



## Statutes of the Synodal Path

Adopted by resolution of the Plenary Assembly of the German Bishops' Conference  
on 25 September 2019

Adopted by the Plenary Assembly of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK)  
on 22 November 2019

### Preamble

The Catholic Church in Germany is embarking on a journey of change and renewal.

We are facing the serious crisis that is deeply shaking our Church, especially due to the abuse scandal. We are counting on the great commitment of all those who are involved in the activities of the Church.

As baptized women and men, we are called to proclaim in word and deed the "kindness and love of God" (*Tit* 3:4) so that people may hear and receive the Gospel in freedom. We want to use the Synodal Path to improve the conditions for us to fulfil this task credibly.

On the occasion of the Synodal Path, Pope Francis wrote a letter to the "Pilgrim People of God in Germany" (29 June 2019). He shares with us our "concern for the future of the Church in Germany"; he has encouraged us to seek "a candid response to the present situation". He addressed our ecclesial sense to preserve the unity of the whole Church and to shape the synodal process from the bottom up. He has encouraged us to embrace the "primacy of evangelization" and to combine the spiritual dimension of the Synodal Path with the structural challenges.

We focus on the question of God and the way He wants to go with people today. We see that for many people it is the Church herself that obscures the image of God. We rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to renew the Church so that she can credibly witness to Jesus Christ as the light of the world.

*Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;  
Teach me your paths,  
Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
For you are God my saviour,  
And for you I wait all the day.  
(Ps 25:4-5)*

In their joint responsibility for the Synodal Path, the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics have agreed on the following Statutes, which describe a Synodal Path of a special kind.

#### **Article 1      Task**

- (1) The Synodal Path of the Catholic Church in Germany serves the common search for steps to strengthen Christian witness. The aim is to clarify central issues and fields of action: "Power and separation of powers in the Church - Joint participation and involvement in the mission", "Priestly existence today", "Women in ministries and offices in the Church", "Life in succeeding relationships - Living love in sexuality and partnership". The process is scheduled to last two years.
- (2) In the context of these tasks the German Bishops' Conference regularly reports on the measures for coming to terms with and clearing-up sexual abuse in the Church, the associated measures for its prevention now and in the future as well as the steps for the introduction of a modern criminal and administrative jurisdiction in the area of the German Bishops' Conference.

#### **Article 2      Bodies of the Synodal Path**

- (1) Synodal Assembly
- (2) Synodal Committee
- (3) Extended Synodal Committee
- (4) Synodal Forums

#### **Article 3      Synodal Assembly**

- (1) The Synodal Assembly of the Synodal Path includes:
  - (a) The Members of the German Bishops' Conference
  - (b) 69 Members of the Central Committee of German Catholics ( appointed by taking into account the particular structure of the Central Committee of German Catholics),
  - (c) 10 representatives of religious orders (appointed by the German Conference of Superiors of religious orders)
  - (d) 27 representatives of diocesan Councils of Priests (appointed by the respective diocesan Council of Priests)

- (e) 15 young people, of whom at least 10 are women, not older than 30 years on 1 December 2019 and not belonging to the Central Committee of German Catholics ( appointed by the Central Committee of German Catholics),
- (f) 4 Permanent Deacons ( appointed by the Association of Permanent Deacons in Germany,
- (g) 4 representatives of the professional association of pastoral workers in Germany,
- (h) 4 representatives of the Federal Association of local parish assistants,
- (i) 3 representatives of the Katholisch-Theologischer Fakultätentag (Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology)
- (j) 3 representatives of New Spiritual Communities who are not represented in the Central Committee of German Catholics (appointed by the Episcopal Commissioner for Spiritual Communities and Ecclesial Movements),
- (k) 2 Vicars General (appointed by the Conference of German Vicars General),
- (l) up to 10 Catholic women and men nominated by the German Bishops' Conference and up to 10 Catholic men and women nominated by the Central Committee of German Catholics (also taking into account other professional groups).

