
Netherlands: Bishops suspend Masses on Christmas Eve. Decision taken “painfully, but with responsibility for public health”

The Dutch Bishops' Conference “has decided that no public celebrations should be held between Thursday, 24 December, at 17.00 and Friday, 25 December, at 7.00”. The decision, according to a statement released today, was made in light of the fact that the Christmas Eve Mass “is usually attended by many”, and “the Bishops want to avoid that too many people travel at the same time”. It is a decision that we took “painfully” but with “responsibility for public health”. Christmas masses and celebrations on 25 and 26 December will be held regularly, although thirty will be the maximum number of faithful allowed. “In November, there was still hope that we would be able to celebrate Christmas with more than 30 people, but that hope has now been dashed,” the Bishops wrote, in the wake of what Prime Minister Mark Rutte said about the situation in the country. With the exception of Christmas Eve, all “celebrations will remain open to the public, because the Bishops consider it essential: they provide spiritual food to the people, sustain them in their life of faith and give them strength, hope and courage, especially in these difficult times”. People will not be allowed to visit cribs in groups, but outdoor activities explicitly authorized by local authorities are allowed. The dedicated website vierkerstmis.nl provides all streamed and televised “opportunities to celebrate Christmas at home”.

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