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Andreas Henkelmann / Graciela Sonntag

A Crisis of Trust, a Crisis of Credibility, a Crisis of Leadership: The Catholic Church in Germany  
in Quest of New Models

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## *Chapter Seven*

# **A Crisis of Trust, a Crisis of Credibility, a Crisis of Leadership**

*The Catholic Church in Germany in  
Quest of New Models*

Andreas Henkelmann and Graciela Sonntag,  
Translated by Robert Schreiter, CPPS

### **EDITORS' NOTE**

For more than a decade, the CrossingOver program has linked the Archdiocese of Chicago with several dioceses in northwestern Germany and became associated with Project INSPIRE early in the history of both programs. (See our Introduction for more information about CrossingOver.) The association introduced a number of the authors of this volume to both the similarities and differences between the situations of parishes in the two countries, and to the exciting possibilities for mutual learning. Strong collegial relationships have followed, among German and American theologians, sociologists, historians, and pastoral ministers. In this chapter, two of our German colleagues examine cases of parish reorganization and leadership initiatives in the dioceses of their area, raising both strong critique and grounds for great hope for the Church, in Germany and elsewhere.

Dr. Andreas Henkelmann served as research associate for CrossingOver ([www.crossingover.de](http://www.crossingover.de)) from its origins in 2003 until 2016, and has also been managing director of the Zentrum für Angewandte Pastoralforschung, the Centre of Applied Pastoral Theology (ZAP) in Bochum ([www.zap-bochum.de](http://www.zap-bochum.de)). He studied Catholic theology and history in Vienna, Münster, Tübingen, and Bochum. His current *habilitation* work focuses on the history of lay ecclesial ministers in Germany and the United States.

Ms. Graciela Sonntag has been a research associate for the CrossingOver program at Ruhr University of Bochum since 2011, also serving as a pastoral

associate for the Diocese of Münster in Germany. She studied Catholic theology and mathematics in Münster. Her doctoral dissertation in pastoral theology offers a comparative study on the future of lay ecclesial ministry and its contribution to the pastoral work of the Church in the United States and in Germany.

Robert Schreiter, CPPS, is Vatican Council II professor of theology at Chicago Theological Union. He holds a theological doctorate from the University of Nijmegen. He is past president of the Catholic Theological Society and of the American Society of Missiology, and for twelve years served as theological consultant to Caritas Internationalis. He is the author of several books including *Constructing Local Theologies*, republished by Orbis Press in a thirtieth anniversary edition, 2015.

## INTRODUCTION

On Friday February 20, 2015, a house tour occurred in a provincial German town that, if the scope of news reporting is any indication, the whole country had been waiting for. Officials guided fifty journalists in six groups, the first outsiders to view the private spaces of the residence of the Bishop of Limburg. The diocese's motivation for this unusual press conference was well known: the freestanding bathtub, the walk-in clothes closet, and the pond for the koi carp stood symbolically for a bishop who in the meantime had come to be known only as "Bishop Bling-Bling." The guided tour through the dwelling was supposed to demonstrate that the new diocesan leadership wanted to make a clean sweep in the hopes that with openness and transparency a fresh start would be possible.

Opening up the private quarters made clear that the scandal around Franz-Peter Tebartz-van Elst had not just done enormous economic damage to the diocese; the deeper problem was rather loss of authority and credibility. If one looks back over other cases, above all the 2010 resignation of Walter Mixa, the Bishop of Augsburg, and furthermore the sexual abuse scandals, the case of Tebartz-van Elst was just the most recent high point of an evermore dramatic crisis of leadership for the entire ecclesiastical officialdom. This crisis has to do with the question of how to exercise credible Church leadership, be it at the diocesan, parish, or any other structural level.

