

Greek govt eases restrictions on Church-going for coming holiday period



Members of the Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Church of Greece concluded the first day of a two-day session on Tuesday, convening via teleconference, with the main topic on the agenda being none other than the issue of Church-going for the Holy Twelve-day period between Christmas and the Epiphany, on Jan. 6.

Shortly afterwards, the government announced that places of worship in the country will remain open for personal prayer and veneration, as well as for Church-going with the presence of worshipers for the three Great Divine Liturgies: on Christmas Day, New Year's Day and the Epiphany on Jan. 6.

A decision published in the government gazette stated that one person per every 15 square meters of floor space would be allowed in churches and chapels, and with a minimum distance between them of two meters. Additionally, the mandatory wearing of face masks by worshipers during the services was again cited.

Earlier, the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Ieronymos, had briefed the Holy Synod members over his talks, by phone, with Greek Prime

Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis a day earlier.

According to reports, His Beatitude requested that churches reopen for personal prayer by the faithful between Dec. 21 and Jan. 6.

Numerous public health specialists and epidemiologists in Greece, in fact, have recently gone on record as saying that Church-going with precautions in place is safe, and that the Church's requests are valid.

Still in the country, members of the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Church of Crete also convened on Tuesday to issue directions to clerics, monastic brotherhoods and to the faithful on the large island, regarding Holy Services and Church-going during the forthcoming holidays.

In a related development, the extraordinary conditions created by the pandemic have caused the Orthodox Academy of Crete and the library of the Foundation "Fos", which means light in Greek, to schedule a series of online events during the Holy 12 days between Christmas and the Epiphany, called the Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by the Orthodox Church.