


[IMWAC address to the American Catholic Council](#)

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Address to the *First National Council of the American Catholic Council (ACC), Detroit, June 10-12, 2011*

by **Christian Weisner**

I would like to thank you very much for the opportunity to address you here in Detroit at this very important and inspiring American Catholic Council. I'm doing this on behalf of the "International Movement We are Church" and on behalf of the "European Network Church on the Move". And I bring you the personal greetings of professor Hans Kueng who supports us very much.

We are a delegation of nine women and men from the United Kingdom, from Italy, from the Netherlands and from Germany (the home country of Pope Benedict and Angela Merkel – and of myself).

The "**European Network Church on the Move**" and the "**International Movement We are Church**" were founded in the 1990s in Europe but now have links to all parts of the world. We are connected with organizations of married priests, groups for women's ordination, movements of homosexual Christians, liberation theologians and many other renowned theologians. Both our reform movements are grass root movements working for reform in line with the Second Vatican Council this gathering commemorates.

The Second Vatican Council made clear: We are the "People of God". We all together constitute the church. We are the church. But since 1995 the name "We are Church" has a special meaning and its own history:

In 1995, in a very deep crisis after a pedophile scandal of a former Cardinal in Vienna/Austria a teacher of religious education and his wife sat at their kitchen table and said: "We want to help our church to see the 'signs of the times' so that people in the modern world will better understand the message of Jesus – a message of a loving God who does not exclude anyone."

They wrote down the essential goals for the movement "We are Church". **Since 1995 "We are Church" has become a brand name** for a world wide movement of church reform starting at the base. The main stress is on inner church reform, but some of us are also very active in questions of social justice and peace, for example at the "World Social Forum".

How do we work for church reform?

– **Firstly**, we encourage committed Catholics in the parishes to take responsibility for their faith as adult persons in their local churches. We hold workshops and spiritual weekends and help to increase knowledge of the Second Vatican Council.

- **Secondly**, we ask the Bishops that they should be good and caring shepherds and not only officers of the Vatican. We write open letters to our bishops and hold vigils outside their conferences. We achieve good media coverage of our events and statements.
- **Thirdly**, we have organized several Shadow Synods in Rome when the Bishops gathered in the Vatican. We remind the Pope and the Roman Curia to keep to the course of the Second Vatican Council. On these occasions we worked closely together with people from all over the world. And I'm glad to meet some of you here again.

Prof. Kueng proposes that at this moment we should avoid a general discussion on reforms but concentrate on **four points of general agreement in all reform groups**:

- **Abolition of obligatory celibacy,**
- **Admission of women to Church ministries,**
- **Intercommunion among catholic and protestant churches,**
- **Admission of divorced remarried Catholics to the Eucharist.**

Hans Kueng says we should now concentrate the international discussion on these concrete points in which of course the resistance of the Roman Curia is especially strong. We should be able to find at least a few bishops like Bishop William Morris in Australia who have the courage to speak out, together with a lot of theologians, priests and laypeople.

As **international studies** like those of Prof. Andrew Greeley have proved again and again: There is a strong desire for reform in our church all over the world. The **protest against the dismissal of Bishop William Morris in Australia** is only a very recent example of many.

This spring more than 300 professors of Catholic theology signed the **Memorandum “Church 2011: The Need for a New Beginning”**. We would like to ask you to give them your support with your signature. You don't have to be a professor. You can easily sign here at our booth or on website www.pro-memorandum-2011.org. This memorandum implies the four essential points I've mentioned before.

Another international project of ours: We shall very soon be creating an **international website to coordinate and inform about all projects and ideas of reform movements** world-wide to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council (www.council50.org). In December 2015, exactly 50 years after the final session of the Council, we plan a large meeting of all of us in Rome.

Our delegation from “good old Europe” wishes all here in Detroit a very successful and inspiring conference. I'm sure that the Holy Spirit is with us to support your work and our work combined for the sake of our church and for the sake of the whole human family. The members of our delegation are looking forward to taking part in workshops and answering all your questions. God bless this meeting.

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