

**Called to Go Out –**  
**Venturing Forth into the Future**  
**SYNOD in the Diocese of Trier**

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## **“Called to Go Out – Venturing Forth into the Future” Final Document of the Synod in the Diocese of Trier**

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### **1. “Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice.” (Matthew 6:33)**

“Breathe in us, Holy Spirit, burn in us, Holy Spirit, work within us, Holy Spirit”.<sup>1</sup> This hymn was sung whenever the Synod convened for its plenary sessions. The words express a passionate prayer for the Spirit of God. The same trust in God’s Spirit can be found in the synodal prayer with which the delegates put their meeting in God’s hands. It expresses the Synod’s conviction that the spark of life can only be kindled in the Church if its people breathe the Spirit of God. Thus the church of Trier seeks to open up to others outside its confines. In its consultations, therefore, the Synod asked not only how we wish to be Church in the future, but also: What is our purpose in being God’s Church in the Diocese of Trier? Where does God want to lead his Church in the diocese today?

The Synod is convinced that God has a plan for the world, for all people of our time and also for the church of Trier. God created man in the image of himself, male and female he created them. He has endowed every individual with an inviolable dignity. God wants mankind to be saved. His intention is also that everyone should have fullness of life. Because he, who is the father and mother of all, allowed himself to be touched by the cry of his enslaved people and came down to set his people free (Exodus 3). God sent Jesus into the world to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to secure its victory through his life, cross and resurrection. He sent his son into the world so that mankind might experience God’s salvation, especially those who need it most: people living in oppressive, violent, impoverished, inhumane or other distressing circumstances (see Luke 4).

God’s affirmation of everything that serves life and his rejection of everything that destroys life are factors that propel the Church forward and which compel every single individual in the Church to confess this truth. The Church shares in the Great Commission of Jesus. The mission of Jesus is also the mission of the Church.

The Synod is committed to this mission and calls upon the church in the Diocese of Trier to be guided by the promises of God’s Kingdom in everything it undertakes (see Matthew 6:33). The Kingdom of God has broken in through Jesus Christ. He is the one who holds out hope for a new world. It is this hope which prompts the church in the Diocese of Trier to come out of its shell, challenging it to start searching and encouraging it to refocus. This reorientation can succeed if every single individual feels this hope in his heart and chooses to trust the promises of God’s Kingdom in a new way.

A Church that sees itself like this and which follows Jesus and his message of God’s Kingdom will focus its attention on people with all their existential issues and questions, their joys, hopes, sorrows and anguish.<sup>2</sup> A Church that follows Jesus Christ knows that it has been sent to the fringes and the peripheries. It is sensitive and identifies with the vulnerable and those who are in danger of losing

their dignity or being deprived of it. The Church of Jesus bears testimony to the hope with which it is filled (see 1 Peter 3:15) and does so by venturing out into unknown territory. It seeks contact with the unfamiliar and with others, and it allows itself to be stirred up, to be affected deeply and to be inspired. It allows itself to be evangelised.

A church which follows Jesus and the good news of God's Kingdom being upon us must of necessity emphasise the dignity and responsibility of all the baptised. This means allowing scope for spiritual gifts which serve the building of God's Kingdom while also leaving space for others and for creative dialogue with them. To understand the signs of the times, the Church must seek to "distinguish clearly what might be a fruit of the Kingdom from what runs counter to God's plan"<sup>3</sup>.

We, as the Church, have often failed to live up to these aspirations. We are guilty of this before man and before God. The Synod therefore admits that the Church does not exist as an end in itself. It is not there for its own sake, to secure its influence, asserts its interpretative authority or establish its legitimacy in today's world. The Church is about God and his Kingdom and therefore about people – every single individual and the unity of the entire human family.<sup>4</sup>

Imbued with this spiritual assurance, the Synod it urges Christians in the Diocese of Trier and also the diocese as an organisation to launch into a new beginning. It wishes to encourage a process of Church development that is rooted in service for others. This entails a radically new focus and having a missionary and service-oriented impact on the world in everything that it does.

## **2. Shift in perspective**

The Synod is convinced that the Church needs to change its perspective, and it sees this change as crucial for the future of Trier as a local church. It will thus be in a position to take a more profound, different and radical view of the rapid transformation which is taking place in society and the lives of Christians.

This new focus involves a radical approach that does not cling to the old and familiar but embraces new perspectives courageously and open-mindedly. This approach does not devalue the past. Rather, it emphasises very clearly that many things are out of step with the situation facing the Church and society today – things that are no longer helping people to develop enthusiasm for the Christian faith and to be the Church of Jesus Christ with joy in their hearts.

It is time to say farewell. Saying farewell means understanding that something has come to an end and that there is a need to make a fresh start. Deliberately saying farewell in a responsible manner means attributing a well-deserved importance to what is being left behind. A good farewell paves the way for a fresh start.

With that in mind, the Synod has agreed on four shifts in perspective that should guide the church of Trier in its future development:

1. Seeing the individual as the starting point
2. Giving spiritual gifts priority over tasks and functions
3. Creating large church districts and firmly establishing networked forms of cooperation
4. Filling the synodal principle with life throughout the diocese

## 2.1 Shift in perspective: Seeing the individual as the starting point

*“Let me learn to think and talk like you, to ask your questions and to live your life, so that I can learn in a new way the message that I’ve been asked to deliver to you.”* (Bishop Klaus Hemmerle)<sup>5</sup>

### 2.1.1 Significance

A Church that sees individuals as the starting point wishes to meet them where they live, in their own environment. It tries to understand them within that setting. *Seeing the individual as a starting point* means being a church that asks questions, takes an interest, identifies with the vulnerable and seeks people out. It trusts that God is present in every person’s life and bases everything it does on Jesus Christ.

The church of Trier will thus learn to be guided by the fundamental questions that people ask and, together with them, will understand these questions in the light of the Gospel. This will enable the Church to come alongside people and, together with them, to rediscover the relevance of the Christian message in their lives.

On the one hand, therefore, the Synod notes the benefits of increasing individualism in society, for example the increase in individual freedom, greater choice and the plurality of lifestyles. On the other hand, the Synod asks itself how it should deal with the downsides of individualism: the loss of human dignity, greater isolation and loneliness, the competition for opportunities in life, the disappearance of protective communities and the decline or loss of Christian community.

*Seeing the individual as the starting point* means that the church of Trier must make a special effort to seek out those who are hurt, marginalised, poor and disadvantaged. What should be done to help them experience fullness of life? What might be the nature of a community that encourages identification with the vulnerable (“solidarity”)? How can the Church exercise caring advocacy on their behalf?

It should be emphasised, however, that this shift in perspective, *seeing the individual as the starting point*, does not mean a general randomness or redefining the Gospel under aspects of convenience. The Synod expressly advises the Church to direct its attention towards the individual and to do so without adopting a patronising attitude or casting people into a mould. “We are not dealing with the ‘abstract’ man, but the real, ‘concrete’, ‘historical’ man. We are dealing with ‘each’ man, for each one is included in the mystery of the Redemption and with each one Christ has united himself for ever through this mystery.”<sup>6</sup>

### 2.1.2 Tension

Such a shift in perspective also involves tensions. *Seeing the individual as a starting point* means being aware of the tension between the individual, on the one hand, and the community of the Church or society, on the other. The individual is clearly distinct from the community, yet both are linked to one another like the two focal points of an ellipse. The individual needs others and thus the community, while no community can exist without the individual or individuals.

If we shift our perspective in this way, the question arises as to how people should be gathered as the People of God<sup>7</sup> and sent out into the world as the Church. We must ask ourselves how we can form a Christian community if the individual in his specific situation and with his specific needs is taken as the starting point. The Church and its members will be confronted with a diversity of individual outlooks on life.

In view of a host of different lifestyles we must, therefore, ask how we can talk of the binding nature of Christian doctrine and its claim to the truth. *Seeing the individual as the starting point* will also raise concerns that the Christian message might have to be compromised or relativised in an inadmissible way. It follows that *seeing the individual as the starting point* must always include “seeing the other person as the starting point”. There has been and will continue to be tension between the community of the Church and the individual – a tension which we can also see in the Gospel (e.g. doubting Thomas, John 20:19-31).

### **2.1.3 Saying farewell**

A Church that *sees the individual as the starting point* must say farewell to the following ideas:

- The idea that it can define or standardise lifestyles as being Catholic or Christian;
- The idea that it can judge whether a person’s life has been a success or a failure;
- The idea that the truths of the faith and good Church traditions are accepted as binding and adhered to by all the baptised;
- The idea that catechesis and growing in one’s faith can be linked exclusively to specific occasions, such as the administration of sacraments;
- The idea that the structural separation of territorial and category-focused pastoral work and of pastoral ministry and charitable work are still in keeping with people’s circumstances in life.

### **2.1.4 Consequences**

In the Diocese of Trier all pastoral and administrative practice will in future be focused on the individual. This will lead to a Church which seeks to serve people and shows respect and appreciation for each individual’s outlook on life.

This will require us to formulate criteria and take a self-critical look at the tasks the Church has undertaken to date. The Synod is convinced that this will not make Church activities random and that the message of the Gospel must not simply be adapted to the spirit of the times. *Seeing the individual as the starting point* means offering and opening up the Good News to individuals in such a way that they can detect a clear turning point for their lives and then love their neighbours in a life-affirming manner (see Jesus dining with Zacchaeus, the tax collector, Luke 19:1-10).

## **2.2 Shift in perspective: Giving spiritual gifts priority over tasks and functions**

*The particular manifestation of the Spirit granted to each one is to be used for the general good. (...) We were baptised into one body in a single Spirit, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as free men, and we were all given the same Spirit to drink. (...) What is more, it is precisely the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest which are the indispensable ones. (1 Cor. 12:7, 13, 22)*

### **2.2.1 Significance**

*Giving spiritual gifts priority over tasks and functions* means that the gifts the Holy Spirit gives to the baptised must play their part in the life of the church of Trier. The focus, therefore, is on individual Christians who wish to use whatever gifts the Spirit has given them for the benefit of the Church.<sup>8</sup> The criteria for spiritual gifts are whether and how they contribute to the building of a Christian community within society, how they help towards active love of one's neighbour, how they inspire worship and how they enable the Gospel to be spread.

At the same time the connection between tasks and gifting must not be overlooked. Virtually all the work of both the wider and local church depends on people's skills and knowledge. These are closely connected with corresponding spiritual gifts, so all Christians are challenged to use their gifting.

*Giving spiritual gifts priority over tasks and functions* does not dispense with the need for a sensible focus on tasks.

The Church wishes to fulfil certain functions because they are part of its commission and because, in doing so, it can rely on the spiritual gifts that God provides. However, the Synod also realises that the familiar structures of Church life can, at times, interfere with and prevent the use of quite a few spiritual gifts. All too often everyday parish life can dull our senses, so that we do not notice the Holy Spirit at work. The Synod is convinced that, as all Christians have their own specific gifts, they wish to contribute to appropriate areas of service and also to discover new activities once they are aware of their own gifting.

