



Presentation

of Synodal Forum III

“Women in ministries and offices in the Church”

for the Second Reading

at the Fourth Synodal Assembly (8-10 September 2022)

for the implementation text

“Presence and Leadership - Women in the Church and in theology”

[Result of the ballot in the Forum: 18 Yes]

Introduction

The goal of becoming a gender-equitable Church requires the presence of more women in leadership positions, in theology, research and teaching, as well as in decision-making and advisory bodies. This is already possible in many areas today on the basis of the provisions of existing canon law.

The German Bishops' Conference committed itself in 2019 to increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions to one-third¹. The recommendations for action that have been developed within the framework of the related study entitled “Women in Leadership Positions in German Ordinariates and Vicariates General” are available². The Central Committee of Catholics also conducted a survey in 2014 on women in leadership positions in the Central Committee, on diocesan councils, and in organisations of the Working Group of Catholic Organisations in Germany - *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der katholischen Organisationen Deutschlands (AGKOD)*³. A wish list has been put together. Targeted measures for personnel and organisa-

¹ Cf. Press interview held at the Spring Plenary Assembly in Lingen on 12 March 2019, <https://www.dbk.de/nc/presse/aktuelles/meldung/pressegesprach-zum-thema-studie-frauen-in-leitungspositionen-bei-der-fruehjahrs-vollversammlung-2019/detail/> (retrieved on 20 August 2020).

² Cf. https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/presse_2019/2019-035d-FVV-Lingen-StudieFrauen-Leitungsposition.pdf.

³ Cf. *Frauen an der Spitze. Ergebnisse der Befragung Frauen in Leitungspositionen im ZdK, in den Diözesanräten und in den Organisationen der AGKOD*, at: <https://www.zdk.de/cache/dl-Broschuere->

tional development, as well as structurally-effective gender equality work with clear objectives, timelines, responsibilities, implementation strategies and process controlling, are in the pipeline.

New leadership models are being practised and tested in pastoral care. A broad, differentiated spectrum of leadership concepts is in place in the dioceses. There is a need to distinguish here between the level of the parishes, the local congregations or church locations, and the larger areas such as the deaneries. In addition to the model of the canonical priest, which is predominantly applied in the German dioceses, there are different leadership concepts at parish level in which leadership tasks are delegated or are carried out by a team who share responsibility. C. 517 § 2 CIC is applied in some dioceses: Deacons and laymen and laywomen can participate in the exercise of “the pastoral care of a parish”, i.e. in comprehensive pastoral care in parishes. The diocesan bishop can involve full-time and voluntary workers, alone or in a team, at the level of a parish or of a parish community, by commissioning them to exercise pastoral care. These commissioned persons are called “parish commissioners” in some dioceses. They then exercise pastoral responsibility together with a priest who is to be appointed by the bishop who coordinates and directs pastoral care as a “moderator”, but is not the priest of the parish or parish community.

New leadership models are also emerging with regard to the leadership of deaneries such as dual leaderships with equal numbers of men and women, where a priest and a woman have joint responsibility for a deanery.

In order to enhance the public awareness of those women who already play a responsible role in shaping the Church in leadership positions today, efforts must be made to bring about a balanced representation of persons of different genders in media portrayals, on podiums, at professional events, and in interviews. Furthermore, a gender-sensitive selection of visual material and the use of inclusive language in all reports of church press and public relations work are indispensable.

For many years, women have been indispensable in the theological faculties, institutes and Church Universities in Germany. They achieve significant advances in theological research, and thus contribute to the development and deepening of teaching. They train the pastoral workers and religious instructors of the future, and share in the official proclamation of Catholic doctrine in accordance with c. 747 CIC⁴. The contribution made by female scholars to the teaching of the Church and the proclamation of the Gospel must be explicitly acknowledged. At the same time, there is still significant room for improvement in their representation in the professorships of Roman Catholic theological faculties, institutes and Church Universities. Furthermore, gender equality must also be taken into account in academic relations in the universal Church.

Frauen-an-der-Spitze-Ergebnisse-der-Bef-30cd5571d85bf9d5ee63fe4b4872c096.pdf (retrieved on 12 June 2022).

⁴ Cf. “*Berufung von Professoren und Professorinnen der Katholischen Theologie. Normen - Vorgaben - Informationen*” (2014) Die deutschen Bischöfe - Kommission für Wissenschaft und Kultur, No. 38. Online: https://www.dbk-shop.de/media/files_public/3ec5298bfb36dfabfbf6087c53660710/DBK_1238.pdf.

Greater, more visible participation on the part of women is also important in priestly training in order to promote versatile, balanced personality growth among the prospective priests, to prepare them for later work in teams with full-time and voluntary workers of all genders, and to give them stimuli for gender-sensitive pastoral work. It is important here for women to be taking structurally-relevant decisions and giving assessments.

