

## Critique as a sign love

**Maria Mesrian:** I would like to welcome everyone who is listening to us today. Young, female, Catholic – This is a rather rare species in these times. This is why I am all the more pleased to welcome Judith, Joana and Daniela here with us. You are inspiring women. I have read all your texts and it is really amazing and great what you have already been able to do in your young lives. “Critique as a sign love” is this somewhat flowery title reveals the dilemma many of us face. As Catholic women, we cannot not criticize the Catholic Church. We have to criticize her because equality is an alien word to the church. If we demand it they reply we only want power, and power does of course not exist in the Catholic Church. “Only service” – as Christiane Florin so smugly remarks. We are women of the 21st Century, we live self-determined lives and we do not want to leave the standards of equality and our basic rights at the church door. They are obvious for us and they should be so in the church. And love, well love is an interesting term. Do I love the church? Well definitely my love goes first and foremost to the Christian message. The church is then the space in which it can unfold. Critique as long as it is constructive is a sign of appreciation. We wouldn't take the trouble to criticize the Church if we hadn't had faith in it. In many ways, it falls so far short of what it could be. Because in the Christian message the dignity of every human being is central. The Church could be a pioneer, avantgarde, in the enforcement of human rights and yet the Vatican has not [even] signed the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights until today. So the gap between potential and reality is deep, and we are going to shed a light on this today. We also speak today about the central question, why it is so difficult for the church to face criticisms. For a long time, I have been accompanied by a phrase of Michael Seewald, a dogmatic theologian from Münster, who says, “because the church lacks a culture of self-criticism with its own fallibility, defining grievances is only possible at the price of conflict.” In short, criticism of grievances in the Catholic Church generates conflict. It is very difficult to generate a constructive debate. That is what we're going to discuss today. The question is also, has the church always been like this? And how can we establish a culture of dispute in the church? What role can strong female voices play? So these are the questions that we would like to ask ourselves today. If during the interviews, we find questions in the chat, we are happy to answer them at the end. So, let's start with the motivation. Daniela you are part of the Synodal Path. You're committed, you're young. Share with us, what people's reaction is when you say you are Catholic.

**Daniela Ordowski:** Very differently. But definitely quite often people ask me how it's possible that I am active in the Catholic Church as a woman. I am very active and I am very openly feminist. And people often ask me how I deal with the fact that the church discriminates against women in the structures and I am totally happy to be socialized in a youth association. I come from the Catholic rural youth Movement and I am also active in BDJ [Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend, an umbrella of Catholic youth organizations in Germany], and I have different experience of church also: where it's natural that young people are active. But that's not always easy and often you have to justify why as a young woman or in general as a women we are part of the Catholic Church and we are active there.

**Maria:** And why do you do it? You are also part of the Synodal Path and that means a lot of work. What is your motivation and why do you do all this?

**Daniela:** I have a lot of hope for the Church. I think, I know too many people within the Church, who do a lot of good things and and see the Church as a very vibrant and courageous entity. That is why I don't want to give up hope. And I would also like to make sure that those who understand church as a very exclusive system, that they don't take over. I have the feeling that there is still hope and I want to fight for it.

**Maria:** Judith, you are at home in university theology. You are a catholic theologian. What is your motivation? What are reactions of the researchers from other fields? Your work is interdisciplinary. How do they react to the fact that you are Catholic?

**Judith Klaiber:** That is a great question. Especially the interdisciplinary level shows, as Daniela already said, a great pressure to justify. Academic theology, as formatted in Germany and Austria, is highly dependent in tenure structures on what Roman authorities say to individuals who want to move forward in their careers for academic theology. So when it comes to the freedom of science, we see a certain pressure or condition. When you work interdisciplinary with sociologists, lawyers, political scientists and even today with IT specialists, then comes the question: Should theology, a confessional perspective, be part of university world at all? And I would always say, yes it does. We need to answer the questions on a credibility and liability in the way we teach theology and at the same we also need to question and challenge how people access a career. To break it down into detail, only two weeks ago, a research was published on how highly female theologians are recognized. Whether they are recognized, allowed to participate in conferences and meetings. And the individual sub-disciplines in theology

sometimes do without female theologians. And this is a scandal, true scandal, this must not be. So, if as a young female theologian, you are to move up in the career path, sometimes the only perspective is what you say on the topic of priesthood and abortion. This is the very one thing that women theologians are severely tested on. So, if she says nothing about it, she's no danger, she can move on into her career path. But if she does then you know the alarm is on. This is independent of your publications, reputations or if you do well with students, if students respond positively to your lectures. These are no relevant criteria. The only criteria that theologians have to benchmark themselves, to better themselves is the question on abortion and priesthood. And this is a scandal.