A gender- and generation-equitable composition of the Assembly is to be aimed at.

- (2) The Synodal Assembly is the supreme body and takes the decisions. The members of the Synodal Assembly have equal voting rights.
- (3) The members of the Synodal Assembly shall be appointed for the entire duration of the process. If a member leaves the Synodal Assembly before the end of the Synodal Path, the body which appointed the member shall make a subsequent appointment. The members of the Synodal Assembly are not entitled to be represented. They are not bound by any instructions from the bodies by which they were delegated.

#### **Article 4 Observers and guests of the Synodal Assembly**

- (1) The Apostolic Nuncio is invited as an observant participant.
- (2) The following institutions are invited to send one observer at a time to the Synodal Assembly:
  - a. the Council of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK),
  - b. the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD),
  - c. the Orthodox Bishops' Conference of Germany (OBKD),
  - d. the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE),
  - e. the Bishops' Conferences of neighbouring countries,
  - f. the lay umbrella organizations of the neighbouring countries.
- (3) The Synodal Committee may invite guests to the Synodal Assembly.
- (4) Observers and guests take part in the Synodal Assemblies. They may be granted the right to speak.

(5) The meetings of the Synodal Assembly are open to the media.

#### **Article 5 Spiritual Companions**

The Synodal Path is accompanied by a female and a male Spiritual Companion. They give spiritual impulses and provide spiritual reflection on the work of the Synodal Assembly.

#### **Article 6 Synodal Committee**

- (1) The Synodal Committee includes:
  - a. the President and the Vice-President of the German Bishops' Conference,
  - b. the President and the Vice-President of the Central Committee of German Catholics.
- (2) Presidents of the Synodal Path are the President of the German Bishops' Conference and the President of the Central Committee of German Catholics. They preside over the Synodal Assembly.
- (3) The Synodal Committee is responsible for the preparation and follow-up of the Synodal Assemblies.

#### **Article 7 Extended Synodal Committee**

- (1) The Extended Synodal Committee consists of the members of the Synodal Committee and the two chairpersons of the Synodal Forums.
- (2) The Spiritual Companions are permanent guests of the Extended Synodal Committee.
- (3) The Extended Synodal Committee supports the Synodal Committee in its activities. In particular, it ensures the coordination of the thematic work.
- (4) The Extended Synodal Committee adopts the agendas of the Synodal Assemblies.

#### **Article 8 Synodal Forums**

- (1) The following forums have been set up for the content work of the Synodal Path:
  - Power and Separation of Powers in the Church - Joint Participation and Involvement in the Mission,
  - Priestly Existence Today,
  - Women in Ministries and Offices in the Church,
  - Life in succeeding relationships - Living love in sexuality and partnership.

The Synodal Forums develop the proposals for the Synodal Assembly.

- (2) Members of the Synodal Forums of the Synodal Path are elected by the Synodal Assembly for the duration of the Synodal Path and comprise:
  - a. Members of the Synodal Assembly
  - b. Consultants.
- (3) The Synodal Committee shall submit a proposal to the Synodal Assembly, including proposals from the chairpersons of the preparatory forums and taking into account expressions of interest by the members of the Synodal Assembly. The Synodal Forums shall have a size of about 30 members.
- (4) Each Synodal Forum elects two chairpersons from among its members, one of whom is a member of the German Bishops' Conference and one of whom is a member of the Central Committee of German Catholics. The Secretariat is in charge of the management.
- (5) The members of the Synodal Forums shall have equal voting rights in their Synodal Forum. Members of the Synodal Forums who are not also members of the Synodal Assembly shall participate in the deliberations on a proposal of their Synodal Forum in the Synodal Assembly in an advisory capacity.
- (6) The members of the Synodal Forums are not entitled to be represented. They are not bound by any instructions from the bodies which appointed them.
- (7) The Synodal Forums may invite observers and guests of the Synodal Assembly to individual sessions. They may be given the right to speak.

