

**Report on the German Synodal Way  
Frankfurt, Germany  
March 6-9 2023**

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## **Background**

My attendance at the fifth and final Assembly of the German Synodal Way (GSW) was at the invitation of co-chairs of the German Synod, Bishop Georg Baetzing<sup>1</sup> and Dr Irme Stetter-Karp<sup>2</sup>. The invitation was intended to demonstrate solidarity between local Churches within the universal Church, to provide space for international exchange, and to offer an authentic impression of how lively and diverse the Church in Germany is.

It was an extraordinary opportunity to witness at close hand the workings of the German approach to synodality as well as network with people active in the German Church.

In preparation for my attendance, I was provided with papers covering the Assembly Agenda and the penultimate texts prepared in advance of the meeting. Unfortunately, these papers didn't include the most up-to-date texts and motions which followed the submission of some later recommendations, including from the bishops after their March Conference meeting.

The German Synodal Path was explicitly a response to the sex abuse crisis and its cover-up, and the findings of what is known as the MHG study<sup>3</sup> on sexual abuse. Four themes focusing the Synod arose from the study:

1. Power and separation of powers in the Church – Joint participation and involvement in the mission
2. Priestly existence today
3. Women in ministries and offices in the Church
4. Life in succeeding relationships – Living love in sexuality and partnership

Unsurprisingly these themes are consistent with those arising from the consultations leading up to the Australian Plenary Council. A significant difference was that the Australian themes arose from an extensive process of consultation conducted in the years leading up to the Plenary Council events held in 2020 and 2021.

In familiarising myself with the German documents I was encouraged and inspired by the sound research, contemporary theological perspective, unshrinking honesty and relevance of the analyses, and especially the courage of the recommended motions prepared to address the concerns identified in the themes. The formal opening of the German Assembly emphasised the necessity for a prophetic voice which while this comes

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<sup>1</sup> Chair of the German Bishops' Conference (DBK) since March 2020.

<sup>2</sup> President of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK).

<sup>3</sup> MHG The acronym of the study (MHG study) refers to the participating study centres in Mannheim, Heidelberg, and Giessen (MHG-Forschungsprojekt, 2018). All 27 dioceses in Germany provided the necessary information on the entire population of their clergy resulting in a data set consisting of 38,156 personnel files, spanning a period of 68 years, from 1946 to 2014.

as disruptive, *“take(s) us ... into the reality of the world”* whereby *“we get touched by the Gospel and find ever new ways how to live the Gospel”*.

Service of mission was central to the vision for the Assembly and the Church articulated in the Preamble:

*“The Church must find the way of the people and not determine the ways of the people. She is needed where fractures and wounds mark people’s lives. She must be of service to people”*.

I arrived at the Assembly aware of the several years of intensive work and dialogue conducted at previous assemblies and forum deliberations. My memory of the Australian Plenary Council was also still fresh. I understood my presence to be an opportunity to learn firsthand from the experience of the German Synod, and to consider the application of their perceived successes and challenges to the evolving reality of the wider movement towards a Synodal Church.

## **Proceedings**

The Assembly proceedings were live-streamed and are now available on the website with English translation: <https://www.synodalerweg.de/english>. The meetings of the were open to the media and regular press conferences held over the three days.

The fifth Assembly occasioned dialogue on final readings. The main part of the content-related work was done in the run-up to the Assembly through four forums<sup>4</sup> related to the four themes. Text drafts were prepared in consultation with expert advisers, debates took place in the synodal forums, proposals were developed, subjected to suggested amendments and a further round of debate and re-drafting of a range of texts followed by voting on the motions arising.

For each text and associated motions under consideration, forum chairs provided an introduction and guide to the proposed amendments received in advance of the Assembly, and the recommendations of the Forum in response to these. It was the work of the Assembly delegates to vote on the recommended resolutions. A final vote then took place on the text as a whole. For a resolution to be successful a double two-thirds majority<sup>5</sup> of the members present was required, including the bishops.

In his opening address, Bp Georg Baetzing referred to the hard work ahead of the final assembly, appealing to delegates to please note: *“the motions put forward result from an intensive struggle”*, urging delegates to adopt the consensus method and to remain focused on being *“a church that’s close to the people”*. Reliance throughout the proceedings on the 10 Synodal attitudes was also encouraged<sup>6</sup>.

