

Encyclical from His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden regarding the Attendance of Holy Services by the Faithful in the Holy Churches of Scandinavia



Stockholm, May 25, 2020

Reverend Fathers and Beloved Brethren in Christ,
Dear Members and Benefactors of Holy Metropolis of Sweden and All Scandinavia,

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Please be advised that beginning June 6, 2020 (the Saturday of Souls preceding Pentecost), faithful are invited to resume attending the Divine Liturgy and other Holy Services, in accordance with the decisions of the relevant local government agencies regarding the adoption of public health measures, to which the Holy Metropolis fully and responsibly adheres.

Outlined below are the necessary prerequisites to avoid overcrowding and the possible transmission of the coronavirus (covid-19), which will be in effect as of June 6th:

1) The maximum number of persons allowed in the St. George Cathedral of

Stockholm and the Annunciation of the Theotokos Metropolitan Church in Oslo is 50, while all other parishes will be allowed a maximum number of 20 persons in attendance.

2) Divine Liturgies and other Holy Services at the parishes of Sts. Constantine & Helen in Jönköping, Sweden, St. Andrew the Apostle in Malmö, Sweden, St. George of Ioannina the New Martyr in Roskilde, Denmark, St. Nectarios in Stavanger, Norway, St. Gerasimos in Trondheim, Norway, St. Chrysostom of Smyrna in Bergen, Norway, and Apostle Bartholomew in Reykjavik, Iceland, are suspended until September 12, 2020.

3) Faithful must maintain two meters distance between themselves and other parishioners upon entering the church.

4) Parish Council members are authorized to ensure that the aforementioned social distancing measure is adhered to by parishioners attending holy services. It is also recommended that those in attendance comply with all other suggested protective measures (masks, disposable gloves, etc.). If possible, it is suggested that parishioners use different exits to decrease overcrowding and enter/exit the church more safely.

5) Faithful belonging to high-risk groups – especially the elderly or those who are ill – are kindly requested to remain at home until having fully regained their health, so as to further safeguard their wellbeing.

6) Antiseptic cleansing materials and hand sanitizers must be readily available at the church entrances, while adequate fresh air must be ensured by maintaining open windows and doors regularly and frequently. Surfaces and floors must be carefully cleaned and regularly disinfected wherever the faithful congregate.

7) Faithful must maintain the necessary distance from each other when lining up to receive Holy Communion. Furthermore, in addition to social distancing guidelines, proper hygiene protocols must be maintained during the distribution of the antidoron, blessed loaves, kollyva, etc. Kollyva from memorial services will be distributed outside the church and not in the church hall.

8) All of the aforementioned measures also apply to the celebration of Holy Sacraments and funerals. The maximum number of persons allowed in the church for these services will be 12 – preferably belonging to the immediate family.

9) The operation of Sunday Schools, ministry gatherings, and weekly parish activities, the Sunday coffee hour following the Divine Liturgy, memorial receptions and luncheons, youth gatherings, and Bible Study groups are suspended until September 12, 2020. In the meantime, the aforementioned groups are encouraged to continue their meetings online.

10) Only the parish priest will be allowed to serve inside the Holy Altar, while the chanters' stand will be limited to only one chanter for each stand.

All of the above measures will be reevaluated in the future, depending on the status of the pandemic's decline. Updates will be provided in a timely fashion.

I am certain that you will implement the aforementioned measures with the necessary attention and spiritual maturity.

With paternal love in the Risen Lord,

+ Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden

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