24/03/2020

Statement of the Three Major Communities for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre regarding COVID-19



On Friday, March, 7/20, 2020, the Three Major Communities with the pilgrimage responsibility for the All-holy Shrines, namely the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Custody of the Holy Land of the Franciscans, and the Patriarchate of the Armenians in Jerusalem, released a Statement, specifying to the faithful Christians that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with the Horrendous Golgotha and the All-Holy Tomb will remain open for the services, according to the existing Status Quo, and that they may come for their prayer, conforming to the instructions of the Local Authorities in order to protect their health. The Statement follows below;

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“Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our world is currently experiencing a time of crisis and emergency, whereas many countries and nations are combating the spread of COVID-19. In many places around the globe, the infection is spreading rapidly and the victims are consistently increasing. The World Health Organization has declared the situation as a global pandemic.

In front of this dangerous situation, governments worldwide mobilized to resist and restrain the spread of this virus. In many places severe measures were adopted which resulted in restrictions of movement of persons maintaining operative only crucial facilities.

This dangerous situation has not passed over the Holy Land and the Holy City of Jerusalem in which all Sons of Abraham Jews, Christians and Muslims are raising their prayers to God Almighty. We are called to live this time in faith and confidence in the Lord’s mercy and His care for all His creatures.

At the same time, we are called to adhere to the instructions of the competent civil authorities enacted to ensure the safety and well-being of the entire population.

Therefore, we the Heads of the Churches in charge of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem urge everyone to abide fully by the provisions for the public health, as they are published from time to time.

The communities living within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre will

continue the ordinary life of the Church in conformity with the instructions for the public health. We will be united spiritually in our aim to preserve the centuries' long tradition of ongoing prayers in the Church even in these sad times when pilgrims cannot reach Jerusalem and local faithful are compelled to remain at their homes.

Accordingly, while maintaining the Church open we urge the worshipers to:

Refrain from any gatherings of more than 10 people in the same place and at the same time in the Basilica.

Keep a minimal distance of 2 meters between each person.

Avoid any act of devotion that might include physical contact such as touching and kissing the stones, touching icons, vestments and the personnel in the Basilica.

To abide always by the instructions of the authorities.

The Holy Sepulchre is the ultimate place of hope. Hope that faith will defeat doubt, light will defeat darkness and life will triumph over death. From this Holy Place and in this time of spiritual preparation for Easter and of global crisis we join our prayers to those of faithful of all religions, asking for the end of this pandemic. We pray for all those afflicted by the virus around the world and express our sympathy and gratitude to those who assist and take care of the victims.

THEOPHILOS III FRANCESCO PATTON ARCH. NOURHAN MANOUGIAN

Greek Orthodox Patriarch | Custos of the Holy Land | Armenian Patriarch

Patriarch
of Jerusalem

of Jerusalem

— Source: en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info