

Holy Twelve-day Christmas period in Greece amid the shadow of the ongoing pandemic



Authorities in Greece remained on high alert this week in order to maintain restrictions imposed by the government to contain the Covid-19 pandemic, especially during the upcoming Christmas holidays. A partial nationwide lockdown remains in effect in the east Mediterranean nation until Jan. 6, a status that also affects Church-going and the opening of places of worship in the country.

As we've previously reported, churches and chapels will open to worshippers during the Great Services of the Holy 12-day Christmas period, which extends to the Epiphany, on Jan. 6. However, a ceiling has been imposed on the number of worshippers allowed within churches, based on the latter's size, along with the mandatory wearing of face masks and social distancing between the faithful.

Authorities are reportedly in contact with Metropolitans around the country, the hierarchs responsible for individual Holy dioceses, in order to ensure that all public health measures are implemented.

On a very disappointing note, the annual singing of carols the day before Christmas, a venerable tradition by which children visit homes and shops to herald the coming Nativity of Jesus Christ, have been banned.

Moreover, public health experts in the country are expected to issue a recommendation on Thursday on whether or not stricter lockdowns should be extended or loosened in a handful of regions around Greece, where the epidemiological concentration was greatest over the past month, such as the west Attica prefecture area, west of Athens proper.

In the northern Greece Metropolis of Drama, for instance, the Divine Liturgies during the Christmas Day, New Year's Day and Epiphany services will be celebrated without the presence of worshippers, according to an announcement issued by its Holy Diocese.

The Metropolitan of Drama, His Eminence Pavlos, said churches will, unfortunately, remain without worshipers, whereas services will be held only with the presence of clerics and cantors, due to a serious spike in the epidemiological concentration of the Covid-19 virus in the area.