
Austria: plenary assembly of the bishops, visit ad Limina and climate on the agenda. Concern about the assisted suicide law

The autumn plenary assembly of the Austrian Bishops' Conference (Öbk) ended in Vienna yesterday. Today, the president, mgr. Franz Lackner, archbishop of Salzburg, with the secretary, father Peter Shipka, and the spokesman, Paul Wuthe, submitted the results at a press conference in Vienna. Many items were dealt with, from the forthcoming visit "ad Limina apostolorum" to the Vatican from 29th November to 4th December to a nationwide discussion of the assisted suicide legislation: it says that such bill of law goes too far and in many ways breaches the rules of the Constitutional Court. Öbk warns that such bill of law on assisted suicide will not be able to effectively prevent vulnerable people from misusing and being influenced by it, as they expect will happen. More specifically, the bishops also criticise the fact that psychological assistance to suicide is invariably left unpunished. The suicidal person's decision-making power is not always assessed by a psychiatrist or by a psychologist. However, in this bill of law, the instrument of death will boil down to a mere "purchase order from the chemist's". Pursuant to criminal law, any other form of assistance in any type of suicide is allowed just after the second medical justification. For instance, in accordance with criminal law, the assistant would be allowed to "give a firearm to the suicidal person just after the second medical explanation, so that they can kill themselves there and then". Another prominent point was the protection of climate: "The results of the climate summit have not been defined yet, but it is clear that much firmer steps need to be taken to achieve carbon neutrality – as Pope Francis and the leaders of the world religions asked – as soon as possible".

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