

**3rd Symposium of the German Bishops' Conference
On Aspects of Gender Equity
in Frankfurt/Main on November 30, 2009**

**Organized by the Department of Pastoral Care of Women
in Cooperation with the Union of Catholic Women's Associations
on Behalf of the Subcommittee "Women in the Church and in Society"
of the German Bishops' Conference**

„Leadership in Honorary Office – Women's Perspectives“

Results of Seven Discussion Forums: Options for Action

Seven discussion forums in the afternoon program of the symposium dealt in greater detail with central issues of the overall topic. The Subcommittee on Women in the Church and in Society stipulated that each specialized forum was to formulate two options for action, which should be innovative and seminal as well as feasible. Those forums delivered the following results:

Forum 1: Honorary Office and Charisma: Biblical Basis and Spiritual Grounds

1. Contributions to improve cooperation between the charismas of the volunteers and the charismas of the ordained, for both participate in the charisma of the Church.
2. The charismas of women and women's associations as charismatic phenomena are welcomed, but seldom recognized. Since they do service in the Church, in the world and in society, they require a culture of appreciation, which is based on financial backing, participation in decision-making and support.

Forum 2: Women in Honorary Office in the Church between Tradition and Modernity. Honorary Office, Citizen Service and Volunteering

Salaried personnel (priests and laypeople) and honorary office

1. Qualification of salaried personnel and volunteers (formation)
2. Assurance of availability
3. Establishment of spaces for association and localization

Project Work

1. Structures as guide rails (open for charismas)
2. Encouragement of openness (cooperation)
3. Requirement of written contracts with rights and responsibilities for duties assumed

Forum 3: Do Women have a different style of leadership than men?

Honorary office seen from the perspective of gender equity

1. Based on their life experiences, women have a multitude of management and leadership skills (e.g. conflict management, chaos management and a capacity for integration). These should be recognized and utilized at all levels of church office. We ask bishops to assure that this happens whenever possible, where appropriate on a mandatory basis.
2. Development and implementation of structures, which ensure that women participate in leadership roles in the Church, e.g.
 - by defining areas of competence in the statutes of the various councils in the dioceses,
 - by taking all reasonable steps to utilize possibilities provided by Canon law.

Forum 4: Authorization of Laypeople in Honorary Capacity in the Church. Canonical and Ecclesiological Perspectives

1. Develop and publicize new functions for volunteers in changing church and societal contexts. Where applicable, use liturgical forms in the authorization process.
2. Institutionalize existing honorary offices, give them legally assured status and make them visible.

Forum 5: Women, Money and Power. Economical Responsibility and

Decision-Making Authority in Honorary Office

1. Appeal to bishops and women's associations: We call for training programs by women for women, which have the specific goal of increasing the financial competence of women.
2. We expect that power issues within the church will not be concealed, and that women can responsibly participate in decision-making processes.

Forum 6: Cooperation between Volunteers and Salaried Staff. A Challenge for Pastoral Care

1. In the diocesan concepts for pastoral care in new larger parish units, volunteers should have an assured role.
2. Actively develop a new culture of cooperation in the way volunteers and salaried personnel as well as men and women interact in management roles.
3. Both in the formation and in the professional development of salaried personnel (priests, deacons, parish and pastoral assistants) special steps should be instituted in order to help women and men to assume the three offices of Christ.
4. In analogy to salaried personnel, volunteers should be offered the same opportunities for development (professional development, financing, esteem), so that they can hold management and leadership positions with pleasure, power and competence.

Forum 7: Leadership in Honorary Office. Perspectives for the Area of Outreach Ministries

1. We recommend that the German Bishops' Conference initiates a dialog process which brings all participants – priests, salaried personnel and volunteers – to a round table, so that they can jointly develop structures, which assure that in the Catholic Church women who hold office in an honorary capacity are truly enabled to have decision-making authority which is equivalent to that of salaried personnel and enables them to make binding decisions.
2. We recommend that a promotion strategy be developed to describe specialized “spaces” for the various areas of ministry having management responsibility, which are particularly suitable for women in an honorary capacity and are attractive to potential women volunteers (including those under 30!).

Translation: Dr. Diane Gössing