News

Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising gestures Sept. 13, 2019 during the extended J

Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising gestures Sept. 13, 2019, during the extended Joint Conference of Bishops and Laity to prepare the "synodal way." (CNS photo/Harald Oppitz, KNA)

by Associated Press

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A meeting between Germany's Catholic bishops and lay representatives agreed Friday to call for the church to approve blessings of same-sex unions.

The three-day gathering, which is part of the "Synodal Path" launched in 2019 in response to the sexual abuse crisis that has rocked the church in Germany and many other countries, brings together more than 200 representatives of Catholic life in Germany.

A majority of 176 participants voted in favor of same-sex blessings starting from March 2026. Fourteen participants voted against them, while 12 abstained. Crucially, the necessary two-thirds backing of the 67 German bishops was also reached, the news agency dpa reported.

Many congregations already perform such ceremonies, but these aren't formally approved by the Catholic Church, a position the Vatican restated in 2021.

In an effort to assuage concerns from Rome, German church leaders have insisted the process won't trigger a schism.

However, Pope Francis himself said in a January interview with The Associated Press that the process might become harmfully "ideological."

For the global Catholic Church, the pontiff has called a two-part synod, or assembly, that will bring bishops and laity to Rome in October 2023 and October 2024 discuss the future direction of the church and ways in which it can rejuvenate its mission.

At the same time, German bishops face pressure from frustrated grassroots Catholics in a country where Christians are roughly equally divided between Protestants and Catholics.

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