
COVID-19 Coronavirus: Germany, Bishops' document on pastoral care of the sick at time of pandemic

The need for pastoral care and assistance has increased significantly since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Isolation, illness, the suffering of relatives, social fear, medical shortcomings and economic difficulties have put a strain on the lives of the sick. The Catholic Church has addressed this situation with different and sometimes new opportunities for accompaniment. Providing pastoral care to “seriously ill and dying people is not only demanding but also urgently needed during the current pandemic”. For this reason, the German Bishops' Conference (DBK) has today issued a document, signed by the Auxiliary Bishops of Bamberg (Mgr. Herwig Gössl) and of Erfurt (Mgr. Reinhard Hauke), entitled “Do not be afraid! – Diaconal pastoral care for people with COVID-19?”. The document includes reflections on the functions and tasks that can be performed given the current rising number of infections. It summarises texts and proposals that are the result of an exchange of views carried out within the German dioceses. The challenge for pastors in this phase is to be by the side of the sick while also ensuring their own protection, the document reads. This requires a “prudent approach that takes into account the different interests of the people involved while also achieving the best possible cooperation with the state authorities and suppliers of the institutions concerned”. The document “Do not be afraid!” conveys the mission of pastoral care that is “to give the hope that comes from Jesus Christ and is for all people”.

Valentina Bombelli