

# **The German Bishops**

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## **One Mission – many Services**

**On the identity of  
world-wide acting Church institutions and  
initiatives today**

**6 April 2000**

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## **Preface**

The Second Vatican Council insistently reminded all believers of the universal responsibility of the local churches. 25 years ago, the Joint Synod of Bishops in the Federal Republic of Germany drew conclusions for the Church in our country from the documents prepared by the Council.

Since then, the situation in the world has changed fundamentally. Our situation is characterised by new challenges: not least the emergence of pluralistic religious theories and the formation of a large number of organizations and initiatives advocating world-wide solidarity in the fight for justice and human development.

Against this background, the present document was drafted by the Commission for Universal Church Affairs of the German Bishops' Conference in cooperation with the interdiocesan world-wide acting Church institutions and initiatives, in particular the missionary religious institutes, religious institutes and the aid agencies.

"One Mission – many Services" describes the Church's universal responsibility that is based on a comprehensive understanding of Evangelization. The focus is on the theological foundation and motivation common to all initiatives and on striving for cooperation – despite the pragmatic "division of tasks" – and not least on bringing the aid agencies into contact with the different dioceses and with the German Bishops' Conference.

The General Assembly of the German Bishops' Conference adopted this document on 16 March 2000 in the hope of lending a new impetus to the joint efforts involved in shouldering the Church's universal responsibility. I would like to thank the Commission for International Church Affairs and all those involved, and hope that the intensive cooperation between the world-wide acting Church institutions and initiatives will become a blessing for the partners all over the world who are awaiting our assistance.

Mainz, 6 April 2000

Bishop Karl Lehmann  
President of the German Bishops' Conference

## Introduction

The situation in which humanity finds itself at present is typified by a constantly accelerating development to which we apply the buzzword 'globalization'. What is meant by this is an irreversible process full of opportunities and risks: A growing interdependence of national and regional economic areas transcending all frontiers; the unhindered flow of international finance; the development of traffic and transport systems; the revolution in information technology; increasing migration for a variety of reasons, resulting in a meeting of various peoples, cultures, religions and systems in a manner which was previously unimaginable. This is perceived as an enrichment, but may nevertheless also lead to disorientation.

Thus, globalization also gives rise to fears that are, in many cases, the cause of reviving nationalistic and ethnic conflicts nourished by ideological and religious fundamentalism.

In this process, globalization is hurrying on ahead of efforts to form an international regulatory policy (global governance) which is needed to ensure that the poorer nations also enjoy opportunities, to create a space for the poor in which they themselves - supported by "global solidarity" - are able to shoulder responsibility for their own development in a manner which shows respect for their human dignity.

This is a special opportunity for a Church that incorporates catholicity, universal, global mission and at the same time responsibility and which, with her 2000-year history, is, so to speak, the oldest "global player".

Against this background, and still driven by the impetus with which the Second Vatican Council reawakened and deepened the comprehensive understanding of Evangelization as the special manifestation of the Church's universal responsibility, we ask ourselves how we can keep alive the perpetual missionary mandate in the awareness of all members of the Church today, particularly in view of "pluralistic religious theories", which regard all religions as equally valid.

At the same time, we ask ourselves how to contribute towards a more just global society, operating in a spirit of increased solidarity, whilst retaining our identity.

In today's pluralistic society, philosophical communities with a wide variety of convictions are disseminating their messages and the most varied organizations and initiatives - religious and non-religious, governmental and non-governmental - are, with various motivations, tackling the need of their fellow human beings and working for their part to serve world-wide solidarity. For this reason, we for our part must reflect on the special theological basis and motives of our commitment and be *ready to make [our] defence to anyone who demands from [us] an accounting for the hope that is in [us]* (cf. 1 Pet 3.15).

The present document is intended to meet these challenges and demonstrate what is shared in common by all world-wide acting Church institutions and initiatives, thereby promoting cooperation.

## **I. Christian Mission today**

### **1. The Mission of the Church in today's world**

The Church's mission, appointed by Jesus Christ, is at all times to bring His Gospel of God's Kingdom - simultaneously the Gospel of life, freedom, justice and reconciliation - to the ends of the earth and proclaim it to all (Mk 16.15; Mt 28.19-20; Acts 1.8). Thus, the Church is continuing the Mission of Jesus, who came to bring the Good News to the poor (Lk 4.18). Thus, "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity" (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 14). Like the Apostle Paul, she must say of herself: "... woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel" (1 Cor 9.16). Being good, liberating news, the Gospel is, at the same time, the answer to the deepest questions and longings of human beings. For this reason, the proclamation of the good Christian news - in words and actions - must be aware of the "signs of the time" and interpret them accordingly. (*Gaudium et spes*, 1; 11 et al.); it must go into the questions with which people are faced and the problems of the current time. Thus, the Church, in the light of the Gospel, must make her own special contribution towards building a more just world operating in a spirit of greater solidarity. With her message, it must permeate all areas of human life and culture, acting like yeast (cf. Mt 13.33).

An important way in which the Church in Germany is making this contribution is in the world-wide acting Church institutions. They have been founded for a variety of reasons and with differing goals, have proven their worth in many ways in witness (Martyria), specifically in the *missio ad gentes*, and in the social charity service (Diaconia). In dangerous situations, in catastrophes and in acute need, they do not conduct debates on general principles, but immediately provide effective assistance - in the same way as the Good Samaritan immediately helped the person in need at the side of the street (cf. Lk 10.25-37). Beyond aid in acute emergencies and catastrophes, structural assistance is also a priority. Here, it is a matter of social charity and development policy commitment towards the poor (cf. also No. 5.). All world-wide acting Church institutions and initiatives work together with institutions and groups of a wide variety of colours, whilst retaining their identity. At the same time, they bear witness to the foundation and the goal of their Christian-motivated and orientated commitment, both in the Church and in society. Church assistance is not a mere repetition of the other aid activities available.

