Beloved in the Lord,

“O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all.” Psalm 104:24

The recent actions of the Republic of Turkey to convert the historic Hagia Sophia into a mosque has drawn worldwide attention. While this political effort may be happening over 6,000 miles from the Metropolis of San Francisco and you may feel removed from its impact, it is incumbent upon each of us to become educated about this situation and appropriately protest this action and encourage the reversal of this decision.

We know that Hagia Sophia was the pre-eminent church in all Christendom from its opening in the sixth century. Besides its significance for Christians, it was and still is an architectural marvel, and a place that has opened her doors for millions of people throughout the world over the centuries to witness her majesty and beauty. The decision to convert Hagia Sophia to a mosque places that openness in jeopardy.

Let us beseech the Lord, through His Might and Wisdom, to bring about a peaceful resolution and may Hagia Sophia be reinstated as a museum that is filled with love, unity and acceptance.

With Love in Christ,

*Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco*

THE CHALLENGE

We now stand at a crossroad as our beloved Hagia Sophia becomes a mosque through a ruling by Turkey’s highest administrative court and actions by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that annulled the 1934 presidential decree that made it a museum. Our physical distance cannot become an excuse for our silence. This is not about restoring Hagia Sophia to a church; this is about preserving an important piece of history and keeping it accessible to people of all backgrounds, of all faiths, and for all to behold this bastion of Byzantium. Please understand that the outcome of this tragic situation could have a devastating impact on other holy sites throughout the world.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

• **Pray!** We know the power of prayer is stronger than any physical attack. When you rise in the morning and before you go to bed in the evening, pray for the deliverance of Hagia Sophia from this fateful decision.

   • **Pray the Akathist to the Theotokos** - Pray the Akathist to the Theotokos - On Friday, July 24 at 5:00 p.m. PDT, all parishes have been asked by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros and the Holy Eparchial Synod to pray the service of the Akathist to the Theotokos. In their [Encyclical to the faithful of the Archdiocese](#), this is being called a “day of mourning” as our beloved Hagia Sophia opens as a mosque. The Mother of God is our fortress and we implore her swift aid and help during this time of great need. At the conclusion of the service, please all join in singing the Kontakion ‘Τῇ ὑπερμάχῳ’/To You Champion General, a hymn that was composed and first chanted as thanksgiving for the intercessions of the Theotokos in protecting Constantinople. There is no more relevant time than now to beseech her intercessions.

   • **Write to your elected officials.** [A sample letter can be found here](#). Please personalize this letter and engage and inform your local authorities about the gravity of this situation, emphasizing the need for them to voice their opinions to the highest level of government. [Find your elected officials in the Senate and House of Representatives](#).

   • **Sign our online petition.** Let us show the strength we have on the west coast, and that we peacefully yet forcefully protest this action by the Republic of Turkey.

LEARN MORE

There are statements of support from religious and political leaders from throughout the country. [Read more!](#)