
Portugal: spike in infections, tougher lockdown. Bishops, “more responsibility and solidarity from all”

There is a spike in infections even in Portugal, with tougher lockdown restrictions coming into force today. But unlike what happened in the spring, schools remain open. The Permanent Council of the Portuguese Bishops' Conference, too, issued a press release with the new lockdown rules. “We are aware that we are going through a critical phase of the pandemic right now”, the Bishops wrote, and this “demands more responsibility and solidarity from all of us in the fight, so that all our efforts can help us overcome the crisis”. Liturgical celebrations, namely the Eucharist and funerals, will continue in person, in compliance with social distancing rules, depending on the size of each individual church. All other celebrations, however, such as baptisms, confirmations and weddings, “should be suspended or postponed to a more convenient time, when the health situation allows. In-person catechesis can continue “where health requirements can be met”, otherwise the Bishops should either cancel it or hold it remotely, as all other pastoral activities. “Our faith opens us to the God of mercy and is the expression of our commitment in solidarity with the efforts of all those who seek to minimise suffering”, the Bishops concluded; “it generates a hope that, beyond vaccines, gives meaning to and cares for life in all its dimensions”. The Government extended the state of emergency until 30 January, anticipating that it might be necessary to maintain the lockdown until mid-February.

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