



German cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller at Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, January 6, 2015.
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Cardinal Müller: No pope or council could permit female deacons, 'it would be invalid'

Amazon Synod, Catholic, Female Deacons, Female Diaconate, Gerhard Müller, Women Priests, Women's Ordination

LifeSiteNews – The cardinal in charge of safeguarding Catholic doctrine under Pope Benedict issued today a second detailed critique of the Amazon Synod's working document (*Instrumentum Laboris*), saying that no synod, Pope, or council “could make possible the ordination of women as bishop, priest, or deacon.”

Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith who was removed from his post by Pope Francis in 2017, concentrated especially on the question of the priesthood and of the impossibility of female participation in it (read full critique below).

“The Magisterium of the Pope and of the bishops has no authority over the substance of the Sacraments,” the Cardinal states.

“Therefore, no synod – with or without the Pope – and also no ecumenical council, or the Pope alone, if he spoke *ex cathedra*, could make possible the ordination of women as bishop, priest, or deacon. They would stand in contradiction to the defined doctrine of the Church,” he continues.

“It would be invalid,” he adds.

Cardinal Müller called the upcoming Synod, set to take place in Rome October 8-27, a “wrecking ball” that aims at a “restructuring of the Universal Church.”

The Cardinal's text is published simultaneously in four languages. In English (*LifeSiteNews*), Italian (*Corrispondenza Romana*), Spanish (*Infovaticana*), as well as in German (*Die Tagespost*). Last week, Cardinal Müller issued his first evaluation of the Amazon Synod's working document, criticizing it for its “radical u-turn in the hermeneutics of Catholic theology” and for its “false teaching.”

In his statement today, Cardinal Müller links the Amazon Synod and its own reform proposals directly with the “synodal process” which is now being prepared by the German bishops and which, similarly to the Amazon Synod, aims at discussing the role of women in the Church as well as raising questions about priestly celibacy.

Both the German “synodal path” and the Amazon Synod aim at questioning the priesthood, both with regard to priestly celibacy, as well as with regard to the incongruous idea of **separating** the governing duties from the teaching and sanctifying duties of the ordained office. The Amazon Synod even proposes to create a new form of priesthood, with married men who have families and thus less time for a longer period of theological preparation for the priesthood. Both reform movements also propose new roles for women in the Church, with the Amazon Synod's working document even proposing an “**official ministry**” for women, to include possibly a “**female diaconate**.”

Cardinal Müller gives his entire theological weight and expertise in order to defend the Catholic priesthood. He reminds us that “the three-fold office – as it historically grew out of the apostolate in the Early Church as instituted by Christ – exists by virtue of a “divine institution” (*Lumen Gentium* 20).” This office is exercised by bishops, presbyters/priests, and deacons.

The Cardinal reminds his German fellow bishops that “in better times, the German bishops unanimously opposed the culture-warrior Bismarck and stated: 'The Church's constitution is based, in all essential points, on divine order and is exempt from any human arbitrariness' (DH 3114).”

Quoting the Council of Trent, Cardinal Müller states that “bishop, priest, and deacon are only degrees of the *one* Sacrament of Holy Orders. 'No one may doubt that the holy ordination is truly and essentially *one* of the seven Sacraments of the Holy Church – *unum ex septem sacramentis*.' (Trent, Decree on the Sacrament of Holy Orders: DH 1766; 1773).”

It is here that the German prelate says that a “theological analysis of the doctrinal and ecclesiastical-historical facts, in context with the binding statements concerning the Sacrament of Holy Orders” makes it clear “that sacramental ordination, in the degree and with the official title 'deacon,' has not and has never been administered in the Catholic Church to women.”

“It stems from the 'divine constitution of the Church,' as Pope John Paul II has reliably decided, that the Church has no authority to administer to women priestly ordination. This is not the conclusion from history, but, rather, stems from the divine constitution of the Church. This of course applies to all three sacramental degrees,” Cardinal Müller adds.

