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QUARANTINE MEASURES FOR CHURCHES EXTENDED UNTIL AUGUST 21 IN GREECE



A day before the Joint Ministerial Decision dictating quarantine measures in Greece, including for churches, was set to expire, the Ministry of Education and Religions and the Ministry of Health issued new directives, extending the measures through August 21.

Specifically, the previous decision regarding the “imposition of temporary measures in religious places of worship for the protection of public health against the coronavirus COVID-19, for the period from 6.6.2020 until 9.7.2020 ”(B ‘2111), is extended from its expiration until 8.21.2020 ,” reports the Orthodoxia News Agency.

Under the extended measures, one person is allowed in a church for every 5 square meters, with 1.5 meters between. No more than 100 people are allowed in a church at any one time, even if the church is larger than 500 square meters. The same applies to monasteries.

The Holy Synod of the Church of Greece met yesterday, discussing the extended

measures. In an interview afterwards with the Orthodoxia News Agency, Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens commented: “The Church is doing everything in its power. It has done and continues to do everything in its power.” When asked whether he believes the Church is being treated unfairly, the Archbishop replied that people are being treated unfairly: “We must do everything possible to save people. This is the highest law for the Church.”

Also asked to comment on the extension of the restrictive measures, Metropolitan Stephanos of Philippi noted that the Church does not believe these measures are biased against the Church.

Everything that happens must be carried out in the light of personal responsibility,” he said. “Only the Lord is just. We all often act unjustly,” he said, noting that taking measures to avoid the situation getting worse is better than taking any irresponsible actions or steps.

Conversely, Metropolitan Theologos of Serres and Nigrita earlier stated that, “the Orthodox [Church of Greece] felt that it was at the forefront of the government’s austerity. “The Church respected the laws of the state, following its measures, despite the fact that many times it felt that these measures were strictly enforced almost only in the Church,” he said.

“What is the Church? Is it a union? Is it a supermarket? Is it a hair salon after all? Is it worse than the supermarket and worse than the hair salon?” Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos) of Nafpaktos, the spokesman for the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, asked with exasperation at the state’s announcement in April that the churches would not reopen for services at that time.

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