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Archbishop Ieronymos on easing of restrictions for Church-going during 12-day Christmas period: A solution that generates peace, tranquility



This week's announcement, by the Greek government, of a slight easing in pandemic-related restrictions on Church-going means that the faithful will be allowed to venerate the Holy Relics of the saint in Zakynthos this week, among others.

As foreseen, strict public health protocols will still be in place, such as the mandatory wearing of face masks, social distancing and a cap on the number of worshipers within a cathedral at any given time.

In the wake of the joint ministerial decision and a relevant announcement issued by the Permanent Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, a subsequent encyclical issued by the Archdiocese of Athens on Wednesday evening details the conditions for keeping cathedrals and chapels open during the upcoming Holy 12-day period of Christmas, in other words from the Christmas Day service to New Year's Day,

whose service commemorates the Circumcision of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to the Epiphany on Jan. 6.

In commenting on this week's apparent compromise by the Greek government, and the easing of restrictions on Church-going, the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Ieronymos, when asked by the Orthodoxy news agency, referred to a solution that boosts peace and tranquility.

As previously reported, individual prayer and veneration will now be allowed in churches, while the Great Divine Liturgies of Christmas Day, New Year's Day and the Epiphany will be conducted with the presence of worshipers.

A specific ratio, nevertheless, has been imposed on the number of worshipers that can be present, based on the size of a place of worship, while the maximum number of faithful has been set at 50 for Metropolitan cathedrals.

Moreover, the splendid annual sanctification of the waters service on the day of the Epiphany, called the Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by the Orthodox Church, will only be held inside churches and chapels.

At the same time, the encyclical reminded that the Orthodox Church continues to patiently bear the "...obsessive attacks by certain public figures and mass media, which are attempting to transform the fight against the coronavirus into a war against a so-called irrationality of the Church, despite the fact there has been no instance detected of a mass coronavirus infection within Holy Cathedrals."