Approximately 210 delegates gathered in person with some participating virtually. It is interesting to note that this was less than the 223 delegates eligible to attend the fifth assembly. A further 70 people attended as either observers or international guests.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1

<sup>5</sup> A double majority is a voting system which requires a designated majority of votes according to two separate criteria. At the GSW a 2/3 majority was required across two criteria: 2/3 of the total number of votes cast, and 2/3 of the number of bishops voting. For some motions delegates were able to request that

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 2

Many of the approximately 60 observers had attended other and some all, of the previous assemblies. I observed what appeared to be a reasonable balance of gender and a younger than expected age profile, with many people present who represent generations in the first half of life. This seemed a contrast to the predominance of an ageing population of Catholics actively participating in similarly designed events in Australia, especially the early parish level consultations.

The Assembly's composition represented the intention to take into account gender and generational justice in the appointments to the Synod. Nevertheless, there was a perception among some that the gender balance was skewed by the presence of all the 67 male bishops and not adequately compensated by the remaining 69 delegates from the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) and approximately 70 representatives of spiritual ministries, church offices, professional groups, religious congregations and employees of diocesan administrations.

### **Key observations**

Through both close observation as well as informal discussions with delegates, observers and guests, I was impressed by a number of dimensions of the German Synod.

I was impressed by what I perceived to be robust meeting structures and processes designed to create transparency and meaningful, inclusive participation. The seating of the approximately 210 delegates<sup>7</sup> so they were facing one another in 'choir formation' was an important sign of encounter and engagement. They were also arranged in alphabetical order so that bishops, religious and lay people were randomly seated among one another. The formal processes established for discussion, debate and voting were conducted methodically and effectively. It was clear how delegates could enter the debate and the associated allocation of speaker time, initially two minutes. It was notable however, as the assembly progressed and the issues under discussion were more contentious, the time allocation was reduced from two minutes to 90 seconds and finally late on the second day, to 60 seconds. This created a quite pressured and strained atmosphere. It resulted in the referral to the Synodal Committee of the issue of "Joint Consultation and Decision-making" for lack of time to adequately address the issues arising during the intense period of debate.

I experienced an inspiring vibrance among the people gathered, as they engaged in passionate and honest communication. The debates across all the issues reflected a breadth of perspectives and often robust exchange on widely divergent positions. The obvious engagement, activism on emerging issues and confidence of the non-clerical participants was impressive. It was personally astonishing and humbling to listen to the interventions of people who identify as transgender and gay addressing the assembly in a confident and unapologetic way. It was extraordinary to witness people who have experienced such negativity and emotional harm, nevertheless choose to remain active in the Church and confidently speak their truth for the purpose of redressing outdated theology and advancing the mission.

That said, I understand from some delegates that tension and disagreement was not as intense as in earlier assemblies, where significantly more tense and fiery debates took

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 3

place, with anger clearly articulated and some people in tears on occasion, even walking out.

I was intrigued by the candidness of the bishops, their willingness to openly name hard issues and to be honest about what is really happening in the church. One local observer commented that previously the bishops would only have aired their concerns about current realities within their own company of fellow bishops. On the issue of obligatory celibacy for instance, rather than hiding behind a veil that “we have enough priests, and we can manage the challenges”, and implying that “business as usual” will work, there was a refreshing honesty that the present situation is unsustainable. Interestingly I was advised that though the five dissenting bishops<sup>8</sup> had previously contributed more actively during the debates, in this fifth assembly they were virtually silent.

It was encouraging to hear the significant issues being addressed directly, especially since these issues also reflect the issues arising through other synodal processes. The necessity for courage was clear from the Preamble in its assertion that, “*no courageous steps of reform have been taken for decades*”. The agenda of the German Synod made clear that this reality was no longer adequate.

The issues around sexuality were confronted in a startlingly frank and direct way, and refreshingly, grounded in sound, thorough scientific research. Both the preparatory documents and many of the contributions to the assembly debates were based on a contemporary anthropology of the human person, and a theology grounded in the Gospel’s witness to compassion. These are the same issues articulated in Australia, but yet to be met with such a compassionate, practical and inclusive response. The success of motions on blessings for same-sex couples, divorced and remarried Catholics and couples who choose to not marry, prompted a very emotional outbreak of exuberant, sustained celebration. Most delegates joined in a standing ovation.

