
Scotland: Bishops' Conference, "revising hate crime laws and protecting freedom of religion"

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland has come back to the issue of hate crime laws. In an article written by Joseph Toal, bishop of Motherwell, and published in the Glasgow "Herald", the Bishops call the government to "follow the invitation of the encyclical 'Fratelli tutti' (All Brothers) to feed dialogue and listen to the concerns expressed by many about the recent laws". "The Catholic Church is asking for further changes to be made in the hate crime laws", bishop Joseph Toal writes. "We want more clarity about the terms 'hated', 'abusive' and 'offensive', which are still quite vague". They call Edinburgh's government to "deal with the concerns of many people, according to whom books and messages on religious social media might be considered to be 'offensive' under the new laws", and to take measures to protect freedom of expression". In the article, mgr. Toal quotes some passages from Pope Francis's encyclical where it speaks of tolerant politics and welcomes the government's decision to change a passage from the recent laws to replace the word 'probability' to increase hate with the phrase "intent to increase hate". "By protecting freedom of expression, the government promotes what the Pope defines as a 'cultural covenant', an agreement that is respectful of the different cultures that exist in our society", the bishops write.

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