

# European Churches urge people to get vaccinated against COVID-19

14 December 2021

*Joint appeal from the presidents of COMECE and CEC*

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*COMECE, december 14th, 2021*

Urging responsibility and care amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and encouraging vaccination together with necessary sanitary measures, H.Em. Card. Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ, President of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), and Rev. Christian Krieger, President of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), have issued the following joint appeal.

In this time of Advent, let us manifest Christ's love by demonstrating responsibility and care for all. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues into a second year, European Churches encourage everyone to observe necessary sanitary measures and get vaccinated.

According to the reports, COVID-19 infections are still on the rise in Europe, while doctors and paramedics are exhausted and hospitals face the risk of imminent collapse.

Varying vaccination rates throughout Europe offer clear indications of the reasons for this dramatic situation. In several Member States of the European Union, the uptake of full vaccination, unfortunately, still remains much below the needed threshold for stemming the spread of the virus, although vaccines are available.

Subsequent to listening to experts in science and medicine, we believe that vaccination is currently the most effective way to counter the pandemic and save human lives. Vaccination offers protection not only to ourselves but also to our brothers and sisters, particularly the more fragile among us. It is thus an act of love and care and also one of responsibility and social justice.

We recognise that the decision to get vaccinated may not be easy and reasons to be hesitant may be manifold. Some may not be able to receive the vaccination due to serious medical conditions. Others may be afraid or doubtful of its effects. We encourage them to clarify their concerns and take a well-informed decision after having sought professional advice from competent authorities and experts.

Regrettably, we are also witnessing the spread of false information and unfounded claims in our societies with regard to vaccination, instrumentalising the pandemic by causing fear and polarisation at a time when our societies need cohesion, unity and solidarity.

We strongly appeal to all who bear responsibility in society, including political and media actors, as well as members of our Churches, to counter any attempts of disinformation.

We call on all societal actors to raise the awareness of everyone and encourage them to take responsible actions to protect themselves and others, particularly those who cannot be vaccinated for health or other reasons.

We also wish to reiterate our call to the European Union and its Member States to fulfill their vaccine-sharing pledges and step up global efforts towards ensuring an equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for all, including in regions with weaker health systems.

While we prepare to celebrate Christmas, let us remember: "A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God (Isaiah 40.3)". God sent His son to earth to express His love and care for us. This good news remains very relevant today. Let us give living witness to it, let us show responsibility and care.

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