In this chapter we present a thematically organized examination of the question from two different perspectives. In the first step, we offer an analysis of the Church crisis in order to identify, against this background, the leadership problems. The second section deals with two possible paths to resolve the leadership crisis at the level of the parish, paths that diverge diametrically. One is a model of the megaparish, called colloquially in Germany the "XXL-Parish." The other is a model of community leadership according to canon 517.2. Continuing the clothing-size metaphor, one might

call the latter the “XXS-Parish.” One thing is clear regarding these models: while there are no clear solutions, there is reason for hope.

## ANATOMY OF THE CRISIS

“Church in Crisis: Diaspora Germany—Is Germany a Christian Country?”<sup>1</sup> “Even the Churches in Bavaria are in Crisis”<sup>2</sup>; “Commentary on the Crisis of the Churches: Scandals Are Not the Main Problem”<sup>3</sup>; headlines like these have marked reporting about the Catholic Church in Germany not just in recent years, but for decades. Already in the 1960s articles like “Church in Crisis: Faith in Fraternal Trust Remains” were the rule rather than the exception.<sup>4</sup> The current crisis therefore has a long pre-history and yet has another dimension from the one in the 1960s.

Let’s begin with the prehistory. If one proceeds from a few statistics, there was as yet no crisis in sight at the beginning of the 1960s. Let us take as the beginning date the year 1963. Regular Church attendance of all Catholics was at 55 percent against 51 percent in 1952.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, the number of priestly ordinations or of those leaving the Church did not differ dramatically from the 1950s. But beneath the surface, there was already a social change under way in the first half of the 1960s that would completely change the character of the Church in Germany.

During the *Kulturkampf* struggles in the second half of the nineteenth century, when different liberal and nationalistic governments attempted to impose restrictions on the Catholic Church’s influence on its faithful, a Catholic milieu pervaded many Catholic-majority regions of the country—a sub-culture with its own code of values and structures that shaped the lives of most Catholics from cradle to grave. But beginning in the 1950s a change of values overwhelmed all segments of society, including the Catholic milieu. After the Economic Miracle—a period of unprecedented economic growth and prosperity—and the consequences that flowed from it, there came a material saturation so that norms such as discipline, reliability, obedience, or subordination, especially among the younger generations, were repressed or overlaid with postmodern values of self-development such as emancipation, autonomy, or participation. The continued existence of distinct cultural segments of society was thus basically put into question, as these depended on individuals who, as a matter of course and without much deliberation, assimilated into them by way of the family, the neighborhood, the school, or the association. This taken-for-granted nature was already widely lost in the second half of the 1960s, as would become dramatically evident in two events during 1968.

Immediately after its appearance that July, the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* evoked a widespread storm of protest that would erupt in September at the

Catholic Congress in Essen. Among other things, the criticism coming from younger Catholics was directed not only at what they considered to be an obsolete sexual morality; it was also leading toward demands for a democratization of life within the Church. The year 1968 made clear that younger Catholics were no longer willing to follow Church leadership unconditionally, but rather wanted to see the norms and values of their generation anchored within the Church, or else they would leave the Church. They perceived the traditional leadership style, based purely on the hierarchy and the clergy, as alienating and off-putting. They felt encouraged in their wishes and conceptions by the Second Vatican Council. One could maintain that the ecclesiology of *Gaudium et Spes*,<sup>6</sup> ushered in theologically the demise of the self-contained Catholic milieu.

Much has been written about the Church's successes and failures after the Council, but from a historical perspective, there has been little research. To blame the Council for the miseries of our own time, as is often and eagerly done from a conservative point of view, comes up too short. The radical nature of the change in values is underestimated, and the significance of some of the standard indices of Catholic life mentioned above is misjudged. The numbers for Church attendance before and after the Council, for instance, can only be compared in a limited way, because the underlying motivations had changed in the meantime. Social as well as intra-Church pressure decreased. Those who go to Church now do so because they want to, not because it is expected of them by their spouse, neighbors, family or the parish priest, as was normal during the times of the Catholic milieu.