Likewise, the session on the final day, “Women and sacramental ministry” resulted in a very emotional debate with movingly heartfelt interventions by a number of women. I was surprised that some of the most outspoken voices were those of women religious dressed in traditional religious habits. Some like Sr Philippa Rath<sup>9</sup> were unashamed advocates for a commitment by the synod to priestly ordination for women. Concerns were expressed about the shocking discrimination based on gender, inequality in an institution such as the Church, and the long time period over which the issue has been left unaddressed. Cardinal Marx reflected on his own change of heart during these previous decades, being convinced: “*over time that the arguments against women have become weaker and less acceptable*”. However, *realpolitik* prevailed on the day and the final motion put to the Assembly was worded to request the Vatican “to open sacramental diaconate to women”. Limiting the motion to women’s diaconate rather than including priestly ordination ensured its success but was a disappointment to many, and not only women. Nevertheless, spontaneous applause erupted once again in the Assembly with the carriage of this motion.

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<sup>8</sup> Five German bishops wrote to dissenting from the proposed establishment of a synodal council: Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki of Cologne, Bishop Bertram Meier of Augsburg, Bishop Stefan Oster of Passau, Bishop Rudolf Voderholzer of Regensburg and Bishop Gregor Maria Hanke of Eichstätt.

<sup>9</sup> Sr Philippa Rath recently published “Because God Wills It”, a collection of the voices of 150 women from German-speaking countries who feel called to be pastors

## Towards compromise or schism

The German Synod has provoked considerable controversy primarily around concerns that the proposed outcomes pose the risk of schism. Implicit in this concern appears to be the belief that the adoption of different practices in different places threatens unity. I returned from Frankfurt with the conviction that the question of 'unity in diversity' is central to the success of this new movement in the Church to adopt synodality as its *modus operandi*. The Preamble accepted at the Synod also cautioned, "*It is contrary to God's spirit to impose unity in an authoritarian way.*"

The texts guiding the GSW reflected a welcome recognition that Church teachings and practices must be enculturated into the realities of the local church. Quoting Pope Francis in *Querida Amazonia*, No. 68, an Assembly text states, "*this means allowing and encouraging the inexhaustible riches of the Gospel to be preached "in categories proper to each culture, creating a new synthesis with that particular culture.* The purpose of a renewed theology guiding the universal Church will always be to promote the mission, to communicate more vibrantly the vision of Gospel.

It was evident to me that the GSW was striving for outcomes that could contribute to unity rather than schism. A prescient intervention by Ulrich Hemel (professor at the University of Regensburg and president of BKU, the Federation of Catholic Entrepreneurs) spoke to the moment: "*We need a path forward because we are one church. There might be different paths and different speeds*". Other similar comments recognized the need for patience: "*Not everything succeeds at once and immediately*".

There were a number of concrete examples of the assembly wrestling with the art of compromise in order to build consensus. For example, the text on priestly celibacy was modified to recommend the Vatican *re-examine* rather than *rescind* obligatory celibacy, a significant moderation in tone.

The texts relating to women in ministry ultimately chose to advocate for diaconate rather than priestly ordination.

The debate around joint consultation and decision-making was suspended at the end of Day Two without an outcome or the motions being put. Instead, the issues were referred to the Synodal Committee for further consideration post Assembly. Lack of time to reconcile the divergent views and concerns was respected in the interests of maintaining unity. This was a particularly heated session, with reference by some delegates to blackmailing by the bishops to achieve their desired outcome.

Yet, debates on some of these more challenging motions e.g. women in ministry, priestly celibacy and blessings for same sex couples, were also characterized by tensions around how much compromise might be acceptable in order to achieve some gains. And the importance of the GSW voice being heard in the wider Church was also articulated as a factor. As one delegate commented, "*In a synodal Church, a balance is struck between necessary unity and legitimate diversity so that the universal Church can hear our voice*".

Interestingly and somewhat controversially the final motions presented on Day Three on "Proclamation of the Gospel by lay people in word and sacrament" embraced a wider purview than the original title, "Proclamation of the Gospel by Laywomen in Word and Sacrament".