**Maria:** And these questions are put to male theologians?

**Judith:** I don't think so.

**Maria:** Johanna, you have your own story with the Catholic Church. Maybe you can share that with us, because I think it's very interesting for the listeners. Maybe you just tell yourself, also about your absence. Why are you still committed and Catholic?

**Johanna Beck:** Yes, actually I have to justify myself regularly, as people ask me always: "how can you as a victim of sexual violence in the church, how can it be that you are part of the church and even study theology?" And this has to do with my story. First 16 years of my history, I lived in the inner circle of Christian fundamental organization, because a leading role my mother had in it. And what may be interesting for this context: women and girls have been told and imprinted with a very strict image of woman. The ideal model was Mary and the idea behind it was that we should be servant, we should be modest, pure and should honor the priest and succumb to them. Especially the priests, who were not ordinary people, but quasi demigods. Then followed the men, and then at the end, the women. And in this very hierarchical system, I experienced spiritual as well as sexual violence. And then I freed myself with a major seizure at the age of 16 and 17, took a break from the church. I didn't go to church for 10 years. Meanwhile I know that there is a technical term for it, the "avoidance strategy". It was all totally contaminated for me by everything I experienced there. And I had the feeling there is no place for me there anymore. I don't belong there. Then I studied and then I had children. And then the question came up: "Do we want to have our children baptized? What do we want to pass on to our children?" And at this point, it tackled again the topic of Christianity, Catholic Church, theological questions. And I have discovered a religion that I was not allowed to know before.

So that there is a God who wants a relationship, a God of freedom, that there is a Magnificat where Mary is revolutionary, where she says "He overthrows the mighty from their thrones and exalts the lowly." And it's all about equal footing, about justice and I was very fascinated. And so I started to study theology and in parallel I discovered a great parish, with a courageous priest and very feminist, active women and there I found my place again. And I understood there was still a place for me in the church. But at the same time, something strange happened: I often had panic attacks when I talked to priests and I had nightmares and I couldn't understand what was going on. And then after the MHG-Studie was published [a groundbreaking research on abuse of minors in the German Church, published in 2018] and I understood everything that I tried to avoid until that point came up again. That's when I started to work it up and also filed a complaint against a priest from my childhood and youth. And obviously I asked myself: can I still be part of the Catholic Church and then continue to study theology? And then up to date I can say, yes and I hope this would be the case also in the future. Because there is a message, a message that strengthens me as a woman also. And there are wonderful women in the bible and also in the history of the church and also in today's age that encourage me. At the same time, for me, faith is actually a source of resilience. Paradoxically, faith actually carried me through this crisis and still carries me today. I thought to myself, I'm staying, but I'm fighting! And I fight to make sure that things change and that the abuse favoring strategies will change. I fight to make sure I can keep my place in this Church. I don't want to give up that space.

**Maria:** So, you stayed because you fight?

**Johanna:** Yes. Also because I have the hope that things will change and I can stay as long as I have this hope.

**Maria:** Hope is something that I have heard again and again here. Daniela the title "Critique as a sign of love" is your invention. How did you come up with that?

**Daniel:** Well, I think many of us know that feeling whenever you criticize the church especially the power structures, people tell us that we are not Catholic. You know, I cannot count anymore how many times people told me, I am not Catholic. I was always glad about the support of the catholic movement where it was clearly said: we are Catholic. Perhaps precisely because we have the courage to criticize. Because that is the way we understand the Christian faith. Jesus was a revolutionist. And I think this courage in the Church just somehow faded away. The courage to move things, to change things. And in the context of the youth synod, when I took

part in preparation for the synod in Rome, I met so many people from the international context who are not allowed to express their criticism due to an even more strict power systems in their countries and their continent don't even have the possibility to express their criticism. It is difficult for us but we are allowed to speak up. I don't have to be concerned that I will be expelled from the church due to the things I say. And I think that the church and the structures in the church have to understand that our criticism is not destructive. We want to be constructive; we want to be of positive force. It will be so much easier. It would have been so much easier for me personally also, if I had just left. But I don't leave because I want to fight for this Church. That's why this title: "Criticism as a sign of love". I think it is in most cases and especially with us! That we exercise this criticism because we want to build on this church and make it fit for the future.