Additionally, he also rejects the idea of speaking “of female non-sacramental deacons, thereby establishing the illusion that this is about reviving a past – but only temporarily and regionally limited – institution of the deaconesses of the Early Church.” Thus, the German prelates insists that no Pope or Council may decide to admit female deacons.

The idea of a non-ordained female office has been [recently proposed](#) by different German clergymen, among them being [Cardinal Walter Kasper](#). Cardinal Reinhard Marx just [proposed](#) to allow laypeople to preach at Mass. This, however, is not acceptable, according to Cardinal Müller. “It also contradicts the essence of the episcopal and of the priestly office,” he explains, “when it is being reduced to the sanctification alone in order that one may then let laypeople – that is to say, men and women in a non-sacramental service – deliver the homily during the Mass celebrated by a priest or bishop.”

Müller goes on to say that here is the danger that priests “become “altarists” [*Altaristen*”: a demeaning word for priests who celebrate Mass without a homily and pastoral care; this was an abuse which Luther detected and used for his polemics; G.M.], something which at the time caused the protest of the Reformation.”

“The Mass is – as a Liturgy of the Word and of the Body and Body of Our Lord – 'one single act of worship' (*Sacrosanctum concilium* 56),” the Cardinal states. “That is why it is up to the bishops and priests to preach and, at the most, at times to let the ordained deacon deliver a homily. The service in the Word and in the Sacrament has one inner unity.” Herewith, the German Cardinal refutes the idea to separate the priest's duties of celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass from his preaching of the Word of God.

Once more, Cardinal Müller insists that the different parts of the priestly ministry all belong properly together and may not be handed over to laypeople. “At ordination, there are not being transferred individual particular competences without any inner order and interconnection. It is the one service in the Word, through which the Church is being assembled as a community of the Faith, in which the Sacraments of the Faith are being celebrated and through which God's flock is being governed by its appointed shepherds, in Christ's Name and Authority. That is why the priestly offices in doctrine, worship, and governance are united at the root and are merely different in their theological aspects, under which we look at them (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4-6).”

Cardinal Müller highlights the importance of the priesthood which has been instituted by Christ as a means to dispense the Sacraments which give Grace: “The Sacraments are signs and instruments of Divine Grace, with the help of which God builds up the individual Christian and the Church as a whole.”

In light of this doctrine, it is clear that those who propose new priestly offices have a “secularized” view of the Faith and the Church. “Only those who have difficulties with this insight consider the Church to be at best a secular institution and subsequently fail to recognize the ordained office as a divine institution. Such people, rather, reduce the Christian office holder to a mere functionary of a religious-social organization.”

“As a supposed way out of the crisis of the Church,” Cardinal Müller adds, “the *Instrumentum Laboris* and the synodal process in Germany both rely on a further secularization of the Church. When, in the entire hermeneutics of Christianity, one fails to start with God's historical self-revelation in Christ; when one starts with incorporating the Church and her liturgy into a mythological view of the entire world; or turns the Church into part of an ecological program for the rescue of our planet, then the sacramentality – and especially the ordained office of bishops and priests in the Apostolic Succession – are up in the air. Who would actually want to build a whole life requiring total dedication upon such a shaky foundation?”

The Cardinal said that a "new model of the priesthood" is not possible.

“The substance of the Sacraments is not subject to the authority of the Church,” he writes. “And one cannot piece together each a new model of the priesthood, aided by isolated elements from Scripture and Tradition and while omitting to distinguish dogmatically binding decisions from developments in minor aspects. Nor are the priestly images as developed by pastoral strategists important, but only the one Image of Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant, which is eternally imprinted upon the souls of the consecrated and in whose name and strength they sanctify, teach, and govern the faithful (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2;12).”

Cardinal Müller points to the German bishops and their “synodal path” which aims at questioning the priesthood, and he states: “If during the proposed synodal process in Germany, the essential topic of the transmission of the Faith fails to be addressed, the decline will be more and more accelerated.”

