



Presentation

of Synodal Forum II

“Priestly existence today”

for the First Reading

at the Third Synodal Assembly (3-5 February 2022)

for the implementation text

“Personality development and professionalisation”

[Result of the ballot in the Forum: 26 Yes, 2 No]

The crimes of sexual abuse have exposed significant shortcomings when it comes to the professionalism and personality development of priests. The Synodal Forum “Priestly existence today” therefore introduces five votes for this area:

1. Personality (development) of priests and pastoral workers

Introduction

The MHG study points out that sexualised violence is often closely related to an immature, disturbed personality on the part of the perpetrators (cf. Typology of accused clerics)¹. The study identified this in relation to priests as one of the causes. Personality (development) takes on special significance in this context. The necessary, in-depth basic theological training and continuing education are not sufficient for the pastoral ministry. It is also necessary to counter the erroneous understanding that a qualification for the priestly ministry is, so to speak, automatically conferred with ordination. A mature, stable personality and personality development are indispensable for any pastoral ministry.

¹ Cf. “Sexual abuse of minors committed by Catholic priests, deacons and male religious in the sphere of the German Bishops’ Conference” (MHG study), pp. 281 et seq.

Numerous documents have already addressed the personality development of priests and pastoral workers². Various practical experiences have however revealed that there is a problem when it comes to implementation. In order to actually incorporate the important elements of personality development into life, there is a need for controlling and for evaluation in order to move from voluntariness to a verifiable commitment that is in everyone's interest.

Motion

The Synodal Assembly is requested to resolve that a working group be established by the German Bishops' Conference in order to work out, in a two-year process, a supra-diocesan framework regulation for the personality development of priests and pastoral workers as well as colleagues, and to enact/implement it according to their competence.

Especially against the background of controlling and evaluation of personality development, the framework regulation should include the following: the important areas of spiritual and cultural skills, as well as the ability to engage in dialogue, collegiality and dealing with co-workers, the ability to relate, sexuality, and the evangelical counsels of poverty and obedience for personality development, and thereby integrate all those working in pastoral ministry.

- The bishops are to create framework conditions so that priests and pastoral workers can find time and ways to lead a spiritual life. At the same time, spiritual life also requires a form of organised guidance and quality assurance (e.g. through annual staff reviews).
- The bishops are to prescribe attendance at training courses in order to enable lifelong learning and to communicate that faith needs a historical dimension so that it does not become an ideology.
- The bishops are to guarantee that further training is offered on psychological topics, as well as reflections on relational skills.
- The bishops are to create opportunities to attend further training on issues related to sexuality. The Church acknowledges that there are not only heterosexual priests. Priests and pastoral workers must show a willingness to come to terms with their own sexual orientation. If this has not yet happened, the bishops will ensure that a pastoral psychological contact person with special skills in the area of sexuality is available for priests and pastoral workers.
- The bishops are to promote priests' communal life and develop models so that a life as a "priest in a civilian vocation" can also become possible. A priest is to cultivate a lifestyle of solidarity in accordance with the evangelical counsel of poverty, including when it

² Cf. for this e.g.: POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exultate*, in: VAS 213 (19 March 2018); SAME AUTHOR, Letter to priests on the 160th anniversary of the death of the Holy Curé of Ars (4 August 2019); CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Gift of the Priestly Vocation. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, in: VAS 209 (8 December 2016); SECRETARIAT OF THE GERMAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE (publisher), *Rahmenstatuten und -ordnungen für Gemeinde- und Pastoral-Referenten/Referentinnen*, in: *Die deutschen Bischöfe* 96 (1 October 2011); SAME (publisher), *Rahmenordnung für die Priesterbildung*, in: *Die deutschen Bischöfe* 73 (12 March 2003); POPE JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, in: VAS 105 (29 March 1992).

comes to the treatment of Creation. Privileges inherent in the priesthood are questioned and reduced.

- The bishops will endeavour to establish uniform regulations with regard to staff management, service instructions and job descriptions for priests in the German dioceses.

Within this framework, the German bishops consider that not only the early and middle years of priests should be considered – sexual violence often occurred after ten to 15 years of someone working as a priest – but that the needs of the large group of retired priests require special attention. Professionalisation in this area could for example involve dioceses creating the necessary conditions for parish housekeepers to remain employed by retired priests.

2. Professionalising staff deployment, human resources development and quality management

Introduction

Exercising a profession requires professionalism, and this also applies to exercising all pastoral professions, including the profession of priest, at all levels of the church hierarchy. In today's social context, learning and adhering to professional standards constitutes a crucial foundation for credible pastoral activity, on which proclamation makes itself heard, liturgical celebrations touch and engage people, and diaconal service proves itself in the spectrum of other providers. Professional quality is not the opposite of spiritual quality, but rather the expression of its commitment and credibility.

