
Austria: Jesuits leave Linz after 400 years. Ignatian network school will be maintained

After 400 years, the Jesuits will leave Linz at the end of July, also in connection with a declining number of vocations. In September, the Old Cathedral, a historic church belonging to the Jesuit community in Linz, will be handed over to the Ukrainian Catholic community: "Bidding farewell to Linz is very painful", Jesuit Provincial Father Bernhard Bürgler said in an interview with "Kurier". An exhibition in the Old Cathedral is telling the story of the Jesuits in the capital of Upper Austria from the 17th century to 2023. The Jesuits held a farewell service together with Bishop Manfred Scheuer and Provincial Father Bernhard Bürgler. In the current situation, the Order saw no other option than to withdraw from Linz, Fr. Bürgler explained. "We're getting fewer and older, so we have to focus", he said. The Jesuits had worked in Linz for 400 years. For the Provincial Father, this period was characterized by good relations with the diocese and the bishop. The withdrawal from Linz is also associated with a progressive concentration of the members of the Jesuit Order in a smaller number of convents, and "space should also be opened for some new things". The Provincial Father also stressed that for the Society of Jesus this "is not a complete break with Linz", since the Order will maintain the Aloisianum, an Ignatian network school in the association of Jesuit schools in Austria and Germany. In the future, the Jesuit Order and the Province want to focus more on justice, youth and climate protection. The Diocese of Linz, which owns the Old Cathedral, decided to hand over the church to the Ukrainian Catholic community, which had previously celebrated in the nearby parish church of the city.

Massimo Lavena