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Cathedrals reopen across Greece for services with worshipers; Church refers to unprecedented pain over absence of faithful - (PHOTOS)



Churches and chapels across Greece reopened to the faithful on Sunday for attendance at holy services and the Divine Liturgies, two months after strict restrictions to prevent exposure to the Covid-19 virus were imposed by the Greek government, measures that extended even over Holy and Great Easter Week.

A ceiling of 50 worshipers at any given time has been imposed, and accepted by the Church of Greece, regardless of the size of the cathedral.



While the state has been uncompromising in its stance vis-a-vis places of worship, numerous instances of mass public gatherings and assemblies have been widely reported and filmed across Greece over the recent period, including political rallies, street protests, impromptu parties in city squares, crowded beaches and even the inauguration of a fountain mall in Athens' main Omonia square by municipal authorities.

The ban on worshipers in churches commenced on March 16.



The permanent Holy Synod of the Church of Greece has accepted the public health guidelines and precautions, and even added some of its own. Conversely, the Church remains absolutely steadfast in its conviction that the Holy Communion entails – and has never entailed in nearly two millennia of holding this holy sacrament – any risk of the transmission of disease or illness.

Churches without worshipers was an unprecedented and melancholic image in the predominately Orthodox country, where the faithful have flocked to holy services even in times of war and other calamities.

“The period that recently passed was grueling and bitter for all of us... However, if your absence from joint church-going and worship was painful, for your pastoral fathers, bishops and elders, this physical absence was the greatest of temptations and pain that we have ever experienced in our pastoral ministry,” according to a Holy Synod encyclical issued to the Greek people.











Photos: Christos Mponis - Orthodoxia News Agency