In light of the recently published statistics in Germany showing that in 2018, 216,000 German Catholics left the Church, Cardinal Müller reminds his fellow German bishops that the answer to this crisis of Faith is not “a further secularization and self-secularization of the Church,” but, rather, “a renewal in the spirit of the Gospel.”

“The Church,” he explains, “can only serve men in their search for God and for a life in the Faith if she proclaims to all men the Gospel in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and if she makes them disciples of Jesus through Baptism.”

Furthermore, the German Cardinal states: “As it was already the case with the Family Synods, the 'German Church' claims hegemony over the Universal Church and proudly and arrogantly praises herself as the trendsetter for a Christianity at peace with modernity.”

In strategical terms, Cardinal Müller also explains the collaboration between the German bishops and the Amazon Synod, when he says that “the synodal process in the realm of the German Bishops' Conference is now being linked with the Synod for the Amazon, and this is done for ecclesial-political reasons and as a

leverage for the restructuring of the Universal Church. Additionally, at both events the protagonists are nearly identical, and they are even financially and organizationally connected by way of the relief agencies of the German Bishops' Conference. It will not be easy to control this wrecking ball.”

However, the German prelate wonders “why, in the face of the desolate state of the Church in one's own country [Germany], they now feel called to be a model for others.”

Other high-ranking prelates who have raised concern about the direction the Amazon Synod is taking include the following:

- Cardinal Walter Brandmüller, a world renowned-scholar of church history and one of the two remaining *dubia* cardinals, **called** the working document “heretical” and an “apostasy” from Divine Revelation. He called upon Church leaders to “reject” it with “all decisiveness.”
- Bishop Marian Eleganti, auxiliary bishop of Chur, Switzerland, **stated** that if ideas in the working document are adopted, they “will contaminate the whole Mystical Body of the Church – and gravely damage it.”
- Monsignor Nicola Bux, a theologian and former consulter to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith during Benedict XVI’s pontificate, **called** the Amazon Synod an attempt to “create another church” by “demolishing” the true Church from within.
- Bishop Athanasius Schneider, the Auxiliary Bishop of Astana, Kazakhstan, **stated** that Pope Francis has a “strict duty, as given to him by God” to uphold the “apostolic inheritance of priestly celibacy” at the upcoming Amazon Synod. “He may not support in the slightest way – by silence or by an ambiguous conduct – the obviously Gnostic and naturalistic contents of parts of the *Instrumentum laboris* (working document), as well as the abolishment of the apostolic duty of priestly celibacy (which first would be regional, and then naturally, and step by step, then becomes universal),” he said.

Full text of Cardinal Gerhard Müller's critique:

“Be not conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom. 12:2)

On the Synodal Process in Germany and the Synod for the Amazon

by Cardinal Gerhard Müller

1. The Secularization of the Church is the Cause of the Crisis and Not Its Remedy

He who believes that “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her” (Eph. 5:25), can only be shaken by the newest piece of news from Germany, namely that in 2018 more than 216,000 Catholics have left their spiritual home by explicitly leaving the Church, thus brusquely turning their backs to their mother in the Faith. It may be that the motives of the individual persons who had become members of the ecclesial Body of Christ through their Baptism are as varied as human beings simply are. It is clear, however, that the larger part of them leave the Church in the same spirit as one cancels membership of a secular organization; or as one turns away from his traditional political party, from which one has estranged oneself or in which one is deeply disappointed. They are not even aware – or have never been told – that the Church, though consisting of defective men up to her highest representatives, is, in her essence and mandate, a divine institution. Because Christ has established His Church as Sacrament of Salvation of the world, as “a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.” (*Lumen Gentium* 1)

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews is well aware of the pastoral difficulty “to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and who have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of

the word of God and the powers of the age to come, if then they commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and they hold Him up to contempt” (Hebr 6:4-6).