Where we borrow terminology from human resources development and organisational development below, this is due on the one hand to the concern for professional clarity and concreteness, and is on the other hand to be understood as a contribution towards dealing with those systemic shortcomings which the MHG study has charged us with countering. It has been shown in the Roman Catholic Church up to high management levels that the probability increases of the abuse of power and sexual violence occurring where there is a lack of professionalism. Membership of the clergy, and the associated expectations of misunderstood loyalty and sometimes uncritical obedience within the church hierarchy, have frequently overlapped with the awareness and willingness to establish a professional approach to church activities, and to monitor and evaluate them regularly. As a result, this has led to problems being dealt with inappropriately – often even with good intentions – and not least to their being covered up. With this resolution, the Synodal Path is countering this with its initiative for the professionalisation of personnel deployment, human resources development and quality management at all levels and in all professional groups in our Church, so that pastoral activity remains sustainable as a spiritually-motivated and -orientated activity in our society.

Motion

The Synodal Assembly is requested to resolve that a working group set up by the German Bishops' Conference and by the Central Committee of Catholics be appointed and commissioned, with the participation of those responsible for human resources in the dioceses, as well as of persons from the most diverse professional groups. The leadership and coordination of this

working group is to be ensured by external expertise, e.g. consultants working in human resources, human resources development, and quality management. This working group is to draw up a supra-diocesan framework regulation containing standards for the professionalisation of personnel deployment, human resources development and quality management within 24 months of this resolution being adopted, and these are to be systematically structured at all levels:

- a) for a transparent development and transfer procedure, as well as for filling posts (professionalisation of human resources deployment),
- b) for strategic personnel planning and development - including training needs analyses as required - with standards for skill-building, further and advanced training, (team) supervision and (team) coaching (professionalisation of human resources development),
- c) for strategic quality management, particularly focusing on standards for leadership and management (professionalisation of quality management).

The standards defined in the supra-diocesan framework regulation are to be implemented at diocesan level. This will involve assessing and reviewing existing regulations and further developing or adapting them in the interest of the professionalisation that is envisaged.

Reasoning

a. Professionalising staff deployment

The need to act in a professional manner when it comes to staff deployment applies to all levels of the church hierarchy, to all professional groups in the pastoral field, and to all areas of the Church's activities. There needs to be a clearly-defined profile of requirements, a job description and a job advertisement, as well as a standardised, transparent application and selection procedure, for every position working for the Church.

In particular, it must be clear in the future that ordination undoubtedly confers the power to carry out specific ecclesiastical processes that are reserved for priests or bishops. But it is no substitute for either qualification or talent, and nor does it absolve the ordained person of the need to undergo further training in order to meet the requirements and perform the tasks, and to be measured by professional standards. The diocesan leadership ensures that church staff, whether they be clergy or lay people, are deployed in accordance with requirements and qualifications, and if necessary provided with the necessary skills. There are many (arch)dioceses where this is not yet the case. A change in thinking is needed here, with the aim of introducing requirement profiles, job descriptions, transparent job advertisements and standardised application procedures across the board and as a matter of course. Proven theoretical and practical professional qualifications, personal aptitude, and professional interest, should be the only parameters used in appointment procedures to evaluate and decide on appointments, with the exception of those processes that additionally require ordination. As a matter of principle, appointment procedures should be so transparent that an appointment decision can be verified at any time.

b. Professionalising human resources development

Strategic human resources development, and the resulting skill-building and further training measures, are indispensable when it comes to professionalising church activities. Ensuring this is part of the pastoral responsibility of every diocesan leadership. Professionalising church activities particularly involves carrying out an analysis of training needs based on current and future tasks and, on this basis, the qualification and further training of staff members according to requirements and tasks. All those working for the Church, both clergy and laity, full-time and part-time employees, have the right and at the same time the duty to obtain (further) skills in accordance with their respective tasks and areas of responsibility, but also with their interests and talents, and thus to contribute to the transparency and quality of church activities. The commitment to lifelong learning is and remains a dimension of professionalism. It must be complemented by positive incentives for high-quality actions, and the benefits of a *self-commitment* to lifelong learning must be emphasised (intrinsic commitment). There must however be a means available to discipline those who persistently refuse to enter into this commitment (disciplinary code). The requirements of church law must be taken into account here, as must the legitimate expectations of the (pastoral) team, those holding voluntary positions, and the people in the community.

