

## Archepiscopal Encyclical on the Day of Remembrance of Hagia Sophia



Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Sacred Archdiocese of America:

Ἡ Σοφία γὰρ ἀληθῶς τοῦ Πατρὸς ἀνωκοδόμησεν

ἑαυτῇ σαρκώσεως οἶκον,

καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν ὑπὲρ νοῦν....

(Κοντάκιον Ἐγκαινίων τῆς Ἁγίας Σοφίας 562 μ.Χ.)

For truly the Wisdom of the Father built for

Herself a House of Incarnation

and tabernacled among us beyond understanding ....

(Reconsecration Kontakion of Hagia Sophia 562 A.D.)

My beloved sisters and brothers in Christ,

This fifth year since the re-conversion of the Great Church of Holy Wisdom to a mosque should remind us all how — in our world of increasing conflict — the inversion of Her purpose has become almost matter-of-fact. The great dome of Hagia Sophia, which for centuries was the largest the world had ever known, was designed to manifest the pleroma of God's creativity and the possibility for humanity to conceive within ourselves and within our society the grace of transformation, of theosis. After 1453, Her dome was reduced to mere architecture and then replicated throughout the Ottoman world as a sign of heavenly beauty, but a beauty hollowed out by lack of understanding.

The Great Church, as She was rightly called, is an image of the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, Who, in the fulness of the Divine Plan for Salvation (οἰκονομία), came forth as a perfect Human Being from the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, uniting and perfecting both male and female — Logos and Sophia — in Himself, the Theanthropos, Jesus Christ. Hagia Sophia did, and still does — despite the alien function to which She is now subject — manifest the “House of Incarnation,” bearing witness to the embodiment of God Who recapitulates in Himself all the potentiality and capacity of humanity for Divinity, so that we, as Saint Peter says, “might be partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

Our Day of Remembrance for Hagia Sophia remains a bittersweet reality for all Orthodox Christians, and indeed for every Christian of any historical awareness. The day and memory are bitter because spiritual error and lack of consciousness fail to ascribe Her full meaning. And yet sweet, because we have the Great Church incarnate in our Venerable Ecumenical Patriarchate, which abides as a spirit-filled space leading the Faithful to embody in their own lives the Mystery of the Incarnation and the reality of God. May the Great Church continue to always give birth to Her spiritual children throughout the world, so that the Tabernacle of Holy Wisdom continues to proclaim the glory of Logos and Sophia, our Savior Jesus Christ.

With paternal love and  
prayerful consolation in the Lord,

† Ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἐπιτοποφάρος

† ELPIDOPHOROS  
Archbishop of America