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Only slight easing of pandemic restrictions affecting Church-going in Greece; worshippers allowed for Christmas, Epiphany services



The Greek government on Friday announced that places of worship in the predominately Orthodox Christian nation will be open to worshippers only on Christmas Day and on January 6, the latter the occasion of the Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, a major religious celebration also known as the Feast of the Epiphany.

However, depending on the size of a cathedral, a ceiling on between nine and 25 worshippers was announced.

Currently, services are held places of worship in the country, but without the presence of worshippers — part of ongoing restrictions against public assembly indoors to prevent exposure to the Covid-19 virus.

Local Metropolises around Greece and the Holy Archdiocese of Athens will be responsible for compliance with the measures.

In addition, on a very disappointing note, the annual sanctification of waters ceremony, a splendid and reverent Church rite that takes place at ports, reservoirs and in other bodies of water around Greece on Jan. 6, will also be prohibited in open public spaces during the Epiphany, a government spokesman said.

Conversely, a partial lifting on retail sales was announced on Friday, with consumers to be able to order and pickup goods from retailers as of Monday.



Church of Cyprus presses for open services with all precautions in place

On Cyprus, meanwhile, a decision this week by the government to impose new and stricter precautionary measures, including the prohibition against Church-going, has generated sharp reactions among the hierarchs and clergy of the Church of Cyprus, and among the faithful.

The Archbishop of Cyprus, His Beatitude Chrysostomos, said the matter will be urgently discussed in a Holy Synod meeting next Tuesday.

His Beatitude and other Church of Cyprus hierarchs have repeatedly called on the government to allow the presence of worshippers during services, pledging to enforce all public health precautions and recommendations.

The Metropolitan of Limassol, His Eminence Athanasios, also addressed a letter to his Metropolis' clerics, on the occasion of the very ominous decision by the Cypriot government.