By putting a greater emphasis on spiritual gifts we can create an atmosphere in which Christians can grow in their spiritual callings. In such an atmosphere people can fulfil their calling to a ministry as a priest or deacon, to a pastoral profession or a life on the evangelical council of a religious order or secular institute. They can decide to follow this calling after appropriate examination.

### **2.2.2 Tension**

This shift in perspective encourages us to stop carrying out tasks as ends in themselves or simply because we have always carried them out in the past.

*Giving spiritual gifts priority over tasks and functions* encourages the Church to review its existing tasks and functions and, where appropriate, to suspend the cycle of monotonously doing the same thing at all times. This shift in perspective empowers us and gives us the freedom to look at what God's Holy Spirit is doing as a result of so many Christians using their gifts, while at the same time watching out for occasions when some other spirit – not God's Spirit – is at work and exerting a life-destroying influence.

*Giving spiritual gifts priority over tasks and functions* also prompts us to look at the relationship between spiritual gifts and Church offices. According to Paul, the purpose of spiritual gifts is to build up the Christian Church. However, there can be conflict when it comes to deciding what is a spiritual gift and what is not. Testing and "distinguishing spirits" (1 Corinthians 12:10) is a spiritual function that must continually be fulfilled by Church leaders and the local church as a whole.

*Giving spiritual gifts priority over tasks and functions* also highlights the tension that exists when the functions of a full-time Christian minister do not automatically match his spiritual gifts.

### **2.2.3 Saying farewell**

A Church with a focus on spiritual gifts must say farewell to the following ideas:

- The idea that all the work within the Church must continue to be done in the same way as it was in the past;
- The idea that the pastoral ministry of the future does not need to be reduced to essential tasks and that there is no need to develop suitable criteria for those tasks;
- The idea that Church activities can only take place if an office holder is active or present
- The idea that Church services are only right and proper if they are led by a priest or deacon.

### **2.2.4 Consequences**

By *giving spiritual gifts priority over tasks and functions* the Synod intends to make it clear that the Church consists of individual baptised members, each with their own specific gifting. Every single Christian has spiritual gifts and is invited to contribute them to the fellowship on his own responsibility. This does not put a question mark against those in leadership within the Church, as their leadership ministry is part and parcel of a lively Christian community.

By initiating this shift in perspective the Synod wishes to encourage Christians to develop an awareness of their baptismal calling, to discover their spiritual gifts and contribute them to the life of the church of Trier.

## **2.3 Creating large Church districts and firmly establishing networked forms of cooperation**

*How good it would be to think of our parishes, communities, chapels, wherever there are Christians, with open doors, true centres of encounter between ourselves and God.* (Pope Francis)<sup>9</sup>

### **2.3.1 Significance**

*Creating large Church districts and firmly establishing networked forms of cooperation* maps out what the first two shifts in perspective mean for parishes. "Within a given territory the focus is now on the diversified life of Christians and the way they form communities within that territory. If a parish is understood in this way, it will develop more and more into a community of communities and bring forth a variety of places where Church life takes place."<sup>10</sup> However, this will only come about if there are new and large parish territories. In these territories pastoral teams, volunteers and heads of existing Church institutions will need to create their own networks.

This shift in perspective means a clear break in matters of content and structures. But it also encourages us to discover opportunities in the face of increasingly scarce material and human resources<sup>11</sup>, to redefine the relationship between closeness and distance and to be proactive in planting churches and being Church within the various social environments. This shift in perspective also encourages us to adopt a new approach to the development of our local churches.

### **2.3.2 Tension**

This new perspective addresses and highlights the tension between closeness and distance. The parish of the future will facilitate new ways of creating communities. Networked forms of cooperation will give rise to a multitude of thematic centres in keeping with local needs and opportunities for contact. People will be able to discover their faith in Jesus Christ and form relationships.

But the question also arises as to how people can find a home within Christianity today. Those who want to live their lives as Christians face new challenges.

### **2.3.3 Saying farewell**

A Church that thinks in terms of large pastoral districts with networked forms of cooperation must say farewell to

- the traditional form of a parish and the routines and practices associated with it;
- the idea that the today's parishes can continue to exist unchanged as platforms for pastoral activities;
- the idea that all parishes can or should be the same in their outward appearance.

### **2.3.4 Consequences**

By shifting its perspective in this way the Diocese of Trier is breaking with the routines and practices of local church life that have been practised in the past. It is a painful turning point because it will change the familiar environment of Church life in an unprecedented manner. However, the situation on the ground leaves no doubt that these fundamental changes are necessary if the church of Trier is not merely to react passively to developments around it. The Diocese of Trier is therefore confronting Christians with the challenge of reorganising present pastoral and administrative processes.

To preserve a tangible level of closeness we must have the courage to develop new Church venues and also to allow such venues to develop by themselves. That means boldly trying out new things and correcting what proves unsuccessful.

## **2.4 Shift in perspective: Filling the synodal principle with life throughout the diocese**

*A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening "is more than simply hearing". It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of truth" (John 14:17), in order to know what he "says to the Churches" (Revelations 2:7). (Pope Francis)<sup>12</sup>*



### **2.4.1 Significance**

The Synod has already transformed the church of Trier. The laity, priests, deacons, members of religious orders, full-time staff and volunteers have developed a new quality in their joint consultations, in listening to one another and looking at issues together. These positive experiences will help to take the synodal principle forward and eventually influence the Church within the Diocese of Trier at all levels.

*Filling the synodal principle with life throughout the diocese* is a shift in perspective with the following implications. Being constitutionally conceived as a hierarchical community<sup>13</sup>, the Church fully understands that it needs dialogue, mutual inspiration and consultation. It is partly by listening to one another that we can hear more clearly what the Holy Spirit is saying to us. This is how the Church arrives at joint decisions, borne by the Holy Spirit, and how it ensures shared responsibility and participation. *Filling the synodal principle with life throughout the diocese* means that all Christians within it must listen to and engage with one another. Every single person is therefore a protagonist who will make a difference – true to the ancient Roman legal principle whereby anything that concerns everyone must be discussed by everyone.

### **2.4.2 Tension**

*Filling the synodal principle with life throughout the diocese* does not mean “grassroots democracy”. Fundamental responsibilities and decision-making competences are not called into question. Nonetheless, synodal rules will change the way decisions are taken. This requires transparency and communication, which will present new challenges for everyone involved. One crucial factor will be the decision-makers’ response to this process and the extent to which they consider the results of consultations as binding.<sup>14</sup> Trusting in people’s sense of faith, a synodal Church must call upon everyone to listen to and learn from each other.

### **2.4.3 Saying farewell**

*Filling the synodal principle with life throughout the diocese* means saying farewell to the ideas that

- Church life must be centrally controlled in all areas;
- only full-time Church staff can and wish to make responsible decisions.

### **2.4.4 Consequences**

To fill the synodal principle with life throughout the Diocese of Trier we need reliable structures that will facilitate and ensure dynamic processes. Decisions must be prepared, discussed and arrived at in a spirit of good fellowship between all stakeholders. Decision-making processes and procedures must be made transparent and effectively communicated.

## **3. Attitudes and culture**

In talking about attitudes and culture the Synod wishes to define the basis of a more credible and convincing church of Trier. Attitudes influence the activities of individuals and the community alike. A culture is what emerges in a large organisation – in this case the diocese – with its different levels

and protagonists in their respective roles, functions and responsibilities. All actions are influenced by attitudes and the culture, while actions, in turn, have an impact on attitudes and the culture.

The Synod believes that the following attitudes and cultural characteristics are necessary for the church of Trier – i.e. the diocese as an organisation along with the individual Christians – so that it can more clearly be or become what it needs to be in terms of the faith:

- We endeavour to take seriously and understand all individuals with their specific needs and circumstances in life.
- We seek to be sensitive in matters of gender. We must ensure fairness between men and women in daily life, in the way the Church exercises its ministries, in the commissioning for such ministries, in the filling of leadership positions and in the assignment of tasks and responsibilities.
- We are under a special obligation to empower and protect children and young people.
- We must ensure a fundamental culture of attentiveness in the life of the Church and society.
- We must encourage everyone's participation in the life of society and the Church. This is a responsibility for individuals, communities and the organisation.
- We must recognise that family life today can assume a variety of forms. The family remains a fundamental concern as the nucleus of the Church and society.
- The option for the poor<sup>15</sup> and caring for creation are biblical commands, Christian commitments and social responsibilities.
- We must encourage a culture of accepting and caring for refugees. We must stand up against any manifestation of segregation or deterrence.
- The common dignity of the baptised influences relationships and fellowship between and among clergy, lay full-time staff and volunteers. This dignity must be taken seriously in everyday life and in all matters of leadership as well as in all functions and responsibilities.
- Discovering and encouraging gifts of the Spirit is a joint responsibility which can take many different forms, for instance in recruiting, training, deploying and supporting priests and deacons as well as lay full-time staff and volunteers.
- It is everybody's calling and commission to bear authentic testimony to their faith in Jesus Christ in their everyday lives and to encourage others to live their lives according to the Gospel. This testimony is also the criterion for the credibility of the organisation.
- Measurable and practicable criteria must be elaborated to assess the human, professional and aesthetic qualities of Church activities and liturgical worship.
- Based on Jesus Christ's prayer for the visible unity of his disciples, all prayer and action must be geared to ecumenical fellowship between all the baptised as well as binding structural relationships between the churches.
- People of other faiths and non-believers must be respected; they provide an opportunity and a basis for promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Contact with mindsets and people different from ourselves enables us to discover our own specifics in a new way and to question our self-image.
- By entering into dialogue with people in familiar places and in places as yet unknown to us we rediscover the strength of a credible Christian life in the midst of a diverse society.
- Both the individual and the organisation must be reliable in their communication and demonstrate mutual respect.

## **4. A new course of action**

The shifts in perspective and changes in attitudes and culture must manifest themselves in concrete action.

### **4.1 Meeting people where they are**

#### **4.1.1 Orientation**

A focus on people's social environment<sup>16</sup> is fundamental to all future pastoral and charitable work in the Diocese of Trier.

This focus must be understood as the binding principle underlying all activities in counselling, catechesis and social outreach. A plan must be devised for the way in which parishes, associations, social outreach organisations<sup>17</sup> and other partners in the various social environments can work together, on a case by case basis, in exercising their various responsibilities.

Engagement within a social environment must mean being sufficiently aware of the people who live there and also of the relevant social groups with all their resources, diverse biographies and inconsistencies, discontinuities and concerns. The church of Trier will strive to talk to them on an equal footing. It will also enable them to partake of and share in life, and it will take a critical look at any structures that violate or threaten their human dignity. This includes a major commitment to the option for the poor, as commanded in the Bible. The Church in the Diocese of Trier aims to seek out people in both familiar and new places.

This focus on people's social environments of necessity implies that the Diocese of Trier must provide suitable initial, further and continuous training that will enable its staff to adapt their pastoral practice and use of language to the people concerned and their lives – also during worship and preaching.

