

**Movimiento internacional  
Somos-Iglesia**

**Movimento Internacional  
Nós somos Igreja**

**Movimento Internazionale  
Noi siamo Chiesa**

**Mouvement international  
Nous sommes Eglise**

**Internationale Bewegung  
Wir sind Kirche**

# **International Movement We are Church**

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## **Media Release:**

***We are Church* recalls: 30 years since revocation of the ecclesiastical right to teach of Hans Kueng (18 December 1979): 'His persistence is encouragement, inspiration and incentive for all of us.'**

This 18 December 2009 will be the 30th anniversary of the day when Pope John Paul II revoked the ecclesiastical right to teach (*missio canonica*) of Prof. Dr. Hans Kueng because of his proposals for reform in the Catholic church. In his book 'Infallible? An inquiry' published in 1970 after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and equally prompted by the encyclical 'Humanae Vitae' from 25 July 1968 Kueng raised the question if the papal ministry is indeed infallible. With this Kueng, like nobody else in our time, raised the question of truth in Christianity and kept it alive ever since.

The world-famous Swiss theologian, appointed official adviser to the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII, contributed decisively to an ecumenical theology notwithstanding his later marginalization by the church. His doctoral thesis 'Justification' about the Swiss reformed theologian Karl Barth, finished in 1957, was praised at the time by Joseph Ratzinger, teaching colleague of Kueng at the University of Tuebingen/Germany until 1968. Kueng made major contributions to the agreement reached in 1999 between the Catholic church and the Lutheran Church with regard to the declaration of the doctrine of justification. His 'Project world ethos' ([www.weltethos.org](http://www.weltethos.org)) started in 1990 grew into an important stimulator for the interreligious dialogue, today more necessary than ever in the face of our global problems. On 6 October 2009 he proclaimed his 'Declaration to a global business ethos' in front of the UN.

After the revocation of the ecclesiastical right to teach Kueng did not retract his theologically well founded statements to the disputed dogma of infallibility of 1870. By doing so he showed that what we are being asked to do is not to obey but to resist the usurpations from Rome. In 1979 Kueng was appointed to the chair for ecumenical theology that was created for him outside the Catholic faculty and which he occupied until 1997.

In 1968 Hans Kueng drafted, together with other theologians, the declaration 'For the freedom in theology'. In the end this text carried the signatures of 1360 theologians – also that of Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI. – from all over the world. In 1989 Kueng was co-signer of the so-called 'Cologne Declaration', a votum for an open-minded catholicity and against an overstretching of the papal authority.

Hans Kueng is also one of the spiritual supporters of the 'KirchenVolksBegehren' (*We are Church* referendum) started 1995 in Austria which resulted in the *International Movement We are Church*. The second volume of his memoirs 'Controversial truth' presents a historic as well as a systematic foundation of the *We are Church* movement's concerns which emerged ever more clearly since the Second Vatican Council and for which he had fought already in the 1960s and 1970s. With his fundamental works ('The Church' 1967, 'Being a Christian' 1974 and 'Does God exist?' 1978), Kueng brought specific reform topics into public sphere early on, thoroughly justifying them both biblically and spiritually.

Today we find that Kueng's enquiries into the papacy have not been answered at all as evidenced by the increasing conflicts between the church leadership and the laity in the church. Obligatory celibacy, ordination of women and the Eucharistic question are still being discussed – despite of all the interdictions from Rome.

In September 2005 Hans Kueng had a surprise meeting with Pope Benedict XVI, his former colleague at university, Professor Ratzinger. Not so surprisingly all topics regarding reforms within the Catholic church had been excluded beforehand. And as before so did Hans Kueng after the meeting commit to the reform issues important to him. Because, in the words of Hans Kueng in the second volume of his biography, 'It is not the Council but the betrayal of the Council that led the church into crisis'.

'His persistence in the renewal of the Roman Catholic church and his commitment to ecumenical issues as well as to the dialogue between the world religions is encouragement, inspiration and incentive for all of us', the catholic reform movement *We are Church* gratefully declared on the occasion of his 80th birthday on 19 March 2008.