



ERZBISCHÖFLICHES ORDINARIAT MÜNCHEN : PRESSESTELLE

— PRESSEMITTEILUNG —

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The spoken word is final!

Statement by the Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, at the press conference on abuse on 3rd December 2010

The year now coming to an end has been for the church a year of penance. It began with a shock, which triggered the cases of sexual abuse and physical violence known to you. These were surely the worst months of my life. I felt shame, sadness and dismay.

The period of advent, which has just begun, has always been a time of penitence, a time of change. In this regard it is appropriate that the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising are today presenting the report on abuse produced by the independent firm of Westpfahl, Spilker, Wastl.

In this report we find again the line that has been taken by the Archdiocese to deal with the terrible events that have befallen the church. What we are doing, we owe to those persons who have become victims. We are doing it in order to prevent any future abuse, as far as it is possible in our power to do so.

I believe that we have no alternative. We intend to bring justice to the victims as far as is humanly possible, and recognise their suffering. In addition, we want to learn from the awful mistakes and transgressions of the past. As Archbishop I say this: we ask as a church for forgiveness for the actions of members of the church.

For this reason we are coming to terms with what has happened with the highest degree of transparency. This purpose is well served by the report on abuse, which Ms. Westpfahl will present to you today.

Accounting for the past is – alongside the work of our commissioners



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charged with investigating abuse – one of the pillars our actions are based on. At the same time we are looking to the future. Our objective is: our institutions, parishes, schools and youth groups to be safe places for children and young people – places, where they will be safe, secure and protected – places, which will provide them a living example of the essence of the Christian message in a believable manner. This is why we are directing our efforts to the area of prevention. We are developing a new concept of prevention under the leadership of our Episcopal Commissioner of Prevention. The German Conference of Bishops (*German abbreviation* - DBK) has already created the guidelines for this.

As a church, we must not and will not abrogate our responsibility. We will not retreat and evade the challenges. This world, this society needs us, needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Who, if not us, will proclaim the magnificent message of the Gospel, enriching both our lives and all areas of society in such abundance – *the* liberating message.

Our trustworthiness, however, is the basis for our actions in the service of the Gospel. This has been seriously damaged in the course of this year. We intend to – and must – regain it.

The shock of this year must act as a wake-up call to the church, turn us around and encourage us to a new, spiritual beginning. That is also the wish of Pope Benedict XVI, who speaks of “cleansing” and “inner renewal”. I can only warn of returning to ‘business as usual’ following these experiences. We owe it not least to our Lord how we behave in this hour.

For these reasons I am grateful for this report, which will help us to learn from the mistakes of the past.