



KirchenVolksBewegung

We are Church Germany:
»Wir sind Kirche« c/o Christian Weisner
Postbox 65 01 15
D-81215 München
Tel.: +49 (0)8131 260 250
Fax: +49 (0)8131 260 249
E-Mail: info@wir-sind-kirche.de
Internet: www.wir-sind-kirche.de

Rome / Munich, November, 2011

November 25, 2011:

For 30 years, Joseph Ratzinger, has largely determined the course of the Universal Church

On 25 November 1981, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the current Pope Benedict XVI, was appointed by John Paul II as prefect of the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. **In the last 30 years, this German theologian has influenced the worldwide Roman Catholic Church for much longer, and in many more profound ways, than most others in the Vatican have been able to do in all of Church history.** He is responsible for more than 23 years of administering the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF—the successor to the “Congregation of the Roman and General Inquisition,” founded in 1542) and for six and a half years as Pope.

We cannot forget, given how clearly the effects are still noticeable, how Ratzinger, between 1981 and 2005, in his capacity as Prefect of the CDF: imposed teaching bans, condemned the Theology of Liberation, marginalized women in the Church, put the brakes on Ecumenism with various churches of the Reformation, and has long contributed to the cover-up of sexual abuse. This is in line with numerous other decisions that were influenced by him, such as the Synodal Instruction of 1997, the Instruction to the Laity (1997), the “Dominus Iesus” declaration (2000), the Vatican paper against homosexual unions (2003) and also the approach to laity-based reform movements like *We are Church*. The German church was faced with a difficult ordeal by his teachings against the counseling of women with distressed pregnancies. **The list of theologians (male and female) throughout the world who have been reprimanded and intimidated by him is long** (see Appendix) **and has led to a permanent climate of fear and paralysis within the church.**

After his election as Pope, on 19 April 2005, there was a change in his public face, partly also due to the mass media’s influence. Yet the hope that Joseph Ratzinger, as Pope, would – In deference to his new title of “*Pontifex Maximus*” (“*bridge builder-in-chief*”) – change his behavior has not been fulfilled. The opposite has occurred.

Ratzinger, who is always complaining about the “dictatorship of relativism,” has himself been responsible for a long time for the relativization of the Second Vatican Council, mainly by his complete release of the pre-Vatican-II Tridentine rite (2007, contrary to the recommendations of the worldwide Synod of Bishops in 2005), through his reformulation of the Good Friday prayers for the conversion of the Jews (2008), and finally by the extremely problematic rehabilitation of the Confraternity of Pius X, in January 2009. The decades-long altercation with this confraternity might also be a personal trauma for Ratzinger. If only he had tried harder, on behalf of Pope John Paul II in 1988, to reintegrate its founder, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre! This has not yet occurred, despite all manner of extremely questionable concessions by the Vatican up to now.

The Roman Catholic Church now finds itself in the deepest crisis since the Reformation. The disclosure of the decades-long coverup of abuse scandals worldwide is certainly not the only reason for this is, but it has thrown open the crisis of the clerical system. **The tragedy of Ratzinger is that he started too late and too hesitantly to deal directly with the abuse scandals,** and that he is not fully supported by either the Roman Curia or the cardinals and bishops. This is not least because he had, as prefect of the CDF in 2001, ordered all the bishops under threat of punishment to keep sexual crimes against minors by clerics as secret as possible, and only to let the CDF know about them.

It is not secularism, but Joseph Ratzinger himself, who is largely responsible for the Church's failure in many areas to meet the challenges of our time. Again and again he proved to be deaf to the concerns brought to him by bishops, theologians, and numerous “lay” people from around the world. Liberation Theology, in particular, was treated by him with suspicion and hostility. **The years of his pontificate are increasingly laying bare the fundamental weaknesses of the whole system of the Roman Catholic Church:** its autocratic, monarchical governance, its “two-tier society” of priests and “lay,” as well as the rapidly growing Roman centralization in recent years, which concedes scarcely any responsibility to the local churches.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1993), which he substantially authored and edited, and the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2005), which he approved and promulgated as Pope (i.e. formally approved and published), in no ways meet the demands of modern theology. The Vatican “Instruction on Homosexuality and ordained ministry” of 2005 (whose full title is *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*) was one of the first documents approved by him as pope to exclude homosexual men from the priesthood. Neither the widespread distribution of the catechism for youth, *YouCat* (2011), nor the commercial success of his many books, **can obscure the fact that today only a small number of people accept and observe the teaching of the Catholic Church, as studies and surveys repeatedly show.**

Pope Benedict should understand **the increasingly loud and worldwide criticism of his pontificate** as an expression of deep concern for the welfare of the faithful throughout the church. For as canon law states in Can. CIC 212 § 3: “According to their knowledge, competence and preeminent position they (i.e. the faithful) have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the church (...).

Meanwhile, humanity has developed a keen awareness of the countless injustices in the world. The Catholic Church, with its worldwide reach, could and must exert a positive influence on how we will all live in the future. **The task for today should be to bid farewell to leadership structures that have been handed down but are no longer life-serving, rather than to cling anxiously to the hierarchical governance allegedly instituted by Jesus:** “Do not call anyone on earth your father; only one is your Father, the One in heaven. Avoid being called teachers. Only one is your teacher, the Christ” (Matthew 23.9 ff.)

Media contact *We are Church* Germany:

Sigrid Grabmeier, Tel: 0170 8626 290, E-Mail: grabmeier@wir-sind-kirche.de

Magnus Lux, Tel: 0176-41266392, E-Mail: Famlux@t-online.de

Christian Weisner, Tel: 0172-518 40 82, E-Mail: presse@wir-sind-kirche.de

- **A list of all persons who, directly or indirectly, have been investigated in any way, disciplined, or excommunicated by the CDF under Joseph Ratzinger** (a compilation by “Catholics for Choice,” 2006) is available at www.wirsindkirche.de/files/212_2006movingforwardbylookingback_31-38.pdf.
- **A list of 99 theologians and spiritual leaders who were banned, expelled, or silenced under Ratzinger** is included in the 2011 book by Matthew Fox, *The Pope's War: Why Ratzinger's Secret Crusade Has Imperiled the Church and How It Can Be Saved*.
www.wir-sind-kirche.de/files/1567_Fox_Liste%20der%2099.pdf
- **An in-depth analysis of the theology of Joseph Ratzinger** is available (in German) in Hermann Haring's “Im Namen des Herrn. Wohin der Papst die Kirche führt” (Gütersloh, 2009).