



**Mail by Bishop Dr Georg Bätzing**  
**in response to the second letter by Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila**  
**(Denver, Colorado – USA)**  
**on the Synodal Path**

*We document the Mail written by Bishop Dr Georg Bätzing, President of the German Bishops' Conference, on 5 May 2022, to Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila (Denver, Colorado – USA) regarding his second letter, dated 3 May 2022:*

Your Excellency,

Thank you for your personal response to my letter of reply to the letter signed by more than 70 bishops.

The email below with which you send me your letter makes it clear that I am not the sole addressee of your letter. "The reply will become public soon" indicates that it is again an open letter, which wants to reach and gather the critics of the Synodal Path in the Church. You are entitled to do so. However, please also understand that I will no longer respond to such open letters. The fact that I did so the first time is due to the respect I have for you and my brothers in Christ. But you also know that it is the usual practice to leave open letters unanswered.

In the meantime, I have also learned that among the collected signatories of the first letter were also those who were decidedly uninformed about the real discussion process of the Synodal Path. And even after some time they had no knowledge of the fact that and how I had answered in detail. This shows: you did not make my answer even remotely publicly available in similar ways to your own letter. That, too, is your right, but it does make your approach seem rather questionable.

I only want to address one point of your argumentation in the current letter. Based on intensive discussions with those affected and intensive scientific studies on the occurrence of abuse of children and young people by clerics in our country, we had to painfully accept that there are

multi-dimensional systemic factors in the Catholic Church which favour abuse. Uncovering these and doing our utmost to overcome them is the starting point of the Synodal Path in Germany, and it is reflected in the four priority areas to be worked on. In contrast, your argumentation that bishops have made mistakes in dealing with abuse and instead of taking responsibility for it, they now want to fundamentally question the doctrine of the Church in Germany, is, from my humble insight, frighteningly one-line and unfortunately does not do justice by far to the complex reality of the structures in the Catholic Church that facilitate abuse. However, I am glad and appreciate the fact that your opinion is by no means shared by all the faithful and bishops, even in the Church in the United States. This is clearly communicated to me again and again. Our Church needs change in order to faithfully carry out her mission and take the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of our time. And the urgent need for change also includes the need to further develop the Church's teaching. Such is my conviction.

Nevertheless, I take your objections seriously, because they indicate concern and at the same time that we also in the Catholic Church worldwide live in a thoroughly plural situation of different social life worlds and theological assessments. These require exchange, critical dialogue and a new understanding and communication with each other, of course on the basis of what belongs to the revealed unchangeable heritage of the Church's faith. That is why I am so extraordinarily grateful for the open way in which Pope Francis has designed the World Synod on Synodality. Everyone should be able to participate, have their say and contribute their views. This is a great approach we in Germany support very much.

Even though I am not able to continue the written discussion with you, I would like to point out that our synodal assemblies will continue to be open to the media and will be streamed, i.e. everyone will be able to follow them. And for the sake of transparency and critical accompaniment, we will make our draft resolutions and adopted texts publicly available.

In thanking you once again, I wish that the Easter confidence may continue in you: The Lord is truly risen, hallelujah.

Fraternally yours

+ Georg Bätzing