But it is also the fact that nearly all the indices have been sinking continually since the middle of the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> In the beginning of 2013, Church attendance was at 10.8 percent. Also, the total number of Catholics is declining. This is so for two reasons. First, we should note the high number of those leaving the Church, over 100,000 people per year since 1990. In 2010 and 2013, the number of departures reached nearly 180,000. Associations with the abuse scandals and the discussion around Bishop Bling-Bling are unmistakable. Second, the number of baptisms continues to plummet. In 1970 there were still 456,070 baptisms, outnumbering 369,852 funerals. In 2013 baptisms amounted to 164,664 in contrast to 230,000 funerals. The reasons for this development lie not only with the decline in the total number of children but also in the increasing disinterest in baptism itself even among parents who themselves had been baptized. Especially, couples who have not been married in the Church are often no longer inclined to present their children for baptism.

The precipitous decline in baptisms allows us to understand challenges the Catholic Church ultimately faces in the area of finances. Already in 2003, profound financial crises confronted most German dioceses. Clear declines in church tax (*Kirchensteuer*) revenues were primarily caused by the eco-

conomic crisis, rather than by people leaving the Church.<sup>8</sup> Nearly all dioceses had to tighten their belts, lay off personnel, skimp on renewing infrastructure or even dismantle infrastructure by, for instance, closing church buildings. Such austerity measures are history, and thanks to the stabilized employment figures, church tax revenues are high. But the resurgent revenue levels are unlikely to last, even were the economic situation to remain secure, because the number of Catholics paying the church tax will continue to decline. Expenditures, therefore, must decrease in the middle term. Putting the right steps into place will be a complicated task, because nearly all German dioceses have hired a large number of lay ecclesial ministers<sup>9</sup> so that the total number of pastoral personnel has only decreased slightly despite the decline in number of priests. Furthermore, this decline has not begun slowing to a halt. The ranks of diocesan and religious clergy sank from 18,663 in 1995 to 14,490 in 2013. The number of priesthood ordinations is likewise declining when compared to the 1990s. In 2013 the number of newly ordained priests stood at 98.

The declining number of priests was cited as one of the most important reasons for a path-breaking decision announced in 2005. Felix Genn, then the Bishop of Essen, announced that, against the background of the economic problems with which nearly all dioceses had to struggle, there would be a fundamental restructuring of his diocese. In the period immediately following the announcement, the number of parishes was reduced from around 270 to 43. Many of the former parishes, though retaining their own church buildings, were classified as substructures of one of the 43 parishes. But in 96 cases, the former parishes completely vanished and the diocese decided that no further funds could be allocated for the church buildings.<sup>10</sup> The transformations throughout the Diocese of Essen started a trend. Up to the present time all dioceses have undertaken restructuring in a similar fashion; in many dioceses the process is incomplete or likely to begin again, given the further diminishing number of priests.

The restructuring processes continue to meet much resistance, but also have their supporters beyond the diocesan administrative offices, because these supporters see in them greater possibilities for pastoral ministry more suited to the present times than the old small-scale structures. Background to this can be found in, among other places, the so-called Sinus-Milieu Study.<sup>11</sup> In the study, social subcultures were classified according to their lifestyles and value orientations, and then related to the more classical ratings of lower, middle, and upper classes. The study has been conducted several times at irregular intervals, but in 2005 researchers structured it in reference to religion and church. The results revealed what many had intuited in their everyday experience: of the ten milieus studied, only three were classified as open to the Catholic Church. The study proved in this way that the parish communities were very narrow with regard to the social and cultural background of

their members. The Sinus-Milieu Study was repeated in 2013 and came to the same conclusion, clearly revealing increases in the number of un-churched Catholics.

At the same time, in the face of so many studies showing a falling off of church affiliation, one should not get the impression that there are no indications of a turnaround or of continuity. While there may be encouraging signs, a single reliable model for the Church of the future is not yet discernible. Perhaps it is a sign of our times that there will not be such a model; rather, the Church must learn to live with a plurality of diverse models.

