
Germany: mgr. Bätzing (Dbk), “Coronavirus and the quest for a future time”. A turning point in the history of the Church and religious communities as well

In the text “Coronavirus and the quest for a future time”, mgr. Georg Bätzing, president of the German Bishops’ Conference (Dbk), stops and looks into the positives that have come out of the need to resist the Covid-19 pandemic too, as a civil society as well as individuals, and as Churches. Bätzing makes a biblical comparison to explain the opportunity to regard this time as a “Sabbath”, a pause of reflection that holds “something to say for the future”. The president of the German Bishops’ Conference points out, for instance, that “in a country – Germany – in which social cohesion threatened to become a scanty resource, this experience led to that feeling of unity that we had not experienced for quite some time”. Only time will tell if for Germans the pandemic has marked turning point in the history of the Church and religious communities: will the restrictions on religious and liturgical services be a “powerful drive to innovate, which will eventually lead to good things”? What will come out of those restrictions and those forms of liturgy that tried to make up for the closing down of the churches? “Will the complaints and annoyance at the closed doors of the churches fill them up again, after the end of the pandemic?”, the bishop asks himself, and “what will happen to the new, interesting virtual formats, the streamed celebrations, in which so much creativity has been invested?”. And, in Bätzing’s opinion, one would not be too far from the truth if one said that “nothing will ever be the same again”. Why, the bishop wonders, “couldn’t such a long time of reflection and deprivation strengthen the feeling of unity, help focus on what is essential, and set the right route to European cohesion and the challenges of climate change?”.

Valentina Bombelli