### **2. One Mission – many services**

The Mission of Salvation of the Church is *one*. It however reveals itself in a large number of missions that, in the different local churches, find expression in various institutions and initiatives. In the Catholic Church in Germany, this has included for time immemorial the religious institutes. Encouraged by the encyclical letter *Fidei donum* by Pope Pius XII, strengthened by documents prepared by the Second Vatican Council, secular priests have

since then entered the service of overseas local churches, and more recently also Eastern European local churches.

In the area of competence of the German Bishops' Conference, some of the large interdiocesan institutions include the mission of the Church in their names. These are MISSIO Aachen and Munich (cf. Mk 16.15; Mt 28.19-20), the Pontifical Society of the Missionary Childhood (Mk 10.13-16; Mt 19.13-15) and the Pontifical Society of Missionary Women (Lk 24.10; Jn 20.18). Other agencies also show through their names the internal link with the very essence of the Church's Mission. Thus, MISEREOR and CARITAS INTERNATIONAL remind one of Jesus' love for suffering people who are to be saved from their need and freed to live a life worth living (cf. Mt 8.2 par.; Mk 4.4 par.; Lk 10.25-27), ADVENIAT of the advent of God's authority (cf. Mk 1.5; Mt 6.10 par.), RENOVABIS of the renewal of the Earth through the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Ps 104.30; Acts 1.8 u. 2.14-24). Moreover, there are many partnerships and initiatives of the different dioceses and their parishes, and of associations and groups.

### **3. The fundamental principles of the Church's Mission of Salvation**

The fundamental principles of the Church's Mission of Salvation have been described bindingly for our time in the documents of the Second Vatican Council (especially *Lumen gentium*, *Gaudium et spes*; *Ad gentes*), in the Post-Synodal letter of Pope Paul VI *Evangelii nuntiandi*, in the encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II *Redemptoris missio*, and in the social encyclical letters of the Popes. They are also to be found in the resolutions of the Joint Synod of Bishops in the Federal Republic of Germany (*Unsere Hoffnung. Ein Bekenntnis zum Glauben in dieser Zeit; Missionarischer Dienst an der Welt; Der Beitrag der katholischen Kirche in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland für Entwicklung und Frieden [Our Hope. A Confession of Faith in our Time; Missionary Service to the World; The Contribution of the Catholic Church in the Federal Republic of Germany towards Development and Peace]*) and in the Declaration *Justice for All* by the German Commission for Justice and Peace. Such texts are the basis for the world-wide work of Church agents, their theological-pastoral reflection, for building an awareness and for public relations work.

### **4. Salvation given by God**

In her Mission of Salvation, the Church embodies the Triune God's love for the world. It starts with the Creation, through which God permits the world to participate in His reality, truth and goodness. Even when Men became disloyal to God and fell into sin and guilt, God remained true to them. Again and again, he offered Men His Covenant: to all peoples through Noah in the cosmic order, to the people of Israel through Abraham, Moses and the Prophets. God's caring for the world finds its highest, unparalleled expression in Jesus Christ becoming

human, through whom God accepted each individual human being (*Gaudium et spes*, 22). Jesus Christ is the mediator of the Salvation which God wishes to give to all Humankind (1 Tim 2.4-5). Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ remains in the Church and is effectively active in the world until its completion. The Holy Spirit is, as it were, the soul of Evangelization (*Redemptoris missio*, 21-30). Thus, in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are to follow the many traces of salvation and healing history in human history and, in the spirit of Jesus Christ, to help lead it to fullness and fulfilment. In this overall understanding, the missionary message remains the essence. It is far removed from being complete, or indeed obsolete. Where it is a matter of opening up God's activity in an understanding of the world and practice in life of people of other religions, the missionary message is also closely associated with interreligious dialogue. This is not the whole, but a major element of Evangelization (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 53; *Redemptoris missio*, 55-56).

## **5. Option for the poor and integral understanding of salvation**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3.16-17). The Son was sent by the Father to "proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God" (Lk 4.43). This is a "message of freedom and a liberating force" (Instruction *Libertatis conscientia* dated 22.3.1986, 43). This good news addresses all humans, in particular the poor, those who labour and are heavy laden, who are privileged by God. Solidarity with them is "a proof of her fidelity to Christ" (John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, 8) for the Church as she recognizes "in the poor and afflicted ... the image of [her] poor and suffering Founder" (*Lumen gentium*, 8). Church pastoral work and development cooperation do not marginalize social groups, but primarily address the poor. In respect for the dignity of the poor, they permit the poor themselves to be the subject of their own development.

God's salvation addresses the whole individual, the human society and the world. It wants to permeate all areas of human life and culture. In this sense, we speak of integral salvation. It covers the reality of human life on this side, and life after death and eschatological completion of the world. Salvation is life given by God, rescued by Him and redeemed by Him; it is life in abundance (Jn 10.10). Fighting for life is today a major focus in this comprehensive sense. The Gospel which we proclaim is the "Gospel of Life" (John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*).

## **6. Salvation work in concrete world situations**

In the concrete fulfilment of the mandate to convey the comprehensive salvation given to the world by God in Jesus Christ, it may make sense to divide tasks and have different approaches towards Christian commitment, as is happening impressively in the Catholic Church in Germany in the various world-wide acting Church institutions and initiatives. In

one instance, the express proclamation of the salvation in Christ can be the point of focus. In another, the emphasis may be more on the commitment to justice and participation in restructuring the world, as well as on the current need of specific people in their poverty, illness and lack of education. The cultural and social situation of the countries or continents which need specific support may differ very widely - different in Africa, Asia or Latin America, different again in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The one Mission of the Church must take account of the differing needs and developments in the world. The proclamation of salvation can only be made effective and believable in concrete circumstances and in situations of distress. What is however decisive is the comprehensive view of the one church mandate.

