

GREEK METROPOLIS OF TORONTO NOW ALLOWING PARISHES AND PARISHIONERS TO DECIDE HOW MANY COMMUNION SPOONS TO USE



The last several months during the coronavirus pandemic have been turbulent for the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, as diocesan authorities, headed by Metropolitan Sotirios, have implemented various approaches to serving Holy Communion in response to requirements and guidelines from the civil authorities.

Moreover, Greek Orthodox parishioners themselves have been known to report their own parishes to the authorities.

On June 20, the city government of Toronto issued COVID-19 guidelines that banned the offering of Holy Communion to the faithful, and on Sunday, July 5, the faithful were not communed during the Divine Liturgy, per diocesan instructions. It was then reported that the ban was instigated by the organization the Greek Community of Toronto, which complained that priests were not abiding by the city's guidelines.

Then, in an agreement with government authorities, it was decided that Holy

Communion would be given in the Greek Churches with one spoon per communicant. On Sunday, July 12, Met. Sotirios announced the new guidelines calling for priests to serve Holy Communion with multiple stainless-steel spoons, which was met with the great displeasure of at least some of the faithful.

A few days later, Met. Sotirios learned that Greek Orthodox parishioners had again reported their own parishes to government authorities, which he warned could lead to serious fines.

Most recently, the Metropolis has decided to leave the decision of how to serve Holy Communion up to each individual parish throughout Ontario.

In a new memo signed by the newly-consecrated Bishop Athenagoras of Patara, Archdiocesan Vicar for Ontario, the priests of the Greek Orthodox parishes throughout Ontario are called upon to familiarize themselves with the Toronto Public Health COVID-19 guidelines from August 28.

After studying the guidelines, priests and parish councils are to choose one of three options for distributing Holy Communion to the faithful:

1. Continue using individual spoons for each communicant;
2. Use one spoon for all communicants;
3. Give parishioners the choice to commune from one spoon or with separate spoons for each of them.

“What ever choice you make, your Community will be solely responsible for all consequences,” Bp. Athenagoras concludes.

Did Toronto ban Holy Communion in June and July?

On July 7, OrthoChristian reported that the city of Toronto banned Holy Communion. The city’s COVID-19 guidelines read:

All places of worship must adhere to the following requirements:

General Guidance

Suspend all communion-related activities as advised by Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health

This ban was not uniformly implemented on the ground, but it was officially in place.

On July 30, AFP Fact Check published the article, “Holy communion has not been

banned in Toronto,” on the basis of which Facebook marked our article as fake news.

However, the fact check article was itself false. As can be clearly seen in the June 20th guidelines that OrthoChristian quoted, the suspension of Communion was a “requirement” that “All places of worship must adhere to.”

This contrasts with the earlier guidelines from June 11 that read: “Discontinuing communion is strongly recommended at this time.”

Following the ban on communion from June 20, the city issued updated guidelines on July 8, which reiterated the ban:

All places of worship must adhere to the following requirements

Faith community leaders and organizers are responsible for preventing the risk of infection among staff, volunteers, community members, and visitors who participate in their organization’s activities.

Suspended Services

Communion and other close contact activities as advised by Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Interestingly, the AFP Fact Check article even links to the guidelines from July 8 while simultaneously denying the ban that is clearly stated therein. (Note that the July 8 guidelines linked to in the AFP article have been replaced with guidelines from August 28, at the same URL. The archived version of the guidelines from July 8 are available through the Wayback Machine [here](https://web.archive.org/web/20200708120000/https://www.orthochristian.com/2020/07/08/communion-suspended/)).

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