

## Press release: Roman Catholic grassroots' wish as to equal access to priesthood included in cantonal law

In the two Roman Catholic churches of the cantons of Basel-Town and Basel-Country of Switzerland / Europe something extraordinary was achieved on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2014: At the ballot (Basel-Town 81.8 % votes in favour, Basel-Country 87.4 % in favour) the members of the two churches voted for the inclusion of the following stipulation in their respective ecclesiastical constitutions belonging to public law: The two cantonal churches are to **submit to the church authorities that the access to priesthood irrespective of sex and marital status should be made possible.**

In most Swiss cantons members of the Roman Catholic Church are subject to two legal systems:

- a) to the global canon law as stipulated in the Codex Iuris Canonici, and
- b) to the local, democratic ecclesiastical law, based on a ecclesiastical constitution, modelled after the cantonal public law system.

The new text passage will be included in the ecclesiastical law system.

Even though the new stipulation will not immediately or compellingly affect global canon law, it will be a strong beacon of the rank and file of the church towards the church authorities, i. e. the bishops. All over the world church institutions and theologians have again and again submitted petitions and resolutions to ecclesiastical decision-makers putting forth the same comparable requests. The ballot of September 28<sup>th</sup> is a new form of expression of part of the church's grassroots with an urgent appealing character.

Behind the text passage two motives can be made out:

- 1) The equality of women and men in the church is also a matter of justice. The most important theological argument in favour of this principle is put forth on the first page of the Bible where we can read that the male and the female were created in the image of God (Gen. 1. 26-28). Even the Pontifical Bible Commission in 1976 stated that there are no biblical reasons against the ordination of women. That is why the future of our church must be under the responsibility of men and women alike.
- 2) In the Roman Catholic Church mandatory celibacy is a disciplinary measure and not a dogma and so could easily be abolished.

An urgent wish of many church members now has been inscribed into constitutions, which in itself is so far unique in the world. We hope that this beacon will be seen by the all men decision-making bodies of our Church.

*The two committees of the „Initiative for Equality in the Church“ Basel-Town and Basel-Country*

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