Announcing three Scholarships for doctoral candidates (1,100 euro/month) on the theme of "Worship and Ethics"

The Department of Liturgy wishes to allocate three scholarships for doctoral candidates in its research project “worship and ethics” located at the University of Würzburg. The scholarships are valid for up to three years.

Conditions:
Applicants must be able to interest in liturgical-theological matters and possess a degree which entitles them to work on a doctoral dissertation (Th.D./S.T.D.) at the Catholic-Theological Faculty of the University of Würzburg. Being doctoral candidates, the scholarship holders will engage in specific aspects of the subject area "worship and ethics" within their doctoral research projects. Besides the usual documents (see below), candidates are to submit a project outline which demonstrates an affinity with the subject area and will form part of the selection procedure. A more detailed project description is attached.

About the subject:
Worship and ethics are interdependent. The ongoing debate about the Freiburg speech of Pope Benedict XVI on the occasion of his visit to Germany in September 2011 and his use of the keyword "unworldliness" makes clear this context: Should Christians retreat back into their places of worship or is it a question of the Christian faith influencing the world? How does the church's liturgy have an impact upon ethical action? And vice versa: How do diaconical commitment and ethical convictions effect the celebration of the Divine Office? – This doctoral study course wishes to reflect on specific aspects of the relationship between liturgy and ethics, employing basic theological research and reflecting on its praxis.

Specialist supervision and infrastructure:
The scholarship holders will work under the guidance of project manager Prof. Dr. Martin Stuflesser and will be connected to the Department of Liturgy and the Catholic-Theological Faculty.

Formalities:
Application deadline: June 1st, 2012
Start of the scholarship: August 1st, 2012 or by arrangement
Scholarship period: a maximum of three years; the award will be made initially for one year with an annual extension
Stipend: 1,100 euro/month

Applicants are asked to submit the following:
– Curriculum vitae
– Degree certificate
– Project outline (maximum 5 pages) with bibliography
(More information can be found at: liturgie@uni-wuerzburg.de)

Please submit your application by June 1st, 2012 via e-mail to: liturgie@uni-wuerzburg.de for the attention of Prof. Dr. Martin Stuflesser.
1. Description:

The question regarding the sources of ethical conduct which different social groups see themselves bound to, is of particular importance to a successful social coexistence in Western European societies, which are ever more shaped by multiculturalism. New research shows that religious rituals play a significant role in societal integration and the management of one’s individual life.

The public debate about the presence of Islamic mosques and community houses in several European countries (e.g. the "minaret controversy" in Switzerland) emphasizes that there is considerable uncertainty about Islam, its ritual practices and their ethical-social implications.

This situation also leads to a consideration of the relationship between worship and ethics in the Christian context. While Christian churches may no longer be as important in Western societies, due to modernity and secularization, they still have an important contribution to make to social debates about values. Theology focuses on the fact that Christian ethics are closely connected to the liturgical life of the church.

This relationship between liturgy and ethics is found concretely in the Roman Catholic rite of the ordination to the priesthood. The newly ordained priest receives the chalice and the paten with the words: "Consider what you do, imitate what you carry out and put your life under the mystery of the Cross." Based on statements of the Second Vatican Council, this reality is applicable to all Christians (cf. Constitution on the Liturgy "Sacrosanctum Concilium" [=SC] 5, 10) Therefore, full, active and conscious participation in the celebration of the liturgy corresponds to an active and conscious life as a Christian in the world (cf. SC 9, 10). If, Christians pray for people in need during the petitions of their worship, then this praying should be followed by concrete worship to the community – whether in neighborly help or by means of political and social commitment.

The ongoing debate about the Freiburg speech of Pope Benedict XVI on the occasion of his visit to Germany in September 2011 and his use of the keyword "unworldliness" makes clear this context: Should Christians retreat back into their places of worship or is it a question of the Christian faith influencing the world?

A prominent example of Christian commitment is Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She drew motivation for her work in the city's slums from a faith celebrated daily. The Catholic Church venerates her as being blessed and presents her as a role model to Christians. Hidden from the eyes of the public, there are a great number of Christians who not only live their faith behind closed doors, but who have a mission to the world through the celebration of the Divine Office.