Human resources development is always a key leadership task, and must therefore be visible in the organisational structure of a diocese as a matter of principle. The diocesan organisational structures must take this into account - where this has not yet been done - e.g. by setting up appropriate staff units or central departments. This is achieved not only by having an adequate organisational structure, but also by clearly allocating the authority and qualifications necessary for the tasks. The organisational structure and competences must be designed in such a way that efficient, targeted measures for human resources development can be developed and implemented.

c. Professionalising quality management

The right and the duty to obtain qualifications and undergo further training according to the respective area of tasks and responsibility must be an essential characteristic of all people working for the Church on a full-time or part-time basis. Anyone taking on leadership tasks in the Church must be intensively prepared and consistently supported whilst carrying out their work. This applies to all levels of church activity and of the church hierarchy and - in addition to spiritual guidance, spiritual exercises and regular spiritual retreats - also expressly includes supervision, individual and team coaching, and methods of individual human resources development and team support.

Two years after the resolution on this presentation, all standards are to be prepared across the dioceses in such a way that they can be introduced and tested. Priority is to be given to those areas of activity that are associated with leadership and management responsibility. After a further two years of implementation in the dioceses, all standards will be evaluated at the level of the (arch)dioceses with feedback to supra-diocesan level, and if necessary their further development/adaptation at supra-diocesan and diocesan level. The aim is to identify further development needs in constantly-recurring phases of evaluation, and to incorporate

these in standards on an ongoing basis. The Secretariat of the German Bishops' Conference will submit a proposal for a resolution to the Synodal Assembly in order to ensure that this aim is achieved in organisational terms.

3. Professional lay ministries in the Church in their interaction with the ordained priesthood

Introduction

The professional groups of parish expert workers and pastoral assistants have formed an essential component of the pastoral ministry of the Roman Catholic Church in the German-speaking region for decades. This component is also of great importance for the universal Church in view of the upcoming paradigm shift from a clerical to a synodal Church, given that it facilitates a 'synodal' embedding of the priestly ministry - which in turn is endangered by clericalism - in the communion of different ecclesiastical offices. Clericalism is based, among other things, on the binary difference between the clergy and the laity. Parish expert workers and pastoral assistants however transcend this binary nature of a distinction between the clergy and the laity towards a plural order of ministries in which a Spirit-empowered diversity of ecclesiastical offices is recognised in the sense of the New Testament beginnings.

They thus continue what begins in Vatican II when the possibility is mentioned that the laity is called to a "direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy" (LG 33), and is entrusted with functions "which are more closely connected with pastoral duties" (AA 24). As ministers who are not ordained, but who are commissioned by the bishop (cf. CIC can. 145 §1), when they preach, for example, they do not speak in their own name, but in the name of the Church. This experience leads to important steps for action.

Motion

The Synodal Assembly is requested to resolve that the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of Catholics are to establish a joint working group with the involvement of the professional associations of parish expert workers and pastoral assistants. It should make the theological and pastoral opportunities that arise from the unique interaction of professional lay ecclesial offices with the ordained priesthood fruitful both for the Church in Germany, and with regard to the universal Church. In doing so, both a discussion of pastoral practice (e.g. the primacy of joint training, the need for mutual supervisory roles, depending on the function, the expansion of all bodies in which the clergy are represented to include professional lay ministries), and theological clarifications, are to be provided. The working group should begin its work within one year of the end of the Synodal Path, and should present its first findings in this regard, and the resulting consequences for the training and practice of all pastoral professions, to the public two years after the end of the Synodal Path.

4. Priests in a secondary office

Introduction

The understanding of the priesthood is undergoing major upheavals in our time. It is not only the shortage of young people, and the abuse committed by clerics, that are triggering reflection on the priestly existence today. Above all, it is about the difficulty of making priestly life and work comprehensible in a society that is becoming increasingly secularised.

For these reasons, the priority today is to rethink the ways in which the priestly ministry is exercised. Priests work in the German dioceses as parish priests, or are active in ministry in the parish. However, there are also priests who have another profession: professors of theology or philosophy, teachers of religion, judicial vicars, vicars general, or priests in categorial service such as hospital, accident and emergency, pastoral care of people with disabilities, etc.

Many aspirants to the priesthood do not find their priestly vocation until they have reached a more mature age. In their first profession, they have taken up another profession in which they are very well trained, and have already participated actively in social working life for a number of years. There are doctors, teachers, lawyers, social workers, bankers and tax consultants who no longer practice their old profession because of their ordination. Ordination to the priesthood places the new profession of pastor on the horizon, in which the pastoral ministry with its manifold tasks has to be mastered. Apart from "gaining time", are there really also substantive reasons why one and the same person cannot be a part-time bank employee and a part-time priestly pastoral worker at the same time? Could a priest not exercise his ecclesiastical office in a secondary office, or even in an honorary office? Is Paul's model no longer valid? Paul was very keen not to discredit the proclamation of the Gospel, thus portraying the ministry of proclamation as "unaffordable" from the very beginning (Acts 18:3; 1 Cor 9:18; 2 Thess 3:7-9).

