
Germany: Bavaria, curfew on Christmas Eve. Bishops, “we ask for an exemption for Masses”

The debate on Covid restrictions at Christmas is becoming increasingly controversial: the decree issued on 8 December in the regional state of Bavaria allowed the regular celebration of Christmas Eve services, from 10pm or later, despite the regional curfew in force from 9pm to 5am. Bavarian Prime Minister Markus Söder (Leader of the Christian Social Union), however, announced yesterday that there would be no special regulation, by way of derogation, to allow celebrations despite the curfew. In the Catholic Church, a proposal was made to anticipate Masses so that all the faithful could be home by 9pm. But then the seven Bavarian Catholic diocesan Bishops, who scheduled a video conference to address the issue, unanimously expressed their disappointment at the regional government's plans. “We urgently call for an exemption from the curfew for all Christmas Eve Masses”, the Bishops asked, arguing that the risk of contagion would be reduced if the celebrations were spread over the entire evening, and “not concentrated before 7:30pm”. Moreover, participation in the Christmas Mass “significantly contributes to people's mental health and stability”. The Bishop of Augsburg, Mgr. Bertram Meier, lamented that “we were literally caught by surprise by this new development”. The Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Card. Reinhard Marx, spoke of a “painful decision”. The same view is taken by the Regional Council of the Evangelical Church which, however, has already cancelled all celebrations on Christmas Eve.

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