**Maria:** But why is dispute in this church so difficult? Why don't we have a [dispute] culture? There is this book from [Hartmut] Leppin, „Die frühen Christen“ [“The early Christians”], where he writes that Christianity was only successful because it has established a culture of dispute. What do you think? Why is it so difficult? This is an open question to everybody.

**Daniela:** I think there are no mechanisms. There is no feedback culture. The church doesn't want people to give feedback on different issues. I think that people in the structures of the church, they are not held accountable. They don't have to explain what they do. As I said I come from a youth movement, we elect people, we vote for people. And if they want to be elected, they have to prove that they have passion and that they have the expertise. Then they are held accountable with regard to the members on what they do in our association. And I think this is a culture that may do good to the Church But for now there are no mechanisms. Even if we express our criticisms – nothing happens.

**Maria:** Judith?

**B3:** As Daniela said, there is the question of mechanisms. We are young women socialized in Austria or Germany and we know the democratic structures. We know the recognition that our opinion is heard and that we can make a difference with our opinion. That we can put a cross [on a voting card]. The Roman Catholic Church, as it is constituted at the moment, does not know all this! There is something I would add to that, there is no forum or corrective for the people who are in switching functions and positions in the Roman Catholic Church, where they have to let themselves be questioned. There's nobody having a say on that. And this right from the beginning of their socialization. And here I am talking about the ranks of consecrated men

who come to seminaries at 17, 18, 19 and stay among themselves. I don't want to say they are a homogeneous group, but they no longer experience what Daniela has already mentioned - this confrontation, the questioning, the confrontation with other realities, and this creates a milieu of isolation, of almost a snail shell, a very tight community where no one can get out. And when someone from the outside enters and raises their voice there, and the person is not even male or consecrated, but also carries other characteristics, such as young women, then this implodes and these people challenged in their own personality and this creates fear.

**Maria:** What about power in that context?

**Judith:** When it comes to my research in leadership, power is an important aspect. I need power in order to shape structures, in order to provide opportunities, in order to support and promote people. Power itself is not negatively connoted, it's just an option, a possibility in order to create a framework. Power always has to go along with responsibility. Power is a relational quantity. And I have to have an ethical and moral framework for how I deal with my power. Here again our socialization: Germany, Austria, we have not directly experienced how power was abused - in our history. But the generations before us did. There we experienced, and painfully experienced, what it means to abuse power. Here I think a certain sensitivity is needed when we talk about power, even in a Roman Catholic Church as it is constituted. And this clearly has to do with the personalities who are here at their switch functions; which personalities are these, do they possibly have a social desire for dominance, do they have a desire to exercise power in a negative sense? This is a question that I put to all those who choose which person can enter into the succession in caput Christi.

**Maria:** You also talk about a tight perspective that we see here. Johanna, the MHG study, which has already been mentioned, also addressed these power structures, which is an issue on the Synodal Path in Germany. But they are ultimately a problem of the whole church. How can you explain that even ten years after this MHG study - we are experiencing it firsthand in Cologne! - criticism is dealt with in such a destructive way?

**Johanna:** I can't understand it, but will try to clarify it, because really: it continues to stun me! I think the basic problem is, and it is also addressed in the MHG study, the clericalism, the male alliance in the church, which has led to the fact that there is an extreme asymmetry of power - that is, that there is a very clear top and a very clear bottom! And not who stands on top is abused. Those who are at the bottom are abused! And these are almost all, including women

and children and others. There is a very dangerous power imbalance and this power imbalance and this male alliance has not only led to the fact that abuse could happen, but that it is now rolled up and uncovered again and again. This has led to cover-ups and this has led to the fact that until today - and this is echoed again and again in all studies that have followed the MHG study! - The protection of perpetrators and institutions is placed above the protection of victims, and unfortunately this is still happening today. I think when you weigh and throw theological arguments back and forth, power, power control, power protection - when it comes to women's issues: that's all important and good! And there may be people or clergy who then shoot back with theologically charged arguments. But I think that if there is a study that clearly shows that this unchecked and this male power has led to children or adult men and women being abused, then these structures cannot be maintained in this way. As I said, it is really a mystery to me why in the upper levels of the church this shot has apparently not yet been fully heard. It really is a mystery to me! And I would like to turn very briefly to the women. The male church representatives who oppose this emergence of female empowerment in the church are afraid of losing power. At the core, it's about power! As far as the women's issue is concerned and as far as the abuse issue is concerned. Very briefly, one more point about abuse....