The main reason for leaving the Church without the realization that they thereby gravely sin against the love of Christ our Redeemer and thus put into jeopardy one's own eternal salvation, is the idea that the Church is a secular association. They do not know anything about the fact that the Pilgrim Church is necessary for salvation and that she is indispensable for each who has come to the Catholic Faith. “He is not saved, however, who, though a part of the body of the Church, does not persevere in charity. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but, as it were, only in a 'bodily' manner and not 'in his heart.'” (*Lumen Gentium* 14)

This crisis of a massive exit from the Church and of the decline of the Church's life (low Mass attendance, few Baptisms and Confirmations, empty seminaries, the decline of monasteries) cannot be overcome with the help of a further secularization and self-secularization of the Church. It is not because the bishop is so kind and encouraging – close to the people and never shy of expressing banalities – that the people return to Christ's salvific community or participate piously at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and in the Sacraments. Rather it is because they recognize the true worth of the Liturgy and Sacraments as means of Grace. Should the Church try to legitimize herself before a de-Christianized world in a secular manner as a natural-religious lobby of the ecological movement, or try to present herself as a relief agency for migrants by donating money – she would lose even more of her identity as the universal Sacrament of Salvation in Christ, and she will not at all receive that much-yearned-for recognition on the part of the left-wing, green mainstream.

The Church can only serve men in their search for God and for a life in the Faith if she proclaims to all men the Gospel in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and if she makes them disciples of Jesus through Baptism. She is the Body of Christ, so that Jesus Christ, her Head, remains present through her and in her, until the end of the world (see Matt. 28:19 seq.). Christ speaks to us in the

words of the homily; makes present His own Sacrifice at the Cross in the Holy Mass; and He gives Himself to us as food for eternal life; he forgives sins and transmits the Holy Spirit to the servants of the Church through which the ordained bishops and priests – in the name of Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant – act and thereby make Him visible in the parish (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 41).

The so-called synodal path of the Church's establishment in Germany, however, aims at further secularization of the Church. Instead of a renewal in the spirit of the Gospel, with the help of catechesis, mission, pastoral care, mystagogy [a mystical explanation] of the Sacraments, one now relies on – and this has already been going on for a half a century now – other topics, hoping thereby to receive public approval of the western world and to please that way of thinking that holds a materialistic image of man.

In its essence, the synodal path is about 1. the change of the Sacrament of Holy Orders into a professional system of well-paid functionaries; 2. the passing of a politically perceived “power” from the bishops and priests on to a leadership of laymen, with the added clause that, if the qualifications are the same, women are themselves to be preferred. What is bothersome to them is (3.) that Christian morality as it stems from the new life in Christ, which is now demeaned for its being “against the body” and, purportedly, not compatible with the standards of modern sexual science. The stumbling block since the Protestant Reformation and since the naturalism of the Enlightenment is (4.), of course, priestly celibacy; as well as the evangelical counsels (poverty, chastity, obedience) of the vowed consecrated life. In a Church which – as a mere human institution with purely secular goals – has abandoned her identity as the mediator of salvation in Christ, and who has lost all transcendental and eschatological reference to the Coming Lord, the freely chosen celibacy “for the sake of the kingdom (Mt. 19:12), or, in order to be able “to concern himself with the Lord's work” (1 Cor. 7:37) is perceived now as an embarrassment – like an alien element or a residual waste from which one has to be freed as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. At best, this celibacy might be granted to some

exotic people as a masochistic form of an extremely autonomous self-determination.

2. *Germans and the Amazon people in one Boat*

As it was already the case with the Family Synods, the “German Church” claims hegemony over the Universal Church and proudly and arrogantly praises herself as the trendsetter for a Christianity at peace with modernity – in spite of Pope Francis' 29 June 2019 Letter to the Pilgrim People of God in Germany. However, it has not been explained – and it is also hard to see for any interested observer – why, in the face of the desolate state of the Church in one's own country [Germany], they now feel called to be a model for others. They use the neutral and good-sounding expression of a “wholesome decentralization” (*Instrumentum Laboris* 126) and of a de-Romanization of the Catholic Church (earlier, this was called the anti-Roman aversion); but really what they value is the mythology of the Amazon and of western ecological theology, over Revelation; as well as the hegemony of their ideologues, over the spiritual authority of the successors of the Apostles in the episcopal office.