The problems we have raised indicate in any case that an essential challenge consists in finding a new style of leadership. This becomes especially clear in the face of the profound loss of credibility by the clergy due to the flood of scandals (which automatically puts in question the authority of all leaders in the Church, even when they are laypersons), compounded by the enormous challenges arising from the restructuring processes. How shall parishes at the scale of 20,000 Catholics be led? With what models of leadership should structures within the parish work?

If one wants to find credible and also realistic answers to these questions, one must consider two further background issues. For one, a distinctive co-responsibility of the laity has been further developed in the German Church since the Second Vatican Council. At the parish level, it is to be found in the *Pfarrgemeinderat*, the parish council.<sup>12</sup> Study and discernment are in order, as to whether such an entity can do effective work in a megaparish, and whether it can have a future as an elected body when voter participation in many dioceses is under 10 percent. However, it is certain that from a theological point of view there cannot be, in any case, a way around a distinctive participation of laity in leadership. This is compellingly indicated because—to raise the second issue—a purely hierarchically oriented model that places authority exclusively in the ordained ministry is no longer convincing in a society that puts strong value in personal development and self-determination, and places a very high value on democracy. Without pressing for relativizing the specific theology of ministry, it is nonetheless evident that church models of leadership will encounter serious obstacles to acceptance if they do not possess plausibility in the social and cultural context. We will now deepen these general observations.

## STEPS TOWARD SOLUTIONS AT THE LEVEL OF THE PARISH

Since the 1990s German dioceses took different paths to guarantee the pastoral care of local churches in light of the ever-increasing shortage of priests. In essence, two sorts of solutions have been put forward. Both meet the requisites of canon law, albeit in different ways.

Many (arch-) dioceses (e.g., Essen, Münster, and Berlin) instituted structural reform, at first envisioned as cooperation among several parishes overseen by a so-called community of parishes or a pastoral care unit, which ultimately required a parish priest to lead the pastoral activities of the community and be responsible to the bishop. This widening of the territory for pastoral care, within which there could still be several quasi-independent communities, ended up in many places with decisions to merge originally freestanding parish communities into parishes that today may include up to 40,000 Catholics. For this reason they have been dubbed “XXL-Parishes.”<sup>13</sup> The nearly arbitrary expansion of the territorial bounds of a parish is possible because canon law does not specify anything as to limitation of territorial size, let alone the appropriate number of members. Dioceses such as Limburg, Aachen, Munich, Mainz, and Freiburg tried going in another direction. They have deacons and laypersons participating in the leadership of parish communities by following canon 517.2, which makes provision for priestless parishes as an extraordinary and temporary measure.

From a legal point of view both steps are seen as “legitimate” solutions to managing a looming leadership crisis caused by a dearth of priests. Their effectiveness is measured above all by their pastoral theological conditions and also, alongside all the challenges they pose, the opportunities they open up. We shall illustrate by way of examples.

#### PARISH LEADERSHIP BY LAYPERSONS, FOLLOWING CANON 517.2 OF THE 1983 CODE OF CANON LAW

If, because of lack of priests, the diocesan bishop has decided that participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish is to be entrusted to a deacon, to another person who is not a priest, or to a community of persons, he is to appoint some priest who, provided with the powers and faculties of a pastor, is to direct the pastoral care. (canon 517.2)

Regarding the practical application of this canonical determination, it is not insignificant that the history of its origin exhibits clear parallels to an ecclesiastical praxis in Latin America during the 1960s. Even then, the bishops of Latin America were “in search of a new and more intensive presence of the Church in the current transformation of Latin America in light of the Second Vatican Council.”<sup>14</sup> Very soon after the Council, creative processes of change were set in motion regarding the question of parish leadership. The priest shortage spurred rethinking of structures in Latin America, and later in Germany. In other words, the canon can be seen as the implementation of a concrete experienced praxis—not as a strategy that may in any way be taken for granted with regard to canon law.