### **7. Mission of the universal Church as a responsibility of the local churches**

The Church as the *una, sancta et catholica* is the world-wide community of those believing in Jesus Christ and baptised in Him. It is one in the belief, in the same sacraments and in community with the Church of Rome and her Pontiff, the successor of Peter. It exists in and from the local churches (*Lumen gentium*, 23) and is fulfilled in the local churches in the various continents, cultural areas and countries of the world. This leads inevitably to cultural and local differences; being an expression of the inculturation and contextualization of the Gospel, such diversity is a sign of the richness and of the true catholicity of the church. The Bishops are a band of the unity of their own local churches and with the universal Church. Each Bishop, together with his local church, shoulders a shared responsibility for the whole Church and Her world-wide Mission (*Fidei donum*; *Lumen gentium* 25; *Ad gentes*, 38). In the *Communio* network of local churches all over the world, and with the successor of Peter, these are to increasingly become partner Churches which get to know one another, learn from one another and help one another to the best of their ability. This *Communio* can only exist authentically and be fruitful if the Churches that are better off and live in freedom support poorer, persecuted Christians. They are rewarded, for their part, with the witness of the strength of faith and suffering and with the momentum and the hope of the Church in adversity.

### **8. Christian Mission in the awareness of its historical positive and negative aspects**

Christian Mission springs from the unity of love for God and for one's neighbour, where God is to be loved for His own sake and the neighbour for God's sake and for his/her own sake. The Second Vatican Council calls love the sign "which points out the true disciple of Christ" (*Lumen gentium*, 42). Men and women without number have been typified by this mark who changed the face of the Earth in the succession of the Lord. As "Disciples of Christ" they made "the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties" of those faced by adversity in their time to their own "joys and hopes, [...] griefs and anxieties" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1). Of course must be

admitted that Christians, too, have frequently been and are insensitive towards the suffering of others. The commemoration days of the 'discoveries' of the continents outside Europe - especially America and India - and the Jubilees of the missionary activities in many countries have reminded us painfully these aspects. The knowledge of the many sacred and saintly missionaries, as well as of the failures of Christianity, are some of the conditions under which we now practice our mission in the world.

## **II. The profile of world-wide acting Church institutions and initiatives**

### **9. Key numbers for orientation**

As much as world-wide acting Church initiatives differ in their direct aims, they nevertheless have in common that they all participate in the one mission mandate of the Church, namely to bring the Gospel to all peoples and humans by word and action. Their task is not of a merely human and worldly nature. It means from and to Jesus Christ the mission to a integrally understood evangelization. The different institutions and initiatives, their members and staff who serve this one mission, are taking on their own profile in their spirituality and in their speciality from the many types of charisma (cf. 1 Cor 12) and from the human need and requirements to which they are to reply.

### **10. Living and working from the Gospel**

There is no new humanity unless there are first new people through new persons renewed by Baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18). The proclamation of the Gospel requires witnesses. People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers and experts (ibid. 41; *Redemptoris missio*, 42). Even if this rightful "autonomy of earthly affairs" (*Gaudium et spes*, 36 et al.) needs of course to be observed, the Gospel is nevertheless light and power in working in the world (ibid. 42). For this reason, orientations towards the Gospel and life lived in accordance with the Gospel are the source and the centre and critical norm of each universal Church commitment.

### **11. Church minded**

All agents of universal Church commitment participate in the mission of the Church, and they themselves are a part of the *Communio* which composes the essence of the Church and which is reflected in the cooperation between the many local churches in the world, such as the various services and offices in the Church. Integration into the church and motivation of all work from the mission of the Church is, hence, the specific nature of the commitment of world-wide acting Church institutions which distinguishes them from similar activities of

other organizations. In active participation in church life, staff continually regain access to the spiritual sources of their service. There is a need for a "sentire cum ecclesia", to feel and live with the Church, sharing joy where she lives and grows, sharing suffering where she is weak, suffering and suppressed.

## **12. Prophetic counsel**

The renewing power of church activities is based on the prophetic counsel provided by the Church for justice, freedom and peace, as well as for the basic human rights of each individual. For this, there is a need in everyday life of an awareness of the hidden work of the Spirit that is awakened by regular practice in faith and piety, as well as through personal reflection, conversion and renewal. Such a faithful attitude awakens a sense of wrong, sin and guilt in personal life, as well as of injustice and structures of sin in social and political systems. However, it also awakens a sense of responsibility for activity in a spirit of solidarity in working for justice, freedom, peace and reconciliation. The witness of the Church is all the more plausible in this area as it attempts to solve even her own internal conflicts through dialogue and argument, rather than with moral appeals or authoritative decisions.

## **13. Christian social teaching**

Part of the basic orientation for all is the social teaching of the Church. Taking in account the requirements of the time, it intends to explain, to explain the principles of a humane social order on the basis of the Christian vision of man. It, too, calls for the option for the poor, teaches subsidiary self-responsibility and the development of pan-societal, and today global, solidarity. It means to reduce dependencies which are beneath human dignity, to commit oneself to human rights, human dignity and freedom, and it is based on the principle of giving assistance towards self-reliance and calls for the struggle against the causes and not only of the effects of evil in the world.

## **14. Forming awareness**

The work of the world-wide acting Church institutions includes forming awareness inside and outside. It is, initially, a matter of informing and motivating one's own staff to enable them to carry out the mission in the spirit of the pan-church mission, on behalf of the Church and in a knowledge of the rapidly-changing situations and developments in the world. The members and staff, thus informed and motivated, will for their part help to form an awareness within the Church. In view of a reducing missionary awareness, they will give witness to the fact that the essence of the Church is missionary (*Ad gentes*, 2) and - in light of increasing individualization - that and how Christians are obliged to promote world-wide solidarity. As Christians, we are faced by the alternative, to do missionary work or to resign (M. Delbrel). If

this awareness is not repeatedly reawakened and promoted within the Church, the world-wide acting Church institutions will lose their foundation.

Forming awareness in public opinion is particularly essential by mass media. Even where institutions and initiatives do not directly serve the proclamation mandate of the Church, the Church is effectively and recognisably present in public, since the institutions and initiatives exercise through their work criticism of unfair and sometimes almost cynical forms of global economic conduct and structures. Public statements and declarations on important events and situations must rely on studies, and if need be on academic analyses, which are free of prejudice and take account of all major aspects.

