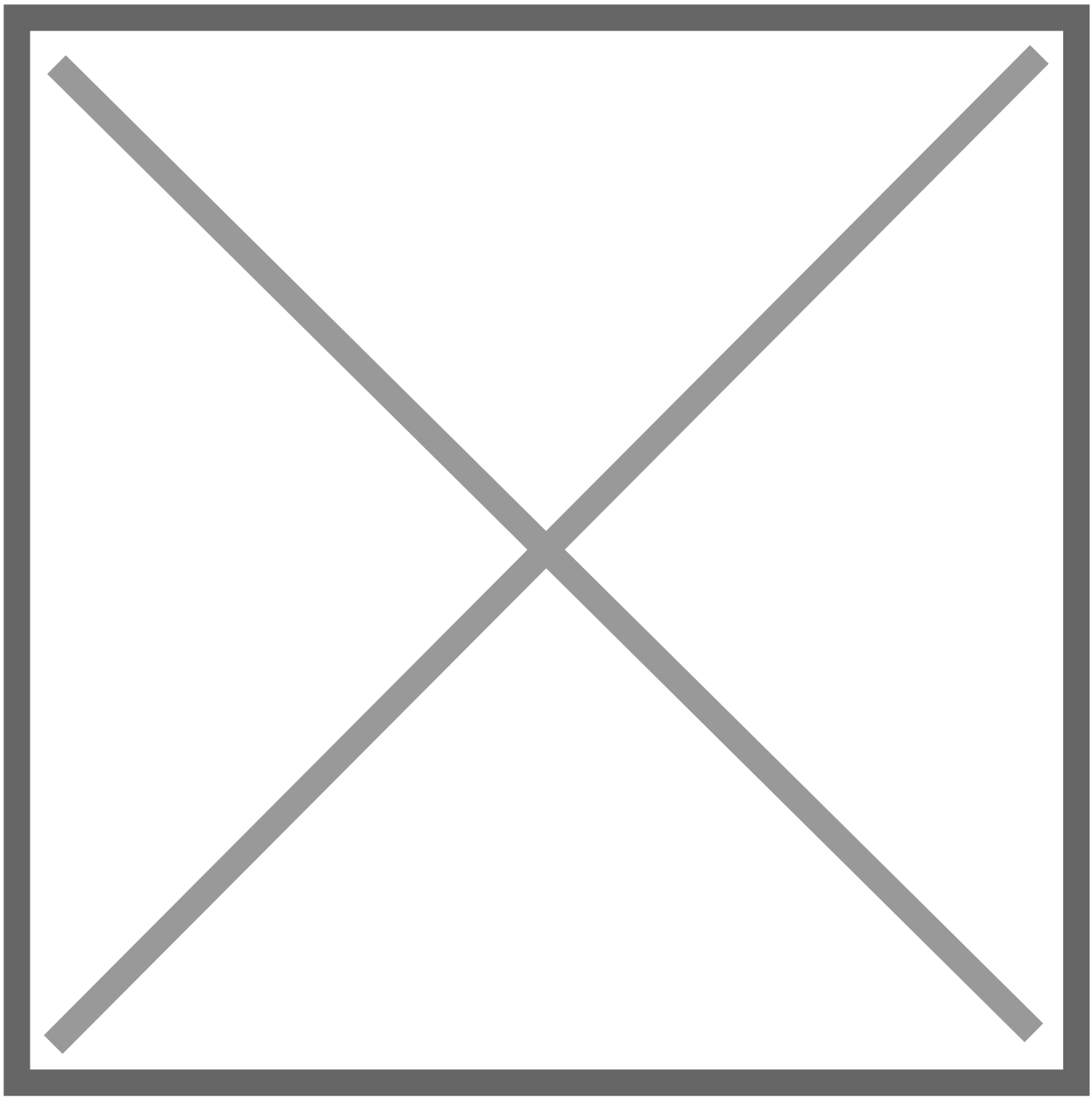
News



German Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising gives a statement on the Munich abuse report to the media Jan. 27, 2022. (CNS photo/Sven Hoppe, pool via Reuters)

by Associated Press

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A prominent German archbishop advocated loosening celibacy rules for Catholic priests in comments published Feb. 3 before a meeting of a German reform assembly.

Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the archbishop of Munich and Freising, told the daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung that "it would be better for everyone to create the possibility of celibate and married priests."

Marx's comments come as his diocese has been shaken by an independent report on the church's handling of sexual abuse cases over decades, which faulted Marx and predecessors including retired Pope Benedict XVI.

Marx, a prominent reformist ally of Pope Francis, said last week that the church needs deep reform to overcome the "disaster" of sexual abuse.

"For some priests, it would be better if they were married — not just for sexual reasons, but because it would be better for their life and they wouldn't be lonely," he said in the newspaper interview. "We must hold this discussion."

He insisted that celibacy won't be scrapped altogether, but said he sees a "question mark" over "whether it should be taken as a basic precondition for every priest."

In 2019, Marx expressed support for a call by bishops in the Amazon region for the ordination of married men as priests to address a clergy shortage there, but stopped short of calling for a global recognition of married priests.

On Feb. 3, the latest session of a German reform process that was launched in response to the abuse crisis is due to open. The "Synodal Path," which brings together Catholic Church and lay representatives, has sparked fierce resistance inside the church, primarily from conservatives opposed to opening any debate on issues such as priestly celibacy, women’s role in the church and homosexuality.

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