible to all lay people,
 - to further clarify the participation of women (and lay people as a whole) in the leadership tasks of the church, theologically and pastorally
 - to promote a gender-sensitive pastoral care in theology and practice.
3. Various projects have been launched to implement this declaration
 - In "Being Church Together" (2015) the German bishops have theologically dealt with questions of the leadership in the Church including women.
 - A mentoring programme for women in the Church (Hildegardis-Verein together with the German Bishops' Conference) has made clear the diversity of leadership tasks in the Church and prepared almost 100 women for a leading role in the Church.
 - At a study day the German bishops dealt with the gender debate and thus discussed far-reaching questions on anthropology and sexual morals, on sacrament and office theology and on more gender justice in the Church beyond traditional gender roles and egalitarian role patterns.

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4. The extensive study “Sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests, deacons and male members of orders in the domain of the German Bishops’ Conference” (2018) especially names “clerical structures and a clerical exercise of the ministry within the Catholic Church”, which have contributed to such massive sexual abuse and its cover-up in the Church. Women in ecclesiastical leadership positions play a crucial role in breaking up closed clerical circles.

5. If, as the *Instrumentum laboris* demands, the Church wants to support the dignity of women (cf. No. 158), then it is not sufficient to repeat the corresponding official doctrinal texts. We must face up to the often uncomfortable and impatient questions of young people about equal rights for women also in the Church. We can no longer simply stay out of the discourses of the present and have to learn a new culture of conflict in order to get involved argumentatively and in a guiding way in the social debates on central basic questions of humanity, such as sexuality, the roles of women and men and the formation of human relationships. And for the sake of our own credibility, we must involve women at all levels of the Church, from the parish to the levels of the diocese, the Bishops' Conference and also in the Vatican itself considerably more in leadership tasks. We really ought to wish this and implement it!

The impression that the Church, when it comes to power, is ultimately a male Church must be overcome in the universal Church and also here in the Vatican. Otherwise the young women will not find any real opportunity for formation with us. It is high time!