**Maria:** I have to interrupt this very briefly. For all non-Germans: The MHG study was conducted in Germany and deals intensively with the abuse of children and young people in the Catholic Church. Johanna, we have to take a very short break there. This is very exciting, but the simultaneous interpreters now need a break of two to three minutes. We will now play music so that they can recover briefly. Then we will start again. Don't forget what you wanted to say!

So, we are back again! Thanks already for the first part. We are now going into the second half, in the topic: How important is a culture of disagreement in the Catholic Church and how can we establish it? If we now go to the theological level and ask questions about the priesthood for women, I like to quote Claudia Lücking Michel, who once said: Sometimes the theological arguments against the ordination of women to the priesthood would violate the professional honor of a theologian if she were to oppose it. In the end, I also experience myself that we don't even have to have this discussion anymore. It is about equality and the exciting question now is: We have seen that power plays a big role for the female voices in this discourse. But I'm also seeing more and more men who see it that way, too. Who are on our side. It's about fear in this system. And the exciting question that comes up and I would love to hear you on this: From all the power you bring, from your know-how, which really jumps out of every sentence, how can we go on without getting tired? And finally - Judith used the term "thinking in the future tense" in

the preliminary discussion - which church do we want to become? What should be written in the history books about us, about this now very powerful feminist movement in the Catholic Church? I don't like to talk about visions, but rather about "realities" that we are already creating for ourselves. What do you think: what should be there and how do we achieve it? Daniela, I can see you are on the runway.

**Daniela:** Yes, I'm happy to start. I think, first and foremost, I want us to be in the history books at all. I think that's a big problem overall! There have always been women in the church and I'm sure there have always been very loud and strong women in the church. We just don't know about them because, well, they didn't write the texts that we read. And I think that's the first important point for me. We need to be mentioned at all. I hope, of course, that something will change. But I think the first thing that has to be in the books is that we rebelled against the structures of the church. I want to be on the right side of history that I just did not accept what Johanna pointed out earlier. It is incomprehensible that the structures do not change despite the results of the MHG study. And I don't want to take it on myself that I have continued to be Catholic and supposedly accepted that, because I have not. We should be mentioned as strong voices against those structures. I think that's the first important point for me.

**Maria:** Johanna?

**Johanna:** I'd like to pick up where we left off, because I think that's also a very important point! It's about visibility and audibility. I would like to bring in two other levels in terms of time. I want the women in the New Testament, Mary Magdalene, Junia – there were so many strong women! – that they be heard again, that they be made visible again. Because in the history of the church there are some great and groundbreaking female teachers of the church; that they are read more, that they are made more present. There are great women in our present time who should also gain much more visibility. I mean, this making invisible is the reason why we are sitting here. Because in "Fratelli Tutti" we ourselves have been made invisible in the title, we women. And I want us to be more visible and audible in the future, and also to be heard. My vision now would be, so to speak: I would like to read in the history book that in a few years the Pope officially proclaims the complete equality – not only equality, but equal rights – of women. That the Church reforms its abusive and discriminatory structures and clears and allows the original great message to shine again. I want the church to take this opportunity to bring this divide back together and for the church to become a credible global player for women's rights; because the



pope is so fond of talking about women's rights. But if you look at the church, women's rights are really, almost trampled on here!

**Maria:** But Johanna, may I catch on for a moment? You say that you wish the Pope would impose this. Even if he expresses good thoughts in his writings, there is a hard core that is hardly interested in what we women in Europe, in the world, think about it. We are connected with many women, also in Africa, in India. How is it possible to achieve a different visibility and a different audibility of these voices? Can we rely on the Pope at all?