Nevertheless, the creation of a Synodal Council<sup>10</sup> appears to remain the intention of the GSW with voting on the final day for the twenty elected members of the Synodal Committee to progress this<sup>11</sup>.

Privately, some delegates communicated to me the difficulty of this *realpolitik* at play and what its underlying dynamics might actually be. There was recognition that the necessity to produce some concrete achievements was being weighed against the risk of texts being rejected completely. However, the compromises were thought to also possibly reflect an assertion of power by the bishops who must support a final text with 2/3 majority. Women in particular expressed distress about this dynamic, and how much of the attempts at compromise might be manipulation of the process.

As the formal Assembly opening urged on Day One, synodality is not a super-human process. Striving for consensus necessarily draws on our deepest human instincts, light and shadow, and challenges us all to the spiritual discipline of letting go into a new way of seeing, and a new way of being.

Ultimately the Church hierarchy must wrestle with the relationship between universality and the principle of subsidiarity, especially as it intersects with the necessity to *“proclaim the message of the Gospel in such a way that we do justice to the people in their respective life worlds”* and *“listen anew to the Gospel of liberation”* (Preamble).

It is faithfulness to this ultimate purpose of the Church, to give witness to the ministry of Jesus illuminated in the Gospels – to witness to his preference for people over rules, his inclusive and compassionate gaze, his outreaching embrace of those at the margins. This is the mission at stake in the drive for Church reform, the imperative for the Church to more faithfully incarnate Christ in and for the world today.

### **Lay engagement and the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK)**

Throughout my time in Frankfurt, I held a question central to my observations. Why and how has the German Church achieved such a contemporary and cogent perspective on the issues facing the Church and its mission within society today. And how has it arrived at such courageous and pastorally sensitive responses to these issues? My observations have led me to the conclusion that the long-established status, power and access to bishops of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) is a most significant factor. The ZdK has been vital in nurturing an educated, confident laity experienced in the ways of the Church<sup>12</sup>. This conclusion has been confirmed through conversations with delegates and others in attendance who were keen to supply me with details.

The ZdK has been in existence since 1868 and emerged from a confluence of Catholic movements coinciding with the birth of democracy and seeking to strengthen the role of the Church in society. Over the succeeding decades the work of this Committee of Lay Catholics fostered an awareness among the laity of their co-responsibility for the Church.

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 4.

<sup>11</sup> According to the Assembly statutes, in preparation for the Synodal Council, a Synodal Committee will be constituted after the last Synodal Assembly. It will consist of the (67) diocesan bishops, 27 members elected by the ZdK and 20 members elected by the Synodal Assembly and will be composed in a generationally and gender balanced way. The Synodal Committee prepares the evaluation of the decisions of the Synodal Assembly and develops them further.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 5

Following World War 2, its work came to explicitly focus on the task of coordinating the diverse forces of Catholic lay work, the social activities of the laity internally and representing them externally.

The Homepage of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) provides the information that it is:

*“the association of representatives of the diocesan councils<sup>13</sup> and Catholic associations as well as institutions of the lay apostolate and other personalities from the Church and society. In accordance with the Decree of Vatican Council II on the Apostolate of the Laity (No. 26), the ZdK is the body recognised by the German Bishops' Conference to coordinate the forces of the lay apostolate and to promote the apostolic activity of the Church. The members of the Central Committee take their decisions on their own responsibility and are independent of decisions taken by other bodies.”*

Importantly, following the Würzburg Synod (1971-1975) a "Joint Conference" was established consisting of representatives of the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK). It meets twice a year to discuss issues and tasks common to both bodies. Its members are ten bishops and ten lay representatives.

This formalised and consistent engagement between the lay and clerical 'arms' of Church life has clearly fostered over time a vibrant and respectful exchange between the two on matters of human life and society and the relationship between them to the mission of the Church in an ever-changing world. It appears to have contributed to reducing the risk of insularity and associated irrelevance of the Church hierarchy.

Of course, not all bishops welcome the influence of such a powerful organization, but it seems most recognize that a joint work of bishops and lay people is for the benefit of all. Other Church communities including the Australian Church would do well to consider the value of such meaningful and mutual collaboration.

### **Synodality and spirituality**

The opening addresses of the German Synod made clear that what is required of synodality is to “embark on a spiritual path”. Delegates were encouraged to use the 10 synodal attitudes as a source of inspiration, and to practice synodality in *“the way we listen, the way we lead discussion. It is deeply human, not super-human”*.

