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Faculty of Catholic Theology

Statement in light of worrying developments

Current global and social developments that are shaking the foundations of democracy are cause for great concern. These include right-wing nationalist, right-wing extremist, and radicalizing developments that misuse religion for their own purposes and undermine what were believed to be achieved goals in terms of equality and equal treatment. Equally worrying is the sometimes aggressive spread of discourses that propagate traditional gender roles and patriarchal family values, reject LGBTQI+ rights and gender studies, openly express Islamophobic and anti-Semitic views, develop nationalist identities, and fundamentally question human rights. But it is not only in the political spectrum that groups can be identified that also engage in anti-feminist, racist, and other forms of discrimination, accelerated by digital possibilities and social media.

Theological faculties in Austria are not spared from these developments. There are increasing reports from women and other marginalized groups of misogynistic, homophobic, and racist comments, defamatory letters, and even threats (see feinschwarz 4/23/2025, die Furche 4/27/2025). Much of this remains hidden, with only a few cases being made public. Incidents of this kind cause fear and uncertainty among the groups affected and, above all, among young academics.

But science needs a fear-free, uncensored space for reflection. We claim this space at the Faculty of Catholic Theology for our theological and religious studies work. We vigorously defend this cosmopolitan space for discourse and take a firm stand against inhuman tendencies that seek to impose ideologically motivated censorship.

The Catholic Theology Faculty at the University of Vienna is taking a stand against these tendencies in a variety of ways:

- Promoting scientific dialogue: We promote interdisciplinary and international exchange in order to examine arguments, models, and theories for rational coherence through dialogue. This also includes debate and the struggle to find the best arguments. A scientifically honest dialogue requires a willingness to engage with the arguments of the opposing side and to question one's own basic assumptions in light of better findings. However, dialogue is impossible with conversation partners who refuse to be open, who disparage people because of their gender or ethnicity, or who categorically reject certain positions from the outset.
- Commitment to a non-discriminatory working environment: At our faculty, we are committed to a non-discriminatory working environment for all employees. We take a firm stand against harassment and threats, whether based on denomination, religion,

gender, sexual orientation, or origin (see <https://ktf.univie.ac.at/en/about-us/together-against-discrimination/>).

- Contribution to social cohesion: Through our research, we make an important contribution to social issues of justice, the recognition of a hierarchy-free coexistence of all people, and the responsible treatment of the planet.

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