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Church of Greece Holy Synod: We can urge faithful to adhere to measures, get vaccination, but we cannot force them



Members of the Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece on Monday again expressed the ecclesiastical body's standing position that the Church can only urge the faithful to follow measures imposed by the state – in order to prevent exposure to the Covid-19 virus and to receive a relevant vaccination. However, the Church cannot force these measures onto the flock as an obligation, the Holy Synod announcement added.

The announcement came after the conclusion of Monday's online Holy Synod session, and in the wake of new and stricter measures taken by the Greek government last week, and in effect as of yesterday, Monday. The measures mainly affect unvaccinated individuals in the country.

The announcement, among others, states that the Church "…stands by its encyclical statement, with which it again urges the Holy Clergy and Pious flock to

absolutely observe all protective measures in order to avoid a spread of the coronavirus; it also urges, in a fatherly manner, for vaccination, as recommended by the medical community as a significant protection measure against the pandemic.”

In later statements to various news media, the Holy Synod’s press spokesman, the Metropolitan of Thessaliotidos, His Eminence Timotheos, also underlined that Church parishes do not have the staff and mechanism to monitor who enters a cathedral or chapel, and that the Church makes every effort, instead, to urge the faithful to follow public health precautions and to get vaccinated.

On the government side, a top public health official, Marios Themistocleous, told reporters on Monday afternoon that he is confident a resolution will be found on the specific matter.

Nevertheless, government spokesman Yannis Economou, speaking on television on Tuesday morning, warned that fines will be imposed on anyone detected entering a place of worship without the necessary negative lab test for Covid-19.