

Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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Website & Directory Information.

www.HolyCrossFtMyers.Org

6th After Pentecost – Tone 5. Commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils. Ven. Macrina, sister of St. Basil the Great (380). Ven. Dius, Abbod, of Antioch (430). Blv. Roman, Prince of Riazan (1270). Ven. Paisil of the Kiev Caves. Bl. Stephen (1427), King of Serbia, and Mother, St. Militsa

Divine Liturgy of St. John:

Romans 12:6-14

Matthew 9:1-8

Liturgical Schedule:

Sunday - 9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Saturday July 25th - 5:00 pm Great Vespers

Wednesday – August 5 – 5:00 pm - Great Vespers of Holy Transfiguration

Thursday – August 6 – 9:00 am – Divine Liturgy of Holy Transfiguration

Letter of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon to Patriarch Bartholomew Regarding Hagia Sophia

His All-Holiness Bartholomew

Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

Your All-Holiness, Dear Brother and Concelebrant in the Lord's Mysteries,

I greet you in the midst of a most difficult year for so many. In the United States, we have faced an unprecedented crisis with Novel SARS CoV-2 and COVID-19. At the same time, we have also seen civil unrest as this country wrestles with the very painful problem of racism. Economic anxiety, high unemployment, and sickness pose challenges to our faithful, to our country, but also to everyone living throughout the world. Further, these new problems have come while humans everywhere have continued their struggle with the longstanding issues of environmental devastation, prejudice, poverty, warfare, and religious freedom and toleration. Indeed, those problems that antedate the coronavirus, it seems, have been exacerbated by the present pandemic, and contributed to the civil unrest we witness in America.

It is precisely the matters of religious freedom and toleration that have prompted me to write to Your All-Holiness. Having heard the news that the Republic of Turkey and its president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, have decided to reconvert Hagia Sophia from a museum to a mosque, I am troubled by yet one more blow to the principle of religious toleration, and the ideal of peaceful coexistence for people of diverse faiths.

But of course, as Orthodox Christians, we know and follow the Apostolic and martyric witness that “the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands (Acts 7:48).” And further, with the Great Prophet Isaiah we confess that heaven is the Lord's throne, the earth his footstool (Isaiah 66:1). What building on earth, consecrated or unconsecrated, could contain him who is uncontainable? As the Apostle teaches, we, the Church, the community of believers, “are the temple of the Living God.” We Orthodox Christians are his people, and he is our God. He lives and moves and dwells amongst us. (II Cor 6:16). The actions of the Turkish Republic can do nothing to affect this relationship that we have with God. This affirmation gives us comfort in this matter, but also with all that ails us in the modern world. God is with us, Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, and we are his body, the Church, alive in this world. Faith in him, a renewed faith, is the only answer, the only solution, the only thing that will relieve us from our present afflictions.

Nevertheless, while believing this wholeheartedly, I am saddened that the status of Hagia Sophia will change, but I hope that the Turkish government will stay true to its word and allow access to Hagia Sophia for everyone. I also know that the work of the Great Church of Christ will continue in Constantinople to the glory of God no matter what happens to the Great Church of Hagia Sophia. And for you, Your All-Holiness, I remain concerned, because I perceive this action to strike at the heart of what you have labored for as the Ecumenical Patriarch: service, toleration, respect, religious freedom, and a yearning for peace and unity. Please be assured of my prayers for you and your unique ministry within world Orthodoxy.

May our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, himself the Peace, Power, and Wisdom of God, the “same yesterday and today and forever (Heb 13:8),” remain for us the hope of all the world. In these unsettled times, may he alone be for us the “head of the cornerstone,” upon which the Church continues to be built. May he, Your All-Holiness, continue to protect and guide you, being your sole refuge and deliverer? **Your brother and concelebrant, +Tikhon**