Aligning Church life with people's living and social environments also means taking responsibility for creation. Ecological issues are social issues, too, because they concern people's lives.

Catechesis must mean that we invite others to gain a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and what it means to follow Christ. It is a lifelong process and one which establishes connections between what we believe and our circumstances in life. Catechetical places are places where people live and meet – places where faith can be learned, experienced and filled with life. This new and fundamental approach to the concept of catechesis must be developed and fleshed out.

#### **4.1.2 Practical implementation**

- The Diocese of Trier will continue and develop its proven social and charitable work, for instance in hospitals, old people's and nursing homes, counselling services, family education centres, day-care centres and social welfare facilities.
- The church of Trier encourages volunteering and will develop appropriate standards. They cover preparatory training, personality development courses and empowering community experience.

- In the future, deacons in civil professions will also receive diaconal commissioning for their working environments.
- The Diocese of Trier will steadily implement and develop the valid environmental guidelines. The climate protection policy will be updated.
- The diocese will offer facilities where people can develop their faith and sense of purpose, ensuring that those facilities are specific to each environment and situation.
- Internal and external counselling services for schools will be set up and developed.
- The present educational, counselling and civic engagement programmes for children and young people will be extended. Proactive youth work in places where children and young people meet can be supplemented by cooperation with other organisations.

## **4.2 Accepting diversity as a gift from God**

### **4.2.1 Orientation**

Uniformity is to be replaced by unity in diversity. The local church of Trier is set to develop into a church with one message but many faces. Diversity, however, also involves conflicts, which must be accepted and resolved in an appropriate manner.

Diversity means actively striving to enable everyone in the Diocese of Trier to participate and contribute. Any barriers that hinder inclusion, i.e. the comprehensive participation of all, will be removed.

The diocese will encourage basic communities – fellowships which can take a variety of forms, each with its own specific background. They are places where people meet to discover, live and share their faith and where they can find and develop their spiritual gifts. Basic communities are self-organising and operate on their own responsibility.

The forms in which Christians come together for worship in the Diocese of Trier will become more diverse. In addition to the Eucharist as “the fount and apex of the whole Christian life”<sup>18</sup>, new forms of worship will develop and spread, making it possible to celebrate together with different target groups, at different times and in different places. Different forms of worship are in keeping with the wide diversity of circumstances in people’s lives today. They appeal, in particular, to people who receive very little attention in society and who rarely gain access to a church community, as well as to people in troubled situations and those who feel ignored and undervalued in ordinary church life.

### **4.2.2 Practical implementation**

- Sunday services should be more varied and lively. Attention must be paid, in particular, to ensuring the reliability of places and times for celebration of the Eucharist.
- On Sundays, too, non-Eucharistic worship should be offered, such as services with the emphasis on God’s Word and daytime liturgies.<sup>19</sup> They will also open up new opportunities to strengthen ecumenical fellowship in a given location. Such services will increasingly be held by lay people.
- The Diocese is currently working on pastoral instructions that will permit joint participation at the Lord’s table for couples from different denominations. They will be based on the practice of another local church, the church of Strasbourg, which has specified since 1972 that if one

spouse is a member of a different denomination, the couple can, under certain conditions, receive communion together.<sup>20</sup>

- Qualified men and women will be authorised to proclaim and preach in different worship contexts.<sup>21</sup>
- Lay people are to be involved in funeral services and suitably trained and authorised for this purpose.

## **4.3 Bearing witness to the Christian faith**

### **4.3.1 Orientation**

The church of Trier is seeking to renew and revitalise missionary awareness among the baptised. This always involves an endeavour to find God in one's own life and in others. It is within every Christian's gifting and remit to bear witness to the faith.

Borderline situations, turning points and existential decisions in people's lives often lead them to ask questions about wider and less obvious issues in life. It is important that when Church staff interact with other people, they should do so with compassion and appreciation. Pastoral workers, in particular, must be prepared to move along the path of faith as they serve people.

People's circumstances in life and their approach to faith must be the yardstick for all catechetical courses offered by the Church of Trier.

Contacts on Sundays before and after Church services, and on other occasions too, can open up new spaces for fellowship, as they often provide opportunities for dialogue and talking about issues of life and the faith. What forms they take will differ from one place to another.

### **4.3.2 Practical implementation**

- The Diocese of Trier will set up a range of missionary centres – new spiritual centres, established in close collaboration with religious orders and spiritual communities, while at the same time supporting existing facilities. All of these centres afford a close look at questions of faith and the doubts people have. They are designed to radiate into their surroundings, attract people and help them clarify issues concerning the meaning of life.
- The diocese will create missionary teams of Christians with special gifts in communicating the Christian faith. Each team will provide faith support at the local level for a limited period of time. The Diocese of Trier will inaugurate a Voluntary Missionary Year, during which Christians can serve at missionary centres or on mission teams.
- Small Christian communities enable Christians to share their experiences and questions concerning the faith and to discover their mission as individuals and groups within the Church and society. The diocese supports and assists the foundation and development of small Christian communities as fresh expressions of Church.
- This new focus of our catechesis entails a division into two levels – elementary and in-depth – as well as a shift towards targeting adults. At the same time, however, we wish to maintain an ongoing link between our catechesis for children and young people, on the one hand, and catechesis for the adults who are responsible for them, on the other.

- Wherever feasible, preparation courses for the sacrament of marriage will be organised as joint courses, each attended by several couples. Special arrangements will be made if one of the spouses is from a different denomination or religion. Once a couple are married they will be invited to various support meetings, particularly during their first year of marriage.
- Where possible, preparations for the sacrament of baptism will take the form of joint courses for several sets of parents, godparents and the wider church. Special facilities will also be provided for the families of newly baptised children.
- The diocese conducts children's and youth work at both the parish and parish association level. Youth centres and youth churches are good examples. These are ways in which the diocese can show its commitment to the protection, upbringing, education and participatory involvement of children and young people. Safety and the prevention of abuse are essential for children and young people.

## **4.4 Creating new local forms of community**

### **4.4.1 Orientation**

The parish of the future will be characterised, in particular, by a network comprising the parish itself, other venues, basic communities and thematic centres (e.g. links with charitable Christian organisations, youth work, catechesis and mission). A network of this kind derives its momentum from the vitality of its hubs. It strikes a balance between being close up to people and giving them plenty of leeway.

In the parish of the future, the Diocese of Trier will integrate category-focused forms of pastoral care and charitable work into a single pastoral policy, wherever this is justified on pragmatic grounds and feasible at the local level. This will make it possible to develop and provide a comprehensive range of pastoral care and social welfare facilities which take their cue from the places and circumstances of people's lives and which are specially designed for them.

### **4.4.2 Practical implementation**

- Notwithstanding the special responsibility of the priest, which is invested in him by virtue of his consecration and commissioning by the Bishop, the leadership of the parish will be placed in the hands of a team working together in fellowship with one another. This team will comprise the priest and at least two further full-time Church workers. It can be extended to include volunteers. An administrator, too, should be represented on the leadership team with sufficient authority of his own.
- The priest is responsible for the right way to celebrate the sacraments and he also supervises the counselling staff and heads the leadership team. The members of the leadership team each have their own departmental responsibilities; their collaboration is based on rules of procedure. Everyone in a leadership position is subject to a binding leadership code, observance of which is monitored.
- In the parish of the future all baptised Christians will be in a position to assume responsibilities based on their abilities, skills, experience and spiritual gifts. A person's gender, how long they have worked for the Church and their status as full-time or voluntary workers will be of no

consequence. The leadership team will ensure that a suitable environment is created and provide the requisite premises and financial and human resources.

- An HR policy will be developed for full-time pastoral staff. Staff deployment will be based on clear requirement profiles and definitions of skills. The aim is to ensure that staff can readily exercise their responsibilities in multi-professional teams. The HR policy for the parish of the future will be developed by the diocese at the local level, together with the various councils.
- Wherever feasible and reasonable, category-focused pastoral care will be integrated into the parish of the future. Diocesan pastoral and HR policies must be drawn up and regularly reviewed to this end.
- A target figure of 60 has been defined for the planning and realisation of parishes of the future. The deanery level must also be subject to review.

## **4.5 Sharing responsibilities**

### **4.5.1 Orientation**

Changes in the perception of the Church and the world and the experiences of the Synod have shown that the time has come to give more responsibilities to rank-and-file Christians than has been the case in the past. This responsibility must also be reflected in extended co-determination and decision-making powers. The synodal principle calls for new relationships and interaction between the Bishop, priests, deacons, the laity, full-time staff and volunteers and men and women in general. In the future it will be more important for the Church than ever before that people should feel attracted to Jesus Christ and thus generate enthusiasm for the Christian faith. The Church thrives on personal testimonies of faith and on the manifold spiritual gifts of the baptised. People will become involved in the Church if they feel that it meets them where they are, that they have an active place in it and that they are valued.

### **4.5.2 Practical implementation**

- The roles and responsibilities of lay people are strengthened if they assume functions on their own account, develop new, attractive fields of activity and fill them with life. This demonstrates a new appreciation for the priesthood of all the baptised. At the same time the Diocese of Trier will initiate a process whereby everyone will be invited to take a critical look at their traditional understanding of roles and jobs.
- The council structure will be redesigned. The synodal principle will be implemented at all levels of the diocese through the creation of councils. There will be a new synodal council for the parish of the future. A Diocesan Council will be set up at the level of the diocese. It will comprise members of the Presbyteral Council, the Council of Catholics and other believers yet to be specified in the relevant regulations. The functions of the current Diocesan Pastoral Council will be transferred to the Diocesan Council. The Diocesan Council will advise and support the Bishop in all important decisions concerning the Diocese of Trier.
- The principle of subsidiarity will be applied at all levels of the diocese. Tasks, activities and solutions to problems will be the concern of whichever group is the smallest or at the lowest possible level. If this is not possible or it involves too many obstacles and problems or if there is

some obvious added value in seeking wider collaboration, on which there is agreement, the next higher level will intervene in support.

## **4.6 Living in relationships**

### **4.6.1 Orientation**

We are currently seeing a growing diversity in the forms of home life. This includes an increase in single households and a rearrangement of gender relationships. The church of Trier is therefore reviewing the existing family and gender roles.

Sacramental marriage is regarded as a sign of God's love for humans, which is why the Church encourages Christian marriage and assists couples wishing to make this lifestyle their own. However, God's love is also visible in other forms of home life. They, too, are places where values such as love, faithfulness, dignity, reliability, responsibility, forgiveness and reconciliation are put into practice.

The concept of the family has come to be understood in broader terms in recent years. Family life manifests itself not just where couples have children, but also where men and women take on responsibilities for their partners' children in patchwork families, where single parents or unmarried couples live with their children, where several generations live under one roof and where same-sex partners accept parental responsibilities for children.

