

Synodal Forum III

“Women in Ministries and Offices in the Church”

Foundational Text (2nd Reading, Decision of September 9th, 2022)

In anthropology, **according to Catholic doctrine**, two convictions exist **at the same time without contradicting each other**:

1. Man and woman have the same dignity as equal human beings.
2. Man and woman have different gender-specific vocations, which does not result in discrimination.

This core of Catholic anthropology is **consistently denied** in the text under the slogan “gender equality”. Although this term could be understood in the sense of Catholic doctrine, **it is used according to gender theory** (variety of sexual identities). **The binary gender system** is to be dissolved due to rare intersex deviations. **The supplementation of man and woman is negatively connoted**. Therefore, people should only be considered gender-neutral according to their talents. Thus, **Jesus’ manhood has no significance** for a vocation to the priesthood.

The **symbolic power of physical sexuality is ignored**: as a woman who can be a bride and mother (receiving life, carrying life within herself, feeding a child from her body); as a man who can be a groom and father (beget life, protect and promote life). **As a result, the clear anthropological orientation-giving frame for the sacraments of priestly ordination and marriage is dissolved. The special priesthood is no longer substantial but only gradually distinguished from the common priesthood of all the faithful, i.a., by mixing the ministries of the “common priesthood” with those of the “ministerial” priesthood**: Ministries of the
a) evangelization/proclamation,
b) charitable works; and
c) the liturgy/as head of the Eucharist.

Overall, the hierarchy is to be dissolved.

For the **sacrament of the Eucharist, no natural resemblance to the manhood of Jesus** is required. The **sacerdotal-cultic understanding of the office** must be overcome since the essential purpose of the Eucharistic celebration is **not the holy sacrifice of the Mass** but the proclamation of the Gospel.

Although Ordinatio Sacerdotalis (May 22nd, 1994) is considered an infallible doctrine (answer to the Dubium with a comment on October 28th, 1995, further explanation on May 29th, 2018), the ordination of women to the priesthood is regarded as an open question of discussion by 45 German bishops. This questions the **authority of the Magisterium**.

Original quotations from the foundational text
(marginal numbers from the original German version):

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(57-64): “This absolutely must include reflecting on the different theological positions from the perspective of **gender equality**, entering into a close exchange with the social sciences, cultural studies, and human sciences, and **taking up their reflections on gender theory constructively**. In this context, it should also be borne in mind that there are people in the Roman Catholic Church **who do not find their gender identity adequately preserved in the distinction between man and woman.**”

”

(187-191): “Gender equality is achieved if **every person** in the respective social context **regardless of their gender or identity** has equal rights and opportunities for participation in goods and access to positions and thus **can lead a self-determined life.**”

”

(223): “**Gender** is, therefore - in the sense of gender theory - **to be seen multidimensionally.**”

Here the **shared humanity of man and woman is denied:**

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(1117-21): “Those who consider the undisputed biological gender of Jesus as a man to be significant in this theological context run the risk of questioning the redemption of women by God since only those whom God has accepted in his human nature are redeemed.”

”

(15-18): “Because all are “one in Christ Jesus”, **the non-admission of women to ordained ministries of the Church** urgently requires renewed theological and anthropological revision in light of the current signs of the times.”

”

(1393-1396): “In the future, it should no longer be the gender that decides on the allocation of ministries, but the vocation, abilities, and skills that serve the proclamation of the Gospel in our time.”

”

(319-320): “The Church takes on Her visible form above all in **liturgical celebrations, catechesis, and diakonia.**”

”

(1192f): “**Jesus Christ represents those who care for the poorest of the poor.**”

”

(1224-1229): “The question arises as to **whether it should be the fact that a minister is a man**, his physical body, that qualifies him to represent Jesus Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist adequately. Any **spiritual glorification of the difference between the genders for the purpose of role assignments within the Church** must be critically questioned in a highly fundamental sense, especially in the context of the theology of ministry.”

”

(1162-1164): “This **overcomes a sacerdotal-cultic understanding of the office** which led to a new interpretation of the priesthood in late Antiquity and scholasticism, where the latter established its most important task, consisting in the offering of the holy sacrifice of the Mass.”

”

(45-52): The Synodal Forum III asks “**the highest authority** in the Church (Pope and Council) **whether the doctrine of Ordinatio sacerdotalis does not need to be revised after all.**”

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(1264-1267): “At the same time, the question arises as to **what it means when individual bishops today regard the question as open-ended** and call for more in-depth argumentations under the theological research.”

