

Reformation is nothing to celebrate, says Cardinal Müller



Vatican doctrinal chief says Catholics 'cannot accept that there exist sufficient reasons to separate from the Church'

The prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Gerhard Müller, has said that Catholics “have no reason to celebrate” the beginning of the Reformation. The German cardinal said in a new book-length interview: “We Catholics have no reason to celebrate October 31, 1517, the date that is considered the beginning of the Reformation that would lead to the rupture of Western Christianity.”

The date, known as “Reformation Day”, marks Martin Luther’s sending the Archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg a document protesting at the sale of indulgences – a text which came to be known as the 95 Theses.

Luther did not then propose separating from the Church, but the 95 Theses eventually led to his excommunication in 1521.

Cardinal Müller says in the new book: “If we are convinced that divine revelation is preserved whole and unchanged through Scripture and Tradition, in the doctrine of the Faith, in the sacraments, in the hierarchical constitution of the Church by divine right, founded on the sacrament of holy orders, we cannot accept that there exist sufficient reasons to separate from the Church.”

The remarks will cause a stir, coming a year before the 500th anniversary of Reformation Day. Extensive celebrations and commemorations are planned in Germany and elsewhere.

Pope Francis will travel to Sweden in October 2017 for an ecumenical commemoration, along with representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and other denominations.

Last year the papal preacher, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, praised the “theological and spiritual enrichment” of the Reformation.

The cardinal noted that the champions of the Reformation had framed the pope as Antichrist in order to

“justify the separation” from the Catholic Church.

Cardinal Müller said the great obstacle to ecumenism was relativism and “the acritical adoption of modern ideologies”.

Citing the Vatican II document *Dei Verbum*, he added: “A Protestantization of the Catholic Church on the basis of a secular vision without reference to transcendence not only cannot reconcile us with the Protestants, but also cannot allow an encounter with the mystery of Christ, because in Him we are repositories of a supernatural revelation to which all of us owe total obedience of intellect and will.”

Last year, the cardinal said that in debates over marriage and the sacraments, pastors should “be very vigilant and not forget the lessons of church history”. He said that confusion over the sacramental nature of marriage could lead to divisions similar to those of the Reformation.

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