### **15. Local church partnerships**

Assistance is always needed where there are major differences between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless. Here, assistance frequently risks ultimately leading to dominance and subordination. At global level, this is revealed in the relationship between "developed" and "underdeveloped" countries. This situation may also occur between "poor young" churches and "rich old" churches. It is therefore important for the measures taken by church partners to be discussed, planned and implemented together by those responsible in the local churches involved. And providing assistance must always take account of the legitimate sensitivity and self-esteem of the partners in the poorer countries. Coordination with the respective local church in a spirit of partnership and exchange of informations is also required in cases concerned in giving assistance to non-Catholic or non-Christian groups or institutions.

### **16. Ecumenical cooperation**

The separate Christians and Churches have realised in our century what they have in common, in spite of all the differences, and are attempting to work together wherever possible. Such a fundamental ecumenical stance in cooperation with Orthodox and Protestant Churches is required because of the plausibility of the Christian witness, even and particularly in countries in which Christians form a minority, and in light of the competition from other philosophical and ideological groups (cf. Jn 17.21). Ecumenism can be lived out in direct aid and in development-orientated measures addressing people in need with no regard for religion and confession, in task-sharing activities and in joint projects. Christian ecumenism, after all, started as a reaction in the early missionary areas in which the separation of the Christian Churches proved itself to be a major obstacle for a plausible proclamation of the Gospel.

## **17. Cooperation with members of other religions**

Evangelization always took place in an encounter and discussion with other religions. As was stated at the beginning, today's migratory movements, the development of the transportation system and modern communication media inevitably led to a theretofore unknown frequency of encounters between members of various religions, whilst encounters with Islam are particularly significant, both directly and numerically. The religions are now frequently confronted with acute need and culturally-based structural injustice which in some cases stems from religious influences. For this reason, too, the religions are called upon to undertake joint efforts to further the cause of justice, freedom, peace and reconciliation, to promote human development and protect life. Christian development and aid movements frequently inspire members of other religions who reflect on their own religious and social motivations after witnessing Christian solidarity. Cooperation in acute need and in development may also lead to the interreligious dialogue called for today, which can enrich all.

## **18. Cooperation with all persons of goodwill**

The efforts to bring about ecumenism within Christianity and cooperation between the religions also leads to openness for cooperation coming from Christian motivation with all persons of goodwill and with organizations and aid agencies which act for people in need and seek to counter underdevelopment, not for primarily religious reasons, but based on a humanitarian motivation, and hence "resist all types of suppression through which the countenance of Man is destroyed" (*Unsere Hoffnung*, IV.4). In terms of their basic motivation, the world-wide acting Church institutions and initiatives should be prepared to enter into such cooperation in the interest of global solidarity. On the basis of the different perceptions of humanity, and different social principles derived therefrom, there may be a number of different assessments and conflicts. They should not be carried out contentiously in a spirit of competitive thinking, but as a discussion to find the better, more comprehensive understanding of the well-being and salvation of humans, in a willingness to enter into dialogue and argument.

## **Conclusion**

### **19. Many services, one witness**

In the unity of their many services, the world-wide acting Church institutions and initiatives witness that "the mission of the Church will show its religious, and by that very fact, its supremely human character" (*Gaudium et spes*, 11). For this reason, its religious and missionary and its humane, development-related mandate may be differentiated, but never

fundamentally separated. It is particularly in the fact of the two sides of the one mandate belonging together that universal Church commitment is a privileged place of Christian witness in today's world. Not least, it is visible thereby whether we Christians are really, "what we confess in the witness of our hope" (*Unsere Hoffnung*, II.2). It can contribute towards overcoming the tiredness, disappointment, even the mistrust, the lack of joy and hope in our local churches. Faith gains strength from meeting with the witness of others. Without the work of religious institutes, agencies and initiatives without number in dioceses and parishes which are able to overcome all frontiers, the world would be poorer in that love which unceasingly transforms it like yeast, and we Christians as a whole would be less plausible in fulfilling our mandate to proclaim the joyful, liberating, reconciling and hope-giving message to all people through word and action.

## **Annex**

In order to be able to fulfil the mission in its universality - as described above - there is a need for a common foundation. The diversity of challenges, demands and needs, and the specialisms required for this, have led to a "division of tasks" which has always been typified in a wide variety of foundations of communities of the holy life. Everyone cannot do everything, and particularly not in the complex world in which we live at the threshold to the third Millennium after the birth of Christ. Thus, in recent history, agencies have been founded which - shouldered together by all the dioceses – gather together interdiocesan and international initiatives and, with the expertise gained from experience, facilitate projects beyond the ability of different dioceses, or indeed parishes and groups. A local church can certainly not "delegate" its universal Church responsibility, but where it is active universally it should be able to rely on the expertise and experience of the agencies and keep to the criteria applying in the respective area - and this applies equally to parishes, associations and groups.

### **Interdiocesan, world-wide acting initiatives and institutions**

#### **The Religious Institutes**

##### *History*

The religious institutes have played a major role in the Church's missionary mandate since the end of the Ancient world. To a considerable extent, the religious institutes have shouldered universal Church missionary responsibility for many centuries.

Since the 7th Century, the Christianization of Europe has been closely linked to Benedictine monasticism, which created a large number of cloisters and abbeys. These became centres of faith and culture and sowed the seed for the subsequent local churches. The "mendicant orders" which emerged in the 12th and 13th Centuries bore the missionary mandate of the Church out into the newly-discovered continents of America and Asia. From the 16th Century onwards, in addition to the existing religious institutes, the Jesuits in particular brought the Christian faith to America and India, China and Japan. In the 18th and 19th Centuries in particular, many religious institutes in the actual sense of the word were created in Europe, especially women's communities, which became active the world over. Their service consisted in the first proclamation of the faith and the foundation of new local churches, as well as in building up a local education and health system.

