

We intend to pick up on this in the interior design of the cathedral. Christ is the centre of our lives, our lives as individuals and as a community. For this reason the altar, which depicts Christ, is to stand in the centre of our cathedral. It is from and towards this that we live. We focus on it as our centre. The congregation will therefore gather in concentric circles around the altar. An illuminated cross will be hanging in St. Hedwig's Cathedral from the First Sunday of Lent until the Second Sunday of Easter to make this idea visible in another manner: Christ radiates in the cross as the Light of the World that lights up the dark side of our lives. I cordially invite you to visit the cathedral and contemplate this cross "abundant in light".

This idea of community, of communion in Christ that our cathedral will illustrate in a sensory manner, is also the core concept in the establishment and shaping of our local pastoral areas. The Christians, the parishes, the communities and institutions within each of these areas are intended to carry and supplement each other. Together we aim to reach out to the people in the social community surrounding us to bring to them the message of God's love and discover with them the God who loves us in both our lives and theirs. All the organisational and practical deliberations about structures, finances and buildings must serve this fundamental goal. I would like to thank all those who devote so much courage and creativity to strengthening the sense of togetherness and fulfilling our missionary task in their local pastoral areas.

The desire to strengthen the concept of communion also serves at another level to foster the development of degree courses in Catholic theology at the Humboldt University in Berlin. I very much hope to see an Institute for Catholic Theology established there in the near future at which theological research is conducted and the Catholic faith is addressed and enriched in dialogue with other academic disciplines, religions and ideologies. And I hope that a good training centre for theology students is established there, not least for the teachers of religion who provide such a valuable service to our diocese by passing on the gospel to young people in our society of whom many are no longer aware of this faith. I very much thank you for this commitment under sometimes difficult conditions.

We as the Church in the Archdiocese of Berlin are called to communion with Christ and through Him with all people. As Blessed Bernhard Lichtenberg put it, this concept of loving God and our neighbour is a "strict commandment". It demands all our strength, gifts and charisma. Everything we do is geared towards this goal and needs constantly to be realigned with it. On this note I wish you all a fruitful and purposeful Lent as we proceed towards the goal of Easter.

Berlin, on the First Sunday of Lent in 2018

Dr. Heiner Koch, Archbishop of Berlin

## **LOVED FOR ALL ETERNITY**

### **Pastoral letter on the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Blessed Bernhard Lichtenberg**

**Lent 2018**

**DR HEINER KOCH  
Archbishop of Berlin**

Dear Sisters and Brothers

Seventy-five years ago, on 5 November 1943, Bernhard Lichtenberg, Dean of St. Hedwig's, whose bones are buried in the crypt of our cathedral, died. He was born on 3 December 1875 in Ohlau, a small town southeast of Breslau. After studying theology in Innsbruck and Breslau, he was ordained to the priesthood in Breslau. In 1900 he came to Berlin as a young priest and remained in our city for 43 years until his death, working as a pastor in various parts of the city and at St. Hedwig's.

In 1938 he became the first Dean of the newly founded diocese of Berlin. Lichtenberg already spoke out as a staunch opponent of National Socialism before 1933. He was a friend of the Jews and of persecuted people of every denomination and ideology. After the so-called Night of Broken Glass in 1938 marking a clear manifestation of the policy of Jewish persecution, Lichtenberg prayed publicly day after day during the vesper service in St. Hedwig's Cathedral for the persecuted Jews. He was arrested and sentenced to two years' imprisonment that he served in Tegel prison in Berlin. When Lichtenberg was released, the Gestapo arrested him and took him into 'protective custody'. He then died while being transported to Dachau concentration camp. On 23 June 1996, Pope John Paul II beatified Bernhard Lichtenberg as a martyr.

It is right and important that we Christians in the Archdiocese of Berlin should remember him, his life and his works in this year 2018, 75 years after his death, and call on his intercession for the people with whom we live in Berlin, Brandenburg and Western Pomerania and for whom we are the Church. For our archdiocese, its parishes, its communities, its institutions and for all Christians.

One of the most striking things he said was to "Continue to act even in these unchristian times according to the strict commandment of Jesus Christ: You shall love your neighbour as yourself". Strict commandment: this is not a reference to the paragraph of some law the transgression of which will result in criminal proceedings. And yet we people are indeed strictly, resolutely, directly commanded to love God, each other and ourselves because God stands behind everything in this world and in our lives and bears us in His arms with love, encourages us and never lets us fall, neither in life nor in death.

God's love also carries us when we forget God. Whenever we think and act without love, He does not forget us but wraps us in His love. That is the basis of our hope and our resurrection: God will also not withdraw the love that has borne us since the start of our lives when we die. We remain loved for all eternity!

We receive this love of God anew every time we celebrate the Eucharist. By bestowing it upon us, God is not simply giving us something but is giving Himself for us. He enters into a relationship with us and accepts us into His life; He shares his life with us.

God turns the past into the present. What was – the Last Supper with His Apostles on the night before He died – becomes present again. His friendship with them becomes His friendship with us.

What happened on the night before His Passion actually takes place again during every celebration of the Eucharist: We receive the Body of Christ and are invited by Him to be members of His Body, in His life, in communion with Him. The Eucharist is for us therefore the source of eternal life in abundance.

That is why celebrating the Sunday Eucharist is so essential for us and why it is also so important for us to celebrate the Eucharist and the Liturgy with dignity and credibility. Without the Eucharist our life as Christians and as a Christian community would ossify and we ourselves would wither, without it we would soon no longer be concerned with fellowship, community and sharing but merely with structures and hierarchies. Everything in the Eucharist centres on Jesus Christ; without the Eucharist everything would soon only centre on ourselves.

Eucharist also means for us that as members of the Body of Christ we bear responsibility for each other and support each other. Separation and isolation represent one of the greatest risks for the Christians in our country. Ensuring a sincere and caring sense of togetherness in our parishes is a fundamental consequence of our understanding of the Church as a Christian community.

We, the recipients of the Body of Christ, are not passive recipients and mere objects in the Eucharist. Instead we are taken into the actions of Jesus. We receive the sacrament and ourselves become a sacrament for the world. We receive the Body of Christ in order ourselves to be the Body of Christ for the people. Christ therefore includes us in his act of self-giving for all mankind during the celebration of the Eucharist. When we celebrate the Eucharist, we declare our willingness to give ourselves in service for the lives of those for whom we are here. We receive the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, become part of His Body with and for each other and as the Body of Christ become bread for all the people in this world.

This concept of Eucharistic communion with Christ shapes our beliefs, thoughts and actions as the Church in the Archdiocese of Berlin. It is therefore to be particularly manifested in the redesign of our cathedral. St. Hedwig's is the only German cathedral in the shape of a rotunda.