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## **Turkey: mgr. Rubén Tierrablanca, the bishop of dialogue and acceptance, dies of Coronavirus. “We all belong to a common house”**

Mgr. Rubén Tierrablanca González, apostolic vicar of Istanbul and president of the Episcopal Conference of Turkey, died yesterday night at 11.42 pm (local time). He had caught Covid-19 and had been admitted to the university hospital of Koç in early December. His condition had immediately been found to be critical, to such an extent that he was put in intensive care and intubated. “May our Lord Jesus Christ welcome him in heaven. The Turkish Catholics and those who had a chance to work with him remember him with gratitude”, it is with these words that last night the Episcopal Conference of Turkey announced the news of the death of its president. Never missing the meetings organised by the Council of the Bishops’ Conferences of Europe (Ccee), mgr. Tierrablanca never failed to give his contribution to the building of a Europe that could be open to dialogue and sensitive to poverty in all its forms. In addition to Spanish, he spoke many languages: Italian, English, French and Portuguese, he had learnt Turkish, German, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. In his last interview with SIR, in the run-up to the meeting on the Mediterranean in Bari, he had said: “the Mediterranean has a bent for acceptance. For years, the European countries and Italy have proven this, but lately they are struggling. So, such mission needs to be boosted, supported, made to grow. And, speaking of migrants fleeing wars and poverty, he had said: “we must repeat, tirelessly, because it’s never enough, our no to the building and dealing with arms that fuel conflict. War is and always will be a defeat for everyone. War is never fair”. Then, he had his own opinion about boundaries: “we have built them ourselves and often they have not been fairly conceived and established. The Christian view of the world is different, and it is built on the assumption that all humans belong to a common house”. Mgr. Rubén Tierrablanca González was born in Cortazar, Central Mexico, on 24th August 1952. He had attended the Franciscan Minor Seminary, then he had entered the novitiate on 22nd August 1970. On 2nd August 1977, he had made his solemn profession and, one year later, on 29th June, he had been ordained presbyter. From 1978 to 1980, he had been a trainer in the local Franciscan seminary, serving in the parish church of St Francis in Acámbaro. In 1983, he was sent to Rome to study for a licence in Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. In 1992, he had been appointed Students’ Rector at the Pontifical University of St Anthony in Rome, then Guardian of the General Curia in Rome (1997-2003). Since 2003, he had been Guardian in the Order of Friars Minor in Istanbul, in the International Fraternity for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue in Turkey, and parish priest of St Mary Draperis in Istanbul. On 16th April 2016, Pope Francis had appointed him apostolic vicar of Istanbul, apostolic administrator of Constantinople of the Greek, and titular bishop of Tubernuca. He had been ordained bishop one year later, on 11th June, by cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Since 2018, he had been president of the Episcopal Conference of Turkey.

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