

Synodal Forum II

Foundational text "Priestly existence today"

(2nd Reading at the Synodal Assembly September 8th-10th, 2022)

Implementation text

"Breaking with taboos and normalization - votes on the situation of non-heterosexual priests"

(Resolved version of September 10th, 2022)

Implementation text

"Celibacy of priests - encouragement and opening"

(2nd Reading at the Synodal Assembly September 8th-10th, 2022)

The passed texts of the forum are unclear, often **incomprehensible, and sometimes even contradictory**. On the one hand, there are quite traditional formulations on the priesthood, comments, mostly added later after objections, and quotes from popes and councils. On the other hand, anyone familiar with the situation in German theology will find the liberal agenda for the **abolition of the ordained priesthood** reflected in the texts. In contrast to the Council, most participants want to bring about a breach and a Protestant conception of the priesthood.

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(Foundational text, No.1): "Questions about priestly existence have been asked for 50 years and have not been satisfactorily answered. In this context, the **priestly ministry is questioned in all its dimensions.**"

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(Foundational text, No.1): "A priesthood theoretically **reserved for heterosexual men only seems questionable** and incompatible with actual practice. The exclusion of women from admission to the priesthood creates a lack of understanding, and its review is clearly demanded. The justification for the **priests' celibacy as an obligatory way of life is broadly no longer accepted. There are loud-voiced calls for the opportunity for homosexuality to be discussed, also among priests.**"

According to the text, the **reality** of people's lives is considered a **source of theological knowledge**: Accordingly, a statement of faith or theological information is **obsolete when it is no longer understood** or shared: Only what can be communicated or what is received is true. However, things are portrayed differently with the communication to the outside and Rome. The leading voices among the German bishops appease: We are not taking anything away from anyone; **the teachings are not being changed at all**; they are just accentuated and further developed.

The original texts speak a different language: Firstly, the agenda is spelled out in the so-called implementation texts. Secondly, the **traditional terms are used ambiguously and are constantly being relativized**. Two examples:

“**Sacramentality**” could, in some places, be understood in terms of the classical definition of a sign that effectuates what it stands for. But that is never said and can **only be meant analogously** in all places: “sacramental” only in the sense of a symbolic representation that lets the faithful “experience” something, “makes something clear” to them, or that can disappear:

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(Implementation text Celibacy, a): “A yes to the sacramental priesthood, which is just as constitutive for our Catholic Church as the common priesthood of all the baptized, at the service of which the sacramental priesthood stands. A yes to the fact that people **can experience priests who promise them salvation** at the junction points of human existence and in its ups and downs and **make it tangible**. A yes to the fact that the priestly ministry allows the abiding presence and working of Jesus Christ **to be experienced** amid the world in various ways.”

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(Foundational text, No. 5.4): “However, there is a danger that the celibate way of life will marginalize if the symbolic nature is no longer supported by large parts of the people of God. In addition, **sacramentality is at stake** when celibacy is neither understood spiritually nor lived concretely and credibly and is tacitly and collectively undermined in a double life tolerated by the Church’s leadership.”

How a layperson represents Christ is little distinguished from the priest’s “representation of Christ.” On the one hand, the latter is understood as a symbol of grace and salvation that come to us “extra nos” undeservedly from God; on the other hand, this is immediately relativized:

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(Foundational text, No. 4): “According to the Catholic tradition, in the Church, the ordained official constitutively keeps the **substantial counterpart** of the divine promise and claim present in the community.”

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(Foundational text, No. 5.2): “**Every baptized person represents Christ**, the only ‘high priest after the order of Melchizedek’ (Hebrews 5:10), who has made His Church into a kingdom of ‘priests to his God and Father’ (Rev 1:6). [...] This must be distinguished from the priest’s representation of Christ in the administration of the sacraments reserved for him, especially the celebration of the Eucharist. In magisterial texts, it becomes clear that the ‘repraesentatio Christi’ by the priest is not limited solely to the sacramental celebration or the presiding over the Eucharist but concerns the entire priestly existence. This raises the question of how

the priest's representation of Christ outside of the celebration of the Eucharist relates to the representation of Christ by all the faithful.

Outside his sacramental acts, the priestly existence does **not differ from that of all the faithful**. The fact that the priest's 'sacramental representation' shapes his whole life does not mean that he is different in everyday life."

