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Archbishop of Cyprus issues circular on church attendance



Churches can be open daily from 7.30 am to 6.30 pm, Archbishop Chrysostomos said in a circular on Friday. They can open at 6.30 am on days on which there is a service.

The circular, sent to clergy and church committees, follows the government's decision to include prayers in places of worship in the first phase of the gradual exit from the lockdown.

Going to a place of worship was prohibited to the public during the lockdown, and several people have been booked for going to church in violation of the decree.

Unveiling the government's lockdown exit strategy on Wednesday night, the president had announced that as of May 4, the exercise of religion will be permitted in churches, mosques and other places of worship, provided that there are no more than 10 persons present. The decree on weddings, christenings and funerals remains in force.

Step two will come from June 1 when church services and other forms of religious worship in churches, mosques and other places of worship will be permitted, provided that protocols on hygiene, as determined by the Ministry of Health, are strictly adhered to, he had added. The same measures are valid for weddings, christenings, and funerals.

In his circular as to what will apply from May 4, the archbishop said that church services will be held normally with open doors. Church committees will be responsible for ensuring that the congregation does not exceed 10 people.

The faithful can venerate icons, light a candle, give names for a church service (name day, memorial etc).

During the service there will be paper at the church for people to write down the names for memorials.

Those wishing to take Holy Communion can do so from 9 am to 10 an on saints' days and Sunday. The church committee will make sure that the number of people will not exceed ten and that the required distancing is adhered to.

The archbishop told church committees to strictly comply with hygiene rules in the church, disinfecting the protective glass over the icons and making sure that distancing is respected.

As regards churches at the cemeteries, the priest will be at the church in the morning (8:30 am – 11.30 am) and in the afternoon (3.30 pm – 6:00 pm) for prayers at the graves and to offer spiritual support and guidance.

Memorial services are carried out as normal. The koliva, once blessed during the service, are given to the relatives. They can also be blessed at the grave.

Source