



**THE BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA**  
**THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

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**ЕПИСКОП ИСТОЧНОАМЕРИЧКИ**  
**СРПСКЕ ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ ЦРКВЕ**

E. No. 397  
July 20, 2020

**Subject: DAY OF LAMENTING FOR THE REVERSION OF HAGIA SOPHIA  
FROM A MUSEUM TO A MOSQUE**

TO ALL CLERGY AND MONASTICS;  
TO ALL CHURCH-SCHOOL CONGREGATION EXECUTIVE BOARDS;  
TO ALL MISSION PARISH COUNCILS AND MONASTERY ADMINISTRATIONS;  
TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL;  
TO THE FEDERATION OF THE CIRCLES OF SERBIAN SISTERS: and  
TO ALL FAITHFUL OF THE HOLY DIOCESE OF EASTERN AMERICA

Beloved Clergy, Monastics and Faithful,

His Holiness IRINEJ, Archbishop of Pech, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovac, and our Serbian Patriarch in his “Appeal to Turkey” ([https://www.easterndioocese.org/news\\_200714\\_1](https://www.easterndioocese.org/news_200714_1)), has boldly joined the world outcry over the reversion of Hagia Sophia, Ἁγία Σοφία, the Great Church of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople (presently, Istanbul), dedicated in 537 AD by Emperor Justinian the Great, from a museum to a mosque. In fact, this is now the fourth instance of an historic Byzantine church being reverted from a museum to a mosque in Turkey.

The Executive Committee of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the United States of America has also let its voice be heard on our collective behalf ([https://www.easterndioocese.org/news\\_200710\\_2](https://www.easterndioocese.org/news_200710_2)) and invites all Orthodox Christians, and all persons of goodwill to stand in solidarity against this grave injustice, by praying for the restoration of Hagia Sophia to the status of a museum, if not a church, or to be used for Christian worship, as noted by Patriarch Irinej in his Appeal.

On this coming **Friday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020** as there will be an ‘inauguration’ of this gross misappropriation of Hagia Sophia, in violation of all standards of respect for history and civilization, religious and cultural patrimony, **therefore, as your Archpastor, we deem it appropriate:**

- for all of our parish churches and monasteries to toll their bells in mourning on this coming Friday at 12:00 Noon and at 6:00 PM;
- for every flag that is raised on church property be lowered to half-mast on this same day; and
- for the Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos to be chanted in the evening of this day, as we chant it on the Fifth Friday of Great and Holy Lent.

65 Overlook Circle • New Rochelle NY 10804-4501 • USA  
+1 (914) 633-9000 • [diocese@easterndioocese.org](mailto:diocese@easterndioocese.org) • [www.easterndioocese.org](http://www.easterndioocese.org)

May the Holy Wisdom of God, through the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos, Protectress of Constantinople and Belgrade alike, comfort us, and give us strength to prayerfully manifest "His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14), worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God, unto the ages of ages. Amen!

The above is for your information and, accordingly, implementation.

With Archpastoral blessings and paternal love,

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