

## For diversity in society: demonstration in Coesfeld



In Germany, we have witnessed the rise of the extreme-right AfD party for years, which polls put at around 20% of the vote, making it the second-strongest party in Germany. The public was shaken and alarmed when a secret meeting with AfD politicians, right-wing extremists, and entrepreneurs was made public in Berlin, Potsdam, at the end of November 2023. The Austrian Martin Sellner presented a plan for „remigration“: a mass deportation of Germans with a migration background. This reminds Germans of the dark chapter of the Nazi era, in which certain people- Jews, homosexuals, and the mentally ill- were pushed out of society and ultimately denied the right to live. After the end of the Second World War, the people of Germany swore that this would "never happen again."

Current events have shaken up the German population. Thousands of people are taking to the streets in all major cities and towns to demonstrate democracy and a tolerant, colorful society. A central message is "Never again is now!". There was also a large demonstration on the market square in Coesfeld. Sr. M. Monika Niehues reports on this special event:

Today, February 2, 2024, we participated in the ecumenical prayer for peace in St. Lamberti Church with some sisters from Kloster Annenthal and Haus Emmaus. This sent a clear signal for democracy and peace. Around 700 people took part in the service. The Coesfeld police currently assume that 3,000 to 3,500 people took part.

The ecumenical service and the subsequent demonstration on the market square were very moving for us. One of the presenters shouted: "We are many, we are colorful, and we are loud." That was the motto for the evening. One of the speakers on stage was a Protestant pastor. She quoted the Bible verse: "Seek peace and pursue it" and "Watching and waiting is no longer an option." The Catholic priest humorously promoted the right to vote: "Voting is like brushing your teeth. If you don't do it, it turns brown." Mohammed Khail for the Islamic Cultural Association said: "God didn't create us differently so that we would fight each other, but rather to show us a miracle."

As the saying goes: "Together we are strong". That may also apply to us.