##### *Task*

The task of the religious institutes and their understanding of their own roles changed at the latest after the Second Vatican Council. The Church as a whole became aware once more of

her world-wide acting Church missionary responsibility. Today, it is primarily the *local churches* that bear the main burden of mission. Within the local church, and in view of the universal Church, the specific missionary mandate of the religious institutes has taken on a new shape. Because of their charisma, they remain especially linked to the mission of the Church, and serve at the same time as a model through their international structure:

They live and act in the respective local church and are at the same time a link in the unity and community of the universal Church.

Whilst the Church mission and aid agencies perform specific aspects in world-wide acting Church cooperation, the service of the religious institutes primarily consists in deploying staff:

Roughly 4,000 German Order members are presently active (in 1999) in a missionary role in more than 140 states in the world. The religious institutes in Germany provide more than DM 200 million in donations annually in support of missionary work, for social and charitable tasks, for the training of German, European and local missionary staff, as a foundation for well-functioning local churches, to train new experts and to build an awareness of mission at home. They are hence also important mediators and funders of project partnerships and international development cooperation.

In the mostly internationally-structured religious institutes, international cooperation between local and foreign missionary staff is an important precondition for intercultural dialogue and new "inculturation" of faith. By closely linking German and local members of the Order, the religious institutes are also a major contribution for the German local churches. Through the exchange of members of the Order from all over the world, and through the experiences of their German members returning home after years of missionary work, they provide a major impetus from the partner churches on other Continents, and hence contribute towards the evangelization of our own country, towards the creation of a pan-missionary climate, towards openness to strangers, migrants and asylum-seekers, as well as towards the exchange of pastoral suggestions, such as in baptismal practice and the Catechumenate, parish leadership and structuring liturgical celebrations, etc.

### *Structure*

The religious institutes and all other institutes in Germany connected with the religious institutes are members of the Associations Superiors in Germany, *Vereinigung der Ordensoberinnen Deutschlands* (VOD)<sup>1</sup>, *Vereinigung Deutscher Ordensobern* (VDO)<sup>2</sup>, and *Vereinigung der Ordensobern der Brüderorden Deutschlands* (VOB)<sup>3</sup> which since their

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<sup>1</sup> Women's religious institutes: Vereinigung der Ordensoberinnen Deutschlands (VOD), Langendorferstraße 162, D-56564 Neuwied

<sup>2</sup> Religious institutes of priests: Vereinigung Deutscher Ordensobern (VDO), Am Knöcklein 13, D-96049 Bamberg

<sup>3</sup> Fraternities: Vereinigung der Ordensobern der Brüderorden Deutschlands (VOB). Nordallee 1, D-54292 Trier

establishment (VDO: 1898) have particularly regarded themselves as coordination and promotion bodies for the missionary services and tasks of religious institutes active in the universal Church and in local churches, and as a link to the Pontifical and Episcopal missionary and aid agencies, as well as to the German bishoprics.

## **MISSIO**

### **Aachen and Munich**

#### *History*

MISSIO was established as an "initiative taken by the laity" in the course of the religious renewal which took place in the 19th Century. Doctor Heinrich Hahn, from Aachen, together with people of a similar mind, gave life to an association to support the Catholic missions, the "St-Francis-Xaverius Association" in 1832. The model was the "Society for the Propagation of the Faith" formed in France by Marie-Pauline Jaricot in Lyon in 1822. The association's establishment in Aachen was recognised by the ecclesiastical and civil authorities in 1842.

In Bavaria, King Ludwig I, in response to appeals from the rapidly-growing missionary movement in the Church in his country, and on the basis of his personal conviction, permitted the foundation of the "Ludwig Missionsverein" in 1838. In 1862, King Max II elevated the association to become a corporation under public law. Under Pope Pius XI, the two legally-independent missionary societies were raised to the rank of Pontifical Mission Societies in 1922. In 1972, both agencies took on the same name, while remaining independent: "MISSIO Internationales Katholisches Missionswerk (Missio International Catholic Missionary Society)". MISSIO Munich is responsible for the bishoprics of the Bavarian Church provinces, including the bishopric of Speyer. MISSIO Aachen is responsible for the remaining bishoprics in the Federal Republic of Germany.

#### *Task*

MISSIO is a missionary movement. It belongs to the world-wide association of Pontifical Mission Societies whose task is to awaken, promote and strengthen a missionary awareness in families and parishes. Additionally, MISSIO supports the pastoral work of the "Young Churches" in Africa, Asia and Oceania with material aid, ensures their material survival and intensifies the links between the churches in the ongoing exchange of information and experience in all areas of spiritual welfare and proclamation.

MISSIO Aachen and MISSIO Munich perform this task as representatives of the Church in the Federal Republic of Germany: through periodicals and the media, as well as through regular events for priests, religion teachers, parish councils, associations and "Third World" groups, as well as for the MISSIO members. Together with those responsible in the Young

Churches, a programme was developed that offers assistance towards self-reliance. Roughly 8,600 applications to support projects are received annually by MISSIO from churches in Africa, Asia and Oceania. These range from purchasing a moped to extending a seminary, from reconstructing a destroyed church to printing Bibles. The initiative for drawing up projects rests solely with the partners in the Young Churches, which also independently set the priorities of their pastoral care. MISSIO particularly assists in the training of local priests, Order members and lay catechists.

### *Structure*

In their capacity as the German branches of the more than 100 Pontifical Mission Societies throughout the world, both MISSIO societies depend on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in Rome.

Nationally, the German Bishops' Conference and the Bavarian Bishops' Conference contribute towards appointing the MISSIO Presidents. Each Bishop also nominates for his diocese a director who promotes the interests of the Pontifical Societies in the diocese in question. The contacts in the parishes are the clergy, the "Mission-Development-Peace" committee in the parish council and some 25,000 volunteers who maintain the necessary personal contacts in the parishes with the roughly 540,000 MISSIO members.

## **Pontifical Society of the Missionary Childhood in Germany / The Epiphany Carol Singers - Kindermissionswerk -**

### *History*

It all started with a child: At the beginning of the 1840s, news came to Europe from China that children - mostly girls - were being discarded because of their parents' poverty. It was reported from Africa that children were being sold as slaves. The missionaries asked for money to be able to help these children.

Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson of Nancy/France then called on the children of Europe to show solidarity for their peers in need and to support and pray for them. In 1843, he founded the children's missionary association known as the "Society of the Holy Childhood".

At the age of 13, a girl named Auguste von Sartorius, from Aachen, heard of the "Society of the Holy Childhood" at her grandparents' in Liège and brought the idea to Germany. In her home town, she enthusiastically publicised the idea that children should show solidarity with children and strive to help them.

2 February 1846 is regarded as the date on which the German Missionary Childhood was founded. By 1912, the Missionary Childhood was represented in all German dioceses.

### *Structure*

From a society with members, to a society of action: Since its inception, the Missionary Childhood has been a members' society. Members are, initially, all children in Germany helping the society in prayer, by giving sacrifices and participating in activities for children in the countries in need. Members in the narrower sense of the word, i.e. members of the registered association, are the 27 diocese directors in the German dioceses, the members of the earlier Society of the Holy Childhood and the members of the administrative council.

The managing director of the agency is the President, who is appointed by the German Bishops' Conference. He is assisted by two more Board members.

The most important activity of the Missionary Childhood is the action by the epiphany carol singers. It has a special position in structural terms because it is implemented jointly with the Association of German Catholic Youth (Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend – BDKJ).

### *Tasks*

For the rights of children: The tasks are derived from the target: "To help children to be able to live today".

Here, those responsible are firmly convinced that the Gospel is the best chance for all human beings to survive. For this reason, the most important task is to invite children in Germany and in the whole world to take the path of the Gospel. The following applies to both pastoral work and to work in the field of education in Germany: Faith assistance is the best counselling! Jesus Christ is the Way.

He is one God for all men and for the whole man. Thus, missionary activities in Germany and the projects enjoying support in Asia, Oceania, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe should fundamentally concentrate on all children.

Help for children is holistic. It is a matter of the mental, physical and spiritual dimension of life.

The projects supported by the Missionary Childhood Society in poverty-stricken countries are orientated towards education in the spirit of the Gospel and towards implementing the rights of children as described in the United Nations Convention:

- the right to equality, irrespective of race, religion, origin and physical condition,
- the right to healthy mental and physical development,
- the right to sufficient food, housing and healthcare,
- the right to special care in case of disability,
- the right to free education, play and leisure,
- the right to immediate assistance in case of catastrophes and emergencies,
- the right to protection against cruelty, neglect and sexual abuse,

- the right to protection against persecution, and
- the right to love, understanding and care.

## **Pontifical Society of Missionary Women in Germany**

### **- Frauenmissionswerk -**

#### *History*

The Pontifical Society of Missionary Women in Germany – Women's Missionary Society - was founded in 1893 by Katharina Schynse, initially as the "Association of Catholic Married and Unmarried Women to Support the Central African Mission". The meeting of the young woman teacher with the task of the Mission and the needs of the universal Church was thanks to her brother, Father August Schynse, one of the first missionaries of the White Fathers in Central Africa. Even then there were two goals, i.e. to serve the Eucharist by giving paraments and "buying women out of slavery". In the later "Missionary Association of Catholic Married and Unmarried Women" (1902) with its new headquarters in Koblenz, the scope of the commitment spread all over the world.

A special focus of world-wide acting Church work was, in 1910, to support the Mission to China.

For international coordination of the Women's Missionary Associations, which soon also became active abroad (Switzerland, Romania, France and the USA), a Central Committee was established in Rome in 1922.

In 1942, Pope Pius XII elevated the association to a "Pontifical Society". Today's work is carried out not least on the basis of Pope John Paul II's Letter to Women dated 29 June 1995.

#### *Structure*

The Pontifical Society of Missionary Women in Germany - Women's Missionary Society - is a movement of lay women according to Codex Juris Canonici 215. The Women's Missionary Society has roughly 16,000 members, and is currently represented in 18 dioceses. The headquarters of the Pontifical Society of Missionary Women – Women's Missionary Society - is in Koblenz.

Its bodies are the Board and the Plenary Assembly. The female leaders of the dioceses are appointed by the respective bishop of the diocese at the suggestion of the President. The agency is headed and represented externally by the President. In addition to the ecclesiastical advisory council at national level, there are ecclesiastical advisory councils at diocese level. The Pontifical Society of Missionary Women in Germany depends on the Sacred Congregation for Evangelization in Rome.

Since 1997, the Women's Missionary Society has had a new set of Statutes approved by the

German Bishops' Conference and a new set of Articles of Association for the funding association, the Zentralmissionsverein Koblenz Pfaffendorf e.V. (Central mission association). The Roman approbation for the Statutes remains valid.

### *Goals and tasks*

Some of the tasks according to the Statutes are:

1. Prayer and sacrifice for the Church's missionary concerns (Redemptoris missio, 78)
2. Lending support to the Young Churches in Africa, Asia, Latin America as well as in Eastern Europe in the field of liturgy. Here, it is especially important to inculturise, i.e. deeply root, the Christian faith in the different cultures. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 122-130).
3. Support by women for women who suffer from human rights violations, such as forced prostitution and abortion." (Evangelii nuntiandi, 19)

Several groups of women work in the Women's Missionary Society who produce paraments. These are now mostly provided for the fitting out of wooden churches in Eastern Europe, in partnership with Renovabis. A traditional exhibition entitled "Solidarity between women and the Universal Church" takes place on a biennial basis. There, exhibits are presented from Africa, Asia and Latin America from the project's work with women in the universal Church.

The Women's Missionary Society performs a special task as a small agency in the context of the major world-wide acting Church agencies in Germany.

## **MISEREOR Episcopal Aid Agency**

### *Identity*

MISEREOR is the Catholic agency against "Hunger and Disease in the World". The commitment is based on the option for the poor that is entrenched in the Bible. The agency provides direct assistance where the poor would like to change their situation. Together with the poor, it fights for fair structures and conditions (land reforms, fair market conditions, debt relief, etc.). In this way, it works both at home and in the South, striving to globalise solidarity.

