



Pastoral guidance on the matter of inter-denominational marriages and sharing in the Eucharist

Statement by the Permanent Council of the German Bishops' Conference

The Permanent Council of the German Bishops' Conference addressed the discussion regarding the pastoral guidance entitled "Walking with Christ – tracing unity. Inter-denominational marriages and sharing in the Eucharist", adopted at the spring plenary assembly (19–22 February 2018). Inter-denominational married couples and families are very close to our heart.

We would like to emphasise that Eucharistic communion and church fellowship belong together. We are concerned to provide spiritual assistance for those addressing questions of conscience in individual cases who receive pastoral care for inter-denominational married couples who have a grave spiritual need to receive the Eucharist. They have a very close mutual bond resulting from baptism, faith and the Sacrament of marriage, and they share their entire lives. We as bishops are concerned here with the question of the Protestant spouse in an inter-denominational marriage receiving communion.

The President of the German Bishops' Conference has informed the Permanent Council of the discussions that took place in Rome. He was able to clarify at a meeting with Pope Francis that

- the letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of 25 May 2018 provides indications and a framework for interpretation,
- the text does not appear as a document of the Bishops' Conference, given that it also relates to a dimension of the Universal Church, and
- the text is within the responsibility of the individual bishops as an aid to orientation.

It is important for us that we are on an ecumenical quest to achieve a more profound understanding and even greater unity among Christians, and we consider ourselves to be obliged to stride forward in this matter courageously.

The topic is to be explored in greater detail, in accord with the letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. We would like to offer the Holy Father and the Roman Curia our assistance in this matter. The opportunity will arise to take up this topic once more at the autumn plenary assembly of the German Bishops' Conference in September 2018.

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Note:

The documents concerning this issue are available as download at www.dbk.de:

- Letter of the (Arch-)Bishops of Köln, Bamberg, Augsburg, Eichstätt, Görlitz, Passau and Regensburg to several dicasteries from 22 March 2018
- Letter of the President of the German Bishops' Conference to the (Arch-)Bishops' of Köln, Bamberg, Augsburg, Eichstätt, Görlitz, Passau and Regensburg from 4 April 2018
- Letter of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the faith from 10 April 2018
- Press release of the German Bishops' Conference and the Holy See Press office from 3 May 2018
- Letter of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the faith from 25 May 2018
- Notice of the President of the German Bishops' Conference to the Holy Father from 12 June 2018
- Excerpt of the Press conference of the Holy Father on his way from Geneva to Rome on 21 June 2018
- Orientation text "Walking with Christ – tracing unity".

The German Bishops' Conference is an association of the Roman-Catholic bishops of all dioceses in Germany. It currently has 66 members (as per: June 2018) from the 27 German dioceses. The German Bishops' Conference was established to promote joint pastoral tasks, to advise one another, to coordinate the Church's work, to jointly adopt decisions and to maintain contact with other Bishops' Conferences. The highest body of the German Bishops' Conference is the Plenary Assembly of all bishops, at which the bishops regularly meet in spring and autumn for several days.