
COVID-19 Coronavirus: Fr. Barrios Prieto (COMECE), “erosion of religious freedom must not become the new norm”

“The reopening of churches must be implemented by civil authorities in dialogue with ecclesial institutions”, said Fr. Barrios Prieto, General Secretary of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), at a time when some Member States are having tough discussions on the issue. “Freedom of religion, including freedom of worship, is a fundamental right and a real necessity for many people”, Fr. Barrios Prieto stated. For this reason, without prejudice to the prudential rules against the pandemic, civil authorities should act in a “clear” and “non-arbitrary” way, “in full respect of and in dialogue with ecclesial institutions”. Barrios Prieto called “disappointing” the fact that the “Joint European Roadmap towards lifting COVID-19 containment measures” by the EU Commission lacks “any explicit mention of religious services” and the possibility to attend them, thereby neglecting “the key role of religion in European societies” in its “public and collective dimension”. “The aggressive approach of certain secularist actors against the role of religion in the public square may have contributed to its marginalisation in the context of the current crisis”, Barrios Prieto lamented. And he concluded: “Any erosion of fundamental rights in the current emergency context, including the one to freedom of religion, must not become the new norm”; “these rights have to be fully re-established as early as possible”.

Valentina Bombelli