The special participation of the ordained priesthood in the priesthood of Christ and the configuration as "imago Christi" for the offering of Christ's sacrifice "in persona Christi", the remission of sins, and his task of administering the priestly ministry publicly before the people in Christ's name is acknowledged with a quote from *Presbyterorum ordinis* (PO) in footnote 30. **But the justification for the priest's offering of his life, with the obligation to be celibate to take on Jesus' way of life, is not seen.**

The pastoral love (*Pastores dabō vobis*) associated with Jesus' pastoral mission does not appear anywhere. Also, the difference, **not just in degree but in substance**, between special and common priesthood is, after *Lumen Gentium* (LG 10) quoted in reduced form. But the manner of speaking is dismissed as ontological Aristotelianism incomprehensible today; and the specific difference of the priest expressed there, to exercise the three "munera Christi" by his sacred power, is **reduced horizontally** and then reversed, as follows:

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(Foundational text, No. 5.3): "... the essential difference consists in the sacramental service for the unity of the community and congregation. The priest also fulfills the described service for unity in his leadership ministry. [...] Leadership ministry is a broad and open term. **Leadership essentially enables the participation of many** in the various tasks of the Church. Leadership seeks the gifts of the Spirit and allows them to be realized in the ministry for the unity of the Church.

[...] Priestly leadership [...] is rather to be understood in theological terms as a teaching ministry. Proclaiming the Gospel is the primary task of leadership ministry."

The need for the consecration of priests is not justified by the "extra nos" of the grace bestowed on Christians from the incarnation, cross, and resurrection of Christ, **which no one can simply take** and which no one can produce, because only a sacrament enables one to administer the sacraments of Christ. Instead, the substantial difference that the consecration justifies, considering the widespread doubt, is only explained in an anti-Donatist way:

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(Foundational text, No. 4): "**The sacramental necessity of the priesthood is in question.** Also, in parishes, the specific ministry of the priest is no longer plausible. Considering the current lack and the foreseeable striking decrease of ordained officials, many parishes are looking for and finding pragmatic ways of shaping **Church life without priests.**"

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(Foundational text, footnote 41): “If the Lord works grace and salvation in the Church through the sacraments, then the effectiveness of the sacramental priestly ministry must be given independently of the moral disposition of the official. But that could only be expressed in **ontological categories.**”

The tendency of the whole text is clear: **The specific difference of the ordained priesthood is to be leveled out.** However, no christological or vocation-theological or ecclesiological justification is sought for the priesthood and celibacy. So, there is a lack of insight that the apostles were first called and appointed before anyone was baptized; that they, in turn, appointed men by laying on hands to celebrate the Lord’s Supper and administer other sacraments, and preside over the communities. Therefore, the following conclusion is drawn:

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(Foundational text, No.1): “The biblical testimony is definite in a thematic context. In the strict and proper sense, **there is only one (high) priest, Jesus Christ. And it speaks of the priestly people who received redemption** (cf. 1 Pet 2:9).”

In addition, the texts are closely related to the other synodal forums regarding modern exegesis and uncritical adoption of the hypothetical statements and research suggestions of an abuse study (MHG study). It is claimed: **The outdated theology of the priesthood, clericalism, obligatory celibacy, and the refusal to ordain women and homosexuals as priests have encouraged sexual abuse.** Who does not favor the change of sexual morality in the Catechism of the Church, which Forum 4 demands, i.e., the legitimacy of not heterosexual genital sex of all possible genders with each other, **“discriminates”**; and:

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(Implementation text “Breaking with the taboos”, No. 3.): “Anyone who exhibits discriminatory attitudes cannot hold positions of responsibility and leadership. To help raise awareness, the Catholic Church in Germany is working with Church, **governmental and civil society anti-discrimination agencies.**”

According to the accepted amendment of the last Synodal Assembly, this is “definitely not enough.” Therefore, it should say in addition:

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(Implementation text “Breaking with taboos”, No. 3): “Discriminatory behavior is principally to be **condemned and even penalized**, if necessary.”

Link to the foundational text “Priestly Existence”:

https://www.synodalerweg.de/fileadmin/Synodalerweg/dokumente_Reden_Beitraege/SV-IV/SV-IV-Synodalforum-II-Grundtext-Lesung2.pdf

Link to the implementation text “Breaking with taboos and normalization - votes on the situation of non-heterosexual priests”:

https://www.synodalerweg.de/fileadmin/Synodalerweg/dokumente_Reden_Beitraege/SV-IV/T2NEU_SV-IV_6_Synodalforum-II-HandlungstextEnttabuisierungsUndNormalisierungs-Voten-zur-Situation_ni.pdf

Link to the implementation text “The celibacy of the priests – encouragement and opening”:

https://www.synodalerweg.de/fileadmin/Synodalerweg/dokumente_Reden_Beitraege/SV-IV/SV-IV_Synodalforum-II-Handlungstext.DerZoelibatDerPriester-Lesung2.pdf