### **4.6.2 Practical implementation**

- The church of Trier will step up its care for people whose lives are marked by breakdowns in relationships and attempts to make a new start. Such people must experience appreciation and support that strengthen them in their ability to cope with life and their capacity to love others and build relationships so that new prospects will open up for them in their lives. Parents and children from broken homes will find strength and encouragement in special pastoral programmes.
- Particularly in places where the family no longer functions as a supportive social network, the church of Trier will provide support for different generations living under one roof in many and varied forms.
- Pastoral programmes for single parents and their children will seek to cater for their special needs in terms of time, finance and personal circumstances. Single parents will be given a face and a voice in the structures of the Church.
- Whenever people separate, divorce or remarry, caution should be exercised in using the term "failure". There needs to be a greater awareness of the fact that such developments also offer opportunities to grow in maturity and make a fresh start. Binding guidance is being developed, with details of rituals and prayers for remarried couples, based on existing documents used in the (Arch-)dioceses of Strasbourg, Luxembourg, Innsbruck and Freiburg.<sup>22</sup>
- The church of Trier must relate respectfully and appreciatively to those living in same-sex partnerships. It goes without saying that we must cultivate ongoing dialogue at all levels and work with homosexually oriented people and their associations. Pastoral and liturgical facilities for same-sex partnerships must be developed through dialogue with homosexually oriented



people. Facilities of this kind must also be provided for their children and their entire family environment.

- Violence towards men, women and children, particularly within families, gives serious cause for concern. Ecclesiastical training and continuing professional development convey knowledge of the physical, psychological and social effects of violence and increase the requisite sensitivity towards victims. This opens up options for intervention and enables help to be provided.
- The diocese recognises equality between men and women and is committed to its implementation at all levels of leadership and work, provided this is not precluded by canonical regulations. A gender equality committee has been appointed for this purpose, composed equally of men and women. This committee specifies and reviews any measures that are taken in this direction. It also helps to develop better conditions designed to ensure the compatibility of married life, work, the family and voluntary activities for men and women.

## **5. Gaining deeper insights and seeing limits as a spiritual challenge**

The Synod also reviewed and discussed issues that went beyond the remit of a diocesan synod (e.g. admission requirements for the priesthood) or which could not be discussed conclusively. This included conflicting views on the fundamental direction to be taken by the church of Trier. Although the conclusions of the Synod contain several indications as to how these conflicts might be dealt with and resolved, they do not present any resolutions themselves. This also shows the limits of a synodal process – limits of which the Synod is fully aware.

The following key issues were not exhaustively discussed:

- There was a repeated demand for a common model. Several Bible-based approaches were presented, but no common model was adopted by the Synod.
- There were repeated demands in the plenary sessions that the Synod should address social challenges. The predominant developments of our times were discussed, with the question being raised of how the church of Trier intends to respond to the opportunities they offer and the tough challenges they pose to the individual, to human interaction and to a Christian lifestyle.<sup>23</sup> However, the Synod did not decide to take the outcome of the discussions as a basis for further work. Initial ideas arising from the synodal consultations as to how the discord might be resolved are reflected in the shifts in perspective, the description of attitudes and culture and the sections on practical implementation.
- A vibrant ecumenism is indispensable as a visible sign of hope and of the unity we must strive to achieve with our sister churches. The split in Christianity is a substantial obstacle to the Church's credibility. It was therefore agreed that ecumenism should be treated as a cross-cutting issue and form part of the work of the various expert committees. However, only a small number of recommendations expressly mention ecumenism. The issue therefore requires further in-depth treatment.
- The Synod was also attended by partners from the universal Church, and our long-standing partnership with the Bolivian Church was underlined by the presence of its representatives. Even though none of the consultations at the plenary sessions focused on our responsibility within the universal Church, we will keep up an intensive dialogue with those partners.
- The conclusions of the Synod will also pose a challenge to the priesthood and the ordained ministry. They will have a greater influence on the spiritual and theological development of the

priesthood than on its exercise in practice. In the discussions started by the Synod we asked how we might add more depth to the theological place of the ordained ministry vis-a-vis the dignity of all the baptised and how this can be filled with life in the church of Trier. It is important that this discussion be continued.

The Synod of the Diocese of Trier was held at the same time as the Roman Bishops' Synod on marriage and the family. The conclusions of the latter found their way into Pope Francis's post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

This letter touches upon issues discussed both at the Bishops' Synod and at one of the thematic forums held at the Trier Synod<sup>24</sup>, but it was not possible to integrate it into the conclusions of the Synod.

Following on from our Synod, we now need to find a way forward in dealing with these issues. They must be discussed and clarified, and we need to obtain spiritual reassurance on them. Moreover, they must form part of the implementation process.

## **6. Venturing a new beginning and keeping on track**

The church of Trier intends to introduce the changes envisaged and is now initiating a new process of spiritual reassurance and visionary Church development.

### **6.1 Credibility**

We are hopeful that, both now and in the future, the recommendations of the Synod will help the local church of Trier to prove credible and convincing in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and bearing witness to God's kindness towards all mankind. This means being prepared to

- create and support processes which enable Christians to say farewell to many familiar things that have become dear to them and to approach new developments with an open mind;
- form the necessary attitudes and create an appropriate culture;
- develop viable, forward-looking opportunities for action, based on the shifts in perspective.

### **6.2 Quality**

When we talk about the human, technical and aesthetic quality of Church activities, the criterion must be whether they foster the spiritual growth and maturity of each individual and of the various communities.

We need effective organisational and administrative structures if we wish Church activities to be of the requisite quality and to keep them at that level. We must therefore draw up a helpful and enforceable legal framework and ensure diversity in both content and methods.

The reviewing, safeguarding and enhancing of quality must draw on proven contemporary forms. They include:

- formulating mandatory targets, standards and criteria for each area of competence;

- setting standards for the development of voluntary positions that are based on the needs, skills and spiritual gifts of volunteers;
- defining binding criteria for job descriptions and specifications of functions in a way that delivers job security while also ensuring that the defined requirements are verifiable;
- defining training regulations, job descriptions, specifications of functions and training schemes in such a way that they help to discover and encourage spiritual gifts and combine them with the relevant tasks and functions;
- issuing binding regulations for leadership teams in parishes;
- offering regular spiritual support and retreats for individuals and communities as well as for full-time staff and voluntary workers so that each person can fulfil his or her commission within the Church and interpret and reflect upon it in the light of the Christian faith;
- initiating further training and continuing professional development, HR meetings, team meetings, expert meetings, supervisory activities, organisational consultancy and peer-to-peer consultancy, coaching and mentoring for individuals and communities as well as for full-time staff and volunteers;
- conducting pilot projects to enable the new practices to be reviewed and refined;
- initiating and designing change processes in different places and in different ways;
- seeing errors and mistakes as opportunities for further development or a change of direction;
- introducing forms of conflict resolution, e.g. through mediation.

### **6.3 Commitment**

The Synod is aware that the changes we are about to implement may have their limits in terms of human, structural and financial resources. Evaluations, quality assurance and quality development have shown, however, that the diocese is serious about implementing the envisaged changes. A binding time frame is needed to implement the outcome of the Synod.

The church of Trier is venturing a new beginning. It will persist along this path and initiate a post-synodal implementation process. It would be good if the current members of the Synod were to remain ambassadors of the various synodal concerns. The church of Trier is thus completing the transition “from a Church of the people to a Church of the people of God”<sup>25</sup>, a Church which seeks the Kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

## **Appendix to the Final Document**

### **Wording of the recommendations of the Expert Committees**

The recommendations of the Expert Committees are the outcome of the work carried out by the ten Expert Committees<sup>26</sup> between May 2014 and August 2015. The sixth plenary session (10 to 12 December 2015) grouped the recommendations in three categories: 1. Attitudes and Culture, 2. Measures and 3. Instruments.

The recommendations, which are set out below verbatim, form the foundation of the Final Document. They provide clarifications and detailed specifications, not all of which could be included in the text of the Final Document.

The wording of the recommendations is included here with only minor linguistic adaptations and standardisations.

#### **1. The wording of the recommendations of the Expert Committees on Attitudes and Culture**

##### **1.1 Move in the direction of a Church of pastoral ministry**

The local church of Trier is developing into a church of pastoral ministry with a focus on people in poverty, distress and need. It opens its heart to them, acts in solidarity with them and is evangelised by them.<sup>27</sup>

This is manifested at three levels:

- The church engages with and supports people in need on an equal footing (individual social and welfare work).
- It enables people to share in and contribute to education and social life (cultural social and welfare work).
- It undertakes a critical appraisal of economic, political and social structures and advocates a decent standard of living (political social and welfare work).

Activities of this kind lead to joint learning and development processes.

The social and welfare work performed by the local church of Trier reflects its commitment to the biblically founded option for the poor and its decision in favour of a change of pastoral course.<sup>28</sup>

##### **1.2 Integrating the basic principles of the Church**

The local church of Trier ensures that, at every level of Church practice, the four fundamental principles of the Church

- charity/social and welfare work
- Church service

- proclamation/witness
- a supportive community

are integrated and that there is vigorous interaction between them. The interlocking of these four basic principles links the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ with the reality of everyday life. This gives rise to a 'sharing culture' which encompasses material goods, cultural treasures, social relationships and faith experiences. Practical charity is the hallmark of all Church activities within our diocese.

For that reason the local church of Trier holds in high regard those who perform pastoral work in the family, the neighbourhood, voluntary positions and the work environment.

### **1.3 Gender-sensitive appointment to leadership positions**

The local church of Trier is developing into a church which regards the creation of every individual in the image of God as the basis for inter-personal relations (cf. *Gen 1:27*).

This is apparent in the spirit of partnership which characterises dealings between men and women both inside and outside the Church.

The Church as an employer should be equally attractive for both men and women and gender-sensitive in appointments to leadership positions.

For that reason there is to be equal opportunity for access to tasks and activities within the Church, with the exception of tasks and activities that are tied to the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

### **1.4 The basic missionary and pastoral orientation of the diocese**

To boldly tread new paths is more important than holding on to established certainties. The Diocese of Trier must, therefore, reposition itself as a missionary and pastoral local church and, in this capacity, make a recognisable and distinctive contribution to the state and society.

The purpose of this reorientation is to bring about a change of culture. This applies to the diocese as a whole, especially with regard to its management, structures, resources, pastoral focus and initiatives as well as the networks and forms of cooperation in which it is involved. It is planned that a considerable percentage of the finances and pastoral staff of the diocese will in future be earmarked for missionary and pastoral activities. The requisite resources will have to be released from other areas.

### **1.5 Shift in perspective**

There is a need for a change of perspective. The 'parish of the future' must comply with the following principles:

- The reorganisation must ensure a clearer focus than in the past on the dignity of the baptised individual. Going hand in hand with this baptismal dignity is a responsibility which is reflected both in the development of spiritual gifts and the exercise of competences.

- There must be a much more marked acceptance than in the past of the realities of everyday life, greatly influenced as they are by the 'signs of the time'.
- We will place greater faith than in the past in the workings of the Holy Spirit.
- There must be a clearer focus than in the past on the social environment.
- Greater care must be taken than in the past to ensure permeability in respect of territory and category.
- Subsidiarity must apply to a greater extent than it has in the past.
- There must be a much clearer response than in the past to the challenges posed by ecumenical cooperation.

