

## **GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA - MESSAGE FROM ARCHBISHOP MAKARIOS OF AUSTRALIA**



### **Chora Monastery conversion**

I was deeply saddened to learn of the decision of the Turkish authorities to convert the historic Chora Monastery in Constantinople into an Islamic mosque. It is a decision that intensifies our frustration and concern, given the recent desecration of the Church of Hagia Sophia, which is the universal symbol of Orthodoxy and Christianity.

Unfortunately, the Turkish political leadership insists on following a path of disrespect for religious monuments of the Orthodox Church but also displays contempt for monuments that constitute a part of the world's cultural heritage. There are currently more than 3500 mosques in Constantinople. There is no need for another one to be added to the list as most of them are empty. Unfortunately, Turkey is moving in the opposite direction from what all modern democracies and societies have set out to do in recent years. At the same time, it invalidates all actions and steps taken in previous decades by the Turkish Republic and the Turkish people, choosing to go backwards instead of progressing and showing disrespect even for its own history.

However, we must realise that such decisions not only constitute an insult to Orthodox Christians or, generally, to Christians around the world. We must understand that such “heroic” initiatives promote intolerance, religious fanaticism and nationalist ideology while, at the same time, undermining peaceful coexistence, which is a pursuit of all religions. It is crucial to ponder – particularly by those who instigate and execute such decisions – that no present intervention can change the historic reality reflected in a monument. It can only determine the future. And this is why the responsibility that comes from such decisions is heavy-laden.

[Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia – Archdiocesan District of Adelaide](#)