

Top German Catholic official says church should be more inclusive

by [Jack Jenkins](#) in the [January 27, 2021](#) issue



(RNS Photo / Tobias Steiger)

Bishop Georg Bätzing, president of the German national conference of Catholic prelates, called for a more inclusive church on December 29, suggesting that the Catholic hierarchy could shift its positions on women's ordination and homosexuality.

According to the Catholic News Service, Bätzing, who heads the Diocese of Limburg, near Frankfurt, told a German magazine that while it is important to "honestly state the church's arguments as to why the sacramental ministry can only be given to men," those arguments are becoming less convincing over time.

"There are well-developed arguments in theology in favor of opening up the sacramental ministry to women as well," Bätzing told the German magazine *Herder Korrespondenz*.

He suggested that change could come gradually by ordaining women as deacons in the church, before ordaining them as priests and bishops.

Bätzing also reportedly discussed the church's position on homosexual relationships, which the Catechism of the Catholic Church currently describes as "intrinsically disordered."

It was not immediately clear what changes the bishop would like to see in the church's teaching on the issue, but he called for church blessings of couples who cannot marry in the Catholic Church—which would include same-sex couples and divorced people who remarry without an annulment.

Bätzing, who is known as a reformer, has voiced similar opinions several times this year. He discussed ordaining women in March when he was elected to lead the German bishops' conference, and he signaled support for married priests in June.

He also told the Catholic News Service in May that the church should examine the "signs of the times" and "develop" its teachings—including those dealing with sexual morality. —Religion News Service