A model framework is to be drawn up for the parish of the future which leaves sufficient scope for adjustment to the circumstances on the ground and takes due account of the aforementioned change of perspective.

## **1.6 Differentiated connection between life and faith as a model for catechesis**

The following model is to apply for the catechism in the Diocese of Trier:

*Let me learn about you, the way you think and speak, the questions you put and the life you live so that I can learn anew the message I am to convey to you. (Bishop Klaus Hemmerle)<sup>29</sup>*

That is the motto for all catechetical activities in the Diocese of Trier. Catechesis is one of the Church's most fundamental activities, the purpose of which is to initiate and supervise processes of maturity within the faith. It encourages dialogue between people as well as between God and people.

In every form of catechesis there must be a correlation between the content of the faith and the everyday reality of the person to whom it is directed. Catechesis thus has a subjective and biographical component, is existential in character and relates to human experience.

## **1.7 Catechesis as the duty of all baptised persons**

All catechesis is founded on the authentic witness of life of all believers.

They bear witness to their hope. This hope manifests itself in a variety of missionary and pastoral attitudes.

## **1.8 The baptised and the new places**

There are Christians who wish to try out the new forms and projects of 'believing, living and learning' in new places together with the people they meet there. They must be given support and, should a new community be established, be sent there and charged with performing the relevant tasks.

## **1.9 Quality**

Special significance attaches to the safeguarding and steady improvement of the quality of Sunday worship. To this end quality standards will be drawn up in considerate and respectful cooperation in a broad-based process of dialogue with all those who attend Sunday services. These quality standards concern the scope for involvement that exists within the guidelines for the liturgy. Quality maintenance and improvement tools will be developed along the same lines, e.g. facilities such as supervision, intervision, peer-to-peer counselling and quality circles.

### **1.10 Ecumenical openness**

As far as possible, Church services should consciously be celebrated in a spirit of ecumenical openness. This fundamental openness will be systematically encouraged by inviting Christians of other denominations to perform services during such celebrations.

### **1.11 Spiritual gifts must be discovered and fostered**

The church of Trier is initiating a process of spiritual assurance and visionary Church development, the purpose of which is to discover and foster spiritual gifts. This process will take place at all levels, but primarily in the pastoral units and basic communities.

Such a process involves

- engaging in discussions about the faith and one's own gifts;
- analysing the present situation and pinpointing tasks that arise from it;
- bringing tasks and talents together and using modern means of communication to that end;
- subjecting developments to a critical review; and
- integrating elements of the spiritual process into other pastoral areas.

### **1.12 Rethinking the concept of family**

The Synod recommends that modules on the subject of 'Realities of Communal Life Today' should form a firm part of the initial and further training of all voluntary and full-time Church staff. The objective is to bring about a shift in perspective.

Church staff should be seen as open-minded, (linguistically) sensitive and thoughtful people. They should be in a position to review their own preconceived stereotypes in order to develop an appreciation for all forms of family life.

### **1.13 Encouragement of the family**

The Church encourages people to lead a family life. Living as a family means mastering a wide variety of challenges. The esteem accorded to the family should be based on a pragmatic view of life, not high ideals. The Church encourages families to go for "successful half-measures"<sup>30</sup>.

## **1.14 Pastoral ministry based on gender equality**

It is recommended that a systematic study be made of gender equality ('gender issue') with a view to developing a pastoral ministry consistent with gender justice. The issue is one of fairness, not of egalitarianism.

Attention should be given to ensuring gender-balanced pastoral work in which men and women can develop and share their respective talents and skills in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Awareness-enhancing processes must be initiated and encouragement given to competences, measures and testing grounds that can help to expose (outdated) traditional role models and corresponding patterns of behaviour.

The language of the liturgy must be reviewed with respect to its gender sensitivity and amended accordingly.

Wherever possible, the content of pastoral services should be made the joint responsibility of men and women.

The issue of 'gender sensitivity' must find a firm place in day nurseries, schools and youth associations and form an integral part of training modules for pastoral, teaching and clinical professions.

## **2. The wording of the priority measures**

### **2.1 Focus on the social environment**

Together with all people of good will, the local church of Trier is working to improve the living conditions of people in the local community (the social environment). Wherever possible, pastoral care workers and the Catholic outreach services address this task jointly.<sup>31</sup> A focus on the social environment is the common operational principle for pastoral work and social and charity institutions and services.

### **2.2 The local church of Trier sees itself as inclusive**

The local church of Trier sees itself as inclusive, in other words everyone can give and take on an equal footing. The local church of Trier is consequently removing the many social and practical barriers which hinder or prevent participation and contribution and advocates inclusion in society.

Those affected by barriers are keenly aware of them and have ideas on how they can be overcome. They must therefore be enabled to play an independent part in introducing changes from the very beginning and at all stages.

A church with a focus on pastoral ministry helps to ensure that diversity is seen and appreciated as an opportunity and source of enrichment in both the Church and society.



## 2.3 Responsibility for creation

For the local church of Trier there is a direct connection between its interpretation of pastoral work and responsibility for creation.

“Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*”<sup>32</sup>

Action in harmony with creation is praise of the Lord. This is carried out in a verifiable manner by

- a) consistent application of the Ecological Guidelines of the diocese,
- b) the updating of the climate protection plan and
- c) the gradual offsetting of the emission of harmful greenhouse gases after calculation of the unavoidable carbon dioxide emissions (and the financial resources). This offsetting benefits the funding of schemes undertaken by Bolivian and other partners (climate collections) to offer protection from, and adjustment to, climate change.

Compatibility with creation incorporates responsible treatment of animals, our fellow-creatures.

## 2.4 Voluntary work

A church with a focus on social work depends on active voluntary commitment.

The local church of Trier sets binding standards for honorary positions geared to individual interests, talents and skills. They include:

- preparatory training,
- personality development,
- motivating community experience,
- a beneficial environment,
- continuous quality assurance,
- an open-minded attitude to new areas of activity in the Church and society.

The church of Trier thus encourages the further development of a variety of honorary positions with different skills requirements and promotes the blossoming of a liberal, self-determined Christian life in a diaconal Church.

## 2.5 Working with target groups in mind and speaking understandably

Responding to individual lifestyles is more important than sticking to one's own ideas in offering services to others. Of the essence here is the question Jesus put: What do you want me to do for you? (Mark 10:51)

The Bishop will, therefore, introduce a range of measures that will enable pastoral practice and linguistic expression to be geared systematically and verifiably to people and their different lifestyles. The following are just a few examples of such measures:

- The methods of lifestyle-oriented and community-oriented pastoral care will be given further encouragement and spread more widely.
- The milieu-sensitive orientation of pastoral work will be intensively promoted and spread.
- Practical tools will be developed and disseminated.
- The ecclesial language used in services, preaching and publications must be more readily understandable for people today.
- Quality assurance methods will be used to describe and verify the fulfilment of these aims.

## **2.6 Promoting the missionary awareness of the baptised**

All baptised persons are disciples, are missionaries. In order to renew, strengthen and invigorate this awareness missionary centres are to be set up in every visitation district in the diocese.

Faith courses will be developed for these centres. They will be of interest and attractive to different age groups and will be held at the local level. The purpose of these courses is to promote knowledge of the faith and enhance awareness of the Good News. They provide a platform for discussion of doubts and questions about the faith. They help to stimulate communication and, using simple and understandable language, to “have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have.” (1 Peter 3:15)

Moreover, if the Good News is to be taken to other places and experienced there, people must be found with the missionary gifting needed for the different milieus. These spiritual gifts must be valued and fostered in every way possible.

## **2.7 Strengthening small Christian faith and prayer groups**

Gaining a better understanding of the Christian message by engaging with other people is more important than exulting in the conviction of knowing and ‘owning’ the Christian message. In future, therefore, Small Christian Communities are to be set up in all the parishes of the Diocese of Trier and, wherever such communities are already in existence, they will be encouraged and developed.

In groups of this kind, Christians set out on a journey together, listening with each other to what the Word of God has to tell them and talking about their experience of life and the faith. They have an exchange of views about their personal understanding of issues, questions and doubts concerning their beliefs. By asking what the Word of God means to them in their specific circumstances they discover their mission as individuals and as a group. This may possibly lead to practical social and welfare work.

Faith and prayer groups thus come to perceive themselves as Church in a smaller setting.

## **2.8 Networking**

Nowadays people organise themselves in networks.

The parish of the future – comprising its location, basic communities, thematic centres and other places – must therefore be seen as a network. This network thrives on the vitality and independence of the individual hubs. It represents the diverse social character of the parish of the future.

The parish of the future will, therefore, be distinguished by a variety of Christian communities of different sizes connected in a network.

## **2.9 Involvement of voluntary workers**

In appointments to all positions and functions at all levels of the parish of the future due consideration must be given to all the baptised with their personal skills, qualifications, experience and spiritual gifts – irrespective of their gender and employment within the Church.

Thus volunteers can assume functions, roles and duties in the parish of the future in addition to their regular employment. This is conditional upon their satisfying the requirements and criteria, however.

Full-time Church staff and volunteers, cooperating in a friendly and responsible manner, will pool their efforts to ensure suitable conditions that will enable them to perform their tasks and duties.

## **2.10 Running of the parish**

In the uniform leadership structure for all parishes the top level will consist of a body comprising three suitable full-time members (a priest and two other full-time employees) appointed by the Bishop. The executive body is to be extended to include up to two volunteer members who can share overall responsibility for the parish and take charge of departments.

Notwithstanding the special responsibility for service to the unit invested in the priest by virtue of his ordination and appointment by the Bishop, the leadership duties in the parish will be exercised in a mutually helpful and cooperative manner. The priest is the superior for the pastoral members of staff and he heads the leadership body. He has special responsibility for the proper form to be observed in the administration of the sacraments.

The administration has a full-time representative with competence of his own in the leadership body.

The members of the leadership body bear joint responsibility for the parish of the future; they work in accordance with rules of procedure. Leadership duties are divided up into various fields, on the basis of which the areas of responsibility of the members are designated in accordance with their competences. There is mutual respect for departmental responsibilities. Organisation and administration are an integral part of the duties of the parish of the future.

A binding leadership code will be introduced for all those exercising responsibility in the parish of the future.

## **2.11 Category is integrated**

In view of the guiding principle underlying pastoral work geared to the social environment it is planned that, wherever substantively justified and locally feasible, the parish of the future and the categorial and charitable services will be integrated in a common pastoral concept.

With this in mind, the Episcopal Ordinariate in Trier and the diocesan Caritas branch – where appropriate in cooperation with the religious orders – will draw up a pastoral and HR concept for the diocese. The provision of the requisite personnel will be regulated in the staffing schedules of the diocese.

Cooperation schemes in pastoral work related to the social environment are governed by the logic of the network. Cooperation in this context is dependent on the respective profile and professionalism.

