



Australian Catholic Bishops Conference



Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

## JOINT STATEMENT ON THE STATUS OF HAGIA SOPHIA/AYA SOFYA

SYDNEY 24-07-2020

We are not politicians but pastors, sent by Jesus Christ to proclaim his peace to everyone. Therefore, as brothers in Christ, we join our voices to the many around the world who have expressed deep regret at the recent decision in Turkey to change the status of Hagia Sophia/Aya Sofya, originally a place of Christian worship, and in more recent times a monument of world cultural heritage and a symbol of inclusivity.

Our fear is that this could aggravate tension between Christians and Muslims at a time when we need to pursue the path of dialogue and seek common ground. The path of nationalist ideology and the political decisions it prompts can lead only to division, which is never the fruit of the holy wisdom all religions seek.

We pray for the people of Turkey, in particular the Christians there who have been especially grieved by this decision. We pray too that in time the decision will be reversed, so that Hagia Sophia/Aya Sofya can again be common ground for all people and an emblem of peace.

† MAKARIOS

Archbishop of Australia, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church

† MARK

President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference