

History of the German Catholic Doctors Association: 1947-2019

9 December 2019

History of German Catholic Doctors Association (Katholische Ärztarbeit Deutschlands) and its dissolving in May 2019

After the catastrophic World War II many people lost their faith in the dignity of man and asked for new orientation and new hope. The German catholic doctors were involved in this discussion in society in many fields but unfortunately there were not any organizations of catholic doctors. In 1947 3 independent groups of catholic doctors were established in different parts of Western Germany which confederated to the Katholische Ärztarbeit Deutschlands in 1968. The organization has been accepted by the Deutsche Bischofskonferenz which appointed the Ecclesial Assistant every 5 years. According to our statue all people, especially with medical professions, who agree with the goals of Christian ethics, could become a member of our association.

The association supported the daily work of the doctors through workshops and congresses on important current topics particularly in regards to medicine ethics but also on philosophical und theological items. The members regularly got the journal: Zeitschrift für Medizinische Ethik and summaries of the annual congresses, which were published on our website as well. Once a year we had a so called "Days of contemplation" at a monastery of Benedictines. Special events for our association were the FIAMC Congress in Bonn in 1990 and the FEAMC Board Meetings in Cologne in 2001 and Berlin in 2011. The Association of German Catholic Doctors collaborated in the past with catholic academies and universities and other medical associations. But this work was not very successful and was finished after some years. Our association was part of the Catholic Academic Association of Germany and member of FEAMC and FIAMC. The association had had at least 170 members.

General Assembly of the association decided to dissolve the association in May 2019

The reasons were the following: Decreasing number and ageing of the members, which led to a steady decline in the number of visitors to our congresses. To stop this process was accompanied by years of efforts, but the attempt to attract new members, especially young ones, was unsuccessful. The reason, the young members were less interested in our events currently as in former years may be that, many medical-ethical topics were discussed during their studies now and are also offered by other medical institutions. In addition, the young colleagues are under great professional strain now and tend to devote their limited free time to their families and leisure interests rather than to participating in other scientific events.

It should not be forgotten that the religious bond of the young generation has clearly decreased and the Catholic Church has recently lost much of its credibility. This can be seen not least in the large number of church departures in Germany. I fear that this development does not only apply to Germany. The last board and especially I regret very much the end of the association, but unfortunately we could not stop this development. Furthermore,

I deeply regret that I have to say goodbye to FEAMC and FIAMC, organizations that were my spiritual home for many years and where I have met many good friends.

I wish FEAMC all the best, much success in their work and above all God's blessing.

PD Dr. med. habil. Rudolf Giertler, last President of the Association

Erfurt, in December 2019