The spiritual dimensions of the Assembly included opening prayer each day, Eucharist on the second and third days, and a pause for spiritual reflection at the conclusion of each

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<sup>13</sup>It appears that most dioceses have a Diocesan Council which is an association of lay people in a diocese. This Council has the task of promoting and coordinating the lay apostolate in the diocese, working independently in social areas and contributing with its own voice to the work of the Church in society and the world. Its members come from the deanery and parish councils, but also from the associations, organisations and initiatives in a diocese. Each diocesan council elects three members to the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK). The 84 diocesan council representatives, together with the 97 representatives of the Working Group of Catholic Organisations in Germany (AGKOD) and 45 individuals, form the plenary assembly of the ZdK.

day. However, recognising the deeply spiritual nature behind the purpose of the gathering and the centrality of spiritual awareness to its success, I believe more opportunities could have been accessed to invite into the proceedings the resources of spiritual awareness and discernment.

The processes developed at the Australian Plenary Council were seen by many as more authentically grounded in spiritual awareness and fostering connections between delegates through the experience of dialogue established before and during the assemblies. Others judged the process as too heavily weighted towards such dialogue and thereby limiting the opportunity for deep engagement, dialogue and related outcomes on the themes and issues central to the work of the Plenary Council.

However, I suspect that a better balance could have been achieved at the German Synod with the inclusion of regular moments of pause during the intensity of the debate. This would have occasioned a spirit of discernment to truly characterise the proceedings by creating regular opportunities for reorientation of hearts and minds towards the fundamental purpose of the assembly, to the unitive dimension of their gathering as Church, and to a deeper expression of the Synodal attitudes.

### **Concluding comments**

It was a privilege to experience the German Synod, its attempts to create a new path of mission for a Church undermined by scandal and in a world beset by so many crises. There is a plethora of commentary about whether the German path represents a 'bridge too far' or whether it stands within an authentic – and ancient - tradition of dialogue, consultation and collaboration.

Synodality is seen as a renewed and renewing path for the Church today. So like all things new and the Gospel imperative to "be made new" we need to engage by drawing on the best of our intellectual wisdom combined with spiritual wisdom, drawing on the core spiritual virtues of perseverance, humility, patience and above all hope.

The Lenten Scriptures have been a valuable guide for me through these days especially the texts recounting the various experiences of our forebears of exile and time spent in the desert. The metaphor of exile in particular speaks to us all as it evokes the experience of confusion, disorientation, and loss of certainty. Exile captures the experience those who feel abandoned by the Church. It can also reflect the experience of those who lament the Church they love and treasure undergoing challenge and change.

Yet we are all called to be pilgrims, to embrace the horizon beyond the known. In keeping faith with the Spirit, pilgrims are on the move, sometimes deep in exile and at others resting in the return. From exile we can be confident we will be guided home: to a renewed sense of belonging, to new ways of seeing, to deeper spiritual nourishment.

Neither exile nor homecoming is ever a final destination for those faithful to the mission and the quest for the divine. On this synodal path as we commit to the call and demands of mission, we are always pilgrims. We alternate between exile and home, yet always confident that we are in the company of fellow travellers, held and propelled by the Mystery of a loving, energising God.



## **Appendix 1**

### **Synodal Forums**

Each synodal forum was chaired by one bishop and one member of the ZdK. In addition to the 30 to 35 members of the synod, the forum also included external experts, the so-called advisors, who contributed their knowledge to the deliberations, for example, when it comes to integrating experiences and findings from other scientific fields, statements from those affected or other contributions that are relevant to the topics of the forum.

The process from the first deliberation to the Synodal Assembly's vote on the proposals was a complex undertaking. It began with the debates in the synodal forums, became more concrete with the dispatch of the proposals and the possibility of submitting amendments, and concluded at the assembly in Frankfurt.

After all synod members received the documents for the second reading at least two months before the synodal assembly, they had four weeks to submit amendments to the documents in writing via a digital text editing programme. Guiding questions were: "What is still missing for me to be able to agree? What needs to be changed so that I can agree?"

