



KirchenVolksBewegung

»Wir sind Kirche« c/o Christian Weisner
Postbox 65 01 15
D-81215 Munich
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

Presse release

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We are Church: 'Rethinking the question of God, or dogmatic stagnation?' The appointment of Bishop Professor Dr G. L. Mueller as Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith

With the appointment by Pope Benedict XVI of the Bishop of Regensburg, Professor Dr Gerhard Ludwig Mueller, as Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith, he is taking up this office **in an extremely difficult phase of Church history, in which the reception and implementation of the Second Vatican Council**, which opened just fifty years ago, **is at stake**. It will soon become clear whether with Professor Mueller the window of the Second Vatican Council will again be opened wider, so as be effective as Church in the world – or whether the very last shutters of the window will be closed so that the Church shuts itself off from the world.

The Church People's Movement 'We are Church' wishes God's blessing on the future Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith for his most responsible work for the wellbeing of the Church.

With Professor Dr Gerhard Ludwig Mueller, once again there is a man at the head of the Congregation of the Faith who, like his predecessor Joseph Ratzinger, **has acquired his high academic qualifications in Catholic theological faculties in Germany**. His previous publications show a profound knowledge of dogmatics. Above all, his static and traditionally-directed 'Catholic Dogmatics' of 1995 may have been crucial for the Pope's personnel decision.

The decisive question will however be, which further conciliar and contemporary developments the theologian Gerhard Ludwig Mueller will either initiate or permit in his future role – and **whether he has the requisite mental and spiritual stature for a rethinking of the question of God, so as to encounter the great theological challenges of the present and of modern atheism in a creative and innovative way.**

Another particularly important question will be whether his friendly contacts over many years with South American liberation theologians, and especially with his spiritual father Gustavo Gutiérrez, can lead to a possible re-evaluation of liberation theology, against which Ratzinger has been fighting for years. It is just because of the eruption and rapid development of the American subcontinent that liberation theology, which sees itself as the megaphone of the oppressed, has a high significance.

Mueller participated in the **conversations with the Brotherhood of Pius** and – no doubt partly because of experiences in his own diocese – took a very reserved or even negative attitude towards them. On the other hand, he opposed the **ordination of women** vehemently, most recently in an 'orthodox' article in the journal 'Voices of the Time' (issue of 6 June 2012), which had to be published under the decree of the Congregation of the Faith against the Jesuit Order. In many other areas, for example in **ecumenism**, Mueller as Bishop for Ecumenism in the German Bishops' Conference promoted a higher profile for official Roman Catholic teachings, and thus favoured polarisation and not reconciliation. In connection with the **Priests' Initiatives** resulting in the whole world church, which commit themselves to reforms, it is to be feared that he will operate in such a way as to counteract and throttle them as 'un-Christian and diametrically opposed to the Catholic faith'.

His ten years of office as Bishop of Regensburg were characterised by an over-emphasis on the episcopal office and the person of the Bishop. With the dismissal and exclusion of elected lay people from diocesan committees, as well as the strict disciplining of critical priests, he very quickly generated a climate of servility and fear in his diocese. The rigorous pursuit against the powers of reform was to him more important than discussion, the enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline more important than the correction of obvious grievances, and the disparagement of dissidents more important than the hand of reconciliation. In dealing with sexual abuse in the Diocese of Regensburg, he committed fatal errors of decision-making, and even now will not admit that structural causes within the Roman Catholic Church bore an essential part of the responsibility for it.

Press contacts:

Sigrid Grabmeier, Tel: +49(0)170 8626 290, E-Mail: grabmeier@wir-sind-kirche.de

Magnus Lux, Tel: +49(0)176-41266392, E-Mail: Famlux@t-online.de

Christian Weisner, Tel: +49(0)172-518 40 82, E-Mail: presse@wir-sind-kirche.de

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