



## **ASIA/TURKEY - The oldest Christian place of worship will become a mosque in Istanbul**

Istanbul (Agenzia Fides) - The ancient monastery of San Giovanni in Studion, currently classified as the museum complex, will be transformed into a mosque in 2014, once the restoration work in progress are completed. The news was given by Turkish sources. This building, built as a place of Christian worship, seems destined to follow the fate of the ancient churches of Hagia Sophia (St. Sophia) in Trabzon and in Iznik.

The Christian Greek - Orthodox entrepreneur Lakis Vingas, a member of the General Directory of Foundations, commented on the news by pointing out that "cultural heritage is universal", and turning it into the soil of sectarian antagonisms ends up damaging large-scale civil coexistence.

The monastery was founded in Constantinople in 463 by consul Studio, who placed it under the protection of St. John the Baptist. The community of "Studite" monks represented a bulwark in defense of doctrinal orthodoxy, opposing the monophysite thesis, the schism of Acacius and Iconoclasm. In 1204 the complex was sacked by the Latins during the Fourth Crusade. After the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks, the monastery church was transformed into a mosque in Imrahor, to become a museum in 1946. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 28/11/2013)