In Catholic ecclesiology, it is not about a balance of power between center and periphery, but, rather, about the common responsibility of the Pope – who is assisted by the Roman Church in the form of the College of Cardinals and of the Roman Curia – as well as by the bishops of the Universal Church, which consists in and of the particular churches under the leadership of a bishop (*Lumen Gentium* 23).

My proposal is the following: if one truly wishes to do some good for the Church with regard to both elements, then one should abstain, for example, from the dismissal of bishops without a regular canonical procedure (which includes the right to a self-defense) and also abstain from closing down monasteries without even giving reasons, or – under the pretext that one is not a subsidiary of Rome – from undermining the proper magisterial and judicial primacy of the Pope. I would also recommend dealing in a Christian manner with fellow brothers and employees who have not committed any fault – except that they defended a legitimate position, in the framework of a

legitimate plurality of opinions and of styles, which deviates, however, from the private opinion of their superiors.

The synodal process in the realm of the German Bishops' Conference is now being linked with the Synod for the Amazon, and this is done for ecclesial-political reasons and as a leverage for the restructuring of the Universal Church. Additionally, at both events the protagonists are nearly identical, and they are even financially and organizationally connected by way of the relief agencies of the German Bishops' Conference. It will not be easy to control this wrecking ball. Afterwards, nothing is to be anymore as it was before, and it has been said that one will not even recognize the Church afterwards. Thus spoke one of the protagonists thereby revealing the true aim.

Perhaps it was a miscalculation, just like King Croesus of Lydia (590-541 BC). He once asked the Oracle of Delphi about his chances of victory were he to attack the Persian Empire and then misinterpreted the prophetic response: “when you pass Halys, you will destroy a great empire.” Our Halys is the divine constitution of the Catholic Church doctrine, life, and cult (*Lumen Gentium*).

Unfortunately, in the once nearly completely Catholic South America, Catholics, just as in Germany, have left the Catholic Church by the millions without leading to any consideration of the roots of this catastrophe, nor leading to an earnest determination to foster renewal in Christ. The solution here is not a pentecostalization of the Church, that is to say her liberal protestantization in a Latin American way, but the re-discovery of her Catholicity. The bishops now may, like the “Holy Synod” of the Second Vatican Council, turn their “attention firstly to the Catholic faithful. Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation. Christ, present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. They are fully incorporated in the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her, and are united with her as part of her visible bodily structure and through her with Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. The bonds which bind

men to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion” (*Lumen Gentium* 14).

The colorful diversity of contradictory opinions and the arbitrariness in the decision of conscience are not Catholic before the Holy Will of God, but, rather Catholic is the unity of the people in Faith which introduces us into the union with the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. “That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21). And that is why we are told to take to heart: be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:3-6).

As a supposed way out of the crisis of the Church, the *Instrumentum Laboris* and the synodal process in Germany both rely on a further secularization of the Church. When, in the entire hermeneutics of Christianity, one fails to start with God's historical self-revelation in Christ; when one starts with incorporating the Church and her liturgy into a mythological view of the entire world; or turns the Church into part of an ecological program for the rescue of our planet, then the sacramentality – and especially the ordained office of bishops and priests in the Apostolic Succession – are up in the air. Who would actually want to build a whole life requiring total dedication upon such a shaky foundation?

3. The Sacrament of Holy Orders as the Central Focus of the Crisis

Through Christ's permitting participation in His Ordination and Mission (*Lumen Gentium* 28), the Apostles and their successors in the episcopal office – which also represents the unity of the local Church with the priests, deacons, and all baptized faithful – exercise their authority in Christ's name and authority (*Lumen Gentium* 20). This is not a political-sociological power, but the authority given in the Holy Spirit in order to sanctify, to teach, and to govern the People of God.

