



ERZBISCHÖFLICHES ORDINARIAT MÜNCHEN : PRESSESTELLE

— PRESSEMITTEILUNG —

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“We must act”

Press statement by cardinal Reinhard Marx for the introduction of the
“Safeguarding of Minors” course of studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome on 5 October 2018

Time and again, the bishops in Germany and around the world have expressed their horror and shame over the constant revelation of new cases of sexual abuse and physical violence. And indeed, I too am rendered speechless by the abominable crimes which priests in particular, but also other employees, have committed within the protection of the institution of the Catholic Church. Let me be clear: words of dismay are not enough. We must act.

In Germany, large numbers of cases of sexual abuse came to light for the first time in 2010. The archdiocese of Munich and Freising presented its own investigation, in which 13,200 documents were analysed by an independent law firm, to the public in December 2010. The shocking results of this study in Munich have now been confirmed by a scientific study which was commissioned by the German Bishops Conference and which was presented at the general meeting of the German Bishops Conference on 25 September. The results show, according to the study, that “sexual abuse by priests was primarily perceived by church leaders acting in a clerical capacity as a threat to the institution and the clerical system” and “sanctioning of the actions and protection of the parties involved” was secondary to “concern for protection of the office and the system”. Researchers summarise this statement under the term “clericalism”. The researchers also determined that palpable resistance to the topic of abuse has emerged in some clerics, which makes the “implementation of effective protection concepts” more difficult. In their summary, the researchers find that it is not just about drawing attention to misconduct by individuals, but rather about focussing on the structural features specific to the Catholic Church which may encourage sexual abuse and make prevention more difficult. Systemic aspects are also the reason why the risk of sexual abuse of children and young people continues to exist within the Catholic Church.

The systemic and specific Catholic causes of these countless crimes which shock both the Catholic Church around the world and the communities in the various societies must be analysed, discussed and eliminated without making them taboo. For the sake of the victims and the children who visit and will visit church institutions. The Catholic Church has lost much of its credibility, and it will be a long road to regain the trust that has been lost. A frank discussion must ask many questions: abuse of power and clericalism, sexuality and sexual morals, celibacy and training for priests, support for victims, punishment of perpetrators, and canonical prosecution of abuse cases.

The education and training of church employees is key to the fight against sexual abuse and physical violence. For this reason, in January 2012, the archdiocese of Munich and Freising, together with the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry/Psychotherapy at the Ulm University Medical Center, founded the Center for Child Protection (CCP). An e-learning programme has been developed in the CCP which is used for training around the world in various languages and which all priests and employees in the archdiocese of Munich and Freising who work with children and young people are required to successfully complete.

As we launch this new, four-semester “Safeguarding of Minors” master course of study here today, the Pontifical Gregorian University consistently continues on this road to scientifically grounded, professional child protection. The course is aimed at those responsible for child protection within the church. I hope that the Gergoriana gets lots of students in this new field – I hope that a valuable contribution will thus be made to the cause of enabling children and young people to enjoy particular



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protection within the church institutions.

I am delighted that a piece of music which is devoted to the victims of abuse will be performed for the first time tomorrow, on Saturday 6 October at 8:00 PM in the Roman Catholic church of St. Ignatius on the occasion of the launch of the new course of studies. The archdiocese of Munich and Freising commissioned this piece from Konstantia Gourzi, Professor of New Music and Ensemble Conducting at the University of Music and Performing Arts Munich. It will be performed by seven instrumental soloists from the Bavarian State Orchestra, the Bavarian State Opera's male choir and children's choir, four solo singers and ten dancers.

As you know, the Youth Synod, which I am also participating in, began this week here in Rome. The gathered bishops must want to understand young people and work together with them to find answers. In this process, we must be aware of our language: platitudes, empty phrases, pious sound bites convince no-one. The church must rather find a voice at last which will be understood, ~~and~~ in which we can credibly talk about God and present a new image of the church.

It is about listening to and understanding new things. I want to be measured by whether I truly listen and understand, and whether my actions suit my words. This applies not only, buy especially in the fight against the unacceptable global scandal of sexual abuse.