The consequence of the decision to the effect that ‘the category is part of the network’ is that all the partners operate in three dimensions. These are:

- a) consistent orientation towards the persons contacted and their everyday surroundings;
- b) pastoral exchange between territorial and categorial pastoral workers and Caritas,
- c) common commitment to ecumenical cooperation and cooperation with non-Church players.

The categorial services convene for conferences at the diocesan level. The outcome of their deliberations is to be incorporated in the updating of the diocesan pastoral and HR concept.

## **2.12 Role and job profiles**

All full-time employees in the parish of the future will work in multi-professional teams.

These teams can include, in addition to the classical pastoral professions, people with administrative duties, educators, social workers, church musicians and others.

The parish must set out clear job specifications to ensure that the Church is ably administered on the ground and can perform effective social welfare, missionary and evangelising work. These specifications are to be taken into account in staff planning and deployment in this field. Key qualifications needed for the exercise of responsibility in specialist, HR, social and methodical fields and other competences must be clearly formulated.

There is a need for different professional groups with their own courses and training schemes.

Provided they have the relevant additional qualifications, the occupational groups involved in pastoral care can be employed to carry out various territorial and categorial duties as required. Joint responsibility means that every occupational group has its own core qualifications.

All pastoral workers perform their duties on the basis of a code of ethics.

### **2.13 Differentiated integration of life and faith as a model for catechesis**

A differentiated approach to catechesis in the Diocese of Trier involves activities at two levels. The point of departure of all catechesis is the elementary level, which aims at emotional acceptance. Its contents are dictated by the needs of the person concerned.

Successful elementary catechesis should be followed by in-depth catechesis, which is intended to lead to a conscious, faith-based lifestyle.

### **2.14 Catechesis as the duty of all the baptised**

As many people as possible should be integrated into catechetical processes. In addition to the leadership task in catechetical processes, which requires special training, there should be a wide range of opportunities for believers to contribute their own experience of life and the faith to the courses in catechesis.

All the baptised require support for their ability to communicate and engage in religious reflection so that they can bear witness to the faith in this way. The relevant courses must be provided in every parish (association).

### **2.15 Adult catechesis as the focal point of catechetical activity and its networking**

Adults should be the main focus of elementary and in-depth catechesis. The relevant catechetical assistance is provided at the key existential phases in life (e.g. end of school, job selection, partnership/marriage, parenthood, mid-life crisis, separation, illness, death, mourning).

The places in which people are socially active (e.g. day nurseries, schools, associations, clubs) must be perceived, extended and networked as catechetical places. In every parish (association) specific, verifiable, catechetical facilities should be provided which meet the objective of a biography-oriented and networked adult catechesis.

### **2.16 Preparation for the sacrament of marriage**

Catechesis in preparation for the sacrament of marriage must be extended and take the form of a process. Catechetical meetings involving several couples, married catechists and Church office holders provide common preparation for marriage. This marriage catechesis is elementary in character; it draws on the existential and spiritual experience of the couples and works with them in a biographical and process-oriented manner.

The preparation for marriage meets the needs of the respective couple in terms of the amount of time, the place and the relevant content. It is long-term and varied in character. Apart from the marriage talks with the priest, various kinds of meetings should be offered or combined which vary according to place and provider (parishes, parish associations, family education and counselling centres) and duration (day, weekend, evening, etc.). It also makes sense to have meetings for bridal couples from different denominations or religions as well as meetings in preparation for divine service.

In-depth catechesis should also be on offer as a follow-up after the wedding ceremony. This should be in the nature of ongoing support and geared to the questions couples and young families have which stem from their individual biographies.

### **2.17 Intensification of baptismal catechesis**

Catechesis for child baptism must be more process-like in character.

Preparation for the baptism of infants and children no longer takes the form of a baptismal talk between the baptiser and the parents of the child to be baptised. Catechetical meetings involving several sets of parents, godparents, other reference persons and parish members provide joint preparation for the baptism, which is elementary in character.

Preparation for baptism should involve several meetings. They should engender awareness of the path-like character of life as a Christian. After baptism, different places (e.g. day-care centres, toddlers' groups, primary schools) afford opportunities for children and parents to gain further experience in catechesis. They offer opportunities to follow up on the experience gained in connection with the baptism.

### **2.18 In-depth catechesis for children and adolescents**

Every parish (association) must provide several courses in catechesis every year for children and adolescents which are independent of the administration of the sacraments and offer in-depth catechesis (e.g. Bible days for children, prayer school for children, catechetical intensification of altar service work, projects for children and adolescents of an artistic/cultural or religious nature or incorporating church music, pastoral work and experiential education; courses in connection with Taizé or World Youth Days; courses in youth associations). Catechetical courses must be developed for young people in employment which are compatible with their working hours.

### **2.19 Permanent deacons and the new places**

Deacons with a civilian occupation, who express the wish and are suitably qualified, should not be appointed to a parish but to their working environment – provided this is feasible – so that they can pursue their activities as deacons there.

### **2.20 Spiritual centres**

Spiritual centres should be set up as points of contact, support, counselling, silence, worship, prayer and reflection outside the realm of everyday routine and, wherever they are already in place, supported and consolidated. A review should be carried out of cooperation between the diocese, religious orders and spiritual communities on conceptual, financial and staff matters. They set out their priorities in accordance with the individual circumstances and the spiritual gifts of those employed there and the participants.

## **2.21 Schools in general**

Experienced Christians who wish to initiate the processes of 'believing, living and learning' receive support at schools and their surroundings. This entails extending and combining courses offered inside and outside the schools and coordinating pastoral ministry at schools.

## **2.22 Church pastoral ministry for children and young people**

The pastoral ministry for children and young people should be sensitive to the respective milieu. Work carried out by the Church for children and young people sharpens its awareness of their needs and enhances the quality of its pedagogical, pastoral and youth programmes.

Building on its current work for children and adolescents, the Church will intensify its endeavours to contact young people and offer courses at places where children and adolescents meet. These courses are tailored to the respective situation and milieu and designed to provide a better understanding of faith and the meaning of life.

The objective is to develop young Christian communities which see themselves as part of a network of diverse places for the practice of the Christian faith.

## **2.23 Sunday service / compulsory Sunday attendance**

The Eucharist is celebrated every Sunday at fixed times and in specific places.

These celebrations of the Eucharist are of high quality. Provided local and personnel circumstances allow, celebrations of the Eucharist can be held at changing venues.

In future, increasing account will be taken of the needs of 'seekers' by the provision of relevant Church services (services with an emphasis on the Word of God, daytime liturgies and a wealth of liturgical forms). These services have their own specific value and bring people together for prayer. They can arouse curiosity and open up paths to celebration of the Eucharist.

In view of the large number of questions, expectations and apprehensions involved, the issue of whether Holy Communion can occasionally be administered for pastoral reasons in services at which the Eucharist is not celebrated will be discussed and clarified after the Synod.

In cooperation with the responsible councils, teams are to be set up to organise and coordinate Sunday services (including times and places).

## **2.24 Culture of encounter**

A culture of encounter will be developed for the period before and after Sunday services and extending beyond Church services. New spaces will be opened up for meetings and for exchanges and conversations between believers, to which interested parties are invited and where they can find inspiration for the strengthening of their faith.

## **2.25 Married couples from different denominations**

The Bishop will respond to the needs of married couples from different denominations and do whatever he can, within the scope of his competence, to satisfy their needs to the greatest extent possible. To this end a pastoral instruction will be issued to pastoral workers for the admission of the baptised, non-Catholic spouse to the celebration of the Eucharist (in accordance with the regulations currently in place for the dioceses of Strasbourg [‘Strasbourg Model’]).

## **2.26 New forms and unaccustomed times and places for worship**

New forms of worship are to be developed by all the baptised. Church services will also be held at unaccustomed times and in unfamiliar places.

Systematic account is to be taken here of the “poor or in any way afflicted”, i.e.

- people who receive little attention or esteem in society,
- people who find it hard to gain access to the Church community and acts of worship,
- people who have experienced all manner of break-ups and rifts in their lives,
- people who have become alienated from the Church,
- people for whom the prospect of blessing or a promise of the Word of God can offer a sense of mercy.

Young people, in particular, are to be invited to join pastoral workers in developing and cultivating forms of worship appropriate to their needs.

## **2.27 Conduct of Church service by lay people**

Lay people are increasingly to be given responsibility for conducting certain elements of Church services, provided the authority of the priest or deacon is not needed. Men and women in pastoral professions are to assume responsibility for preparing and conducting acts of worship at the local level that are in keeping with their other everyday activities or for which they have a personal spiritual gift.

Active volunteers are to be encouraged, enabled and empowered to organise acts of worship at the local level together with the responsible full-time staff. This will also apply where the latter are not available.

Training and commissioning for this purpose will take place at the local level.

## **2.28 Conduct of funeral services by lay people**

Lay people – full-time pastoral workers and active volunteers – are gradually to be incorporated in the conduct of funeral services.



## **2.29 Liturgical proclamation by lay people**

All men and women qualified to do so are to be able to preach and proclaim during the liturgy, provided this is not in contravention of Canon Law. Wherever ecclesiastical regulations rule this out – in the case of a homily during celebration of the Eucharist, for instance – the Bishop is called upon to use his good offices for a review of this question and, wherever appropriate, an amendment to the regulations.

## **2.30 Setting up of spiritual centres**

More spiritual centres are to be set up.

In both the literal and the figurative sense, spiritual centres are places in which people can undergo spiritual experiences, learn and practise personal prayer and find contacts for spiritual support.

Places of silence and special events are designed to provide access for seekers and offer believers greater depth in their faith, e.g. “prayer schools”, everyday spiritual exercises, practice in forms of meditation and low-level forms of Church service, such as Bible sharing.

Existing facilities, such as in monasteries and educational centres, are to be supported and express use made of the relevant competences of pastoral staff as part of their official remit.

## **2.31 Spiritual gifts can unfold and be facilitated in basic communities**

The Diocese of Trier is divided up into pastoral units (parishes within the meaning of Can. 374 § 1 CIC). Basic communities already exist at the level of, or beyond the bounds of, parishes and new ones are emerging. These can be territorial units. They are also built around persons, initiatives and projects, around groups, associations and movements, in ecclesiastical or secular places.

Basic communities wish to discover and live out the faith with each other.

A considerable degree of personal responsibility and self-management must be ensured in view of the structural diversity of the territorial, categorial and personal places. The basic communities are guided by one or several of the fundamental principles of Church life and can be designed for the short or long term or for a specific project. Every basic community has a contact person to link up with the pastoral unit (parish).

## **2.32 Focus on children**

The numerous schemes the Church already has in place to promote, educate and involve children must be maintained and extended. They must not be put at risk by austerity measures.

## **2.33 Inter-generational cooperation**

The Church is called upon to find new and different ways of supporting and caring for families. For instance by

- continuing to consolidate and extend multi-generational houses and multi-generational residential projects. Property schemes must be improved with this in mind.
- promoting a culture of perception and appreciation of services in the fields of care and nursing provided by family members or voluntary helpers. An integral aspect of this culture is recognition of the needs and problems of all sides.