“Bishops, therefore, with their helpers, the priests and deacons, have taken up the service of the community, presiding in the place of God over the flock, whose shepherds they are, as teachers for doctrine, priests for sacred worship, and ministers for governing.” (*Lumen Gentium* 20) It is not about three different offices which have been bundled together by historical accident, so that one could take them apart or reassemble them in a different way.

It is also not appropriate to make a comparison with the worldly power of absolute monarchs against which one justifiably – and by referring to Baron of Montesquieu – presents the model of the separation of powers (government, legislation, jurisdiction). Because it is here about the one service of Christ the Teacher, the Shepherd and Priest, which is being exercised by the Apostles and their successors in Christ's Name and in the power of the Holy Spirit. And it is not a form of power *over* others, but, rather, a service *for* them and their salvation (Mt. 23:11). That is why the publicly declared readiness of some bishops to freely give up “power” is not an expression of their modesty, but, rather, a sign of their lack of understanding as to what a Catholic bishop is. The form of “power” that they wish to give up is something they had better not have in the first place; and the spiritual authority which they received from Christ at their ordination, they cannot give away, since it is not their own property that they may propose to dispense of. At the most, they could ask to be relieved of the jurisdiction of their diocese, because they are no longer capable of living up to their responsibility.

It is striking that both the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Amazon Synod and the German synodal path do not start with biblical foundations and then orient themselves according to the developing teaching of the Church in Tradition and the definitive doctrinal decisions of the Councils and the Pope. Instead, they draw their norms and rules from the putative sociological necessities of the globalized world or from the Amazonian tribes' traditional forms of organization.

If one ordains there in the Amazon respected men in professedly stable partnerships (whether in a canonically valid marriage or not?)

to the priesthood, in order to provide (!) the community with the Sacraments – even without a theological formation (IL 129,2) – why should this then not also be the leverage finally to introduce the *virī probati* in Germany, where celibacy has no acceptance anymore in society and where many married theologians would be available in order to fill, as priests, the holes within the celibate clergy?

One cannot deduce from the calling of “the seven men of good reputation who were filled with the Spirit and the Truth” (Acts 6:3) to the service of the tables (Acts 6:1-7) – which one later linked with the degree of the sacramentally ordained deacons – the clerical-theological conclusion that the Church may now create at any time new sacramental offices out of sociological necessities (IL 129), or that one may do so at all. The three-fold ordained office came, on one side, out of the necessary succession of the Apostles and their mandate to proclaim the Gospel, sacramentally to mediate Grace, and to lead, as good shepherds, Christ's fold. On the other side, it came out of the formation of the particular churches as local representatives of the Universal Church. Here, then, one of the priests is the First among the College of Presbyters, together with the deacons; and, beginning with the 2nd century, he is more and more exclusively called a bishop (Ignatius of Antioch, Mag. 6,1). In the bishop, the unity of the local church is sacramentally represented, and the unity with the Apostolic origins, inasmuch as the entirety of the bishops, with the Pope at the head, follows the College of Apostles with St. Peter at their head (First Epistle of Clement, 42:44; *Lumen Gentium* 20 seq.)

4. A Sacramental Office for Women?

The three-fold office – as it historically grew out of the apostolate in the Early Church as instituted by Christ – exists by virtue of a “divine institution” (*Lumen Gentium* 20), and it is being exercised by those who, according to the current terminology, are “called bishops, presbyters/priests, deacons” (*Lumen Gentium* 28). In better times, the German bishops unanimously opposed the culture-warrior Bismarck and stated: “The Church's constitution is based, in all essential points, on divine order and is exempt from any human arbitrariness” (DH 3114). Part of this is also the insight that bishop,

priest, and deacon are only degrees of the *one* Sacrament of Holy Orders. “No one may doubt that the holy ordination is truly and essentially *one* of the seven Sacraments of the Holy Church – *unum ex septem sacramentis*.” (Trent, Decree on the Sacrament of Holy Orders: DH 1766; 1773). That is why it makes no sense to plant into “*Ordinatio sacerdotalis*” (1994) the specious interpretation that there was no decision made about the indivisible Sacrament of Holy Orders as a whole, but, rather merely about the degrees of the episcopal and of the priestly office which only men can receive.