The application of the new law in Germany can be deemed as rather cautious. It received a variety of interpretations. Confronted early on with the priest shortage because of its scattered population and far-flung communities, the Diocese of Limburg implemented a model of parish leadership according to canon 517.2 in about fifty parishes between 1995 and 2008. The responsible person was, as a rule, a full-time worker, most often a theologically studied and trained layperson (normally a professional lay ecclesial minister, in German a "*Pastoralreferent*" or a "*Gemeindereferent*"), installed alongside a moderator-priest.<sup>15</sup> As a bit of prehistory it should be mentioned that especially in the case of the Diocese of Limburg, but also in other dioceses since the 1970s, full-time laypersons, for all practical purposes, were already serving as actual parish leaders or were entrusted with central tasks of leading parishes. A different interpretation of canon 517.2 may be found in the Diocese of Aachen. There a whole team, entrusted for the pastoral care of a particular parish, carries out the canonical provision. The team consists, as a rule, of a lay ecclesial minister, a priest moderator, and volunteers elected from the parish community.

Behind these efforts lies the idea that for a viable parish (and that means in a narrower sense a parish unhindered in its fundamental characteristics as a local church community), there is no need to legally dissolve it just because, for the time being, no priest is available to entrust with the leadership. There is an explicit presupposition in this approach: a community should be maintained only if it is also able to function. So regarding parishes, the constructed social context meets the characteristics of what pastoral theologians call the Community Principle. In most instances what lies behind this Community Principle is an image of a lively community with a large number of groups and volunteers. The governing idea is "closeness."<sup>16</sup> The location of the parish in a certain village or a certain neighborhood in the city is essential to its identity. The principle, therefore, is only to be considered for parishes of several thousand Catholics at a maximum. It is plausible in contexts with clear social homogeneity and thus the desired closeness, more often the case in rural areas rather than large cities. In cases where physical closeness is marked by a highly diversified social range (for example in midsized and metropolitan areas), the pressing question becomes, To what extent are parishes of this type able at all to offer a pastoral program matched to a modern (or post-modern) society, in which distinctive social subgroups are no longer tied to particular neighborhoods? The Sinus-Milieu Study had previously noted this question.

That this parish leadership model is no panacea becomes evident with another problem. In places where the participation of the faithful is low and the Church performs its ministry as a service provided by full-time personnel, a model of leadership along the lines of canon 517.2 will not work because it requires many active volunteers who express a sense of ownership

for their parish. The decision for a leadership according to canon 517.2 has to be supported by the parish itself. The path that seeks participation in pastoral care by non-full-time personnel, as chosen by the Diocese of Aachen, presents a hopeful option. It emphasizes that the Church is borne by the place, and on this basis all those baptized and confirmed have the capacity to be called upon to share the pastoral responsibility.

That this can be a very promising path to follow was demonstrated in the summer of 2008, when three such canon 517.2 parishes were surveyed in the Dioceses of Aachen and Limburg. There was clearly great satisfaction with these moves, among those in charge and those who were engaged in the ministry of their parish communities, as well as among parish members who did not participate in parish life or who experienced it “from outside.” The wide endorsement reflected certain conceptions and expectations of Church, reflected in how pastoral ministry was shaped.

These expectations confirm the picture, sketched above, of a parish where the canon 517.2 model could fit. It portrays a Church that is present to a place and because of that can be part of people’s lives. Such a leadership model can be experienced insofar as the Church strives to take seriously its location in a given place and its commitment to that place. Opinion surveys in the parish communities revealed that people expected the Church to provide a personal presence as well as a flexible and continuous temporal presence. The attraction of this parish leadership model lies in its potential to help the Church realize “closeness” to the people, “because it lives in social proximity with the people.”<sup>17</sup> The problem stated above remains. It is questionable whether such an image of a parish community fits everywhere and at all times, thus whether all people want to live in social proximity, or whether there is not a danger here of glorifying a golden past with the Church at the center of the city neighborhood or the village.