Wherever the family as a social network is no longer consistently in a position to provide support, the Church is called upon to play a part in actively developing new forms of relationships, lifestyles and support systems. The brotherliness of the new family of Jesus in the New Testament is a model that continues to challenge us, because for Jesus it is not the biological family but the relationship which counts.

### **2.34 Separation, divorce, remarriage**

“Failure” is a term that should be used with the utmost caution. Break-ups in relationships are viewed differently when seen from inside and outside the relationship. The Church is endeavouring to bring about a change of perspective and to discover in separation, divorce and remarriage the potential for growth and reorientation.

In addition to what is already in place, schemes of an explicitly pastoral nature must be developed for people who feel that their life plan has failed. The objective here is to support these people in mustering up the courage to confidently embrace new plans for their lives. This applies to both parents and children.

It is recommended that binding guidance with rituals and prayers should be developed for those who have remarried which builds on the existing documents available from the (arch-)dioceses of Strasbourg, Luxembourg, Innsbruck and Freiburg.<sup>33</sup>

### **2.35 Single parents**

The Church must demonstrate a more active commitment to support and encouragement for single parents and their children.

It goes without saying that programmes for and with single parents should form part of all family-related services in the Diocese of Trier.

Family programmes should be devised so that they also appeal to single parents.

In the schemes and programmes it offers, pastoral ministry should take due account of the circumstances of single parents and their children with the specific limitations they face in terms of time and money.

Single parents are given a face and voice within Church structures through interaction between counselling services and community groups. There is a need for more vigorous lobbying on behalf of single parents in both the political and the social sphere.

## **2.36 Same-sex partnerships**

Efforts must be made to bring about a change of attitude towards people living in same-sex-partnerships to ensure that they are approached with respect and not a disparaging attitude.

It goes without saying that a regular dialogue should be kept up at all levels, as should cooperation with people who have a same-sex orientation and with the associations to which they belong.

A pastoral and liturgical programme is to be drawn up in dialogue with people who have a same-sex orientation. This programme will also be directed at their children and the entire family environment.

## **2.37 The issue of “violence against women”**

There is to be open communication on the subject of “violence against women”. Full-time employees and volunteers must undergo training designed to heighten their awareness of the mental state of women affected by violence.

Ways of dealing with violence must be included in Church plans for initial and further training; theological, pedagogical and pastoral competences must be enhanced.

## **2.38 The issue of “violence in families”**

There should be open communication on the subject of “violence in families” with the aim of raising awareness of this issue.

There is a need to grasp the wide-ranging nature of physical, verbal and psychological violence in situations of family dependence: violence that is inflicted not just on children, but also, for example, on relatives in need of care.

The issue of “power and violence” must be freed from the taboos that surround it. As is the case with the issue of “child abuse”, all full-time staff and volunteer workers must develop a capacity for verbal communication on this issue. Programmes to prevent violence and support families are to be put into practice and extended.

# **3. The wording of the instruments given priority**

## **3.1 Missionary teams**

Being missionary means recognising the everyday reality, language and culture of people’s lives and becoming immersed in them so that the Good News can take on a new form (inculturation). The aim is not to tell people what to do, but to accompany them on their journey.

In future, missionary teams are to be employed in the Diocese of Trier. Their task will be to conduct a sincere and patient dialogue with those who have no contact with the Catholic faith. This will involve seeking out and building up new and different Church locations, supporting and consolidating them over a limited period of time.

The mixed teams can include, for example, young and old people, men and women, priests, pastoral and community advisers, and other full-time staff, e.g. social workers and participants in the Voluntary Missionary Year. These teams require far-reaching independence from present structures and responsibilities. In the work they do they are responsible to the Bishop, but they also network with those involved on the ground.

### **3.2 Voluntary Missionary Year**

Discovering and nurturing spiritual gifts of a missionary kind in oneself and others is more important than relying solely on training, roles and functions. In future, therefore, a Voluntary Missionary Year will be introduced along the lines of the various voluntary services.

The volunteers are members of the missionary teams.<sup>34</sup>

People of all ages and backgrounds will be given the opportunity of becoming “temporary missionaries” in the Diocese of Trier and of working for a year in the newly formed missionary teams or in projects of a similar nature.

### **3.3 Thematic centre**

The parish of the future will set up thematic centres.

The aim of these thematic centres will be to specify and deal in a practical and exemplary manner with any issues that arise. Moreover, they will be open and permeable for the entire parish; they will make it possible to network with all those tackling the same “issue” in different places and at various levels within the parish of the future. They will facilitate a thematic network.

Each parish is to have at least one thematic centre on social and welfare work, youth, catechesis and mission.

### **3.4 Restructuring of pastoral spaces**

In the restructuring phase after the Synod the dimensions of the new spaces will be determined on the basis of the residential and social spaces and further allocations undertaken.

Taking into account the findings of the Expert Committee on the “parish of the future”, the recommended figure given to those responsible for carrying out the restructuring is 60 parishes.

Following a trial period involving pilot phases, all the parishes of the future awaiting their establishment will be set up.

### **3.5 Local church development**

In every future pastoral unit, local church development projects will be launched on a mandatory basis in an attempt to form new parishes.

The establishment of “fresh expressions”, youth churches and basic communities offers prospects for the future to supplement the traditional pastoral ministry.

### **3.6 Youth churches**

In view of the experience gathered with the three youth churches (in Koblenz, Marienburg and Saarbrücken) other youth churches (at least one more by 2020) are to be founded in the Diocese of Trier.

### **3.7 “Gender Equality” Committee**

A “Gender Equality” Committee is to be established. Its task will be to support the equal participation of men and women at all leadership and work levels of the Church.

- The committee will specify and review the targets already formulated in the voluntary commitment undertaken by the diocese.
- It will draw up guidelines on gender equality for all Church structures, taking due account inter alia of the results of gender research.
- It will endeavour to bring about conditions ensuring men and women genuine freedom of choice as regards the compatibility of marriage, family, job and voluntary commitments.
- It will promote mixed-gender teams at all levels and in all areas of work.
- It will review the practical introduction of gender quotas.
- It will advocate the use of staff development tools to promote equality of opportunity.
- It will be directly responsible to the Vicar General, report to the leadership conference and have an equal number of male and female members.

## **4. The instruments for the Implementation Committee**

The sixth plenary session categorised 34 recommendations made by the Expert Committees as instruments which were of relevance for the implementation of the Synod’s decisions but were not ultimately included in the Final Document. During the seventh plenary session these recommendations were handed over by Bishop Dr. Stephan Ackermann to the Vicar General, Dr. Georg Bätzing, the head of the steering group charged with putting the results of the Synod into practice.

## **Appendix**

### **The path of the Synod**

*“The deliberations of the Synod are designed to provide orientation for Christians, individually and together, on how they can follow the path of the faith in the Diocese of Trier under the conditions of the third millennium.”* (Statute of the Diocesan Synod in the Diocese of Trier, Preamble)

#### **1. Key developments of the time**

In the run-up to the Synod its members took a look at key developments. The Expert Committees later had the job of reflecting these key developments in their recommendations. In addition the theological issue was raised of whether these key developments might be interpreted in the light of the Gospel as “signs of the times” and treated as such.<sup>35</sup>

1. Individualisation offers increased freedom and requires each and every one of us to make decisions. Individualisation reminds us that God takes a very personal look at every single person. Each person is unique and is called to freedom. But individualisation can also lead to isolation and loneliness. It expressly raises the question of human dignity and of how the poor and the weak can be seen and noticed.
2. Pluralisation offers a vast number of different opportunities. Plurality is a sign of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity and tolerance towards other lifestyles. On the other hand, pluralisation results for many people in a lack of direction, making it more difficult for them to take decisions.
3. The change in the role of the sexes is apparent in the equality of men and women, the differentiation of gender roles beyond the biological gender and in changed forms of partnership, in the question of sexual orientation and gender orientation. Every person is created in the image of God.
4. Religiousness exists even in a secular society. Religiousness manifests itself in a need for spirituality that is subject to exploitation in the religious market. For many people the search for spirituality does not go hand in hand with adherence to a certain religion. Moreover, there is increasing evidence of intolerance, terror and violence perpetrated in the name of God.
5. In many countries all over the world the average age is dropping, while in others it is increasing. Demographic change in an ageing society calls for cooperation between young and old, between the native population and immigrants, between men and women. It raises questions about the protection of life, fair and equitable distribution, integration and inclusion as well as the willingness to accept migrants from young societies.
6. Flexibilisation is reflected in the fact that people now have many more opportunities than they did in the past to shape and develop their lives. The need to be flexible can also lead to people feeling they are not sufficiently rooted and at home.

7. New ways of making contact and forming relationships are emerging in the media and communication society. This offers new opportunities for satisfying human curiosity and acquiring knowledge. At the same time it harbours the risk of people shutting themselves off and becoming dependent and of social media being used to harm other people.

8. Economisation extends opportunities in life. It makes it easier to recognise resources and deal with them in a more responsible manner. However, it can also lead to the subordination of all spheres of life to economic constraints.

9. Threats to life make it clear that human existence is finite and at risk. Human dignity must be respected in all situations and phases of life if we are not to succumb to a “globalisation of indifference”<sup>36</sup>. Creation is God’s gift and must be treated in a responsible manner.

## **2. The process of the Synod**

In announcing<sup>37</sup>, organising and holding the Episcopal Synod, the Bishop launched a process of consultation which regularly underwent change and development. Characteristic of this process was the growing relationship of trust between the members of the Synod, good cooperation between the various bodies of the Synod and application of the principle that the plenary session advises the Bishop in a sovereign manner.

Groups, bodies and organisations were informed about the planned “Synod in the Diocese of Trier” project and requested to submit proposals for topics to be discussed during the Synod.

The plenary sessions of the Synod took place in Trier, Saarbrücken and Koblenz. Invitations were issued for people to attend meetings between the members of the Synod and members of the public. Information and discussion meetings were held by way of support throughout the diocese. Many of the faithful prayed for the members of the Synod and for a successful outcome to their deliberations.

The Synod was conducted in a spiritual atmosphere. This enabled the Synod to handle crises. After eighteen months of concentrated work in the Expert Committees the recommendations they drew up were grouped and prioritised. One of the reasons for the successful mastering of the crisis situation which arose in this context was that the Bishop made it possible for a seventh plenary session to be held at the request of the Synod.

The Synod prayer gave expression to the experience gathered over the years of joint consultation and struggle.

*Lord Jesus Christ, saviour and redeemer,...*

*We believe that you walk at our side and through our times.*

*Grant us your Holy Spirit so that we may recognise the signs of the times.*

*May it infuse our discussions. May it remove what separates us.*

*May it give us the patience to listen to each other and the courage to venture forward into the future.*

*Let the Synod be a gathering marked by honest views and brotherly cooperation.*

*We are journeying together.*

*Let us listen together to what the Holy Spirit has to tell us.*

*Let us together be the sign and instrument of your Good News.*

### **3. Legal framework and composition of the Synod**

By definition of Canon Law a diocesan synod is “a group of selected priests and other members of the Christian faithful of a particular church who offer assistance to the diocesan bishop for the good of the whole diocesan community” (Can. 460 CIC). A diocesan synod advises the bishop in laying down the basic pastoral directions for his diocese. Synods are a form of communally expressed co-responsibility within the Church.

