

# Mission Manifesto



## Preamble

*As far as anyone can see, the Church in Germany, Austria and Switzerland is about to cease to play any significant role in our societies in the years to come.* The problem with that is not so much that it's bad for the Church as an organization; rather, it is a grievous loss for the people who will forfeit God or never get to know Jesus in the first place. *We are Catholic Christians from Austria, Germany and Switzerland* who grieve about the „erosion of the Catholic faith“ that Pope Francis speaks of.<sup>1</sup> We are aware of the fact that our home countries have become mission territories. *We are ready for mission. We wish that our countries may find Jesus.* We extend our invitation to everybody who wants to join us in a committed wave of prayer. *We wish to bring together all those who have the courage to take extraordinary steps.* „The current imperative“, Pope Francis says, „is pastoral conversion“: “The renewal of [the Church’s] structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood [...] as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself”. *Many bishops have heeded this call and even amplified it. With our grassroots initiative we want to support them.*

### 1.

*We are driven by the desire that people may convert themselves to Jesus Christ.* A merely culturally Catholic upbringing is not sufficient any more. The Church must rediscover its determination to initiate conversion; that is, to have people surrender their lives decidedly to Jesus Christ. After all, the purpose of the Church is not to be an institution or a cultural form but a community centered around Jesus. Only those who follow Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour will be able to ignite others for passionate discipleship of Christ.

### 2.

*We want mission to be the top priority.* The Church's resources, in terms of money as well as in terms of staff, must be focused on evangelization. „The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature“<sup>2</sup>! Jesus Christ's ultimate commission to His disciples is to „go and make disciples of all nations“ (Matthew 28:19). A church that doesn't approach all people joyfully and persuasively doesn't have a mission; it is bound to lose its purpose and meaning. It doesn't stand for anything. It can't grow but rather declines. For our countries, that means: „The Church will send or the Church will end“.

### 3.

*We believe that chances have never been better than they are right now.* In the world of today, the lack of hope, individually as well as communally, is growing from day to day. Many people are in search of answers and won't content themselves with small solutions. But the greatest possible hope is already in the world. The Gospel hasn't lost its appeal. Our duty as Christians is to share this hope instead of keeping it to ourselves. Wherever that happens, people of our time will be compelled to become Christians. On a global scale, 200 million Christians even put up with persecution as they

1 [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151120\\_adlimina-rep-fed-germania.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151120_adlimina-rep-fed-germania.html)

2 [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_ad-gentes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html)

cannot let go of their only hope: Jesus Christ.

4.

***We wish to address all people in our countries, without making distinctions*** – just as Jesus did. We want to approach Christians and non-Christians, people of other faiths as well as ex-Christians. There is not a single human being in the world for whom Jesus hasn't died or who isn't supposed to get to know Jesus. „God is Love“ (1 John 4:16), and He „wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth“ (1 Timothy 2:4). We want the same.

5.

***We believe that our missionary activities will only be as powerful as our prayers are.*** A new missionary awakening can start from no other place than from a renewed commitment to fasting and prayer. God, who passionately loves all human beings, has acted before and will act today if we call on Him personally and wholeheartedly. Miracles will happen. God will cross people's paths, even in the form of dreams and inspirations. „We should not dread to ask God even for the most difficult things, such as the conversion of great sinners or even whole nations“ (St. Charles de Foucauld).

6.

***We are grateful for all the Christians outside the Catholic Church who are already devoted to mission, baptizing and leading people to Jesus.*** As Christians in the Catholic Church we appreciate their fidelity to Holy Scripture and their committed closeness to Christ. We acknowledge the positive impulses of the Reformation. We want to learn humbly from our brothers and sisters from different denominations, not least from Evangelicals, and cooperate with them to become more missionary ourselves. We are aware that the world will only find Christ if we recover our unity and practise it in prayer and missionary work today. (cf. John 17:21).

7.

***We need to rediscover the contents of our faith*** and proclaim them clearly and boldly, „in season and out of season“ (2 Timothy 4:2). We have received them through God's revelation, worded in the primordial document of Holy Scripture and handed down in a living manner through the interpretation of the Church as taught in the Catechism. The mysteries of the Faith have to be proclaimed comprehensively, integrally, in rational clarity and with the Joy of Salvation. They have to shine. Whoever attempts to profess the Faith to others must not dabble; he must first refine and strengthen himself – his life, his love and his knowledge of the Faith. A missionary awakening requires a recapture of our own Faith, as we have unlearned how to be missionary.

8.

***We want to evangelize, not indoctrinate.*** Delivering the mission of Jesus Christ must always be an invitation. Missionary work is grounded in the desire to share one's joy with others; it's an open and respectful offer to free people. Mission is about washing people's feet, not their heads. It doesn't coax, it doesn't press, it is incompatible with coercion or violence. Christians are not only tolerant of other beliefs, they even actively commit themselves to the sake of religious liberty. We profess the Christian faith's claim to truth without aggression of any kind. We cannot possibly keep silent about the reason for the hope that we have (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

9.

***We need a „democratization“ of mission.*** There is no rule that says the commission Jesus has given us is limited to specialists, to professional proclaimers, theologians, clergy or members of religious orders. To be missionary is Christ's commission to everyone who is baptized. Furthermore, mission is not just meant for certain „non-Christian“ countries, cultures and/or religions. Mission needs to be always and everywhere. It is the one great and too often forgotten profile duty for all Christians in all countries and cultures.

10.

***We have to convert ourselves to the Joy of the Gospel in order to be able to lead others to Christ.*** Wherever we have conformed to a secular humanist mainstream in thought, deed and sentiment, we must make staunch efforts to „move resolutely away from the Church's worldliness“, as Pope Benedict XVI. said.<sup>3</sup> We can only gather missionary force if we become „new men“ filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. We should, however, take into account that the awakening of the Faith that we desire will probably not be a clear-cut success story all along. Still, the beauty that shines from a faithful and joyful testimony for Christ even through suffering and opposition will eventually bear fruit.

*(Translation: Tobias Klein)*

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3 [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20110925\\_catholics-freiburg.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110925_catholics-freiburg.html)