
Germany: innovative and enhanced website for online pastoral care of the deaf in sign language

Here is an interesting online pastoral initiative by the German Church: the relaunch of a web channel providing a pastoral service in sign language for persons with hearing impairments. The website offers a variety of materials including pastoral resources, spiritual reflections for the liturgical year, prayer initiatives to be celebrated in community, biblical texts in sign language, a calendar with local and national events, a guide for deaf communities, Eucharistic celebrations in sign language, and contact options for full-time employees and volunteers working in the pastoral care of the deaf. The purpose of the website is to “provide a platform where people with hearing impairments can learn about religious issues and the Church, exchange ideas, and publish their own contributions”, the promoters explain. In addition to the contents already available before the relaunch, online networking features have been added as well as the opportunity to chat to get online counselling. The Auxiliary Bishop of Erfurt, Mgr. Reinhard Hauke, representative of the German Bishops’ Conference for the Pastoral Care of the Deaf, welcomes the project and the new opportunities provided on the website: “From my own experience as a pastor for the deaf, I know how important it is to provide people with hearing impairments with suitable resources that help them live together the treasure of faith in their own mother tongue and culture”. The website www.taub-und-katholisch.de “makes an important contribution in that it facilitates access to the Gospel and to ecclesial life” for those who cannot hear. The materials available on the website “are a precious resource for the pastoral care of people with disabilities. The project is a good example of active inclusion, not least because it was developed with the help of deaf people and volunteers”. The website is managed by an editorial team composed of deaf and non-deaf employees of the pastoral care of the deaf.

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