## **Article 9     Secretariat**

- (1) The Secretariat of the Synodal Path consists of:
  - a. The Secretary General of the German Bishops' Conference
  - b. The Secretary General of the Central Committee of German Catholics
  - c. Other staff provided by the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics.
- (2) Secretaries of the Synodal Path are the Secretary General of the German Bishops' Conference and the Secretary General of the Central Committee of German Catholics. They are in charge of the Secretariat of the Synodal Path. They take part in the meetings of the Synodal Assembly, the Synodal Committee and the Extended Synodal Committee in an advisory capacity. They are invited to participate in the meetings of the Synodal Forums and may participate in them in an advisory capacity. The Secretariat is bound by the directives of the Synodal Committee.
- (3) The Secretariat of the Synodal Path is at the disposal of the Synodal Committee and the Extended Synodal Committee for the fulfilment of their tasks. In particular, it is responsible for helping to prepare the meetings of the Synodal Assembly, keeping the

minutes and ensuring the necessary follow-up work. The Secretariat includes the Press and Information Office.

#### **Article 10 Discussion of submissions in the Synodal Assembly**

- (1) The Synodal Committee and the Synodal Forums may present submissions for discussion to the Synodal Assembly. Each member of the Synodal Assembly has the right to present motions for amendments to the submissions in writing.
- (2) There will be at least two readings for each submission. The first and second readings cannot be held within the same session, which may last several days.
- (3) No later than one month before the first reading, the submission shall be sent to the members of the Synodal Assembly of the Synodal Path and to the observers. At the same time it is published. In the first reading, a vote is taken on the acceptance of the submission as a basis for deliberation. Rejected proposals cannot be re-introduced. Motions for amendments that are accepted must be referred to the relevant Synodal Forum which shall revise the text in the light of the submitted requests for amendments.
- (4) At least two months before the second reading, the revised submission shall be sent to the members of the Synodal Assembly and observers. It shall be published at the same time. Proposals for amendments to this submission must be sent in writing to the Secretariat of the Synodal Path no later than one month before the second reading. During the second reading, further motions for amendments may be admitted to deliberation by the Synodal Assembly by a simple majority of the members present. At the second reading, the votes on current amendment proposals and, unless another reading is required, the final vote on the submission shall take place.

#### **Article 11 Passing of resolutions**

- (1) The Synodal Assembly of the Synodal Path passes resolutions for the final determination of the results of the deliberations. It has a quorum if at least two thirds of its members are present.
- (2) The resolutions require a two-thirds majority of the members present, which includes a two-thirds majority of the members present of the German Bishops' Conference.
- (3) At the request of a quarter of the members present, special votes shall be published on resolutions adopted in final votes.
- (4) Votes are always taken in public. This does not apply to personnel decisions or votes that can be taken by secret ballot at the request of at least five members of the Synodal Assembly.

- (5) Resolutions passed by the Synodal Assembly have no legal effect of their own accord. The authority of the Bishops' Conference and of the individual diocesan Bishops to issue legal norms and exercise their magisterium within their respective spheres of competence remains unaffected by the resolutions.

#### **Article 12    Announcement of Resolutions**

- (1) Resolutions of the Synodal Assembly shall be announced by the Presidents of the Synodal Path.
- (2) Resolutions whose topics are reserved for an all-church regulation are transmitted to the Apostolic See as a vote of the Synodal Path.

#### **Article 13    Implementation and Evaluation**

Three years after its last meeting, the Synodal Assembly will meet again under the leadership of the Synodal Committee to evaluate the implementation of the results of the Synodal Path.

#### **Article 14    Rules of Procedure**

The rules of procedure shall lay down the details of the procedure. They shall be adopted by the Synodal Assembly. Amendments to the rules of procedure may be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the members present, at the written request of at least one third of the members of the Synodal Assembly.

#### **Article 15    Final Provision**

These Statutes shall enter into force after their adoption by the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics. It can only be amended by mutual agreement.