Some committees and councils are disproportionately weighted towards one gender, this applying for instance to many church councils in the parishes. It is a growing challenge in these times to get people involved in voluntary work at all. The goal nonetheless remains to also enable women to have equal participation in deliberation and decision-making in these bodies too.

Resolution

Gender-equitable appointment to leadership positions

Bishops, Vicars General and personnel officials are to agree on concrete, scheduled, effective measures for the Ordinariates and other church institutions (such as academies, press offices, church courts), on the basis of the recommendations for action from 2019, and are to introduce structurally-effective equality work with corresponding personnel resources for this purpose by mid-2024.

Appropriate measures are to include:

- defining targets for gender-equitable appointments to leadership positions on the basis of a corresponding age structure and/or gender equality analysis,
- controlling goal attainment,
- personnel development measures for high-potential employees and leaders,
- describing criteria for taking on leadership positions,
- open, transparent advertisement of leadership positions,
- gender-aware application procedures,
- introducing different leadership models (top-sharing, leadership on a part-time basis, etc.),
- ensuring the reconciliation of work and long-term care activities, and
- regular public reporting on the objectives set and on progress made with regard to equality⁵.

The Human Resources Commission of the Association of German Dioceses is to guide the process. On the basis of the survey entitled “Women at the Top”, the Central Committee of Catholics undertakes to aim for an increase in the proportion of women in leadership positions

⁵ A handout on the implementation of a gender equality regulation in the German dioceses can be found [here: https://www.bistum-hildesheim.de/fileadmin/dateien/Unterbereiche/Gleichstellung/Ordnung_zur_Gleichstellung_von_Frauen_und_Maennern_-_Ein_Entwurf_fuer_die_deutschen_Dioezesen_12-2018.pdf](https://www.bistum-hildesheim.de/fileadmin/dateien/Unterbereiche/Gleichstellung/Ordnung_zur_Gleichstellung_von_Frauen_und_Maennern_-_Ein_Entwurf_fuer_die_deutschen_Dioezesen_12-2018.pdf)

in the Central Committee of Catholics, in the diocesan councils, and in the organisations of the Working Group of Catholic Organisations in Germany, and to contribute to this through defined goals and measures.

Leadership of parishes

- All the dioceses are to promote different models of leadership in shared responsibility in congregations, parishes and deaneries, enabling the competences and charisms of people to be effective together. Teams are always mixed. The dioceses promote greater gender equality when exercising leadership when it comes to pastoral work. They make greater and more creative use of the scope offered by canon law.
- The dioceses are to present concepts for this to their diocesan committees within three years.
- The experience with new leadership models is to be evaluated in the dioceses, and the evaluations made available to the other dioceses.
- The dioceses are to revise the Church Property Management Acts (*Kirchenvermögensverwaltungsgesetze* - KVVGs) and the Property Management Acts (*Vermögensverwaltungsgesetze* - VVGs), with the aim in mind to ensure that parish commissioners (in accordance with can. 517 § 2 CIC) are also enabled to have a seat in the church council (administrative council). The second step will be to develop corresponding sets of rules of procedure.
- Attitudes and skills that aim to bring about a contemporary understanding of leadership and gender sensitivity are to be intensively promoted in the basic and further training of the pastoral staff, and when providing guidance to volunteers.

Media visibility

The press offices of all church institutions, and church media such as online portals and church newspapers, are responsible for raising women's profile in terms of personalities and language, and are to ensure a balanced representation in the media. The German Bishops' Conference is to raise the public profile of cooperation between the participating advisors and other women who have been appointed or are involved. All dioceses are to agree together with the voluntary bodies on the use of gender-sensitive language, and to jointly introduce regulations. Appropriate further training measures are offered to raise awareness and implementation.

Theological faculties, institutes and Church Universities

The Synodal Assembly calls on the Roman Catholic theological faculties, institutes and Church Universities to describe mandatory measures by 2024 by means of which it intends to promote the completion of doctoral and post-doctoral studies by women and increasingly recruit people of different genders to professorships. The German Bishops' Conference (Commission for Science and Culture) is to have these descriptions of measures submitted to it by 31 January

2024, and will discuss them together with the Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology (*Katholisch-Theologischer Fakultätentag*). The (arch)dioceses are to allow women in the phases of doctoral and post-doctoral studies a (partial) temporary leave of absence from service (whilst continuing to pay their salaries). In addition, the (arch)dioceses are to make available the pastoral practice posts necessary for the recognition of post-doctoral studies, insofar as this is necessary and honorary activities cannot be appropriately recognised. They are to appoint a contact person who receives and coordinates the corresponding applications.

The German Bishops' Conference and the Committee of German Catholics are to seek to bring about a significant increase in the share of female scholars on their advisory bodies and commissions. The German Bishops' Conference and the Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology seek to draw up in mutual agreement a new regulation on the *nihil obstat* procedure in which discrimination against women is to be addressed. Forms of participation by women are to be introduced here, at least in an advisory capacity. The German dioceses are to undertake to place financial support for doctoral studies by women from non-European countries on an equal footing with doctoral studies by priests. The German Bishops' Conference and the individual dioceses are to have their theological scholarship programmes evaluated with regard to their gender equality. The Secretariat of the German Bishops' Conference is to examine, together with the episcopal aid agencies, the statutes of the latter as to whether they contain systemic obstacles that stand in the way of increasing the support provided to women from other local churches.