It is important to continue to consider how canon 517.2 may hold open the possibility of thinking about the Church community in a more comprehensive way, rather than just as represented by the clergy or full-time professionals. This view permits, precisely, a better understanding of whom to entrust with participation in pastoral care without putting essential qualities of ordained ministry into question. As indicated, the Diocese of Aachen has already moved in this direction by entrusting leadership in such parishes, not to a single deacon or full-time layperson, but rather to a team, one that to a significant degree may also be composed of volunteers delegated by the parish community.<sup>18</sup>

Up to now, however, this is more vision than reality. Applications of canon 517.2 have come from initiatives of single bishops and tend to be implemented rather controversially as emergency responses to the priest shortage. To date there appears to be no consensus within the German Bishops’ Conference, where not all bishops express openness to the practice. It

contradicts the theological conviction of some individual bishops that the application of canon 517.2 undermines the constitutive and non-negotiable meaning of the priestly office. It is notable that not even a general discourse on experiences with alternative leadership models has been taken up within the Bishops' Conference. The necessary engagement requires a great deal of courage, but today's German bishops have an example they could follow from the Latin American bishops at Medellín in 1968. The occasion for them was entirely in the sense of the Council, the effort "to renew and to create new structures in the Church that make possible an ongoing dialogue and ways for cooperation of bishops, priests, religious, and laity."<sup>19</sup>

### MERGER INTO AN XXL-PARISH

Other German dioceses have embarked on an alternative resolution of parish leadership in light of the priest shortage: merger. Several freestanding parishes (in the Diocese of Essen, the highest number was eight), each with its own pastor, are brought together in a new megaparish and the diocesan bishop names a single priest as pastor. The territorial principle of a parish, which served as the guiding principle in the previously discussed case of parishes led according to canon 517.2, gets due recognition and so formally stays in place. But it is strongly relativized, if not even undermined, as a principle. For the bigger the territory, the more impossible it becomes to understand it as homogeneous and to generate comprehensive modes of pastoral care for the whole territory that cover all the needs that the older kind of parish tried to address. As a matter of fact, in an XXL-Parish territorial boundaries extend out to such an extent (with up to 40,000 Catholics, as for example in the Diocese of Essen) that many of those involved keep questioning whether the Church can be understood as a "Church in this place" ("*Kirche vor Ort*"), a Church that lives the lives of people in their immediate environment. In the sense of a parish family that is shepherded by a pastor, the Community Principle no longer applies.

For some the XXL-Parish is unacceptable from the perspective of a theology of community. For others it carries with it a challenge in a positive sense. For the expansion of the territorial (and social) boundaries offers an opportunity often not fully appreciated: a merger process can also lead to breaking up starkly parochial community structures that have been constricting in nature or, in other words, tendencies toward petrification.<sup>20</sup> The new possibilities offer pathways that can lead out of the narrowing milieu of the Church, which we have already described. In the new and larger space of the XXL-Parish, closeness or, rather, presence of the Church could be realized by the Church being inserted in distinctive life-spaces where human beings may be found, and not by asking people to come to church because it is "so centrally

located and just around the corner.” “Decentralized” is a key term in the new kind of parish. And in this idea there is another opportunity: being decentered in its best sense promotes networking and stronger participation on everyone’s part. However, this requires a new leadership style and a pastoral policy of cooperative facilitation.

Following this line of thinking, the parish can be conceived as a network in which the individual nodes of Church presence (such as a daycare center, a hospital, a small Christian community, or a youth group) are seen as fundamentally equal in rank. Church happens where the baptized and confirmed present the Christian message on their own initiative in local and personal modes of expression, connecting with other people and enabling them to enter into other nodes in the network. The task of XXL-Parish pastoral teams is to coordinate this networking of initiatives and new structures of participation. Full-time leadership is charged with facilitation and promotion of such short- and longer-term networking structures within the territory of the XXL-Parish.

