

Statement on the refusal of the Nihil-Obstat to elect Prof. Dr. Martin Lintner OSM as Dean of the Philosophical-Theological University of Brixen

As presidents of the International Association for Moral Theology and Social Ethics and of the two theological-ethical working groups, we express our unreserved solidarity to Prof. Dr. Martin Lintner OSM. He is a highly esteemed and globally recognized colleague. His merits as a mediator between scientific discourse, concrete life experiences and social debates, between theology and church teaching, tradition and necessary innovation are beyond question. This also applies explicitly to his contributions to a Catholic ethics of relationships, which start with the experiences of today's people and support a responsible self-care and shaping of relationships.

We note with incomprehension the refusal of the Roman Nihil obstat for the election of Martin Lintner as Dean of the Philosophical-Theological College of Bressanone. We criticize the disciplinary intervention of the Dicastery for Culture and Education as professionally inappropriate and incomprehensible. Martin Lintner's positions reflect a broad consensus within German-speaking moral theology and far beyond. Since the post-synodal letter *Amoris laetitia* (2016), they are increasingly found in magisterial letters as well.

No arguments are given for the decision. The lack of transparency of the procedure leaves no choice but to see in the disciplinary action a curial demonstration of power. In the current situation of the world church, it can only be understood as an attempt at intimidation. The anti-discursive curial approach, which seeks to lead theological research and teaching on the leash of discipline, renders calls for dialogue implausible.

The Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium* on ecclesiastical universities and faculties (2017) formulates in its programmatic introduction the expectation that theological faculties work as "cultural laboratories" (VG 3) and engage in the dialogue of the sciences according to the criteria of "responsible freedom and mutual transparency" (VG 5). Curtailing the institutional self-determination of a teaching and research institution runs diametrically counter to this claim. It contradicts the spirit of the introduction to the Apostolic Constitution as well as the claim of synodality.

The curial procedure disregards the freedom of theological science and once again massively damages the reputation of theology in the concert of the sciences. Beyond the non-transparent, anti-dialogical style, the procedure demonstrates the inner contradiction in the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium*. The curial decision can invoke a norm in the juridical part of the Constitution VG, according to which the dean of an ecclesiastical faculty "are appointed, or at least confirmed" by the Roman authority (VG 18). The denial of freedom of research is inherent in the system.

A theology whose scientific freedom is fundamentally called into doubt and disciplinarily curtailed suffers serious damage. This is especially true with regard to the dialogue with the human and social sciences, without which no consistent theological ethics can be worked out.

Martin Lintner stands for such a dialogical theological ethics, which is committed to understanding human life and to making the Gospel accessible in the present. We stand behind him.

Prof. Dr. Marianne Heimbach-Steins,
Chair of the International Association for Moral Theology and Social Ethics

Prof. Dr. Katharina Klöcker und Prof. Dr. Thomas Weisser, Speaker of the AG Moraltheologie

Prof. Dr. Michael Rosenberger, Speaker of the AG Moraltheologie, Österreich mit Südtirol

Prof. Dr. Michelle Becka und Prof. Dr. Christian Spieß, Speaker of the AG Christian Social Ethics