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## **Germany: Sandra Schnell to assume charge of Altena Parish (Diocese of Essen). “A sign of hope for the Church”**

Sandra Schnell is the first woman in the Diocese of Essen to be put in charge of a parish: from next Easter, 4 April, she will be the representative of St. Matthew's Parish in Altena. The portal of the German Church interviewed her to know more about her perspectives and administrative and pastoral roles. Schnell said she was surprised to see that the news had received great media attention, since similar figures already exist in other German dioceses, like in Osnabrück: “I interpret this great deal of attention as a ‘sign of the times’: it is time for us as a Church to go down this path, that is, that people show great openness”, and this appointment could be “a sign of hope”. In this sense, the experience of Sandra Schnell, who has served as executive officer at the Diocese of Essen for 27 years, is significant: “When I started working, it was unthinkable that paths like this one would open. I am very happy, because it is a great step for our Diocese”. For her, training is of the essence: “In my new role, my strengths lie above all in the pastoral work. I currently work in a parish where there are few Catholics in a vast area. I have to learn new things and attend training courses, for example in the administrative field, tasks that I have not previously been entrusted with, because the parish priest was in charge”. Schnell will work with a moderator priest: “My job is to guide the parish, and the priest will help me by taking on the roles related to the priesthood, such as the administration of certain sacraments”.

Massimo Lavena