

1st World Meeting of Lay Ministers

1.-5. Oktober 2023 | Rom



1st World Meeting of Lay Ministers



On the occasion of the World Synod of Bishops, theologically educated pastoral lay ministers from all continents met in Rome. These professional lay ministers got to know about each other, meet and listen to each other.

The world meeting aimed at an empowerment of lay ministers in various countries all over the world, i. e. of non-ordained but theologically educated professional pastoral ministers. Their various and already long given reality in the Roman Catholic Church still seems to be overshadowed by other ecclesial perspectives. This ministry reveals an ecclesiological alternative to the “classical” dualism between clergy and laity.

The outcomes of the sharing and reflection, which the world meeting offered, can influence the processes of the World Synod of Bishops. Therefore, in addition to the exchange of lay ministers on the different continents, there was also a sharing participants of die Synod.

The initiator of this meeting was the Association of professional Pastoral Ministers in Germany, which at this moment might be the largest organization of full-time lay theologians in the world.

1st World Meeting of Lay Ministers



Edward Hahnenberg
USA



Gabriele Eder-Cakl
Austria



Thomas Bergmeister
Germany



Patricia Bauer
Austria



Christian Bauer
Germany



Regina Nagel
Germany



Emmanuel Dassah
Ghana



Pedro Alvarez Soto
Bolivia



Karoline Wilkens
Germany



Danilo Siter
Slovenia



Fredy Bihler
Switzerland

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Cirilo Boloron
Austria



Hildegard Scherer
Germany



Grace David
India



Esther Göbel
Germany



Stacey Noem
USA



Isabelle Molz
Germany



Bibiana Joohyun Roh
Korea



Konstantin Bischoff
Germany



Jessica Joy Candelario
Philippines



Johannes Frenz
Germany

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The timetable

1. 10. (Sunday)	2. 10. (Monday)	3. 10. (Tuesday)	4. 10. (Wednesday)	5. 10. (Thursday)
	<p>SOLIDARIZATION ("Seeing")</p> <p>Sharing: What does it mean to be a lay minister?</p>	<p>REFLECTION ("Judging"): Insights of academic theology: Lay ministers as a counter-model to clericalism</p>	<p>POSITIONING („Acting“):</p> <p>Writing a letter to the synodal participants</p>	<p>Next steps</p> <p>Goodbye – Farewell</p> <p>Press conference</p>
		<p>Deeper reflections</p> <p>Starting the process to collect and save the discussions</p> <p>Working with the instrumentum laboris</p> <p>Spiritual conversation</p>	<p>Commitments for further networking</p> <p>Rome experiences</p>	
Meet & greet - Welcome		Evening in Rome	Sharing with participants of the Synod	

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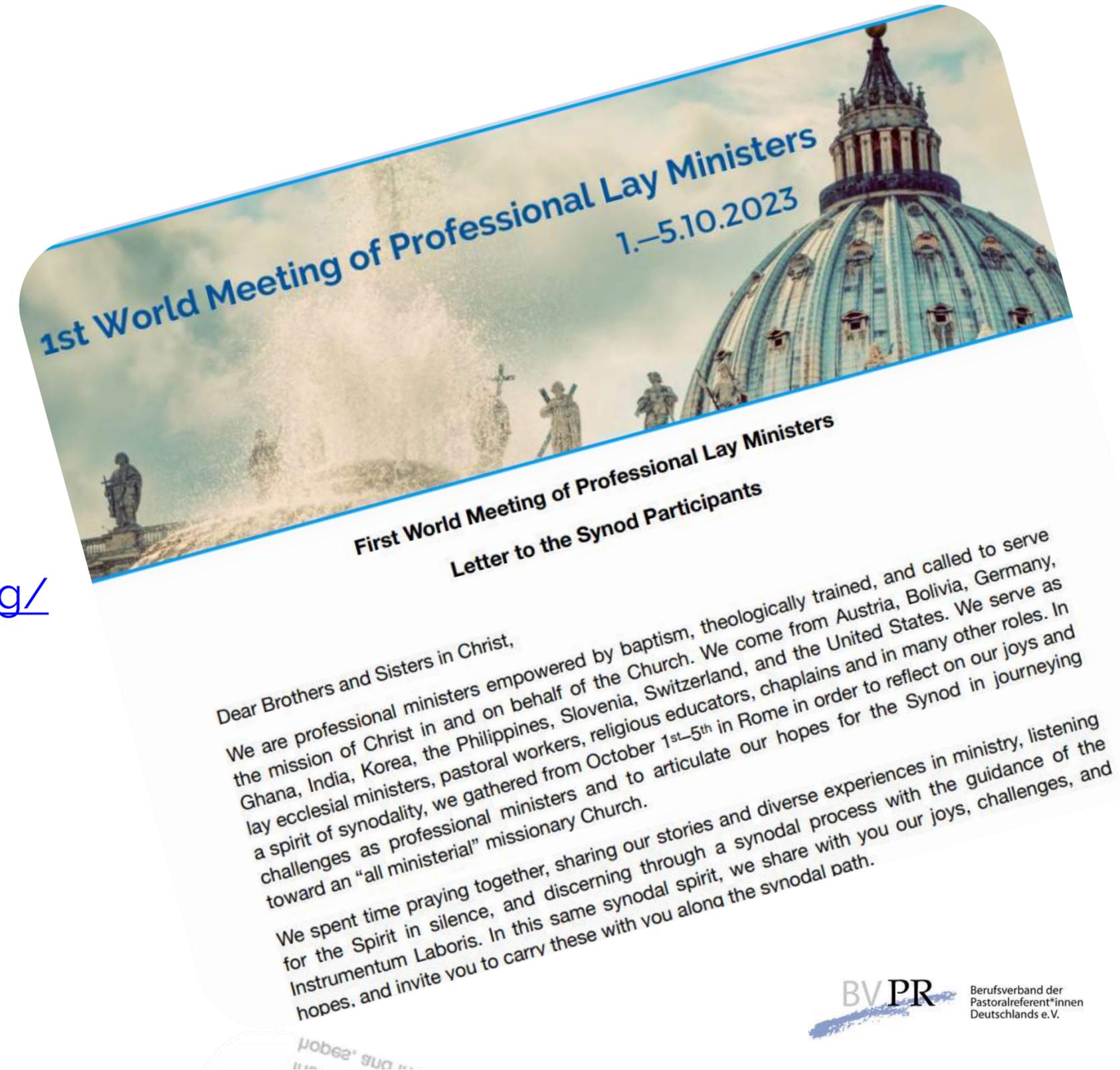
Our text