Of course as a rule, mergers come with a reduction of resources (real estate and finances) and paring back of personnel. But it also can be shown that pastoral teams consisting of the parish priest, lay ecclesial ministers, and deacons (directors of Church music and social workers may be counted into this as well) become larger teams with multiple competencies. The networking activity of such a team presumes, on the one hand, large measures of cooperation, communication, and transparency. On the other hand, the larger team makes possible a sorting out of responsibilities according to strengths and weaknesses. Not everyone has to be a “jack of all trades,” as was previously the case in very small parishes where one person had to cover all the areas of pastoral endeavor. “Points of concentration become possible and a charism-oriented deployment of personnel comes into the realm of the possible.”<sup>21</sup>

## SUMMING UP

It should have become clear that neither model of leadership—a parish led according to canon 517.2 or the XXL-Parish—represents a real solution as long as it is understood as a way to “manage” a shortage of parish priests or as an emergency solution with the intention of continuing the Church in the old way. Conversely, the two paths that German dioceses have blazed each open new opportunities, if they are taken seriously, to consider a new way of being Church—a way that is oriented by the Conciliar theology of the People of God and thus values the responsibility and participation of all the baptized and confirmed in Church mission. Both approaches toward leadership must prove themselves against this background. Such a legitimacy problem is also

a quest for a new leadership style less founded upon a functional sense of leadership than it is, above all, upon two decisive criteria that return to the renewing Church a perceptible, credible form. One criterion for such a leadership style is the multiplicity of individual strengths resulting from cooperative leadership that consequently also makes the participation of many people possible. The second and possibly even more decisive criterion consists in understanding leadership as a leadership of service. Those who lead with a servant attitude pursue development of the potential they see in others. A Church led in this twofold manner would be a serving Church that acknowledges multiplicity that would then be aligned with its original mission.

Against this background neither of the two approaches to an alternative leadership of the local Church is ultimately better than the other. Each has its justification and certain potential for realization from place to place. And each must be measured against the message of Jesus. They are, to be sure, an instrument for carrying out the missionary task of the Church, namely to go out to all people and bring them the Good News. This is well described in the words of a parish priest of a merged parish in Recklinghausen (Diocese of Münster). In his letter about the merger to the parish community, he wrote: “We bear responsibility—in these changing times—that God will be present also in the coming generations in this city, in the way Jesus Christ spoke of Him. And this parish community presents itself to meet this responsibility of carrying out this biblical task.”<sup>22</sup> What is valid for a merged parish community (in Recklinghausen) also holds true, of course, for a parish led according to canon 517.2. What remains, however, is the question of the creativity of the German dioceses as they work with both instruments.

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## NOTES

1. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 29, 2014, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/krise-der-kirche-ist-deutschland-noch-ein-chrisliches-land-13342759.html>.
2. *Die Welt*, February 28, 2015, <http://www.welt.de/regionales/bayern/article135704083/Selbst-die-Kirchen-in-Bayern-sind-in-der-Krise.html>.

3. *Die Welt*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article7328706/Skandale-sind-nicht-das-Hauptproblem-der-Kirche.html>.

4. *Die Zeit*, March 11, 1966, <http://www.zeit.de/1966/11/die-kirche-in-der-Krise>.