**Johanna:** Nah, it really has to be as broad as possible. There has to be a radical, really also broad-based change. A cultural change. I believe that if we start to radiate, that we infect others, that we network and exchange internationally and realize that we are not alone with our struggle or with what hurts us, but also what keeps us in the church. That much more networking is taking place and that it is percolating from the core to the top - this message and also this cultural change. And I would like to add one more point: My vision is not only that everyone is equal here in the Church, but I dream that the Pope – now we're back to the Pope, but he's the boss here! – and apologize for the centuries of discrimination against women in the church. I would like to see that happen.

**Maria:** Wow, let's work on that. Let's write a letter. Judith?

**Judith:** Yes, a dear friend, Maria Herrmann, said: "It is a denial of reality what is happening with the people who are in these structures". I experienced it then when I talked to an archbishop about all the femicides that happened, in 2018: We have over 160 women who have been murdered by their men, husbands, boyfriends. And then the headline in the media and in the headlines is "relationship drama". This is an absurd trivialisation of what is happening. It is femicide and the perpetrators are men. That is one thing. Consecrated men in their leadership positions in the Catholic Church do not have that reality. And I ask myself where the Christian message with its critique of domination, its critique of ideology and its critique of power has actually got to, if a perception and awareness cannot even be created for this. The second topic is the movement of intersectional feminism, i.e. the various forms of discrimination. Women are not only bearers of one gender characteristic, to stay, pardon me, in this polarity of man and woman, but that is simply the short state of affairs now, before we can discuss gender issues in general even further. But intersectional feminism means that all those who bear different marks of discrimination are discriminated against because of their religion, because of the colour of

their skin, because of the nationality in which they were born, etc. And here the Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church as a world-wide concern, which it ultimately is, must be diversity-sensitive and above all massively criticize exploitative structures that they also have within their church. And that is the quintessence of what we are actually always discriminating about - the church always easily recognizes stories of exploitation and discrimination on the outside. But what happens inside is a perversion of what we call the Christian message.

**Maria:** There is an extreme gap between the inside and the outside. And you said, Johanna, you are sitting here because you spoke out in "die Zeit" about "Fratelli Tutti", about this encyclical of the Pope, in which societies are urged to respect the rights of women. And as a woman, you have the impression: "And in our own house there is silence about it". Does that mean we have to speak out more loudly, with more self-confidence? Well, we ourselves stand on the shoulders of giants who came before us. But I think we have reached a point in the meantime - well, you are still a generation younger: how long can we manage the balancing act between these realities that are drifting apart? How much longer can we stand it? And what is a counter-strategy? What can the struggle or infiltration look like? Daniela?

**Daniela:** So I think it's incredibly difficult. What has always helped me with the balancing act is to form gangs of women; in other words, to have people around you. It doesn't have to be only women, but for the most part it was women who gave me courage. And also in the international context! I think that one of the points that is always made to us is: "This is a German phenomenon. There are only women in Germany or at most in Europe who might have an interest in not being discriminated against"; which I find very presumptuous anyway. And this is being played on us again and again. But it is a lie! That's also a kind of power, to say the same things over and over again until people think it's the truth. But it's just not true. And I have experienced it as very liberating to get to know so many strong women in the last few years, even in an international context, who really give their best! And I believe that I also take this responsibility with me to a certain extent on the synodal path and overall in my church-political commitment: to also represent the people who do not yet have the possibility at all to raise their voice within the church structures without strong personal consequences. And I believe that this international networking is incredibly important. To encourage each other once again, and I think that is one of the strongest strategies - to really show quite clearly: We are not just a few! We are incredibly many!

**Maria:** So, networks! Judith?

**Judith:** Exactly, to form the gangs and the internationalisation, and above all to try again to tie in with all those discourses that have always existed in the secular space anyway. I mention again: abortions always exist and always will exist! The question is, under what hygienic conditions? And this is a point where we could walk alongside international and intersectional feminists and campaigners; if we take it seriously and trust people in their own freedom decision and with their own conscience to be able to form judgements that they can stand up for. And to enable a great educational factor, a prevention and a great empowerment here. To say: "Women, you can make decisions and these decisions are fine for you"! To give them courage and be by their side when they experience domestic violence, when they experience sexualised violence, when they experience their human rights being trampled on, when exploitative structures continue to exist. When care work is simply still mapped onto women's shoulders. When women are the ones who keep system-relevant professions and the shop running, but are not compensated monetarily accordingly. When women still have to run after being represented on supervisory boards, to bring in the other perspectives - then I actually wish from a Roman Catholic Church that it would finally recognise this sense of injustice in 2021 and tackle it! And to point it out: We are all God's creatures, for God's sake! I cannot say it any other way. We are all beloved creatures of God - no matter in which physical form we exist. So this injustice, we really need to overcome that.