When making a theological analysis of the doctrinal and ecclesiastical-historical facts, in context with the binding statements concerning the Sacrament of Holy Orders, there is to be seen very clearly that sacramental ordination, in the degree and with the official title “deacon,” has not and has never been administered in the Catholic Church to women.

It stems from the “divine constitution of the Church,” as Pope John Paul II has reliably decided, that the Church has no authority to administer to women priestly ordination. This is not the conclusion from history, but, rather, stems from the divine constitution of the Church. This of course applies to all three sacramental degrees. It has become custom in the general public and in the usage of the Church to use the open word “servant” in the Greek version “*diakonos*” as the technical term for the first of the three ordination degrees. Therefore, it is not useful now to speak of female non-sacramental deacons, thereby establishing the illusion that this is about reviving a past – but only temporarily and regionally limited – institution of the deaconesses of the Early Church.

It also contradicts the essence of the episcopal and of the priestly office when it is being reduced to the sanctification in order that one may then let laypeople – that is to say, men and women in a non-sacramental service – deliver the homily during the Mass celebrated by a priest or bishop. One would thereby make priests to become “altarists” [“*Altaristen*”: a demeaning word for priests who celebrate Mass without a homily and pastoral care; this was an abuse which Luther detected and used for his polemics; G.M.], something which at

the time caused the protest of the Reformation. The Mass is – as a Liturgy of the Word and of the Body and Body of Our Lord – “one single act of worship” (*Sacrosanctum concilium* 56). That is why it is up to the bishops and priests to preach and, at the most, at times to let the ordained deacon deliver a homily. The service in the Word and in the Sacrament has one inner unity. The most important office of the bishops is the proclamation, from which stems with an inner logic also the sacramental duties (*Lumen Gentium* 25). Just as the Apostles are “servants of the Word” (Lk. 1:2; Acts 6:2), also the task of the priests (bishops, presbyters) is being defined as the service in the “Word and in Doctrine” (1 Tim. 5:17).

At ordination, there are not being transferred individual particular competences without any inner order and interconnection. It is the one service in the Word, through which the Church is being assembled as a community of the Faith, in which the Sacraments of the Faith are being celebrated and through which God's flock is being governed by its appointed shepherds, in Christ's Name and Authority. That is why the priestly offices in doctrine, worship, and governance are united at the root and are merely different in their theological aspects, under which we look at them (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4-6). In the first description of the rite of the Mass in Rome around the year 160 AD, the martyr and philosopher Justin says that during the Sunday liturgy – after the readings from the biblical books – the presider (bishop, presbyter) holds the homily, and that afterwards he celebrates the Holy Eucharist with Offertory, Consecration, and Communion (see Justin, II. *Apologia* 65-67).

The Sacraments are signs and instruments of Divine Grace, with the help of which God builds up the individual Christian and the Church as a whole. That is why one cannot go to secular authorities and claim, in the name of human rights, the right to be ordained (neither as a man nor as a woman), because human rights are instilled into the nature of man. As regards the order of Grace and the order of the Church, the civil authority has no competence. Only a Catholic of the male sex can be ordained – if he is called and if the Church, represented by the bishop, recognizes the authenticity of this vocation

and then ordains a fitting candidate according to the canonical conditions as bishop, priest, or deacon.

