



Press Release

Alfons Auer Ethics Award for former Irish President Mary McAleese

University of Tübingen: Faculty of Catholic Theology pays tribute to McAleese for her work supporting women's rights and the moral renewal of the Catholic Church

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The former President of the Republic of Ireland, Professor Mary McAleese receives the 2019 Alfons Auer Ethics Award for her involvement as a Christian and as an academic in the implementation of ethics in politics. The 25,000 euro prize is sponsored by the entrepreneur Siegfried Weishaupt and is a tribute to the moral theologian Alfons Auer.

The jury said McAleese had made a special contribution to ethics in politics and had given impetus to moral renewal in the Catholic Church. It said she applied Christian values to the world's current conflicts in a message of non-discrimination, reconciliation and of peace. **The award will be presented on Wednesday, 30 October 2019, at 6:30pm at the Theologicum lecture theater (Liebermeisterstr. 12).** The laudation is to be held by Professor Hille Haker of Loyola University, Chicago, USA.



Mary McAleese was born in 1951 in Belfast in Northern Ireland. Growing up in the midst of a civil war, peacebuilding, democratization and reconciliation became the defining issues of her life. She studied Law at Queen's University in Belfast. In 1975 she was appointed as Professor for Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology at Trinity College Dublin. In 1987 she returned to Queen's University

as a professor, and in 1994 she was the first woman ever to take on the office of pro-vice-chancellor there. During that time she advocated for the peace process between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as well as for women's rights. *Photo:private*

From 1997 to 2011 Mary McAleese was the eighth president of the Republic of Ireland. After her presidency McAleese studied Catholic

canon Law at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. After obtaining a Doctorate in Canon law at the Gregoriana in 2018, she was appointed Professor of Children, Law and Religion at the University of Glasgow in the same year. When McAleese took office, she aimed to build bridges: between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, between the winners and the losers from economic growth in Ireland, between the urban and the rural areas of the country, between young and old, and between all parts of society that show cracks and tensions. Under her leadership the Employment Equality Act (1998) and the Equal Status Act (2000), which both prohibit discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, were introduced. Today, she is a member of the Council of Women World Leaders, a network of former female presidents and prime ministers, that advocates primarily for women's rights.

Equal rights were also the topic with which she committed herself to advocating for reforms within the Catholic Church. McAleese addresses children's rights and the discrimination of women, demands the recognition of LGBT rights, and criticizes the structural clericalism in the church. In recent years, Mary McAleese has advocated increasingly for a new assessment of sexual ethics: for the correction of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, for a change in the ethical evaluation of homosexuality, and for the recognition of same-sex marriage. These themes connect her to Alfons Auer, who was a member of the Pontifical Commission on Birth Control, supporting the majority that the Pope rejected. At the time, a small minority prevailed with the help of the papal authority. Alfons Auer later asked whether the Church today is still "ethically inhabitable."

Alfons Auer Ethics Award

The Award was first made in 2015 to the Canadian social philosopher, Professor Charles Taylor, and then in 2017 it went to the human rights activist Heiner Bielefeldt. The award is named after the Tübingen theologian Alfons Auer (1915-2005), founding director of the Catholic Academy of the See of Rottenburg-Stuttgart (1951-53), prior to taking up the Chair of Moral Theology at the University of Würzburg in 1955.

From 1966 until his retirement in 1981, he was Professor of Moral Theology at the University of Tübingen. Auer is considered one of Germany's most important moral theologians of the 20th century. He promoted a dialogue between the church and wider society in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. His ethical approach focused on human reason in questions of Christian teachings, which he placed in a positive view of mankind and the creation.

The Alfons Auer Ethics Award was inaugurated by the entrepreneur Siegfried Weishaupt on the 100th anniversary of Auer's birth. Weishaupt is the managing director of Max Weishaupt GmbH. This international company with 3000 employees was founded by the sponsor's father Max Weishaupt, an honorary senator of the University of Tübingen. Its headquarters are in the southwestern German town of Schwendi. Siegfried Weishaupt has been an enthusiastic collector of art for more than 50 years. The Siegfried and Jutta Weishaupt Collection has been on display in the Kunsthalle Weishaupt in Ulm since 2007.

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