
Germany: Card. Marx offers resignation to Pope. “In the next years of my service, I would like to dedicate myself to the Church’s renewal”

The Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Card. Reinhard Marx, asked Pope Francis to accept his resignation from office and handed over the decision about his further service to him. In a letter to the Holy Father dated 21 May, the Cardinal outlined the reasons behind this move, as he explained in an official statement today: this is because Pope Francis informed Card. Marx that that letter may now be published and that he should keep performing his service as bishop until a decision is made.

“I have been a priest for forty-two years and a bishop for almost twenty-five years, twenty years thereof I was an ordinary in large bishoprics. It is painful for me to witness the severe damage to the bishops’ reputation in the ecclesiastical and secular perception which may even be at its lowest”, the Cardinal wrote to the Pope. “To assume responsibility, it is therefore not enough in my opinion to react only and exclusively if the files provide proof of the mistakes and failures of individuals. We as bishops have to make clear that we also represent the institution of the Church as a whole”. Furthermore, “it is not right to simply link these problems largely on past times and former Church officials thereby ‘burying’ what happened. I feel that through remaining silent, neglecting to act and over-focussing on the reputation of the Church, I have made myself personally guilty and responsible”. According to the Cardinal, “overlooking and disregarding the victims was certainly our greatest fault of the past”. Following the MHG study into child abuse commissioned by the German Bishops’ Conference in the Cathedral of Munich “I stated that we have failed. But who is this ‘we’? In fact, I also belong to this circle. And this means that I must also draw personal consequences from this. This is becoming increasingly clear to me”. By his resignation, Card. Marx wants to “show that not the ministry is in the foreground but the mission of the Gospel. This too is an element of the pastoral care”. The Cardinal concluded: “I continue to enjoy being a priest and a bishop of this Church and I will keep committing myself in pastoral matters, wherever you deem it reasonable and useful. In the next years of my service, I would like to increasingly dedicate myself to pastoral care and support an ecclesiastical renewal of the Church which you also call for incessantly”.

Massimo Lavena