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'Rebellious' Austrian priest to embark on multicity U.S. tour

by Maureen Fiedler

NCR Today

Schüller Tipping Point Tour

Fr. Helmut Schüller, a leader of church reform in Austria, is coming to the United States for a 15-city speaking tour from July 16 through Aug. 6.

In March, just as Pope Francis was elected, *The New York Times* featured Schüller as a "rebellious priest" who comes from what "might well be the unruliest country in the Catholic world."

I know from personal experience that the *Wir Sind Kirche* ("We are church") movement began in Austria in the 1990s in the wake of the sex abuse charges against Cardinal Hans Hermann Groër of Vienna. Even after Groër (who never faced civil charges) was replaced by Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Catholics in that country have not ceased to be leaders in reform.

Schüller has been the leader of more than 400 priests and deacons who issued an "Appeal to Disobedience" in 2011, calling for (among other things) admission of women and married people to the Catholic priesthood.

This statement went beyond mere words. The group announced it would actually implement changes often forbidden in Catholic churches, such as allowing laypersons to preach, giving Communion to the divorced and remarried or those of other Christian churches, and giving laypeople a large role in running local parishes.

Moreover, they are outspoken proponents for allowing married men and women into the priesthood and for LGBT rights.

As a result of all this, Schüller was recently stripped of his honorific title "monsignor" by Schönborn.

Schüller will speak in New York City; Boston; Philadelphia; Baltimore; Washington, D.C.; Chicago; Cleveland; Detroit; Cincinnati; Denver; San Diego; Los Angeles, Portland, Ore.; Seattle; and Manhasset, N.Y.

CatholicTippingPoint.org has more information.

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