Women in priestly training

The bishops and those responsible for priestly training are to increase the share of women with responsibilities in priestly training, both at diocesan and supra-diocesan level, and are to test the following models for this purpose:

- introducing a dual leadership made up of a rector and a woman,
- appointing a woman as second spiritual director,
- linking the training of future priests, as well as parish and pastoral assistants and teachers of religious education,
- interlocking leadership of training with reciprocal authority,
- taking into account findings from theological women's studies and feminist-theological scholarship in the basic and further training of all professional groups within pastoral care.

Committees and councils

The responsible parties are to approach persons of different genders in a planned and targeted manner and solicit their collaboration in the run-up to elections, in new appointments to existing committees, or when establishing new ones. The preparatory working groups are to be staffed equally with men and women. Those who shape the framework conditions for committee work are to respect the needs of those who are elected, and to take into account the diverse realities of life such as communication habits. This is to ensure that participation in

councils and committees can be reconciled with long-term care work (times of day, duration, location, digital possibilities, etc.). Furthermore, a quota system is a helpful tool that enables equal participation by women and men within a defined period of time. The (arch)dioceses are to revise the access regulations for the diocesan committees and councils for this purpose, and for the committees at deanery, parish and congregation levels. Lay women are to be included in the deliberations when diocesan committees that consist exclusively of clergy, or to which access is regulated by virtue of their office (e.g. cathedral chapter, priests' and deacons' councils), discuss topics which affect the shared responsibility of all the faithful for the local church. Lay women are to be granted the right to advise the priests' and deacons' councils as guests. At least 50 % of the advisors are to be women. A new legal foundation for the composition of the cathedral chapters is to be created which ensures that women can also be admitted to the chapter.

Reasoning

The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel and to promote the life of all creatures. This can be achieved when different perspectives on one and the same reality come together, including at leadership level. Teams increase innovativeness, work more transparently, and in a more goal-orientated manner. Everyone benefits from the different perspectives and skills.

The charisms of all people are to be respected and promoted, regardless of their gender. The Roman Catholic Church gains innovation and identification through greater diversity at its leadership levels. Whilst the goal of equal representation in leadership positions may not be immediately achievable in view of the shortage of specialists and leaders in the Church, a wide variety of tools will help to move closer to this goal in the medium and long term. In addition, female role models are needed in order to win young women over to take up a commitment in the Church.

It is a matter of finding a new style of “collaboration, of encounter and closeness, of mercy and solicitude for the proclamation of the Gospel” (Instruction of the Congregation for the Clergy entitled “The pastoral conversion of the Parish community” 2). This cultural change means that the Church can only do justice to Her mission in the interaction of the different charisms and skills of women and men; it is only in the interaction of gifts that She can grant appropriate space to pastoral care and be there for people in their diverse settings. Seeking new paths for the proclamation of the Gospel (Instruction “The pastoral conversion of the Parish community” 1) makes the experience of women particularly indispensable in leadership tasks.

Leadership models which provide for cooperation between spiritual leaders and those with pastoral and administrative responsibility can and must be further developed and tested. This requires further theological-scientific reflection and a redefinition of the relationship between ordination and leadership. The legal directions following the Second Vatican Council are to be tapped into and applied more consistently. Lay women exercise ecclesiastical offices by virtue of their separate mission through baptism and confirmation (can. 145 CIC). It is necessary for the tasks to be distinguished in the different models of leadership according to charisms, training, profession, commissioning, mission and ordination, but to remain free of superordi-

nation and subordination. When lay women undertake leadership tasks in parishes and congregations, this task should also be marked and described as “leadership”. Accompanying development processes within the Church are needed where the attitudes and competences of those involved are enhanced, such as with regard to transparency, trust, attentiveness towards one another and willingness to learn.

Language is a living means of expression, and has always adapted to changes in society. As a Church and as Christians, we need to consider all people and use a language that does not silence or marginalise anyone.

Women in some local churches have virtually no access to theological training and to academic qualifications, even when they themselves would very much like to have such opportunities. This not only excludes them from the Church’s decision-making processes, but also makes them more vulnerable to exploitation of power and to abuse. For this reason, all stakeholders who bear responsibility for the international theological exchange in academic and ecclesial settings must be mindful of gender equality in their work.

The training situation of prospective priests in particular is currently undergoing substantial upheavals. This presents an opportunity to interlock the training pathways of different pastoral professions more closely, and to allow people of different genders - ordained and non-ordained - to work together. It is important that decision-making and assessment powers are also shared more broadly. This will enable all those involved to gain a more comprehensive picture of the candidates for pastoral ministry, but also of the training pathways as a whole.