
COVID-19 Coronavirus: Austria, Bishops' assembly reduced to two days with venue change

Due to the coronavirus emergency, the spring plenary assembly of the Austrian Bishops' Conference (ÖBK) will last only two days instead of four, and its venue will be moved from Tyrol to the Episcopal Palace in Vienna. The agenda will therefore be limited, with discussions taking place on Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 March. As the Secretary General of the Bishops' Conference, Mgr. Peter Schipka, told the Austrian Catholic news agency Kathpress today, the "local bishops will start their debate on Monday, 16 March, at the Episcopal Palace in Vienna, under the presidency of Cardinal Christoph Schönborn. The agenda will cover almost exclusively the current coronavirus crisis and measures against the pandemic". Consultations among bishops, government officials and experts on the current epidemic crisis are also on the agenda. The assembly takes place at a time when the Church life in Austria has been significantly reduced, since most religious celebrations have been suspended. The election of the next president of the Bishops' Conference is another confirmed item on the ÖBK plenary agenda: the successor to Card. Schönborn will be elected as expected. Due to the abbreviated meeting, Mgr. Schipka reported, some topics will not be dealt with as initially planned. For instance, there will be no debate on the situation in universities and theological faculties, and public celebrations of the Eucharist with the faithful are cancelled as part of the measures against coronavirus.

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