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## **Portugal: Assembly of Bishops, undertaking pastoral challenges with “prophetic, missionary and synodal dynamism”. A focus on lay people**

In the context of the current epidemiological situation and the state of vulnerability and serious economic crisis, there are “pastoral challenges, that need to be undertaken with prophetic, missionary and synodal dynamism in all ecclesial circumstances”: this was said by the Portuguese bishops in their plenary Assembly that ended in Fatima yesterday, 15<sup>th</sup> April. They highlighted some of them: the announcement of the core of the Christian message; the importance of communal and fraternal dynamics; the mission of families and lay people; special attention to young and old people; the urgency of education; care for new languages. The Assembly sees the end of this pandemic as “an opportunity to renew the life and mission of the Church in the world”. In their final note, they also voiced their “concern for the sustainability of social welfare institutions”. It is a call to “hope”, the one that the Bishops make to the Portuguese “to face, as a people, the pandemic, social, economic and cultural crises, to bring hope back in truth and justice, and to protect the sense of the common good”. The plenary Assembly of the Bishops passed a document on “Permanent deacons in the Portuguese Church”, a ministry that is proof of the “unbreakable bond between liturgical service and charitable practice”, but it also started a reflection on “Lay ministries in a ministerial Church”, which in the next few months “will continue into a synodal process within the diocesan bodies and episcopal Commissions”. The Portuguese Church is also reconsidering the initiation to Christian life with a new option that places emphasis on the family, as the domestic church.

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