

## ACADEMY OF GLOBAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP 2024 (for our website)

From the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2024 was held the first edition of the yearly Academy of Global Church Leadership. The event was hosted by St. John the Baptist Major Seminary of Munich under the theme: **Church Financing**.

The lectures, discussions, workshops and panel discussion were held by experts from Europe, Africa and America. With the aim of being international in character and contents, English was the language of exchanges. There were 57 participants, among which 23 in physical presence and 34 online. The participants were from 04 continents (Africa, America, Asia and Europe) and from 13 different countries.

During the three-days seminar were held 8 presentations by both researchers and practitioners on various aspects of the Financing of the Church. Were, equally, organized two workshops and an optional coming-together in the evening of the second day. A panel discussion of keynote speakers closed the reflections on the third day. There was, also, the possibility of attending holy Mass with the seminary community and the possibility of participating at meals upon prior registration.

### **The Financing of the Church**

***It is certainly true that material goods and their management cannot be the main concern of the Church [...] but that does not mean that they should be ignored or neglected.***

These words of the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, to the participants at the international symposium on "The administration of the ecclesiastical goods of the institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life" in 2014, shed light on the importance of the question of finances in the life of the Church, as it is the case for any physical or juridical person.

In effect, having known and enjoyed various forms of financing throughout its bimillenary existence, in this first quarter of the 21.<sup>st</sup> Cent., due to profound changes in the various socio-cultural contexts, the particular Churches, groupings of particular Churches and the Church at the universal level, do face the urgent question of rethinking their financing. The question is made more urgent by the reality of the ongoing secularization in all societies.

With this underlying intention were held 08 presentations and led 02 workshops:

- **Mrs. Alexandra Fischer (Missio Munchen)** on ***Funding Church Life: Challenges and new Ways***, advocated Fundraising as an efficient alternative in Church Financing. Also, the Church would gain in letting know all the good it does, all the help it provides to the needy. That would convince people in sustaining ever-more its activities.
- **Prof. Matthew Manion (University of Villanova, USA)** on ***Church Funding in the United States: Lessons from the Covid-19 Pandemic*** analysing the statistics of the finances of various Churches before, during and after the pandemic came *inter alia* to a threefold conclusion: Heterogenous groups produce better quality decisions, pastoral decisions should include financial people and financial decisions should include pastoral people.

- **Prof. Martin Rehak (LMU)** on *Canonical Foundations of Church Financing and the Plurality of Financing Systems. An Overview*, spoke *inter alia* of the principles and main features of the acquisition of ecclesiastical goods; the diversity of financing systems and their criteria of evaluation.
- **Prof. Klaus Unterburger (LMU)** on *Exploring Church History to unlock new avenues for Church Financing* presented various financing systems that the Church has known throughout its history. As such, in the present particular historical context, adapted methods are to be sought.
- **Mr. Markus Reif (Finance Director of the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising)** on *The German Church Tax System and its Possible Refreshment* held that though nobody likes paying taxes, for the most part, there is no fundamental criticism of the Church tax system among Church members. However, there are requirements for the acceptance of Church financing through taxes, among which: transparency and the pastoral challenge of a greater contact with the tax payers in their everyday life.
- **Jun.-Prof. Jean Olivier Nke Ongono (LMU)** on *Securing the Just Remuneration for the Clergy* said that the sustenance of clerics defined by the supreme legislator is to be organized concretely by the particular Churches and the groupings of particular Churches.
- **Mr. Ambroise Laurent (Deputy General Secretary of the French Bishops' Conference)** on the *Financing of the Catholic Church in France* underlined that it is exclusively funded by the faithful. The decline in the number of donors and in Church attendance constitute great challenges for the Church of France.
- **Prof. Andreas Wollbold (LMU)** on *Main Perspectives of Church Financing Systems in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* held that money is more than something material, it is an expression of inner attitudes. He, thus, presented financial contribution to the communion, active participation and spiritual involvement as the three criteria for contemporary Church Financing.
- **Mrs. Elena Bark (Missio Munchen)** led a workshop on *Der Club der guten Hoffnung: Unternehmenskooperationen bei Missio München. Herkunft – Entwicklung – Ausblick*. Founded in 2008, it aims at achieving visible and sustainable impact on the world from Bavaria. It advocates for new approaches in public development cooperation, with 'blended finance' and 'social impact investment' since global challenges require strong networks and partnerships.
- **Prof. Andreas Wollbold (LMU)** led a workshop on *Leaving the Church. Phenomenon, Causes and Pastoral Consequences*. Though people leaving the Church are not representative of Church members, the church needs a clear and strong faith profile so that it does not become a needs-oriented service.

In line with the maxims *Ecclesia semper reformanda est* and *Ius semper reformandum est* the Global Church Leadership in carrying out such reflections, in organizing events like its yearly Academy, aims at offering not only ground for further brainstorming, but also plausible efficacious tools for ecclesiastical legislators, local and universal. In order to be systematic and constant in this endeavor, shall be made public through appropriate publication, in the *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift*, the presentations and workshops held at the Academy. They could serve as inspiration for further research or their substantial proposals could be used at various levels for the implementation of new methods for the good of the Church and of society at large.