22/11/2021

Stricter Covid-19 restrictions in Greece affect houses of worship



New and stricter measures against the spread of the coronavirus in Greece went into effect on Monday. The measures, announced last week by the Greek government and primarily aimed at unvaccinated individuals, include a provision whereby entry into houses of worship now requires a negative PRC or rapid test result, or alternately, presentation of a certificate of vaccination or previous infection.
According to government officials over the past few days, inspection of such certificates will fall on religious institutions themselves, with state services merely overseeing that the measure is adhered to.

Nevertheless, the specific provision in the new measures that affects places of worship generated numerous questions, especially given the fact that Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis last week cited an encyclical by the Permanent Holy Synod of the Church of Greece to justify the development. However, the encyclical in question refers to exhortation, rather than an “obligation”.

In the wake of the development, members of the Permanent Holy Synod of the

Church of Greece met via teleconference today under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Ieronymos, to consider the issue.

In a related development, the Metropolitan of Thebes and Livadia, His Eminence Georgios, on Sunday expressed serious reservations over the new restrictions affecting houses of worship.

Additionally, the Metropolitan of Fthiotida, His Eminence Symeon, speaking on the Metropolis' radio station, underlined that the Church cannot enter into a procedure where parishes assign so-called doormen and security guards at cathedrals' entrances.