- Commitment of the group
(created by an open process)
- Letter to the synodal participants

- All translations here:

<https://www.bvpr-deutschland.de/world-meeting/>

- Working basis for the future also for our group and to work in the local groups



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Letter to the Synod Participants

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are professional ministers empowered by baptism, theologically trained, and called to serve the mission of Christ in and on behalf of the Church. We come from Austria, Bolivia, Germany, Ghana, India, Korea, the Philippines, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the United States. We serve as lay ecclesial ministers, pastoral workers, religious educators, chaplains and in many other roles. In a spirit of synodality, we gathered from October 1st–5th in Rome in order to reflect on our joys and challenges as professional ministers and to articulate our hopes for the Synod in journeying toward an “all ministerial” missionary Church.



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We spent time praying together, sharing our stories and diverse experiences in ministry, listening for the Spirit in silence, and discerning through a synodal process with the guidance of the Instrumentum Laboris. In this same synodal spirit, we share with you our joys, challenges, and hopes, and invite you to carry these with you along the synodal path.



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With joy we respond to the gift and grace of our call to serve the People of God, as did our ancestors in the faith. Encouraging us on this path are:

- Our ability to accompany and lead the faithful into the ever-evolving reality of the Church in the world with all the newness and opportunity it brings.
- The richness of our theological preparation, education, and formation for professional service in the name of the Church.
- Co-responsible, collaborative relationships with colleagues, ordained and non-ordained, and, for some of us, formal authorization to ministry.
- The opportunity to actively contribute to the realization of a synodal Church by cultivating the seeds of synodal thinking and methodologies in the fertile soil of our continents, now, and well into the future.



But we are confronted with challenges:

- There is a lack of recognition and acceptance of the value and importance of professional ministers in the Church. There are many who struggle due to the lack of proper structures and financial support for professional ministers.
- Clericalism is a threat to a synodal Church and has led to an abuse of power in a way that has affected and damaged relationships and discouraged laity participation and ministries. Combined with patriarchal mindsets, it has posed severe challenges to women and persons who identify with the LGBTQ+ community. Women also feel marginalized when it comes to access to theological formation and opportunities of working in Church structures.
- Professional ministers play a major role in the life of the Church but at times they are not given the space and trust to serve the People of God in the liturgy, academy, social work and other pastoral fields.



It is our hope that a synodal Church becomes a reality in our midst, through and with professional ministers:

- We hope however, that communion be experienced through a Church that walks with the people, in fraternity and not elite separation. Thus, we seek authentic gender justice and inclusion in the Church manifested in listening, dialogue, and communal discernment.
- We see our mission in support of a diversity of ministries that recognize the needs of the community and respond to the signs of the times. Thus, we hope that the whole sacramental life of the Church be freshly considered through these diverse ministries. Further, formation in authority and responsibility be reflected in all areas of life of the Church.
- We hope for a Church of participation, co-responsibility, co-decision-making, and mutual empowerment. Thus, we need to rethink existing structures and systems that promote division and clericalism, and instead we need to awaken the importance of the role of the laity.

