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Epiphany in Greece celebrated in churches with worshipers, and with full compliance to pandemic-related restrictions



Yesterday's feast day of the Theophany, or the Epiphany, was celebrated with open churches and chapels in Greece, as Church-going strictly complied with restrictions and measure stipulated in a Dec. 15 joint ministerial decision — issued by the Greek government to prevent exposure to the Covid-19 virus.

Nevertheless, the Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece on Monday clearly stated that the Church would not abide by an abrupt decision by the Greek government on Friday – taken without consultation – which ordered the closing of places of worship to worshippers on Wednesday, the great feast day of the Epiphany.

Only a handful of instances of the Tossing of the Cross into the waters, as part of the splendid Sanctification service, were held outdoors around Greece, given that the previous ministerial decision mandated that such services be held inside churches – something that the Holy Synod also concurred with.

Police in some cases issued fines.

Members of the permanent Holy Synod of the Church of Greece will convene on Tuesday to consider these instances.

The Holy Synod had previously decided that the Sanctification of the Waters service would be held indoors, without accompanying litanies, processions or blessing of the waters outdoors.

In a later statement, the Holy Synod's spokesman, Metropolitan Athinagoras, noted that hierarchs will consider any incidents of non-compliance with the Holy Synod's encyclical, or directives in the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece's relevant letter, during their upcoming meeting.