Link to the original document:

https://www.synodalerweg.de/fileadmin/Synodalerweg/Dokumente_Redен_Beitraege/englisch-SV-IV/ENGL_SV-IV-Synodal-Forum-III-Foundational-text_Second-reading.pdf

Synodal Forum III

Implementation text “Proclamation of the Gospel by Women in Word and Sacrament”

(Decision of September 10th, 2022)

The implementation text is based on a functional understanding of consecration and Pelagian ecclesiology. **For pragmatic reasons, for example, the administration of a sacrament should be entrusted to the catechist. There is a lack of a clear distinction and appropriate definition of the relations between ordo and charisma.** Canons of the CIC, which contain exceptions, are intended to serve as a basis for general cases. The text reveals the desire for the clericalization of the Church by **opening up the sacramental functions reserved for consecrated ministers to laypersons (baptism, homily, assisting at marriages, anointing of the sick, confession).** This contradicts the desire to strengthen the lay apostolate, as already the II. Vaticanum and Pope Francis put into practice by opening up the ministry of lectors and acolytes to all the faithful and by reviving the catechist ministry.

Original quotes from the document:

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(89-93): “[The German bishops] stand up **for a particular norm in addition to can. 766 CIC 1983**, through which theologically and homiletically qualified **non-ordained pastoral workers are commissioned as preachers** of the Gospel to the **permanent preaching ministry in the local Church** in accordance with the pastoral needs recognized by the local ordinary in all the forms of divine worship.”

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(115-118): “In the committees of the German Bishops’ Conference, taking into account existing documents in individual German dioceses and the universal Church, a framework for the commissioning of lay people to lead the celebration of baptism and to assist at marriage is being developed.”

”

(132-135): “Possibilities for the revival of **lay confession** in the context of spiritual accompaniment are also discussed. The importance of the **blessing and anointing of the sick regarding all pastoral workers**, who are active in the accompaniment of the sick, is also considered.”

Link to the original document in German:

https://www.synodalerweg.de/fileadmin/Synodalerweg/Dokumente_Redен_ Beitrage/SV-IV/T3NEU_SV-IV_9_Synodalforum_III-HandlungstextVerkuendigungDesEvangeliumsDurchFrauen.pdf

Synodal Forum III

Implementation text

“Measures against Abuse of Women in the Church”

(version of the 1st Reading)

The main weakness of the text is that **the term “spiritual abuse” remains indefinite**. The lack of terminological sharpening **could pave the way** for denunciations of clergy with unpopular views and an inhibiting threshold to offer spiritual accompaniment. The text also does **not separate different forms of abuse**, e.g., in proposals for prevention programs.

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Quote: “It has been known for years that many adults, especially adult women, **are victims of spiritual or sexual abuse** in the Catholic Church; at the same time, the legal regulations are insufficient (see explanation below). **Sexual and spiritual abuse often go hand in hand in the context of the Church.**”

Link to the original document:

https://www.synodalerweg.de/fileadmin/Synodalerweg/Dokumente_Readen_Beitraege/englisch-SV-IV/ENGL_SV-IV-Synodalforum-III-Handlungstext.MassnahmenGegenMissbrauchAnFrauenInDerKirche_First-reading.pdf

Synodal Forum III

Implementation Text "Presence and Leadership – Women in Church and Theology"

(Version of the 2nd Reading)

The main criticism is the **tendency to partially detach leadership from the sacrament of Holy Orders to transfer to the laypersons, especially women.** The required alternative leadership models contradict the instruction "The pastoral conversion of the Parish Community" (2020) No. 66, which rejects exhaustion of can. 517. There is a lack of clarification on the inclusion of women in priestly formation. A justification based on gender theory is to be rejected, and a critical examination of it is to be welcomed.

Original quotes from the document:

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“In pastoral care, new leadership models are being practiced and tested. (...) In addition to the model of the canonical parish priest, which is predominantly applied in the German dioceses, there are various leadership concepts at the parish level in which **leadership functions are delegated** or carried out by a **team of persons who share responsibility**. In some dioceses **can. 517 § 2 of the CIC** applies: Deacons and laypersons can be involved in the “exercise of the pastoral care”, i.e., in the comprehensive pastoral care in parishes. The diocesan bishop can **involve full-time and voluntary workers, alone or in a team, at a parish or parish community level, by commissioning them to exercise pastoral care.**”

“This requires further theological-scientific reflection and the **redefinition of the relation between consecration and leadership.**”

Link to the original document:

https://www.synodalerweg.de/fileadmin/Synodalerweg/Dokumente_Re-den_Beitraege/englisch-SV-IV/ENGL_SV-IV-Synodalforum-III-Handlungstext.PraesenzUndLeitung_Second-reading.pdf