

## Being Christian in a post-Church society

**Nicole Grochowina: "What counts is our own vocation as persons who believe, hope and love"**

**"Charism and vitality are the decisive criteria for the Church 3.0, and not numbers or structure". With these words, Nicole Grochowina summed up her vision of an evolving Church. She addressed these words on Saturday March 12, 2022 at the Dialoghotel Eckstein in Baar to the 120 participants belonging to about twenty Movements and Communities from all parts of Switzerland. The topic was "Christian life in a post-Church society".**

Nicole is a historian and a nun of the Protestant Community Christusbruderschaft Selbitz/Upper in Franconia. She started by outlining the dramatic situation of the Church in today's context. She affirmed that the pandemic has drastically limited ecclesial life. "At the same time, however, new possibilities came about, that is, the digital spaces that can be utilised for the announcement that includes praying, blessing, hoping and listening". She then proceeded to underline the loss of trust that the Church suffered due to the crimes of spiritual and sexual abuses, "as we can today see clearly in front of our eyes". Many persons ask themselves: "why should we remain in these associations, and they are leaving the two great Churches in droves".

### **Hope and realism**

The Synodal Journey of the Catholic Church is a sign of hope: "Will it be possible to reflect upon power and service, and take decisions that would be useful for life? Will it be possible to give women a role in the Church so that they do not have to keep on asking for them?" Nicole Grochowina's hope is linked to a realistic vision of the Church: "The amazement for the first decisions in great; at the same time it is accompanied with the question whether these decisions would last, seeing that the Sacred Supper of the diverse confessions cannot be shared not even for pastoral reasons".

### **The war in Ukraine**

The current war in the heart of Europe is prompting many countries in the world to come together to act and speak with one voice: "In these days we are living in a situation that leads us toward prayer, toward our own vocation of persons that believe, love and hope. The Church 3.0 shall be, first of all, a Church that prays, and, at the same time, fully engaged in service". This entails a "new start toward the interior and the bottom, toward a bruised Church that is not ashamed of her weakness and wounds; indeed, these move her to be dependent upon the Triune God; a fresh start, therefore, toward a humble Church that shows that she lives thanks to her wounds and thus overcomes the nimbus of weakness". The Risen Christ, too, appeared to his disciples with his wounds.

### **Prayer as "a vital colloquium with God"**

In a rapidly changing world with its fundamental questions regarding faith, the clue is prayer, living a "vital colloquium with God", and this needs to be done by each person. "The personal and communitarian experience of prayer is very important. The thing is that in prayer there is an existential "transformation" of the Word of God, which then leads to action at the service of life".

“‘Church 1.0’ was born during the first Pentecost; the Reform was, so to speak, an ‘update’ that brought about ‘Church 2.0’. Nicole Grochowina stated: “‘Church 3.0’ is once again being called to ‘bring and spread God’s love throughout the world, and we do this with all our heart, soul and all our energies”. Her keynote speech was imbued with hope; it was based on the inputs offered by the preparatory group, especially the young people who shared their experiences and their vision of Christian life in a post-Church society. The audience was enthused and expressed its appreciation and gratitude with applause.

The participants contributed with their questions, experiences and reflections during the group meetings and workshops. The atmosphere was permeated with joy, openness and mutual respect. The conference was concluded with a liturgical celebration and a prayer for peace in Ukraine.

### **Allowing the charisms to bear fruit**

The invitation for the meeting was issued by the Swiss coordinating group “Journeying together”. This group is linked to the “local groups of *Together*”, which are linked to the European ecumenical network ‘*Together for Europe*’. The latter embraces more than 300 Christian Communities and Movements of diverse Churches. Nicole Grochowina is a member of its Steering Committee on a European level.

“*Together for Europe*” wants to deal with the important challenges that the Continent is facing by allowing the charisms of the Movements and Communities to bear fruit for the good of humanity. It organizes a gamut of activities aimed at reconciliation and peace, for the safeguarding of life and the environment, for a commitment for a just economy and a sharing in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, for the wellbeing of families and cities and for an inclusive fraternity in Europe.

Swiss coordinating group: [www.miteinander-wie-sonst](http://www.miteinander-wie-sonst)  
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