## **Appendix 2**

### **Ten Synodal Attitudes**

1. Open yourself  
...for the blessing and needs of our time, our Church, for the call of God that is in it. Open yourself up to the other members of the synod, to different opinions, to new ideas but also to unsolvable questions.
2. Move  
Reach out to others. Join people you know and look for others. Change seats occasionally. Allow yourself to change your mind. Avoid cliques.
3. Listen  
Listen carefully before you speak. Try to understand the other before you judge. Make every effort to salvage the other person's testimony before discarding it. Endure contradictions and give them time.
4. When you speak...  
Say clearly what you think. Do not judge other per represent your position. If you are cooking internally, consider carefully whether it is beneficial to spe Speak to others instead of about others.
5. Dare...  
to talk about yourself, about your experiences and feelings. Dare to listen to others so that they can talk about themselves. Dare to treat confidential things confidential, to talk about your faith and sometimes to suggest something new or to express a "crazy idea".
6. Take your time...

to understand the signs of the times in the light of the gospel, to let new experiences and suggestions mature, to form your own opinion. Take your time deciding how to vote and give others the time they need.

7. Distinguish...

who you can talk to about what; what your office, your role, your function require of you and what is important personally. Where are the intense feelings you're feeling coming from? Get a feel for which suggestions may lead more on the way of Christ.

8. Fight

for positions that are worth it: with an open mind, with fair means, with respect for the opponent. Fight for clear solutions, but also for consensus and unity in the synod. Be a good winner and a good loser.

9. Be generous and calm

when things don't go as hoped or planned. Allow others and yourself to make mistakes. Contribute to the good climate of a joint learning process. Be open in clearing up incidents because long-suffering and forbearance are attributes of God.

10. Stay in prayer

to discern God's voice among the many voices on the Syn; to remain in firm confidence that He himself is leading the synod; to face others with reverence, even those who contradict you and criticize you. Keep praying so that God may be glorified in everything

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Assembly participants**

Since the Synodal Path is supported by both the German Bishops' Conference (DBK) and the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK), the members of the Assembly included the members of the DBK and 69 representatives of the ZdK. There were also other representatives of spiritual ministries and church offices, professional groups, religious congregations, employees of diocesan administrations as well as young people and individuals. Gender and generational justice were taken into account in the appointments. In addition, from the beginning of the Synodal Path, different guests accompanied the events: observers from the ecumenical community and neighbouring countries, as well as the Apostolic Exchellency.

### **Appendix 4**

#### **Synodal Council**

In order to ensure that the cooperation of bishops and faithful at the supra-diocesan level becomes a permanent practice, the synodal members decided at their fourth assembly to establish a Synodal Council. The intention is to make synodality a permanent form of church togetherness and to consolidate the culture of togetherness experienced in the course of the Synodal Path. As a consultative and decision-making body, it is to advise on important developments in the Church and society and, on this basis, make fundamental decisions of supra-diocesan significance on pastoral planning, questions of the future, and ecclesiastical financial and budgetary matters.

The following minimum standards apply to the framework regulation:

- The Synodal Council of the diocese shall be elected in free, equal and secret elections. Its composition shall reflect the people of God in the diocese with its various voluntary and fulltime groups and ministries, and shall be based on gender and generational equity as far as possible. The Council may co-opt additional members by majority vote.
- The Synodal Council of the diocese shall be co-chaired by the bishop and a chairperson elected by the council.
- If the bishop approves a resolution of the Synodal Council of the diocese, this decision shall be legally effective.
- If no legally-effective resolution comes about because the bishop does not concur with it, a new consultation shall take place. If no agreement is reached here either, the council may contradict the vote of the bishop with a two-thirds majority.

## **Appendix 5**

<https://www.zdk.de/>

The website of the ZdK is available only in German but the following translations of the statutes were made available to me:

### **The ZdK has the following tasks:**

- it observes developments in social, state and church life and represents the concerns of Catholics in public;
- it gives impulses for the apostolic work of the Church and Catholics in society and coordinates the work of the forces which are united in it;
- it participates in ecclesiastical decisions on a supra-diocesan level and advises the German Bishops' Conference on questions of social, state and ecclesiastical life;
- it shall prepare and carry out joint initiatives and events of German Catholics, such as the German Catholic Days;
- it shall take care of the concerns and tasks of German Catholics abroad and at the international level;
- it shall ensure the implementation and fulfilment of the corresponding measures.