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We commit ourselves and our work to share our joys, overcome these challenges, and realize our hopes for the whole of the Church and its mission. We do not see the 1st World Meeting of Professional Lay Ministers as an end, but rather as the 'beginning of a beginning'. To participate and enrich the mission of the Church, we will create a world network of professional ministers and continue our journey together and work to co-create a synodal Church for the good of all and our Common Home.



Rome, on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, 04 of October 2023

The participants of the 1st World Meeting of Professional Lay Ministers Pedro Alvarez (Bolivia), Patricia Bauer (Austria), Christian Bauer (Germany), Thomas Bergmeister (Germany), Fredy Bihler (Switzerland), Konstantin Bischoff (Germany), Cirilo Boloron (Austria), Jessica Joy Candelario (Philippines), Emmanuel Zumabakuro Dassah (Ghana), Grace David (India), Gabriele Eder-Cakl (Austria), Johannes Frenz (Germany), Esther Göbel (Germany), Edward Hahnenberg (USA), Isabelle Molz (Germany), Regina Nagel (Germany), Bibiana Joohyun Roh (South Korea), Hildegard Scherer (Germany), Danilo Siter (Slovenia), Karoline Wilkens (Germany), and others

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Further / Next steps:

- Spread the Idea and our commitments in our places/regions/countries
- Creating a world network – find a common vision for our group
- Looking for further partners /networks in different countries
- Establishing a website with our experiences and a platform for exchange
- Development of a simple guide to work with our paper in the local structure
- Preparation of an online meeting in 2024 and the 2nd world meeting in 2025
- Contact the dicastery of the laity
- Support countries without structure



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„The meeting helped me to understand the varied contexts in which lay pastoral workers are engaged around the world. I felt a deep resonance with their joys and struggles. The processes we engaged in helped us to articulate our hopes and aspirations, as we reflected on what truly constitutes a synodal church.

We also connected with each on a personal level and realised how wonderful it is to be part of a movement for collective good.“

Grace David, India



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„The meeting was a valuable experience for me. One of the things that surprised me, is that our situation as lay pastoral workers in the Austrian dioceses is fortunately much better than in other dioceses around the world. What was valuable about this meeting was the mutual appreciation and recognition of the diversity and colourfulness of our profession!“

Patricia Bauer, Austria



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„The gathering was a moment of reflection for me both inwardly and outwardly with respect to inclusiveness. In order to cultivate an atmosphere of optimism, our church must strive to be hospitable and embrace individuals from various backgrounds. This entails actively embracing diversity across various dimensions, such as color, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, socioeconomic background, and others. By cultivating an atmosphere characterized by tolerance and respect, we may establish a secure and inclusive environment where persons from many backgrounds feel esteemed and honored.

Emmanuel Dassah, Ghana





„The meeting was a total “game changer” for me. For the first time I had an opportunity to receive, first hand, the experience of other professional lay ministers from around the world. We are so different and yet we hold so much in common—especially a love for the people of God. Thanks to this meeting and, especially the individual relationships we got to develop, I learned how a synodal process actually looks and what it feels like.“

Stacey Noem, USA



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„A dream has come true. For several years I have been wishing that it would be possible to network professional theologians in pastoral ministry internationally. The exchange with colleagues from so many countries in Rome was a great experience. Despite all the differences in cultures and church realities, we have a lot in common. And we are a reality that is still far too little recognized in the church. It is important to me that we now take further steps towards networking internationally and together. The church in Germany may have the most financial and structural resources, but many other resources are needed to create a genuine global network.



Konstantin Bischoff, Germany

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International preparation team:

Christian Bauer, Germany

Thomas Bergmeister, Germany

Fredy Bihler, Switzerland

Konstantin Bischoff, Germany

Cirilo Boloron, Austria

Emmanuel Dassah, Ghana

Grace David, India

Gabriele Eder-Cakl, Austria

Johannes Frenz, Germany

Joy Candelaria, Philippines

Esther Göbel, Germany

Isabelle Molz, Germany

Bibiana Joohyun Roh, Korea

Dani Siter, Slovenia

Karolin Wilkens, Germany

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International preparation team

Start in January 2024

Working by online meetings (about 10:30 CET) & an online platform

The German team will invite and finance the platform



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Thanks to our financial supporters:

Verband der Diözesen Deutschlands



Association of German Dioceses

Erzbistum München und Freising



Archdiocese of Munich and Freising

Erzbischöflicher Stuhl Freiburg



Archbishopric of Freiburg

Solidaritätsaktion Renovabis



solidarity campaign Renovabis

Fachstelle Weltkirche und globale Zusammenarbeit
Diözese Münster

Global Church and Global Cooperation Office Diocese of Münster

Viele Deutsche Pastoralreferent*innen ...

Many German pastoral workers ...

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Contact:

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<https://www.bvpr-deutschland.de/world-meeting/>