

Fisrt sign language Liturgy in Cyprus to be celebrated

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A Divine Liturgy will be celebrated this Sunday with simultaneous sign language interpretation for the first time in Cyprus. The Diocese of Tamasos and Orinis has invited a theologian well-versed in Greek sign language to come from Greece for the service in St. John Chrysostom Church in Lakatamia in the Nicosia district, Cyprus Mail Online reports.



According to parish priest Fr. Kyriacos Kasparis, the interpreter is scheduled to come once a month at first, eventually increasing to once every two weeks plus major holidays, depending on his schedule.

“This arrangement is aimed at satisfying the needs of the deaf faithful who have never had the opportunity to follow a liturgy and have someone explain to them the deeper meanings in their own language,” Fr. Kyriacos said. Seventeen have expressed interest in coming so far, but more are expected. “We have already invited several people and informed deaf organizations and we have also made announcements in the media,” the priest said.

The theologian will stand on a podium to be visible to as many people as possible. After the service, guests will be treated to breakfast in the church hall, with the opportunity to ask questions about the Orthodox faith through the Greek theologian.

The diocese has also invited a Cypriot woman to learn from the Greek interpreter, to eventually take his place when he cannot travel from Greece. If all goes well, the diocese also plans to start a Sunday school for deaf children.

Work with the deaf and hearing-impaired has also begun elsewhere throughout the Orthodox world. A new social and missionary center for work with deaf and hearing-impaired people was opened at the Church of All Saints of Russia in the Novokosino district of eastern Moscow on October 4, 2015, with sign language Liturgies being served there every Saturday. Regular Sunday Liturgies for the deaf and hearing-impaired also began at Sts. Andrew and Vladimir Church in Kiev in October, 2016, and a Russian Orthodox sign language YouTube channel, “Desnitsa,” was launched in August 2016.

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