
Germany: Card. Woelki, “I made mistakes in handling abuse cases and I made mistakes in communication”. Archbishop of Cologne keeps his post, now a time of silence

“I made mistakes in handling abuse cases and I made mistakes in communication. I am sorry for this and I am particularly sorry for the victims who, as a consequence of this, have been further traumatised”. The Archbishop of Cologne, Card. Rainer Maria Woelki, appeared calm in front of the press as he made some off-the-cuff remarks following the publication by the Nunciature in Berlin of the statement about the decisions taken in Rome on the matter, after a “long conversation last week” between Pope Francis and the cardinal himself. The statement informs that since the Pope “acknowledges the cardinal’s loyalty to the Holy See and his concern for the unity of the Church” and “is counting on him”, Card. Woelki will remain at the helm of the Archdiocese. Indeed, the apostolic visit in June showed that “there was no indication that he acted illegally” in dealing with sexual abuse cases, and all cover-up allegations were refuted. The statement from the Nunciature acknowledges “major errors” were committed, particularly at the communication level. Card. Woelki admitted that his mistakes contributed to “a crisis of confidence, for which” he is “truly sorry”, and that he “told the Pope that he wished more time to reflect and find new ways” to “continue walking together” in the Archdiocese. For this reason, from about mid-October to the beginning of Lent, the cardinal will be substituted by Mgr. Rolf Steinhäuser who will act as apostolic administrator “sede plena”. The cardinal then walked away without taking any questions from the press. The resignations of the two auxiliary bishops Dominikus Schwaderlapp and Ansgar Puffs were also rejected because even if errors were committed, “there was no intention of covering up abuse or ignoring the victims”. Mgr. Puffs will immediately resume his ministry in the Archdiocese, while Mgr. Schwaderlapp will serve as a parish priest in a parish of the Archdiocese of Mombasa for a year.

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