

## **Greece enters stricter lockdown measures for the pandemic; Epiphany services will take place without worshippers on Jan. 6**



**Stricter week-long restriction measures to manage the rise in coronavirus cases went into effect at 06:00 on Sunday, January 3 in Greece.**

**As announced by the government on Saturday, the annual Sanctification of the Waters and tossing of the Cross ceremonies by Orthodox hierarchs and clerics on Jan. 6 - the splendidous feast day of the Epiphany or Theophany - will not take place outdoors, but only within cathedrals and chapels and without the presence of worshippers.**

Initially, the Greek government had announced that Church-going would be allowed during the great services of Christmas Day, New Year's and the Epiphany, albeit with strict social distancing protocols in place and with the mandatory wearing of face masks.

Other measures include a night curfew from 21:00 to 05:00 next morning,

suspension of pick-up orders at retail stores (“click away”), and the shutdown of retail stores including beauty businesses.

If there is no extension beyond Jan. 10, retail businesses and other activities will return to the previous state of restrictions.

An assessment of the measures and the clinical data will take place at the end of the week, according to government spokesman Stelios Petsas on Saturday. He said the measures had a double purpose, of relieving the National Health System and of ensuring that schools can reopen on January 11.

In addition, the Finance Ministry announced also on Saturday that businesses forced to remain shut in January will be relieved of the obligation to pay rent for that month of January.