**Maria:** We have a great capital, which is ultimately the message, the Gospel with justice at its core. Perhaps one way to achieve this, if it cannot be represented by the official church for fear of losing power, is to open up this discourse on a large, broad, international level. I think we have taken a very, very important step towards this today. Johanna, I see that you want to say something more.

**Johanna:** No, I just wanted to add something, but I didn't want to interrupt you.

**Maria:** That's fine. We also want to take a couple of questions from the chat. But please add.

**Johanna:** Just very briefly on the question: We women have been in a powerless relationship in the church for centuries. And I believe that the best thing that helps against this, and this also applies to the abuse issue, is a reversal of powerlessness and self-empowerment. We have to make ourselves powerful, so to speak, through bonds and international networking. By being loud. We have to empower ourselves and at the same time make it clear to the church - and I hope that this message will get through at some point: there is this wonderful quote by Phyllis

Zagano "the schism to worry about is the one where all the women leave the church". Just to make it clear: "When we are gone, the last one turns off the lights in the church". There is so much charisma and so much potential. The church can't really afford not to draw on it at the moment. And to really let it reach the top.

**Maria:** But it does! And she has been doing it for 2,000 years! That it does without. And the big question is with what self-confidence we can appear. Ultimately, perhaps, to leave these hierarchical structures behind ourselves. How important is the view from the outside? Judith.

**Judith:** On different levels. We talked about emotions, about love. And I ask myself whether the Church, as it is formatted at the moment, deserves my love at all. Whatever emotion I want to add: I am infinitely angry! And this power and energy that is necessary for this anger actually robs the joy of faith at the same time. Suppose we find 500 women who seal their resignation immediately - the gentlemen won't itch. They simply won't itch. They don't give a damn. I actually find this experience and this indifference very difficult to bear. What helps me to endure it is what Daniela has already mentioned with the women's groups. And I quote Johanna Dohnal again, an Austrian women's politician who was really on fire: "To tread softly for tactical reasons has still proved to be a mistake". So to become loud and to really use and channel the anger that is also so often denied to us women and to show it: We are there and we are on fire. This is the point of no return.

**Johanna:** May I say something very briefly about this? I think it's totally right, I can only support it. And I always think to myself when I read the story of the resurrection in the Gospel, where the women come and testify that Jesus has risen - and the men dismiss it as gossip, at least at the beginning: if these men had not believed these women at some point, then perhaps there would be no Christianity and no churches today. And if the men don't want to believe us today, perhaps there will be no church at some point; if they don't want to listen to us.

**Maria:** Or something absolutely new emerges. So I think the idea of being on fire is very, very good. And I think that this is also the way! In the form of empowerment, that we really do not have to put up with these restrictions with self-confidence. Daniel Bogner calls it pastoral disobedience and that goes hand in hand with it. I think there is a little trace of that. But now I'm leaving my role as moderator, because I'm also always very concerned about this topic. Chantal, what's the situation? Do we have any questions in the chat?

**Chantal Götz:** Yes, exactly, there are questions in the chat. The one thing that keeps coming up is this networking. One question is: "Can women's networks be formed between grandmothers, mothers, generations of daughters, and if so, how? Do you have any suggestions for solutions?"

**Maria:** Daniela?

**Daniela:** I believe that this is already happening in many places. And I think it is incredibly important because it also has a lot to do with history. Of course, sometimes it also makes you incredibly angry to know that there have been so many women before me and they have also said loudly in church that this injustice can no longer be accepted. And so far nothing has helped. But I also think it's encouraging to know that there were people before us who also had their experiences. I think this networking is really important in order to move forward. I also believe that it doesn't do justice to the people who were active before us to always talk about the "young women" who "change everything". It is also about all the people who have prepared this path for us. We must continue to be loud together!

**Johanna:** I also know the most devastating stories of abuse from older women. Such stories must be collected and bundled, across all generations, and brought to the public. I hope that this will have a certain impact. And these voices must also be bundled and connected and brought to the outside world. This also applies to the old, earlier generations.