Seizing on a wide variety of initiatives from the sphere of the Catholic Church, MISEREOR was established by the German Bishops in 1958. It is a specialist church development aid agency. The name takes up Jesus' words in feeding the four thousand: "*Misereor super turbam* - I have compassion for the crowd (Mk 8.2).

### *Project work*

The universal Church's development cooperation encompasses cooperation with the local churches and non-church partners in the South, and is open to all poor "irrespective of race, gender, religion and nation" (Statutes). It aims to set in motion liberating, sustainable development processes for poor population groups in Africa, Asia, Oceania and Latin America, as well as preserving the Creation for today's and future generations. The fields of work are, amongst others, rural development and safeguarding food, education and health, self-help for residential construction and urban development, self-organization and human rights work, crisis prevention and peace promotion, and not least networking between North and South, as well as between South and South.

### *Activities in Germany*

The appeal to the faithful, "for the sake of Christ's need" (Cardinal Frings) to forego material benefits and share with the poor is incorporated into the practice of fasting and the call for conversion in the Easter repentance period. Within the Church, MISEREOR is concerned to renew religious life in which the focus is on the option for the poor and where the dignity of the poor is taken seriously as equal partners and subjects of their own development.

The German public is shown the structural injustice in the sharing of assets and opportunities and in world-wide relations. This awareness-creation finds its expression in the fasting and other campaigns, and in educational activities. It influences political opinion-forming processes in many ways. This corresponds to MISEREOR's basic mandate as defined by Cardinal Frings "to speak to the conscience of the powerful through the Gospel". In the context of project partnerships, MISEREOR offers parishes and groups in Germany the opportunity of direct contact and cooperation with parishes and groups in the South.

MISEREOR is based on the trust that has been built up in more than 40 years of development and educational work among Christian-motivated people in Germany acting in a spirit of solidarity. Apart from donations, funds are available from the German dioceses and from the budgets of the Federal Government and the European Union. The "Catholic Central Agency for Development Aid" was founded for the appropriate deployment of public funds, and is part of MISEREOR.

### *Structure*

The agency is headed by and under the responsibility of the German Bishops' Conference. It works at national and international level with a large number of church and non-church organizations. MISEREOR is a member of the world-wide working group of Catholic development cooperation aid agencies, CIDSE. At ecumenical level, inter alia with "Brot für die Welt" (Bread for the world), the aid agency of the Evangelical Church in Germany, it carries out the "Sharing with One Another" activities.

## **Episcopal ADVENIAT campaign**

### **Aid from German Catholics for the Church in Latin America**

#### *History*

In the context of the Second Vatican Council, the Christmas offering of the German Catholics for the Church in Latin America was introduced through a resolution of the General Assembly of the German Bishops' Conference in 1961, continued in 1962 as the Episcopal ADVENIAT campaign, and established as a permanent feature in 1969.

#### *Goal and tasks*

With the aims of pastoral aid for the local churches in Latin America and in the Caribbean, it is making its own major contribution to world-wide acting Church cooperation. The campaign is bound by the appeal of the Second Vatican Council for solidarity between the Churches: "Indeed, it is the duty of the whole People of God, following the word and example of the bishops, to alleviate as far as they are able the sufferings of the modern age. They should do this too, as was the ancient custom in the Church, out of the substance of their goods, and not only out of what is superfluous." (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 88). In this spirit, ADVENIAT supports the work of the local churches in Latin America. This includes openness for all areas of church work, and for all church associations and institutions active in Latin America, especially the willingness to serve the pastoral care priorities of the local churches in Latin America. At the same time, ADVENIAT contributes towards the promotion of the spiritual and pastoral impetus for the Church in Germany through activity in solidarity, meetings and dialogue, through sharing material and spiritual assets.

#### *Project work*

The option for the pastoral care and social-pastoral work of the Church in Latin America are guidelines of the project work of ADVENIAT which are continually updated in a dialogue with the Church in Latin America. In particular, the following are promoted: Basic and further training of priests, deacons, Order members and other full-time and voluntary staff, as well as social communication, necessary building measures and means of transport. In the spirit of the option for the poor, promotion focuses in each case on building up an adequate church infrastructure. Furthermore, ADVENIAT is supporting the creation of a retirement fund for local clerics.

#### *Activities in Germany*

To this end, ADVENIAT is asking for donations and other appropriate funds. In particular, ADVENIAT prepares the annual Christmas collection and assists in its implementation. Furthermore, ADVENIAT, together with the dioceses in Germany, implements the godparent

campaign to support Latin American seminarists. ADVENIAT carries out its tasks through intensive public relations and training activities, through an exchange of experiences and other suitable measures. It works together with the other Catholic world-wide acting Church initiatives and agencies of the religious institutes and Catholic associations. Within its field of operations, it is available to all similarly-orientated initiatives of the Catholic Church, gives them specialist advice and promotes cooperation. The ADVENIAT campaign fulfils its mandate and tasks under the leadership and responsibility of the German Bishops' Conference. Responsibility for ADVENIAT is assumed by the Subcommission for Contacts with Latin America (ADVENIAT in particular) of the German Bishops' Conference's Commission for International Church Affairs (X). The diocese of Essen is the legal entity and property holder of the ADVENIAT secretariat on behalf of the German Bishops' Conference.

## **RENOVABIS**

### **Solidarity campaign of German Catholics with People in Central and Eastern Europe**

RENOVABIS is the solidarity campaign of German Catholics with People in Central and Eastern Europe. The campaign was established in 1993 by the German Bishops' Conference at the suggestion of the Central Committee of German Catholics. Its job is to support people in Eastern Europe in social and religious renewal. The name RENOVABIS comes from Psalm 104.30: "Renovabis faciem terrae - You renew the face of the ground".

With the RENOVABIS campaign, the Catholics in Germany - trusting in a renewal in the spirit of the Gospel - would like to work with their neighbours in Central, South-eastern and Eastern Europe on the future shape of the European Continent (Statutes). The vacuum left by Communism is to be filled by freedom, justice and solidarity.