At the first plenary session the Trier diocesan synod consisted of 279 members, of whom 108 were women (39%) and 171 men (61%). Among the men there were 110 priests (39%) and seven deacons (3%); all told, therefore, there were 117 clerics (42%) who consulted with 162 lay people (58%).

In compliance with the rules and regulations of Canon Law and the rules of the Synod, the Synod had 74 official members (27%); they belonged to the Synod because they hold a certain office in the diocese or are members of a certain body. 120 members of the Synod (43%) were elected and 85 members (30%) were appointed by the Bishop, some of them at the suggestion of groups or bodies.

### **4. Thematic forums on the occasion of the Synod**

Since a number of important and urgent topics could not be resolved at the level of a diocesan synod, three thematic forums were organised in parallel to the Synod, each of which was attended by approximately 200 people, both members and non-members of the Synod.

The participants in the first forum entitled “Divorced – Remarried” (13/14 June 2014) examined input on the issue of divorce and remarriage from the fields of theology, the humanities and social sciences. One of the main topics discussed at the forum was the participation of remarried people in the sacraments of the Church.

The second forum headed “Sexuality. Life” (24/25 April 2015) focused on the tension between the Church’s official teachings on sexual morality and everyday reality. This included, amongst other things, homosexuality, various sexual identities, sexuality in old age and celibacy for priests. Held in an open, anxiety-free, respectful and appreciative atmosphere, the forum opened up paths to an intensive exchange.

The third forum entitled “Women. Perspectives” (17/18 July 2015) formulated expectations of the Church with respect to gender-sensitive language, cooperation in partnership between men and women and the ongoing development of official theology. A call was raised for the setting up of an equal opportunities committee in the diocese; it was urged that greater account should be taken gender equality in matters of employment.

### **5. The work of the Synod**

A preparatory committee appointed by Bishop Dr. Stephan Ackermann drew up the rules for the work of the Synod (Statutes and Rules of Procedure) and advised the Bishop in determining the



questions to be dealt with at the Synod. In the run-up to the Synod the Bishop pinpointed four areas in which he saw a need for consultation:

1. The Church in the modern world
2. Believing, living and learning
3. Celebrating the faith in Church services and prayers
4. Discovering and fostering spiritual gifts among God's people

The work of the Synod was steered by the Executive Committee which was headed by the Bishop and comprised four moderators and five other persons present by virtue of their office. The Synod secretariat attended to the executive tasks.

The members of the Synod met the Bishop seven times for plenary sessions, four times in Trier (former Abbey Church of St. Maximin), twice in Saarbrücken (E-Werk) and once in Koblenz (Youth Church of St. Elisabeth).

The Synod was constituted at the first plenary session (13/14 December 2013 in Trier).

Ten Expert Committees (EC) were set up at the second plenary session (30 April to 3 May 2014 in Trier):

- EC 1: Being diaconal  
(original title: Diaconal work)
- EC 2: Being missionary
- EC 3: The future of the parish
- EC 4: Catechesis
- EC 5: Learning to live out the faith in many places
- EC 6: Sunday and the organisation of the Sunday service
- EC 7: Prayers and Church services
- EC 8: Discovering and valuing the diversity of spiritual gifts  
(original title: The diversity of spiritual gifts among men and women)
- EC 9: Developing council structures
- EC 10: Families in all their diversity in Church and society and gender equality  
(original title: Families in all their diversity in Church and society and the change in gender roles)

Taking due account of the feedback submitted during the preparatory phase and of the evaluation of past practices in the Diocese of Trier, the Expert Committees were called upon to specify challenges, propose changes and developments, and describe practical consequences and tasks. In doing so, they were to give consideration to the key developments of the time, the prospects for the "poor and afflicted" and inclusion as a cross-cutting issue.

During the third plenary session (2 to 4 October 2014 in Saarbrücken) feedback was provided on the work conducted in the Expert Committees, which revised their recommendations accordingly.

At the fourth plenary session (14 to 16 May 2015 in Koblenz) there was discussion of the revised recommendations; for the first time feedback came from the Bishop, Diocesan Bishops and the Vicar General.

The fifth plenary session (3 to 5 September 2015 in Saarbrücken) made it clear that the 102 recommendations submitted by the Expert Committees needed to be structured, compared and grouped. A working group set up by the plenary session was charged with preparing a draft. During this session a decision was taken to hold a seventh plenary session.

At the sixth plenary session (10 to 12 December 2015 in Trier) the members of the Synod faced the challenge of dispensing with the logic underlying the work of the Expert Committees up to that point and of thinking and arguing with a view to producing a common final outcome. The Synod performed an initial grouping and agreed on the four shifts in perspective. It prioritized the recommendations submitted.

At the seventh plenary session (28 April to 1 May 2016) the members of the Synod discussed the Final Document submitted on 30 April 2016 and adopted it with 212 votes in favour, 19 votes against and no abstentions.

#### *List of references*

- 1 Catholic hymn book no. 346
- 2 See Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1
- 3 Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), no. 51
- 4 See Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 1
- 5 Klaus Hemmerle, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 4, Freiburg i. Br. 1996, p. 329
- 6 Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), no. 13
- 7 See *Lumen Gentium*, no. 9
- 8 See *Gemeinsam Kirche sein. Wort der deutschen Bischöfe zur Erneuerung der Pastoral* (1 August 2015), *Die deutschen Bischöfe* no. 100, pp. 20-22
- 9 Homily during the celebration of the Eucharist in Asuncion, Paraguay (12 July 2015)
- 10 *Gemeinsam Kirche sein*, p. 51
- 11 “All Christians are called upon, by virtue of their baptism and confirmation, to further develop what is holy in their lives and thereby to help shape the world and the Church in the

spirit of Jesus Christ. This importance and responsibility on the part of every single Christian also applies regardless of the number of priests and full-time staff in the Church.” In: *Gemeinsam Kirche sein*, p. 15

- 12 Address at the 50th anniversary celebration to mark the institution of the diocesan synod (17 October 2015)
- 13 See Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 15b
- 14 Cf. Pope Francis, Address at the ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the institution of the synod of bishops (17 October 2015); *idem.*, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), no. 120
- 15 The option for the poor is grounded in biblical theology (see the inaugural address by Pope Benedict XVI at the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in Aparecida, 13 May 2007) and entails working with the poor and for the poor (i.e. those excluded from participation and sharing) in order to bring about social justice.
- 16 Social environment orientation is “an integrated action plan for social work. Essentially it is about improving living conditions for all the people living in an urban district, neighbourhood or similar social space. The focus is on their interests and needs. The plan starts with the strengths of the individual and activates these. It is designed to encourage people living in unfavourable conditions to take the initiative in ushering in changes in their residential area. Furthermore, resources in the social environment are sought, combined and rendered accessible. The basis for working in the social environment is provided by cooperation and networking between the institutions and services of non-statutory welfare organisations, the municipal administration, the local business community, the housing sector, educational establishments, parish associations and civil society initiatives.”  
(<http://www.caritas.de/glossare/sozialraumorientierung>, retrieved 20 April 2016)
- 17 The terms “pastoral care” and “social outreach organisations” describe the entire breadth of Church agents at the local level, i.e. parishes/parish associations, pastoral care in category-related areas, deaneries, counselling centres, day nurseries, family education centres, institutions and services of the Caritas association, senior citizens homes, multi-generational homes, etc.
- 18 *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11
- 19 See Appendix: The Recommendations of the Expert Committees 2.23
- 20 Cf. Msgr. Leon Arthur Elchinger, L'hospitalite eucharistique pour les foyers mixtes (30 November 1972), in: *Amtsblatt der Diözese Straßbourg L'Eglise en Alsace*, 12/1972, pp. 11-22. (German translation in: Hans-Georg Link (ed.), *Das Straßburger Modell. Eucharistische Gastfreundschaft im Elsass. Eine Dokumentation*, Cologne 2002, <http://www.religion-theologie.fr/gerardsiegwalt/pdf/2002%20strassburger%20modell%20endfassung.pdf> [retrieved 12 May 2016]) – See also: Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (25 March 1993), no. 129 as well as Can. 844 §§ 4-5 CIC

- 21 See Appendix: The Recommendations of the Expert Committees 2.29
- 22 See also the reference to the sources in the Appendix: The Recommendations of the Expert Committees 2.34
- 23 See Annex: The Path of the Synod, 1
- 24 See Annex: The Path of the Synod, 4
- 25 Cf. Bishop Dr. Stephan Ackermann in his New Year sermon 2015. See also *Gemeinsam Kirche sein*, foreword by Reinhard Cardinal Marx, p. 6
- 26 See Annex: The Path of the Synod, no. 5
- 27 Cf. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 198-200
- 28 Cf. *ibid*, no. 27
- 29 Cf. endnote 5
- 30 Fulbert Steffensky, *Mut zur Endlichkeit*, Stuttgart 2007, p. 21: "Gegen den Totalitätsterror möchte ich die gelungene Halbheit loben."
- 31 Cf. endnote 17
- 32 Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), no. 49
- 33 Joseph Dore (Archbishop of Strasbourg), Archdiocese of Strasbourg. Leitlinien für eine Pastoral für Geschiedene und wiederverheiratete Geschiedene (1 May 2004), in: *Amtsblatt der Diözese Straßbourg L'Eglise en Alsace*, 6/2004, pp. 23-27. (German translation: Klaus Nientiedt) - Episcopal Ordinariate Luxemburg. Gebetszeit für wiederverheiratete Geschiedene (24 February 2006) - Andreas Möhrle, Michael Schweiger, Handreichung für die Seelsorge zur Begleitung von Menschen in Trennung, Scheidung und nach ziviler Wiederverheiratung in der Erzdiözese Freiburg, October 2013. [All three documents available at: <http://www.familienseelsorge-freiburg.de/html/wiederheirat452.html> (retrieved 8 July 2015)]. – See also: Pastoral Office of the Diocese of Innsbruck, *Wenn geschiedene Menschen anlässlich ihrer standesamtlichen Trauung um ein Gebet bitten* (January 2008), in: [http://dioezesefiles.x4content.com/page-downloads/wenn\\_geschiedene\\_menschen...dibk.pdf](http://dioezesefiles.x4content.com/page-downloads/wenn_geschiedene_menschen...dibk.pdf) (retrieved 8 July 2015)
- 34 Cf. 3.1
- 35 Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 4, 9 und 11
- 36 Pope Francis, Homily during the celebration of the Eucharist on Lampedusa (8 July 2013)
- 37 Bishop Dr. Stephan Ackermann, *Es ist Zeit, wieder zu einer Synode zusammenzukommen*. Homily for the Solemnity of St. Peter and Paul (29 June 2012) in Trier Cathedral
- 38 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1