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143 theologians call for women's ordination, end of mandatory celibacy

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More than 140 German, Austrian, and Swiss Catholic theologians have called for a fundamental reform of the Church of Rome that would end the celibacy of priests, it was reported Friday.

In their petition entitled, "The Church 2011: an indispensable renewal," which is accessible via the Internet site of the German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, these 143 theologians, mostly teachers in German speaking universities, also call for the ordination of women, and for the Church's acceptance of homosexual partners. They also demand participation of the faithful in the nomination of bishops and an end to the "moral rigidity" of the Church.

They justify their position by the "unprecedented crisis" that runs through the Catholic Church in Germany since the explosion, a year ago, of a series of sexual abuse scandals perpetrated by priests. "The tumults that can sustain an open discussion, without taboos, are not necessarily clearly perceived, especially the days before the Pope's visit. But the other solution, the silence of death, can not be acceptable for it reduces the last hopes to nothing," says the memorandum.

Pope Benedict XVI, of German origin, will pay an official visit to Germany in September.

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