



## INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE!

*Political Theology Seminar:*

**'living together'**

*critique & alternatives to the division of society*

Thursday, April 23, 2020, 5:00 pm to

Saturday, April 25, 2020, 5:00 pm

Cardijn House, Kapuzinerstraße 49, 4020 Linz, Austria

### Context

- The divisions in our societies are growing - in much of Europe, including Austria.
- Feelings of threat and anxiety also spread in the former well-secured middle class. The future is uncertain.
- Neo-liberal and right-wing populist politicians bring these sentiments home by blaming the most vulnerable in society for the threat situation: refugees, members of minority protection, etc.
- Along with the threat, populist and divisive narratives have come far into the middle of society.
- At the same time, neoliberal capitalist policies promote actual division from above: cuts in social benefits, austerity driven budget savings and tighter social security controls, tax breaks for large corporations and private property owners, and continued high freedoms for international financial speculation keep the gap between (super) rich and poor grow, worldwide, in Europe and Austria.

### **From a committed, Christian, liberation-theological perspective urgent questions arise for us:**

- ? How can we respond in solidarity and commitment to these intensified social & economic developments?
- ? How can we create understanding and conversation across populist divisions?
- ? How can we live well together, today and in the future, and what can we do in concrete terms?

In the seminar we aim to develop a radical critique of the divisive forces in our contemporary European societies. We will analyze the effects of the capitalist economy on the basis of Christian principles. This analysis influences our talk of God and the good life for all.

The role of churches in contemporary societies and these developments will be critically examined. Beyond criticism and analysis, our seminar will explore practical alternatives and strategies for social change.

**Throughout the process, we will discuss what political theology can contribute to critique, vision, and practice in our society.**

## **Speakers:**

**Prof. DDr. Nikolaus Dimmel** studied law, political science, sociology, worked, as a carpenter, defense lawyer, debt and tenant consultant, social service manager, GmbH - Managing Director etc. and is a university teacher at the University of Salzburg and at a number of colleges. He focuses on poverty / wealth / inequality, social and migration management and special sociology (labor, criminal and legal sociology).

**Dr. Julia Lis** is a theologian and co-founder of the Institute for Theology and Politics and co-founder of the network Kirchenasyl in Münster. Her work focuses on: church asylum, theology in the context of social movements, flight and migration, church of the poor, crisis protests.

**Niall Cooper** is director of Church Action on Poverty (CAP) in the UK, an ecumenical network dedicated to tackling the causes of poverty. In campaigns as well as supporting practical action, grassroots groups and projects in church parishes on the ground. CAP deals with unfair policies, reinforces the voices of people affected by poverty in society and calls the Christian churches to their responsibility. The work is aimed at making British society fairer and more equitable in the long term.

*"A crisis is the state in which the old dies, but the new cannot yet be born. There are many dangers in such a time of intermediate rule, and all sorts of symptoms can come out - it's the time of the monster. "*

*(Antonio Gramsci)*

*"It is right and important that societies help those in need. That alone is not enough. Our projects address the underlying causes. "*

*(Church Action on Poverty)*

**Language:** There will be simultaneous interpretation German – English – German in the plenary sessions and language support in one or two groups. We invite participants who can work in either English or German

## **Outline Programme:**

**23<sup>rd</sup> April**

Arrivals from 17.00

18.00 Dinner

19.00 p.m. Introductions and first Input (public lecture and discussions)

Nikolaus Dimmel

Analysis and critique of the (populist) narrative of the division of society.

Analysis of the distribution question and the connection to populism

Locating social forces that are committed to a good (together) life.

Where is there a resistance strategy? Where is the current potential for living together?

What counter strategies that exist, not only macro level, but also in practice?

**24<sup>th</sup> April**

09.00 **'SEE'**

Group work, connecting and sharing diverse experience and making connections

Focus on different contexts, short input on Austrian perspectives

Connect & share your own experiences and perceptions

12.30. Lunch, in the house

14.00 **'JUDGE'**

Theological starting points – input by Julia Lis

Group Work and Plenary discussion

18.00 End

19.00 p.m. Dinner and cultural programme (in another venue)

**25<sup>th</sup> April**

09.00 **'ACTION'**

Developing practical and political action – input by Niall Cooper

Group work and plenary discussion

12.30 Lunch – in the house

14.00

Reflection, deepening theological reflection and action strategies for the future

17.00 End

**NOTE:** The **General Meeting of the Cardijn Association** will take place at 15.00 on 23<sup>rd</sup> April at Cardijn House and all are invited. This meeting will include the election of a new Board.

The final programme will be shared at the end of January