5. All the statistics given here are from <http://dbk.de/zahlen-fakten/kirchliche-statistik>.

6. The Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965.

7. All the statistics given here are from <http://dbk.de/zahlen-fakten/kirchliche-statistik>.

8. The term *Kirchensteuer*, "church tax," is easy to misunderstand. It refers not specifically to the Catholic Church or to Christian churches in general but to all religious communities with the status of a corporation of public law, like the Jewish synagogues, and it is of course possible for such corporations to opt out of it (as do some very small Christian denominations in Germany, such as the United Methodist Church or Church of Christ, Scientist). The term "tax" is also misleading, as it is not a national tax paid by all Germans but only by the members of the religious communities with this status. It is called "tax" because the assessment is bound to the income tax (church members have to pay 8 or 9 percent of their income tax as church tax) and because it is collected together with the income tax by the state, which receives a fee for this service. It is also, of course, possible for individuals to opt out of the tax. The German dioceses understand such a decision as a formal renunciation of the Church, but this is highly controversial—Pope Benedict XVI rebuked them for this position.

9. Professional lay ecclesial ministers are either *Pastoralreferenten* (PR) (with an academic degree comparable to that of the priests) or *Gemeindereferenten* (with shorter studies; usually these ministers work in a parish). In contrast to the United States they are hired and paid by the dioceses and not by the parishes. There are 3,171 PRs and 4,526 GRs.

10. The fates of the church buildings were very different. Some of them were torn down or converted into other buildings. A few are still used as churches with the help of private funding. For other church buildings, some of which remain under protection as historical monuments, no solution has yet been found.

11. Sinus is the name of a research institute in Heidelberg which is working on societal and cultural change in Germany. Their customers are both commercial enterprises and nonprofit organizations.

12. The term *Pfarrgemeinderat* (PGR) is difficult to translate, as there are some differences from the parish councils in the United States. It has to be noticed that the parish council as discussed in the 1983 Code of Canon Law (CIC 1983 §536) is *not* the reference point. After first attempts in different dioceses, the national German synod (named usually after the town where it met "*Würzburger Synode*") passed in May 1975 a resolution which was used by almost all German dioceses for the installment of the new council. In that way the PGR became mandatory for all parishes. In contrast to the parish council of the CIC 1983 it also has the formal right to pass resolutions. This formal right is in many ways restricted. The PGR, for instance, cannot decide on the budget of the parish. Another mandatory body has responsibility for these issues, a finance council, which is usually called "*Kirchenvorstand*."

13. Currently the parish of St. Urban in Gelsenkirchen-Buer, with its 38,000 members, is Germany's largest parish.

14. The Second Plenary Assembly of the Latin American Episcopal Conferences in Medellín, quoted following Böhnke, "Gemeindeleitung," in Böhnke and Schüller (eds.), *Gemeindeleitung*, 12, which presents the legal historical perspectives of this model of parish leadership.

15. Cf. Schüller, "Partikularrechtliche Umsetzung," in Böhnke and Schüller, *Gemeindeleitung*.

16. [Editors' note: The term "closeness" connotes both physical proximity and social intimacy.]

17. Böhnke, *Gemeindeleitung*, 29.

18. "Wenn das Leitungsteam zum Pastor wird," *Aachener Zeitung*, March 6, 2015, <http://www.aachener-zeitung.de/lokales/region/wenn-das-leitungsteam-zum-pastor-wird-1.1041724>.

19. Second Plenary Assembly of the Episcopal Conferences of Latin America in Medellín, as cited by Böhnke, *Gemeindeleitung*, 12.

20. Parish priest Andreas Unfried reports effectively on his experiences with the merger process into a “community of a new type.” He sees opportunities in the XXL-Parish that are being described here further. Cf. Andres Unfried et al., *XXL Pfarrei. Monster oder Werk des Heiligen Geistes?* (Würzburg, 2012).

21. Unfried, *XXL-Parish*, 145.

22. Jürgen Quante, “Fusion,” in *Veränderung als Chance begreifen. Fusionsprozesse in Orden, Kirche und Gesellschaft*, Band 2: *Erfahrungsgeschichte aus Orden und Kirche*, ed. Markus Warode, Bernd Schmies, Thomas M. Schimmel (Münster, 2013), 60.