

## Presentation

### of Synodal Forum I

**“Power and separation of powers in the Church  
- Joint participation and involvement in the mission”**

**for the First Reading**

**at the Second Synodal Assembly (30 September - 2 October 2021)**

**for the action text**

**“Sustainable strengthening of Synodality:  
A Synodal Council for the Catholic Church in Germany” (draft file)**

---

The Synodal Assembly is requested to resolve as follows:

Synodality is a fundamental activity of the Church. Joint consultation and decision-making strengthens the community of faith. Synodality is a spiritual process that helps us to hear God's Word today and to promote evangelisation through discernment of spirits, prayer and the exchange of arguments. Synodality is a means enabling the members of God's people to discover, contribute and interconnect their specific spiritual gifts.

Pope Francis whole-heartedly promotes the synodal movement: “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium. What the Lord is asking of us is already in some sense present in the very word “synod”. Journeying together — laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome — is an easy concept to put into words, but not so easy to put into practice.” (*Pope Francis' Address at Commemorative Ceremony for the 50th Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015*). The Pope has invited the whole Catholic Church on a Synodal Path in order to develop this concept.

The Catholic Church in Germany is very happy to accept this invitation. She is able to contribute the experiences that she is gathering on the Synodal Path, and in community with the Pope also seeks to take up the stimuli from other parts of the universal Church in order to embed synodality as a fundamental principle of the Church with regard to the pastoral challenges in the field. It is essential to make a permanent practice of the process of decision-

making together, both bishops and all who are baptised and confirmed. The legal system of the Church is to strengthen the principle of synodality.

In order to draw an important practical conclusion, the bishops establish a Synodal Council of the Catholic Church in Germany against the backdrop of can. 127 and can. 129 with all those who are baptised and confirmed which is closely linked to the Bishops' Conference and which maintains a close dialogue with the dioceses. This Synodal Council builds on the work of the synodal assembly which, according to Art. 13 of its statutes, reconvenes under the leadership of the Synodal Committee three years after the last plenary assembly in order to evaluate the implementation of the results of the Synodal Path.

The Synodal Council of the Catholic Church in Germany develops the decisions of the Synodal Assembly and the concerns of the Catholic Church in Germany in the power of the Holy Spirit, with the aim of ensuring that the Church can give a credible witness to Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the World.

#### *The Synodal Council of the Catholic Church in Germany: composition and tasks*

The Synodal Council of the Catholic Church in Germany is composed in a similar manner as the Synodal Assembly, but should be reduced in size if possible. It should have a gender- and generation-appropriate composition. With the exception of the members of the German Bishops' Conference, the members of the Synodal Council are to be elected in free, equal and secret elections for a term of five years. The members of the Synodal Council have equal voting rights.

The chair of the Synodal Council is to be held jointly by the President of the German Bishops' Conference and one of the elected members of the Synodal Council elected from among their midst. The Vice-President of the German Bishops' Conference is also the Vice-President of the Synodal Council on the episcopal side. The elected members of the Synodal Council elect a deputy chairperson from among their members. Together they form the governing body of the Synodal Council.

The Synodal Council meets regularly, at least twice a year. It is supported by a permanent secretariat. The Synodal Council is quorate if at least two-thirds of its members are present. The Council adopts its resolutions with a two-thirds majority of the members present, which is carried by at least two-thirds of the members of the German Bishops' Conference present, and on the motion of two-thirds of the female members of the Synodal Assembly present. The resolutions are published.

The Synodal Council makes fundamental decisions on budgetary issues that are not decided at the level of the dioceses, as well as on pastoral planning and future perspectives of supra-diocesan significance. It promotes the social, catechetical and missionary relations of the Catholic Church in Germany with the local churches throughout the world and with the Holy See. It adopts Statutes and rules of procedure. The Synodal Council can establish Synodal Forums which draw up proposals for the meetings of the Synodal Council. It appoints a spiritual companion, and can invite observers to attend its meetings.

The elected members of the Synodal Council elect five persons with a simple majority to attend the plenary assemblies of the Bishops' Conference in an advisory capacity.

*Evaluation of the implementation and further development of the resolutions of the Synodal Assembly:*

*Cooperation with the dioceses*

The Synodal Council seeks to ensure that comprehensive reports on the concrete implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Synodal Assembly and the further strategies are prepared in the dioceses at regular intervals. Every three years, each diocese comprehensively evaluates in its Synodal Council the implementation of the decisions taken by the Synodal Assembly, and publishes a report on them. This report especially contains information about

- the framework regulations and model codes of co-decision and their implementation, as well as the experiences in the diocese with the structures of binding co-determination at diocesan and parish level,
- alignment with the diocesan consultation and decision-making processes in all essential questions of finance, personnel planning and structural decisions,
- [...]A further resolution adopted at the end of the Synodal Assembly adds the essential points to be evaluated from all the resolutions that have been adopted.]

The bishop and the Synodal Council of the diocese deliberate on the report, and decide on concrete steps on this basis, as well as adopting the further strategy of the diocese to implement the resolutions of the Synodal Assembly.

The evaluations and strategies for the implementation of the Synodal Path within the dioceses are deliberated on by the Synodal Council of the Catholic Church in Germany. The Synodal Council prepares an overall report on the status of the implementation of the resolutions of the Synodal Assembly in Germany, recommends strategies and measures for further implementation, and indicates possibilities for the future development of the resolutions. The report is published in its entirety. The recommendations of the Synodal Council are debated by the bishops and the Synodal Councils in the dioceses, and form the basis for the further implementation of the resolutions in the diocese.