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Orthodox Churches across SE Europe adapt to unprecedented restrictions on public assembly



Orthodox Churches are modifying and adapting to the unprecedented cornonavirus pandemic, namely, restrictions on non-essential movement and public assemblies, all ahead of Holy and Great Easter.

In Romania, the Holy Flame will be transported by plane and arrive in Bucharest on the evening of April 18, Holy and Great Saturday, whereby it will be distributed to Metropolises around the country by volunteers from each parish. In turn, the volunteers will visit the residences of faithful who wish to receive the Holy Flame, also known as the Holy Light.



The volunteers will take all sanitary precautions prescribed by public health authorities, while calling on the faithful to leave a candle or lantern outside their front door.

In a related development, the Patriarchate of Romania this week announced that it has donated nearly 1.5 million euros so far for the support of people and households drastically affected by the pandemic in the country.



South of Romania, in Bulgaria, the country's prime minister, Boyko Borisov, received the Patriarch of Bulgaria, His Holiness Neophyte, with the two leaders discussing necessary public health care measures for churches and chapels, ahead of next week's Holy Easter Week.

Borisov said **Holy Easter Week** coincides with an expected spike in the number of confirmed cases in Bulgaria, with state authorities concerned over the prospect of worshipers crowding in cathedrals.

At the same time, the **Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church** has recommended that a flight annually bringing the **Holy Flame** to Sofia from the **Holy Land** be cancelled, with money used for transportation to be donated to healthcare institutions.



Finally, the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania this week donated sanitary equipment to Albanian police in Tirana, including 1,000 protective masks, gloves and anti-septic liquids.

The materials were delivered by a Church delegation led by the Bishop of Vilida, His Grace Astios.