



## **Moral and theological questions in the context of rape (“morning-after pill”)**

Due to recent events, the plenary assembly of the German Bishops' Conference dealt with the moral and theological aspects of the administration of the so-called “morning-after pill” to women who have been victims of rape. Cardinal Karl Lehmann (Mainz), president of the Commission for Doctrine and Faith of the German Bishops' Conference, illustrated the moral and theological evaluation of the use of a so-called “morning-after pill” on the basis of scientific findings on the availability of new compounds with modified effect. Cardinal Joachim Meisner (Cologne) explained the background of his statement of 31 January 2013 given after two Catholic hospitals in Cologne had turned away a rape victim and after consultation with the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and the Pontifical Academy for Life.

The plenary assembly affirmed that women who have been victims of rape of course will receive human, medical, psychological and pastoral help in Catholic hospitals. This can include the administration of the “morning-after pill” as long as it has a preventive and not an abortive effect. Medical and pharmaceutical methods which result in the death of an embryo still may not be used. The German bishops trust that in facilities run by the Catholic Church decisions on the practical treatment will be taken on the basis of these moral and theological guidelines. In every case, the decision of the woman concerned must be respected. In addition to first statements on the “morning-after pill”, the plenary assembly recognizes the need to study in more detail other implications of this issue – also in contact with those responsible in Rome – and to make the necessary differentiations. The bishops will have talks on this issue with Catholic hospitals, Catholic gynaecologists and consultants.