Until now, the theoretical and empirical examination of the connection between worship and ethical conduct has not progressed beyond the incipient stage – at least in the German-speaking world. The starting point for this project is the possible contribution of Liturgical Science to the intersections of social justice and liturgy as principles of the Church. It will occur in a dialogue with other disciplines and sciences, and has to be open to intercultural and interreligious perspectives from the outset. The project wishes to bring Liturgical Science into conversation with representatives of other theological disciplines and beyond to excavate the interdependence between worship and religious rituals, and ethics. Dialogue partners are moral theology, Christian social ethics and the Biblical sciences, but also Jewish studies, Islamic studies, psychology and the social sciences. The planned project, wishes to link the scientific exploration of this subject area, with theoretical knowledge and religious practice.
2. The scholarship program:

Three young scholars will be given the opportunity of assisting in the project and its different components (scientific and organizational), over the course of their doctoral studies and the writing of their doctoral theses at the University of Würzburg.

Specialist studies on particular aspects of this interdependent relationship between liturgy and ethics have yet to appear. The challenges from inter-religious dialogue and a multicultural society still await study. There have been some publications dealing with related issues in the field of Liturgy. Historical and practical aspects of the Liturgy have been examined in particular.

From a theological point of view, the fact that the majority of liturgical texts (studies) are of euchological nature – they are about prayers – has to be considered in potential studies in the doctoral research course, which examines the ethical dimension of worship. Being the primary addressee of these prayers, God is requested to do something. Therefore, the respective "effect" of the texts is, according to theological understanding, in the area of God's action. Receiving the prayer texts, the liturgical assembly is also to be regarded as the addressee. So the text function of prayers is to be analyzed with regard to the assembly. In order to examine worship and its ethical relevance, the liturgical material needs to be studied initially for elements that have a guiding effect on the assembly's action and life, from a verbal and non-verbal perspective. For this reason, the formal principles and how these elements function have to be examined. If necessary, a formal criteriology has to be developed on the basis of these observations.


4 An expansion of the classical research methodology of Liturgical Science is inevitable in the context of this project. Liturgical Science usually works historically, systemically-theologically as well as pastorally and practically. It examines the creation and development of liturgical texts, edits them philologically, subjects them to a systematic reflection and develops concrete pastoral/practical liturgical perspectives. More recently, the practical theological localization of the particular subject has become the subject of intense discussions. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the project the use of a number of ancillary sciences will be helpful. For the analysis and comparison of liturgical material, the methods of text pragmatism and semiotics might be used (how do texts "work" when they are being prayed, spoken, recited?). The methods of historical scholarship will be used in exploring the historical development of ritual forms, as well as their social and political connections. Dialogue between Liturgical Science and the human sciences has developed over the last number of years, given that both are interested in symbolic and mediated experiences. In this context, the fields of psychology, sociology and further studies in human origins might be used as possible methodological partners. The use of social scientific or ethnographical methods is also conceivable.

5 Concordances as well as disharmonies between the concrete course (action) of the ritual and its subject might be examined in the course of the research: Where do contradictions exist between the content of the ritual and the style of its course (action)? Given the fundamental postulate of justice in Christianity, the question, arises of what roles social hierarchies play in the Christian life e.g. Are there performative contradictions on a regular basis? Which influence do these contradictions have on the participants in the ritual? How the historical processes of liturgical inculturation may have ethical implications? What does it mean when a religion with its ritual courses (actions) develops in new cultural conditions – e.g. the spreading of Christianity in South America or the formation of Islamic communities in 21st century Europe? From a sociological and political perspective, the relevance of rituals for politics and public life need to be reflected upon. Which social functions do religious rituals fulfill? Where, for instance, do they have an integrative effect, where do they lead to segregation? What are the characteristic social norms and moral concepts of religious rituals, how do they communicate and pass them on? In what way are societies or social groups influenced by such rituals?