Should there not also be other vocational opportunities for priests in this day and age? A doctor, for example, who is also a priest, would come into contact with people in our society who otherwise would not (want to) have anything to do with the Church. The same applies to other professions in our society. But it is not only contact with clients or patients that is important. Contact with colleagues in the same field could also make the ecclesiastical profession stand out more prominently. The congregation of God has always been larger than the boundaries of the parish indicate.

Motion

The Synodal Assembly is requested to submit a motion for consideration with regard to the extent to which ministry is possible under canon law for priests in a secondary or honorary office. Priests who exercise another profession cannot be appointed as parish priests in the traditional sense. They could however carry out their ministry in a secondary office by virtue of administering the sacraments, and thus also help build up the congregation.

Reasoning

The model of a priest living and acting as a parish priest has many advantages. Above all, the fact of his being available for the wide range of tasks is an argument in favour of regarding the priesthood as a “full-time position”, and not as a “secondary office” or “honorary office”. The question is however whether this model must remain the only one, or whether there might not be other models of working as a priest. This professional model is already practised in other countries, as is the case with the permanent deacon. If a priest earns his living with another profession, this can also enhance the credibility of his ministry. He is thus placed on an equal footing with all faithful who earn their living in their professional lives and devote their free time to the faith.

The priestly ministry is primarily to serve the renewal of the Church (PO 6). The priest is not only the shepherd of the worshipping community, but he is the shepherd of the whole people of God (*Pastores dabo vobis*, 12). This people also includes those who are distant from the Church, those who have left the Church, and the non-Christians. To live in unity with them and to proclaim the Good News to them is an undeniable task to be performed within a priest’s work for God and for the world. Our present time in particular needs priests who work for God’s Word in the midst of the conditions in society and, as professionals in social professions, promote other and new places of formation of the community.

5. Professionalisation in training for the priesthood

Introduction

It is also important to look at the conditions of training in the context of professionalisation. The results of the MHG study, social change, and the questioning of the former conception of the priest, pose new challenges for training for the priesthood in Germany.

Motion

The Synodal Assembly supports the quality criteria developed so far at the level of the German Bishops’ Conference for the reorganisation of training for the priesthood in Germany.

The Synodal Assembly is requested to resolve that the Standing Council of the German Bishops’ Conference should implement the following additional criteria in its process of reorganising training for the priesthood:

- Training should be carried out according to uniform nationwide quality criteria and goals, and these should be enforced and monitored. This requires common quality management. It is recommended that an episcopally-commissioned person be appointed at the level of the German Bishops’ Conference. His or her task is to advise and monitor the seminaries in the implementation of and compliance with the quality criteria through regular visits and in discussions with leaders and seminarians. (Cf. for this the previous practice at the level of the Bishops’ Conference)
- Training in all pastoral ministries is provided with the aim in mind of subsequently working together in a team. In order to promote and practice a culture of cooperation from the

very beginning, there is a need not only for a joint inter-professional pastoral course, but also, in addition to the individual training elements, for trainees from all pastoral professions to work together during the first years of training.

- The admission and exclusion of candidates is communicated to them in a transparent manner according to criteria which are standardised throughout Germany. This includes mandatory minuting of the once-per-semester discussions between the rector and the seminarian, and access to the seminarian's own training file. The basis for this is formed by a training contract which is concluded between the diocese and the seminarian when the latter first enters the seminary.
- Training for the priesthood aims to train candidates to become integrated, holistic, mature personalities:
 - I. Personality development requires prolonged activity in a practical pastoral field during the course of study, and the acquisition of knowledge in the field of pastoral psychology.
 - II. Personality development requires professional trainers. The mentors and trainers in training for the priesthood should therefore be selected and trained according to defined quality criteria before they begin their work. In addition to the obligatory supervision, they should also receive spiritual guidance for constant self-reflection. Where this is not yet guaranteed by a corresponding framework regulation, this should be included.
 - III. Personality development is also closely linked to the development or growth of relational skills. This is part of both affective maturity and of pastoral empowerment.
 - IV. Psychological guidance is to be integrated into training for the priesthood³. It is highly recommended to offer this during the whole training period, together with the activity of the other trainers. It is provided by an external psychotherapist. The voluntary option for the seminarians, as well as a suitable selection on the part of the seminary, must be guaranteed (similar to the selection of spiritual guides).
 - V. Personality development requires that the candidate's sexual identity and orientation be clarified. The psychosexual development of the candidate is an integral part of training for the priesthood. This requires clear substantive guidelines and unambiguous personnel responsibility. There must be no taboos, as these can trigger latent dynamics in the candidate.

³ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Amoris Laetitia*, No. 203; *Ratio Fundamentalis* Nos. 190-197.