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Swiss Benedictine abbots speak out on church reform

Robert McClory | Dec. 18, 2012 NCR Today

Two Swiss Benedictine abbots have recently questioned the practice of naming bishops and are calling for major church reforms.

Peter von Sury, abbot of Mariastein Monastery in the Sur diocese, questioned the leadership [1] of the local bishop, calling him "not a bridge builder but a divider." The church is far too centralized, he said, adding, "Even if it is denied, in fact the dioceses are treated by Rome as administrative entities."

"In our church we have serious structural problems. It is important to me that questions *[such as clerical celibacy and women's ordination]* simply be dealt with," von Sury said. "Topics can only be solved when the structures are minimally functional and the procedures are worked out. One unresolved question concerns the selection of bishops. Many other problems in the church stem from this."

Meanwhile, Martin Werlen, abbot of Eisiedeln and a member of the Swiss bishops conference, authored a brochure [2] that claims all the baptized and confirmed should have a voice in the naming of bishops. He also urged that cardinals have term limits and suggested that "people from the whole world, women and men, young and not so young, could be called for five years into the college of cardinals." His brochure, titled "Discover Together the Embers under the Ashes," is a reminder of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini's last interview [3], in which he spoke of the church as largely ashes above the flickering embers.

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Links:
[1] http://www.praytellblog.com/index.php/2012/12/15/swiss-abbot-harshly-criticizes-church-structures-calls-for-reform-in-the-system-of-naming-bishops/
[2] http://ncronline.org/news/global/swiss-abbot-makes-fiery-appeal-church-reform
[3] http://ncronline.org/node/32039