

**Movimiento internacional
Somos-Iglesia**

**Movimento Internacional
Nós somos Igreja**

**Movimento Internazionale
Noi siamo Chiesa**

**Mouvement international
Nous sommes Eglise**

**Internationale Bewegung
Wir sind Kirche**

Press release

We are Church: Letter to Pope Benedict asking for voluntary celibacy

We are Church writes Letter to Pope Benedict asking for voluntary celibacy as a first step toward a renewed form of priesthood. *International Movement We are Church* coordinates next year's initiatives in its annual Council in Strasbourg/France.

In a letter to Pope Benedict XVI the *International Movement We Are Church* asks him "to reconsider the present organisation of the ministries in the Roman Catholic Church, to urgently repeal the present Church's law of obligatory celibacy and to re-introduce voluntary celibacy for ordained priests as a first step towards a renewed form of priesthood."

In its letter *We are Church* writes "The opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist should take precedence over the Church law of compulsory celibacy" referring canon 213 which gives Christians the right to receive the Holy Eucharist each Sunday.

The Catholic reform movement is greatly concerned about the growing shortage of ordained priests which can be seen in the Vatican's "Anuario Pontificio". Because of this the celebration of the Holy Eucharist has had to be omitted in an increasing number of parishes. This does not only affect Europe and the United States of America, but especially the parishes and missions in South America. It is a global problem that urgently requires a global solution and one that a great majority of practising Catholics would like to see changed.

The letter is addressed to "Dear Pope Benedict XVI, dear brother in Christ" and is signed by Raquel Mallavibarrena from Madrid, present Chair of the International Movement We Are Church.

Future activities of *We are Church* will include:

Common statements on the 40th anniversary of the Encyclical "Humane vitae" (July 25, 2008), on the third Encyclical of Pope Benedict (expected in Summer 2008) and on the 10th anniversary of "World Aids Day" (December 1, 2008).

We are Church will take part in the Shadow Synod organized by *Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW)* on October 15, 2008 in Rome (shadowing the Synod of Bishops October 5-26, 2008 in Rome).

Members of *Noi Siamo Chiesa (We are Church, Italy)* were delegated to be present at the European Social Forum in Malmoe, September 2008 and at the Forum Theology and Liberation at Belem/ Brasil, January 2009.

Various preparations for the 50th anniversary of Vatican II Council (1962-1965).

At this Council of the *International Movement We Are Church* members from Austria, Belgium, Catalonia, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, UK and USA were present in Strasbourg April 30th and May 1st, 2008. They also participated at the subsequent 18th Annual Conference of the "European Network Church on the Move" and its study day "Secularisation in a multicultural and multiconvictional Europe in search of social cohesion based on common values" from May 1st until May 4th.

The *International Movement We Are Church* - a grassroots church reform movement of lay people, priests, and members of persons in religious orders - is working to continue the process of reform in the Roman Catholic Church, a process which began with the Vatican II Council (1962-1965) and which has come to a standstill in recent years. *We Are Church* was started in Austria and Germany in 1995 with a referendum, is now represented in more than twenty countries and is in touch with other reform movements all over the world.

The next informal Council of the *International Movement We Are Church* will take place in London in May 2009.

Website: <http://www.we-are-church.org>

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