Only those who have difficulties with this insight consider the Church to be at best a secular institution and subsequently fail to recognize the ordained office as a divine institution. Such people, rather, reduce the Christian office holder to a mere functionary of a religious-social organization. How easily could one, in that case, exhort the faithful with the words: “Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (Heb. 13:17)

The Magisterium of the Pope and of the bishops has no authority over the substance of the Sacraments (Trent, Decree on Communion under both species, DH 1728; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 21). Therefore, no synod – with or without the Pope – and also no ecumenical council, or the Pope alone, if he spoke *ex cathedra*, could make possible the ordination of women as bishop, priest, or deacon. They would stand in contradiction the defined doctrine of the Church. It would be invalid. Independent of this, there is the equality of all baptized in the life of Grace, and in the vocation to all ecclesial offices and functions for which exercise the Sacrament of Holy Orders itself is not necessary.

5. On What is Important with Regard to the Priestly Office

In the course of 2,000 years of Church history, the cultural constellations and political-sociological conditions for the life of the Church have also at times changed in a dramatic fashion. However, the priestly office has always been the same in its essential elements, be it in a feudal society, or in the Germanic propriety church system, during the establishment of court and prince bishops, or at the time of the Office of Peter up until 1870 with the advantages and burdens of the Papal States. Like today this office is about serving the Word and the Sacraments for the salvation of the world and it is the care of the shepherd who, like Jesus, “the shepherd and bishop of your souls” (1 Pet. 2:25), the “Supreme Shepherd,” gives his life for the sheep that have been entrusted to him (1 Peter 5 1:4). The substance of the

Sacraments is not subject to the authority of the Church. And one cannot piece together each a new model of the priesthood, aided by isolated elements from Scripture and Tradition and while omitting to distinguish dogmatically binding decisions from developments in minor aspects. Nor are the priestly images as developed by pastoral strategists important, but only the one Image of Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant, which is eternally imprinted upon the souls of the consecrated and in whose name and strength they sanctify, teach, and govern the faithful (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2;12). However, profound German thinkers involved in the synodal process have defamed the central claim that priests act – by virtue of the character that they have received at their ordination – just like the Apostles, “*in persona Christi*” (2 Cor. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:20), the head of the Church (*Presbyterorum ordinis* 2), by calling it the cause of clericalism and even the cause of sexual abuse of youth. This is an unbelievable insult to the many diligent pastors. This claim means to belie Jesus who told first the 12 Apostles and then the other 72 disciples: “He who hears you hears Me, and he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects him who sent Me” (Lk. 10:16). A German professor of liturgy unwittingly placed himself in a bad light, and openly into a contradiction to the Second Vatican Council, when he claimed that the daily celebration of the Eucharist – in which Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross, out of love for mankind, becomes present to the world – is the reason for the pedophile and homophilic abuse of sexuality. Because the Council says: “In the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in which priests fulfill their greatest task, the work of our redemption is being constantly carried on; and hence the daily celebration of Mass is strongly urged” (*Presbyterorum ordinis* 13). If during the synodal process in Germany, the essential topic of the transmission of the Faith fails to be addressed, the decline will be more and more accelerated.

Perhaps we are on the way to becoming a “small flock.” But this word of Jesus is not meant in a sociological sense, and it has nothing to do with small or large numbers. God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4), with the help

of the one mediator Jesus Christ, within the “household of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

The Church is the People of God amidst the peoples. And if in one nation the majority of the people are Catholic, and thus the community and the state are permeated by the Christian culture, it is certainly God's Will. We are a “small” flock in the majority or in a diaspora, because to be a Christian in the imitation of the Crucified Lord is not a question of adaptation to the dominant culture, or a way of contradicting that culture, but, rather, a personal decision.

It is certainly so beautiful to be at the Rhine and to dream of the Amazon. But impressions of majestic rivers cannot calm the yearning of the human heart, nor can their waters quench the thirst for eternal life. Only the water, which Jesus the Incarnate Word of God, gives us, becomes in us, the “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

Translation by LifeSiteNews' Maike Hickson