**Maria:** Judith?

**Judith:** when it comes to younger women and younger people who come after us, we should stop teaching them that we should have understanding for men! For those privileged by patriarchy. And that is not only men, it can also be women. Patriarchy is coming to an end! And we absolutely have to work against always having understanding and patience. These are diversionary strategies and we are being fobbed off with them! It undermines our intellect, it undermines our independence and ultimately it undermines our dignity as human beings. If we still say here, "We have patience, yes, it's so hard for you, of course we understand". Bullshit! That's where the end is. That's just big bullshit.

**Chantal:** An additional question: Do you believe the situation of corona, creates a possibility to accelerate changes?

**Judith:** Corona naturally accelerates a lot on all levels, be it cultural, social or political. It becomes extremely visible what has been going well so far and it becomes visible what is in crisis. It can be the climate that is in crisis. It can be social welfare states that are in crisis and ultimately also our health system and above all those forms of socialisation in which we grew up. Gender roles and stereotypes no longer work! That has come to an end. What I find highly difficult, however, is that the Roman Catholic Church here - especially in its liturgical forms - still falls back on showing the priest celebrating Mass and that's it. Where are the people of God who participate in the Mass? In the liturgy? Where is that depicted? I have no desire to be subjected to having to look at a priest celebrating Mass. And that has been the case in recent months. The main thing is to somehow maintain the liturgical form here while at the same time keeping the church empty; and indeed the church space. And that is what will continue to happen, at least here, I would say in Germany and Austria. There are high secularisation tendencies and the question of the social relevance of the Roman Catholic Church, the tradition, the Christian message is highly questioned.

**Johanna:** I found Corona very ambivalent. I also find precisely this tendency very problematic. Of course, there was a lot of digitalisation in the church, which is actually to be welcomed. But exactly as you say, Judith, what could be seen? The priest celebrating mass. And there were no women, or at most a few, if at all, visible somewhere on the periphery. But at the same time I found it exciting that there were new forms of devotion, some kind of zoom devotions for women. Or we have reawakened the house church at home - I have three small children. I had never dealt with that before. We baked and shared bread and gave each other blessings and that carried us through the time as a family. I then presided over it, as a woman. And it's exciting what's happening right now - it's ambivalent.

**Maria:** Chantal, further questions?

**Chantal:** Yes, a good question, which you answered a bit, also in "die Zeit" last November: How can we make the Pope understand today that we are not only saying that we should participate in the Church, but that we should also be integrated in the decision-making process? So how can we really make him understand that we want to participate in the Church, in the structures, in the decision-making processes? Today! And not only talk about it again?

**Judith:** I totally understand the approach. But here the work of having to convince someone is again put on the shoulders of women and that can't be it. There are enough writings, enough

statements, everything is available. What is lacking is the will to understand. And that is a serious question that I have for the will and the self-image of those who are in the positions. It's all there, and women should not be the ones doing the work again.

**Maria:** Yes, the men brought it on, and I also think that's another very good point, if I may allow myself that: that the bishops must not be taken out of the obligation to do their share. It cannot be that we save the Church! Rather, we do it to make our dignity visible. But it is really a task for everyone; otherwise the Church has no future. We are at the very end. Chantal, are there further questions?

**Chantal:** There are still many questions, but we have to finish now. I would like to thank you young women very much, really! This preparation, these discussions that we had in Zoom already last week and in December, that was already very exciting! There is still so much to discuss and maybe we will do a second round sometime. Maria, thank you very much for the moderation. And I would like to point out that on 13 February we have another Zoom conference, an event, with Philippa Rath, who is a Benedictine nun in Tutzing, about her new book. It will be published on 1 February. And we are allowed to present it. Me together with Maria. It is about the vocation of women as deacons and priests. We're doing that on 13 February, also at 11am. And it would be great if we see you all here again. This is also translated into English and Italian.

**Maria:** From our side, we would like to thank Voices of Faith once again. For all that you make possible that these discussions get going. Chantal, Stephanie, Zuzanna, thank you very much!

**Judith:** And from my side, a very big thank you to those women who have translated our voices into English and Italian. This is a spirit experience. What is happening here is Pentecost! Thank you so much for your talent and your gift to translate simultaneously. Thank you.

**Johanna:** And thank you for everything. It was a pure pleasure. Thank you. Thank you for listening to us.

**Maria:** So enjoy your day everybody. Be blessed and get on fire. Bye-bye

**Judith:** Be protected and set everything on fire!