#### *Project work: Assistance towards self-reliance*

RENOVABIS supports projects in the pastoral, social and social-charitable areas. The pastoral work serves to build up and strengthen the life of the Church. Social projects help to alleviate spiritual and material need. The campaign is intended to provide assistance towards self-reliance and help to take on responsibility, thus contributing towards creating dignified conditions and perspectives. Central, South-eastern and Eastern Europe is characterised by a wide variety of religious convictions and Christian Confessions. RENOVABIS would like to be true to this variety, and in local project work attaches considerable importance to positive coordination with the local churches and to effective ecumenical cooperation.

The funds come from the annual national Whitsun collection, from donations, Church taxes and to a small extent from public funds.

*Partnership instead of one-sided assistance*

People in Eastern Europe have a varied tradition in cultural and faith life, as well as a rich spiritual heritage. For this reason, the RENOVABIS solidarity campaign is orientated in partnership towards an "exchange of offerings". In addition to specific financial assistance, it is equally concerned to promote dialogue, an exchange of experience and personal encounters. RENOVABIS hence initiates and supports partnerships between West and East, between parishes, associations and individuals in order to enable East and West to learn from one another and to believe together. The political changes in the East have also strengthened and kindled a many-faceted commitment in Germany. RENOVABIS intends to help and continue the efforts of committed groups in the Church to further encounters and reconciliation between Christians in Europe. In the context of its aims and mandate, the campaign attracts the attention of the faithful and the general public in Germany to the situation of the people and to the service of the Church in Central, South-eastern and Eastern Europe. RENOVABIS would like to contribute towards making the Church's responsibility for Eastern Europe more and more experiential as a pan-European task.

**Caritas international**

**For people in need**

*Caritas international: Aid agency for emergency assistance*

Caritas international (Ci) provides emergency assistance and carries out reconstruction for the victims of wars, natural catastrophes and other crises. Long-term emergency assistance and prevention contribute towards promoting justice and reconciliation. Assistance is provided such that people's dignity is retained, self-help and self-organization are supported in the long term, and those in need are made less vulnerable to crises. The assistance is subsidiary in nature, which means that the work of the local partners takes priority.

Even in cases where Ci acts locally itself, direct aid has an unmistakable profile by virtue of its partner-orientation, flexibility and orientation towards the weakest.

*Caritas international: Network of solidarity*

Caritas is concrete assistance for people in need; it is a task and an obligation for each Christian, and at the same time a fundamental mandate of the Church. Caritas provides assistance towards self-reliance and takes sides for the victims of social marginalization and violence. The obligation of Caritas international is to further the development of Caritas and its anchoring in the Church and society.

For this reason, Ci provides assistance in the establishment of partners, and Caritas organizations in particular, helping them to gain skills and become autonomous. Support for

concepts and programmes in specialist social work and emergency assistance are offerings that Ci provides in cooperation. Here, a link exists to the experience with the special competence of the German Caritas Association (Deutscher Caritasverband – DCV) including its structures. Ci supports the international Caritas network in order to effectively deploy limited resources and to further develop Caritas as a world-wide, joint movement.

#### *Caritas international: Service of the German Caritas Association*

Ci supports the international solidarity of the DCV and its structure. It is a service provided by DCV headquarters, and helps through appropriate services to anchor the obligation towards international charity at all levels of the association. The standards and agreements of Caritas international and the international aid organizations for emergency assistance and development cooperation apply here.

### **German Commission for Justice and Peace**

#### *History*

In 1967, Pope Paul VI wrote his much-admired encyclical letter "Populorum progressio", which was concerned with world-wide economic and social injustices and the contrast between the rich North and the poor South. In this work, the Pope stated the following on the connection between comprehensive, humane development and peace: "the new name for peace is development". The first concrete fruit of the encyclical letter was the foundation of the *Pontifical Commission "Justitia et Pax"* and the suggestion by Paul VI to establish such Commissions everywhere in the world. Against this background, the *Katholischer Arbeitskreis Entwicklung und Frieden (KAEF)* was established in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1967, which in 1982 was given the name *Deutsche Kommission Justitia et Pax* (German Commission for Justice and Peace) in line with a practice which had by then become world-wide.

#### *Structure*

The German Commission for Justice and Peace works as a "roundtable" of Catholic institutions and organizations working in the area of the international responsibility of the Church in Germany. Among its members are several bishops, representatives of the Central Committee of German Catholics, senior staff of the German Bishops' Conference (Zentralstelle Weltkirche, Katholisches Büro), of the aid agencies and of the Catholic associations and, finally, also international policy experts. Justice and Peace is the responsibility of the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics.

The German Commission works with the Pontifical Council and the Justice and Peace

Commissions in other countries. At national level, there is close cooperation with the Evangelical Organizations; This ecumenical work finds its clearest expression in the *Joint Conference on Church and Development (GKKE)*. In the interest of a broad social movement of solidarity, Justice and Peace is, moreover, involved in amalgamations of civil society players (Forum Menschenrechte [Human rights forum], Verband entwicklungspolitischer Nichtregierungsorganisationen [VENRO - Association of development-policy non-governmental organizations, Plattform Zivile Konfliktbearbeitung [Platform for civil conflict-solving] et al.).

### *Tasks*

- The German Commission for Justice and Peace is striving to network those church players which are concerned with international issues. It regards itself as a *common* voice within the Church, in society and in policy. Development, peace and human rights are the topics of concern to the Commission.
- Justice and Peace drafts innovative concepts to develop on Church work regarding these topics.
- Christians are also to be made aware of problems of international justice and peace.
- With regard to the social and political sphere, Justice and Peace makes church contributions towards structuring Germany's development, peace and human rights policy. The Commission is conducting an ongoing dialogue in these issues with Parliament, the Government, the political parties and social forces.
- The exposure and dialogue programmes implemented by Justice and Peace give church, social and political decision-makers the opportunity to meet the poor or victims of human rights violations in developing countries. These programs serve not only to create an awareness and to promote skills among decision-makers at home, but are also a tool to open up new perspectives to improve existing political and church programmes in "Third World" policy.

## Addresses

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Pontifical Society of Missionary Women in Germany:

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